

FIRE THIS TIME



The Newspaper of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice

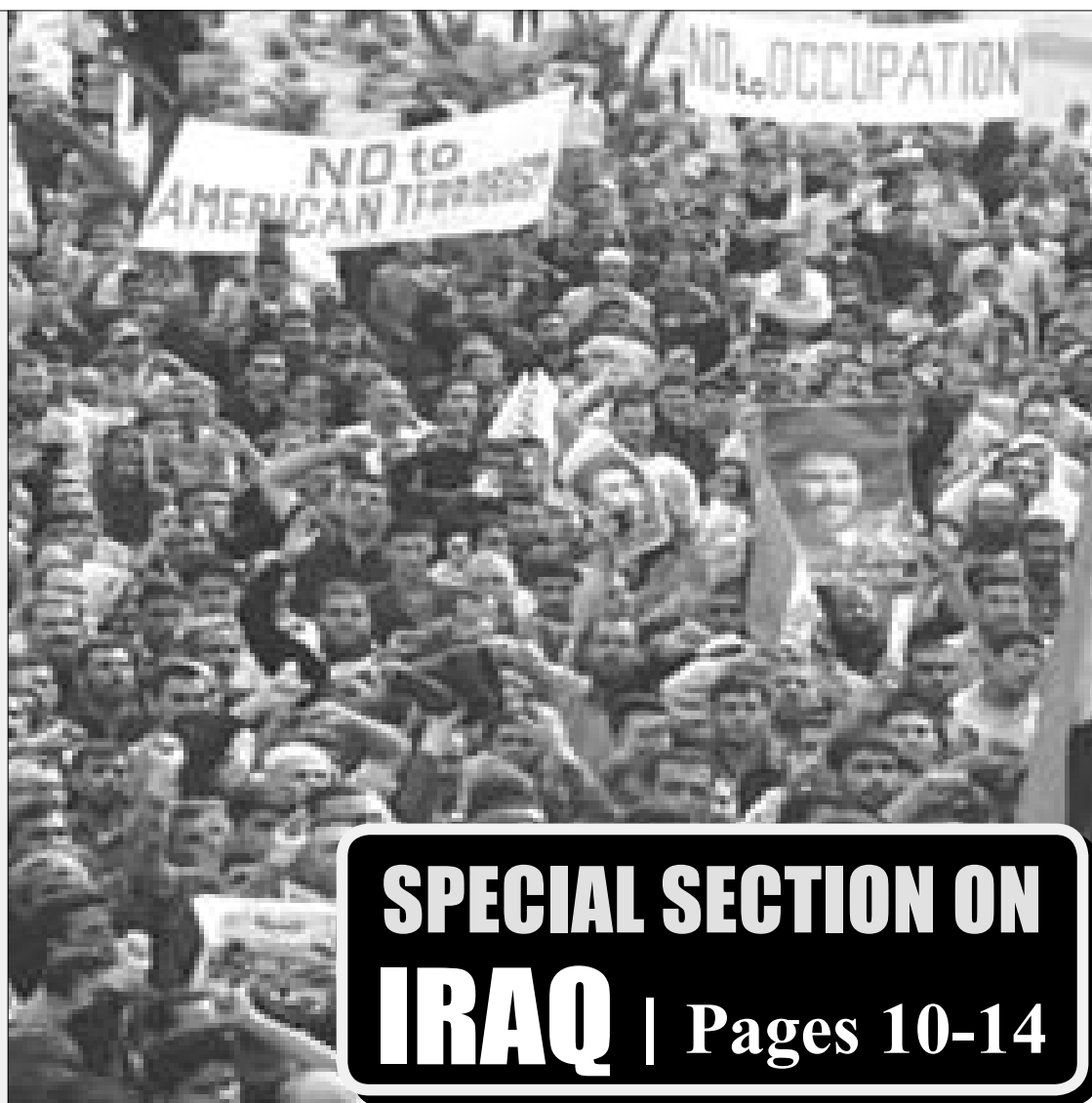
Issue 14 - May 2004 Issue

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FREE

Workers of the World, Unite Against the Occupations of

**Iraq,
Afghanistan,
Palestine,
Haiti, &
Indigenous Nations in
Canada!**



**SPECIAL SECTION ON
IRAQ** | Pages 10-14

FREE INSIDE!

Antiwar Posters

**THE WAR IS NOT
END THE OCCUPATION
SELF DETERMINATION
Iraq!
Afghanistan!
Palestine!
Indigenous Nations in**



**OPERATION
CANADA OUT!**



Pullout section:

**Posters Against War
and Occupation**

ALSO INSIDE:

**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 finally 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 active 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 doesn't make sense." – 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 labour.

The 6,500 HEU workers who lost their jobs 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



Picket of HEU workers and their supporters, including members of Mobilization Against War and Occupation, at Vancouver General Hospital, April 30th 2004.

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 of the HEU.

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, contracting out and an expiring contract, the HEU membership voted overwhelmingly, 89%, for strike action. The provincial government's refusal to negotiate or reconsider their massive, 100 page concessions package that included more layoffs, wage roll backs and benefit reductions left the workers with no choice but to strike.

