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#12 JULY / AUGUST 2006

A SOCIALIST PROJECT REVIEW



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IMMIGRATION PROTESTS * WAITING FOR HEALTH CARE
CALEDONIA * JUSTICE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS
BEYOND THE CAW-NDP DIVORCE * ATENCO





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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.

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

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RELAY II CONTENTS

July/
August #12

2006

Canada

Enron: The Canadian Connection	Murray Cooke	4
Waiting for Care: Challenging the Agenda in Health Care	Pat Armstrong	6
Secret Trials in Canada	Matthew Behrens	10

Caledonia

Six Nations Land Claim Struggles	Elaine White	11
The Caledonia Occupation	James C. B. Lawson	12
We Didn't Learn this in History Class	Anne MacMeekin	15

Migration

Re-envisioning the Possibilities of May Day	Enrique C. Ochoa	16
Taking the Struggle to the Streets	Gilda L. Ochoa	18
Migration to the North in the Mam Zone	R. Aída Hernández Castillo	20
Justice for Migrant Farm Workers	Evelyn Encalada Grez	23
Bodies and Borders: Neoliberalism and Migration	Anna M. Agathangelou	26

Culture Front

Mapping Silences	Carolina Cambre	28
Towards a Radical Critical Pedagogy	Andrew Michael Lee	29
No Revolution Without Song	Len Wallace	32

Labour

Beyond the CAW-NDP Divorce	Sam Gindin	36
Barrick Gold's Muddy Footprints in Chile	Carlos Torres	38
Solidarity in the Post Office	CUPW & FENTECT	40

International

State Violence and Gender in San Salvador Atenco, Mexico	R. Aída Hernández Castillo	42
The Left Bank: Anti-Zionist Jews	Matt Fodor	46

Mailbag		47
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Enron

The Canadian Connection

Murray Cooke

To the delight of many, Enron's founder Kenneth Lay and former CEO Jeffrey Skilling were recently found guilty on multiple accounts of fraud and conspiracy for their roles in one of the largest corporate scandals and bankruptcies in American history. The 2001 collapse of the Houston-based energy trading giant and one-time darling of Wall Street saw \$2.1 billion worth of pensions and 5,600 jobs wiped out. For six years in a row, Enron had been named "America's Most Innovative Company" by *Fortune* magazine. Much of that innovation was applied to their financial statements.

Only a few days before the Lay and Skilling verdicts were announced, an American judge gave final approval to arrangements to settle a class action suit filed by Enron investors against three banks; the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), JP Morgan Chase & Co. and Citigroup. The timing was fitting. Enron executives were able to maintain their façade of creative bookkeeping as long as they did only with the connivance of their bankers and accountants. Perhaps the only thing missing was the impeachment and incarceration of Enron's political cronies who allowed this energy debacle to emerge through privatization and deregulation.

ENRON & THE CANADIAN BANKS

Three of Canada's big banks had ties to Enron. The most involved was CIBC. CIBC's ties with Enron date back to 1991. By the late 1990s CIBC was actively participating in deals which Enron used to manipulate its books. In their book *The Smartest Guys in the Room: The Amazing Rise and Scandalous Fall of Enron*, Bethany McLean and Peter Elkind suggest that CIBC "was falling over itself to please Enron" in order to become one of the energy firm's top tier of bankers. CIBC did join the inner circle of Enron's tier one

banks in June 2000, but by the end of 2001 Enron had collapsed.

According to the class action complaint filed against the bank, CIBC "helped Enron falsify its financial statements and misrepresented its financial condition while its securities analysts were issuing extremely positive reports on Enron extolling its business success, the strength of its financial condition and its prospects for strong revenue and earnings growth." The relationship between CIBC and Enron was apparently quite cozy. The plaintiffs allege that "CIBC's relationships with Enron were so extensive that these individuals constantly interacted with top executives of Enron... on almost a daily basis... discussing Enron's business, financial condition, financial plans, financing needs, its partnerships and SPEs [special-purpose entities] and Enron's future prospects." It is hard to believe that CIBC was merely an innocent bystander to Enron's deceit. One is left to wonder whether Lay and Skilling's old friends at CIBC will keep in close touch when these two end up behind bars.

Two other Canadian banks, the Royal Bank of Canada and Toronto-Dominion Bank, had less extensive but still impressive dealings with Enron for a number of years. Both are accused by Enron investors of knowingly participating in dubious transactions that Enron used to overstate its income and hide its debt. Like CIBC, RBC coveted the position of being one of Enron's tier one banks. Enron investors allege that "In 1995-99, Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) structured, funded and executed numerous deceptive transactions." In 2000, as it sought to become one of Enron's inner circle of bankers, RBC participated in a number of highly suspicious transactions. For its part, TD is accused of participating in six disguised loan transactions with Enron with a total value of about \$2 billion from 1998 through to 2000. The class action suit alleges that "Toronto-Dominion had actual

knowledge of the wrongful conduct in connection with those transactions."

PAYING THE PRICE OR MAKING A KILLING?

Amidst the fallout of Enron's collapse, CIBC CEO John Hunkin made a pious speech on business and ethics in April 2002. Hunkin admitted that "As a business leader, I understand the pressures that can tempt someone to start down the continuum from ethical to unethical behaviour." Unfortunately, the confession ended there. He went on to explain, "There is mounting pressure on boards and CEOs to increase earnings on a quarterly basis – to 'beat the street.' This pressure accelerated in the nineties as more individuals and institutions invested in the equity markets... The combination of this pressure, the volatility of markets and the substantial holdings of stocks and options by senior executives is pretty well everything you need to encourage aggressive – and sometimes unethical behaviour – by a company's management." To his credit, Hunkin laid out a rather apt explanation for the fall of Enron and his own bank's role in that scandal.

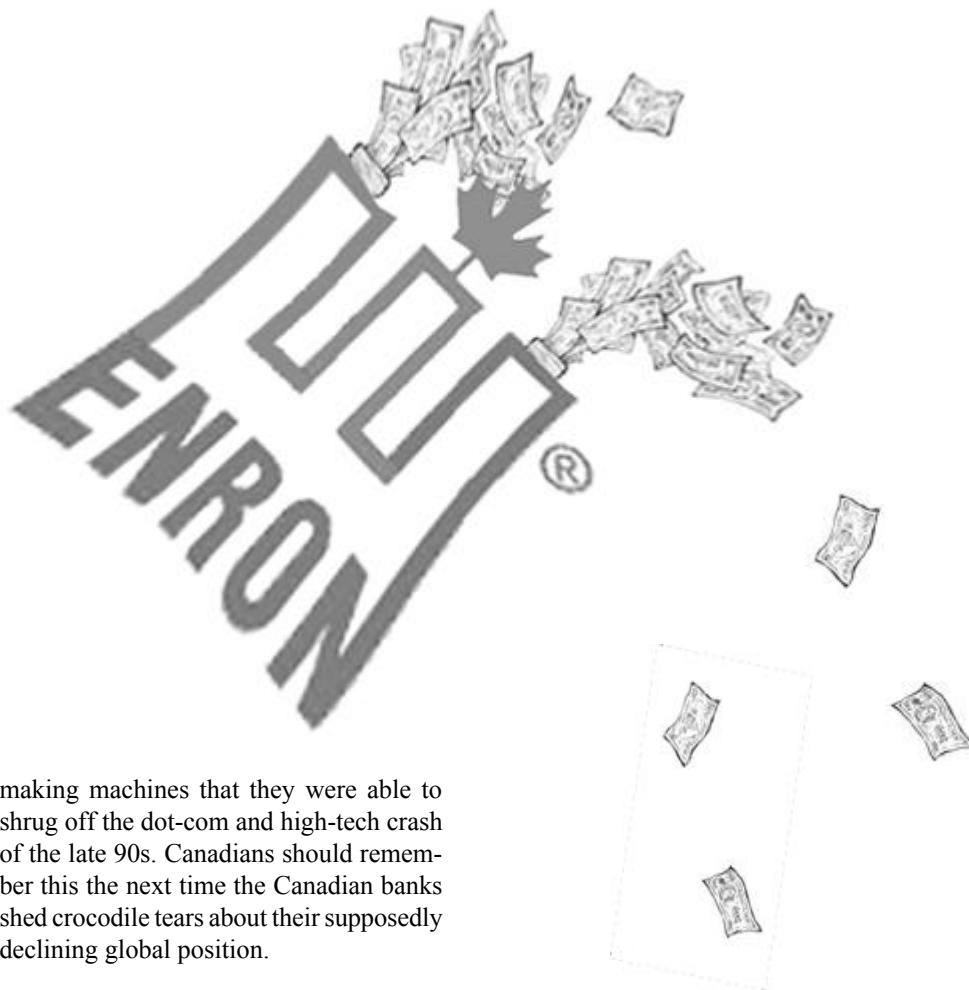
In December 2003, CIBC paid out \$80 million (US) in a settlement reached with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the U.S. Department of Justice for its Enron adventures. The SEC accused CIBC of "having helped Enron to mislead its investors through a series of complex structured finance transactions over a period of several years preceding Enron's bankruptcy." The U.S. Department of Justice announced "that the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) has accepted responsibility for the criminal conduct of its employees in connection with a series of structured finance transactions with Enron Corp." Bluntly, the Department of Justice stated that "CIBC aided and abetted Enron's fraudulent financial practices."

This settlement was just the beginning.

On August 1, 2005, CIBC CEO John Hunkin retired to his sailboat and cottage in Nova Scotia a year earlier than previously expected with a reported \$52 million package. Coincidentally or not, the next day CIBC announced that it was paying the massive sum of \$2.4 billion (US) to settle the class action suit launched by Enron investors. This is the largest settlement reached yet, larger than that paid by the huge U.S. banks JP Morgan Chase and Citigroup. Of course, the bank does not consider the settlement to be an admission of wrongdoing. And don't bother looking for Hunkin to answer any questions about what went wrong (or give back any of his retirement package), there's been the corporate equivalent of a cabinet shuffle. Later in the same week, CIBC agreed to another \$250 million (US) settlement for a different suit, this one from Enron itself. All of this led *Globe & Mail* columnist Eric Reguly to note that, "On Wall Street, when the going gets tough, the tough get ousted. Or sued or indicted. In Canada, they go yachting."

Ironically, only a few weeks before these massive settlements, in July 2005, CIBC had donated \$700,000 to Simon Fraser University to establish, of all things, the CIBC Centre for Corporate Governance and Risk Management. Was this hypocrisy on the part of CIBC or a sincere cry for help? Is this the equivalent of a Hell's Angels Centre for Public Relations and the Disposal of Evidence? What sorts of lessons are to be taught in this fine corporate-sponsored institution of higher learning? Perhaps one could ask the same thing about the Schulich School of Business at York University where John Hunkin remains Chair of the Dean's Advisory Council and an Honorary Governor of the university itself.

CIBC's massive settlement put a major dent in the bank's financial performance in 2005. CIBC posted an annual loss (of \$32 million), a rare event in deed for one of Canada's big banks. Already in the first six months of fiscal 2006, however, CIBC has recorded a profit of \$1.2 billion. As with previous blips (from the perspective of the banks) such as the energy crunch of the 70s, the Third World debt crisis of the 80s and the real estate crash of the early 90s, the Canadian banks are such money-



making machines that they were able to shrug off the dot-com and high-tech crash of the late 90s. Canadians should remember this the next time the Canadian banks shed crocodile tears about their supposedly declining global position.

NEXT IN THE DOCKET

The Enron scandal had a strong Canadian connection and its full fallout remains to be felt. RBC and TD have also been named in the class-action suit launched by Enron investors. These two banks have not agreed to settlements and litigation is scheduled to begin this fall.

Beyond Enron, the next big corporate celebrity trial features sometime Canadian citizen Lord Black of Crossharbour, Conrad Black himself, who is accused of mail fraud, wire fraud, racketeering, obstruction of justice and money laundering for his part in milking Hollinger International of millions. If he can avoid a jail term, he deserves a teaching post at a business school near you. Is it any surprise that until he resigned in January 2004, Black spent 26 years as a director of the CIBC? **R**

Murray Cooke is the author of *Banking on Mergers: Financial Power Versus the Public Interest*.

CIBC CEO John Hunkin retired to his sailboat and cottage in Nova Scotia a year earlier than previously expected with a reported \$52 million package. Coincidentally or not, the next day CIBC announced that it was paying the massive sum of \$2.4 billion (US) to settle the class action suit launched by Enron investors.

WAITING FOR CARE:

Challenging the Agenda in Health Care Reform

Pat Armstrong

Health care is fundamentally about social justice, about our commitments to each other and about collective rights and responsibilities. The struggle over reform is a struggle over what form of justice will prevail, over whether solidarity, community, equity, compassion and efficiency defined in terms of public good will take precedence over individual rights to sell, purchase and consume based on market principles and profits. It is a struggle over power and equity.

While health care reform is about evidence, it is fundamentally about values, as Romanow pointed out in his report some years back. The debate is not simply about my good vs. your good. It is also about what we know about what works for whom in what ways. There is evidence we can use as the basis of our values debate. It is often hard to sort the evidence from the values, partly because they are integrally related. But we do have solid research, research developed from a variety of sources and perspectives, research that provides a firm basis for policy development and change. Unfortunately, as Paul Krugman and Robins Wells put it in their recent *New York Review of Books* article on U.S. health care, "the bad news is that Washington currently seems incapable of accepting what the evidence on health care says." We could say the same about Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton and Québec City as well.

The debate over health care reform is further complicated because our health care system is very complicated, because similar reforms are often put forward both by those promoting social justice and those promoting profits, because reforms frequently have contradictory consequences and because we are so individually and personally involved in health care. Just think of the recent *Globe and Mail* articles on access to specialized drugs; articles that attack the public system for denying what is presented as life-saving care; or think of the Supreme Court in the Chaoulli decision using the Morgenthau case as a basis for supporting individual rights to private health insurance; or the confusing discussions about what is private and what is public in health care. Such complications make democratic decision-making more difficult to maintain.

The debate is also complicated by the representation of health care as a system in crisis. For well over a decade, we have been told the sky is falling in health care. Crisis after crisis has been front-page news, the subject of talk shows and elections, of even family and Supreme Court disputes.

First, it was panic over debt and deficits. "Costs are out of control," we were told, "think about the debt we are leaving our children." Drastic cuts followed at both the federal and provincial

levels. Hospitals were closed; nurses, cleaners, laundry, dietary and clerical workers, but not doctors, lost their jobs. Most of those who lost their jobs were women, in part because they account for 80% of the health care labour force. The deficit and debt receded as issues, but we have not left behind the fear that health care eats up a growing share of government budgets. Indeed, health care's share of spending has led the news stories on recent provincial budgets.

Then we had the panic over an aging population and abuse of the system. 'All us baby boomers are going to bankrupt the system,' we are told. Given that most of the elderly are women and that women use the health system more than men, this too is an area where women bear the brunt of the attack.

After that we had a panic about nursing and doctor shortages. Headlines appeared regularly about crowded emergency rooms, patients in hallways, about people without family doctors. This too has not gone away as an issue.

Now, it is hard to pick up a newspaper today without seeing an article about wait times. The Supreme Court decision reinforced this panic, but it was news long before that. Indeed, the federal/provincial/territorial agreement on new funding makes reporting on wait times almost the only condition for funding.

Are there problems in the system? Of course there are problems with rising costs, aging populations, health care workers and wait times. These are real issues, among others, that we need to address collectively, while recognizing their impact on individuals. Do these constitute a crisis in the public system? For the most part the answer is 'no' in that these are problems that can be addressed without dismantling the system.

Is privatization the answer? Definitely not. Here the evidence is clear.

In short, these are not problems of panic proportions and they are best solved within a public system. The headlines themselves are creating a crisis because these representations of crisis are being used as a means of undermining faith in the public system and of justifying privatization. Let's unpack two 'crises' which are used to argue for greater privatization: costs and waiting time.

First, costs and sustainability.

Is public health care the major cause of debts and deficits? According to Mimoto and Cross, two mainstream Canadian economists, "Expenditures on social programs did not contribute significantly to the growth of government spending relative to GDP." Undoubtedly, governments were spending more on care. How-

ever, the growth rate alone cannot explain the focus on cost and the language of crisis. A recent article in *Health Affairs* noted “In most countries the rate of increase in real health care spending was highest during the 1960s and generally has been declining since then, and the percentage of GDP spent on health care has been relatively stable since the early 1980s.” Canada’s rate of growth in health spending during this period averaged 3.6%. In 2002, Canada stood eighth among 26 OECD countries in terms of public expenditure as a percentage of GDP, allocating 6.7% of GDP to health care. Moreover, as health economist Robert Evans makes clear, the provincial health budgets are not significantly different from the past in terms of health care spending and it would be false to claim that pressures from health spending are squeezing out other programmes. Tax cuts are a more important factor because they reduce the size of the government pie.

In short, expenditures alone do not seem to justify the label crisis. Nor do they justify a shift to for-profit delivery and private payment, given that the highest spending countries are the U.S. and Switzerland, the countries with the most private involvement. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore that fact that health care costs have been rising. But we need to ask which costs have been rising if we are to assess the privatization alternative.

Traditionally, labour costs have accounted for the lion’s share of health spending. And it would not seem unreasonable to focus on these expenditures. However, it would be a mistake to see un-

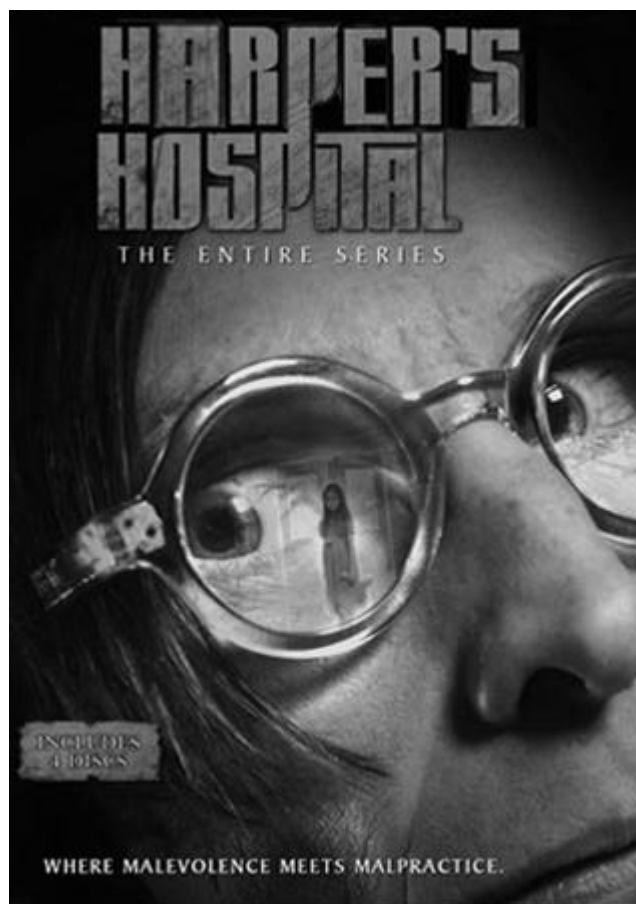
reasonable demands from labour as a primary cause of cost increases. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, “Census data show that, on average, employment incomes for full-time workers in health occupations rose at about the rate of inflation between 1995 and 2000. That compares to almost a 6% after-inflation increase for all earners.” In other words, health care workers got less than their share. Moreover, there are huge disparities in incomes among health care workers and in their wage gains in recent years. Ancillary workers are the lowest paid of all those employed in this sector, yet these mainly female workers have been a primary target of cost cutting in the form of contracting out the services to the private sector. Eliminating jobs or reducing wages for the lowest paid saves much less money than would be saved by doing the same for managers or physicians, although this has not prevented ancillary workers from being targets for privatization. Research in the UK shows that, while there may be initial cost reductions through this form of privatization, the “savings are made principally at the expense of the terms and conditions of the work force” and that quality of service declines.

If it is not the workers, what does account for the increase? Well, much of the recent growth in health expenditures is attributable to drugs. In 2004, \$8.5 billion was spent by the public sector on prescription drugs while spending on retail drugs rose from 9% of total health spending in 1984 to 16% in 2004. New technologies, especially information technologies, also accounted for a significant share of these new costs – although it is much more difficult to count their contribution to expenditure growth. Expenditures on drugs and information technologies are growing rapidly even though there is often little evidence to show that many of these drugs and technologies significantly improve patient care or increase efficiency. According to an editorial in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, “roughly 75% of all large IT projects in health care fail” and the problems “are not simply bits of bad programming or poor implementation.”

In other words, the rapidly rising costs in health care come from the private for-profit sector even though they have not necessarily proven to be either efficient or effective in health care terms. But they have been profitable. If we want to control costs, we should be targeting drugs and technologies rather than the services and the mainly female providers. And we should be extending public control over costs through means such as drug regulation and bulk purchasing rather than moving to contracting out services and public/private partnerships.

The Supreme Court, among others, is increasingly telling us that every one is doing it. All the countries similar to ours are turning to the private sector. Even if this were the case, I would still challenge the notion that we should follow their lead. I never allowed my children to use that argument and I do not see why I should accept it here. Let’s look at the evidence in terms of equity, access, effectiveness, efficiency and quality. It all tells us to not go the private way.

What is not sustainable is rapidly growing profits in health care and increases in for-profit delivery that allow public money to go to profit rather than care. →



Secondly, let's consider wait times.

Wait times are our newest crisis. Not long ago, I was phoned by a major Toronto newspaper asking for a horror story on wait times. I offered a story about someone who did not wait and was told that was not news.

Wait times have become a major preoccupation of governments in recent years. The Supreme Court decision on *Chaoulli*, that rejected the prohibition against private insurance in areas covered by public care, was justified in terms of unreasonable wait times, making governments pay attention to this issue. According to lawyer Andrew Petter, the Court's 4/3 decision reflects a "liberal legalism that protects negative liberty and imposes a formal vision of equality that harms the disadvantaged" or, as Hutchinson puts it, the decision is based on the false assumption that citizens are "most free when their negative liberty is protected from state interference." The individual right to buy was reinforced and the decision has opened a floodgate of demands for more private purchasing and for-profit delivery.

