Workers of the World, Unite Against the Occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Haiti, & Indigenous Nations in Canada!

FREE INSIDE!
Antiwar Posters

Pullout section: Posters Against War and Occupation

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Radicalization, Polarization, & Class Struggle in BC: The HEU Deal, Victory or Defeat?

The HEU Strike | Page 2
Radicalization, Polarization, & Class Struggle in BC: the HEU Deal, Victory or Defeat?

Part 1: Before the Deal

SUPPORT HOSPITAL WORKERS! DEFEND PUBLIC HEALTH CARE!

By Ivan Drury

“No matter what this government says about HEU members, they cannot run a health care system without us. We are standing our ground and we won’t back down!” — VGH Picket Line News Issue #1 (distributed at the Vancouver General Hospital picket line on Thursday April 29th)

On Thursday April 22nd at midnight the Hospital Employees Union gave up on waiting for the essential services designation needed to go on strike and agreed to the levels previously set. They immediately gave 72 hours notice to the time strike action would begin.

By the time the 72 hours ran out, the level of enthusiasm for the strike had resonated so strongly throughout the province that the originally planned overtime ban kick-off fell away for a full scale strike. Picket lines went up at every hospital and long term care facility in BC. After three years of devastating attacks from the reactionary BC Liberal government, 43,000 health care workers had already gone out on strike and the entire BC labour movement was immediately electrified.

However, as the promised provincial walkout approached, the potential of this enormous action for solidarity to swing the scales in favor of working people in BC against Gordon Campbell suffered a tremendous setback. On Sunday, May 2nd, a deal was struck between the BC Federation of Labour and the BC Liberal government. This deal was struck the day after over 10,000 people had gathered at the biggest Mayday rally in contemporary Vancouver history, and just hours before the biggest solidarity strike in just as long was to begin. This deal ended the HEU strike.

The BC Liberals attacked Health Care Workers from the Moment They Took Power

“We have some huge cost pressures. We have to make sure we find cost savings, otherwise we have to divert more money away from direct patient care in order to pay support workers who are already paid higher than any other province in Canada. And that's not on our watch.” — BC Minister of Health, Colin Hansen

In 2002 the BC Liberal government tore up the Hospital Employees Union contract and passed Bill 29 in the dead of night at the end of a marathon sitting of the legislature. The Bill was the first major step towards the privatization of health care in BC. It let health care facility management fire workers and contract their positions out to non-union health care facility management fire workers since the passing of Bill 29 were mostly women and people of colour, making this one of the worst blows against pay equity gains ever seen in this province. Health Minister Colin Hansen’s comments, in this context, means that workers have no rights in BC when faced with the agenda of the BC Liberal government to turn the current capitalist crisis into profit. For the capitalist government, the only acceptable wages are the lowest ones possible. These overall attacks began through an attack on those among the most marginalized part of the working class in BC: the women of colour.

The HEU Fights Back

“The lines are drawn in BC today between the government... and labour.” — Peter Mansbridge, CBC anchor, April 29, 04

In the spring of last year, the leadership of the HEU recommended that the membership accept a deal from the employer that included rolled back wages, benefits and working conditions and capped the number of union layoffs at 5,000. In a massively important show of strength and solidarity, the membership rejected the offer. One year later, facing increasing layoffs, the BC Liberal government continued to pressure the union to accept this deal.

When The Deal Was Done

“It seemed that we were on the verge of having a recognition of the importance of workers versus the importance of investors. This deal is a crushing disappointment.” — Christine Arcand, HEU Shop Steward and VGH-HEU local executive member, just after the May 2nd deal was announced by nightfall of April 29th, the day Bill 37 passed, 100 Hydro workers at the WAC Bennett dam in Hudson’s Hope walked of the picket line.

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This is the newspaper of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice

Editorial Board: Shannon Bundock, Mike Krebs, Ali Yerevani, Nasim Sedadghat, Ivan Drury, Rachel Taylor

Editor: Ali Yerevani

Layout & Design: Mike Krebs

Copy Editing: Tamara Hansen

Phone/Fax: (604) 322-1764
Email: info@fire-this-time.org
Mail: PO Box 21607

Vancouver BC

V5L 5G3

Submissions: We welcome articles, letters, and unsolicited submissions. However, we cannot promise publication. Submissions can be made by email, fax, or mail.

The opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of Fire This Time.

This newspaper could not have been possible without the generous contributions from our supporters.

May 2004

Issue 14

Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice
HEU Strikes Back for Workers Rights and Health Care

An Interview with Fred Muzin, President of the BC Hospital Employees Union (HEU)

By Ivan Drury

Since coming to power in 2001, the BC Liberals have been on the destruction of trade unions and the reduction of wages and securities of working and poor people overall. The attacks they have carried out against the HEU have been a cornerstone in their attacks.

A union with a membership of 87% women, a majority of whom are people of colour, the HEU is an obvious starting point for a government that strives to drive back all progressive gains made by working people in this province.

For this reason, much of the provincial fightback against the BC Liberal agenda has also focused around the HEU. When we last interviewed Fred Muzin in February of 2003 (FTT issue #32), he and his union were preparing for a long battle for the rights of their membership. This interview was conducted as part of the beginning of that strike which has been so long coming and has fast become the most important labour struggle in recent BC history. Since this interview was conducted, the strike was legislated to end by the BC Liberals, ruled illegal by the courts and then ended suddenly the night before a massive province-wide walk through a deal between the BC Government, the employer, who has laid off thousands of people in the last three years, and the BC Liberals.

The active support of the membership of the HEU by all poor and working people in BC has also focussed around the HEU. This interview was conducted on the eve of the beginning of that strike that has been so long coming and is continuing to carry out negotiations right now.

Fire This Time: Right now you are in negotiations for some 43,000 workers in BC?

Fred Muzin: That’s right, in the facilities sector in health care.

FTT: And its against the BC Liberal Government, the employer, who has laid off thousands of people in the last three years, and is continuing to carry out these layoffs even under negotiations.

Fred Muzin: Well, they have an ideological agenda. They want to privatize health care; it’s one of the areas where companies believe they can still make a lot of profit. The government does not believe in public services or in any sense of community in our society, so they are trying to drive their agenda. The public sector, and particularly health care, is one of the areas where new Canadians and particularly women have made decent economic gains. They believe that if they can destroy the public sector they can create a very entrenched, rich-poor kind of economy and they can reward their friends who make big political donations. Their view of society is that you have the very rich and then you have virtual slavery for other people. It is straight Margaret Thatcherism.

FTT: Can you give us an update on how HEU is proceeding with negotiations right now?

Fred Muzin: There are no real negotiations. We met with the employer on March 31st after we achieved an 89% strike vote and we expected that there would be some understanding from the employer that if they wanted to avoid disruption of services that they had to better hold off their 109 page concession package. It included things like a wage roll back (anything from $55 a month to 12%), an increase in workweek and decrease wages to 34%, decrease in sick leave benefits, a revised costing for benefits that would cost people $2,000 to $3,000 more a year and it just went on and on and on.

Now, when we met with them after the strike vote, they made some minor moves, but one of the things that was most shocking in their $300 million concessions package was that they decided to eliminate sort of this three-tiered roll back of 55, 8 and 12 and replace it with 9 and a half percent for everybody across the board and a decrease in sick leave benefits, a revised costing for benefits that would cost people $2,000 to $3,000 more a year and it just went on and on and on.

Last week they unilaterally applied for mediation, but when we met with the mediator last Friday they had nothing more to offer. They were in the same entrenched position they were on April 2nd. Why they engaged the mediator is still a mystery to us. We are proceeding along with our plans to take job action because that is the only way to push back against a government that will not listen to any reason, and has absolutely no respect for the public workforce.

FTT: The public sector is one of the fields where women have made gains as far as being able to have a job that has decent wages or livable wages at any rate. Today a Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study was released that shows that women hospital workers in BC today are the lowest paid in Canada, 26% below the national average. Do you think the BC Liberal government is targeting women?

Fred Muzin: I think that by going after health care, where 87% of our members are women, they are. It’s reflective of a whole bunch of moves that this government has made, everywhere from the attacks on child-care to the closing down of Women’s transition centres, to the cost of cutting welfare rates. This is just another example. In effect they want to eliminate pay equity, they do not believe in it. They believe that women should not even be in the work force, they should be at home looking after kids and men and there is no government responsibility.

So, yeah the Campbell government is very misogynist, there is no question about it. That’s one of the reasons they are going so hard after health care workers, is because through a lot of militancy at all levels of the public sector we have been able to try and equal out the huge economic discrimination against women and men workers through agreements.

So yeah, they have targeted us absolutely, there is no question.

FTT: With all these layoffs, the ones that are still going on and the ones through the past three years, what’s going to happen to these women and all these hospital workers? What are their options?

Fred Muzin: There are a number of options. They do get a notice period. It’s six months in one area and you know how the federal government attacked that. Either they apply for jobs with contractors, where men at least are not being hired, but these jobs are paying nine or ten dollars an hour and you simply can’t live on that, and these jobs have no benefits.

So they can basically beg for a job or at some point, when they exhaust their savings, they can go on welfare. There’s re-training but with the numbers of people laid off and the lack of government programs because they don’t want to invest in people, it’s going to be extremely difficult.

FTT: I want to ask you about a controversy over the last couple of years. The conflict between the HEU and the IWA has been going on for about a year now.

Fred Muzin: About a year and a half now.

FTT: Can you tell us in short, what the conflict is about and what it means, not only for you but for the labour movement on the whole in Canada?

Fred Muzin: The controversy is about one local of the IWA, 3567, deciding that they were going to enter into collective bargaining agreements with contractors. They knew that the government was going to contract out services so they went and talked to the government and said let’s negotiate before they had any members

Continued on page 5
On April 29th, the BC Liberals passed unprecedented back to work legislation to force the Hospital Employees Union back on the job with a 15% pay cut and without any job security. Throughout the morning the workers on the picket line were tense, angry and worried, awaiting word from the HEU leadership on how the union was going to respond.

At 12:30pm, the executive came out of their meeting and announced that the HEU had decided to defy the BC Liberal’s legislation by maintaining a ‘Protest Line’ against the back to work order.

Cheers went up from the HEU membership and supporters who remained determined to fight against the concessions package from the employer, the privatization of health care and the legislation that Chris Allnutt, spokesperson for the HEU called ‘draconian and mean-spirited.’

Fire This Time, along with members of Youth Third World Alliance and Mobilization Against War and Occupation have walked the picket (and protest lines) with the defiant membership of the HEU throughout the eight days that it stood. These interviews were done while the strike was still in full swing, while it was still building towards a province-wide walk out of over 200,000 workers bridging the public and private sectors in a massive show of solidarity. This mass-solidarity strike was called off the night before it was to begin through a deal between the BC Federation of Labour, including the executive of the HEU, and the BC Liberal government. However, the words of the workers on the picket line stand as testimony to the tremendous strength of the working class in BC, as around the world. This unity, solidarity and revolutionary potential exists still, even if the strike does not.

Jacquie Janum, Servicing Rep for HEU and Care Aid

What is the membership response to the legislation that passed early this morning ordering the HEU back to work?

I think, from what I have seen on the line today is that people are angry, very angry. This is not a money issue for anybody. It’s a job security issue. They keep contracting out, more and more folk’s keep dropping off and they’re becoming destitute.

As you’ve seen all over the place, people are having to make some really serious household decisions, they can’t pay their mortgages, they’re not getting hired by the contract companies. They’re in dire straits and they’re angry and from what I’ve got so far today people are willing to stand up and defend their positions. They want to stand their ground.

As someone on the ground on the picket lines, who is organizing the pickets around this building [Vancouver General Hospital], what can people who are not HEU members do to support you at this desperate hour?

I think that it is time for people to really look at the effects of what is being imposed on us as going to ripple and have the effect on the rest of the labour movement.

The communities have been very positive and very supportive and coming out. They know that the rates that they [the BC Liberals] are trying to introduce into the province along with the new poverty level, I think that the rest of the labour movement especially, but that everyone across BC should be warned about what is going on.

Sixty percent of the kids of BC are in households where the adults have to make some really serious household decisions, they can’t pay their mortgages.

What is the implication of this protest line for workers rights in this province and for the relationship between unions together against the provincial government?

Workers are standing up to defend public health care. The implications? I don’t know. It’s up to the Liberals. Knowing the Liberals and what they have been doing these last three years, causing chaos all over BC, I don’t think they have any respect for working people. They might take some harsh steps against workers to try to intimidate us, but I think the thousands of healthcare workers across BC understand that enough is enough. What more can they do?

Many of our members are already waiting to get laid off. There is no security left. Under Bill 37 they are forcing the workers to go back to work without any job security. In the past, when they forced the teachers, the doctors, the nurses back to work, at least there was a wage increase there and at least there was job security there.

The Liberals are saying [to us], ‘you have absolutely no right to job security, you have absolutely no right to defend your rights,’ no matter how long you have been working in the industry. That’s unacceptable.

What level of support have you had from other unions in the province?

I was at the New Westminster District Labour Council last night, I spoke to the delegates there and we got a tremendous amount of support from everybody. You can tell from the honking going by on the street here that the support is increasing. The Liberals should wake up. They think that by intimidating HEU the public will support the Liberals, but it’s going the other way, it’s going backfire.

What can people do to help?

I hope that more people will continue to come out to our picket lines, our protest union lines, continue to call their Liberal MLAs and tell them that what they are doing is not acceptable. It is important that we protect our public health care. My message to anyone who is reading this is to please continue to support our health care workers. We need your support. Together we can defeat this BC Liberal agenda.

Thank you Raj.

Ken Elwoorthy, Sheetmetal Workers and Roofers Union

What do you see happening for the HEU after the passing of this bill to work legislation?

This is kind of ridiculous. Now this legislation is being crammed down our throats. This isn’t just affecting us, this is affecting other unions also. You’ve got to remember, if they can do this to us they can do it to anybody else. What’s to stop them from saying, OK, you’re being brought back, and then 2 weeks later to say, ‘Guess what?’ We’ve decided to close your unit down. We’re getting contracted out. There’s no security.

Albert Lee, HEU member

What do you see happening for the HEU after the passing of this bill to work legislation?

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Peter Lake, BC Ferry and Marine Workers Union

How do you see the BC Ferry and Marine Workers Union supporting the HEU in this strike?

Well, I can’t say anything officially, but for the people I work with down on the ships and stuff, we’d be willing to walk, no problem.

So there’s a high sentiment within the BC Ferry and Marine Workers Union about supporting the strike now?

Most definitely. I think the government has shown that if their are going to rip up an agreement and impose a 15% wage reduction, it doesn’t matter what comes out of our binding arbitration, if they don’t like it then they’ll just change it. You know, if they can’t deal with the union fairly then we’ll just have to go out illegally.

Thanks a lot.
The struggle is

Just that it's

level one and two sanctions on the

or four week ago, did impose

wages and benefits for working

labour movement and decent

chosen not to do that because they

these corporations and they have

the same kind of agreements by

Canadian Labour Congress

We did file charges with the

contractors.

the first opportunity to re-organize

period of time, we should have

have an established employment

is our traditional work, that we

they wanted to represent them.

people never got to vote on their

wages, of employment was, for those

employers, one of the conditions

process with the individual health

contracts through the bidding

the company managed to get

into those contracts. Then when

the company managed to get

contracts through the bidding

process with the individual health

employers, one of the conditions

economic. They basically want

really a struggle for justice and

Fred Muzin:

The struggle is

a struggle for justice and
decency. They basically want

to destroy the public health

system, that's where the rich
government cutbacks are, and
deaths are, and the public health

system is despite

the disabled community and

the seniors and the students and

the youth will be a tremendous

Arm and keep people

together fighting side by side.

That's what it's all about, we're

either all going to advance as a

society or we're all going to get

devastated.

F FT: Do you have any closing

comments, anything you want
to say?

Fred Muzin:

Just that it's

very difficult in our bargaining

situation, where the workers are

more committed to the services of

the patients and the residents who

have become like family, when

we're working for supervisors

and bosses who don't care as

much about the work they're

supervising as the people who are

actually providing the services.

A lot of the service that people are

getting through the public health

care system is despite

management that intimidates

and coerces. Because you sort of

see the turmoil going on behind

the scenes, and the tremendous

sacrifice people are making in

order to preserve public services

in a decent way of life for all

Canadians.

If people would be sensitive to

that and understand, and join in

the struggle, that would mean

a tremendous amount. People have
to understand, they talk about

social engineering when you have

social justice government, but this

is the extreme of social

engineering. This is just a cut

above slavery. We don't choose
to live in that kind of society

and government owns, we own it.

It's our society and we have a right
to determine what that society looks

like, how we spend our tax dollars. People

have to be totally determined to

resist, to become in

effect ungovernmentable. If they're not

prepared to become ungovernmentable

then there will be unmerciful people who will control their

society.

That's what the struggle is

really about.