HEU Defies The Employer... And The Government

When the HEU went on strike on Sunday April 25, Health Minister Colin Hansen immediately blamed the union for the loss of non-essential services at hospitals and care facilities saying, "We need to sort this out at a table and not by making patients the victims of their strike action."

Just one week before making this comment, Hansen had called in a mediator for these negotiations, but had remained so rigid that the mediator walked out.

By late Wednesday night, with massive support of unions and working and poor people throughout the province behind the HEU, the government introduced 'back to work' legislation to the legislature. Bill 37 passed early in the morning, and started panic amongst workers on the picket lines. Suddenly, their strike had lost its legality.

In the one of the most brutal and reactionary 'back to work' legislations in Canadian history, Bill 37 undercut even the contract rejected by the HEU membership one year before. Under Bill 37, the government legislated itself the power to completely destroy the HEU through unlimited contracting out of its membership to private companies. It eliminated the \$65 million severance fund from the previous contract, introduced retroactive wage rollbacks so workers would have to give back money they had already earned, increased work hours and eliminated any cap on contracting out positions.

A rally was held at noon on Thursday April 29th. The HEU executive came

out of their meeting and announced that the union would defy the legislation. HEU spokesperson Chris Allnutt directed his membership, "You are to respect the protest line until we decide it is time for you to go back to work." The over 500 people who had gathered cheered and chanted for a general strike.

When asked what the difference between a protest line and a picket line is, Allnutt said, "We're calling it a protest line because that's what it is. We're protesting against the government's legislation that was rammed through the house in the early hours of the morning. That's not acceptable to us and we are going to continue to protest against it. And we as a union are going to decide when our members return to work."

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 Arcant, 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

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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 set their sites 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 focussed around the HEU. When we last interviewed Fred Muzin in February of 2003 (see FTT issue #2), he and his union were preparing for a long battle for the rights of their membership. This interview was conducted on the eve of the beginning of that strike that 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 Federation of Labour and the BC Liberals. The active support of the membership of the HEU by all poor and working people in BC is more important today than ever before.

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.

Fred Muzin: Well so far they have pink slipped over 6,700 of our members and over 2,500 since bargaining began in January through the guise of contracting out. The government stripped away all of our protections against contracting out by enacting Bill 29 two years ago.

FTT: Even with an 89% strike vote and massive support of unions in the province behind you, including the BC Federation of Labour, the government is continuing with their hundred-page concessions package and massive layoffs. Why do you think the government is continuing these attacks?

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 then 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 better hold off their 109 page concession package. It includes 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 in wage rollbacks. This scooped in 200 more classifications including people whose occupations have huge skill shortages. They have no understanding or appreciation.

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 pubic 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 on April 1st to 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 seniors 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 working in female dominated occupations. 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 not good severance but under Bill 29, they do get a sixty-day notice period. After that, they can basically apply for unemployment insurance, and you know how the federal government attacked that. Either they apply for jobs with contractors, where most of them 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 voluntary recognition agreements with contractors. They knew that the government was going to contract out services so they went and negotiated before they had any members

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In Defence of Health Care

Voices from the Hospital Employees Union picket line

By Brennan Luchsinger
& Ivan Drury

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 meanspirited.'

Fire This Time, along with members of Youth Third World Alliance and Mobilization Against War and Occupation have walked the picket (and then 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.



HEU workers on Strike in Nelson BC, April 28th 2004.

On Thursday, April 29th, the day some workers on the line called 'D-Day,' Ivan Drury and Brennan Luchsinger from Fire This Time and Youth Third World Alliance interviewed some of these workers and workers from other unions who were also at on the line to support health care workers.

These HEU members, whose voices are recorded below, were among the many who welcomed us, thanked us for our support and asked us to come back with more and more people to join the fight for health care and workers rights everyday until the strike is won.

To these people and to the HEU, Fire This Time responds: The brave health care workers who lead this fight against the BC Liberal government's profit driven agenda

are the ones all working and poor people in BC must thank. The rest of us remain proud to join you. Together, We Will Win!

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 folks 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 is 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 worried about what is going on

with health care.

The contracting out and the privatization just scares me, it scares the hell out of me.

Raj Chouhan, Director of Bargaining for the Hospital Employees Union

What decision was made just now in response to the BC Liberal's legislation that was passed early this morning?

The provincial executive of the HEU has decided that Bill 37 is a bad law. We don't recognize it. Our protest line will continue all over BC. We are standing up to defend our rights and to defend public health care.



HEU workers and their supporters picketing at Vancouver General Hospital, April 29th 2004.

What is the implication of this protest line for workers rights in this province and for the relationship of labour 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 lay-off notices. 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 to backfire.

What can people do to help?

I hope that more people will continue to come out to our picket lines, our protest 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

organizer

Why are you down here today supporting HEU?

The reason I'm down here today is because we've got to support our brothers and sisters because we're all in this together.

What impact do you think the decision of the HEU to stay out despite the Provincial Government's legislation is going to have overall for the labour movement in this province?

I think we've got to put up a fight and it's got to be sooner rather than later.