It was the Fraser Institute that first made wait lists a crisis issue, producing a series of studies they claimed revealed dramatic growth in wait times for surgery and tests in Canada. They were based on some doctor's belief that wait times were increasing rather than on actual measure of wait times.

What do the actual measures show? Well, first it depends on what we are measuring. Waiting for what – an appointment for an

annual checkup, for elective surgery, or for emergency care? Waiting in each case may have very different consequences. Second, wait times are hard to measure because it is hard to tell when to start the clock and what is an appropriate time to wait.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information, unlike several provinces, counts from booking form received to surgery. According to that measure, CIHI reports that median wait times for non-emergency surgery remained virtually the same between 2001 and 2005 and the number of surgeries increased enormously. Meanwhile, Canadians do not wait long for emergency care. And we should also remember that we are doing many surgeries frequently now that were mainly experimental a couple of decades ago, so we have made significant progress within the public system. In short, the data do not suggest a crisis, although there are certainly areas where we need work.

Equally important, the research indicates that a public system is the best way to reduce wait times. There is no reason to assume that private payment and investor-owned service delivery will reduce wait list. There are a lot of assumptions about for-profit delivery being better, but lots of evidence that quality is lower and access more limited. As Michael Rachlis shows in his paper on "Public Solutions to Health Care Wait Times," specialized clinics and managed wait times in the public sector can provide superior service "while reducing overall administrative costs and providing broader societal benefits" such as equity.

Adding private insurance, as the Court suggests, and adding investor-owned delivery services, as Senator Kirby and other suggest, can only increase rather than improve overall wait times because the system will be more fragmented, and less coordinated.

In their *New York Review of Books* article, Krugman and Wells conclude that the U.S. way means high government costs while "the actual delivery both of insurance and of care is undertaken by a crazy quilt of private insurers, for-profit hospitals, and other players who add cost without adding value."

Making the wait list the crisis of the hour also distorts our priorities. The five priority areas get all the attention and resources, leaving out the majority who have other health issues. And it can mean bad quality care. A March issue of the *Guardian* reports that National Health Service hospitals are "having to repair damage done during botched operations on people who have been sent to private centres for hip and knee replacements to cut waiting lists." In two centres where the figures were examined, the failure rates were significantly higher than in NHS hospitals, three times the rate in one and ten times the rate in another. The article also claimed that training for surgeons also suffered, leaving a questionable future for quality care.

In sum, wait times do not constitute a crisis and privatization is not an appropriate solution to the problems there are in waiting.

We need to shift the debate from one of crisis to one of strengths. We know the strengths in a public system. The onus should be on those who want to privatize delivery and payment to show how investor owned services and private payment will maintain or improve on these advantages.



There are at least ten established advantages in the public system. So those who want to privatize payment and delivery must address these in order to justify their claims.

1. The quality of care is higher, in part because the rich must use the same services as the poor and thus have an interest in making sure all services are good.
2. The administrative costs are lower. Much less money is spent sorting the deserving from the undeserving; less is spent on billing and on chasing those who have not paid.
3. Distribution of services can be centrally planned, making services more fairly distributed across the country and especially in rural and remote areas. While we clearly have not been entirely successful, in part because we have left many of the decisions up to private organizations and individual doctors, we have reached many who have not been reached before.
4. Wait lists can be centrally managed to allow an efficient and needs-based distribution of services.
5. Wasteful duplication of services can be reduced through central planning.
6. Access is based on need, not ability to pay.
7. Jobs are better in the public sector, especially for the overwhelmingly female labour force that does the ancillary work.
8. Employers save significant amounts of money through a public system, especially for the retired. Now costs are shared among us all and this is particularly important for those with catastrophic illness costs.
9. Innovation on a large scale has been possible in the

public system. We need only think of cataract surgery, insulin, lasers and antibiotics, all of which were developed in the public realm.

10. Now costs are controlled through government budgets. How will costs be controlled, and what happens when complications arise, in the private system when there are cost overruns, when people trained mainly with public money seek to work only in private care while reducing resources in the public system, when business fails, when people are refused care?

We are told nearly daily this system is in need of improvement. But the evidence demonstrates that the privatization solutions being advanced will not address these issues. Only a public system can hope to meet the criteria of access, equity, quality, and cost effectiveness based on democratic decision about care. Private solutions will leave too many of us waiting for care.

It is simply bad logic to say we already have some private care and some people can now push to the front of the line, therefore we should have more of both. It is like saying you already had some crime so why not allow more. Of course some aspects of care will remain private. But we need to demonstrate how the line should be drawn in relation to both the demonstrated advantages of the system and our notions of justice and how that line can be drawn in ways that are based on evidence, principles and public participation not on the basis of power and ability to pay.

We have a collective responsibility to ensure this is the case. These are value questions to be debated in a democratic society but ones we should address on the basis of the evidence. Let's do it now. **R**

Pat Armstrong teaches feminism and political economy at York University. This article is based on the 2006 Phyllis Clarke Memorial Lecture (Department of Politics and Public Administration, Ryerson University) which Pat Armstrong delivered on March 27th at Ryerson University



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Secret Trials in Canada

Matthew Behrens

With each new federal election, the issue of who will best uphold Charter rights and freedoms tends to dominate debate. Yet for Canada's Arabic and Middle Eastern communities, and for sections of this country's Muslim community, the notion of Charter Rights has been obscured by racial profiling, aggressive surveillance by the RCMP and CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service), deportations to torture, and the use of secret trial security certificates.

A security certificate, for over two decades part of immigration law, is perhaps the most draconian measure available to Canadian authorities. While many Canadians express justifiable concern over civil liberties violations with the hastily passed Anti-Terrorism Act, few realize that the power to detain someone without charge or bail – on the basis of secret “evidence” which neither they nor their lawyer is allowed to see – has long been directed at Canada's refugee and immigrant population.

Five Muslim men – the Secret Trial 5 – are subject to security certificates in Canada: three at Metro West Detention Centre in Toronto (Mohammad Mahjoub, father of three, held since June, 2000, half that time in solitary confinement; Mahmoud Jaballah, father of six, held since August, 2001; Hassan Almrei, held in solitary confinement since October, 2001); one at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (Mohamed Harkat, married, held since December, 2002), and one in Montreal (Adil Charkaoui, father of two, held May 2003–February 2005, released under harsh bail restrictions).

A sixth individual, Manickavasagam Suresh, was subject to over two years of incarceration but has been out on bail since 1998. About 30 certificates have been issued since 1991, with only two thrown out. The remainder has resulted in deportation, often after as long as 8 years in prison without charge, to an uncertain overseas fate.

Mr. Jaballah was originally arrested in the spring of 1999, but the case was dismissed as “not credible” by a Federal Court judge later that year. Yet he was re-arrested in 2001 by a vengeful CSIS, one of whose agents conceded in the limited public portion of the secret trial that there was no new evidence against Jaballah, only a “new interpretation” of the old evidence which had already been dismissed by the Federal Court.

The Canadian government is working actively to deport all five men to what even its own immigration bureaucracy admits is

the substantial likelihood of a future of torture or worse.

The issue of security certificates will come before the Supreme Court of Canada for three days this June, and plans are underway for nationwide vigils on June 13, the opening day of the hearings, as well as for a Freedom Caravan on June 3-10 from Toronto to Ottawa.

Security certificates have been found to be fundamentally flawed and unfair by the likes of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, both of whom have called for their abolition. And a broad range of Canadians from labour, church, legal and political backgrounds (including MPs of all political parties as well as June Callwood, David Suzuki, Denys Arcand, Bruce Cockburn and Alexandre Trudeau) have called for an end to the process. In both May and June of 2005, two separate committees of the United Nations criticized Canada, expressing “grave concern” that Canada detains individuals on mere suspicion.

But the government of Canada seems intent on maintaining the process with a few slight alterations. The recent construction of a \$3.2 million facility in Millhaven for those currently detained – dubbed ‘Guantanamo Bay North’ – is but one sign of their commitment to continue this process. It is likely the Conservatives will introduce a “special advocate” who can go behind closed doors and ask questions, much like what occurred during the Arar Inquiry.

But the detainees, their families, and a wide swath of supporters are opposed to this window dressing of a fundamentally unfair process. Rather, they argue that if these men have done anything they should be charged under the criminal code, with its higher standards of proof, complete disclosure, and (relatively) stronger procedural protections. To do otherwise is to maintain a two-tiered justice system in Canada.

Indeed, the discriminatory secret trial process is directed ONLY at people who do not enjoy full citizenship rights. Before the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2001, proceedings which involved alleged security threats were generally carried out under the Immigration Act, not too subtly enforcing the concept that only non-Canadians pose a threat (only one Canadian has been charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act).

Since Canadian citizens cannot be subject to the certificate, it appears that when a citizen comes under the sights of CSIS, the spy agency waits until the individual is overseas, where they are picked up by spy agencies in countries with horrible human rights records.



This is what happened to Maher Arar, detained close to a year in a Syrian torture chamber. Lesser known are the cases of Canadians Ahmad Abou El-Maati, Abdullah Al-Malki, Arwad Al-Bouchi, and Muayyad Nureddin, all detained at the apparent request of CSIS in Syria and Egypt, where they were subjected to torture.

The good news is that, after issuing between two and three certificates a year between 1991 and 2002, CSIS has been stopped cold, not because the security climate has necessarily changed, but because the political climate is different. For a full three years, and likely for much time to come, no such certificates are likely to be issued (unless, of course, the Supreme Court decides in their favour, in which case the floodgates may well burst open with a new round up of arbitrary detentions).

But for the detainees and their families, the torture of indefinite detention and threat of deportation to physical torture or worse

remain over their heads.

For the past five years, the Campaign to Stop Secret Trials in Canada has worked with the detainees and their families in a search for justice. The Campaign continues seeking releases on bail, guarantees that the men will not be deported to torture, and the abolition of secret trials. We welcome donations both for our work and for The Esperanza Fund, which meets the educational and social needs of the children of detainees. For more information contact us at (416) 651-5800, tasc@web.ca, www.homesnotbombs.ca, or at PO Box 73620, 509 St. Clair Ave. West, Toronto, ON M6C 1C0. Donations can be made out to Homes not Bombs. **R**

Matthew Behrens is an activist with the Campaign to Stop Secret Trials in Canada.

Six Nations Land Claim Struggles

Elaine White

On February 28, 2006 a group of Haudenosaunee people set up camp on a piece of land known as the Haldimand Tract or Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia, Ontario. This tract is included in a land claim that was filed with the Federal Government by Six Nations of the Grand River in 1987. The Clan Mothers, who hold title to this land, were never asked to meet to discuss selling the land, and to this day they still have the deeds.

This land was governed by the Two Row Wampum Agreement, and this territory was never surrendered or sold to Canada. The Six Nations people were granted land 6 miles on each side of the Grand River, from its source to the mouth. Currently they only have about 5% of the land that was granted to them. Much of the land they claim has been taken from them either by squatters or Government.

Henco Industries Limited, the company who was given the right to develop this property, was aware of the land claim before starting construction. However, they stated that they owned the property legally, and they filed for an injunction against the

Haudenosaunee, seeking their removal from the site. Provincial Court Judge David Marshall ordered them to vacate the property by 2pm, Wednesday March 22, 2006 or be arrested. The OPP (Ontario Provincial Police) utilized mediation services aimed at convincing the protesters to leave.

On April 20th, the OPP raided the reclamation site in the early hours of the morning, arresting 16 Haudenosaunee people. The Haudenosaunee have kept their side of Treaty; however the Federal Government and the OPP has not. Recently, Prime Minister Steven Harper stated that this is not a Federal issue, this was a Provincial issue; but land claims are with the Crown, which would be the Federal Government.

The support for Six Nations continues to grow, with many Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people from across Canada, holding rallies in their communities or spending time on the site with them in solidarity. I have been to the reclamation site several times to show support, and have always been greeted with warmth and respect. The Six Nations peoples acknowledged the importance of labour's support,

and they were very grateful that the CAW was there in solidarity. After the Six Nations people faced an angry and racist mob of residents from Caledonia, the CAW along with other unions, and Haudenosaunee, have formed a coalition called Community Friends for Peace and Understanding with Six Nations. Their goal is to work on educating residents, and eliminating the racism in the town.

Currently, they are still in discussions with both Provincial and Federal Governments, to resolve this dispute. There is a moratorium on the construction site, but the Six Nations people will continue to occupy the construction site until the land claim issue is resolved. The Haudenosaunee are unarmed and committed under their Great Law of Peace, to resolve this matter in a peaceful way, one nation to another. **R**

Elaine White is Migmaw, from New Brunswick, and is currently working as a national co-ordinator for the Canadian Auto Workers in Toronto.

The Caledonia Occupation

James C.B. Lawson

On February 28, 2006, Six Nations members occupied a 40-hectare construction site in Caledonia, Ontario. During the ensuing occupation, they have blockaded nearby roads and railways, and disrupted local power generation. A polarizing confrontation with their non-aboriginal neighbours has been the result. These events at Grand River, whose population of nearly 22,000 makes it Canada's largest reserve, arise from deep historic conflicts with the Canadian state.

By all accounts, the titular owner of the disputed site, Henco Industries, acquired deeds to the land in an orderly manner and properly registered its plans for a subdivision in 2005. The proposed Douglas Creek Estates were purchased from a local farmer in 1992. Henco's adherence to conventional legality gives the Caledonia crisis the surface appearance of an irrational outburst over a routine moment in the creeping suburbanization of rural southern Ontario.

But the Six Nations have long contested the Crown's right to deed lands in the area, and clearly pressed Henco to desist. Their legal case contests the legitimacy of much earlier negotiations in the mid-19th century. These talks concerned the much larger (385,000 ha) Haldimand Tract, a land parcel reserved for the Six Nations that had run the full length of the Grand River. The Six Nations had gained the Tract much earlier, on the basis of representations made immediately after the American Revolution. These in turn had their roots in an even deeper legacy of European contact and war. But in the Crown's view, the talks in the 1830s and 1840s ended these Six Nations' rights to all but a small reserve.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest Six Nations homeland, in what is now upper-state New York, was located along critical geopolitical faultlines, first of Anglo-French and then of Anglo-American rivalries. Founded in pre-contact times, the Confederacy came

to threaten the settlements of New France, at the same time as their growing enmity with the Wendat Confederacy (Hurons) guaranteed a French trading monopoly deep into the interior.

In 1784, the Haldimand Tract was guaranteed to Six Nations allies of the British Crown in the aftermath of the American Revolution. It originally ran 20 km wide along the Grand River. First, the Six Nations exiles claimed rights in southern Ontario by right of their conquest of rivals there during the 1640s. Nearly a century of subsequent use and forced intermarriages had reinforced these ties. Six Nations use of these lands was increasingly disrupted in the 18th century amidst famine, war, disease, and the influx of Mississauga Anishnabe (Ojibway) from the northwest. But the Six Nations exiles also had moral claims to these lands as British allies who had suffered major costs for their alliance.

In the later liberal reformist uprisings of 1837-8 in Upper and Lower Canada, southwestern Ontario had become a frontier settlement area, and a growing stronghold for liberal sentiments. Above all, the wave of newcomers sought easier access to secure property rights to land. Both moderate and radical reformers had denounced Crown land reserves of all kinds – whether for elite land speculators, for naval timber supplies, for First Nations, or for the established church.

Thrown on the defensive on this point by the unrest of the 1830s, the Crown came under liberal influence, and in particular sought to have the Six Nations sell lands all along a planned Plank Road. That settlement road later became Highway 6. Subsequent Crown arguments cite a framework agreement in 1841 and a controversial 1844 document from much of the Six Nations leadership that purportedly accepted land transfers. But another Six Nations stream of opinion had wanted the Plank Road corridor leased on their behalf. Crown policy at the time opposed such arrangements. The current legal controversy rests on whether the purported agreements were legitimate.

Within the First Nation today, land and political autonomy remain sensitive issues across the political spectrum. Some of the more militant voices align themselves with the traditional leadership structure of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The elected council was forcibly imposed by Ottawa in 1924, a traumatic event accompanied by arrests, the confiscation of historical records, and a sharp restriction of aboriginal political rights.

In 1995, the Six Nations filed a statement of claim in Ontario Superior Court in relation to about half of their outstanding claims against the Crown. In 2004, this court case was suspended, launching three-way negotiations over a smaller initial subset of files. At the time of the occupation, progress had been unremarkable.

RECENT EVENTS

The February take-over of the Douglas Creek Estates site soon evolved into a lengthy occupation. On March 10, 2006, Henco won an Ontario Superior Court injunction against the protesters, for which penalties were sharply increased later in March. The occupation continued. By late March, the traditional Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy wrote to federal and provincial authorities, demanding faster action on the outstanding cases.

On April 4, nearly 500 primarily non-aboriginal residents protested, the first major mobilization against the occupation. The principal substantive complaints stressed the disruptions to everyday life and traffic, the economic impact of construction delays, and incidents of public disorder.

Discussions were accelerated, focusing particularly on the 'exploratory resolution process,' launched in 2004. On April 5, a joint statement announced progress on the two most advanced cases. On April 13, an interim agreement was announced on a 'new understanding' between Ontario and the Six Nations.

On April 16, an important internal rapprochement occurred. After an emer-

agency meeting with the traditional Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy, the Six Nations' Elected Council ceded the leadership role in negotiations. The following day, incoming federal Indian Affairs minister Jim Prentice and provincial Aboriginal Affairs minister David Ramsey demanded an end to occupations, but fundamentally accepted Confederacy involvement.

Ramsey's statement was accompanied by a joint federal/provincial settlement offer. It included political funding for both Six Nations institutions and for economic development; an end to local conversions of disputed lands to suburban use; and a list of Ontario Crown holdings that could offset land withdrawals from the local municipal land base in any settlement.

Surprisingly, the Ontario Provincial Police conducted an early morning raid on April 20, and arrested 16 protesters. The raid was clearly intended to enforce the court order, but in fact merely hardened views and broadened the crisis. By mid-morning, a larger, re-energized group had re-occupied and reinforced the site. Other protesters blockaded a local rail line, Highway 6, and a local bypass to the highway. A wider network of militants launched sympathy protests. Kanienkehake ('Mohawk' – one of the Six Nations) protesters briefly blockaded Montreal-area traffic. Overnight, other protesters from Tyendinaga in eastern Ontario impeded freight and passenger traffic between Toronto and Montreal.

With little prospect of overcoming Six Nations opposition without further escalation, the OPP now agreed not to enter key areas. Discussions accelerated. By April 22nd, with both police and protest lines maintained, the Six Nations, provincial, and federal parties had agreed to re-launch negotiations.

But with the prospect of continued, mounting costs on the ground during these negotiations, local non-aboriginal residents intensified their own protests. On April 24, a local rally drew about 3,000, and later that day, nearly 100 police officers blocked a smaller group of militants from rushing the Six Nations barricades.

The Ontario government then took steps to reduce third-party costs, offering to compensate Henco and other local businesses for losses. On April 26, a tripartite

statement highlighted efforts to resolve the dispute, and on April 30, former Liberal premier David Peterson was appointed provincial facilitator.

Restraint extended to the municipality. When Mayor Marie Trainer of Haldimand County spoke publicly about local frustrations, she demanded the Six Nations consider the daily travel obligations of non-aboriginals with jobs. By implication or inference, aboriginal protesters did not face such obligations: that is, she was seen to be saying they did not work. Forced to apologize, the mayor ceded her public roles on the file to a deputy.

Contradictory commitments to negotiations clearly affected both camps. On April 28, some 500 people attended a second rally against the occupation. Many Six Nations members avoided patronizing Caledonia businesses, intensifying the local economic impacts. A flyer supposedly recruiting for the Ku Klux Klan was exposed as a hoax. On May 4, Railink sought a second injunction against the railway blockade. On the 19th, a small counter-blockade closed off access the Grand River reserve.

But during May, the tide of events generally favoured negotiations. On May 16, the protesters partly re-opened the Highway, and facilitated local traffic behind their barrier. On May 19, Ontario offered to suspend construction on the site indefinitely. Police were allegedly expected not to wear protective riot gear.

On May 22, Six Nations protesters finally lifted their roadblock entirely, but some local non-aboriginal protesters blocked all Six Nations traffic in response. The Six Nations side abruptly re-established their own barricades. For the first time, they dragged a hydro tower frame across the highway, and used heavy equipment to dig up part of the asphalt. The two protest camps clashed directly, exchanging blows and racial insults. Nearby, a local Hydro One transformer was heavily damaged by fire, cutting off electricity to several thousand townspeople and businesses. Provincial police struggled to separate the two sides, later reinforced by Ontario's emergency task force.

The following day, representatives from both sides ceremonially initiated a partial stand-down. But as talks were

slowly re-established over the following days, the costs for local residents mounted. Some local residents and businesses organized in favour of a crackdown. On May 29, David Marshall, the judge who had issued the original injunction against the construction site protesters, also ordered a multi-party meeting to explain the disregard of his injunction.

But Justice Marshall's unusual move soon proved to open up new pressure points in favour of a resolution. While local residents at the meeting called on the OPP to reinforce the injunctions, the judge moved only to recall the parties in mid-June. Marshall also formally joined calls for Ottawa to play a more active role.

Relations on the ground remain delicate. In reply to local questions about their neutrality, police announced an extensive list of protest-related investigations: one footbridge had been burned, a nearby Hydro One line vandalized, and several sites looted. As late as June 4, a police car strayed into an agreed no-go area, and was immediately surrounded. On June 5, email messages were intercepted that called for non-aboriginal residents to block a lacrosse match at the Grand River reserve. On June 8, another violent incident led to the filing of attempted murder charges.

ANALYSIS

Several factors have contributed to the recent tensions at Caledonia. First, the Six Nations' case does not fit conventional administrative categories for handling land disputes. Second, even tractable land disputes in Canada currently face long negotiations.