F FT: Thank you very much

Fred. Fred Muzin: Thank-you.

REPEAL THE DEAL!

Stop Privatization, Layoffs and Cuts! Campbell Must Go!

On Monday May 3rd, 2004, hospital

workers across BC were feeling frustra-
tion, disbelief and anger.

Overwhelmingly they rejected the

"deal" that was made late Sunday

night to end the HEU job action and the

massive province wide strikes planned

for Monday May 3rd (which included

over 70,000 CUPE members

walking off the job).

This deal still means over 600 Full Time

Equivalent jobs contracted out, which could amount to over 900 MORE

workers out of jobs. As well it means a 15% wage cut across the board.

In Victoria, HEU workers refused to return to the job. Ferries were stopped,

buses weren't running. In Queenel, the entire city was shut down.

Monday saw incredible community support, with people out on the lines

and at the picket sites across the province.

Stop Privatization, Layoffs and Cuts!

"I think the rest of the labour movement especially, but that everyone

across BC should be worried about what is going on with healthcare. The

contracting out and the privatization just scares me, it scares the hell out

of me."

-HEU worker Thursday April 29th

Launder, food service and janitorial services have already been privatized

and contracted out in BC hospitals. As more jobs are ready to go, people

in BC need to understand that attacks on HEU are the beginning of attacks

against all poor and working people in BC. We must unite for healthcare

and workers rights and justice.

Campbell Must Go!

This Saturday we must unite community members with HEU workers and

support the fight by HEU members against the sellout of our healthcare

system. We must put patients first by defending foundations of healthcare.

We must connect the fight against attacks by the Campbell government with

the struggles of the HEU. As working people, women, people of colour,

refugees, indigenous people, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, seniors,

students, as people under attack the fight alongside HEU is a fight for everyone of us.

With the leadership of HEU rank-and-file members, all working and poor

people in BC must unite in solidarity to demand Repeal the Deal! Stop Privati-

zation, Layoffs and Cuts! Campbell Must Go!

May 2004
Radicalization, Polarization, & Class Struggle in BC: The HEU Deal, Victory or Defeat?

Part 2: After the Deal

Interview With Fred Muzin, HEU President

Immediately Following the Announcement of the Agreement between the HEU and the Liberal Government

By Ivan Drury

May 2nd 2004

What happened tonight?

Fred - We were able to force the government to back down, one of the most right wing governments this country has ever known. We forced them to back down on wholesale, unlimited contracting out. Also, the other part of Bill 37 that people found most offensive was that they were asking people to pay retroactively on a 15% wage decrease. People felt that was just too much. So, practically all of the elements were almost totally eliminated by the government today because of the huge public pressure.

Tomorrow, when you shut down all public services, like schools for instance, you would lose a lot of public support because that really seriously inconveniences people and when the only major thing left in the bill is wages, that becomes whether that is reasonable to shut down the school system and transit just on an issue of straight money. The real motivations have been eliminated. You ask yourself, is it worth going that extra step just for something that can be recovered in future contracts and our estimation is that it would do more damage to our support and our public relations than cutting our losses after having scored a major victory against the Campbell government.

What was the factor of pressure upon you by the recent actions of the provincial government in the courts today?

Fred - The courts were quite strident in condemning us for our illegal actions and they reserved on awarding penalties, that would be in a couple days... but they would be significant if the actions were still going on, were the comments of the justice today.

Also, at any point, because it was an illegal action, employers could start disciplining or firing people. To many, they have not been doing a lot of that, but under the proposal from the government, if we were not to go back to work by 9am tomorrow, we would expect that a lot of employers, and certainly one of the most visible, the provincial health authority, they run Children’s, that it would be at the forefront of victimizing people.

What do you feel was established by the fact that we were able to strike with the levels of support from people and the actions of the membership itself?

Fred - Tremendous sense of solidarity, first of all, our members getting over the issue - cuz health care workers are very committed to patients in residence and providing service and it is very very difficult for them to withdraw services. But the situation that the government left us in without any real ability to defend ourselves through their laws, by collective bargaining, by doing that it violated people so much that people got over the issue of walking out and once they walked out they were not that concerned whether it was legal or illegal because they had been so incredibly offended. And then, um, the out pouring of support from the community and from other unions, broad based support, because people felt we were so unjustly treated. So, building those connections and that solidarity and actually not just rallies but being able to use that and focus that in a very disciplined manner without affecting patients in residence as far as essential services and pushing back against one of the most fascist governments we’ve ever had: it was incredibly empowering.

But the point where now it becomes difficult, because it was so empowering, people have the expectations that anything and everything is achievable whether it is realistic or not. When you come into power the sky is the limit and that’s where leadership sometimes has a hard time bringing things back to reality. It was a very difficult decision tonight, but we feel that decision will have to stand the test of time. But it is a very difficult decision for everyone. Nobody is celebrating that it is a great victory, but that we have been able to stop privatization in health care, or certainly severely limit it, is a major, major achievement.

What do you think the negotiation reached tonight, the deal made tonight means for health care workers in BC?

Fred - In simple terms it means that they will have a job 2 years from now and they will be able to play a major part in getting rid of this government. That’s the big thing, the fact that they will have jobs years from now. Even though it would be very difficult to deal with a 15% wage rollback, and there’s no other way of pressure that you can apply to employers between contracts, especially in areas where we know there’s going to be skills shortages if they apply those 15% wage rollbacks.

There’s other ways. For instance, with the increased backlogs in surgeries and demand for services, you’re going to have to make that up in overtime, because the employers going to have to offer people a lot of overtime now. We don’t know under Bill 37, we’re going to have to make some decisions, but it’s probable that we’re going to be able to avoid the rollbacks they wanted in benefits and super stats and a whole bunch of other things that were in the 109 page shopping list that HSABC put forward.

Basically except for the wages, contract rights will be in place as they were before. The employer wanted to strip them but it looks like we were able to avoid all that.

What do you think the deal means for the labour movement in BC?

Fred - I think the labour movement is quite clear: When public and private sector unions work together, with the community, when people are focussed, are determined, when they are prepared to engage in principled action, legal or illegal, you can fight back and you can win.

Solidarity does work and when we agree on what the objective is and work towards it and put some of our differences aside, that is the best way to achieve real gain for civil society. I think it has been very empowering and I think it will change the labour movement.

The other thing is that there was a real outpouring of grassroots membership pushing their leadership to areas where at the start of this, many of the leaders were not willing to go. Basically, when people being empowered, push the people at the head of the leadership, you can make great things.

Honestly, tonight I have spoken to a lot of people who are really angry about the deal. A lot of hospital workers who are on the line who are responding with feelings of betrayal. They see this betrayal predominately by the Fed, but also by the executive of the HEU. How do you respond to that anger?

Fred - I think at this point people don’t have the full information to what moves the government was forced to make. For instance, I don’t think they have a full understanding of the cap on contracting out or what that means for their job security. That will take a while before they completely understand.

I also think they had the impression that we were in bargaining. So they think that we
Interviews from May 2nd:
On the lines at VGH and St. Pauls just after the news of the ‘Deal’

Sam, HEU member on the picket line at VGH

Were up here on the night of May 2nd and I just heard about what just happened here tonight? Sam- Just very very very disappointed, we’ve been out here for a week now going in to these negotiations we were told and we told everybody that there was no more contracting out. We’ve been down the road, basically by the time we’re not talking about cancelling surgeries and people have to wait longer for surgeries. We’re concerned about the health care but this strike had to be done. Thank you.

Guy, Porter at the BC Cancer Agency

Guy- I’m not sure exactly what went down yet and I can’t say that I’m completely sure about anything actually. It’s just going down tomorrow because I haven’t really talked to the rank and file co-workers who don’t work during the weekend. I work at the cancer agency which is kind of shut down on the weekend.

So I don’t have my co-workers to mess this up to me. These people are themselves and their opinion is going to be there and the opinion is going to be ours. I have heard that Victoria’s not planning on going back on in Victoria. General before. Then what happens is that, this is going to go on a little while ago. What the reaction really is going to be tomorrow morning is going to be decisive. In the coal in the decision is going to be in front of the line that says ‘you know what, I’m sorry, you’re making a mistake’. I don’t know who’s making the decisions here: the BC Fed, if they’re the ones making the decisions, are unfortunately not health care workers so they are just the same as the public in this particular situation.

The BC Fed and all the other unions are public people. They are not health care workers. Hospital workers are telling you unequivocally that your health care system is going down the toilet, they really want to go. Well, that’s fine. The simple fact is, like you mentioned before, our little paper here, we lost 5,000,000 workers did the cleaning and did food services etc... We know inside the hospital the damage that is being caused by this new service provider. We are the second layer of your infection control safety system in your health care system. We are now being targeted for privatization just like the first layer.

Once this government manages to take out the second layer, you will be saying goodbye to your health care system. Because there will be no one to remember how cleaning used to be, how cleaning should be, how it’s going to be by its very nature to have this done in the first place. You’ve got until October of this year to recall the people from the small area that I was in and the people in the big area. You don’t have much time to think about that or do anything. I was down in the area and I’m not going to want to bring them back. But if you don’t get back in there and start talking, what would happen is the exact same health care system as in the UK.

If you want information on how the UK health care system is suffering go to the auditor general of Scotland and type in hospital cleaning. You will get reams of information of why they are desperately trying to bring back in house cleaning. They need 250,000 bed days a year to run a smooth health care system they are losing 500,000 bed days a year to hospital acquired infections. In other words, hospitals can’t get clean enough, to prevent people from getting secondary diseases when they are in the hospital so this occupies 500,000 bed days a year that could be better served treating people who come in for surgery. We’re concerned about the health care but this strike had to be done. Thank you.

Alan, Maintenance Electrican

Alan- I’ve been a maintenance electrician for 27 years here at the hospital and have held various positions on the executive over 26 of those years.

How do you feel about what happened tonight with the deal made by the HEU and the BC Fed with the Provincial Government?

Alan- Well, I’ve been around for 26 years and there was a part of me that, because of my experience, I felt that there was as distinct possibility that this is the way it would all come about. But there was part of me, in my heart, there was a part of me that I wanted to see us be prepared to go it alone and oppose the government and what the government has been doing to organized labour ever since they took office three years ago with the loss of jobs for drivers and with BCGEU and impromptu contracts. I see this as a real black day for democracy and the concept of negotiations and coming to a consensus. When they just impose a contract on us, by decree, coming from the government, they’re taking on - I mean, I’ve always felt the definition of a democracy was the consent of the governed... and that isn’t what is happening here.

I know that the people who voted certainly didn’t vote for Campbell based on the platform he presented but now he’s campaigning for premier. If he told us that this was what we were in for, he neither would have had it. What do you think should have happened differently with the happen to your members? I think they’re going to lick their wounds, and according to the agreement that said we were going to still going to lose 600 more people. We’re in a sort of strategic retreat with this government, we’re going to come up for elections in 2005. Hopefully the people in this province wake up and start participating in the democratic process and stop wanting their time supporting corrupt hockey players and overpaid hockey players.

I always feel that young people shouldn’t be aspiring to greed and corruption, but should aspire to really serve the interest of their fellow man and neighbours. My philosophy has always been ‘look after your brother’ and ‘I am my brother’s keeper’. I know that sounds like a cliche and I think like a dinosaur but I really enjoy talking to young people and I enjoy inspiring young people like yourself and people in your group that I have spoken to. That’s what I was here for. I was over on his strike thinking about the young people who are going to take our jobs, once I retire, they’d have a job that they could make a decent living and have a nice family and continue the process of making a community strong and rich and have some dignity and integrity.

Thank you.

Sharlynn, Nurse at VGH

What is your impression of what happened tonight with the deal that happened with the provincial government?

Sharlynn- Devastating. I just got picked up from work and I was all excited about tomorrow. I was glad that I wasn’t working. And I just heard from Deb McPherson, a nurse, not to support the strike because they’re corrupt. And I thought ‘that’s bullshit’ and I was going to go anyway and maybe have a sign that said ‘BCNU where are you?’ or something like that. It’s awful.

Continued on page 8
What do you think is going to happen to you and your HEU members?

Raphael- I think it mainly affects women and immigrant women of colour and I think they are going to lose themselves. As a young white guy, I have more opportunities, even if I get screwed by my contract. I feel that I

What do you think is going to happen to essential workers who've been trashed in this province recently?

Raphael- We still have to fight for our rights and still have to stand for ourselves. That’s all it can say.

Thank you.

Christine, IHEU’s Shop Steward

My Name is Christine, I work in Health Records at VGH, for 14 years, and I’m a Shop Steward here. I’ve been a nurse for 26 years and recently I’ve been working on the Essential Services Committee for B.C.

Should we simply basic, what are your feelings when the news came down today?

Christine: We’ll be addressing this personally that I’m personally very disappointed. I think the loss of the pay equity for nurses and I think workers who’ve been trapped in this province since Campbell came in and even before we were really feeling energized, enthusiastic and feeling a pride in themselves again.

One of the most interesting things about working on the essential services is seeing that they’re – when people come in, they’re not coming in hoping that they’ll be essential – They were hoping that they weren’t so that they could join their fellows out on the picket line and they could get heard. Well people who do other jobs in a short time they weren’t concerned about money they were concerned about a sense of solidarity and the increasing sense of pride in their work and seeing people with a spring in their step knowing that they could go out and join the picket line, it was quite inspiring to me and it made me feel like the world had changed.

I’m really glad that you’re doing this interview because one of the reasons why there has been so much opposition out there on part of the public that things can’t change is because of the concentration of corporate media and we don’t hear about all these people’s lives I’ve seen in here and you’ve seen elsewhere and the people who are, y’know, at events the attendance and importance of those events are downplayed and not given publicity and so the people who don’t know about this and your getting most of your information from corporate media that things are inevitable.

And I don’t think Gordon Campbell is mortal, I think Gordon Campbell is immortal, I think Gordon Campbell is immortal because people can say what they want to say about him. I think he’s got a spring in his step knowing that they could go out and join the picket line, it was quite inspiring to me and it made me feel like the world had changed.

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War, Occupation, and Labour

Iraqi Workers the Backbone of Resistance

By Shannon Bundock

“As on 6th December 2003. US troops raided IFTU’s [Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions] temporary headquarters (the Transport & Communication Union offices) and arrested 8 IFTU leaders who were subsequently released without charge. However the offices have been vandalised and closed down by the US troops and remain locked out of use.” – Abdallah Muhin, London Representative of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions

Under the US-led occupation independent union organizing is illegal in Iraq. Organizers are beaten and shot. Workers demonstrations are attacked and dozens are arrested. The US Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), headed by Paul Bremer, refuses to negotiate with unions, refuses to respond to their demands and in particular refuses to recognize the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions.

Despite these conditions, despite the fatal threats facing them, Iraqi workers have established a nation-wide union federation. Dozens of unions have been established and they are constantly on the streets in action to improve the lives of Iraqi people and to gain sovereignty.

Why US Cannot and Will Not Respond in the Interest of Iraqi People

From the economic interventions of the US so far, their interests and agenda are clear. Iraqi companies and workers are repeatedly denied contracts to rebuild infrastructure, and American corporations are given primary control over bids for “reconstruction.” According to reports, 138 of 600 state-owned enterprises have already been offered for sale. According to the occupying forces, stabilizing the political situation in Iraq means opening up contracts for Western owned companies. This shift in the Iraqi economy in the favour of US interests is inherently against the interests of the Iraqi people.

In reality, stability is a distant goal for the occupation forces. The process of privatization in Iraq is being met with fervent opposition across the country. Those who have jobs in Iraqi predict that the selling off of Iraq’s resources and industry will mean job losses, pay cuts and the deterioration of living standards. This prediction has roots in the realities of millions of poor and working people across the globe who face layoffs, wage rollbacks and loss of benefits when the neo-liberal agenda of privatization is implemented.

Unemployment and Poverty

“The problems they face are immense; between 50%-70% unemployment; rampant inflation; a deteriorating security situation; infrastructure in ruins; not to mention the illegal occupation of their country by the US/UK who are busy trying to impose a neo-liberal economic agenda which no Iraqi ever voted for.” – Alex Gordon National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers, RMT (UK)

The Iraqi people are faced with completely unreliable and inadequate electricity service, no consistent access to clean water and skeletal, at best basic, social services. The major schools and hospitals that are in crisis, and workers have no stability or job security. In conditions where many people cannot leave their homes for fear of being arrested, shot and/or killed, normal working life is crippled and incredible poverty dominates the lives of both employed and unemployed Iraqis.

“...The CPA administered ration (previously supervised by the UN’s World Food Programme) is what most Iraqi families still survive on. The ration, worked out at 250 ID (12c) per person, per month, consists of rice, flour, pulses, cooking oil, tea, sugar and fluctuating amounts of powdered milk. Without the ration, families simply wouldn’t survive. As it is, malnutrition and anaemia are rife. Eight hundred thousand children under five years old are chronically malnourished...” - Ewa Jasiewicz. Occupation Watch, Baghdad

Seven to eight million Iraqi people are

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A young Iraqi chants at rally in Baghdad against the occupation, March 19th 2004.