Thank-you very much.

Albert Lee, HEU member

What do you see happening for the HEU after the passing of this back 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.

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 willing 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. Y'know, if they can't deal with the union fairly then we'll just have to go out illegally.

Thanks a lot.

Why All Poor, Working, and Oppressed People in BC Must Support the HEU Strike

From page 3

or employees. They negotiated contracts that paid virtually just a little bit above employment standards or minimum wage, about \$9.50 an hour with nothing in the way of benefits or protections. They entered into those contracts. Then when the company managed to get contracts through the bidding process with the individual health employers, one of the conditions of employment was, for those desperate people who were willing to work for those wages, to sign an IWA card.

There are two things, one is that people never got to vote on their terms and conditions, and they never got to choose which union they wanted to represent them. Our position has been that this is our traditional work, that we have an established employment relationship and at least for a period of time, we should have the first opportunity to re-organize that work and re-organize those contractors.

We did file charges with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), we went to arbitration, and our position was sustained. Other unions have been approached with the same kind of agreements by these corporations and they have chosen not to do that because they know it would erode the whole labour movement and decent wages and benefits for working people. So the CLC, about three or four week ago, did impose level one and two sanctions on the

IWA and we're calling for them to basically throw them out until they stop doing this and reverse the damage they've already done. By signing these contracts they've undermined the whole provincial standard, the company says, 'well, we've got somebody for \$10 an hour, why should we pay anybody decently?'

It's had a very very negative impact. Also, it's a very well thought out government strategy to turn workers against workers. You have people who have been fired for no cause, who are desperate, against people who are desperate for any job trying to survive, and they're trying to get both sides fighting amongst themselves while the government laughs all the way to their golden handshake deal.

FTT: These cuts and privatization of health care affect the rights of workers in the province both through attacks on our labour rights as well as attacks on public health care. What can people who are not HEU members do to support health care workers in this fight against the BC Liberal government?

Fred Muzin: The struggle is really a struggle for justice and decency. They basically want to destroy the public health care system, which will impact everyone in our society. You will have an American style health care system where only the rich get care and other people, if they get any care at all, will have to



MAWO member Aaron Mercredi distributes letter of support for striking HEU workers at Vancouver General Hospital, April 30th 2004.

deal with long long line-ups.

The first thing is for people to become familiar with the issues and to understand the real threat to the Canadian way of life. And then it's to be out there advocating, telling your neighbours, telling your friends, writing letters to the editor, people meeting with their MLAs, telling them that they completely and absolutely oppose this government direction.

When we commence job action, it's to be out there standing side-by-side with health care workers, being part of the struggle no matter how long that goes or how difficult it becomes. People's natural tendency when they are under vicious attack is to feel very isolated and alone. So seeing people from the anti-poverty groups, the women's groups,

the disabled community and the seniors and the students and the youth will be a tremendous shot in the 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.

FTT: 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 bad management, despite management that intimidates and coerces. Because you sort of have a professional image when you are looking after patients in residence. But people don't see the turmoil going on behind the scenes, and the tremendous sacrifice people are making in order to preserve public services and 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 no government owns it, 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 disrupt society, to become in effect ungovernable. If they're not prepared to become ungovernable then there will be unscrupulous people who will control their lives. That's what the struggle is really about.

FTT: Thank you very much Fred.

Fred Muzin: Thank-you.

REPEAL THE DEAL!

**Stop Privatization, Layoffs and Cuts!
Campbell Must Go!**

**Rally 12:30PM
Sat. May 8th
Vancouver Art Gallery
March to St. Pauls Hospital**



Organized By:

Communities in Solidarity with Hospital Workers

REPEAL THE DEAL!

On Monday May 3rd, 2004, hospital workers across BC were feeling frustration, 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 by unions across BC for Monday May 2 (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 Quesnel, 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

Laundry, 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 of 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 struggle of the HEU. As working people, women, people of color, immigrants, refugees, indigenous people, LGBT, 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 Privatization, Layoffs and Cuts! Campbell Must Go!

more info: cshw@resist.ca

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 retroactivity on a 15% wage decrease. People felt that was right over the top. So, those 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?

F- 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 my knowledge 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 virulent, the provincial health authority that runs Children's, that it would be at the forefront of victimizing people.

What do you feel was established by the week that you were out on strike with the levels of support from people and the actions of the membership itself?

F- 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 effecting 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?

F- 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 ways 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 its 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.



HEU picket signs at the VGH strike headquarters on May 2nd, shortly after the 'deal' was announced.

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?

F- 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?

F- 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

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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 2 2004, how do you feel 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 the bottom line is no more contracting out. We’ve been sold down the river, basically by the federation of labour and I don’t know what our union people are doing in there cutting this deal, but everybody inside is just devastated tonight. That’s all I can say for now.

What do you think should have been done differently as far as this strike goes?

S- We’ve been bullied for the last two years. We’ve gone, and we’ve talked about what we wanted...the bottom line is we want to save jobs. That’s what we’re here for, that’s why we’ve been out for a week, we’ve wasted a week now.. It’s just a travesty basically.