Third, the dispute is taking place in Canada's agro-industrial centre, adding to the economic and political costs of any settlement the First Nation would accept. Fourth, this location also raises the costs of interim embargoes on Crown land deals with third parties during negotiations. Without such embargoes, non-aboriginal interests are more often drawn into the dispute, just as replacement workers can intensify labour disputes.

Several features of the conflict deserve wider attention. First, it draws public attention to a unique history of internal colonialism and resistance. At the same →

time, it speaks to issues affecting much broader alliance networks: hence, a June 7 solidarity rally could draw 100 chiefs from across Ontario. Third, this crisis provides discouraging insights into polarizing inter-ethnic divides, as well as law-and-order ideologies, can be used to invoke the interests of much broader communities. These themes can be mobilized particularly rapidly when aboriginal protest (for example) impinges directly on 'third-party' interests.

Finally, in the latter respect, the crisis exposes the moral complexity of calls for peaceful negotiation. On the one hand, such calls do speak to human tendencies toward peaceful settlement of disagreements, mutual respect, and potentially cooperation. On the other hand, such initiatives also speak to state and civil-societal pressures to contain and to mystify fundamental social conflicts that a crisis has exposed. More precisely, formal negotiations have been more than a desirable *outcome* from land conflicts. They also form a *backdrop* for avoiding the cost of settlement.

The role of third parties in the latter situation is critical. *During* crises, governments have commonly off-loaded the costs of continued crisis onto third parties. In a sense, the high visibility of protest in many aboriginal land cases (just as with labour disputes) can mobilize the non-protesting third parties as a kind of spontaneous human shield for the status quo. *Between* crises, however, the benefits these same third parties gain from the absence of either crisis or reform constitute a latent force for inertia – for forgetfulness and further delay. For many decades, the capacity of senior governments to under-fund and draw out the pace of land negotiations has thus contributed to the continued marginalization of many First Nations across Canada – surely a profound inconvenience of its own, but one with less electoral weight. This dynamic also increases pressures on negotiators for the protesters to accept and even impose sub-optimal settlements when settlements become unavoidable.

But this observation hardly means that such crises are comfortable times for government leaders. The political stakes for the sitting Liberal provincial government have been substantial. In the Caledonia case, the provincial state has increasingly

been caught three ways, with roles as a party to the land dispute, as a guarantor of public order, and as a supposedly neutral arbiter in disputes amongst its supposed subjects. Local calls for the OPP to restore 'law and order' have called the neutrality of the police into question. But a crack-down to restore the status quo threatens merely to intensify and broaden aboriginal resistance. For example, on May 31, Six Nations information pickets were established upstream at the Brantford casino, emphasizing related claims over that land parcel.

On the one hand, the provincial Liberals had gained some partisan advantage from launching an investigation into the 1995 death of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park. George's death had occurred during an abrupt police crackdown on a similar First-Nations occupation. The inquiry uncovered some evidence for the persistent allegations (still denied by former premier Mike Harris) that the previous Progressive Conservative government had ordered or influenced the tactical change. On April 21, George's family spoke publicly on the Caledonia crisis, calling for a peaceful resolution, official restraint, and serious government negotiations. As a consequence, the current provincial government cannot afford to crack down without losing support from its more progressive wing.

On the other hand, the Liberals are also in electoral danger from the provincial Conservatives for unrelated missteps in fiscal, electricity, and industrial policy. The government cannot be seen to be indifferent to the practical and financial costs of the drawn-out blockades, nor can it allow aboriginal or non-aboriginal defiance to slip out of control. A key part to Ontario's approach to this contradiction has therefore been interim compensation for local businesses, including Henco.

The provincial opposition is predisposed to favour a stronger law-and-order approach to these events. The Progressive Conservatives even had the legislature pass a non-binding motion on June 5 calling for an inquiry into Ontario's role in the dispute. They are also politically aligned with the federal Conservative government. With different institutional and political interests in the dispute, the federal Conservative

government has also sought to place responsibility for a breakthrough on Queen's Park. In objective terms, a passive federal role builds momentum behind a law-and-order constituency that broadly favours the Conservatives, and also conforms to the philosophical hostility of many key federal ministers and advisors towards any expansive view of 'special' aboriginal rights.

On the Six Nations side, the dispute has apparently contributed to moderating decades-long internal divisions over questions of political institutions and degrees of political autonomy. These internal rifts contribute to a broader crisis of governance, which has both external and internal consequences. Six Nations communities have hotly debated the dividing lines between the militant defence of political and economic sovereignty, support for traditional political institutions, and merely destructive behaviour. This internal debate is conducted alongside adverse economic and political conditions, and has long been complicated by the historical failure of the dominant society to address and resolve its historic complicity in undermining Six Nations institutions.

Capitalist accumulation still depends on reliable property rights and stable government, but it was not born, at least in North America, in the presence of either. Exclusive Crown sovereignty; and the misplaced feudal presumption, inscribed in the sinews of Canadian law, that all North American land rights flow from the Crown: both are imposed fictions. Many indigenous peoples still retain economic interests and political commitments that routinely conflict with both. In a confrontation with the state and capital on their traditional lands, First Nations can therefore expect a very wide range of the dominant society's local interests to gravitate into opposition. The vast political challenge, both for First Nations and for solidarity groups, is to build up countervailing political consciousness in the dominant society – and ultimately economic interests – that in a crisis will instead choose a different course. **R**

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We Didn't Learn *this* in History Class

Anne MacMeekin

You may be hearing about the Six Nations land dispute in Caledonia, Ontario in the news. The land, which was expropriated from them in the 1840s had been leased and expropriated, promised and repealed repeatedly, until Six Nations filed a land claim in 1987. Unresolved five years later, a company named Henco Industries purchased some of the land from a farmer and have now begun to build a \$6 million subdivision on it, known as Douglas Creek Estates.

After some legal wrangling over injunctions and the OPP's reluctance to remove anyone occupying the land, police moved in to clear the protesters on April 20th, the 52nd day of the occupation. The solution just isn't that simple.

I visited the protest site on the 58th day of the occupation of the reclamation site to find out firsthand, what was happening. The young Six Nations people were friendly but nervous, courteously letting local traffic pass through the Highway 6 blockade with only a momentary delay. They had reason to be nervous. Only two days before that, an angry group of local residents stormed to the barricade, hurling racial slurs and threats. Not only are these insults common, but Haldimand Town Council had to put a gag order on their mayor for making stereotypical remarks to the media about the Six Nations people.

While I was there I had a chance to do a quick interview with Floyd (last name withheld by writer), to better understand some of the issues:

Anne: The Charter of Rights says that the process of due justice cannot erode Aboriginal rights in a land claim. How is it that Six Nations people were removed from the occupation site last week?

Floyd: The OPP were following a provincial court order. The OPP were threatened with contempt of court, even though they resisted the order as long as they could.

A: When Henco bought this piece of land, wouldn't they have done a title search and discovered the unresolved land claim?

F: Land *purchases* go through the provincial government. Land *claims* are handled by the federal government. One side doesn't know what the other side is doing.

A: I understand there is a Haldimand Agreement from the Crown to protect native lands from encroachment. Why isn't that being enforced?

F: Again, the three levels of government are not cooperating.

A: Who is ultimately at fault in this land dispute?

F: The federal government is responsible. This land and lands across Canada has been removed from native peoples and they were never compensated. If you add it up, the ensuing debt is in the billions.

A: How do you think this issue will be resolved?

F: The Ontario government, the Canadian government and the Confederacy (Chiefs and Clan Mothers) each formed a committee to draft their own proposals. Then they will meet to exchange their proposals.

A: Are the people feeling positive about it though?

F: I think that they are. You know there was a rumour that there is a native burial ground site here. Surveyors are trying to detect evidence. If they find it, that changes the parameters of the land claim.

A: There have been solidarity pickets in other areas like Kingston. Does that help?

F: Absolutely, we appreciate the support. These problems have been brewing for 200 years in this country.

A: Is there anything CAW members can do to help?

F: Of course, they can come by. Buzz Hargrove spoke out and he wrote a letter to the Prime Minister. He's your president, right? (CAW flags flanked the entrance to the blockade).

It seems like almost all concerned citizens and the affected groups agree that all government levels need to act quickly. I read a well-written commentary in the *Toronto Star* that suggested that the government pay Henco for their investment immediately and preserve the site until all parties have come to a settlement. On the 59th day of the occupation, the McGuinty government offered Henco interim financial assistance. The construction company should not suffer due to the government's deliberate longtime inaction, nor should Six Nations be denied their ancestral land.

The issue is complicated and simple at the same time. Historical events have disadvantaged the Aboriginal peoples since Europeans arrived. "Every year, the Canadian Human Rights Commission reports that the treatment of aboriginal peoples in Canada violates domestic and international human rights" [*Toronto Star*, Apr. 26, 2006]. The supposed lack of communication and cooperation between the governments are suspect to those who would question the motives.

Before I left Caledonia that day, word was spreading that sounded as if evidence of the native burial site might indeed have been discovered. **R**

Anne MacMeekin is a CAW activist in Ingersoll involved in Flying Squads and CAW solidarity work with Six Nations.

Re-envisioning the Possibilities of May Day

Coalition Building, Internationalism, and Workers Rights

Enrique C. Ochoa

On May 1, 2006 hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest the inhumane immigration policies passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2005 and to advocate for the rights of immigrants and working people. This historic day came after weeks of pro-immigrant rights protests throughout the United States. While many who participated had not been politically active before, the demonstrations were not spontaneous. They were the product of years of grassroots organizing in immigrant and labour communities.

The May 1st marches were a historic recapturing of International Workers' Day in the United States. While May Day has been commemorated throughout the world and has its origins in the struggles of the working classes of the U.S., it has long been strategically ignored in the U.S. by red-baiting elites and union officials. Nevertheless, workers and activists have reinvented May 1st and its significance to address the local and global issues faced by workers in the USA. May 1, 2006 is a testament to the success of this activism. As the immigrant rights movement grows and assesses its future, many are hoping that it builds strategic class alliances and engages in cross-ethnic and international coalition building.

Historically, May 1st commemorations emerged as a result of the struggles for the eight-hour work day in Chicago during the 1880s. In 1884, the Federation for Organized Trades and Labor Unions called for a general strike for the eight hour day to begin May 1, 1886. The tens of thousands of workers who protested throughout the U.S. included immigrant workers. In Chicago, 80,000 people demonstrated that first May Day, and in the ensuing days police repression resulted in the death and injury of several workers, including a police officer. Police summarily arrested eight anarchist organizers, charging them with conspiracy to commit murder. They were tried with little evidence and sentenced to death. As historian James Green has demonstrated, the convictions led to an international amnesty movement in which workers from places such as Cuba, Germany, and England reported on the events and launched campaigns to save the lives of the eight convicted

Chicago activists. Despite the worldwide protests, four of the leaders were executed in November 1887; one committed suicide, and the other three were pardoned in 1893. In subsequent years, May Day became an international symbol of worker power and solidarity in the face of capitalist injustice celebrated by labour activists in Mexico and numerous Latin American countries.

May 1st and its legacy was quickly erased from official

U.S. labour history. The violent repression of socialist and anarchist organizing that occurred over the next few decades was coupled with elites co-opting the more reformist agenda of the American Federation of Labor. While anarchists, socialists, and communists commemorated May 1st for years, it became replaced by the more conciliatory day of relaxation known as Labor Day. The class-struggle and international character of the early labour movement was subsumed by anti-communist collaborationist unions that stressed bread and butter gains over worker power. In the U.S., May Day came to be seen as a communist holiday, something linked with the Soviet Union and alien to U.S. history.

As U.S. capitalists suppressed radical worker activism, they sought to expand this form of U.S. capitalist hegemony throughout the Americas. Capitalist expansion led to empire building which resulted in the economic conquest of Mexico during the late 19th and early 20th century, the subversion of the Cuban independence movement, the colonization of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines in 1898, and the invasion and occupation of Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, and Panama. Economic and political domination worked to integrate Latin American economies into the U.S. economy on unequal and dependent terms. This has been reinforced throughout the 20th century by U.S. foreign policies that have alternately intervened "covertly" as in Guatemala in 1954, Brazil in 1963, Chile 1973, through overt military intervention as in the Dominican Republic in 1965, Grenada in 1983, and through covert and overt support of counterrevolutionary activities in the 1980s and 1990s in Central America. In addition, capitalist restructuring since the 1960s and the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1980s have further integrated labour markets of the Americas by driving campesinos off their lands, encouraging privatization of public resources by foreign investors, and devastating national industries. These policies have repressed popular movements, led to massive displacement of populations, and forged social ties with the populations of these countries through massive migration.

Immigrants who came to the U.S. as a result of its political and economic domination have experienced both anti-worker policies and imperial racist attitudes. As capitalist restructuring since the 1960s led to significant migration to the USA, it was met with a severe backlash. In California, anti-immigrant backlashes led to the passage of Proposition 187 in 1994 that sought to deny undocumented workers and their children crucial public services. Later in the decade, voters passed two propositions to eliminate bilingual education and affirmative action. After 9/11, immigration and homeland security were connected, leading

In 1884, the Federation for Organized Trades and Labor Unions called for a general strike for the eight hour day to begin May 1, 1886.



to the criminalization of immigrants who were now seen as potential terrorists.

As economic restructuring led to increased immigration during the 1980s and 1990s, immigrant workers challenged the anti-organizing and anti-immigrant attitudes of the AFL-CIO by organizing themselves. Many immigrant workers drew upon their years of political and labour organizing in their home countries and their knowledge of U.S. imperialism to the struggle for social justice in the United States. As workers organized, many immigrant rights groups began to create organizing units to support day labourers, dry wall workers, street vendors, and gardeners. A few progressive unions, including the high-profile Justice for Janitor Campaign, connected with these workers and sparked the renewal of organizing campaigns by other unions.

In Los Angeles, immigrant workers began to publicly celebrate May Day beginning in 2002, led by MIWON, the Multi-Ethnic Immigrant Workers Organizing Network. MIWON was founded in 2000 as a loose association of immigrant worker organizations, such as the Coalition of Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles, the Garment Worker Center, the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates, and the Pilipino Workers' Center. This march was a highly visible action that demanded amnesty for all immigrant workers in the wake of the criminalization of immigrants after 9/11. As repressive immigration policies were being implemented, MIWON's members refused to hide. Instead, immigrant workers came out to show their strength and force unions and "progressive politicians" to acknowledge their existence and advocate on their behalf. May Day marches helped propel grassroots organizing campaigns that led to a growing visibility for immigrant workers. This was part of the movement that resulted in several key legislative victories in California, such as the passage of a law granting undocumented high school graduates the right to attend public colleges and universities as residents and another law that gave undocumented workers the right to obtain a drivers license.

So when the Sensenbrenner Bill, H.R. 4437 was passed in late 2005, immigrant workers and their allies were well positioned to confront this latest attack. In the midst of xenophobia, globalization, and class antagonism, immigrant workers once again braved the climate and came out in large numbers. May 1st was chosen by organizers of the March 25, 2006 marches as a boycott day; "A Day Without A Mexican," named after the recent feature film of the same title. For other immigrant rights groups and unions, May 1st was an important day for immigrant workers' actions, since MIWON had already been organizing marches on this day with immigrant workers. For activists with ties to the labour and left movements, it symbolized a connection to long historic struggles for worker rights and justice with a connection to the pressing issues of immigration. For many immigrant workers, it is a symbolic day since it is linked with International Workers' Day which is commemorated in their countries of origin. While there were divisions among the organizers of the May 1st events, they were united in their support for immigrant rights. May Day organizers in the U.S. linked with unions and workers in Latin America who organized solidarity boycotts of U.S. companies and immigrant rights were woven into traditional worker day celebrations.

While the May 1st events were impressive, in some circles

they were presented in divisive ways. The mainstream media and writers pitted Latinos/as and African Americans against each other in ways that inflame already tenuous relations. Many writers have argued that immigrant rights are not civil rights and that Latino/a immigrants are part of the reason why African Americans have such high rates of poverty. Likewise, some nationalist Latino/a movement leaders have focused on galvanizing the Latino/a population to the exclusion of other marginalized groups. These arguments and approaches, however, distort the real issues that working class and communities of colours face in the midst of neoliberal globalization. Growing inequality coupled with the privatization of inadequate public services has disproportionately hurt these communities.

Nevertheless, the recent marches have brought real issues to the fore and are leading to increasing cross-racial dialogues. The alternative press has covered the movements in their complexity. At many local stations, Pacifica Radio has sought to make the connections between U.S. global power and immigration and has helped to foster a multiracial dialogue on many of these issues. In a variety of local ethnic newspapers, writers have sought to show the similarity of experiences between Latinos/as and other groups. Writing in *Rafu Shimpo*, the Japanese American Daily newspaper in Los Angeles, Mark Okuhata sketched out the commonalities and underscored the historic cooperation between Japanese Americans and Mexican Americans in California. Okuhata demonstrated that treatment of Latino/a immigrants are akin to the anti-Japanese measures such as the Alien Land Laws, which prohibited Japanese immigrants from owning land in the early 20th century, and that Japanese Americans and Latinos/as both suffered from school segregation and harsh working conditions in the fields. Activist and teacher Ron Wilkins, writing in the *L.A. Watts Times*, argued that in the present immigration debate, African Americans must consider that "Mexico has a history of solidarity with Blacks." By citing Mexico's historic role as a refuge for Africans who escaped slavery and discussing African Americans who played in the Mexican Baseball League when they were barred from the Major Leagues, Wilkins hopes to recover a lost history of solidarity. In their coalition building efforts, activists are working to foster a sense of solidarity and an understanding of how economic and political domination has affected various communities.

Some within the current movement are working to reconnect May 1st in the United States to the historic day of international working class solidarity and coalition building. May Day can serve as an important point of unity for a multi-racial social justice movement. Dialogue between various groups needs to be continued so that points of commonality can be emphasized and historic divisions discussed openly. Issues of immigration must explicitly be linked to capitalist development and U.S. foreign policies, so that we can really begin to see how the growing systemic inequality makes us all vulnerable. To do so, however, coalition building efforts need to be emphasized so that local struggles can be linked to global processes in the same way that May Day has been viewed and commemorated by workers since 1886. **R**

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Taking the Struggle to the Streets

Students Challenge Multiple Borders

Gilda L. Ochoa

In March 2006, over 40,000 mostly working class Latina/o students walked out of Southern California schools in opposition to U.S. House of Representative Bill 4437: The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Control Act. Walking out of school made students proud, affirmed their identities, and allowed them to learn about the bill that was being debated by politicians and discussed on Spanish-language airwaves, but that was largely ignored in their schools and classrooms. During this student movement, students were emotionally, politically, and intellectually engaged.

Unfortunately, school officials tended to respond negatively to this unique learning opportunity. Many students were ticketed and required to appear before a judge for being “truant;” others faced detention and even suspension, and some students received both tickets and detention. Many teachers and schools opted not to use class or school time to discuss the bill, students’ rights, or political participation. Instead, students were portrayed and treated in ways comparable to the undocumented immigrants for whose rights they were defending – as “criminals” and “economic burdens.” Some school officials ridiculed student activists as “stupid” or “delinquents” who were wasting time and money, and schools were placed on “lockdown” where students’ movements were restricted. One elementary school even prohibited students from leaving their classrooms to use the bathroom. Students were instructed to use buckets placed in classroom corners or behind teachers’ desks. Apparently, the school principal misread the district handout and implemented a lockdown policy designed for nuclear attacks. Some district personnel also investigated teachers who they accused of inciting walkouts because of their social justice perspectives.

While serving Saturday detention for walking out of school, one Los Angeles-area student rhetorically asked, “Do they want to keep us in or them out? It’s almost like we’re in jail.” While his question was referring to the 700-mile fence proposed under H.R. 4437, his question applies equally well to the treatment of students by many school officials and to the structure of U.S. schools.

U.S. SCHOOLS DIVIDING & CONTROLLING STUDENTS

The equation of schools as nations and students as undocumented immigrants needing to be controlled was indisputable during the March 2006 student walkouts. School officials’ responses to the walkouts magnified how the conservative movement to increase border surveillance and control of immigrants is reflected in an equally powerful attempt in schools to stifle and contain students. However, by leaving schools and marching into the streets, students challenged the fences at the U.S.-

Mexico border, the ones surrounding and dividing their schoolyards, and the ones in the course curriculum that limit critical thinking, active engagement and creative analysis.

Schools in the U.S. have long divided and sorted students by race/ethnicity, class, and gender. Using racist biological and cultural deficiency arguments, students have been segregated into distinct schools and into separate classrooms in the form of curriculum tracking. While the California Supreme Court ruled against de jure school segregation in *Mendez v. Westminster* in 1947, and the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned racial segregation in schools nationally, the system of curriculum tracking and de facto school segregation persists. These practices have resulted in the under-representation of Latina/o and African American students in highly financed schools or honors and advanced placement courses where students are prepared for college and more likely to be challenged academically. Non-college preparatory courses tend to emphasize rules and rote memorization.

While the type of education that students receive varies by race/ethnicity, class, and gender, since the 1980s, school policies have become increasingly stifling. The same neoliberal policies of “free market” deregulation and privatization, that have devastated communities in Latin America and stirred migration, have been shaping school practices. U.S. schools have moved to an emphasis on accountability, standards, high stakes testing, and privatization through vouchers and charter schools. Many of these school policies were established during the Reagan-Bush era with the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk*. This report, commissioned under Ronald Reagan’s secretary of education, critiqued the “rising tide of mediocrity” among U.S. schools in industry, science and innovation in comparison with Japanese and Western European educational systems. The report blamed teacher education programs and teachers for U.S. economic problems. Though *A Nation at Risk* has been challenged for lacking evidence, fabricating a crisis and attacking public schools, the report became a rallying call for conservatives and ushered in a wave of neoliberal educational reforms that are most prevalent in today’s policies under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

At the core of NCLB is accountability through strict standards and high stakes testing where test scores are used to evaluate and make important decisions on students, schools, and teachers. Among the mandates of NCLB is annual state testing in math and reading of children from grades three to eight and once in high school. If schools do not meet their targeted competency scores, schools receive sanctions increasing in severity. These sanctions include paying the transportation for students who may transfer to other schools, funding private tutoring programs, in-

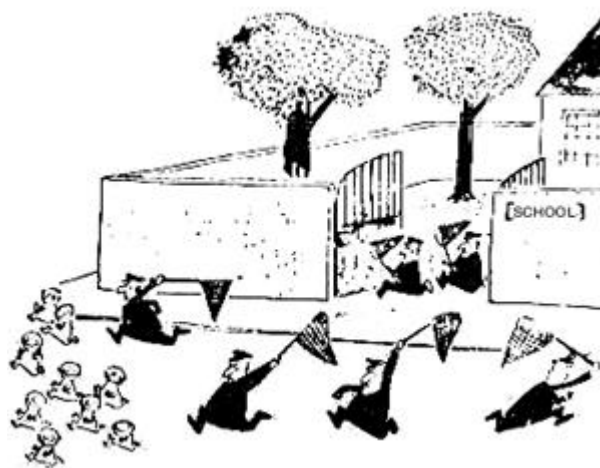
cluding religiously-based ones, and being taken over by the state and closed entirely. As well as diverting public money away from public schools, these sanctions allow for the possibilities of school vouchers, “school choice,” and charter schools.