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After One Year:

Why Have US, UK Failed in Iraq?

By Mike Krebs

“Our military commanders will take whatever action is necessary to secure Fallujah on behalf of the Iraqi people,” US President George W. Bush, April 29th 2004.

This statement by George Bush is a lie, pure and simple. In the wake of a whole month of mass bloodshed in Fallujah, where hospitals estimate that up to 1000 Iraqis have been killed since the massacre began, it is clear to the people of Iraq that the US imperialist occupiers have done nothing for their benefit. The above statement by Bush is only the most recent of a series of lies used by the US government to justify their completely unjustifiable occupation of Iraq. Along with these lies, as the occupation continues the US and the other imperialist countries involved in the occupation of Iraq find themselves in deeper and deeper crisis. With more than 115 US soldiers killed in combat this month — more than the number killed in the three weeks it took the US-led forces to topple Saddam – the Iraqi resistance is creating more and more problems for the US government. The resistance is hindering the US government’s ability to secure Iraq for the plundering of its wealth, resources, and people.

Though the US is dealing with many problems on many fronts in Iraq, the US, and internationally, legitimacy is the fundamental problem facing the US in maintaining the brutal occupation of Iraq.

1st Breach of Legitimacy: A War Based on Lies and Deception

Even if the US had a winning argument for war before it launched its invasion of Iraq in March of 2003, the potential legitimacy of any of these arguments has been completely shattered in the last year by the reality of the situation in Iraq. All of the reasons given by the Bush administration and its supporters for a war on Iraq have turned out to be completely false. The embarrassing search for “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq is almost never brought up anymore by spokespeople for the US government, and it is clear that the only place that weapons of mass destruction can be found in Iraq is in the hands of the occupying military forces. These include 5000 bombs that have been dropped on Fallujah in the last few weeks, as a part of the siege by the US marines, which they call ‘Operation Iron Resolve.’

In addition to the nowhere-to-be found weapons of mass destruction, the excuse of the need to invade Iraq in order to ‘oust the Saddam regime’ also no longer holds any weight, as Saddam himself has been sitting in

in US hands for many months now. At this point, the only potential for a return to power of other former Ba’ath party leaders is if the US gives them jobs in the new ‘transitional’ Iraqi government and military, which it started to talk about in mid-April in a desperate attempt to dig themselves out of the
**How to Fight Against Terrorism: US: UK Out of Iraq!**

**By Ivan Drury**

[Terrorism is] The systematic use of coercive intimidation, usually to service political ends. It is used to create and exploit a more readily generalisable immediate victims of the violence, and to publicize a cause, as well as to coerce a target population to the terrorists' aims. Terrorism can be used on its own or as part of a wider and unconventional war.

"One basic distinction is between state and factional terror. The former has been vastly more lethal and has often been an antecedent to, and a contributory cause of, factional terrorism." – From the Norton Dictionary of Modern Thought, 1999

The airline bombing of the World Trade Centre and Pentagon and the national security of the United States has been President George Bush's final reasoning for every attack the US has carried out since 9-11. The death of some 3,000 people on the East Coast of the US was only the beginning of the terrorist attacks the people of the world have been pounded with every since.

At every turn, the 'War on Terror' has been the watchword of US imperialism; but the question arises: how can terrorism be defeated? People living under the daily terror of bullets and bombs know that the constant threat of war know what the US ruling class knows perfectly well but cannot and will not say. The US is the biggest terrorist group and the most terrible threat to security in the whole world, so to end terrorism we must end US imperialism.

**What happened on 9-11?**

"Historical data show a strong correlation between US involvement in international situations and an increase in terrorist attacks against the US" – US Department of Defense study, 1997

US Commissioner Thomas H. Kean was the other bold witness of the congressional hearings on 9-11 as "an indictment of the FBI for over a long period of time." In fact these hearings are not the exception for US imperialism, but rather the rule. Throughout the world, from the Middle East to Africa to SE Asia to Latin America to oppressed nations within the US itself, the use of terror to coerce and force working, poor and oppressed people to give up their rights, securities and lives has been the foundation of the capitalist system in crisis.

George Bush is right, there is no peace while half the world lives on less than $2 a day, 1.3 billion people have no access to clean drinking water. And there will be no peace as long as US imperialism uses every method of terror imaginable, from bombs to structural adjustment plans, to keep the world that way. It is not a wonder that 9-11 happened, it is a wonder and a testimony to the solidarity of the people of the colonial and semi-colonial world with working, poor and oppressed people in the US that it did not happen sooner and does not happen more often.

Unfortunately, these terrorist attacks are not the exception for US imperialism, but the rule. Throughout the world, from the Middle East to Africa to SE Asia to Latin America to oppressed nations within the US itself, the use of terror to coerce and force working, poor and oppressed people to give up their rights, securities and lives has been the foundation of the capitalist system in crisis.

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The War on Terror is a War on the People of the World.

"It's clear that the economic costs of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon have helped worsen a global recession in ways that not only have had a major impact on the US economy, but have hurt the world" – Anthony Cordesman, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS - a Washington based rightwing think-tank), December 27, 2001

"The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th and still goes on." – George W. Bush, May 1, 2000

The argument that the ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’ (WMD) in Iraq don't exist does not even have to be made any more, that much has been made clear by the US's complete failure in discovering them. So, since he did not possess WMD, Saddam Hussein could not have been a threat to the national security of the US. So why did the US bomb and invade Iraq and why are they still there? - George Bush explained on April 5th, 2004, "As we were beginning to recover from the recession, the enemy hit us... And it hurt us. It hurt us economically. Our economy lost nearly 1 million jobs in three months after we were attacked."

In fact, it was not ‘terrorism’ that caused the capitalist crisis that US capitalists still grapple with, it was a global capitalist crisis of overproduction. This crisis opened a new era for the US ruling class, as well as for imperialists around the world. The era of war and occupation that we have witnessed amidst this crisis is the strategy that the US has used to compete with their imperialist rivals, namely: France, Germany and other imperialist countries.

Faced with this crisis and falling economic strength, the means of terror that the US had preferred to use in Iraq and everywhere (economic intervention and ‘covert operations’) were not enough to fight against other imperialists’ strategies and tactics "get through the crisis", the US had to invade Iraq in order to take control of its rich resources, install a puppet-regime and end the terrorist militarily for use as a base of operations in the Middle East against its rival imperialist powers.

When Bush states that the US will stay in Iraq until the job he is referring to. Entirely to the credit of the people of Iraq, this ‘job’ is failing miserably.

The US’s ‘War on Terror’ has Failed

The April assault on Fallujah is nothing new for the US. Lacking any sort of strategy to deal with the economic crisis they are facing globally, the US has brought the same crisis to the people of Iraq. Faced with daily terrorist attacks from the occupying forces, on top of skyrocketing unemployment, poverty, and a lack of drinkable water and dependable electricity in most parts of Iraq, the Iraqi people have responded with resistance. The US has been unable to solve these crises, brought on by capitalist plunder, greed and overproduction, at home in the US or anywhere in the world and they cannot solve these problems for the Iraqi people. In the Norton Dictionary of Modern Thought, the definition of terrorism includes: “Once regimes and factions decide that their opponents’ actions justify them in unrestrained retaliation, they tend to become locked in a spiral of terror and counter-terror.” In the case of the US, the mightiest military in the world, this spiral is self-contained. One terrorist action does not solve the problems that the one before it caused so they must act with yet another to suppress the results. Of course, as in Fallujah, the eventual response to this suppression and terror has been resistance.

In the month of April in Fallujah alone, up to a thousand innocent people have been murdered by this spiraling imperialism.

This method, the endless suppression of injustice with the force of terror, cannot last. The resistance against, which has sprung up in Fallujah is growing, with thousands of ordinary people taking up arms to defend themselves against the occupying forces. It is growing in response to the oppression of US imperialist occupation and war and it is rapidly developing as a mass movement from Fallujah to Najaf to the rest of Iraq because the resistance is winning.

The movement that is developing is far different from an al Qaeda network and it is far more threatening to the US goal of global military, political and economic dominance that they need in order to survive as the number one imperialist power. The danger that the US fears far more than individual ‘terrorist’ attacks is the development of this mass anti-imperialist movement in the colonial and semi-colonial world that has the power to end the occupation of Iraq, spread internationally, and defeat imperialism altogether.

Create Two, Three, Many Fallujas

"The terrorists hate our country, they hate our freedom, they hate everything we stand for in the world!" – US Vice President Dick Cheney

Dick Cheney is right, people living under US occupation do hate everything that he stands for. The population of the United States, stands for in the world. We all must fight against it and in support of the Iraqi resistance against the US occupation, the theft of resources and wealth of the third world and the imperialist force of terrorism.

**US marines carry out house-to-house searches in a village near Fallujah,**
April 2004.

Imperialism is Terrorism

"A world where some live in comfort and plenty, while half the human race lives on less than $2 a day is neither just nor stable." – US President George W. Bush, July 2001

In 1991 the US began a full scale war on the people of Iraq to defend its imperial interests housed in its more than friendly relationship with Kuwait. Between 21,000 and 35,000 people died in this direct terrorist attack to knock all of Iraq back in line with US interests.

Following the ‘Gulf War’, the US imposed severe sanctions on Iraq through the United Nations. Under these sanctions a million people, half of them children, died. Throughout this period, from just prior to the Gulf War to the end of the imposed sanctions (the second US invasion of Iraq in 2002), the effects of the US terrorist campaign was felt by the people of Iraq who they now claim to defend. Prior to 1991, the per capita income of people in Iraq was $4,000 a year. Ten years later, this annual income had fallen to $150, or approximately 42 cents a day.

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Continued on page 10
By Brennan Luchinger

“They seem to underplay it a lot...they think the war is over...it’s not...it’s getting worse and worse...” – Private First Class Tristan Wyatt

Since March 2003 when the bombing of Iraq began, to May 2003, when major combat was officially declared “over”, one thing remains visually visible through the thin veil of the US administration. The war is not over. This month (April 2004) has seen some of the heaviest combat since the US led occupation began. Beginning with the siege of Fallujah, and more recently the attacks on Najaf, the occupation coalition is being met by fierce Iraqi resistance. The effects of continuing this occupying occupation are being felt from Iraq to the US. Low troop morale has been reported among three-quarters of the occupying forces, and a strong anti-war sentiment has developed among soldiers and their family members at home. The immorality of the war is now inherent in the situation where US troops are filing for conscientious objector status, and many are heading across the border to claim refugee status in Canada.

The resistance that is facing the US army can be traced back to that of the initial invasion, and US troops are stuck in the middle of the quagmire that US imperialism has created. The force required to maintain control in the face of the popular resistance is gigantic, which is adding to pressure being put on US and other coalition forces.


In Iraq, the US is in a position that is similar to that of US imperialism in Afghanistan. The exposure of prohibited photographs is causing US imperialists to lose their manipulated image of a war already won. With more and more soldiers returning to the US, the US administration is finding hard for imperialists to legitimize their occupation of Iraq to the American public. That is the main reason why the US government has been trying so hard to increase troop morale. In order to maintain control in Iraq, the US is understanding that the American ruling class is forced to downplay the war on Iraq. The exposure of photos of US coffins returning home has struck a huge blow at the efforts of the ruling class to convince Americans that the war ended in May of 2003.

Statements made by a spokesperson for the Pentagon that the policy of censoring photos is to protect the interests of families of the dead. However, the facts prove that the possibility of these photos generating momentum for a movement against the war is strong. Troops from Iraq has the ruling class scared.

Iraq protest against the abuse, torture, and killing of prisoners by US occupation forces at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, May 2004.

US Soldiers Object to War on Iraq

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US Soldiers Object to War on Iraq

By Brennan Luchinger

“They seem to underplay it a lot...they think the war is over...it’s not...it’s getting worse and worse...” – Private First Class Tristan Wyatt

Since March 2003 when the bombing of Iraq began, to May 2003, when major combat was officially declared “over”, one thing remains visually visible through the thin veil of the US administration. The war is not over. This month (April 2004) has seen some of the heaviest combat since the US led occupation began. Beginning with the siege of Fallujah, and more recently the attacks on Najaf, the occupation coalition is being met by fierce Iraqi resistance. The effects of continuing this occupying occupation are being felt from Iraq to the US. Low troop morale has been reported among three-quarters of the occupying forces, and a strong anti-war sentiment has developed among soldiers and their family members at home. The immorality of the war is now inherent in the situation where US troops are filing for conscientious objector status, and many are heading across the border to claim refugee status in Canada.

The resistance that is facing the US army can be traced back to that of the initial invasion, and US troops are stuck in the middle of the quagmire that US imperialism has created. The force required to maintain control in the face of the popular resistance is gigantic, which is adding to pressure being put on US and other coalition forces.


In Iraq, the US is in a position that is similar to that of US imperialism in Afghanistan. The exposure of prohibited photographs is causing US imperialists to lose their manipulated image of a war already won. With more and more soldiers returning to the US, the US administration is finding hard for imperialists to legitimize their occupation of Iraq to the American public. That is the main reason why the US government has been trying so hard to increase troop morale. In order to maintain control in Iraq, the US is understanding that the American ruling class is forced to downplay the war on Iraq. The exposure of photos of US coffins returning home has struck a huge blow at the efforts of the ruling class to convince Americans that the war ended in May of 2003.

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The Struggle of Iraqi Workers

From page 10

unemployed. Those who do have jobs have no guarantee of how long those jobs will last, or even if they will be paid. Under the Coalition Provisional Authority, bonuses, profit sharing and housing subsidies that once helped Iraqi workers survive on substandard wages, have vanished. In combination with the rising cost of imports, most workers have sunk deeper into poverty.

Workers Under Attack

“When we talked to the manager, he told us he had to talk to the oil ministry, which had too high a ranking. We did not have the right language were to be stripped away, the reality of their working conditions. The massive unemployment, and shoddy reconstruction coupled with massive post-war profit for U.S. companies might prove to be revealing.

Reconstruction or War Profiteering?

The reconstruction of Iraq’s major infrastructure including schools, sewers, and water systems is being handled by the California based company Bechtel, which has also awarded the contract to repair the damaged power system. The contract was awarded just prior to the so-called Coalition’s lawlessness, and yet most of Iraq still suffers from an average of 16 hours without power, daily. In addition, after 12 months of Bechtel being on the job, Iraq’s power sector is only producing at between 25% – 30% of its full capacity. This is required. The repair of schools and sewers seems to be progressing just as slowly, if not more so. Repairs of substandard equipment, incomplete repairs, and cheap replacement structures in schools are frequently being documented. These shoddy reconstruction efforts however do not prevent Bechtel from collecting the $1 billion it was awarded for the contract, as well as the possible $20 billion it stands to receive from future contracts. Halliburton, the Texas based oil company, seems to be faring no better with its contract to revamp the Iraq’s oil industry. While the repair of oil refineries is impeded by both the failure to provide electricity and continued attacks by the resistance. It is also slowed by Halliburton’s choice to import oil from Turkey and Kuwait, an operation that provides them with significantly more profit (to the tune of $56 billion so far) than repairing Iraq’s oil infrastructure.

War on Working and Poor People

Despite the claims of new jobs for Iraq’s the current unemployment rate stands at about 70%. Those that are lucky enough to have jobs are paid by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) with the majority making their minimum wage of $60/mo minority up $120. Of the $87 billion coughed up by U.S. congress for the reconstruction of Iraq, absolutely zero has been allocated for workers or the unemployed. Recently, 300 Iraqi police walked off the job citing low wages as their cause for quitting. Working conditions are proving to be just as wretched as the wages, as the average shift at the Al Daura oil refinery creeps from 11 to 13 hours per day. Since workers are paid by the month, they do not receive overtime pay. Indeed to make up for the horrible standard of living, Al Daura has been giving workers motor oil, in hopes that they may be able to sell it on the street. In addition, years of U.S. led sanctions have left factories with dated and dangerous machinery and the absence of necessary safety equipment. Attempts by Iraqi workers to organize unions (which are still illegal under the occupation) and demonstrations have been met with punishment, such as the arrest of 21 union leaders demonstrating outside occupation headquarters.

Private “Security” or Mercenaries

Perhaps the most atrocious effect of private enterprise in Iraq has been the utilization of private security contractors or mercenaries. Approximately 15,000 private military contractors work in the region right now, protecting U.S. business interests as employees of the reconstruction companies or the CPA itself. These mercenaries are not held accountable for human rights abuses in the same way that troops or military officers are. They are essentially given free reign to shoot at will or even carry out large scale attacks. This was particularly evident when Blackwater launched its own attack following the killing of four Americans in Fallujah, where the security company flew in its own helicopters to re-supply its commandos.