What do you think is going to happen to members now?

S- I...Everybody was pretty vigilant the last few days and tonight everybody inside was just...no one wants to go back but I can’t account for the other three or four hundred people who have gone home and have been picketing all week. I’m praying to God that they’ll stay out tomorrow. That they’ll come in, see that there’s public support and we’ll all keep it together and try to get a better deal done for HEU members.

What do you think is going to happen to you?

S- I work in food service and I’m outta here in five weeks, I’m already contracted out. I’m mean that’s why I’m willing to fight. I mean it’s not just for me, it’s for the rest of the people here and for the future, young people across the province, because if we don’t fight now, I mean, its gonna be like sheep going off on an assembly line and falling into the ocean and dying. We gotta battle and be strong and keep it together we need community amongst all the unions and all the public support will be great, try to keep it together and get a positive solution for HEU people.

Thank you.

Amy, HEU Member at VGH

How do you feel about what happened tonight, about the deal with the government.

Amy- Actually, it’s a raw deal. And it will make lots of people unhappy, and I’ve been working as an OR assistant in the operating room for the last, since 1991, and about a month ago our job was deleted, and our pay was decreased by just about 4.72\$ and now we will have this 11% rollback so its a raw deal for the amount of work we do, and the nurses and the surgeons are totally dependent on us to get everything ready so... I’m not happy. I’m retiring but I support the people that have to stay and take that kind of money and support family. It’s going to be hard for them.

What do you think should have been done differently?

A- Um, I think they shouldn’t have rolled back the wages, they

should’ve been kept at that for two years without any increase in the pay, and then not to privatize the jobs that have, that will make lots of people unhappy.

Do you think the strike should’ve stayed?

A- I can’t say anything about that, because I think that patient care is important too. It is disrupted by the strike, even though it gave essential services, especially in the operating room, they had to cancel 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 have decided anything about what is going down tomorrow because I really haven’t seen the rest of my 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 discuss this with. These are VGH people and their opinion is going to be their and our opinion is going to be ours. I have heard that Victoria’s not planning on going back in. Victoria General. But then again, this is what I have just heard a little while ago. What the reaction is really going to be tomorrow morning is going to be the decisive nail in the coffin or the decisive step 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 hospital workers. 4,000 hospital workers are telling you unequivocally that your health care system is in dire straits. No one wants to listen. Well, that’s fine. The simple fact is, like you mentioned in your nice little paper here is that we lost 5,000 workers who 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 good bye to your health care system. Because there will be no one to remember how cleaning used to be, how cleaning should be, or why its wrong to have take them out in the first place. You’ve got until October of this year to recall the people that you’ve laid off. You don’t have much time to think about it. Your government is still in power and he’s not going to want to bring them back. But if you don’t get them back you can plan on having 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, their hospitals can’t get clean enough, to prevent people from getting secondary diseases when they are in the hospitals this occupies 500,000 bed days a year that could be better served treating people for what they came in for.

BC was the cleanest set-up left in Canada and now this government has decided to wipe it out. To me, who is just a simple worker, who

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 back when he was campaigning for premier. If he had told us that this was what we were in for, he never would have got in.

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 memorandum of agreement we’re still going to lose 600 more people. We’re in a sort of strategic retreat with this government, until we come up for elections in 2005. Hopefully the people in this province wake up and start participating in the democratic process and stop wasting 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



HEU picket at Vancouver General hospital, abandoned shortly after the announcement of the deal on May 2nd, 2004.

went out when they were trying to get rid of the workers, and talked to people found out that the companies that ruined a hospital in the UK is the same company that is coming to ruining the Cancer agency, children and women’s hospital.

It is just incredible what is going to come down on your health care system, and we stood up for a whole week willing to loose our wages to try to let the people know what is going down. The privatization scheme is killing the health care system.

Alan, Maintenance Electrician

Alan- I’ve been a maintenance electrician for 27 years here at the hospital and have held various other 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 a 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 teachers and with he bus drivers and with BCGEU and imposing contracts. I see this as a real black day for democracy and the concept

strike itself?

Alan- I feel personally, with my experience here, I feel that what we expected from the BC Fed- the BC Fed has done this to us before - I see the BC Fed is strictly a political group that is only interested in furthering their own political careers. Not really caring about the rights of the workers, only using the workers to further themselves politically. I know that sounds maybe mean spirited but that’s how I see the Fed.

I feel that what should be done for the HEU is that that we should be networking with other health care services in other provinces. I think that what’s in our best interest is in their best interest as well. Especially with other unions back east, this is where they have been successful in the past to defeat government imposing contracts... They’re more experienced with that than we are and they carry a lot more weight, a lot more financing and I feel we’d be a lot better off and a lot stronger if we affiliated with other unions in other provinces rather than going the BC Fed way.

We’ve been down this road with the BC Fed before and they sabotaged us back in ‘84 with the Jack Monroe from the IWA went out into the interior to meet with Bennett to sign this deal. We were Operation Solidarity and everyone was prepared to go on a province-wide strike and at the last minute, they signed a deal. It’s like deja-vu all over again.