Just as the neoliberal policies have resulted in greater divisions of wealth and inequality between capitalists and workers, school practices under NCLB are similarly magnifying racial/ethnic and class inequalities. While schools in wealthier communities and those serving more privileged students typically have the luxury to continue with few educational changes, schools in working class areas and with greater percentages of English language learners are pressured to improve their test scores for fear of losing money and closing schools. As a result, many teachers in these schools are pushed to follow scripted curriculum that is sold to school districts by textbook companies that are making huge profits. Teachers are also forced to scale back the course content to only tested areas and to shift their classroom pedagogy to exercises that are more conducive to multiple choice tests such as test practice, memorization and drills. The results are that some schools are still encouraging student engagement, critical thinking, and creative approaches to teaching and learning while others are losing too many students, especially working class Latina/o and African American students, to boredom, grade retention and lack of high school completion. Over forty percent of Latina/o students do not complete high school.

Top-down, bureaucratic policies designed by politicians far removed from the classroom undermine the knowledge and experiences of teachers *and* students. When teachers have to follow a strict pacing guide, there is often little room and time in the scripted curriculum to explore the issues, topics and concerns that may most concern students, families and communities. Also, the school culture may shift so much to testing that teachers may find themselves in faculty meetings discussing not curriculum, pedagogy or the state of education but instead listening to test results and strategies for increasing scores. With the pressures of testing, teachers become overwhelmed and students are stressed.

LINKING IMMIGRANT RIGHTS TO STUDENT RIGHTS

Within this context of contemporary schooling in the U.S., it becomes easy to see that when primarily working class Latina/o students walked out of their classrooms supporting immigrant rights in March, many were also critiquing an educational system that ignores them and dismisses their families. By carrying national flags from their family’s hometowns and chanting “Viva México” and “Sí, se puede,” students were affirming cultural and immigrant identities and histories that are usually excluded from course curriculum and not always understood by school officials. As school officials tried to corner students and persuade them to get on school buses to be repatriated to their schools, students resisted. They expressed their distrust and declared that school is “fucked up.” When students marched to other schools, they were building coalitions and connecting with their peers who are often separated by boundaries of race/ethnicity, class and community. As students made decisions about where to march, they were exercising their creative and critical thinking skills. While many students



were learning about their rights and immigration policies through the internet, friends and family members, most schools continued with business as usual. At this time of the academic year, that meant endullment through test preparation and standardized tests.

This is not the first time that Los Angeles area students have walked out of schools. In 1968, over ten thousand students blew out of their East Los Angeles schools demanding inclusive curriculum, bilingual-bicultural education and more Mexican American teachers and counselors. They also critiqued the system of curriculum tracking that steers working class students to vocational courses and away from colleges and universities. In 1994, when proposition 187 – the supposed Save Our State initiative – was placed on California ballots and endorsed by then California Governor Pete Wilson, Latina/o students walked out in protest to this draconian proposition that would have denied social services such as education and health care to undocumented immigrants.

What distinguished the March 2006 walkouts from previous political actions was the magnitude of the demonstrations. Activism was apparent not only in East Los Angeles schools, where there has been a long history of student activism; students also walked out in schools, communities and states where there had been little overt political activity in support of immigrants and Latinas/os. The student walkouts received international attention. People saw the power and courage of students – and students experienced a surge of excitement, pride and optimism as they collectively took to the streets. These demonstrations revealed the growing student activism and students’ crucial role in the movement for immigrant rights.

Students’ actions and comments during the walkouts and the responses by too many school officials, affirmed the importance of linking immigrant rights to student rights. Just as students challenged multiple borders as they organized and took to the streets, teachers and other community members need to learn from students and join in the struggle against the policies that seek to control borders, immigrants *and* students. What was made clear this spring is that the spirit of activism and the commitment to social justice cannot be contained. **R**

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Migration to the North in the Mam Zone

New Identities and New Border Crossings

R. Aída Hernández Castillo

The Sierra region, along with other regions in the state of Chiapas, has suffered accelerated changes in community dynamics in the last ten years as a result of the impact that neoliberal politics are having on the peasant economy. Since the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was enacted in 1994, the prices of basic grains plummeted while the price of a basic food basket increased by 257%. In the case of corn producers, President Vicente Fox has allowed 3,725,000 tons of corn to enter Mexico without charging the tariff agreed to with the United States, due to which the country stopped receiving \$429,782,000. This affects three million corn producers. Along with this, while Mexican agricultural producers are displaced from the internal market, 40% of Mexican imports are destined to covering basic food necessities.

Immigration to the North, a generic term which includes both the northern border areas of Mexico and the United States, has become a survival option for thousands of peasants who have renounced a life lived at the mercy of fluctuations in the international coffee market or the expectation of an agrarian parcel that never arrives. This region, in which 80% of the population lives in extreme poverty (134,108 according to the 2000 census), has been affected in the last few years by the coffee crisis, torrential rains of 1998 that destroyed almost 50% of the agricultural production, and the droughts of 1999 that left them without corn.

This migratory process that began as a trickle in the 1980s has acquired a mass character that is leaving communities on the southern border as well as mountainous communities inhabited primarily by women, the elderly and children.

The Mexican Mams, often guided by the Guatemalan Mams, were the pioneers of the Chiapas peasantry in embarking on the path to the North since the 1980s. But the testimonies of these experiences were then told as bold, individual sagas that were more the

exception than the rule. In anticipation of the dimensions that this phenomenon could assume, the Catholic Church began to promote the creation of organic agricultural cooperatives as a strategy of halting migration and resisting the model of agricultural development based on agricultural chemicals. In spite of the agro-ecological option that has allowed many Mam peasants to find an option for confronting the fierce rules of the free market in alternative markets and fair trade, many others have had neither the land nor organizational resources to take this option and have renounced the agricultural struggle. As a result, more and more young people from the highlands take the decision of running the risk of working illegally in the United States, leaving behind the hope of collectively searching for an option to survival.

The faith in the possibility of establishing a peasant utopia seems to have become diluted in the ten plus years since the Zapatista uprising and the San Andrés Agreements, which were signed by representatives of the government and the EZLN and translated to Mam by the state government. These accords have come to be seen as more of a historical document than a real proposal of state reorganization to be fought for by the organized peasants in the region. A climate of mistrust and division within indigenous and peasant organizations has replaced the atmosphere of mobilizations and political resistance that characterized the Mam zone during the first years of *Zapatismo* – which included the occupation of 44 farms in the Sierra and Socunusco regions, the taking of the municipal administrations of Siltepec and Bella Vista, the closing of highways and, since 1997, the annexation of 66 communities to the autonomous Zapatista municipality of Tierra y Libertad. This has reduced the capacity of the communities to pressure the government and has allowed the state and federal governments to co-opt much of their leadership for the new neo-indigenous bureaucratic apparatus.

In spite of these developments, the new political

visions and discourses opened up by Zapatismo have contributed to the growth of a strong sense of the dignity of indigenous cultures and has given national attention to the problem of exclusion and racism against indigenous people. These developments have had a great impact on the cultural identities of the highland peasants, who increasingly assert their Mam roots and include in their political agendas the cultural rights of their peoples. The number of people who identify themselves as Mams has tripled from 8,725 in the Population and Housing Census of 1990 to 24,000 in the 1996 census. This increase in the census figures represents more than demographic growth; it represents a growth in pride of cultural identities which previously had been rejected.

I would like to deal with the existing tensions in this double dynamic: on one side are the economic forces that lead thousands of Mam peasants to abandon their land and communities to again cross a political border to the north, while on the other side are the cultural and identity forces that are leading them to maintain the Mam identity as an anchor for confronting the homogenizing tendencies of globalization and reestablishing solidarity networks in the new transnational space.

RE-TRAVELLING THE PATHS FROM THE SIERRA

The very landscape of the Sierra has changed considerably in the last ten years. The construction of new highways and the improvement of those already existing was one of the direct consequences of the Zapatista uprising, as a strategy to make possible the rapid movement of troops. The semi-paved and gravel and dirt roads that linked the communities of El Porvenir and La Grandeza with Motozintla have been paved and are now travelled in little time by the new luxury passenger vans that serve as public transportation, bought by the ex-ranchers of the zone, who have made transportation their new preserve for economic power. Several farms occupied by peasants in the Sierra and Costa zone were paid for by the government that gave a very high price, the highest in the state, to the ranchers who received as indemnity approximately 5 900 pesos per hectare. This money allowed the ex-ranchers to re-invest in transportation.

Utilizing the new highways, the military has arrived and established a large military base on the outskirts of Motozintla with military checkpoints in various parts of the region. In addition to constant patrols, more checkpoints are installed daily, through the argument that they are applying the "Federal Law of Firearms and Explosives." With the military, new housing units have also appeared in Motozintla, and were added to those constructed after the 1998 floods. They give the region new features, more similar to the poor urban zones of the industrial belts than to the large towns which

Aguirre Beltran would call *regions of refuge*. Only the beauty of the mountains that surround Motozintla and the absence of industry remind us that we are in the heart of the Sierra and not in some lost village on the outskirts of the DF (Federal District). From the village of Frontera Comalapa the billboards of the Tourist Agency announce that the "North" is now a fundamental part of the social imagery for those who live in the Sierra. Trips to Tijuana cost \$800 and leave three times a week, internet sites and telephone booths have multiplied reducing time and space between the southern and northern borders. In the municipal administration of Frontera Comalapa – with 7,500 inhabitants – there are now 30 money exchanges, 2 banks, 2 post offices, and 10 travel agencies. The billboards saying "Trips to Tijuana," "Trips North" accompany us throughout the route of the region. Going up the roads of the Sierra, in the localities of El Porvenir, there are small wooden placards at the point of falling over with large letters announcing the days and times of departures to "the North." I look for my friends and many are no longer there, they have hooked up with some Guatemalan "coyote" or with one of the many "travel agencies" that take them to the northern border. Others have stayed to care for their grandchildren while their young daughters go



in groups to try their luck. The stories of the new border crossings are not always of success, there is a lot of pain in these shared experiences.

THE NEW BORDER CROSSINGS

The Mam peasants, border crossers par excellence, have crossed national borders between Mexico and Guatemala, identity boundaries between *mestiza* (mixed) culture and Mam culture, religious boundaries between Catholicism and Protestantism, and once again they risk crossing national borders in migrating to the United States. Testimonies tell that in the first migratory waves at the end of the 1980s the journey was undertaken with the support of Guatemalan friends and acquaintances, many of them Mam speakers, who established the →

first migratory routes to the east coast of the United States, above all to North and South Carolina and Florida. With time, Guatemalan migrants became specialized as coyotes. The cost of taking Mexican peasants to the northern border and helping them cross illegally has today reached a price of between 30 and 50 thousand pesos.

Testimonies taken from the Sierra region speak of a new type of “recruiter” who contracts workers for periods of three months and transports them illegally in buses to the United States with the promise of returning them to their places of origin once they finish the period of the contract. We don’t have exact data regarding the size of the migration from the Sierra region, but a preliminary study conducted by Daniel Villafuerte and María del Carmen García, showed that approximately 400 people were transported from the region to the northern border every 15 days. They estimate that roughly 10,000 inhabitants from this region have emigrated to northern Mexico or the United States. These numbers represent close to 22% of the economically active population. Newspaper sources speak of close to 50,000 people from Chiapas migrating annually to the United States and estimate that 380 million dollars are sent annually as remittances by these workers, which in terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) represents 45%. It is evident that these new economic and social dynamics are impacting the daily life of the inhabitants of the Sierra, creating a new transnational network in which men and women live a different “American dream.”

THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF THE CHIAPAS COUNTRYSIDE

It is evident that migration is changing the lives of not only those who have left but also of those who have stayed: women see themselves as obligated to become heads of households and in many cases abandon the “socially acceptable” traditional gender roles in the region; grandparents have to be parents again, taking care of their grandchildren while their sons and daughters establish themselves in the “north”; indigenous and peasant organizations witness the reduced participation of their members who have gone to the United States. The very landscape of the Sierra is changing. More solidly built housing and satellite dishes are now much more abundant than in the past. The significance of these changes is providing a new level of economic and political identity for the indigenous people of Chiapas, a phenomenon whose analysis is a challenge for the social sciences.

In the case of the Mam population in Chiapas, their cultural identities have historically been marked by migratory experiences, from Guatemala to Mexico at the end of the last century, and to different regions of the state during the entire twentieth century. The sense of belonging to an “imaginary community” has been linked more to historical memory than to territory, and in this

sense abandoning the *ejidos* (communally held lands) of the Sierra and migrating to farms in North Carolina can be one more story to tell in the reconstruction of narratives of belonging that continue to be shared in family reunions or through the radio programs of “Mam Word and Music” (*Palabra y Musica Mam*) transmitted weekly in *Voice of the Southern Border*. The Mams have strong historical antecedents of the formation of multiple identities that have allowed them to defend themselves as peasants, Mams or Jehova’s Witnessess in different ways, depending on the context. In the same manner, the Mams may be developing new multiple identities, one through the multi-local affiliations that Mam peasants seem to be developing with their communities of origin in order to maintain their family and social links through new communication technology, while at the same time building new communities in shared space with *chapines* (Guatemalans) workers in the United States.

Perhaps the advances of communication technology allows the links between the different localities to be more intense than those that could have been in the past between the Chiapas Sierra Madre and the Guatemalan Cuchumatanes, but the transnational community is not a new experience for the indigenous Mam. In spite of the violence of integrationist programs by the Mexican State, their *imaginary community* has also included tokiol-speakers who stayed on the other side of the border. Paradoxically, the processes of economic globalization, more than annulling their cultural identities, has led them to re-discover their “*chapines* brothers” thousands of kilometers from their communities of origin. For some of them this has represented a return to their Mam identity and a rediscovering of the memories of their maternal culture that the integrationist programs of the Mexican State tried to destroy.

These new multi-local ethnographies speak to us with regard to how these new networks formed “transnational communities” in which people have to live double lives. One researcher found that: “The participants are generally bilingual and move easily between different cultures, often maintaining houses in two countries and maintaining economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both.” It is still unclear up to what point the second and third generation of migrant indigenous people from Chiapas will be able to maintain these double lives, but what is clear is that the process of cultural homogenization that the most apocalyptic perspectives of globalization announced does not seem to be an immediate reality for these “border crossers” par excellence. **R**

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Justice for Migrant Farm Workers:

Reflections on the Importance of Community Organising

Evelyn Encalada Grez

The globalised economy poses constant challenges to community labour organising. For instance, how do we organise migrant workers who can at any moment be repatriated to their home countries for being ‘troublemakers’? This has been one of the questions with which Justicia for Migrant Farm Workers (J4MW) has been tackling, a collective that I have been a part of since its founding in 2001. We consider ourselves allies of migrant farm workers who participate in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP).

The SAWP was established by the Canadian government and Jamaica through a Memorandum of Understanding in 1966. Thereafter the program expanded, adding Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and the Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States. The SAWP is indicative of Canada’s racialised economy and the lessons we still need to learn about organising marginalised workers.

J4MW got its start when over twenty Mexican farm workers were repatriated in retribution for organising a wild-cat strike in a Leamington, Ontario tomato greenhouse operation. In this article I reflect on the challenges of organising SAWP workers. Repatriation as a tool of coercion and control is one of the many deterrents in organising workers as a united front to improve their living and working conditions in Canada. Where are we as a movement and where do we need to go?

THE SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS PROGRAM

The SAWP allows employers access to “just in time” workers to work in a variety of agricultural jobs across Canada. Employers are given the choice of hiring men or women from participating countries. Workers earn an average of \$8.50 an hour for arduous farm work. Wages are low for the type of work and hardships workers endure but they are significant in the context of economically devastated rural communities in Mexico and the Caribbean. The economic depression in these communities is mostly the result of the tariff-free influx of cheap foodstuffs from the United States and Canada.

Labour contracts vary in length with some totaling eight months. Seasonal housing is paid for by employers. Workers pay income tax and deductions for the Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, and Workers’ Compensation. However, these deductions do not ensure migrant workers full access to these programmes. Workers are entitled to basic health coverage in participating provinces (Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta, PEI, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia). This year British Columbia has excluded migrant workers from its Medical Services Plan, which violates the provisions of the Canadian Health Act. The B.C. chap-

ter of J4MW has since been actively organising against this arbitrary move.

Workers confront numerous problems in their life and work in Canada. One of the most pressing issues is that migrant farm workers are forced to perform the worst and most dangerous types of tasks. They cannot object to handling pesticides even when no protective gear is provided, operating dangerous machinery or performing back-breaking work.

WORKERS’ HEALTH & SAFETY

In Ontario, farm workers are excluded from the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and the Employment Standards Act. Last year the provincial government announced it would incorporate farm workers in the OHSA. But in March 2006 the government reversed its position by producing voluntary guidelines that are not legally binding. Therefore, workers do not have the right to refuse unsafe work. Complaining about the job can cost the worker his or her contract and being sent home with an unfavourable evaluation by the employer.

Migrant farm workers have no protection if they become sick or exhausted. If workers are seriously injured it means that they are in violation of their labour contract, which granted them entry to the country. For instance, in September 2004 J4MW fought against the repatriation of Carlton Morgan, who had worked for the same employer in Chatham for over twenty years. As soon as his back went out his employer ordered him to return to Jamaica. The liaison officer insisted that Morgan had to leave because his injury prevented him from completing his contract. Others such as Hermelindo Guterrez have been forced to apply for refugee status on humanitarian grounds in order that he can remain in the country to undergo treatment that would be impossible for him to afford back home. In most cases, workers will be sent home even though their illness or injury is directly a result of their job in Canada.

Migrant workers’ health and safety provisions are extremely variable in Canada. In general workers receive substandard medical attention due to language barriers, mobility restrictions and the current shortage of doctors in rural Ontario. Every year there are numerous deaths and serious injuries as a result of industrial and bicycle accidents. Ned Peart was crushed while loading tobacco kilns in a farm near Brantford, Ontario in 2004. This past summer J4MW held vigils for Jamaican workers, William Bell and Desmond McNeil, who were killed in Delhi, Ontario when a vehicle struck them while they were riding their bicycles. The reliance on bicycles for transportation is another glimpse of the vulnerability of migrant farm workers. →

Housing is another major concern. Some employers cut costs by cramming workers in substandard housing such as deteriorating trailers. Houses are not properly maintained and some do not include washers and dryers stipulated by SAWP housing guidelines. Many of the employers dismiss complaints on the basis that any housing is always better than what they have back home in the “Third World.” Compounding all these issues is the very real pain of separation from their families and communities. Migrant workers experience racism, isolation and depression in predominantly white host communities in rural Canada.

LEGAL RESTRICTIONS ON ORGANIZING

Migrant farm workers are currently barred from joining unions. When problems arise they are forced to turn to their respective consular representatives. However, consular officials are more likely to protect contracts with employers rather than advocating on behalf of their compatriots. The Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Dunmore vs. Ontario* granted migrant workers the right to join associations but not the freedom to engage in formal negotiations with employers. For J4MW this means workers can be part of our collective but we cannot accompany and advocate on behalf of workers in meetings with consulate officials and employers. Therefore, the right to associate has little real meaning for migrant farm workers.

More importantly, many workers are afraid to take action and become involved in organising. Before they depart for Canada workers are ‘prepared’ for work in Canada with constant warnings to shun organising efforts. In an informational pamphlet produced by the Mexican Secretariat of Labour it explicitly states that no one is to associate with any group or persons in Canada who are not affiliated with the Mexican consulate. The Caribbean countries produce similar warnings in the literature and workshops they offer workers.

Workers’ private life is also a target of control and supervision as evidenced by comments made by the Barbadian Minister of Labour in February 2005 who claimed workers were engaging in “irresponsible sexual behaviour.” Basically migrant workers are recruited to Canada solely to work. They are not to live as human beings who can tire from work and engage in intimate relationships. Their sole function is to feed the growing agricultural industry in Canada as expendable and controlled labour force.

Dire economic realities at home force many workers into silence and acquiescence. Most come from rural communities that have been devastated by structural adjustment and free trade policies. Ironically, yearly displacement through labour migration allows them to stay connected to their land and way of life in the countryside. In the case of migrant women, who have to be single mothers to participate, the program has become their sole lifeline. Without it they would have had to permanently abandon their rural communities to search for work in the urban sector, the United States or free trade zones.

CHALLENGES FOR ORGANISING: THE ACTIVITIES OF J4MW

J4MW’s mandate is to organise migrant farm workers as a united front with minimal risk of repatriation. This means secur-



ing strength in numbers and counting on broad community support and applying pressure through media coverage of workers’ conditions. In cases where workers are determined to stand together there are almost always a few that retreat at the last minute out of fear or loyalty to employers. The approval of employers is important for workers to be able to return to the same farm, saving the stress and further dislocation of being sent to an uncertain location with uncertain conditions. Workers that work according to employers’

expectations are “named” back and can count on a few more benefits than those that are “unnamed” and on a farm for the first time. Also, since workers cannot apply for permanent residency, as is the case with the Live-in Caregivers Programme, some try to convince employers to sponsor them, which often means acting against their own compatriots.