No Choice But To Resist

The CPA has passed orders allowing for 100% of Iraq’s businesses to be foreign owned, and American companies continue to make millions while Iraq’s starve, look for work, get shot, and starve some more. The so-called handover of civil control to the U.S’s handpicked Iraqi Governing Council on June 30th offers no hope for the population, as it will in no way end the military occupation or exploitation of the Iraqi people and their territory. The Governing Council has proven that the only real power it can exercise in the region is to pick a new flag. With countries getting worse, and the future looking bleak, more and more Iraqis have no other choice than to resist the current occupation by fighting for their own political, and economic self-control. Working people and all anti-war, anti-occupation activists must demand USUK CORPORATIONS OUT OF IRAQ, and END THE COLONIAL OCCUPATION NOW!
The Illegitimacy of the US-led Occupation of Iraq

From page 10

One year of occupation in Iraq has proven that the US government’s claims about ‘bringing democracy’ to Iraq are nonsense. The US-drafted ‘constitution’ for Iraq is a sham, and this was obvious within days of its signing on March 8th, as it has little or no input from the Iraqi people. The US imposed Council heavily criticized the constitution, and as a result the signing was delayed by almost a week.

The Governing Council itself has represented nothing but further failures for the US-led occupation and its crisis of legitimacy. Even by the admission of many US officials themselves, the Council holds no real authority or support among Iraqis. On top of this, support for US policy by the Governing Council itself has dropped significantly, especially over the recent mass killings in Fallujah. Three members of the council have resigned in protest, and the only remaining member, Ghazi Al-Yawer, describes the US Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) established the Governing Council as “a travesty to provide an Iraqi face for the occupation.”

The US-led occupation forces have only provided enough money to repair 3, 400 of these schools and build 3, 500 housing units. The conditions of hospitals in Iraq are one indicator of the many aspects of the US-led occupation. In an article from February 21st 2004 a reporter from the British newspaper The Independent reported, “in Iraq’s hospitals, children are dying because of shockingly poor sanitation and a shortage of medical equipment. In Baghdad’s premier children’s hospital, Al-Iksan, sewage drips from the roof of the premature babies’ ward, leaving from waste pipes above.” The article went on to state that the rate of secondary infections in hospitals is 80 percent, meaning that 4 in every 5 Iraqis who even come into a hospital. This is the leading cause of death in many of Iraq’s hospitals.

The US-led occupation forces have failed to improve the basic living conditions for Iraqis, and in fact they have gotten worse since the occupation began. It is any wonder, under these conditions, that Iraqi resistance to this brutal occupation has steadily increased.

In an interview with Reuters on April 28th 2004 the US military in Iraq, outlined the US efforts to suppress the people of Iraq. According to Major General Dempsey, the commander of the 1st Armored Division in Iraq, roughly 10% of Iraq’s security forces were working against U.S. troops during the recent resistance in Iraq, and an additional 10% percent walked off the job because they refused to participate in the massacre of fellow Iraqis in Fallujah.

In addition to the failure of the US government to set up even remotely democratic institutions in Iraq, the US-led occupation forces have also repeatedly suppressed democratic rights of Iraqis to free expression and association. This includes the shutting down of newspapers, refusing to recognize Iraq-organized labour unions, raiding union headquarters, and the routine arrest of political leaders against or even critical of the occupation. This is more evidence of why the US administration’s claims that it wanted to establish ‘democracy’ in Iraq were, and continue to be, completely false.

The astonishing level of energy that the US has put into the brutal measures that Iraqis face under the US-led occupation. Most Iraqis remain without adequate access to clean water or electricity. Over 11,000 Iraqs are in need of repair, and according to estimates by the Coalition Provisional Authority, 3.4 million housing units need to be built. So far the occupation forces have only provided enough money to repair 3, 400 of these schools and build 3, 500 housing units.

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Iraqis mourn nine resistance fighters killed near Najaf, April 27th 2004.

As the people of Iraq are seeing every day, the US-led occupation can only bring more destruction as the imperialist occupiers attempt to dig themselves out of the world economic crisis through the super-exploitation of Iraq. It is only through establishing their own institutions, and creating their own government by way of a constituent assembly, that self-determination for Iraqis will be achieved. The ability of the people of Iraq to organize themselves has been demonstrated with the labour unions and regional councils they have already formed. These demonstrations of their ability to organize are on top of the widespread resistance that occurs by everyday Iraqis in their hospitals and schools and to try and improve the conditions that are being imposed on them by the US-led occupation.

For real sovereignty to happen, the occupation of Iraq must end at all levels. We must demand an end to the occupation in Iraq, to the occupation led by the US or the UN, whether it is ‘unilateral’ or ‘multilateral’. This includes the military occupation itself as well as the Coalition Provisional Authority, we must demand ALL TROOPS OUT NOW!

The destruction in Iraq brought on by the US-led occupation should also serve as a warning to the rest of the world that the super-exploited people worldwide of the path that imperialists are leading us on. The US-led occupation has forced Iraqis to participate in new occupations in the coming decades. We must extend the struggle against war and occupation, and in the holy city of Najaf, (which would almost surely create a wave of Iraqi resistance) the established Shi’ite leadership will turn over Sadr to them. As suicidal as this current movement is, the US-led occupation forces, with the failure to establish legitimacy on any front, is the only way the US can continue the occupation of Iraq. The brutal and relentless bloodshed being carried out right now in Iraq is imperialism in its most naked form. Mark Kimmitt, the US’s top representative for the US military in Iraq, outlined this US strategy in an interview with the press in April 2004: “The US-led occupation forces will continue to look for the political track to go forward as long as it shows promise.” When it no longer shows promise we will take alternative means.”

Self-Determination: The Only Legitimate Solution for The People of Iraq

The US-led occupation of Iraq is not, and has never been, a ‘democratic’ one. The year after the war began, the US has not established any ‘democratic’ institutions in Iraq, nor has it improved the economic and living conditions in the country. If you are one of the many people to come to Iraq is killed, tortured, and terrorized. The US Council for Iraqi Resistance has with violence showing that the occupiers are the US-led occupation. As suicidal as this current movement is, the US-led occupation should also serve as a warning to the rest of the world that the super-exploited people worldwide of the path that imperialists are leading us on. The US-led occupation has forced Iraqis to participate in new occupations in the coming decades. We must extend the struggle against war and occupation, and

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The situation of women in Afghanistan, in my view, is succeeding. Progress has been noteworthy, especially when measured against the level of effort and resources devoted to Afghanistan,” – Zalmay Khalilzad, US Ambassador and special envoy to Afghanistan.

Based on this quote, it is clear that Ambassador Khalilzad’s definition of “success” achieved in Afghanistan relative to the money and resources committed is not based on reality and is absolutely misleading. Between 2001 and 2005, between the cost of humanitarian assistance and military expenditure, more than 10 billion dollars was spent on Afghanistan. On April 1, 2004 at the Berlin Donor Conference a total of $4.5 billion was pledged, with $4.5 billion for the first year.

The majority of international aid met this $4.5 billion. The US military operations hunting down Osama Bin Laden and others, to no avail, while Afghans live in abandoned cars, cramped by the hundreds, in the ruins of buildings, the vast majority unemployed and starving. Success for who?

The war the United States began in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 has never ended. Instead, it has gone through the stages of invasion, cluster bombing and mines, through the establishment of a shaky occupation, with force being added in vain by NATO troops led by Canada, and on and on to the implanting of the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA), a weak puppet government with no popular legitimacy. Throughout the past 2 ½ years since the invasion and occupation, Afghanistan has seen no possibility of stability for her people. There has been no progress in rebuilding the thousands of homes, schools and hospitals that have been destroyed, and certainly, there has been no government capable of leading the Afghan people anywhere but deeper into the tragedy of the occupation.

Afghan Women and Children: Suffering and Death

“There is not a village in Farah where a young woman has not burned herself to death.” – Nazir Shah, father of a 26-year old woman who committed suicide by burning herself to death.”

Their desperate situation is seen in the tragedy of the number of women committing suicide by self-immolation. This has increased in recent months and has also spread across several provinces. Anecdotal evidence suggests that several hundred young women are burning themselves to death every year in western Afghanistan. These suicides are becoming more common among educated women, especially former refugees who have returned from Iran and who have grown accustomed to a freer life there. There have been several documented cases of nurses teachers burning themselves to death in Herat, just 100km from the Afghan-Iranian border. Suraya Sohah Rang, Deputy Women’s Minister, has said, “Women in this country are in a completely unsustainable situation, with forced marriages, families selling their daughters to pay drug debts, women being beaten all the time.” The Afghan Human Rights Commission has also stated “women have always burned themselves, because they have always been so bullied but this phenomenon was never as prevalent as it is today.

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups suffering under the chaos of the occupation. Many young children are being killed in the violent and unstable conditions of foreign occupation, there has been a growing epidemic of child kidnappings for the purposes of trafficking as labour abroad. In late 2003, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) released a report, “Trafficking in Persons”, stating that there are additional forms of human trafficking prevalent in Afghanistan including prostitution, forced labour, slavery, servitude and the removal of body organs. The report states that this is a direct result of the kinds of factors created by the occupation: long-standing conflict, lack of internal security, poverty, poor socio-economic opportunities.

The war of occupation rages on in Afghanistan. Groups like Human Rights Watch have been reporting on this and on occupying forces employing “cowboy-like” tactics against Afghan people. Reports include that soldiers are “blowing doors open with grenades rather than knocking” and “military forces using deadly force from helicopter gunships and small and heavy army fire during law-enforcement operations … in residential areas where there is no military conflict.”

The pre-war rationale of “liberating Afghan women” has proven to be a complete lie as we see all people in Afghanistan forced into increasingly unstable and desperate situations. Only, the occupation hasn’t freed anyone in Afghanistan except the interests of imperialist nations, giving them free reign to establish what is necessary for Afghanistan to remain a docile and obedient state, serving imperialist needs and interests.

Occupiers in Crisis

For the foreseeable future, Afghanistan’s security rests with NATO and its economic development depends on foreign aid.” – The Guardian, Monday, April 31, 2004

The above quote illustrates clearly the basic but very serious problems facing the occupiers in Afghanistan. The invaded and devastated country is propped up by foreign military might and by foreign aid money and is in a completely unsustainable situation.

Without the constant funneling of money, troops and arms, the Afghan that imperialists want to create would cease to exist. While the occupation is clearly not working in favor of the people of Afghanistan, neither is it working for the occupiers, as they slip deeper and deeper into the political mire they’ve created.

Occupying forces are turning up short of their target goals in most areas from only having 6,500 enrolled in the new Afghan National Army (ANA) out of a targeted 70,000, to having barely 10% of eligible voters registered for elections, postponed from June/July 2004 to September 2004 due to this. With still no electoral law, consensuses have yet to be delineated and to date, there are no political parties registered to run in these elections. Under the Bonn agreement of December 2001, a conference held to map out the timetable for Afghanistan’s transition to a “stable, functioning democracy”, elections were to take place in June/July of 2004 that would put into power the government that would replace the transitional authority. However, UN efforts to register voters have been met with violence and have left southern Afghanistan practically off-limits. During the week of March 18-24 nearly 100 people were killed during heavy fighting in Herat, previously considered one of the safest places in the country. The increase in violence in Kandahar as well has forced the UN to temporarily suspend voter registration.

The US, UK and NATO are under pressure to produce results in this 2 ½ year campaign. With US Presidential elections upcoming in November 2004, Bush in particular is anxious to show hard proof of progress in “the war on terror” as his administration comes under the microscope of the 9/11 Commission. Legitimization of the occupation didn’t come with involving the UN and NATO so the US is looking to other tactics. One of these was the recent “spring offensive” collaborated with the government of Pakistan to launch a major operation at the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan to capture major Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders. This is basically a further distraction from the fact that the US still hasn’t caught Osama bin Laden, and have not had any degree of success in establishing themselves with the Afghan people.

The delaying of the elections is a problem that the occupation is seeking to remedy at the earliest date. This includes renewing the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) by another 12 months coupled with launching a new NATO operation, accompanied by 100 more troops sent from the UK, to “pacify the entire country and clamp down on warlords”. The new NATO plan will require thousands of extra troops from forces around the world and intends to “consolidate the north, then the west, south and east.” This is yet another imperialist plot to use military force to make up for the solutions that they are lacking.

Afghanistan 3 Years After Occupation: A Country Without Government

By Kira Koshelanyk

March 2004

Continued on page 18
Bolivarian Revolution: Venezuela, a Progressive Example for Latin America

By Carlos López

On April 25th two members of parliament from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela travelled to Vancouver in order to host a day-long conference. Dario Vivas and Victoria Mata spoke about the current situation facing the people of the Bolivarian revolution of Venezuela. They outlined the foundations of the struggle that faces the Venezuelan people today and spoke of how the people of Venezuela are moving forward toward building a new society. Below are excerpts from an interview that Dario did for Fire This Time.

On Fundamental Changes Achieved in the Bolivarian Revolution

The new constitution, which was adopted by the Chavez government after a referendum in 1999, belongs to the majority of the Venezuelan people. In the previous constitution, the majority of Venezuelans found themselves excluded and ignored. The constitution that was passed in 1999 outlines the plan for how we want to build Venezuela from now on. The constitution is based on five fundamental principles. We call these principles the five "balances". The first of these is the political balance, which means the construction of a participatory democracy and it also means leading the people of Venezuela through Bolivarian political education. The second is the social balance, which enforces that we must work according to the principles of social justice. The third is the economic balance, which means the development and diversification of our economy. The fourth is the territorial balance, which is directed to promote our land. The final balance is the international balance - working towards a new economic world order. This "new order" is one which consists of understanding the many opposing poles that exist in the world today and of then developing a world without the hegemony of any powerful country.

On Education in the Bolivarian Revolution

Speaking to education, Simon Bolivar said, "moral and lights are our first needs". The education of our people is important to maintaining the strength of the Bolivarian revolution and to constantly move forward. Education is a fundamental aspect to the process of transformation, of change and of popular participation. People cannot take part in this process if they can neither read nor write. As a result we must put a lot of emphasis on education within Venezuela. In Venezuela we consider education a fundamental human right. We say it in our constitution and we enforce in practice that education is free. We are giving away free education at the University and Postgraduate. Each person in Venezuela can and must access education for free.

In addition, we have begun a campaign to eradicate illiteracy in Venezuela. At the same time, we have opened what we call a "Bolivarian School" for young people. Here, from morning until night, young people have the opportunity not only of studying but also of eating, socializing and enjoying themselves. This has meant a dynamic and participative school, which contributes to the integral overall education of young people.

On US intervention and Attacks Against the Bolivarian Revolution

We have overcome many obstacles. There are from various arms of the oligarchy; the dome of the Catholic Church and the reactionary mass media that aimed a failed coup d’état, financed by the government of the US in 2002.

Despite these attacks we have continued advancing consistently and without fail. In this political process there are sectors that conspire against democracy and against the Constitution. We therefore have to inform the world of our democracy. Our opponents try to stop us, to eliminate democracy and progress; so that we cannot continue this process of transformation, which is, in fact, being realized.

On Achievements of the Bolivarian Revolution

We have advanced in many fundamental achievements; one is in education, which is to eradicate the illiteracy by July 5th 2004. Secondly, we are emphasizing on everything that has to do with health. Along with solidarity from the Cuban people and government, we have doctors in each one of the poorest communities of our country.

On National Strategy

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Solidarity Internacional

In order for us to progress, we need to partner with the people who are struggling for their own rights. We need the support of those who are struggling for their own rights. We need the support of those who are struggling for their own rights. We need the support of those who are struggling for their own rights. We need the support of those who are struggling for their own rights.

Continued on page 9

Revolución Bolivariana: Venezuela, un ejemplo positivo para Latinoamérica

Por Carlos López

El pasado 25 de Abril los diputados de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Dario Vivas y Victoria Mata, ofrecieron en la ciudad de Vancouver una conferencia sobre la situación actual que vive el pueblo y la revolución bolivariana. Esta es una breve charla que Dario realizó para Fire This Time.

Acerca de los cambios en la revolución bolivariana de Chavez

La nueva Constitución es el reclamo de la mayoría del pueblo venezolano que antes se encontraba excluído. Éste, desea el país que nosotros queremos constituir a partir de ahora. Reseñando en cinco fundamentales, nosotros le damos mucho énfasis al aspecto educativo y para que se eduque. En ese modo, cada habitante de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela puede y debe ser educado. Esta es una de las leyes fundamentales en la nueva Constitución.

solidaridad internacional

Hemos avanzado por diversos obstáculos. Primero son las medidas de lucha, las de la iglesia católica y los medios de comunicación que surgen contra el proceso de transformación y de construcción de una nueva sociedad.

Continued on page 29
Why Israel is Killing Palestinians

By Mike Krebs

“The Palestinians can’t miss the fact that he (George W. Bush) isn’t talking to them about the future…others, mainly Israel, will decide for them.” – Report from IPSA, PPP April 2004.