What do you think is going 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 cliché and I sound 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 here 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 at 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 it’s illegal. 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.

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More Interviews with HEU Workers from May 2nd

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What do you think is going to happen to HEU members who are going to be impacted by this deal?

S- The first thing I can think of is that both my parents are HEU members, and the only reason I'm a nurse now is because they worked their ass off at a job that allowed them to make a decent living. There's LPNs, they are called full scope LPNs and they do everything that a registered nurse does except now they are going to do it for three dollars less, for doing the same thing that I do. It doesn't make any sense to me.

I work in extended care right now and the people are care aid workers, like what my mom did for 20 years, and they do everything. Honestly they do everything. I just push pills but they do everything. I cannot believe that they are going to have to put up with the shit they put up with every day and have these cuts and I don't know how they are going to take care of their families. This is the only thing I can think of is their families.

I was in a family that worked for HEU and even then it was tough enough, but now its going to be tougher, its just going to be impossible. It's impossible for families to live off of \$10, even \$15, its just going to be impossible, I don't know how its going to happen for them.

What effect do you think this deal is going to have for the BCNU member nurses?

S- I that when its our turn, because our turn is going to come, that no ones going to be standing there with us because we didn't stand there with them. And I think the reason why we didn't is because nursing has become this really bullshit bourgeois so-called profession. They tried so hard to remove themselves from being working class that they wouldn't even come out to support the strike of people. If they thought about it... if HEU is going to go on strike then whose going to do the job? It's going to be the nurses, and unless nurses want to take time out of their busy day to start doing some of the really hard dirty work then they should have been out there with them. I was totally disappointed with my union the whole time.

What do you think should have been done differently with the deal that was made?

S- I don't think that whatever deal that came out now shouldn't have been the deal. We should have been out there tomorrow with the general strike so that people would feel the full impact of the strike. I think people really wanted their time to show what they are going through. They really wanted to show their defiance at what is going on. They wanted to show that they are fed up. And I hope that people still do it. It's hard without the support of your union, but I hope people still do it.

Thank you.

Thomas, HEU member at St. Paul's

What is your reaction to the del that was made tonight?

Thomas- I'm quite disappointed. Just being on the picket lines for the last couple days with my fellow workers, and not even just fellow workers but with everyone who was coming out to support us, I was feeling a lot of momentum and a lot of energy. There were a lot a people who are dealing with really intense things, really horrible things in their everyday life, just being under constant attack and finally having some sort of means to fight back, some sort of way that they felt they could come together and address what's going on. This momentum is all seeming to be swept under the table right now.

What do you think is going to happen to you and other HEU workers?

T- Probably the same thing that is going to happen to all workers right now: more attacks, more work for less pay. It's gotten to a point where we can't live like this. Where we have to do something. I thought this was the start of something and I still think it is. I don't feel like everything is lost just because our leadership took the deal but I think it is going to make things a lot more difficult.

But being on the picket lines and seeing that

momentum, seeing energy and seeing how we acted when we were together, I have faith that we can come back. We need to come back.

Doug, Psychiatric Worker at Children's Hospital

What is your impression of what happened tonight?

Doug- I am astounded. Astounded and destroyed and furious. It's a sell out. I don't understand how they could get there. I have been standing with my brothers and sisters. We have been out here everyday, sometimes for 24 hours, sometimes for 48 hours to make this line happen and I have seen it grow, I have seen our members get braver and more certain and uncompromising and I have seen the community get involved.

Today I was certain it was going to happen, that there was nothing they could do to fuck it up and they found a way.

What do you think is going to happen now to you and other HEU members?

D- I think the clock is ticking for all of us to be gone. It sets us on the path to the goal of the Liberals which is to get unions out of health care and to make it so there isn't any watch dogs, so they can get away with privatization and they can sell it off.

I think for the workers in this industry, you can expect that in the next couple years its going to be similar to community and social service work where the qualifications they are demanding from us are going to go up at the same time that the pay and the working conditions are going to go in the tank. Its just going to be a disaster.

What do you think should have been done differently when the executive of the HEU sat down with the government tonight?



Fire This Time member Ivan Drury interviews HEU worker, May 2nd 2004.

D- Thy should not have sat down with the government tonight. We should have said, 'just watch what's going to happen and wait - we'll come to you when we are ready.' That's what they should have done. When I went to the Mayday rally yesterday I was really excited by the march, by the balloons, by the crowd and then when I got there standing up there talking, I got a sense that they were going to do the same thing they did with solidarity, just sign off a deal for expediency and then fuck everybody. That's where we're at now.

What do you think HEU workers are going to do now?

D- Well that's a good question, we're talking about a couple of things and I'm hoping that the membership builds on what we've gotten here, the connections that we've made and that we look for each other in the hospital and we find ways that we can take back control.

I think management right now is going to be feeling that they've got us under the thumb, that they can intimidate us, and we can't let any of that happen. We've got to use the contract we've got left to push them back.

Thank you.

Kevin, BCGEU Member on the HEU picket lines

What is your impression of what happened tonight?