Employers manipulate these divisions to extract more labour from workers. Although workers may share the same nationality, gender, working and living quarters, antagonisms do develop. It is common practice for employers to divide the labour force according to race, gender and nationality in order to pin workers against each other. These tactics have served to fuel resentment among Mexican and Caribbean workers. Compounding these divisions is a misunderstanding that Caribbean workers count on better treatment because of their ability to communicate in English. But Caribbean workers are equally isolated and have no additional protection from arbitrary firing. In many cases Caribbean workers are even more controlled by strict curfews and farm rules to restrict their mobility and prevent them from staying in Canada without status. Therefore J4MW is committed to creating spaces for dialogue among Caribbean and Mexican workers to counter these divide and conquer tactics.

Another important part of J4MW’s work is to fight against structural conditions that produce this type of “unfree labour.” This entails organising within Mexico and the Caribbean and gaining a better understanding of workers’ specific cultural and historical locations. Some workers have histories of labour militancy and most associate unions as being conservative and government-controlled. Others have worked as undocumented migrants in the United States and are familiar with radical farm worker organisations. However our context in Canada is much different. The SAWP is significantly smaller than the previous Bracero guest worker program and the current H2A programs operating in some

states. Therefore, social movement unionism is crucial for improving the conditions of migrant farm workers.

THE CANADIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT & MIGRANT FARM WORKERS

The labour movement in Canada has responded to the situation of migrant farm workers. J4MW strongly supports the right of migrant workers to join a union. In B.C., J4MW counts on the support of several provincial unions as well as the BC Federation of Labour. Canada-wide, the UFCW is at the forefront of the labour movement's response to the plight of migrant farm workers. The UFCW operates a number of support centres in Ontario and Québec and has launched court challenges on behalf of migrant farm workers. It was recently granted the right to represent migrant farm workers in a constitutional challenge to exempt workers from mandatory EI deductions. The UFCW believes that Canada is unfairly profiting from migrant farm workers by making deductions to benefits they cannot claim. Although J4MW and the UFCW have common goals and have worked together our tactics and approaches have significant differences.

The challenge to EI deductions is one example of our differences. Consuelo Rubio of the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples in Toronto discovered a few years ago that workers are indeed entitled to parental leave benefits under the EI scheme. Since then community groups and UFCW migrant support centres have assisted workers to access these benefits. Applicants have been able to receive financial support that has significantly helped their young families. Instead of fighting for full eligibility of EI as a form of universality and reciprocity for Canada's complicity in economic policies that displace migrant workers in the first place, migrants may now become further excluded from entitlements other Canadian workers and residents can access.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT, WORKERS OF COLOUR & DEMOCRATIC ORGANISING

These types of strategies raise a bevy of questions. Who really represents migrant workers? Can a Canadian – predominantly white and hierarchical – union serve the interests of migrant farm workers? Should a new union be formed by migrant workers to better reflect their diverse backgrounds and experiences? Would it be a union that is based in their home countries or can this union be more transnational in scope while bound to the SAWP? Also, what is the role of the broader community and community

organisers in the labour movement?

Most members of J4MW are young organisers of colour who have not found a place or have been expelled from the labour movement due to radical politics. We have been basically told this is how it is going to be and this is how it is going to be done. The labour movement still too often approaches workers of colour as a static and homogenous group without an analysis of power and systems of oppression that structure their lives. When we have raised our concerns or offered our knowledge and experiences we have often been silenced for the official line. While the labour movement in Canada seeks to make inroads with unorganised communities of colour it has yet to create meaningful spaces for dialogue and decision-making among community groups that work with racialised communities at the grass roots.

J4MW was founded partly to counter hierarchical organising tactics that are still very much a part of the labour movement in Canada today. J4MW offers us a space to develop our community organising skills and to link our own personal class, gender and race struggles with that of Mexican and Caribbean migrant farm workers. J4MW does not speak for or represent migrant farm workers. Migrant farm workers have agency and voices of their own. We attempt to work from workers' perspectives. This is one of the main reasons we have not called for the boycott of the SAWP. Some of us have lived with migrant workers and their families and understand the importance of the SAWP for the



livelihood of thousands of families.

J4MW is a relatively small collective of volunteers with limited resources and ambitious dreams. We seek to build a transnational movement with and in support of migrant farm workers in Canada. Migrating to Canada for many reasons ourselves, we all envision a world where people are not displaced and forced to sell their labour in forms of modern slavery in order to survive. This implies that peoples of the Global South are not deprived from subsistence in their communities by advocating for radical change that humanises the economy. The future of this struggle lies with a strong social movement unionism where labour is democratised with the voices of migrant farm workers, who are among the most marginalised workers in Canada today. **R**

Evelyn Encalada Grez is a community organizer with J4MW (www.justicia4migrantworkers.org) and PhD student in Sociology and Equity Studies at OISE. Evelyn would like to thank Chris Ramsaroop and Janet McLaughlin of J4MW for their suggestions to the original version of this article. The views expressed in this article are her own and do not necessarily reflect those of J4MW.

Borders and Bodies

Neoliberalism and Migration

Anna M. Agathangelou

As legislation was being debated this spring in the U.S. Congress, millions of migrant workers raised their banners of “no border, no nation.” They were protesting neoliberal and imperialist migration policies, including their identification as “illegal” and their invisibility in low paid jobs no one else wants to do. I argue that the (re)-production of the “New World Order” and the neoliberal policy agenda, depends on the shift of the surplus value produced by the low-waged working classes from peripheral and semi-peripheral states (as in the cases of China, India, and Russia), as well as the migration of reproductive labour into other semi-periphery and core countries.

For example, Cyprus, Greece and Turkey “import” cheap reproductive labour for what I call the “desire” or sex industries. This labour becomes crucial in the (re)-production of neoliberalism as both contradictory social process and political identity. Such labour also takes away time from the working class that is necessary to reproduce itself or alternative visions. Exploitation and bodily violence against these workers prevents them from contributing toward the redefinition and a practice of a less violent “social,” that is, the capacity to produce new conditions of their own living. A key question emerges: How can we understand this new redrawing of borders, and the neo-imperial sexualized and racialized social relations of this particular form of migration?

The “Import” of Cheap Labor: Choice or Complicity?

Since the economic turmoil of the 1980s, the states of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Sri-Lanka, India, the Philippines and China are exporting, in addition to the surplus value produced in these regions, their cheap labourers as *value-generating bodies themselves*. These mainly female workers are employed in industries with few social controls. The trade in these industries accounts for the racialized feminization of the present migration. The current intensified racialized feminization of migration leads to the placement of these women as “exploitative casual labour.” It results from the sending and receiving states deregulating labour to enhance flexible accumulation so that they can effectively and efficiently continue the competition and free trade. Within this structurally asymmetrical context the sale of cheap reproductive labour has become a major “technology” and a tool of the neoliberalism in the process of trying to (re)-produce the middle class *on the cheap*.

In its desire to sustain its position in the global economy, the state ascribes race to skills and transposes racial hierarchies from peripheral countries to more dominant ones. The state also facilitates the commodification and fetishization of desire to “fit into” the capital accumulation machine by normalizing whiteness and

masculinity. The more black bodies we can export and import for cheap labour, the more competitive it enables us to be; the more violence we use to exploit these migrant bodies, the more powerful we seem in the global order; the more corrupt trafficking technologies we draw upon to reduce costs of labour, the more “white” we become. Paradoxically, accessing surplus value and supporting the migration of reproductive labour becomes a priority for the peripheral state even at the expense of the feminization of its own state and industries, and its own female citizens. The peripheral state will often draw on militaristic and economic discourses to moralize and justify the structural theft of wealth from globalization. It will also do for the export of migrant female labour, arguing that the remittances from “migrant labour” benefit families and the majority of the society.

Semi-peripheral states such as Greece and Turkey, and core states like Canada, work to facilitate the migration of *reproductive labour*, in terms of both sex and domestic labour, in formal profit-making industries but also in the shadow economy. Reproductive labour comprises the child bearing and rearing responsibilities, domestic and intimate tasks undertaken by either sex. It is labour that is required to guarantee the welfare, survival and even the pleasure of individuals including the offering of intimacy, rearing, educating, feeding, looking after and nurturing household members and other tasks of maintaining the household and the welfare of its members.

Commodities and Prostitutes: ‘Nothing to Sell but Skin’

The capitalist state’s desire to secure power depends on its ability to sell and exchange resources. This capacity also depends upon transferable labour which is flexibly moved across labour processes and borders according to the necessities of the market. Flexible labor is fragmented, easily consumable and involved in short duration projects. Labour that is also compliant and diffuse holds no attachments or loyalties that impede the completion of the labour process. This creates the most secure environment for trading of capital and goods. Such flexible and compliant labour comes from the poor “black” and “white” women who end up working as “economic soldiers,” servants, slaves or prostitutes on the margins of middle and upper class households, adult entertainment and other services. This is the “other” domain of sexual economies.

Here women’s sexual agency (that is, the value of their labour and bodies) is allowed and exploited in the process of constituting desire economies and the reaping of profits. Women in the desire industries become constituted as objects of desire to be

consumed at any time and cheaply. Migrant female labour fills this function particularly well. The consumption of people in the process of desiring to become 'rich,' 'modern' and 'western' create many contradictions and disjuncture in all contexts. This is especially so in countries that historically are considered peripheralized, such as Turkey or Mexico, that are integrating into the core capitalist countries. In short, constituting the desire industries creates a series of social relations that are based on profitability and flexible labour whose major characteristics are its transferability, ephemeral character, diffusion and servitude. The social relations of receiving and sending states, non-state actors, female migrants, the employers (impresarios, madames, cabaret owners, club owners), employment agencies, and migrant workers are informed by different "codes of social conduct."

Some of the principles that dominate production in the desire industries are profitability through hyper-exploitation, violence, and the fencing-off of women from their social and political networks to thoroughly commodify them. Women, like any other free trade goods in the international market, are sold cheaply in the name of constituting development, power, and achieving security. These women encounter violence and insecurity. They are often picked up by police and used as "scapegoats." They reflect, and deflect, the vulnerabilities and anxieties that are generated by the policies of neoliberalism of deregulation and privatization.

Why do sending states encourage out-migration despite the violence and insecurity migrants are likely to encounter? Sending countries, such as Mexico, Russia, India and the Philippines, gain enormously from the remittances of workers. The World Bank estimates that in 2001 "migrant workers from developing countries sent home US \$72 billion, the second largest source of external revenue after FDI." Peripheral countries use this strategy to address unemployment, generate foreign exchange and foster economic growth. But this strategy becomes crucial – and problematic – in the definition of state and social identities. As one prominent Indonesian intellectual stated in the *New York Times*: "Who are we if all we can export abroad is unskilled workers? It means we are really a nation of coolies, and a coolie among nations." Peripheral states that export "unskilled" workers encounter anxieties about the racialization process that ensues. The migrant workers, however, also face daily dangers and anxieties in the process of producing the "right" kinds of families, "right" kinds of sexualities and "right" kinds of values.

The regulation of migrant female workers makes for an international racialized and sexed proletariat. It also raises a series of

discourses of racialized masculinities and national anxieties. In core and semi-peripheral states, state discourses mobilize national anxieties by arguing how these workers may be dangerous and threaten national security. In Greece, for example, Article 50 for Public Security provides for controls against any alien who could potentially violate the rules about territorial sovereignty of Greece, including the violation of legal formalities. In Turkey, the media regime makes invisible the structural violence against Russian prostitutes, who are instead depicted as posing a threat to Turkey's national security because of the "fake" marriages to Turkish citizens. As put in one news report: "This situation will become an important security issue for Turkey....It will also be an important threat factor in terms of the effect it will have on our human resources....The state officials, who have been involved in the Natasha activities and who are in important positions, may leak extremely important information regarding the general security of the state, to these women."

This example of the individual female migrant, and the infantilization of the Turkish man, as a threat to the national security makes invisible the actual conditions under which such "transfers" of bodies, and the surplus value that they generate, occur. The state works in

collusion with the multi-billion dollar industries of desire directly through direct recruitment of migrants, or actively turns away from the trafficking and smuggling of women to ensure their continuing profitable operation.

In other policy areas, both sending and receiving states implement a series of "technologies of servitude." For instance, domestic workers undergo extensive training to learn how to behave with their overseas employers, including how to present themselves when talking to their employers as well as how to take care of the household. This might include how to use modern technology for cooking and washing of dishes. More violent measures for regulating migrant female labour may occur upon arrival. Technologies of servitude and imprisonment are deployed to lock women up in their employers' hotels to ensure that their sexuality is not "used up" without the employer being compensated for its consumption.

Migrant Workers and Political Mobilization

The migration of female domestic and sex workers to semi-periphery and core countries of capital "doesn't just happen."

(Continued on page 47)



Mapping Silences

Carolina Cambre

Some time has passed since hurricane Katrina made New Orleans appear on the global map of disaster sites known as “ground zeroes” and simultaneously disappear from the globe-trotter’s map of places to visit. Katrina accelerated New Orleans’ disappearance from the map of Louisiana but simultaneously put New Orleans on many other maps.

Media coverage of Katrina made the usually invisible, visible. The U.S. State’s lacklustre response to the natural disaster revealed the unnatural forms of race and class-based discrimination in the U.S., which continues to be part of what many commentators have called the ongoing socio-economic war on the poor and on African Americans. This socially structured domestic race and class war is certainly connected to the U.S.’s foreign military occupation of Iraq. Domestic financing for hurricane relief was slashed to pay for military adventurism abroad. By inadvertently revealing the class and race contradictions of U.S. society in the time of the “new imperialism,” the media – both in the U.S. and in Canada – sparked a host of meaningful public debates over black Americans being treated as second-class citizens and the race and class-biases of the Bush Administration.

The mainstream corporate media’s preoccupation with coverage of looting, assaults and violent encounters constructed an image of New Orleans as a kind of domestic Fallujah, a war-zone being fought over by unruly blacks and benevolent national security agencies. This media’s construction of New Orleans as a domestic battleground between unruly blacks and state security imaginistically rationalized police and military violence and discrimination. While the poor and black victims of Katrina were being temporarily criminalized as internal enemies of the State, others were being denied water or access to the Superdome by the same State “peace keepers.” And with these sensational images, the majority of American media consumers could be expected to blame the victims.

The sensational excesses and objective failures of corporate media coverage, however, did not go unchallenged. People publishing on the internet attempted to reveal what the corporate media concealed, making many cases of unnecessary suffering and death accessible to the online public. The impact of internet reports is difficult to gauge but the sheer volume of reports and “hits” on various websites indicated a widespread view that news and other organs of the media world don’t describe the world in a complete or even satisfying way. Unfortunately, while web-log reports filled in some of the blanks of the corporate media narrative of Katrina, most were no less selective in what they registered and few rarely peered beyond previously circulated discursive frames.

Yet, much of the local and community media coverage of Katrina revealed cultural solidarity. A few small community papers reported on the efforts to help various ethnic groups, mostly by others who share the same ethnicity. Approximately 3,000 Kore-

ans displaced by the storm found shelter with Korean “mom and pop” stores in Houston or with friends, American Indian groups came to the aid of affected band members, 20,000 Vietnamese from Mississippi and Louisiana were welcomed by various organizations in Texas.

News coverage of the mostly foreign-born Latino New Orleans residents who were also caught in the grips of the storm



however, was (and still is) virtually non-existent. Various papers estimated that many Latinos resided in New Orleans, but local, federal and consular authorities have had trouble locating Latino victims because many are undocumented. Some calculated that 145,000 Mexicans live in the disaster zones of Mississippi and Louisiana, many of them without access to vehicles, bank accounts, or the English language. Honduran Consul Maria Eugenia Lobos said her office has only been able to locate about 100 of the estimated 150,000 Hondurans who reside in New Orleans and the surrounding area. These were the most vulnerable people in the Katrina disaster. Not just because their fear of deportation prompted them to avoid hurricane relief efforts, but also because in legal terms they simply didn’t exist as people worthy of relief.

In a country whose economic growth increasingly depends on the labour-power of illegal and migrant workers, these workers – and the nature of their exploitation – remain widely concealed by the media. According to a recent U.S. Department of Labor survey, migrant workers comprise a quarter of workers in the meat and poultry industry, 24 percent of dishwashers, and 27 percent of drywall and ceiling tile installers and up to 25 percent of the construction workforce. Last year, according to a Hew Hispanic Center study, more than one million of the nation’s 2.5 million new jobs went to undocumented workers.

In Canada, the situation might be becoming similar. The Cana-

dian State and Canadian capitalists contract an ever-increasing number of Mexicans to do jobs Canadian citizens do not want and for very little pay. Tax deductions are subtracted from these workers' paycheques, but most are not allowed to enjoy the basic social benefits received by Canadian citizens. Will the Canadian media pay attention to the reality of migrant workers and their struggles?

Places, people and events considered important in a society appear on "the media map" because they are discussed, well-known, prominent or famous. Most dictionaries agree the phrase "to put (something or someone) on the map" means they have become important, just as getting "wiped off the map" means something has been demolished or annihilated. Curiously, according to both Oxford and Webster's dictionaries print and on-line versions, the phrase "drop off the map" does not exist, though it appears over 12,000 times if typed into a "Google" search. Saying someone has "dropped off the map" could mean they have not been heard from, that there is no news about them or that they have been forgotten in some way though at one time their presence had been charted.

From Katrina to Canada, the war on the racialized poor and the realities of the migrant working classes are regularly "wiped off" or inadvertently "dropped off" the mainstream media map. As they, through their struggles, put themselves on the media map, how might progressives help? For those who claim to have a social conscience, it is a matter of critically peering into the folds of the two-page advertising spreads, scrutinizing the world the mainstream media draws for our mass consumption and asking: what or who has been wiped or dropped off this map? Then it is a matter of becoming a witness to that which has been erased, forgotten or ignored by saying: I see, I remember, and I notice. In this way, each act of witnessing what has been wiped or dropped off the media map can help to reveal its tacit control of how political events and the great majority are represented and misrepresented and how the politics of its travellers, by extension, are restrained. **R**

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Towards a Radical Critical Pedagogy

Review by Andrew Michael Lee

Teaching Against Global Capitalism and the New Imperialism

By Peter McLaren &
Ramin Farahmandpur
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 272 pp.

We develop critical understandings of the world through teachers and their teachings. A radical consciousness, which is to say, a working knowledge of the disconcerting machinations of global capitalism and a never-ending drive to understand the roots of this system is not simply derived from thin air. It must have a history and must come from some place within the terrain of social struggle. Within the fields of educational theory and critical pedagogy, Toronto native Peter McLaren has been pushing at the boundaries of acceptable social thought for over twenty years, starting with his 1980 Canadian bestselling book *Cries from the Corridor* (now self-critiqued and republished as *Life in Schools*), which documented his teaching experiences in the late 1970s in Jane-Finch district of Toronto (home to Canada's largest government housing complex).

Since the early 1990s, McLaren has been nothing short of prolific, publishing numerous books each year, all of which contribute to his transformative project of developing a revolutionary Marxist critical pedagogy, steeped in Freirean philosophy and aimed towards addressing the political bankruptcy of public schools and colleges of education throughout North America. Overall, McLaren has been both convincing and captivating in arguing for the radical reorientation of public schooling and its accompanying pedagogy. *Teaching Against Global Capitalism and the New Imperialism* (co-authored with Ramin Farahmandpur), one of his three books published last year, is an excellent example of the educational work in which McLaren is engaged. Comprised of nine no-holds-barred essays, the book continues the innovative task of articulating and developing a radical Marxist pedagogy within the context of U.S. imperialism, which has been ever-impinging on all facets of our daily lives. Sadly enough, →

some would argue that this impingement is more suitably characterized as a full-scale colonization of *la vie quotidienne*.

McLaren and Farahmandpur start from the axiom that nowhere within public schools is there any serious discussion taking place on the topic of global capitalism. There is a tremendous reluctance for educators to engage in serious debates on the current social, political and economic crises that currently exist in the new millennium which continue to spiral out of control. This collective silence is not without its reasons. Since 9/11, intellectuals have been goaded into joining the ranks of the collective Western actor and its “war on terrorism.” This war, grounded in racist and dubious pretenses, needs a well-oiled (both literally and figuratively) machine of intellectuals who keep their mouths shut on critical political matters, do the job of maintaining the ideological status quo, and train the citizenry to accept the limits of action imposed on them by the system in place.

Public educators, especially educators of future teachers, play an indispensable role within modern-day capitalism. They have the incredibly powerful ability to enlighten, encourage and even sometimes shape the minds of students from a multiplicity of spaces and places. But in fact, the opposite is taking place. Educators producing probing inquiries into global capitalism are deemed “political” and censured for promoting “special interests,” whereas reproducing commonsensical understandings of the United States, 9/11, the “war on terrorism,” etc. is to act with “objectivity,” “neutrality,” and therefore, “honesty.” McLaren and Farahmandpur point out that these latter discourses “distance themselves from the larger set of social and political contradictions and antagonisms that are generated by capitalist social relations of production.”

Several chapters of their book are devoted to a thorough and incisive critique of Western intellectuals’ now-infamous and allegedly-radical turn towards postmodernism that has taken place roughly over the course of the past two decades. With the post-1960s increased political conservatism of the advanced capitalist countries and the collapse of “actually existing socialism,” the left needed to become something other than that which had apparently disintegrated with the Berlin Wall. Many leftist intellectuals continued and continue to push for radical social thought, but in a very different direction than before. Solidarity and struggle with the working-class was essentially abandoned by this group for an embrace of the French philosophical avant-garde. Regardless of one’s position on the appearance and expansion of “the Post,” it is hard to deny that there have been major repercussions vis-à-vis the way concepts such as “working-class,” “labour,” “class struggle,” “exploitation,” and “socialism,” formerly cherished by the left, are now deployed (or not deployed at all) within the current postmodern knowledge industry.