The recent developments regarding US and Israel’s plans for occupied Palestine make it more clear than ever that neither the US government nor the state of Israel are interested in ever seeing peace or justice for the Palestinian people. The murder of three Palestinian leaders in one month, coupled with the recent speech by Bush endorsing Sharon’s ‘unilateral’ plan for Gaza and the West Bank, expose the lies put forward by the US that their ‘Roadmap for Peace’ has anything to offer for Palestinians. All of these plans are a part of furthering the colonial expansion of Zionist Israel through the murder and suppression of Palestinians, as well as consolidating the theft of their land.

Political Decapitation in Palestine

On May 5th 2004, Israeli troops shot and killed Imad Janadra, a senior official in the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, an armed resistance wing of Hamas. On April 17th 2004, an Israeli attack helicopter blew up a car carrying Abdel-Aziz Rantisi, the head of the group Hamas. This came less than a month after Israel assassinated the group’s spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Though stating that it will not happen ‘today, this week, or the next’, Israel’s unilateral leader Ariel Sharon has publicly threatened to assassinate Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat.

This campaign of terror by the Israeli state is essentially one of political decapitation of Palestinian leaders. It is not just about the goal that self-determination for Palestinians never happen.

The same imperialist strategy within the ‘Roadmap’ can be seen in Sharon’s latest ‘unilateral’ plan for Gaza and the West Bank. This plan involves the removal of Israeli settlements in Gaza, explicitly to make it easier for the Israeli government to maintain its control over key settlements in the West Bank ‘for all eternity’, as Sharon described on April 14th 2004. As with previous ‘peace plans’, Israel would still maintain full control over the airspace and borders of Gaza.

Ensure for Palestinians, at the very best, less than twenty percent of their historic territory. The US ‘Roadmap’ – as well as the so-called Geneva Accords, hailed by ‘left-Zionists’ and a miniscule amount of Palestinian politicians as a ‘breakthrough’ – never intended to address the issue of the ‘right of return’ for the 700,000 Palestinians displaced in 1948. In addition, we must ask: Is it possible for the US to ever be ‘neutral’ towards Israel, a country to which it provides billions of dollars every year in military and financial aid?

The recent statements by George Bush endorsing Sharon’s ‘unilateral’ plans for Gaza and the West Bank have caused some analysts to claim that the US role in the ‘Israeli-Palestinian conflict’ has changed from that of ‘mediator’ to ‘supporter of the Israeli position.’ This is pure nonsense: as significant as the statements made by Bush are, in the final analysis Bush was merely stating the obvious conclusion of the ‘Roadmap’ plan. From the beginning, the ‘Roadmap’

Palestinian youth throwing rocks at Israeli tank in Gaza.

It is clear to Ariel Sharon that the state of Israel could ever accept a ‘two-state’ solution, and neither could the Palestinian people. Israel relies on continued expansion, as well as the exploitation of cheap Palestinian labour from the disenfranchised Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, to keep its cross-ridden economy afloat, and thus could not survive any loss of the West Bank settlements. At the same time, a ‘two-state’ solution does not address the right of return for Palestinian refugees, nor does it address the theft and occupation of Palestinian lands that occurred with the establishment of Israel ‘proper’ in 1948.

The recent killing of Palestinian leaders is the logical result of the ‘Roadmap’ plan. As we said in Fire This Time 85 last June, “the faulty construction of the road map as a US imperialist plot that will only lead to more bloodshed of Palestinians and also Israelis.”

The road map is nothing but an old imperialist trick: make the deal, buy more time, kill it in the process.”

Bush Condemns Palestinians to More Israeli Violence and Injustice

“It is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final-status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949.” – George W. Bush, in joint press conference with Ariel Sharon, April 14th 2004.

The recent killing of Palestinian leaders at the hands of the Israeli settler state has served US interests in the Middle East since its establishment. While Israel locks Palestinians in a constant state of war the climate of instability for the people of the middle east allows the US to assert control in the area. The current massacres going on in Iraq are but a new lever for the US to achieve this goal, and as with the US-led occupation of Iraq, the complete illegitimacy of the Zionist occupation of Palestine means that only through the killing and suppression of Palestinians can Israel perpetuate this occupation.

Problems Within Israel

Sharon’s announcement of his ‘unilateral’ plan for Gaza and the West Bank, the response within Israel has drawn attention to further contradictions that exist within Israeli society. In a recent referendum on May 1st, the membership of Sharon’s own Likud Party rejected the plan by 60%. There is great pressure on the Israeli establishment by the settler communities, who are unwilling, and economically unable, to give up territory in Gaza.

At the same time, the deep recession that the country facing has only been made worse by Israel’s attempts to continue its suppression of the Palestinian people and their Al-Aqsa Intifada. The ‘closure’ that has been imposed on the West Bank is not only furthering the impoverishment of Palestinians who are unable to travel to their jobs in Israel, it has also damaged the Israeli economy by denying the country its access to this cheap labour pool. In addition, the Sharon government has had to steadily increase the Israeli military budget in order to pay for the continued suppression of Palestinians and the continued theft of their land. In essence, the Israeli state cannot afford – politically or economically – to continue its war against the people of Palestine, while at the same time it cannot afford not to.

Self-Determination for Palestinians and the Right of Return

For Palestine and for the anti-war movement, the question is how to reject all supposed ‘peace plans’ that serve as a distraction from the demands of the Palestinian people: for an end to the occupation, true sovereignty, and for recognition of the Palestinian right to return to their homeland. The occupation of Palestine meant the expulsion of millions of Palestinians from their homes by the Israeli government before, during and after 1948. In the final analysis, no plan that further maintains the oppression of the Palestinian people has the capacity to bring peace.

In order to bring true peace, the first question that must be addressed is that of justice and sovereignty. The movement in Palestine and the demands of the Palestinian people are the same demands being echoed by the people of Iraq and the people of Afghanistan. These demands are being echoed by Indigenous people in Canada and, as a result of the recent invasion, echoed by the people of Haiti. This universal demand of oppressed nations globally is simple: SELF-DETERMINATION.

The response of the anti-war movement must continue to be one in support of the popular movement in Palestine. It must be against the occupation and for the Palestinian right of return to their land. While we must build a movement globally that can truly oppose and defeat the occupations of oppressed nations, our demands must be clear and independent from imperialist ruling classes. No to the Israeli killings of Palestinians! No to the Zionist Occupation of Palestine! Yes to Self-Determination for Palestine!
Iraqi Workers and the Antiwar Movement

From page 13

...“...we will have a total shut down of the streets...”

We will fight them. We will resist them with force. And we will join the armed resistance.”

Hassan Jum’a head of the Southern Oil force. And we will join the armed resistance.”

Canadian Troops Out of Afghanistan Now!

From page 15

and on the other hand Karzai is considering the appointment of the dirtiest elements... to important government posts” - Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), April 28, 2004

It has been no secret for some time now that the Afghan Transitional Authority has only a weak sphere of influence, extending no further than the northeast quarter of the country and parts of the Pashtun south, but recent events expose further the true nature of the ATA, a group with no popular support among the people.

Karzai’s cabinet contains some of the most brutal murderers in the country’s history, former members of the Mujaheddin, now regrouped under the name Northern Alliance. During the war, when they were fighting with arms and money to these leaders and their private armies to use them in defeating the Taliban. Since the fall of the Taliban, these leaders have consolidated their territories and become legitimate “Regional Governors” of their own provinces, such as Gul Agha Shirzai who controls Kandahar. The use of these brutal murderers of old by the US upon invasion and the continuation of the US governments involvement with them, while they continue to brutalize the people of the outlying areas of the country in much the same way as the Taliban, clearly discords any notion of “peace” in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has advanced the human rights of the Afghan people, or granted them any more freedoms with corruption. The UN special envoy to Afghanistan, Jan Kubis, and Former White House Advisor, Karl Kuhn, reported in late 2003 on homes being destroyed in Kabul’s Shur Pur district to make way for the first portraits ever of Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Mother Teresa. In an earlier visit and report, the UN housing envoy accused the defense minister and officers of government officials, grabbing the women and the poor and called for their removal from office. The report adds that land speculators have driven prices up to astronomical levels, resulting in an acute shortage of affordable housing, especially for returning refugees, and food riots, of whom 30 have been killed and three injured. In addition, a number of Ministers in Karzai’s cabinet have resigned, since the formation of the ATA and three have been assassinated in the past two years. An administration that, by changing the names of its institutions can’t be trusted to by the people is only a government without a government, which only promises to increase as Canada’s involvement continues.

Canada Out Now!

“Empire is being built on the backs of Afghanis and it is up to us anti-war activists to recognize it and address it.”

Sonali Kolhatkar, Co-director, Afghan Woman’s Mission in “What are YOU doing about Afghanistan? An Open Letter to Anti-capitalists”

Given Canada’s leading role in Afghanistan, which only promises to increase as Canada’s global imperialist role increases, anti-war activists in Canada have a tremendous responsibility to expose this colonial, imperialist agenda. As we demand, “Troops Out Now!” and “End Occupation”, we must also demand “Canada Out!” and work to organize and educate people against this government. Canada enforces the idea that it is a “peacekeeping”, or “neutral” nation when it comes to international affairs. Canada’s

Iraqis protest against the abuse, torture, and killing of prisoners by US occupation forces at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, May 2004.

Canadian Troops Out of Afghanistan Now!

While the US invasion of Afghanistan was a means to increase profits for these US corporations, it is clear that they want to make sure that their interests are protected and that they will be able to have their say in the future. This is why the US is supporting the current government in Afghanistan. This is why the US is supporting the current government in Afghanistan.

In addition to such high profile attacks, the daily-life day of work is characterized by instability and fear. With demonstrations and pickets being organized frequently, Iraqi workers and protesters are able to unite their resources is a basic human right, and to decide how they will use and distribute their resources is a basic human right, and to decide how they will use and distribute their resources is a basic human right. As a result the budding trade union movement holds a strategic position within the Iraqi movement globally, and in Canada, has the responsibility of echoing their calls and providing support vessels, arms and equipment to the US forces, stationing Canadian ships in the Persian Gulf. All poor, working and oppressed people in Canada have much work to do to unite that peace movement and to organize and educate people against this government. This is why the US is supporting the current government in Afghanistan. This is why the US is supporting the current government in Afghanistan.

The people of Afghanistan have an awe inspiring history of anti imperialist resistance, comparable to that of the Cubans in 1836 and 1921 the Afghan people heroically defeated three British invasions. Afghanistan has also shown that they have no problem governing and running their own country, a particular example of this being the period of time after the overthrow of Mohammad Zahir Shah in 1973. Progress was being made for women and all Afghans, unfortunately the government was dragged into factional fighting followed by the US occupation as the primary step forward in increasing the position of US imperialism in that region. As a result, the budding trade union movement holds a strategic position within the Iraqi movement globally, and in Canada, has the responsibility of echoing their calls and providing support vessels, arms and equipment to the US forces, stationing Canadian ships in the Persian Gulf. All poor, working and oppressed people in Canada have much work to do to unite that peace movement and to organize and educate people against this government. This is why the US is supporting the current government in Afghanistan. This is why the US is supporting the current government in Afghanistan. This is why the US is supporting the current government in Afghanistan.

Self-Determination: An Inalienable Right and the Only Solution

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Iraqis protest against the abuse, torture, and killing of prisoners by US occupation forces at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, May 2004.

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by Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro, the head of the revolutionary government of Cuba, gave this speech on January 3, 1959, for the 45th anniversary of the Cuban Republic.

Dear fellow Cubans,

Distinguished guests:

Many of you who had the privilege of witnessing that exciting day are still alive, many others are deceased. It was only 50 years ago, in 1959, over 70 years after the majority of those here tonight were less than 10 years old or had not been born, that there had been many years to go before they would be born.

It was never our purpose to attain individual or collective glory, honors or recognition. However, those of us who today have a legitimate right to call ourselves Cuban revolutionaries, have always been obligated to write what has turned out to be an unprecedented page in the annals of history. Unhappy with the political, social and political situation in our country, we simply resolved to change it. This was not something new; it had happened many times for almost a century.

We believed in the rights of the peoples, including the right to independence, national sovereignty and to rise up against tyranny. It was from the exercise of such rights in this hemisphere, conquered by fascism, that the struggle began, and to continue what has been done, we have created, from the exception of the empire, a peaceful and independent Cuba, where there was out of reach of enemy bombs and guns.

The fascist ideas that were the cause of that colossal conflict were in total contradiction with the principles proclaimed by the 13 former British colonies in America on July 4, 1776 as their Declaration of Independence, which literally read: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. [...]

That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man, which resulted from the 1789 French Revolution, carried its point even further when it proclaimed: "When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is the right of the people to defend themselves. The people most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties.

The fascist ideas also clashed head on with the principles of the United Nations Charter after the gigantic battle that was World War II, which among the aims that were proclaimed to be essential prerequisites of a world political order were respect for the rights of the peoples to self-determination and independence.

Actually, the rights of the peoples have never been respected throughout humanity’s brief centuries, so full of wars of conquest, empires and an infinite variety of forms of plunder and of ways for human beings to exploit other human beings. Nevertheless, a recent historic point in time and despite the reality that the victorious powers imposed a world political order with privileges for a minuscule group of the most powerful states that became ever more irritating, many nations, institutions and people were hopeful that a new and promising stage for humanity was beginning. More than 100 nations or groups of states, groups that still lacked a national identity, were formally recognized as independent States. As it was a time that greatly favored illusions and might and not rights would continue to be the basic fact of human life, as it has been the case through the millennia. It has happened up until the present, since the first known historic facts were registered, is the result of the natural and spontaneous, tardy and disorderly evolution of human society. Nobody can be blamed for the various economic and social systems that have followed one another over the course of five thousand years.

The different civilizations which arose in the most distant regions of the world: China, India, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Central and South America obviously were, in a greater or lesser extent, ignorant of the others’ existence, talking about something that goes beyond the noble and completely justifiable wishes for a better world, because human beings can live a free and decent life, we are talking about the survival of the species.

The big difference between the age of the development of the production capacity of our species but in the exponential and absolutely finite development of science and technology that has taken place in the last 150 years, and which completely eclipses the negative results and manifestations that we have been shown for facing up to the risk of perishing as a species, a risk which really is threatening humanity.

Less than 60 years ago, when the first nuclear device exploded over Hiroshima, it became clear that technology had created a tool which, if developed, could bring about the obliteration of human life on this planet. From that day on, the development of such new weapons and weapons systems, hundreds of times more powerful, vast and accurate and has not ceased, not for one day. Today, there are tens of thousands of them. Actually, very few have been destroyed under deceptive and limited covenants.

A group of countries that has a monopoly over such weapons has taken upon themselves the exclusive right to produce and improve the most destructive technology and interests of its members change and humanity descends a road of a war that threatens the very existence of a considerable number of nations or groups of nations, including human civilization.

The worst of all is that a considerable number of countries have let themselves be turned into hostages of such weapons and that we have psychiatrists to look after us. We cannot just acquiesce to this. We have the responsibility to exercise pressure and demand changes and an end to such an absurd, unheard of situation, which makes hostages of us. We should not have such powers or else no one on this earth would be able to talk of civilization again.

There is another lethal problem as well: namely 40 years ago some people began to voice their concerns over what has come to be called the environment, because a barbarous civilization was destroying the natural conditions for life. This has become an obsession on the table for the first time. Quite a few people thought it was just some alarmists exaggerating, but which makes us realize that this is a kind of neo-Malthusianism, like in previous centuries.

They were, in fact, well-informed and intelligent people who took on the environmental issue on this issue, at times worried sick that it was too late to take useful measures. Regrettably, there were others who due to their great political responsibilities should have shown greater concern, showed only ignorance and disregard.

More than ten years have passed since the UN-convened Rio de Janeiro Summit and despite the usual proliferation of speeches, pledges and promises, very little has been done. Nevertheless, there is a growing awareness of the need to join and give war. There is no option.

Recently, a conference was held in Havana on development and climate change, which was also convened by the UN. It was an important effort to heighten awareness and call people to join the struggle.

In Rio de Janeiro, I was a witness to the deep concern for the fate of small islands in the Pacific and from other countries threatened by the risk of being either partially flooded or destroyed, because of climate change. This is sad. The first to suffer the consequences of environmental disaster are the poor nations, the poor people, or air conditions; it is possible they do not have the ability to do anything about it. That is. The effects of huge emissions of carbon, the warming and the destructive effect of the ultraviolet rays, which pass through the damaged ozone layer filter...
y personas, concibieron la esperanza de que las potencias victoriosas impusieron un orden de saqueo y explotación de unos seres humanos cuya raza, geografía, cultura, ideología, y en el caso de las potencias del Eje, también sus maneras de comportarse, eran al margen de su control político. La instalación de campos de concentración era el símbolo de la ruina de un orden blanco.