Kevin- My impression is that, as a worker I have nobody standing up for us and we have to find ways to take our voice back. Obviously our union movement has failed us, the BC Fed has failed us. My impression is that they have used what's going on as a way to publicly show that they can control the workers to prop up the NDP in the next election.

I just feel like we were sold out as an election campaign. They can gain more public support by showing that they can keep us in line. That's what it was to us, they showed us that they can bring the workers close to a general strike and bring them back.

As far as my contract went, I'm from the community services sector of the BCGEU and we didn't even get the opportunity to get a strike vote before we voted. We weren't organized to know that the vote was going to happen. When I finally was phoning head office to find out the vote, I got to vote in someone's cubicle with no partition, with them telling me that my only chance was to vote yes.

My reduced wages, because I'm a casual worker, my first shift back, I got beat up by one of the clients, concussion. So I been out on the HEU line with a concussion on workers comp this whole time. Thinking that at least I have an opportunity to stand up somewhere.

As a BCGEU worker, why do you consider the HEU strike so important to be here on the line?

Kevin- Because it mainly affects women and immigrant women of colour and I think they have more to lose them myself. As a young white guy, I have more opportunities, even if I get screwed by my contract. I felt that I

and that's why we're fighting for it. Now they have lost their hope too that their job is going to be down the drain. Even though they are on the one-year recall, they don't expect that they are going to get called.

What do you think is going to happen to yourself and other HEU workers now?

For us it is back to business. We will do our job, go back to work. Like I said, the management will probably think that they can do whatever they want to with us. We are just going to do our job and that's what we're going to do.

What do you think should have happened differently in the negotiations?

We should fight for it and wait for the result... should wait until after Monday and then maybe the BC Fed could have talked about it.

Do you think there was going to be a lot of support tomorrow?

Tomorrow is the day that we have been expecting. That's why we were staying here until tonight, so we could try to be here for tomorrow morning. When we hear the news it's really sad.

What do you think HEU workers should do now in order to fight back?

We still have to fight for our rights and still have to stand for ourselves. That's all I can say.

Thank you.

Christine, HEU Shop Steward

My Name is Christine, I work in Health Records at VGH, for 14 years, and I'm a Shop Steward, and I'm on the Local Executive and recently I've been working on the Essential Services Committee.

Shannon: So Basically, what were your feelings when the news came down today?

Christine: We'll I'm addressing this personally that I'm personally very disappointed. I think there is a lot of energy out there and I think workers who've been trashed in this province since Campbell came in and even before 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 people who were facing losing their 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 joint he picket line, it was quite inspiring to me and it made me feel like the winds have changed.

I'm really glad that you're doing this interview because one of the reasons why there has been an impression 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 I've seen in here and you've seen elsewhere and the people who are, y'know, at events and the attendance and importance of those events are downplayed and not given publicity and so there is a sense that you're in your cocoon and your getting most of your information from corporate media that things are inevitable.

And I don't think Gordon Campbell is inevitable, I think Gordon Campbell is immoral, I think Gordon Campbell is I can't find any polite words to express it! (laughs) I think he's a very hollow man and I think one of the most horrible aspect of this is that his being premier of this province is that not only has he done things that are physically harmful to working people and especially to peopl ehwere in the HEU, but people have come to distrust government and think that the government is against them and that's totally contrary to democracy. A short time ago we heard his press confrence here in the nurses residence and he threw around the word democracy, and I don't think he has the right to utter that word.

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Speeches from Rally at VGH: 12 noon May 3rd

A Half Day After the ‘Deal’ was cut

Al, HEU Local Leader

I want to let you know that I have asked this young citizens group to pass out leaflets to all of you about this impromptu rally. I have checked with the employer and I want to let you know that even if you are here on hospital time, you won't be subject to any kind of discipline. The fact is that we need to go through this process because of what we have experience here in this last week. I know that all of us are physically and psychologically stretched to the breaking point and that's what this is for. its to deal with a lot of the frustration and the anger and the hurt feelings and way we feel like we've been let down. I really feel like we had an initiative here. I really think that even though for some of us, we've lost because we had expectations for other than what we've settled for, I think we're stronger today as grass roots activists than we were a week ago. I'm really proud of that.

Sandy, HEU Local Leader

The fact of the matter is that we did a great job. The fight's not over with this government. This government has to be defeated, it has to be defeated now and it cannot wait. No matter what you heard in the press, don't believe them. The press, and you know who they are, you watch the news, you see it, it's slanted, it's for the employer, it's for the government. So don't believe it. I have never been more proud of my membership in my whole life. I have been in many strikes but this was the best one. This was the best strike we have ever had becasue you showed such passion and integrity and you knew what you were doing was right! We don't know where we are going but we are going to go somewhere. And it's not over now.

Doreen, HEU Local Leader

I have to say that I am as proud of each and every one of you, so proud of each and every member in this province, let alone the members of our local. They stood up for what they believed in and what was right.



HEU rally on Monday, May 3rd, the day after the ‘deal’, Vancouver General Hospital.