Perhaps what is most significant about postmodern theory is its emphasis on the death of universalism and the end of so-called “grand narratives.” History, politics, and culture, according to postmodernism, are more appropriately understood as disjointed non-series of events that cannot be explained with traditional applications of science, certainty and rationality. Knowledge of the world becomes a thing characterized by textuality instead of materiality (as Marx would have it). With an endless amount of interpretations and narratives that comprehend the world in particular way, it becomes highly problematic to privilege one interpretation of the world over another. Culture is separated from ideology; everything becomes “cultural.”

McLaren and Farahmandpur do admit that postmodernism has not been a complete disaster. They aptly point out that its theories have helped educators understand extremely important social phenomena such as the power of popular culture, the organization of mass-media structures, and the impact of technological restructuring of daily life. Most importantly, it has helped reconceive of new schooling practices that actually take into account issues of racial, gender, sexual and national identity. Yet an acceptance of the primary tenets of postmodernism make it incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a coherent critique of global capitalism and challenge the rule of capital with the building of a mass oppositional movement on material grounds. As McLaren and Farahmandpur write, “postmodern theory’s stress on micropolitics transforms social struggles into discursive struggles...at the expense of political economy and a philosophy of praxis.” Furthermore, it “too often discounts class struggle and underestimates the importance of addressing economic exploitation for fear of succumbing to an implicit teleology of progress.”

Another overarching theme of the book is that modern-day global capitalism is synonymous with a new form of imperialism. Although mainstream political discourse fixates on “globalization” and maintains that its processes are wonderful for humankind because they connect the world in new and inspiring ways and provide economic opportunities to those sections of the world that never had it before, the “globalization is good” argument is essentially a friendlier way of saying that the world should give primacy to the logic of privatization, development, and profit-generation at all costs through the unrestricted expansion of capital. McLaren and Farahmandpur write against this dominant conception and see “globalization” as a ruling class code-word that blankets over the exploitation and power of capitalism, expunging from the debate the fact that there are social relations of production that exist within the totality of global capitalism that divide human beings into categories of workers and owners. Crude as it may seem, our society is one of private ownership that is characterized in the first instance not by “possession by the minority” but rather “exclusion of the majority.” Conceptualizing this division and this exclu-

sion is fundamental for the revolutionary critical pedagogy project.

In the tradition of the late Paulo Freire, the great Brazilian teacher-activist-theorist and one of the forerunners of critical pedagogical thought, McLaren and Farahmandpur conjugate hope with struggle in the search for an educational alternative to capitalist schooling, which negates democracy and disallows the possibility of students acting autonomously from capital and in collectivity with one another in order to create the world in which they live. One objective of (what they refer to as) “contraband pedagogy” should be “the translocation of past socialist struggles into the corridors of our historical imagination as a condition of possibility of transformative change and a necessary prelude to our own history-making activity. Such an objective would be to overcome despair in the face of capital destructive and imperializing force by outbidding it with an affirmation of socialist solidarity.” Key to working toward this objective is the insistence that the structural and institutional frameworks of capitalism have not completely obliterated the possibility of resistance and revolution. Though the challenges are daunting and the behemoth that is modern-day capitalism appears as a seemingly insurmountable force, contraband pedagogy asserts that there is still room to operate in opposition to the doomsday machine that we live within, however small that space may be.

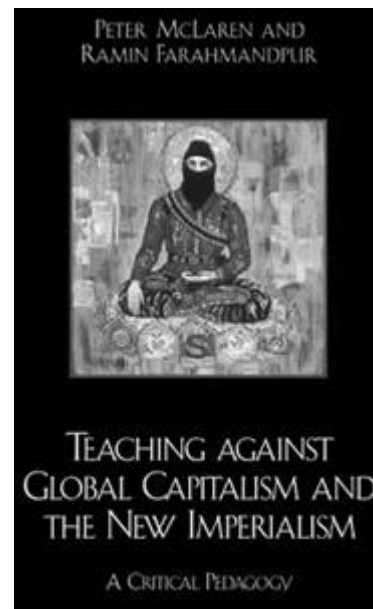
Yet in the context of an increasingly conservative political culture within the American academy, the theoretical and political moves of this pedagogy are never made without a disciplinary counter-response from ideologically-conservative organizations that keep tabs specifically on progressive elements within the educational institution and police those who “step out of line” by speaking out against the status quo. Last January, McLaren found out exactly what happens to intellectuals who use their knowledge as a tool of resistance and write against the capitalist commonsense when he found himself the victim of a nasty right-wing political attack at the University of California-Los Angeles (where he teaches) by a university alumni association. The incident, characterized by political intimidation, academic witch-hunting, and a trashing of academic freedom, gained international recognition in countries such as England, Greece, Italy, Japan, and Taiwan.

McLaren was spitefully named the #1 leading professor of the “dirty thirty,” an accusatory list castigating thirty professors at UCLA for their supposedly politically-biased and ideologically-extreme activity in the classroom. The website responsible for the attack, www.uclaprofs.com, proclaims its dedication to “exposing UCLA’s radical professors,” includes slanderous profiles of so-called “dangerous elements at UCLA” and originally offered cash payments to students for information supplied on “radical professors” before the university deemed such an on-campus political spy program illegal. They have since changed their offering to “free advice in reporting, documenting, and publicizing abusive professor behavior.” Joseph McCarthy would have been proud of such malevolent disciples.

David Horowitz is perhaps the best example of a conservative ideologue who is leading the charge against attacking radical professors in the North American Academy. His deceptively-titled *Center for the Study of Popular Culture* is dedicated to building a college-based network of unquestioningly patriotic students and professors who see “intellectual decay” (read: critical thought) at each and every turn within America’s colleges and universities. According to Horowitz, “you can’t get a good education if they’re only telling you half the story.” Horowitz’s delusional antics are continued in his new book *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*, which states on its inside cover, “Coming to a Campus Near You: Terrorists, Racists and Communists – you know them as The Professors.”

In light of the hostile environment in which North American educators must work, it is safe to say that a book like McLaren and Farahmandpur’s is desperately needed in these times. *Teaching Against Global Capitalism and the New Imperialism* is a struggle-text that is written courageously in its head-on engagement with pressing social and political subjects that virtually no one within the field of educational theory will talk about so boldly. All those interested in radical education and public pedagogy would benefit greatly from carefully reading each of the nine essays offered up and seriously considering the issues raised within each piece.

Despite the claims of neoliberal thinkers, capitalism has not brought us closer to the “end of history.” Far from it. History is an unfolding material phenomenon and its dominant forces are being contested by the likes of McLaren and Farahmandpur. Now more than ever, there is a need for more concerned educators to work towards naming and interrogating the logic of capitalism within the classroom. This should be done in the interests of students, all of whom will soon find themselves faced with the inhumane realities of “the real world.” How could we not prepare them for this future? **R**



No Revolution Without Song

Len Wallace

Wait a minute! I've been ROBBED! I can't believe it, I've been ROBBED! FELLOW WORKERS, I'VE BEEN ROBBED BY THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM!

*Are you poor, forlorn and hungry?
Are there lots of things you lack?
Is your life made up of misery?
Then dump the bosses off your back!*

*Are your clothes all patched and tattered?
Are you living in a shack?
Would you have your troubles scattered?
Then dump the bosses off your back!*

*Are you almost split asunder,
Loaded like a long-eared jack?
Boob, why don't you buck like thunder?
And dump the bosses off your back.*

*All the agonies you suffer
You could end with one good whack!
Stiffen up you ornery duffer
And dump the bosses off your back!
AMEN!*

This was a tactic used by members of the IWW – the Industrial Workers of the World, the believers in the One Big Union for all workers. They would gather workers together in such street theatre and make their voices heard in song. They understood that art, poetry, music, song, jokes, storytelling, etc., were intrinsic parts of the struggle for freedom.

I hold here in my hand a copy of *The Cry of Justice*, a book edited and published by Upton Sinclair in 1915. This book, full of poetry, songs, stories, found a home in many an IWW and socialist halls across North America. It opens with "A Consecration", a poem written by John Masefield:

*Not of the Princes and Prelates with periwigged charioteers
Riding triumphantly laurelled to lap the fat of the years,
Rather the scorned – the Rejected – the men hemmed in with
spears.*

*The men of the tattered battalions which fights till it dies,
Dazed with the dust of the battle, the din and the cries.
The men with the broken heads and the blood running into
their eyes.*

*Not the be-medalled Commander, beloved of the throne,
riding cock-horse to parade when the bugles are blown,
But the lads who carried the koppie and cannot be known.*

*Not the rulers for me, but the ranker, the tramp of the road,
The slave with the sack on his shoulders pricked on with
the goad,
The [wo]man with too weighty a burden, too weary a load.*

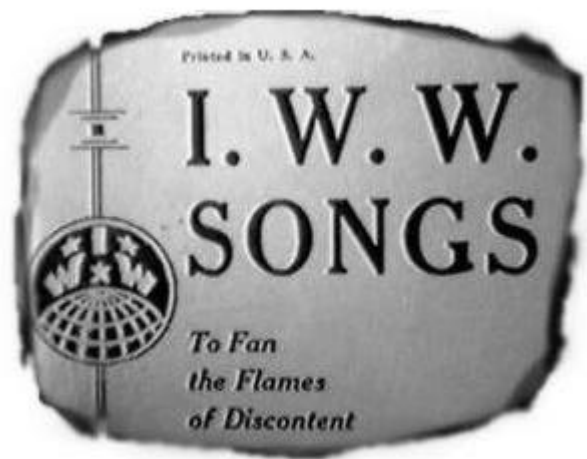
*The sailor, the stoker of steamers, the man with the clout
The chanteyman bent at the Halliards putting a tune to
the shout,
The drowsy worker at the wheel and the tired lookout.*

*Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the mirth.
The portly presence of Potentates goodly in girth; –
Mine be the dirt and the dross,
The dust and scum of the earth!*

*Theirs be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold,
Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould.
Of the Maimed, of the halt and the blind in the rain and
the cold –*

Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tale be told.

AMEN.



Okay, you're probably asking yourself – Who is this guy coming here today and talking to us like this?

I am a Citizen of the World. My country is the Working Class.

I am my father who came to Canada in 1928, rode the rails, ran with his friends when the RCMP rode into town to jail or deport unemployed workers. I worked in the mines of northern Ontario and worked for 30 years in Windsor's auto plants.

I am my grandfather, blacklisted for helping miners organise a union. In 1933 I packed up my family and went to Russia in order to have work.

I am my mother, 17 years old, working six days a week from 5:00 in the morning till 7:00 at night in northern Ontario boarding houses for \$13.00 a week.

I am Joe Hill, songwriter, union militant, a believer in the One Big Union of all workers framed up on a murder charge and executed in front of a firing squad in Utah in 1915.

I am the young women of the Shirt Waist Triangle Company in 1911, plunging to my death from a ninth story window to avoid death by fire because the exit doors of the factory were locked. And I am one of the thousands of young women from the Lawrence, Massachusetts mills demanding a better life.

I am the socialist Mary Marcy devoting myself to teaching workers about building a "living class solidarity."

I am the Italian workers and gentle anarchists Nicolo Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, falsely accused of a murder in Boston, sent to the electric chair because of my beliefs.

I'm the autoworker in the 1920s and 30s beaten up by company thugs for trying to organise a union.

I am Woody Guthrie, writing songs to raise up people's spirits, make them proud of their history and fight "Them No Good Songs"!

I am the workers of Flint, Michigan who lay down their tools and occupied their factory.

I am Windsor's Ford UAW worker who in 1945 took the very commodity I made and turned it against the company to stop scabs crossing the picket line. I drove my car to the company Power House, parked it, locked it and walked away causing a three day traffic jam of 1600 cars. It was poetry in action.

I am the woman from Vietnam working sewing in the sweatshops of Toronto. I am the worker in China working at slave labour wages.

I am the single mother disabled and wracked with the pain of Repetitive Strain Injuries from my work.

I am the child worker in England in 1850, working 16 hours a day. And I am the child worker of today, sometimes chained to a machine.

I am the worker – the working class.

It is I who banded together with other workers who laid down our lives fighting for the 10 hour work day, for the 9 hour work day, the 8 hour work day when Bosses and governments shot us down in the streets, murdered our leaders.

If it was not for us there would be no right to vote for all citizens.

It was we who brought you the Weekend.

The thing that I own is my power, my ability to work and I sell it for a wage or salary to someone else. Others make profits from what I have created.

The philosopher Georg F. Hegel wrote, "*The power of Spirit is only as great as its expression.*" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*)

I express Spirit in my songs.

My history is not acknowledged. It is not taught to my children in schools. We don't learn about it listening to the corporate-run radio where songs abound about alienated "love."

And sure as hell, you won't find working class history – or even the word "WORKINGCLASS" in corporate-run newspapers. In a thousand ways, every day, we live in a world where any mention of our class is eliminated – like Central and South Ameri-

can dissidents we are "disappeared."

My songs preserve the history. They are not songs that celebrate work. You know what Joseph Stalin said about work? - - WORK!

They are not songs that talk about how great the Boss is. They give voice to our struggles, our hopes and our dreams like the voices of the thousands of young women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1912 going out on strike against deplorable work conditions. Over half of these young women were between the ages of 16 and 21 – Italian, Jewish, Polish, Russian. They carried their banner: "We want bread and roses too." James Oppenheim wrote the poem later set to music:

*As we come marching, marching
In the beauty of the day.
A million darkened kitchens
A thousand mill lofts grey
Are touched with all the radiance
That a sudden sun discloses
For the people hear us sing,
Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses!*

*As we come marching, marching
Unnumbered women dead
Go crying through their singing
Their ancient cry for bread.
Small art and love and beauty
Their drudging spirits knew.
Yes it is bread we fight for
But we fight for roses too.*

We sing our anger at our condition like this popular worker's song of the Jewish worker written by Chaim Zhitlowsky, written in Yiddish, based upon the revolutionary poetry of Georg Herwegh and of England's Shelley:

*Un du akerst un du zeyst,
Un du fiterst un du meyst.
Un du hamerst un du shpinst
Zog, mayn folk, vos du fardinst?*

*Kling-clang, kling-clang!
Klapt der hamer mit zayn gezang!
Kling-clang, kling-clang!
Tserayst di keytn fun shklafn-tsvang!*

*And you plough and plant and grow
And you weave and spin and sew
And you hammer, weld and burn.
Tell me friend, what do you earn?*

*Cling clang, cling clang
The hammer's song sings loud and free.
Cling clang, cling clang,
Break the chains of slavery.*

→

*Tell me how is your table laid?
Where are the fine clothes that you made?
Why is your sharp sword and your life
In service to some parasite?*

*Rise you workers and unite!
Realize your awesome might.
When your strong arm take the wheel
you can make that wheel stand still!*

They take the wealth we make and they call this legalized theft their “profit.” They steal our very time away from us. Show me a Boss who brings in a machine that’s a “labour saving device” and I’ll show you a Boss who deskills me, devalues my work and makes me work harder!

Back in the early 1800’s those called “Luddites” – followers of the mythical Captain Ludd knew this well. The workers rose up to smash the new shearing frames that would force them into the factories. At night the workers would march holding the huge hammers called “Great Enochs.”

*Come Cropper lads of high renown
Who love to drink good ale that’s brown
And strike each haughty tyrant down
with hatchet, pike and gun.*

*Chorus:
The Cropper lad’s for me,
The gallant lad’s for me.
Who with lusty stroke the shear frames broke
The Cropper lad’s for me.*

*What though the Specials still advance
and soldiers nightly ‘round us prance,
The Cropper lad still leads the dance
with hatchet, pike and gun.*

*And night y night when all is still
And the moon is hid behind the hill.
We forward march to do our will
With hatchet, pike and gun.*

*Great Enoch still shall lead the van
Stop him who are, stop him who can.
Press forward every gallant man
with hatchet, pike and gun.*

The Luddites were defeated, suppressed by Bosses, their governments and troops. One hundred years later we hear the result of that defeat in the song of Mary Brookbank from 1920:

*Oh dear me, the mill’s runnin’ fast
And we poor shifters
Canna get no rest.
Shifting bobins coarse and fine.
They fairly make you work for your 10 and 9.*

*Oh dear me, I wish the day were done.
Running up and doon the line is no fun.
Shifting, piecing, spinning, warp, weft and twine
To feed and clothe my babies off of 10 and 9.*

*Oh dear me, the world is ill-divided,
Them that works the hardest are the least provided,
But I must bide contented dark days or fine
There’s no much pleasure living off of 10 and 9.*

The other evening a young woman approached me as I performed at a function for the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Detroit, Michigan. She was writing a report on Irish music and asked me if there was a common theme behind the songs. After a short conversation I had more time to think about the question and called her back and told her, these songs are people’s songs, tell their story. It’s the history of those who were defeated. Those who win the wars are the ones who get to write the history books, what we learn in school. These songs preserve the history of a social class, the ones who suffered a great historical defeat.

Our’s is not to wonder why. Our’s is but to produce and die. We must sell ourselves. We must produce. What we produce is sold and amazingly we must buy back what we ourselves produce! We must work. You know what Joseph Stalin said about work? - - - *WORK!*

But OUR culture is not produced with a view to sell it. It is not mass marketed. It is not made to numb us, but to make us THINK, to help us remember.

I was interviewed the other day in preparation for this Labour Arts Festival asked – “What does Labour have to do with Art and Culture?” – EVERYTHING!

Culture – REAL culture – is not something that can be manufactured. Our art and our culture is not from the top-down. It is from the ground-up!

Karl Marx was correct. Our work, what we produce, where we work, how we interact with fellow workers, with bosses, with governments, who we take our orders from, shapes our ideas and our values.

The revolutionary Victor Serge in his *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* noted from a friend that “When it’s all said and done, the bourgeoisie certainly invents some damned muck to get itself drunk on.”

In the process they give us “Survivor,” “American Idol,” Donald Trump, celebrity aristocracies, Bill Riley, The Windsor Star, Janet Jackson’s nipple. They call it “Entertainment.” This is the “culture” they feed us.

And we are told every day, in thousands of different ways, that we live in the best of all possible worlds. History has come to this end. There will be no more history. We are ALL middle class now. THIS is as good as it gets.

It is such a limited vision. They cannot see beyond themselves. They cannot understand that even capitalism is not forever.

Bosses and governments have had their way in running things for a long, long time. There IS another way. That’s for US to run



things. It is time. It is necessary and achievable. As Eugene Pottier wrote in 1871 at the ending of the Paris Commune:

*C'est la lutte finale
Groupons nous et demain
L'Internationale sera le genre humain*

For those who do not know the history of the Paris Commune, in 1870 the French Empire was at war with Otto von Bismarck's Prussia. The French army was defeated, the Empire crumpled and while the Prussian army lay siege at the gates of Paris the people proclaimed a republic. The citizens of Paris seized control of government and proclaimed a Commune and a democracy far beyond many in existence today.

When Pottier wrote these words, the workers of Paris, the Communards – men, women and children – were being slaughtered in batches in the streets of Paris by the forces of Reaction.

*We want no condescending saviours
To rule us from their judgement halls.
We workers ask not for their favours
Let us consult for all.
We'll make the thief disgorge his booty
We'll free the spirit from his cell.
We must ourselves decide our duty.
We will decide and do it well!*

Many, many years ago, the great Labour, Socialist, Anarchist revolutionary orators would often end their talks or speeches with words from England's poet, Shelley:

*Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number.
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you -
We are many - they are few.*

As the IWW's Joe Hill wrote in song:

*If the workers take a notion,
They can stop all speeding trains;
Every ship upon the ocean
They can tie with mighty chains.
Every wheel in the creation,
Every mine and every mill,
Fleets and armies of the nation,
Will at their command stand still.*

To use the words of surrealist poet Jayne Cortez: "Find your voice and use it. Use your voice and find it!"

I'll end with Joe Hill's song:

*Would you have freedom from wage slavery
Then join in the grand Industrial band.
Would you from misery and hunger be free
Then come! Do your share, lend a hand!*

*Chorus:
There is power, there is power in a band of workingfolk
When we stand hand in hand.
That's a power, that's a power
That must rule in every land
One Industrial Union Grand!*

*Would you have mansions of gold in the sky
And live in a shack way in the back?
Would you have wings up in heaven to fly
And starve here with rags on your back?*

*If you've had 'nuff of the "blood of the lamb",
Then join in the grand Industrial band.
If, for a change you would have eggs and ham
Then come! Do your share, lend a hand!*

*If you want sluggers to beat off your head
Then don't organize, all unions despise.
If you want nothing before you are dead
Shake hands with your boss and look wise!*

*Come all you workers from every land
Come join in the grand Industrial band.
Then we our share of the earth shall demand
Come on! Do your share, lend a hand.*

(The above was a presentation made by Len Wallace at the 2005 Windsor Labour Arts Festival workshop "A Class Act: Working Class Culture and Protest")

Beyond the CAW-NDP Divorce: Towards a New Politics?

Sam Gindin

On April 21, 2006, the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) broke with a tradition that extended over half a century and voted to leave the NDP. A few CAW activists shrugged their shoulders: the impact of the NDP on their daily struggles had been minimal and so setting it aside did not seem to matter much. Others, including a significant section of the Canadian left, were outraged: leaving was a mistake because electoral politics remains crucial to our lives. We must, they argued, focus our response on getting back in.

A third perspective, which may turn out to be the most lasting and important aspect of the CAW leaving the NDP, was that this exit created an opening for those frustrated with what has recently passed for 'politics.' The auto workers have a long history of independent working class activism inside and outside of electoral politics; the break with the NDP poses the question of how today's activists, confronting new pressures and the disappointments with the NDP, might contribute to creatively and concretely building on that earlier legacy of the union. Before elaborating on this, however, it is useful to return to the CAW's decision to leave its traditional political home and assess what that move was actually about.

The CAW Exit: A Move to the Left?