Los líderes de la Sociedad de Naciones fueron incapaces de hacer algo para frenar estos horrores. El Tratado de Versalles, el churchillismo, el protagonismo americano buscando la paz y la seguridad, fueron tan inepto como inútil. Al contrario de lo que muchos pensaban, no era el caso de resignarse o decir que la guerra era algo que nunca podría evitarse. Lo que no se podía permitir era que se repetieran estos desastres. Había que aprender de aquellos errores, y por eso se propuso el sistema de Naciones Unidas.

Sin embargo, el mundo siguió así como si nada. En el corazón de Europa, en las tierras de Río de la Plata, en la isla de Cuba, el dolor y la lucha persistían. Hombres y mujeres, que habían sufrido tanto, pero que tenían una visión diferente del mundo, decidieron cambiarlo. En el año 1959, en medio de la crisis de los misiles, en pleno clima de miedo y desesperación, los líderes cubanos decidieron tomar el control de su destino. La revolución liderada por Fidel Castro, el líder de la guerrilla, se convirtió en un símbolo de resistencia y esperanza para todo el mundo.

La revolución cubana fue un hito en la historia del mundo. Inspiró a millones de personas en todo el mundo a luchar por sus derechos y libertades. La lucha contra el imperialismo y la explotación fue una batalla que todos podemos seguir y apoyar.

La revolución cubana es un ejemplo de cómo el cambio es posible. A pesar de los desafíos y obstáculos, los líderes cubanos mostraron valentía y determinación. Han demostrado que el cambio es posible, y que las oportunidades que se han desarrollado en el mundo son significativas. La revolución cubana es un ejemplo de cómo el cambio es posible, y que las oportunidades que se han desarrollado en el mundo son significativas.

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De cada 100 nuevos puestos de trabajo que se crean, 82 pertenecen al llamado "sector informal", que incluye una larga lista de los que se van a la vida de cualquier forma sin protección social ni legal alguna. La pobreza ha crecido de forma alarmante, especialmente la pobreza extrema, 12,8 por ciento hasta 2004 por ciento de la población. El desarrollo se estanca y los servicios sociales se deterioran cada vez más. En estos últimos, que incluyen en primer lugar la educación y los servicios sociales para la población que vive en pobreza extrema, se espera que la globalización neoliberal produzca un verdadero desastre.

Continued on page 32

Fidel Castro January 3rd Speech continued

A partir de estos datos, se puede decir que el crecimiento de la región se ha detenido, a pesar de las alarmas generadas por esta desastrosa situación. Los cálculos más reducidos afirman que en el año 2050, la región sólo alcanzará 7,409 millones; el más alto dice que los 7,500 millones.

El primer fruto de esta especie pública fue la "decada perdida" de 1980, en la que el crecimiento de la región se limitó a un poco por ciento entre 1990 y 1999.

Privatization wiped out hundreds of billions of dollars of wealth national to the point that many years to create, but which evaporated with the speed at which capital flies from those countries to Europe and the United States.

Unemployment reached record levels and those with jobs, created 82 are in the so-called "informal sector" which includes a long list of workers who are ready for the honor of taking the job, but are ready for the honor of taking the job.

A summary of all that I have said shows my profound conviction that our species, and with it each one of our peoples, are at a turning point in their history: the course of events must change or else our species shall not survive. There is no more important question. and the world's wealth.


I must draw my talk to a close. There is much waiting awaiting us in 2004. I want to congratulate our people for everything it has done over all these years, for its heroism, its patriotism, its fighting spirit, its loyalty and its revolutionary fervor.

I want to offer special congratulations to the Latin American peoples and for the people in the United States whose jobs are threatened by plentiful cheap labor recruited by the maquiladoras from among those who were prevented by the existing poverty, educational disaster and unemployment from getting properly trained. Cheap, unskilled labor is something that the Latin American oligarchs can offer on a grand scale.

The first fruit of this disastrous policy was the "lost decade" of the 80s during which economic growth in Latin America was stagnant and social services, first and foremost health services, were really defending. Nobody can pretend with threats or aggressions that our doctors, teachers, sports instructors or any other collaborator show their solidarity; nobody can hold back the bravery of our sons and daughters because many are ready for the honor of taking the place of those who might fall victims of terrorist attacks encouraged and promoted by extremist officials in the US government.
COPE, the Future of the Vancouver City Council

An Interview with Tim Louis

By Shannon Bundock

"Although it's a cold day, it's not as cold as the blood that punches through Danny Williams' heart." – CUPW Newfoundland President, Wayne Lucas

In Newfoundland and Labrador on April 1st, 2000, public workers went out on strike in the largest public sector strike in Newfoundland's history. There are important similarities between this major strike that ended just as the major HEU strike in BC did. The two major similarities are the reason that this strike is important for working people. The first is that the HEU and COPE, and the other unions are similar because they are the forces of the ruling class against the forces of working people. The ruling class attacks... The Premier stated after the Bill was passed that the government would go on to eliminate public sector jobs within the 4 year imposed contract period. Solidarity: Coast to Coast and Beyond

On March 30, 2000, about a hundred public sector workers who refused to return to the job and the fine of any union leader who encourages staying off the job $25,000 a day and any union that does the same $25,000 a day. This legislation was introduced into the Newfoundland legislature on Monday April 26th, the first full day of the HEU strike in BC. The strike went back to work in Newfoundland on April 28th, and the defiance of the back to work order in BC began on the 29th. The strike that began in Newfoundland on April 1st by public sector workers under attack from a profit driven government continued in BC by the same workers under attack by the exact same forces. Bill 11 in Newfoundland was postponed until Monday May 5th, so that negotiation could continue over the weekend. Monday May 8th was also the day that the province wide strike was scheduled to begin all the way across the country in BC. On Sunday in Newfoundland, union leaders met with the Tory government and could not reach agreement. At the same time, the BC Federation of Labour made a deal with the BC Liberal government that passed the HEU strike and carried the BC day of walkouts. On Tuesday May 4th, the Progressive Conservative government in Newfoundland passed the 'back to work' legislation to impose a 4 year contract on the public sector workers, as had been carried out in BC.

By Ivan Drury

"Striking to Save the Public Sector in Newfoundland From British Columbia to Newfoundland: Labour and Unions in Motion"

Fire This Time coordinator Shannon Bundock interviews Vancouver City Councillor Tim Louis, April 2004. The pressure on the three of you to be so great?

Councillor Louis: Well, the good news is that the concern was never that Bass, Roberts and I would be expelled from the cabinet. The AGM. At the beginning of every year there is an election to the executive, our executive is the Board of Directors, and the membership elects 11 members of the Board of directors. Now it is the executive that throughout the year, between AGM's that might have the ability to remove people from the caucus and so there was, in the minds of some people, the concern that the composition of the executive not be a composition that would be inclined towards expelling people from the caucus.

FITT: And on the level of pressure that we were under.

Councillor Louis: Well I don't think it's any secret that on the Translink plan there were two different views, one was that "wants and all" it was better than no plan, better than defeating it, that should be approved. The contrary view, the one I subscribe to, and so did Bass and Roberts, there was a potential that yourself and Councillors Bass and Roberts may face some form of expulsion from COPE. What threat did you pose that required...
Demonstrators gathered across shacks that had been set up in the "community event", DERA activist out of 5 and the mounting crisis of welfare eligibility to 2 years of Women's Centres, the limiting crowd gathered at Victory Square held a demonstration on April 1st against these major attacks. A crowd gathered at Victory Square and spoke out against the closing of Women's Centres, the limiting of welfare eligibility to 2 years and the mounting crisis of homelessness in BC.

Announcing a march to a nearby "community event", DERA activist Lilly Longcar led the crowd down Hastings street to a park nestled against the Georgia Hudacek set off of Main Street. By the time the march arrived, a line of police had already formed, blocking the entrance to the horse of small plywood shacks that had been set up in the middle of the park. Demonstrators gathered across the street and Lilly Longcar announced DERA's demand: A plot of land from the city to set up a semi-permanent tent city to house the front line of homeless people, by the BC Liberal's cuts to social programs and the federal and provincial government cuts to social housing. By the time the sun went down the plywood houses had been wheeled away by police and city workers. The park was left empty except for the remaining protesters and a few stray banners hanging from trees.

However, DERA's demand still stands. Since April 1st, the request for a plot of land for a "Hope Village" tent city has been proposed to Vancouver City Council, which would be modeled after similar tent cities in Seattle and Portland.

The crisis of homelessness is both greater and more pressing than ever. Over 1,200 people sleeping on the streets of Vancouver every night are people over 60. The people in the Lower Mainland are under housed or pay rent that they cannot afford. According to the city of Vancouver, these 60,000 working and poor people are at severe risk of homelessness.

Shelters and tent cities cannot solve the problems of homelessness caused by capitalist crises and real estate speculation and are at best a band-aid solution. However, DERA, as a social service organizer in the Downtown Eastside (DTE), has the nearly impossible task of trying to help people survive on the streets in the short term, while demanding social housing as a real solution to homelessness, under housing, unaffordable rents and real estate speculation.

Lilly Longcar is a long-time anti-poverty tenants rights activist and advocate in the Downtown Eastside. She was one of the founders of the Woodward's squall in the fall of 2002 and remains one of the most important front-line anti-poverty activists in the Downtown Eastside.

On April 1st, while facing the police lines blockading DERA's tent city, Fire This Time had the opportunity to ask Lilly Longcar some questions about what DERA had planned.

FTT: What were you hoping to accomplish today with this demonstration and tent city?

Lilly: The plan was to first highlight what this government has been doing to people. How they have been attacking poor people, attacking women especially, by the cuts that COPE was opposed to. It went, we said "No COPE policy." So, around and around and I was told that if we voted against the Translink plan we would be voting against COPE policy. So, around and around it went, we said "No COPE policy is what was decided by the membership." and they said, "Only until the executive changes that position" and "You can't vote against COPE policy."" FTt: The AGM that was scheduled for April 3rd 2004, and was then cancelled due to the inability to accommodate the large turnout of over 1000 COPE members. At the cancelled AGM, what was your assessment of the composition of the membership and their reasons for coming out? Did you think the executive was a reflection of COPE membership? What message, if any, did the membership give to COPE that day?

Councillor Louis: I saw a very inspiring COPE that day. I saw and explicitly promoted a 1.7 billion dollar RAY project (RAPid transit line to run from Richmond Airport to Vancouver - ED) which (by the way) was to be and still is to be a Public-Private-Partnership). And the plan that was presented was the Translink plan reduced the goal for the number of buses. Unlike the old Translink plan, the new Translink plan had been 2000 buses by the year 2000. And if we look at the Transit plan, the number on the wall that was 4 years ago. The Translink plan that we voted against has reduced the goal of the number of buses to 1600 buses and had extended the due date from the year 2000 to the year 2013. So based on the plan’s very strong commitment of money to the RAY line, sucking money like a black hole away from buses, and given the membership approval of a platform that called for exactly the opposite…we formed the position that we would be voting with the platform, with the COPE membership if we voted against the Translink plan.

About a week prior to the Translink plan being voted on at the GVRD [Greater Vancouver Regional District – ED] there was a COPE executive meeting. The executive passed a vote in favour of the Translink plan, and so yet another difference of opinion arose. One view was that the executive was capable of replacing the membership’s commitment on the issue. The COPE executive motion to endorse the Translink plan now became new COPE policy. The other way, the view that I subscribe to, is that between elections it was not possible that in a closed meeting, behind closed doors, a very selected and in a matter of moments to endorse a 4 billion dollar plan without any input from the membership.

In any event, suffice it to say the executive voted in favour of the Translink plan, Bass Roberts and I were told that if we voted against the Translink plan we would be voting against COPE policy. So, around and around it went, we said "No COPE policy is what was decided by the membership." and they said, "Only until the executive changes that position" and "You can’t vote against COPE policy." FTt: What can people do to change the crisis of homelessness that exists in Vancouver?

Lilly: People can tell the government that they are in trouble, that they will not support them, that they want them out. That they will defeat them in any way possible unless they bring in policies that help people. Unless they bring in housing, build social housing, unless they give people welfare on demand when they need it. Unless the federal government restores transfer payments so these services can be provided. Unless they do these things, I think that people should put their government reps know that they will defeat them, that they [the BC Liberal government] are not going to be much more long.
The anti-war, anti-occupation movement has continued to organize over the past year, and has been led by the Iraqi calls for self-determination. To be effective, this movement can and must build into a worldwide anti-imperialist movement. Through enforcement and support of working and poor people within both imperialist and third world nations, the expansion of this movement to an anti-capitalist movement has the potential to become a reality.

The Early Stages

After the major spring explosion of anti-war organizing across the globe, the movement was faced with a serious challenge. This challenge involved shifting the focus of the movement from anti-war to include anti-occupation. In the period that followed the declared “end of major combat” on May 1st the challenge to make this shift led to an expansion in the leadership of the anti-war movement and a clear political difference in that leadership on how to proceed.

For Vancouver’s anti-war coalition, Stopwar.ca, this challenge meant the development of a floor-led opposition of youth and people of colour who were pushing for the immediate focus and transition of the movement to include anti-occupation. In contrast, another tendency in Vancouver called for a slowing of activity and a focus on domestic issues, with the objective of building a low-pressure movement to oppose the current federal government. Similarly, according to reports, political divisions deepened in the movement worldwide, with one tendency calling for renewed energy to be put into expanding the anti-war movement. The other prominent tendency calling for a shift in focus to domestic elections, boycott campaigns and opposition to far-off missile defence programs.

The inability to reconcile these divisions while still leading the movement forward meant, in many cases, open and outright factional splits. The origin of these splits can be found in the political differences that existed throughout the building of the movement. The division is now, and has always been between movement building and lobbying. This means the difference between building a rapidly expanding and uncontrollable movement (a movement with revolutionary potential); and building a tightly controlled force against one wing of the ruling class.

This period was characterized by the urgent need to expand the political focus of the movement in a direction that would expand its effectiveness against war and occupation. Building effectively meant following the leadership of the young people and people of colour who were organizing frequent and dynamic actions in solidarity with the calls of the Iraqi resistance for sovereignty and an end to occupation by all foreign forces.

Rejuvenation of the Movement

In Vancouver, the fall of 2003 brought a rejuvenation of the anti-war movement in the form of increased consciousness among students and youth. Campuses across the lower mainland were lively, with forums and events calling for an end to imperialist occupation by US and UK troops. With threats of the internationalization of the occupation and support for UN intervention by soft-imperialists, a demand against UN occupation was established in the anti-war movement.

With political backing from this upsurge in awareness among young people, the movement-building tendency increased its pressure within Stopwar.ca.

As a result, divisions were further exacerbated and the official leadership secretly organized the purging of the movement-building tendency in Stopwar.ca. On October 15th, 2003, five members of Stopwar.ca were expelled, with no opportunity for defence, and no space for open political debate. Along with the five expelled members, nearly every young person in Stopwar.ca left the coalition to join the movement in the streets of Vancouver and to continue organizing as broadly, effectively and independently as possible.

Less than 2 weeks later, on October 29th, a room at the Britannia Community Centre in East Vancouver, was filled with indigenous people, people of the third-world, students and workers. On that day Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) formed with the mandate of action, education and organizing consistent and frequent mobilizations against war and occupation.

MAWO was carried by the political weight of the global movement and the development of the Iraqi resistance into an organized, popular and effective machine. MAWO rallied at the Vancouver Art Gallery, less than one month later, with over 40 endorsers and hundreds of supporters.

The world powers at this point, the US and UK occupation forces, were facing tremendous pressure from around the globe. In Iraq they were being forced into a quagmire politically and militarily as they struggled to establish their occupation. At home, they were met with declining support from the US population and a renewed pressure from anti-war organizing.

Emergence of Canada as Imperialist Power

During this time, the Canadian government began to emerge as a real threat to poor and working people globally. Canadian troops took control of the NATO occupation forces in Afghanistan and Prime Minister Martin made repeated commitments to “unseat Canada on the world stage.”

For people in Vancouver and Canada, this provided the important opportunity to expose the history of the Canadian government and its imperialist agenda at home and abroad.

Bowen Island Mayor Lisa Barrett speaks to crowd at MAWO March 20th march and rally against war and occupation, 2004.
Hands Off Iraq!

Vancouver Demonstrators Demand US-UK Out of Iraq

By Nicole Burton, Kira Koshelanyk, & Aaron Merced

On March 20th 2004, on the one-year anniversary of the brutal invasion of Iraq, hundreds of anti-war organizations and coalitions around the world organized mass demonstrations against the ongoing occupation. Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), the anti-war/anti-occupation coalition of the Lower Mainland joined in this international effort to bring people to the streets against the brutal occupation of Iraq and imperialist occupations all over the globe.

As more than 500 people gathered at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the political context of the action was set by the opening words of Shannon Bundock, MAWO’s co-chair and coordinator of Youth-Third World Alliance, establishing the political nature of the day in Vancouver, by introducing Mobilization Against War and Occupation, and addressing the importance of the Global Day of Action with people coming together all over the world. Kira then stressed the fact that the work of the anti-war movement must continue beyond March 20th to build a dynamic movement against war and occupation.