(applause)
I am disappointed - I don't care what anybody says - I am disappointed in Jim Sinclair! (Shouts, cheers, applause) How dare he sell us out! (Cheers)
He has no business speaking for our union. What he has done is disappointed many citizens of this province! (cheers) I am so upset. (applause)
What he has done to the working people of this province is shameful. We had a momentum going and it was for his political aspirations. It was for his political aspirations, that's why he called this off. We are going to take him on too. We have every right to take him on. (applause)
How dare he do this to the people of this province because it is not just going to just impact HEU, it is going to impact every worker out there. (cheers)
Brothers and sisters, we are going to take him on. (Shouts and applause) We need to, we need to start a petition and call for his

resignation. (applause)
Starting this afternoon, let's go after the BC Federation of Labour and ask them to resign. We can do it, I know we can do it because the grassroots members elect the leadership and we can unelect the leadership too. (applause)
We also need to focus on the next election brothers and sisters. We need to work very hard in our constituencies to work and to support party who's going to support working people. So let's do that.

HEU Interviews From May 3, Noon, After VGH Rally

Leanne, HEU Member
What are you feeling as far as what happened today and the feeling among HEU workers because of the decision made last night?
Its fairly safe to say that we are completely disgusted. I don't know how our leadership decided that this was the right move, this was

not the right move. We had a statement to make and like I've said before, this is bigger than me losing my job, this is about us losing our health care. Our health care will go right.... and also for workers.... they say there's a cap now and we are going to lose 600 people over the next 2 years, but who's it going to be next week? Who the week after that? If they can do this with us, they can do it with everyone. All the workers out there know it. We need the public to know it. We work hard. We come here because we love our health care system, we support our health care system. We know what's going to happen. They're starting to privatize and there's not going to be any end to this. They will go and go and go. They are going to privatize everything so we are going to have to pay for everything, pay to have babies, pay to have heart surgery, we are going to end up the American way. This goes against our Canadian health plan. This is atrocious. **What do you think the next step is for people in the HEU and supporters?** I think that we need to go off again. I think it is important to maintain essential services because no one wants to see the patients in care suffer but I was there on the line when we were talking to truck drivers... not one delivery was not allowed to drop off their goods here. This hospital got every supply that they needed, got every supply that they ordered. There was no suffering as far as medical supplies go. We received everything. It was just a matter of them dropping it off at 10th Ave, so it was a little bit of an inconvenience because they had to come down to get supplies, but they were never turned away - that's important. It's even been reported on the news that they were never turned away. I think that we should maintain essential services and that we should walk. I think we need to do it now when there is still a bit of momentum, hopefully all the momentum has not gone... We need to be strong, we don't have the Fed [BC FED] to support us. **Thank you very much.**

More Interviews with HEU Workers from May 2nd

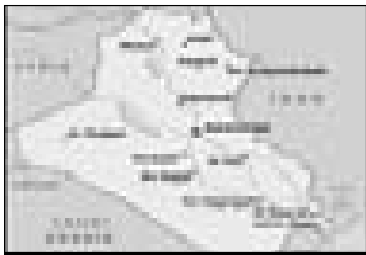
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True democracy is not imposing your will on the people, true democracy is not lying to the people, it is listening to people. That has not happened at all. I think we are starting to roar, I think we were very loud yesterday and I think perhaps that was why he at least put forth to sit down the table and give a little bit away. I am very disappointed in the leadership of the BC Fed and my union. I don't know whatwent on in that room, I don'tknow why they made that agreement and I probably will never know. There is an immense profit to be made in health care. I don't think what Premier Campbell says has to do with patient care, i think it has to do with ripping apart a health care system and leaving room for huge international interests to make money out of something that should have a primary aim of taking care, not profit. You can't introduce profit into every aspect of the system and have a healthy system. **What was the feeling amongst people up here tonight when the news of the deal came down?** Great anger and disappointment. They would like an explanation from Chris Allnutt and others as to why they made the decision they made. But, anger and disappointment, sort of an equal mix. Crushing disappointment in some cases. It seemed that we were on the verge of having a recogniotin of the imprtance of workers versus the importance of investors. Crushing disappointment. **And as far as tomorrow goes, what do you**

think is going to happen tomorrow? Well, I think many people are going to come here and they are going to be expressing that frustration and anger. It is my hope that we can express it in a positive way, sort of channel it in positive way. We'll have to brainstorm early in the morning, we want to be together. So we'll have to brainstorm in the morning and see what we can come up with. What we're doign is that we're giving out the essential service badge to anyone who comes by. Most people are grabbing them by the handful. We are going to continuwe to wear them as a gesture of solidarity. **Thank you.** **Mandy, HEU Member** How have you seen some of the health care cuts affect you as a member of HEU? Well, I lost my job in housekeeping in the fall and I had to bump into another position in the hospital which I'm not happy in. I was unable to get out of that job within the 3 month period, which - you were no longer able to get out of your job after 3 months, that was another condition of Bill 29. So I wound up stuck in a job that I hate. What's your response to the deal that HEU made tonight? It is very disappointing that the BC Fed just caved in. After this has been going on for years now, just waiting for this to happen. It's been 2 years since we were told in housekeeping that this was on the cart. Two years later I'm in a job I loathe.. at least I have a job though.