The ostensible reason for leaving the Ontario NDP was that the party had unfairly expelled the union leader, Buzz Hargrove, for supporting Liberals during the election. The NDP did indeed act inconsistently; numerous other party members had also supported Liberal candidates without sanctions. Yet did it make sense to let a particular spat lead to a reversal of an historic commitment to social democracy? If the debate was only over some tactic, then why not, for example, protest the NDP's decision by withholding dues or by mobilizing to reverse the rather intemperate and daft decision the party had made? The point of course is that

something larger was in fact going on: the CAW leadership was clearly moving away from the NDP before the ouster of Hargrove, and the NDP conveniently gave the CAW president the incident to formalize the rupture.

The union did subsequently explain its position in broader terms. It suggested that it had shifted from support for a tepid social democracy and narrow electoralism, toward a more explicit 'movement politics.' But the most visible signs of CAW involvement in the election had little to do with education of the members and movement building; rather, the election will be remembered for the presence of Paul Martin at the CAW convention, the smiles and hugs as the CAW president bestowed Martin with a CAW jacket, and the extent to which this left the membership confused, divided, and cynical. In the eyes of many activists – both inside and outside the CAW – the union's politics was increasingly driven by pragmatism, not an expansive vision. In the auto industry in particular, where the union puts its main energy into lobbying for money for the Big Three, the union seemed to have gotten uncomfortably close to both the corporations and the Liberals.

The CAW leadership nevertheless insisted that it was in fact moving to the left and pointed to its new internal structures – Union in Politics Committees or UPCs – as the basis for 'a new way of doing politics'. But UPCs had in fact been established back in September 2004 (a further reminder that the tensions with the NDP were not new). In the more than two years since, they have been disappointingly dormant. To be fair, there have been a number of well-received training sessions for these committees; the CAW's commitment to membership education remains unparalleled, and local CAW activists continue to play impressive roles in specific campaigns such as those around health care. Yet without a larger overall commitment to challenging the status quo and a clear turn away from elite-oriented politics the stagnation of the UPCs is virtually inevitable (the staff member assigned to

In defending his electoral role during the 2006 Federal election, CAW President Buzz Hargrove has been able to call on a resolution passed by national delegates to the CAW Canadian Council. The NDP's response, Hargrove argued, was therefore not just an attack on him personally, but a direct challenge to the overall union and its democratic autonomy. It is interesting to note, however, that while the actual resolution explicitly called on delegates to 'endorse sitting NDP members' as well as NDP candidates in 'winnable ridings,' it stated that in other ridings, *'the CAW will not endorse any specific candidates.'* In this context, the support given to Liberal candidates Belinda Stronach of Magna and a Toyota executive – both representatives of notoriously anti-union companies – was not only politically questionable in terms of the union's long-standing challenge to anti-union employers, but debatable even in terms of the wording and intent of the resolution.

act as a catalyst for the mobilization from below tellingly ended up concentrating his efforts on acting as the union lobbyist in Ottawa).

A 'new politics' would have meant more than rejecting the NDP and replacing it with new but lifeless structures. It would have included:

- Developing an anti-capitalist vision and actively engaging its members in that process.
- Moving to a platform that attempts to cope with our relationship to the USA – an issue that can't be ignored in any serious reorientation of Canadian society: (this ranges, for example, across free trade, democratic control over investment, oil policy, our role in Afghanistan, immigration and civil rights in the context of 'security').
- Asking what it means to link up with 'other movements.' Are they simply 'others' or do they speak to other dimensions of our own member's lives, such as health, the environment, war?
- Overcoming the CAW's isolation from the rest of the labour movement, without whom any new politics is fundamentally limited.
- Putting union organizing into the broader context of building the working class as a whole
- Addressing how to 'organize' the members who are already unionized;

In short, raising the possibility of a new politics can't help but raise rethinking the place of unions within today's local and global struggle against neoliberalism and alongside this a) how unions think about their members and their member's role in the organization; and b) the adequacy of union's structures – including structures for democratic debate and participation – to the challenges currently confronting unions and working people.

It is true enough that the NDP had moved to the center. The irony is that in leaving the NDP, the CAW leadership was hardly breaking new ground on the left but rather *also* moving, in its own way, to the center.

Back to the Party?

The frustrations with formal politics are certainly understandable. But bad politics is not a reason to give up on any politics. We take it as obvious that electoral politics and the state are too important to leave to Canada's elite. And we also take it as obvious that single-issue lobbying or one-off mass events – as important as they are to an overall politics – do not in themselves really constitute a serious challenge to the status quo. Ignoring the ques-

tion of political power is therefore suicidal in terms of social progress. The question of how we organize ourselves to simultaneously defend ourselves AND develop the kind of capacities that can eventually address state power is therefore the most important political question we can ask.



However, fighting to get back into the NDP represents a step backwards. The NDP has not and cannot address the political task we face. This is, to begin with, not just a shortcoming in the Canadian NDP but something much more general. It's a failure that has characterized *every* social democratic party in the world. Behind that failure lays the very essence of social democracy. Social democracy is not a milder form of socialism which has lost its way or radicalism, but a political project rooted in a particular vision, ideology, culture, and set of structures and practices. The two inter-related cornerstones of social democracy are that first, social democracy doesn't really believe that capitalism can be transformed and second, even if capitalism could be transformed, social democracy doesn't believe that the working class can ever develop the political will and capacity to do so. And so, social democracy is left with the cramped vision of administering neoliberalism with a human face, and the cramped politics of workers' needing to only know who to vote for.

This failure has a long history but it has been particularly exposed in the neoliberal period. Policy options under capitalism have, over the past quarter century, been polarized – the middle ground has given way. Corporations and their representatives have come to understand this and have acted decisively and aggressively to move things to the right. Social democracy →

never reached such an understanding – or when it did, it was awed at the implications and retreated.

One result of this was that the political initiative shifted to the non-electoral actions of unions and the social movements (with the CAW playing a very prominent role). This was first seen in the fight against the Canada-USA Free Trade Agreement in the mid-80s, where it was the unions and movements that led this most political fight with the NDP largely tagging along behind. The political leadership of the unions and the movements was further reinforced in the creative Days of Action in the mid-90s against the Harris cutbacks, by which time no-one even looked to 'labour's political arm' to lead any non-electoral political mobilization.

There are many on the left who would not disagree with the above analysis yet would insist that since the 'most advanced' sections of the working class movement remain in the NDP, that's where the politics of all progressives must also gravitate. This is an argument that cannot be discounted, especially at a time when no alternative political party seems on the horizon. The NDP is certainly not the enemy and the activists that remain in the NDP must be respected enough to continue to engage them in discussions and debates, to join with them around particular campaigns, and even to vote NDP at election time given the options. But we must do so without any illusions. To the extent that many committed activists are in the NDP, the NDP also serves to limit their expectations and to mis-educate them on social possibilities and political potentials.

Taking 'A New Politics' Seriously

The issue is not to return to the NDP but to figure out how

to go beyond the NDP.

The political choices we confront today are not real choices because we don't in fact have the political capacity to implement them and – more distressing – we haven't figured out a way of developing such capacities. At some point we are going to have to build a new political organization. Not a different party, but a different *kind* of party. We need a party that addresses how we build our collective political capacities, to not just come to power, but to do so with the intent of using that political power to transform states so they are democratic in the fullest sense of further developing our capacity to transform our workplaces and communities and contribute to genuine global solidarity. That is, to move towards replacing capitalism.

What kind of party might this be? What kinds of relationships, structures and struggles should we be creating and experimenting with now, so that kind of party might be possible in the future? How do we bridge our immediate needs for self-defence with such a longer-term project? Might it, for example, make sense to begin by setting up 'Permanent People's Assemblies' – regular meetings of representatives of the various progressive groups, including union locals, in each community – to provide mutual support, share and expand resources, determine some common priorities, and work to the development of a common platform?

The CAW's reasons for leaving the NDP may, as we've suggested, have had nothing to do with posing such questions. But the contradictions inherent in the CAW leadership's determination to leave the NDP may have created an opening for going beyond a return to the NDP. Future issues of RELAY will initiate and invite a fuller discussion of this possibility. **R**

Sam Gindin is the Packer Chair in Social Justice at York University.

BARRICK GOLD'S MUDDY FOOTPRINTS IN CHILE

Carlos Torres

The Canadian company Barrick Gold (BG) continues to show its indifference and aggressiveness in such key areas as the environment and labour relations. To its already-known abuses of power practiced in various regions of the world, in its unquenchable pursuit to control the gold market, is added the managerial pursuit and aggression against the workers and their union from the mine Mantos de Oro. This mine operates 150 kilometers from the city of Copiapó in northern Chile. The abuses committed by this company are possible due to the weak environmental regulations and lax labour laws inherited from the military dictatorship. One of the most well known features of BG's operations in Chile is that this Canadian transnational counts on the complicity of those who do not dare to challenge the laws in question. These laws do not provide workers or society with the mechanisms for

participating that, without eroding current economic policies, are aimed at equitable and sustainable development. Once more the old adage that 'the pig is not always at fault' is fulfilled.

In an interview, the trade-union leaders of Mantos de Oro mine, Nibaldo Orrego, Bernardo Lamas and Cristian Tapia, disclose facts of the conflict with BG.

Q: Could you explain to us the nature of the labour conflict that exists in the Mantos de Oro mine?

A: For a long time there have been endless problems and provocations, instigated by the mining company that exploits Mantos de Oro. Workers do not create the conflicts or tensions with the company. We have suffered persecution, the union as much as the

workers, creating a very tense work environment. The workers feel uneasy, there have been unjustified firings, and the mining company has manipulated laws allowing it to fire employees easily. Most worrisome are the effects on the workers and their families; who are pushed to unemployment and possible bankruptcy.

This attack against union organization became stronger once Placer Dome, the former owner of the mine, transferred all of its assets and administration to another Canadian company, Barrick Gold, last February. Sadly, this transnational is known for its anti-union practices and environmental abuse.

Q: How long have the workers been confronting the mining company's aggression?

A: Different stages in this long process, which began in 1995 when the company carried out a great campaign to stall and divide the union of more than 250 members, have existed. This maneuver was temporarily successful because the company offered a resource package to workers who were open to negotiations with the bosses behind the union's back. Assisted by the company, they created a parallel organization that damaged the union's harmony for a long time and the struggle for our rights. However, we were able to rebuild our union in spite of the pressure and threats.

The most serious assault was at the beginning of January, this year, when the hostilities broke out again. The company had fired workers under false pretences as unjustified accusations of stealing, blackmail and surveillance were renewed.

The officers of the Labour Board were aware of what was happening in the company and did not intervene. Once again we were forced to endure vigilance, provocations and the use of snitches to denigrate the union and its leaders.

Q: What are the most concrete cases of persecution against workers and leaders that can be mentioned?

A: The company retaliated by firing four workers who were accused of stealing, for which there was no evidence or proof. These four workers have actively participated in the reorganization of the union and in the election of the president of the electoral committee. These brothers worked in the mine between eleven and seventeen years.

In the last weeks of April a supervisor who was trying to organize the union was also fired. He was one of more than 70 supervisors and "trusted employees" of the mining company. The latest to be fired was the payroll manager who had worked for almost 18 years in the mine. He was accused of collaborating



Break New Ground.

Developing new gold projects to its full potential. Break with a new partner. Barrick Gold. You may not have dealt with us before, but you should know who the world's best. **BARRICK** Where the Gold Is

Barrick Gold is a Canadian mining company that exploits gold and silver worldwide. From Chile, through its operation in Mantos de Oro, it extracts more than 300 000 ounces of gold annually, which is sent out of the country. It also operates the mining company Saldivar in the north of Chile. It has pending lawsuits in Tanzania and conflicts in the Pascua Lama mining project in Chile. Recently, its representative in Canada Peter Munk, associate of George Bush Sr., made a considerable donation to a hospital in Toronto estimated at 37 million dollars; where does such a fortune come from? Chilean miners have not witnessed such generosity on the part of BG and the country's natural resources continue their journey to foreign lands. In this way the decline and deterioration of the environment continues in a country that does not yet deal with the great challenges of poverty, exclusion and dependence.

with the union because he had a friendly attitude toward the workers when they required information on issues concerning payroll and other deductions. This is and was the only help this person gave us; in no way did he provide us with confidential information of a professional nature that would not fit with what we mentioned.

Q: How has the union confronted this series of attacks against its affiliates and leaders?

A: First, we met with the new director, an official from Barrick Gold, whose head office is in Canada; he had only been two weeks in the mine. He promised that management's actions would come to an end, but up to now things have not changed. It is possible that his intentions toward the union are friendly, but that he has insufficient authority to change policy. Or perhaps he is following the same logic of the previous administration. What is true is that the persecution and mistreatment have not diminished.

The Mining Confederation and the CUT have given their full support to the workers that were fired and union leadership. We have a solid union and the support of the community, including other workers we have supported in their organizing process. For our union second-class workers do not exist, we are all the same and we work together.

Likewise, we had a meeting with a delegation from the United Steelworkers union from Canada, to which we have given all the records of the case. They agreed to inform their leadership in Canada and the head office of BG in Toronto of what has happened. The union will exhaust all means and resources at its disposal nationally and internationally to do justice to this new assault on workers' rights. **R**

Carlos Torres, a Toronto activist, penned this article in la Serena, Northern Chile.

International solidarity has always been central to socialist politics and for the left more generally. One of the major challenges we face is to develop forms of international solidarity that can be effective in the face of the consolidation of neoliberalism globally. In this respect, the 'Solidarity Pact' developed between CUPW and their Brazilian counterparts (FENTECT) printed below is not only an important development in its own right but a real contribution to our understanding of how to build an effective international solidarity. Particularly noteworthy is the emphasis placed on national and local struggles to defend the interests of workers and promote equality against those of employers and governments, with international solidarity understood in terms of mutual support for and the sharing of experiences in these struggles. This has parallels to the thinking in Sam Gindin's The Auto Industry – Concretizing Working Class Solidarity: Internationalism Beyond Slogans (available at www.socialistproject.ca/documents).

Equally significant is the importance given to opposing privatization of public services. Privatization is integral to the neoliberal project of extending (global) markets into every aspect of social life. Given its adverse effects on those workers who provide these services, those who depend on them and democracy generally, anti-privatization campaigns have been an important point of convergence between unions and progressive social movements and deepening these linkages is crucial to advancing the struggle against neoliberalism. R

— Donald Swartz, Carleton University, Ottawa.



Solidarity in the Post Office

Draft Solidarity Statement of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)
& the National Federation of Brazilian Postal Workers (FENTECT)

This solidarity statement arose from the visit of the FENTECT delegation to Canada and Québec on November 5 to 17, 2005, hosted by CUPW. The tour took place following the Union Network International (UNI) Conference of Postal Unions in the Americas on November 2 to 4, 2005, held in Aylmer, Québec. The Brazil Postal Union delegation, composed of two sisters and two brothers on the National Executive of FENTECT, visited postal installations, participated in a variety of events and met with CUPW members, local activists and regional and national representatives in Ottawa, Montreal, Kitchener and Saskatoon.

Both FENTECT and CUPW view this solidarity tour as an unqualified success. As the tour progressed, we realized that, despite different levels of economic development in our respective countries, the situation facing workers and our members is more similar than any of us imagined.

Both unions discussed and developed major insight into the workplace struggles of each other's membership. We made concrete links between the escalating fight against privatization and for universal public postal service, and the roles our two unions have assumed in the larger battle against the neoliberal model of capitalism in our countries and around the world. We discovered a profound level of unity on strategies to represent our members and agreed on a common commitment to ensure the mobilization of our respective membership to resist these threats and to participate in the struggle for equality and against discrimination,

both in our unions and in our larger communities. We also determined the necessity of ongoing acts of solidarity between CUPW and FENTECT as we build on the relationship we have created.

Consequently, FENTECT and CUPW declare our **joint solidarity and unity around the struggles of our members in the workplace**. We share the conviction that it is our responsibility as trade unionists to represent the class interests of our members in response to the competing interests of employers and governments. We recognize that our most important work occurs at the point of production in the workplace. This underscores all of the related struggles in which we engage.

As a result, and taking into account differences in the circumstances and the legal environment the two unions work within, we declare our full support for each other's struggles to bring about improvements in working conditions and benefits for our members. We will provide to each other all the assistance and collaboration possible, whether it be through sharing our experiences, bilateral exchanges, providing education materials or assisting in capacity-building projects. One priority in this area arises from our exploration of the health and safety issues facing members in FENTECT and CUPW. Our two unions share a commitment to the right of all workers to a safe and healthy workplace as an integral part of our undertaking to defend workers against exploitation.

Our unions will exchange information, educational materials

and strategies geared to achieving the highest standards in our collective agreements, in legislation and in our work environments.

Further, we will look for opportunities to provide solidarity assistance in other aspects of our mutual struggles to improve working and living conditions for workers in both unions.

CUPW and FENTECT stand united in our **determination to defend universal public postal service in our respective countries** and to ensure that this is guaranteed in law. To this end, we will support and assist each other's campaigns and struggles to ensure a strong public postal monopoly, which lies at the heart of maintaining a universal service obligation. Both unions are committed to resisting the neoliberal drive to deregulation and privatization of public services and recognize that trade unions constitute the principle obstacle to privatization drives both in Brazil and in Canada and Québec.

In addition to the struggle against deregulation and privatization, **both unions join in opposing the international economic and political institutions and agencies driving these neoliberal projects in our respective countries.** The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are principle examples of the economic power and control exercised by multinational corporations at the expense of the working class in countries around the globe, and massively inequitable trade agreements, such as the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), seek to enshrine the power of multinational corporations and their political representatives over the sovereign right of people to determine their own destiny in their own nations.

It is agencies and trade deals such as these which have concretely given rise to the attacks on public postal services by the multinational courier industry. United Parcel Services (UPS) and the courier industry in Brazil are attacking the very existence of the postal monopoly there. UPS has launched a legal challenge against the Federal Government of Canada claiming that Canada Post Corporation violates the rules contained in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) around unfair competition against private courier companies – a challenge threatening the provision of universal public postal service. FENTECT and CUPW declare their total solidarity with the campaigns and mobilizations of each union in response to the growing power of these corporations and resolve to explore and act upon further joint activities in the future.

To this end, FENTECT and CUPW **will work together in the international trade union organizations to which we may be affiliated, particularly in Union Network International (UNI-Americas), in order to build policies and an action program capable of uniting all affiliated unions in defending workers, in resisting discrimination and all barriers to inclusiveness and in struggling against the challenges of neoliberalism and exploitation.** This includes a continued commitment to oppose any remaining cold war policies within UNI. We will strive to ensure that workers in our sister Cuban unions will not be isolated, through their increasing participation in UNI-Americas activities, meetings and conferences. We also will work together and within UNI-Americas to develop solidarity relationships within the new progressive labour organizations in Venezuela.

CUPW and FENTECT recognize the potential existing in UNI for building international solidarity with unions struggling against exploitation. Much progress has been made in UNI and its predecessors in the past number of years, but much remains to be accomplished if UNI is to realize this potential. Both unions will actively work together to build on UNI-Americas' capacity to bring unions together and thereby better represent our own members in the workplace.

To this end, CUPW and FENTECT want to ensure that UNI conducts its solidarity work based on the foundation of workers in struggle to advance their interests counter to the competing interests of employers and their allies in governments. Both unions therefore recognize that UNI's recent membership in and involvement with the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the world-wide network of postal services, should be limited and cultivated only to the extent that takes advantage of its role as a tool for the global campaigns of UNI.

In order to make it possible for FENTECT to pursue this collective work within UNI, both unions will emphasize the necessity for all documents generated by UNI-Americas to be available in Portuguese.

As well as joining together to resist discrimination at the international level and within UNI, FENTECT and CUPW **agree to provide solidarity assistance in the ongoing project of breaking down barriers to participation of our members within our unions**, and by extension, within our respective societies. Both unions recognize the need to deepen and expand the struggle for gender equality, and we pledge to look for new ways to help each other in our work to build unions free of gender discrimination.

We recognize that our unions are immeasurably strengthened when women workers, workers of colour, indigenous workers, workers of different sexual orientations and disabled workers feel that they occupy places of equal importance in their trade unions, and that they have equal access to participation in, and leadership of, the many struggles our unions must take on. CUPW and FENTECT will exchange information and educational material and will provide support to each other's efforts to promote real equality within our organizations.

All of the members of CUPW who were able to participate in the tour, and the delegation from FENTECT, realize that our two unions have begun a very special process with this visit. We have come to appreciate profoundly how the struggles of postal workers in both our unions closely intersect and how we can support each other. We are determined to build on the relationship we have begun and, in solidarity, to deepen our participation in the struggles of the international working class.

Solidarity,

FENTECT

Ivan Carlos Pinheiro
Ana Zelia Almeida dos Santos
Rogerio Ferreira Ubine
Sandra Martins de Jesus

CUPW

Deborah Bourque
Lynn Bue
Denis Lemelin
Evert Hoogers

State Violence and Gender in San Salvador Atenco, Mexico

R. Aída Hernández Castillo

How can any honest woman in Mexico, regardless of her ideology, remain silent?

May 3rd and 4th, 2004 will be remembered as some of the saddest and most violent days in the modern history of San Salvador Atenco, on the outskirts of the Mexico City megalopolis. This small town, home to 33,000 people who still depend on peasant economy, witnessed a violent clash between 300 unarmed civilians, members of the *Frente de Pueblos en la Defensa de la Tierra* (Peoples Front for the Defense of the Land), and some 4000 policemen from the state and various corporations. The police put the demonstrators down and terrorized the whole community, raiding houses, breaking down doors and arresting without warrants 207 people, including children, women and the elderly. At the end of the day, 20 people had been seriously injured and a minor was dead.

What had started as a demonstration to support eight street vendors from the neighboring town of Texcoco became a violent clash which most of the media described as the “return to the rule of law” after the arbitrary actions of a “radical group.” The image of a group of peasants from Atenco battering a fallen policeman was shown again and again to justify the State’s use of violence. The loss of control and violence by a few were used to disqualify a whole movement and to characterize it as a destabilizing and dangerous force for the state and the population in general. The attack on the policeman should have been punished according to the law, and considering there were plenty of images of the event, it would have been possible to identify the attackers. Instead, state and federal authorities chose to unleash the full force and violence of the state on innocent people, many of whom don’t even belong to the group the authorities aimed to disband.