The importance of understanding and exposing governments’ economic ties to war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan was spoken to by Lisa Barrett, Mayor of Bowen Island, and endorsing member of MAWO. George Feenstra, a United Church Minister and a defendant in the Britannia 9 trials, added to this in an upbeat and empowering speech about the hypocrisy of the initial US-led War. Feenstra argued that it is everyone’s responsibility to stand up in the fight against injustice. The day was taken up by Kay Kim, an international student and co-founder of the Korean Student Network Against War who spoke about South Korea’s current involvement in Iraq. Kim addressed the crowd in outrage that his country is currently allied with the United States and other imperialists under the guise of “national interests.”

The struggle for self-determination by Indigenous nations is vital to the anti-war movement in Canada, and Rachel Taylor of Redwire Native Youth Media and MAWO spoke powerfully about this fight, stirring protestors into movement and chants. Taylor reminded everyone in front of the Art Gallery, on a Coast Salish territory, of their incredible responsibility as members of the anti-war movement to constantly connect the war abroad with the war at home.

In wrapping up before the march was on its way, one last speaker motivated the crowd with a reminder about the strength of mass mobilizations. “We are part of something much larger than ourselves today,” said Ali Yerevani a member of Fire This Time, MAWO, CUPE Local 15 and the Vancouver Labour Council. “In Fidel’s words, we will build this movement because, as oppressed people in struggle, ‘the struggle must grow and will grow! There is no option!’” Marchers took to the streets with passionate screams for “Troops Out Now!” As the politics of each speaker echoed upon the buildings of downtown Vancouver, hundreds pushed this city’s anti-war movement forward, demanding an end to the occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Haiti. The fiery words of MAWO speaker Rachel Taylor were carried on through megaphones, microphones, and powerful voices for all to hear: “Occupation is a crime, from Cheam to Palestine!”

The day closed in a convergence with an anti-war rally organized by Stopwar.ca at Sunset Beach. Once arrived, MAWO organizers and marchers continued their anti-war work, by distributing the ‘Canada Out!’ petition campaign, gaining more signatures and by engaging in important discussions about the tasks ahead for the anti-war movement.

The movement is unified in its demand for self-determination for all oppressed nations against imperialism. Whether it is in the name of war, occupation, or peacefulness—and whether attacks on oppressed people are unilateral or international the anti-war movement has the ability to see-through imperialist tricks. This ability has become one of the stepping-stones for this dynamic movement which is much larger and more powerful than one day can reveal.

On March 20th 2004, on the Global Day of Action it was established in Vancouver that the demands of the anti-war movement are clear and must be strong: The War is Not Over! End the Occupations of all oppressed nations! Self-Determination!
indigenous activist Kelly White speaks at ‘canada out!’ rally organized by MAWO, April 2004.

MAWO holds emergency rally against occupation of Haiti

By Nicole Burton

On Sunday March 7th, the Vancouver Anti-war movement responded to the invasion and occupation of Haiti with a day of action. Mobilization Against War and Occupation held a protest rally at the Vancouver Art Gallery where through pouring rain it was joined by Haiti’s supporters for self-determination on less than a week’s notice. The demonstration demanded “Hands off Haiti!”, “US/ France/Canada Out of Haiti!”

Millions around the world were furious at the illegal acts taken on March 1st and 2nd by the United States, Canada, and France to intervene in Haiti’s internal affairs and to attack a sovereign nation with foreign militaries. The initial deployment of over 1600 troops to Haiti was within 48 hours of the March 7th notice to the world that Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti’s democratically elected leader, had left office. While the dispute is made over whether Aristide voluntarily resigned, or was “kidnapped” by U.S. officials as he claims, the seizure of the sovereign Caribbean nation created an international uproar, with dozens of emergency rallies called across North America while thousands of Haitians protested daily in the streets of their own country, demanding an end to foreign invasion. This came simultaneously with occupations made by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycott the African Union that they would boycot...
What the Occupations of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Canada and Haiti Have in Common

MAWO Forum Addresses the Problem of Colonial Occupation

By Tamara Hansen

On April 10th Mobilization Against War and Occupation hosted an educational event at Collingwood Neighbourhood house. It was a free public forum entitled, “What the Occupations of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Canada and Haiti have in Common”. The forum was organized to link some of the struggles happening around the world in this era of war and occupation.

The forum was opened with a moving slide show presented by Shannon Bundock MAWO co-chair. The slide show was made up of pictures from occupied territories around the world. These photos ranged from indigenous people marching in resistance to the expansion of Sun Peaks Resorts in Secwepemc wetl, to the degrading checkpoints in Palestine. The slide show visually demonstrated many of the links between the humiliation and oppression that people in occupied territories are subject to daily. After the slide show Haalani Dimars, a writer, poet and writer introduced the speaking portion of the program with two touching poems inspired by her travels throughout the Middle-East.

Tim Louis a city councillor with COPE (Coalition Of Progressive Electors) in Vancouver then took the floor, sharing information about the current occupation of Haiti and linking it to the struggle of people in Cuba. Kira Koshelanyk, coordinator of Youth Third World Alliance then began her speech which linked how the plundering of resources, lowered standards of living and resistance are all inherent aspects to imperialist occupations. Mike Krebs, a member of MAWO then elaborated and expanded on much of what had already been said by connecting the importance of war and occupation to imperialist nations because of the current global economic crisis, “We live in a world dominated, not by a spirit of love and humanity between people, but a world dominated by imperialism.” It is time for us to get up and stand in solidarity with people in occupied territories and demand “Self-determination for all oppressed nations!”

MAWO’s forum, “What the Occupations of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Canada and Haiti have in Common” provided the necessary background for participants to understand the links and commonalities between occupied territories around the world. It helped establish how these occupations are not several different issues, but instead one issue, which is the fight for self-determination, currently being fought on many different fronts around the world.

Struggles For Indigenous Rights In Canada

Delta Must Go! Support the Struggle to Defend Secwepemc Territory

By Brennarr Luchsinger

Sun Peaks ski resort is built on Secwepemc land, and since the early 1990s Delta Hotels and Sun Peaks ski resort have been destroying the traditional Secwepemc territory known as Sheswke Wetl. The Secwepemc people set up the Sheswke Wetl protection center to resist the attacks of Sun Peaks and the Canadian government on indigenous people.

On Thursday March 25th a crowd of 60 people gathered at Victory Square to protest Delta hotels’ expansion of the Sun Peaks ski resort into Secwepemc territory. Organized by the Native Solidarity Network (NSN), the rally was opened by Ray Bobb of the Sto’Lo nation, who is also an organizer with NSN. Bobb brought context to the march as he spoke of the continuing struggle of the Secwepemc people to defend and protect their homeland. From Victory Square protestors marched west along Hastings St. to the Delta Hotel. In front of the hotel, people chanted and waved banners and signs before listening to speakers.

Speakers at the rally included George Manuel Jr. from the Nisga’a nation who delivered a message of solidarity and stressed the importance of supporting struggles to defend indigenous territory in Canada. Harsha Walia from No One Is Illegal-Vancouver spoke next, relating attacks on immigrants and refugees with the attacks on indigenous people in Canada. Billy Pierre with Native Youth Movement spoke about the struggle to defend indigenous lands in Canada, and working to fight back against further attacks by the government of Canada. Kira Koshelanyk spoke as a representative of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) and Youth-Third World Alliance, relating the international struggle for self-determination, with the ongoing fight to protect Secwepemc land, and the necessity of building a movement that can challenge the basis of Canadian colonialism.

The March 25th march and rally saw many grassroots organizations come together at the call of the Native Solidarity Network to support the struggle against the expansion of Sun Peaks into Secwepemc territory. In order to fight back against all attacks of imperialism throughout the world, we must support oppressed nations in their struggle for the right to self-determination. The message of the action was clear, whether it is the occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Haiti, or Indigenous Nations in Canada, we need to unite around the demand of self-determination for all nations who are fighting for very thus basic right.

Que es MAWO?
Contra la guerra y la ocupación

El reto del movimiento contra la guerra es realizar una efectiva tarea para educar, organizar y movilizar a la gente contra esta época de guerra y ocupación. Esta tarea es especialmente importante en comunidades de gente de color, con musulmanes, inmigrantes, refugiados, jóvenes, estudiantes y comunidades indígenas: la gente mas profundamente afectada por la guerra y la ocupación.

MAWO es una organización que está construyendo un movimiento contra la guerra y la ocupación con la iniciativa del pueblo oprimido. Estamos organizando una serie de eventos desde noviembre, destacando la movilización internacional del 20 de Marzo en la construcción del movimiento.

Mientras esta era de guerra y ocupación continue, MAWO continuará organizando, educando y movilizándose contra ellos. Te damos la bienvenida para unirte, pelear y hacer retroceder la máquina de guerra estadounidense, por el retorno de las tropas de Canadá y por el FIN DE LA OCUPACIóN EN IRAK, PALESTINA Y AFGANISTAN!
MAWO Forum Sparks Debate on War and Occupation

By Aaron Mercredi

On March 28th, Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) brought activists in Vancouver together at the Britannia Community Centre for an educational forum focusing on the injustice and illegality of the occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Haiti, and Indigenous territory in Canada.

The afternoon began with a screening of “Breaking the Silence”, the new Jon Piégel documentary that exposes the hypocrisy and illegitimacy of the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. The film touches on the approach of the United Nations (UN) and international law in relation to the current era of war and occupation. Following the movie, two speakers gave presentations and opened up discussion. Bob Everton, a long-time activist and Professor with the Latin American Studies Program at Simon Fraser University, illustrated the long and brutal time activist and Professor with the discussion. Bob Everton, a long-time activist and Professor with the Latin American Studies Program at Simon Fraser University, illustrated the long and brutal history of colonialism and foreign intervention in Haiti. He concluded that the modern-day intervention in Haiti by the US, France and Canada has undermined the sovereignty of the Haitian people. Shannon Bundock, of Fire This Time and co-chair of MAWO, then gave a presentation using relevant UN resolutions and International law to expose the criminality of many cases of war and occupation. “What we really need to understand is that we must oppose the invasions, occupations and wars that are continuing in many forms in Iraq, in Palestine, in Afghanistan, in Haiti, and here on Indigenous land, not solely because they are illegal according to international law, but because they are wrong from a political, moral, human rights and legal perspective,” said Shannon. She expanded this idea by adding, “These wars and occupations are wrong because they simply serve to expand the hegemony of imperialist nations at the expense of oppressed people globally.”

A diverse and broad discussion began between members of the audience and the two speakers. Throughout the discussion many myths and reasons for the occupations were discussed and exposed as false. Activists at the event also took on the concept of ‘peacekeeping’ and Canada’s role internationally. As the event came to a close, members of the audience emphasized again how international law provides the anti-war movement with an incredible opportunity to expose the illegality of imperialist wars and occupations, and reaffirmed that we should not only oppose these wars and occupations from a legal standpoint, but also from a political, moral, and human rights perspective.

Letter of Solidarity to the Cuban 5

Dear Companeros, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labanino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero

I am writing as a representative of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee to congratulate you on your progress with the essential work being done on your case for the Cuban Five cases. The huge international outcry surrounding your case, your recent Appeals court hearing and the full-page advertisement in the New York Times outlining your case, are important victories. We believe these gains are an important part of building something that has huge potential and momentum, and our Committee looks forward to continuing our work on this case.

Directly after the March 10th, 2004, Atlanta 11th Circuit Court of Appeals hearing we organized multiple forums on the case of the Cuban 5 and the blockade of Cuba as part of an ongoing awareness initiative. Within these free public presentations we screened a film with Leonard Weinglass detailing the case of the Cuban Five along with a short film on the blockade of Cuba called Desaparecidos. At each presentation there were speakers on both of these connected issues. We found that giving a brief history and context of the brutal attacks against the Cuban people, was a natural introduction to the persecution of the Cuban Five. These forums provided information regarding the case, focusing especially on the new updates regarding the Atlanta 11th Circuit Court of Appeals hearing and the internationally coordinated campaign to FREE THE FIVE!

These ongoing forums and discussions focus on the importance of solidarity and coordination throughout North America and abroad to raise consciousness and activity. We hope to raise awareness to a level which forces anti-imperialist issues - making them impossible to ignore and demanding a response. As well as this we emphasized the case of the Cuban 5 in the larger context of a continuing struggle for self-determination in Cuba, as well as globally.

As part of this struggle the role of people in Western countries is essential. We have a responsibility to support the efforts of oppressed people worldwide by echoing their demands and connecting their struggle to our own. As activists demanding self-determination for oppressed nations we continually connect the issues of Cuba to the issues of Indigenous nations in Canada. Any attacks committed towards Cuban people happens alongside the continued repression of Indigenous nations in Canada for the same reasons and by the same forces. As people asserting their right to self-determination Indigenous people in Canada are met with continual systemic brutality and violence by Imperialist forces who have no interest in fundamental human rights or freedoms. We are happy to see the photos of the Free the Cuban Five committee participating in anti-war demonstrations on your website. Our Committee is a member of Vancouver’s anti-war, anti-occupation coalition, Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO). We participate in meetings and demonstrations, continually exposing the occupations of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Haiti as examples of Imperialist disregard to the rights and sovereignty of people worldwide. As we’re sure you are fully aware, we need only to look at the history of Cuba to understand the United States’ approach to “independence” and oppressed people asserting their rights.

We are building up to a summer of high activity - continuing our petition drive (where we have collected over 1000 signatures) as well as organizing multiple forums on campuses, in Vancouver, and in other cities and towns as well. We will respond positively and enthusiastically to any international initiatives and will continue to work on the case until you are free. As part of an international struggle for self-determination our work does not begin and will not end with your release, as you are only five of the many prisoners of Imperialism. We will continue to organize after you are freed, for justice, dignity, and freedom for all oppressed people worldwide. We look forward to continued correspondence and coordination, and together we will win.

In Solidarity,

Thomas Anthony

Organizer Free the Cuban 5 Committee

Vancouver

Get involved with the Free the Cuban Five Committee – Vancouver! Since our inception on July 26th 2003 we have been dedicated to raising awareness around the cases of these five Prisoners of Imperialism - who were arrested for exposing terrorists operating in the United States, tried without access to an unbiased jury, and convicted without evidence. We undertake this in a constant effort to connect their struggle to a broad and dynamic movement for self-determination worldwide. Join us in our weekly meetings, frequent petition drives, and ongoing educational events. Contact us by e-mail: cuban5van@yahoo.ca, phone: 604 322 1764, or regular post: PO Box 21607, Vancouver, B.C V5L 5G3
Mobilization Against War and Occupation began to develop a campaign to expand the focus of the anti-war movement in Canada. It must include the demand of “Canadian Troops Home Now” and to expose Canadian imperialism at its foundations and we must expose Canadian imperialism at its participation of indigenous nations on Canada. In January 2004 MAWO launched Operation: CANADA OUT! which challenged the people of Canada to oppose the occupation of Afghanistan along with the occupation of Iraq.

Spring Response – One Year Later

One year after the birth of the anti-war movement of 2003, the political situation in the world had gone through many periods, many stages and many developments. However, the dominant theme that prevailed in early 2004, was the desperate and weak position of the world’s greatest super power in their failure to stabilize Iraq, and to control it. The voices of Iraqi people, who had survived one of the most brutal invasions and wars of the century, remained loud, defiant and in control. Sovereignty was also expanded to include this new front - the Caribbean and Latin America. Operation: CANADA OUT! was also expanded to include the front of Canadian imperialism and the people of Vancouver demanding CANADA OUT OF HAITI!

The spring of 2004 has brought an unbelievable upsurge in the impact of Iraq resistance. Before the end of April 2004, it was already declared that more US soldiers had died this month than in any period during the occupation. The reason has put the US-led forces in a deep and downward spiralling process of demoralization. It has had an impact to the interest of imperialism and has improved the position of opposition to the US-led intervention: Canada Out of Haiti! Canada Out of Afghanistan!

The spring of 2004 has taught the people of the world the important lesson of following the leadership of those under attack. It has shown us the success of the strategy to build a focused and effective movement against war and occupation.

The anti-war movement must look to a future in 2004 where we can effectively develop a leadership that will bring mobilization and education consistently and based on political necessity. We need a leadership that will call for actions that unify the fight of the poor and working people at home and abroad. We need a movement with eyes on the global anti-war leadership, from Iraq people to the people of Palestine and Afghanistan.