The testimonies of the men and women arrested on these two days, which are now beginning to emerge thanks to human rights organizations, speak of physical and sexual violence on a par with the worst days of the dictatorships in South America. But why use such a show of violence against a group of unarmed, poor peasants? Why use sexual violence against the women in the movement? Was it not against the state’s own interests to issue such a repressive response, now that Mexico has been chosen as founding member of the United Nations’ recently created Human Rights Council?

Scholars who have studied the social effects of violence and terror have pointed at the difficulty of analyzing and “explaining” them from a scholarly point of view. Australian anthropologist Michael Taussig (*Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, 1987) refers to the effect of terror by saying that the stories of violence confronted him with an interpretation problem, until he realized that the problem of interpretation is essential for the reproduction of terror; it not only makes it very difficult to create an effective counter-discourse, but at the same time it empowers the terrifying aspects of death squadrons, disappearances and torture, because it causes demobilization and limits people’s capacity to resist. Since terror depends so much on interpretation and sense, it ends up feeding on itself by destroying any evidence of sense and rationality.

A Symbol of Resistance: *Frente de Pueblos en la Defensa de la Tierra*

In the same way, the disproportionate violence with which those arrested at Atenco were treated has the double effect of demobilizing and inspiring skepticism about what happened, thus making it difficult to create a counter-discourse, break the silence in which our indignation has left us and shake off the indifference that has crept

after some of the political prisoners were liberated.

The representations that the news media has constructed around the *Frente de Pueblos en la Defensa de la Tierra* show a movement of a violent and intolerant nature while at the same time minimizing the numbers of its adherents and their politics and discrediting their leaders. These representations bear little resemblance to the men and women I had the opportunity to meet this past April. They appeared a cheerful, supportive, and inclusive group, well organized and capable of complex political thought. I met them just a few weeks before the fateful clash, at *La Cañada de los Sauces*, in Cuernavaca, Morelos, in one of the most festive, socially inclusive resistance demonstrations I have ever attended.

During the memorial festivities of Emiliano Zapata, I was among the supporters of the *Otra Campaña* in Morelos state, the name given to the tour of Mexico by the Zapatistas (EZLN) during the Presidential campaign, awaiting the arrival of Sub-Comandante Marcos to the town of Tetelcingo. Suddenly it was announced that the meeting was moving to *La Cañada de los Sauces*, in the residential neighborhood of Tabachines, where police were about to force out a group of residents and environmental activists who had chained themselves to trees. They were protesting the construction of a road that would cross the area and required cutting down the ancient willow trees. The arrival of the *Otra Campaña* at *La Cañada* forced out the police, the ambulances, and the bulldozers which were ready to bring down the trees and their guardians.

A little while later, about 200 men and women peasants from San Salvador Atenco arrived, marching in order and keeping time with the metallic clatter of their machetes. They came in support of the people of *La Cañada de los Sauces*, just like they had

in previous days supported the indigenous community of Cacahuatpec, Guerrero, who oppose the construction of the dam that would expropriate their communal land, and the people of Cuernavaca who resisted the construction of a COSTCO store to protect the historical murals of the old Casino de la Selva, or the people of Texcoco who protested the construction of a Wal-Mart across from the ancient pyramids of Teotihuacan. The peasants of Atenco supported the struggle of these communities and shared with them their experience and strategies. Their success in 2002, when they managed to stop the government building an international airport that would have expropriated five thousand hectares of farming land, has made them into a symbol of resistance against the blows of globalization. These local struggles share a search for alternative ways of development that are respectful of nature and of the historical heritage of communities. The success of the movement in Atenco was proof that it is possible to say NO to the neoliberal economic model which is indifferent to people's wellbeing and excludes the majority of them.

This was the message that the *Frente de Pueblos en la Defensa de la Tierra* brought to the residents of La Cañada in Cuernavaca, a message that encouraged them to continue resisting. In their speeches, they said that the struggle to defend the old trees of La Cañada was similar to the struggle of many indigenous and peasant peoples in Mexico. The words and songs they brought seemed to melt the barriers between social classes. The meeting became a great popular gathering. The housewives of La Cañada cooked and fed everyone, the workers of the *Pascual Boing* co-op handed out fruit drinks and the peasants from Atenco enlivened the evening singing *corridos* about their struggles. The women danced in pairs, clashing their machetes high above their heads in a slow, ritual dance reminiscent of religious dances in indigenous communities. These were strong, extroverted women who shouted out resistance slogans and wielded their machetes with the ease of those who use them in everyday tasks. I could not help thinking of the Zapatista women and of many other women who are fighting from the bottom of society to build a fairer life. I

felt inundated by their political energy. I would never have guessed that a few weeks later I would see these same women beaten, bloodied, humiliated, silenced... the political energy I felt that evening in April was a danger the government aimed to eradicate.

As an analyst of social movements, I was impressed by the organizational expertise the *Frente de Pueblos* possessed. I was awed by their ability to systematize the his-



tory of their struggle in songs, by the strength of the women, who seemed to play a central role in the movement, and by the obvious influence the group had over the young students who were at the meeting. Among the crowd, I had the opportunity to witness an informal "passing of the torch" ritual in which an elder from Atenco gave a young woman student from the University of Chapingo his machete. A group of young people crowded around, cheering and shouting slogans, while the man addressed an improvised speech to the girl, who received the machete in recognition of her solidarity with the peasant movement. I wonder now if that girl was among the women who were raped and abused in the jail of Santiaguito. Could it be that that was the punishment for taking on the torch?

At the time I thought it would be a good idea to have one of my students analyze this experience. Perhaps that is also what the teachers at the National School of Anthropology and History thought. Two of their students are now facing criminal charges for being in Atenco on May 4th.

That afternoon at *La Cañada de los Sauces* the police stayed away, and eventually the residents were able to negotiate with the government to save →

the willows. The political cost of upsetting a residential community or breaking through the home of a Public Attorney that lives in that neighborhood, would have been too high. But repression came later, in lands of poorer people, where it seems it is easier to silence complaints and break down a movement in the name of the rule of law.

State Violence: Breaking Down the Movement

My previous encounter with the group *Frente de Pueblos en la Defensa de la Tierra* made me feel suspicious of the images of extreme violence that showed some people of Atenco beating on a policeman. Up to now, the media has failed to give the names or the histories of the attackers, and it is not that far-fetched to think that the movement could have been infiltrated by provocateurs that would then provide the cue to unleash a campaign of repression. It may also be that years of accumulated grief and struggle exploded in an incident of irrational violence for which the movement will have to pay a high price. I do not know what happened, but what is plain and what we have to say over and over again is that nothing justifies police violence, or the violation of the human rights of those taken into custody. The State's legislature had significant foresight when it approved in February 1994 the Law to Prevent and Punish Torture, which establishes that any public officer who inflicts "blows, mutilations, burns, physical or psychological pain, or who withholds food and water" from a person in custody is guilty of torture, as is "any public officer who instigates, compels, authorizes, orders or consents to the aforementioned. ...torture is considered a crime and this is not affected by exceptional situations, such as internal political instability, urgent investigations, or other circumstances. Neither can it be excused because it was carried out under superior orders."

During the police raids in Atenco, houses were broken into and destroyed without search warrants, 207 people were taken into custody without arrest warrants, a minor was murdered, 20 people were severely injured – one of whom is still in a coma, (a 20 year old undergraduate student of the National University (UNAM)).

There were 23 sexual assaults on women, seven of which were rapes. The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) has received 150 complaints from residents of Atenco. The authorities, whether municipal, state or federal, have so far failed to accept responsibility for what happened, and President Vicente Fox has justified the use of violence by the police as "the means to bring peace to the people of this community in the midst of rising violence" (*La Jornada*, May 13 2006).

Of those arrested on May 3rd and 4th, 17 were freed, 144 were charged with damage to public property, a misdemeanor for which they can be released on bail, and 28, including the leader of the *Frente de Pueblos en la Defensa de la Tierra*, Ignacio del Valle Medina, as well as his son, César del Valle, have been formally indicted under charges of kidnapping and damage to public property. While authorities use the law at their discretion against social leaders, those responsible for the violations to human rights in Atenco are still shamelessly speaking of rule of law.

We need to take the government's discourse about using the full weight of the law in the case of Atenco and make it our own: we must demand the just punishment of government officials responsible for the abuses.

Gender Violence: Subjugating Women Social Leaders

If the women of Atenco waving their machetes in the air had become a symbol of peasant resistance, their bloodstained faces and bodies now represent the shame of a repressive Mexican state. The accounts that have come to public light in the last few weeks show the specific form that violence takes in patriarchal systems in which women are still considered war booty. Both the National Human Rights Commission and the Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro A.C. have direct testimonies from the women being held in custody which describe the sexual attacks they suffered. Most of the victims have preferred to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals, but the deported foreign students Valentina Palma, from Chile, Samantha Diezmar, from Germany, and Christina Valls and María Sastres, from Spain, have

denounced the sexual assaults they suffered, as well as those other women were subjected to.

The testimonies made public by the human rights organizations show that the attacks were not isolated cases but rather a strategy of sexual violence which was a key part for the police operation:

"They started by clubbing us on the head. Then they were touching my breasts, my buttocks. Then I felt a hand touching my vagina and penetrating me with the fingers."

"There are cases such as that of a 50-year old woman who was forced to perform oral sex on three policemen in order to get them to set her free. Hiding her face in shame and pain, she says she had gone shopping for a gift for her son when policemen in uniform grabbed her. She says they told her 'you have to give us each a blow-job if you want to go back home.' She was afraid they would hit her, like they had done with the other women, so she did what they asked. In the end they set her free."

"They shut the door of the van where they had us and one said 'that bitch needs a wedgie' and started pulling on my panties. He realized I was having my period, because I was wearing a sanitary pad, and shouted to the rest 'look at this bleeding bitch, let's get her even dirtier' as he shoved his fingers in my vagina, many times. I was not really there any more, but I remember I could hear myself saying 'My God, what are they going to do to me?'"

Alicia Elena Perez Duarte, the special attorney in charge of crimes against women, said that upon hearing about these testimonies she tried to get in touch with the women held in custody, but the representatives of the government of the locality said there were no women in custody (*La Jornada*, May 12, 2006). This lie points to a web of complicities which made possible a police strategy of terror and sexual violence.

Marinana Selvas, an anthropology student among the 28 activists still in jail, has contended that the rejection by the Public Attorney to consider the testimonies of rape, as a strategy to allow time to erase any physical evidence of the sexual abuses. This contention has probably put her at risk as she is still under arrest.

Carlos Abascal, the Secretary of State, minimized the relevance of the women's complaints and doubted their veracity. Other lesser officials, such as the regional police chief, Wilfredo Robledo, and the Speaker of the Department of State of the Estado de Mexico, Emmanuel Ávila, disregarded the testimonies as part of a legal defense strategy. Meanwhile, the human rights organizations have pointed out that this type of crime is prosecuted by the state, so it is the job of the public attorney to initiate the investigations.

Article 273 in Mexico's criminal law defines rape as the penetration by force of the vagina, anus or mouth by the penis or any other part of the body, object or instrument. Article 274 of the same law establishes that the participation of multiple attackers, that is, more than one person taking part or supporting the aggressor, constitute an aggravating factor. Under these definitions, the experiences described in the testimonies are not just sexual assaults, but rape, and as such should be prosecuted by the state.

The attacks on the women of Atenco add to the long list of women who have been the victims of sexual violence for political motives in the last two presidential terms. For the more conservative sectors of Mexican society – both mestizo and indigenous – any show of organization among women in any community or region has become a synonym of Zapatista influence. Organized women, whether they are Zapatistas or not, are a symbol of resistance and subversion, and for that reason are placed at the center of political violence.

The political use of sexual violence was one of the issues discussed during the first series of talks between the EZLN and the government on October 1995, in San Cristóbal de las Casas. At the Women's Table during this meeting, the people invited by the government and those brought by the EZLN agreed, in spite of their political differences, that rape should be considered a crime of war as described by international law. There have been no efforts, however, to act on the agreements reached then on those negotiation tables.

Gender analysts from other militarized regions, such as Davida Woods in Palestine or Betty Denich in Sarajevo, point out that in contexts of political military con-

flict feminine sexuality tends to be transformed into a symbolical space of political struggle and rape is instrumentalized as a way of showing power and dominion over the enemy. Atenco was not an exception: police repression has affected women in particular, as we can readily see from their testimonies. In a patriarchal ideology that still considers women sexual objects and repositories of a family's honor, the rape and sexual torture of women constitutes a way of attacking all the men on the enemy's side. Just like Serbian soldiers, the policemen of Atenco "take possession of women's bodies one after another, as objects of sexual abuse and as symbols in a fight against their male enemies, thereby reproducing traditional patriarchal patterns where the male inability to protect their women, to control their sexuality and their reproductive capacities, is considered a

symbol of weakness in the enemy."

In spite of the effectiveness of fear as a disintegrator of social resistance movements, it is evident that the women of Atenco are determined to continue fighting for their rights as women and as members of a community. Their testimony before human rights organizations proposes a counter-discourse that can break the silence of terror. It is our turn to echo their voices and demand that justice be done. **R**

Translation by María Vinós.

R. Aída Hernández Castillo is at the Center for High Studies in Social Anthropology (CIESAS), Mexico City, and is author of *Histories and Stories from Chiapas* and *Mayan Lives, Mayan Utopias*.

Toronto Protests Support Atenco Prisoners

The Toronto-Atenco Solidarity Committee caught up with Enrique Peña Nieto, the Governor of Mexico State, on June 16th at the Metropolis Conference where he was speaking on a commission concerning private-public partnerships. The Governor is one of the people responsible for the police violence that was unleashed on the residents of Atenco and Texcoco, having called in 3,500 members of the state and federal police. The committee set up a picket in front of the conference building and leaflets were distributed to passers-by and conference participants.

Some of the committee members also ventured into the conference. During the question period, they confronted the Governor with the Atenco abuses and the continued human rights violations of prison detainees. He refused to respond to the allegations made against him and the State of Mexico. Because of the questions and protests about Atenco from the floor, the Commission was forced to adjourn. There was also noticeable support shown to the protesters from the audience after the moderator was forced to close the meeting. The Governor could not avoid the embarrassment of his human rights records coming before delegates at the conference.

Three days later, on June 19th, a delegation organized by the Toronto-Atenco Solidarity Committee delivered a petition to the Mexican Consulate in Toronto. The petition condemned the state violence unleashed against the people of Atenco and Texcoco and was signed by almost 400 individuals and 9 organizations. June 19th had been chosen as an International Day of Action for Atenco because that was the first day of Mexico's presidency of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The Mexican consul, Miguel Angel Caceres, accepted the petition but refused to make any statement.

Upon leaving the Mexican Consulate, the delegation joined a rally outside. People came with banners and signs, handed out leaflets, chanted "NO MORE ATENCO, NO MORE REPRESSION," and held a clothesline with bloody women's clothing to represent the sexual torture used against the women of Atenco. Both protests have successfully brought the message to the government of Mexico that people in Canada are aware of the human rights abuses being carried out. **R**

The Left Bank: Anti-Zionist Jews

Matt Fodor

On June 8th, the Socialist Project sponsored a talk with two anti-Zionist Jews, Judith Weissman from the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation in Toronto and Israeli peace activist Reuven Kaminer, a member of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality's Control Commission and Peace Now.



Weissman, who wrote an open letter to Mayor David Miller protesting his agreement to lead this year's Walk for Israel, spoke of her experience growing up in a Zionist household prior to World War II when the majority of the world's Jews were anti-Zionist. While in Israel, it was a painful experience for Weissman to learn of

the racist nature of Zionism as well as the history of Zionist collaboration with the Nazis prior to the war, after so many years of engaging in Zionist propaganda. The Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation, Weissman noted, originally called for a two-state solution. The organization recently changed its position, however, and now explicitly calls for the right of return and for the right of Palestinians to choose the one-state or two-state solution.

Kaminer noted that Israelis increasingly accept the occupation as brutal and even a "shame of the Jews" and stressed that "Israel will end the occupation or the occupation will end Israel." Under the two-state solution, the Palestinians would end up with 22% of historical Palestine. Included in this 22% are 200,000 settlers who are in violation of the Geneva Conventions, which serves "to break the back of Palestinian national aspirations." Kaminer interpreted the last Israeli election as a vindication of Ariel Sharon's strategy to *maintain* the occupation. This strategy concedes

that it will not be possible to hold all of Israel and led to a split in the Likud Party. The far-right however, Kaminer stressed, is no more than 10% of the Israeli electorate. Meanwhile, elections under occupation (i.e. Hamas) are very difficult to evaluate.

Kaminer stated that the "Saudi Plan," the "Arab League Plan," the "European Plan" and the Geneva Accords are essentially the same. All call for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, for Jerusalem to be the capital of two states, and for an improvement in the material conditions of the Palestinian refugees. As of now, the Palestinians lack the strength to defeat Israel, strategically speaking.

It is on these grounds that Kaminer advocated the two-state solution, for which he highlighted two reasons. First, Palestinians want a flag, capital, nation, etc.; a semi-sovereign state does not have any significant Palestinian support. Second, there is gigantic establishment support for the two-state solution and none for the one-state solution. It is morally wrong, Kaminer argued, for advocates of the one-state solution to wait for a better relationship of forces, given that the Palestinians are "the most betrayed people in the world, including by the Arab world." A Palestinian refugee in the audience argued in favor of the one-state solution, on the grounds that one cannot defend a state based on race and/or religion.

In the end, Kaminer concluded, "the struggle must be first and foremost about occupation" and should be clear on whether it wants to use sanctions, boycotts, etc. Second, this struggle should be connected to the struggle against American imperialism, of which support for Israel is not a deviation from, which is "the enemy of Palestinians *and* Jews." The Palestinians deserve the support of international struggles for peace and justice, but this must connect to practical political goals. **R**

Matt Fodor is a graduate student in political science at York University.

Mailbag

Dear Relay.

I recently came across an article in your magazine where the author attempted to instruct readers on the correct Socialist position to have with regards to religion in general (pg 9, Vol 8). The unnamed author selectively quoted passages from Marx and other socialists which showed a rather inconsistent reading of both Marx, religion and the world the author inhabits, yet, despite the author's inadvertent need to dismiss contemporary religious fundamentalists the author's article shared one thing in common with them – it understood religion as dogmatically as they do.

Indeed, such lopsided readings of both Marx and religion do in fact remind us of our times and are as irksome and as worrisome as our times appear to be. As a reader, I would prefer that you follow Marx more closely and examine religion as a rich repository of popular expressions of the collective hope and dream to realize our human essence, instead of engaging in one-sided pronouncements that can inevitably help no one except the author's ego; after all true critique demands that we finish the incomplete thoughts of our ancestors, not simply abandon them for a future without memory. To the everyday person the demand to abandon one's particular, and historically specific image of justice can only be understood to be as unjust and conservative as the demand to conform to a practice of justice that in truth can be no more than the unjust world we inhabit. It is for this reason that we must understand that to transcend popular, but incomplete forms of justice we must first realize them. Let's, then work together to complete our popular images of justice rather than proclaiming them to be backward. In your future, I hope the editors of the magazine take their very own cultural objects more seriously instead of one-sidedly reflecting the conformity of our times.

— *Elleni Centime Zeleke*

Dear Elleni:

We agree that religion sometimes plays a positive role in providing support to the marginalized and, as Marx put it, a 'soul in a soulless world.' We made that point in general and with respect to liberation theology, and also quoted Marx on this point. But religion as an ideology expresses many contradictory interests and needs, and binds its adherents to the existing social order in historically specific ways. No one could look at history, or the world today, and fail to observe the important role religion has played in innumerable tragic events. Or that the roles that Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and so forth play as part of the ideology that keeps ruling classes in power, in Canada, in the Middle East, in India. Therefore, socialists have historically been committed to a separation of church and state, something that remains to be accomplished in many areas in Canada, and which seems more important than ever to strive for with a more plural society; and socialists have sought to protect the freedom to practice religion without discrimination as a basic civil right. In a time of resurgence of fundamentalisms, these basic points seem important to reassert.

— *Relay*

Borders and Bodies (continued from page 27)

It is due to the deteriorating conditions of peripheral states (or in the transitional economies of Russia and Eastern Europe) under neoliberalism. The labour of migrant workers, especially racialized female migrants, sustains neoliberal economic policies, even as they are more and more seen as "disposable" or as a threat to national security. States are moving toward securing borders through discourses and the design of policies that police, and often imprison, "foreign" and "dangerous" bodies. But these policies and discourses also silence and making invisible the migrant workers that support middle and upper class privileges. This includes the domestic and sex workers that sustain their households, sexualities and their bodies.

Such neoliberal agendas, and the contradictory places of migrant female workers, require political mobilizations of a differ-

ent kind. This requires new linkages amongst migrant workers directly and in international struggles. For example, the mobilizations of migrants and others in the United States against the imperialism and military interventions of the United States is one important illustration. The mobilization of the Asian immigrants in Cyprus connecting their struggle with those of the Kurds is another example of this type of connection. After all, the immigrants "didn't cross the border, the border crossed them." And the global working classes did not cross imperialism, imperialism and neoliberalism crossed them. **R**

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Venezuela Rising



Tuesday, Aug. 15
Toronto

Place:

Cervejaria Downtown Bar-Grill
842 College (& Ossington)

Time:

Doors open at 7:00pm
7-8:00pm - music and slide show
8-10:00pm - poetry, live music,
spoken word

Two years ago, opponents of the Bolivarian revolution unfolding in Venezuela attempted to have Hugo Chávez, president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, recalled. This reactionary referendum was resoundly defeated. Join us on the second anniversary of this turning point in the struggle in Venezuela for a celebration.

There will be solidarity greetings from a representative from The Consulate General of Venezuela and from the four sponsoring organizations:

- Circulo Bolivariano Louis Riel
- Circulo Bolivariano Manuelita Sáenz
- Coalition Venezuela We Are With You
- Hands Off Venezuela (Toronto)