The movement must allow for rapid expansion and must be strategically oriented to focus on effectively attacking imperialism. Our task today is not only to resist the assaults being launched by imperialism, but also to take advantage of their failure. We must provide a united front, along side the heroic resistance in Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan. We must respond immediately and effectively, by taking advantage of each and every opportunity to strengthen our fight. We must develop this movement to a point where everyone poor and working person in Vancouver, comes to the streets and shouts “We Will Win!” in unison with the voices of Fallujah, of Haiti, of Palestine, and of Kabul. These are the united shouts that will shatter the US criminal military empire and bring to power one that will stop the wars that will cause the defeat of war and occupation everywhere?

On International Solidarity

In order to build international solidarity we must first go to areas and regions where our contacts will be excited about initiating processes of direct transformation in the world. These processes are intended to permanently preserve the means to achieve a network of information, which will allow us to communicate widely. This way we will fight to global solidarity with the government of Chile, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by confronting and exposing the complete distortion of Venezuela that exists in many parts of the world. At the same time this allows us to expose the interference of the government of George W. Bush in the internal matters of Venezuela, which is the same thing that was done when the US administration invaded Haiti, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Entrevista a Dario de Venezuela

From page 16

que nos permita llevarla a los ciudadanos, con el fin de acabar con la extorsión que existe sobre Venezuela. Y al mismo tiempo podamos justificar la lucha del gobierno de Bush en los asuntos internos de Venezuela, que es lo mismo que hizo en Haití, Irak y Afganistan. También en este esferior de solidaridad, difundir y denunciar la violación de los Derechos Humanos que el gobierno de Bush realiza mantenendo 600 presos en la isla de Guantamano Cuba, violando todos los derechos de los reclusos y acuerdos internacionales sobre esa materia. Dario enfatiza los siguientes logros de la revolución bolivariana

Hemos avanzado en logros fundamentales, uno en educación, que es erradicar el analfabetismo para este año el 5 de Julio. En Segundo lugar, estamos atendiendo todo lo que tiene que ver en salud, con la solidaridad del pueblo y del gobierno cubano tenemos medicos en cada uno de las comunidades mas pobres de nuestra patria, danos salud en forma gratuita con atencion primaria de medico de cabecera y, pasando tambien a tener servicios ambulatorios organizados por la propia comunidad con el objetivo de elevar el nivel de la atencion medica. En el caso de la agricultura estamos trabajando en funncion de garantizar la seguridad y la solidaridad alimentaria de nuestro pueblo con una distinta y mejor distribucion de la tierra, donde la tierra sea para quien la trabaja; estos son aspectos fundamentales de algunos logros que hemos venido alcanzando en este proceso de cambio. De esta manera estamos logrando un objetivo natural de lo el de la justicia social y el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida de los ciudadanos.
Café Rebelde... Café Rebelde... is an opportunity for people to come together to celebrate and unite the various struggles for Social Justice in Canada. It is a coalition of several grassroots organizations. The next Café Rebelde will take place on January 30, 2004 at 7pm, at 706 Clark Drive. The topic will be: political prisoners in different parts of the world. The purpose is to promote solidarity with Latin America. It seeks to open up spaces for the community of Vancouver to share and express Latin American culture and discuss issues of current interest in Latin America. It is a space for cultural and political education and participation. Café Rebelde can be defined as a place for conscious leisure.

Resisting Imperialist Terrorism

The attacks of September 11th were used by the US and Canadian ruling classes to drive racist sentiments up amongst the working class people in these countries.

Through this racism, the ruling class tried to convince working and poor people in developed countries that the attacks were against us, that these ‘terrorists’ hate our freedom and way of life. In fact, the demands of people under attack by imperialism are basically for power for oppressed people against imperialism.

These demands are the same demands people hold on picket lines throughout Canada and the US. Because the attacks against workers and poor and oppressed people within imperialist countries are by the same forces that attack people in the West. As the people of Iraq are strengthening the fight against the most powerful terrorists in the world today, so the people in these countries have the right to fight back.

What the ruling class of the US understands perfectly well but has never uttered is that they are not capable of ending, or even fighting what they call terrorism. US imperialists are the terrorists that murder, burn, destroy, maim and torture the people of the world for the cause of profit, power and plunder. The only way to fight against terrorism is to fight the most powerful terrorists in the world and their occupation of Iraq by building a movement that fights alongside the Iraqi resistance, unifying behind their demand.

US-UK OUT OF IRAQ!

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movimiento fire this time por justicia social - bases de unidad

la humanidad es amenazada hoy por guerra, crisis económicas, el hambre, la pobreza y el crimen: todos creados por el imperialismo; aunque nos resistimos al imperialismo, también tenemos la obligación de luchar contra él. El imperialismo es la realidad del mundo tras la guerra, es la realidad que creamos y que vivimos.

fire this time movement for social justice

adaptado para el contexto de latinoamérica

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Interview With Tim Louis

Councillor Louis: Well, we’re at a crossroads. We’re at a fork in the path. We’ve come back where we started.

Councillor Louis: Yes, the issue of unemployment in the next few years will be the number one issue in the city. We’ve had some years of prosperity and we’ve had some years where people have been unemployed. But I believe we’ll be able to reach an agreement that allows for a joint slate.

What about the AGM? Is it working? How is this process developing? Is it working? How is it working?

Crossroads. We’re at a fork in the path. What might have said in fact was voting from being expelled for the “crime” of the need for a municipal solution.

Claudia Ekdahl
Stand in Solidarity With Health Care Workers!

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their jobs in solidarity with the HEU. The BC Teachers Federation announced strike action at many of its locals starting the next day. At least 15,000 CUPE BC members planned to walk off the job at the same time. CUPE president Barry O’Neill said, “Ily each of these workers in the public sector is the very backbone of our province.”

Electrical workers and Hydro workers thereon announced the same day. The same day, theCUPE job action, said Wayne McVor of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Fifteen thousand CUPE workers walked off the job on Friday April 30th in support of the HEU strike. The momentum continued to build as over 10,000 people gathered at the Vancouver Art Gallery in solidarity with the HEU and against the BC Liberal government. Monday May 3rd was being anxiously anticipated by workers all across the province as the day to finally fight back against Gordon Campbell’s agenda and defend the HEU. Even the Vancouver Sun was predicting that over 200,000 workers were expected to walk off their jobs.

On Sunday, May 2nd the CUPE Federation of Labor held a closed room with the BC Liberals and the executive of the HEU. After a reported 48 hours of discussions, labour and the government reached a deal that forced an important setback on the strength of HEU workers and the movement of working and poor people in BC against the BC Liberal agenda.

This deal included a 15% wage roll back across the board for all HEU members, a limited severance package and the contracting out of 600 full time equivalent HEU jobs to private companies. The HEU executive defended the deal as the best possible scenario and emphasized that they were not in bargaining, but facing a draconian guy who had them cornered on the other side of the government. They claimed that the deal was a victory for working people in the province.

HEU-Front was back to work on Monday and CUPE and all unions called off the Monday walkout.

Most workers across the province disagreed that the deal was a victory. Wildcat picket lines sprung up in Kelowna, Tsawanssken and Victoria. The entire town of Quenual and Kamloops shut down as school communities joined Prince Rupert with HEU member parents. The energy of the pickets was the active unity of organized working and poor people throughout the province, the action was not lost.

Working and poor people in BC kept organizing and demanding to know: why did the BC Fed sit down with the government? Why did the HEU agree to the deal that included both wage roll-backs and layoffs for their membership on the eve of a massive show of strength from all the people of BC?

The deal that was made between the BC Fed and the BC Liberals was a setback for HEU members who have been fighting for three years against layoffs and rollbacks. If working people had continued escalating resistance against the BC Liberal government (Bill 37, Bill 36, and Bill 37, there would have been no need to compromise with Gordon Campbell.

Because of this setback, the deal was an even bigger setback for the development of the strength and confidence of poor and working people in BC. This strength, confidence and solidarity had been the most critical element (after the provocation of the BC Liberal government) in pushing the leadership of the labour movement to call for escalating province wide strike action.

However, the movement was not strong enough to continue when the leadership called it off. Where confidence, action and resistance had been, confusion set in.

Support Health Care Workers!

“The premier has drawn a line in the and that goes so deep that working people are left with little choice but to defy this government.” — Barry O’Neill, CUPE BC President on supporting the HEU strike

Working people in BC cannot afford to allow the BC Liberals to get away with the implementation of the back to work legislation they have levied at the HEU.

The implications of allowing this legislation and the ‘deal’ to stand unchallenged would be a further setback for all working people and trade unionists. If the capitalist class can force unionists and working people to go back to work under worse conditions than before they struck, it not only destroys the right of collective bargaining, it would be a severe deterrent to bargaining at all.

At the root of the attack on the HEU is a thinly veiled attack on the rights of all working people in BC. Suddenly, as workers in BC, we are finding ourselves back in the early days of unionism, where we must fight for our right to strike or even be in effective unions at all. Above all, the rights of the Health Care Workers must be defended and their particular struggle today must be supported by all working and poor people in BC.

One thing is certain: in order to fight for the labour, health care and democratic rights of all working and poor people in BC, we are faced with the profit driven neo-liberal agenda of the BC Liberal government. We must re-build the confidence of the working class in BC. We witnessed and were part of an explosion of this confidence around the HEU strike, if only for a week at the end of April. This is very important to understand that the momentum of this movement is not dead, but the challenge before us now is to re-organize ourselves around specific demands for the rights of working and poor people against ruling capitalist class of British Colombia. We need to take advantage of the openings that have been created by HEU workers after the ‘deal’, since the mood of the workers around the Province and among HEU workers is not demoralization but disbelief and anger. Within this short given period, our immediate task, in the face of this setback, is to believe that these demands can be realized through the same sort of beautiful and powerful mobilizations, disruptions and strikes that were most recently led by the membership of the HEU.

Today, we must all unite behind the Hospital Workers against the so-called ‘deal’ and the entire BC Liberal agenda for health care, workers rights and justice. This is the time to come together, educate and mobilize. WE WILL WIN!

Interviews with CUPE Members

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They say we’re the highest paid. We got this through equity ruling and we got this through superannuation ruling. That is how we achieved these wages in the first place. It was a foundation for these wages, that’s how we got. These wages in the last 20-30 years of bargaining. In the last 15 years we went for comparability and we got this. We gave the same job to the same person for the same amount of wages.

In the last years we went for comparability and we got this. We give the same job to the same person for the same amount of wages.

The difference was 25% to 35% that someone outside of the female dominated industry of health care to someone inside.

Subsequent years of negotiations achieved what we got now in comparability between those industries outside the health care industry, and equity which is a woman’s right.

The way of winning a earning power against a man’s earning power for getting the same job done. We achieved those throughout the years and now this dyimpanon guy comes along and says, ‘well, this female dominated industry isn’t worth much’. And we fight those wages. He also tells one of the female MLAs to ‘f*ck off’.

So I say, where’s the power? Where is his direction and what is he going for? What are his long term goals? Is it just his ego or ‘me-first’ for “we’ve got the most powerful ego to feed, when you have come in power over other workers, you work without any competition. You make the law. You’re the king. And it’s a whole weird thing that I never thought this province would ever see, or in my lifetime in Canada. It’s a sad progression of what democracy is supposed to be, it’s a mockery.

Where will you be tomorrow morning?

Tomorrow morning I’ll be here, manning the picket line. And we’ll see what happens in the morning. I’d like to go for a ride.

Dave, HEU Member

What has the response of people who have been out on the lines tonight to the deal that was made here?

They’re not very happy at all. It’s beyond our control. He’s already got his grassroots there and all the power there that he wants to have over the workers.

How do you see the workers responding to the deal that was made tonight?

They’re not happy at all. They think they’ve been sold out. They made a deal that included both wage roll-backs and layoffs for their membership on the eve of a massive show of strength from all the people of BC.

What do you think the deal that was made tonight and the battle the HEU has carried out will mean for the labour movement in BC?

If we fold like the leaders want us to, I think the rest of the unions will be fair game for Campbell. He will make the rules, he makes the laws. If he gets away with what he’s done with us he’ll do it to hundreds of others. How can the cuts to health care up to this point have an effect on you and the people you work with?

A lot of people have been laid off. Some of the employees elsewhere have been able to get other jobs, most of them are down to $9 and hour jobs, you know.

What has changed the care in the hospitals themselves? It’s not like it used to be. It just used to be good. We were all together to give the health care, it’s not there. The attitude of all the people. They’re not focusing on the people, they’re worried about their jobs.

Thank you.

Interview with Fred Muzin continued

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agreed to the 15% wage rollbacks. There was no negotiation, its something we don’t agree with, we didn’t bend, we’ve had no opportunity to bargain that was imposed by legislation.

It’s going to take people a while to understand that. They feel that the executive agreed to bargain away 15% of their wages, that’s not the reality at all.

There was no negotiations period. It was just a straight political campaign to push back the government on some severely threatened legislation.

What is the HEU going to do now?

F- Well, a couple things. One of the things we learned quite clearly through the whole buildup to job action and the eight days of job action that we’re not too much on running the bureaucracy, but we’re too much on communicating and doing member to member communication. We have to focus more on communicating and keeping in touch with our members.

Also explaining processes and having them be part of the fight back. So I think you’re going to see a lot more meetings and bylaw executives on site, not just in the local, but also in the regions where people feel a lot more isolated.

Sort of our approach to our members, I think, we’ve learned how empowering that is, not just for the union executives, but for the members who like seeing the union executives. They like having discussions and debates. Also you find out, like we did on the picket line, you find out day to day where the members are at and what things they say to do so there’s more accountability.

In large organizations there’s a lot of bureaucracy and it does tend to tie up a lot of members time. It’s a very small thing to say, but the challenge still exists.

It’s a good thing we still have the health care system because you look like hell. F- I caught bronchitis somewhere along the way, so that will be huge amount of your time, so that will be one little thing that we can have a go at.

Thanks Fred.
Si a esto se unen viejas y nuevas formas de saqueo como el intercambio desigual, la fuga incesante y obligada de capitales, el robo de cerebros, el proteccionismo, los subsidios y los uces de la OMC, a nadie deben extrañar las crisis y los acontecimientos que tienen lugar en Suramérica.

Fue América Latina la región del mundo donde con más rigor y exigencia se aplicó la globalización neoliberal. Ahora enfrenta el desafío del ALCA, que barrería las industrias nacionales y convertiría el MERCOSUR y el Pacto Andino en apéndices de la economía norteamericana: un asalto final contra el desarrollo económico, la unidad y la independencia de los pueblos latinos.

Pero si ese intento de anexión se consuma, tal orden económico seguiría siendo insostenible tanto para los pueblos de América Latina como para el propio pueblo de Estados Unidos, que ve amenazados sus empleos por una abundante mano de obra barata reclutada en países donde la pobreza, el desastre educacional y el desempleo impidió que los jóvenes obtuvieran una adecuada calificación. Mano de obra barata y no calificada es algo que pueden ofrecer masivamente las oligarquías latinoamericanas.

La síntesis de cuanto he dicho expresa la profunda convicción de que nuestra especie, y con ella cada uno de nuestros pueblos, se encuentra en un momento decisivo de su historia: o cambia el curso de los acontecimientos o no podría sobrevivir. No existe otro planeta adonde podamos mudarnos. En Marte no hay atmósfera, ni aire ni agua. Tampoco una línea de transporte para emigrar en masa hasta allí. O salvamos la que tenemos, o habrán de transcurrir muchos millones de años para que surja otro planeta con condiciones parecidas a las de la Tierra.

Debo concluir mis palabras. No es poco el trabajo que nos espera en el 2004. Deseo felicitar a nuestro pueblo por todo lo que ha hecho a lo largo de estos años, por su heroísmo, su patriotismo, su espíritu de lucha, su lealtad y su fervor revolucionario.

Felicito de modo especial en este 45 aniversario a los que supieron cumplir gloriosas misiones internacionales, hoy simbolizadas en la ejemplar conducta de los Cinco Héroes Prisioneros del Imperio, que con impresionante dignidad se enfrentan a las injustas, vengativas y crueles acciones de los enemigos de su Patria y de su pueblo, y en los quince mil médicos que, derrochando sacrificios, desafiando riesgos y peligros, cumplen sus deberes internacionales en cualquier paraje de más de 64 países, proezas humanas que no podrían realizar jamás Estados Unidos y Europa por carecer de capital humano para demostrar cuáles derechos humanos están realmente defendiendo.

Nadie podrá impedir la conducta solidaria de nuestro pueblo y la valentía de sus hijos con amenazas ni agresiones contra nuestros médicos, maestros, instructores deportivos o cualquier otro tipo de colaborador, porque muchos están dispuestos al honor de ocupar los puestos de aquellos que incluso perdieran la vida, víctimas de acciones terroristas estimuladas e impulsadas por funcionarios extremistas del gobierno de Estados Unidos.

Felicito a todos los que luchan, a los que no desisten jamás ante las dificultades; a los que creen en las capacidades humanas para crear, sembrar y cultivar valores e ideas; a los que apuestan por la humanidad; ¡a todos los que comparten la hermosa convicción de que un mundo mejor es posible!

¡Lucharemos junto a ellos y venceremos!