How do you see some of the members of the HEU reacting to this? Well, I think obviously tonight already that they're not going to take it, not going to accept it. I drove up here at 11pm and asked if they were still picketing and Kevin said, 'yeah' so I drove home for an hour and came back. It seems like its not being accepted by everybody. It seems like it's split down the middle. **Michael; HEU Member** **What is you reaction to the deal made tonight?** I am disappointed, really really disappointed. Here's a person whodrops these draconian laws or moves the goalposts whenever the game plays against his favor. He's in a political spotlight where he's going to get a lot of bonus points for this. And it just goes to show that he can use this (*inaudible*) for any union now that is set up for this kind of law, this draconian law. That's my opinion. It's a sad day to see that. **What has the reaction of other workers about what they are going to do tomorrow?** Workers are going to maintain the protesting. It is no longer a strike, it is a protest. And they'll maintain the protest. There may ne fines involved, we know. But apparently the government is not going to impose the fines individually, they'll impose the them on the union itself. That'll come out of the supreme court of BC and the HSABC in it's most cruel behaviour, has asked for \$430,000 in bonds.

For the past week? For the infraction. And I believe all this stuff has actually come from the HSABC: Bill 29, subsequent bills and this bill here, Bill 37. They are just fingering out our union right now. I am beside myself with what has transpired in 2 days. I anticipated a god general strike where you can actually sit down a protest. Like my mother, she's 85, she's suffereing. She used to get a good nus trip downtown and that was her freedom pretty well, using the bus transportation service. They've taken that right out from under her. Now her income is down to like \$13,000 and she's having to struggle. And that's just my mom. There are other social institutions that have lost humungous amounts of resources and out a lot of people into the street, people who shout not be on the street. That's what our government does to the poor and underprivileged. It's a sad thing to see. For the cost of someone's wealth or profit, us poor people have to pay. **What effect do you think the legislation, the agreement imposed on people, is going to have on all 43,000 HEU workers in BC?** I'm sure they're greatly disappointed. A lot of them are female workers and a lot of them have children. Quite a few are single families and this is their only source of income. If you have 2 kids and you're trying to support them on your income, you're maxed out on your budget. Especially if you live in Vancouver. This is a very expensive province to live in. **Continued on page 31**



War, Occupation, and Labour

Iraqi Workers the Backbone of Resistance

By Shannon Bundock

"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."
—Abdullah Muhsin, 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 Bremmer, 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. Currently, the American Betchel Corporation is in charge of the Railway sector. The CPA



Women workers protest in demand of backpay in Baghdad, April 2004.

has now published Order No. 39, which allows for 100% foreign ownership of businesses, except the oil industry. In early September, the CPA designed Order No. 30 on Salaries and Employment Conditions, which Paul Bremer signed. This Order cancels all previous state subsidies for public sector workers such as family, housing, location, and risk benefits. This proves that 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 Iraq 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 majority of schools remain closed, hospitals 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 anemia 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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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 500lb bombs that



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

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 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

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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 wider target group than the immediate victims of the violence, and to publicize a cause, as well as to coerce a target into acceding 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 Pentaton 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 occupation and 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. Kearn was rather bold when he spoke 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 examining the actions of the FBI, CIA, department of defense or any branch of the US military that created the condition for the September 11th attacks. Instead, they are wrapped up in rhetorical and unanswered questions of whether or not George Bush ‘knew’.

On the witness stand at the Congressional Hearing on April 9th, Secretary of Defense Condoleeza Rice spoke the deceptive words, “The terrorists were at war with us, but we were not at war with them.” George Bush had said basically the same thing in a statement on September 20th 2001 calling for immediate war on the people of Afghanistan, “Americans have known surprise attacks - but not at the centre of a great city on a peaceful morning.” Both of them would have us believe that the US ruling class was napping idly in the sun on a beautiful fall morning when they were rudely awakened by an inexplicable attack. Both Rice and Bush are lying through their teeth.

US imperialism is responsible for both the creation of the conditions that gave rise to Usama bin Laden and Saddam Hussain and for the arming and funding of them early in their careers. Even more importantly, the US itself has been the most terrible force of terrorism in the world for over fifty years. On September 11th, these chickens came home to roost.

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.



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

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.

George Bush is right, there is no peace while half the world lives on less than \$2 a day, 1.3 billion people live on less than \$1 a day, 3 billion people have no sanitation and 1.3 billion 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.

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, 2003

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 Hussain 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

against its rival imperialist powers.

When Bush states that the US will stay in Iraq until the ‘job is done’, this is 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 Falluja 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 try to suppress the results. Of course, as in Falluja, the eventual response to this suppression and terror has been resistance.

In the month of April in Falluja 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 that has sprung up in Falluja 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 Falluja 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, as the Vice President of the United States, stands for in the world. We all must fight against it and in support of the Iraqi resistance if we are to end war, occupation, the theft of resources and wealth of the third world and the imperialist force of terrorism.

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US Soldiers Object to War on Iraq

By Brennan Luchsinger

"They seem to underplay it a lot...they think the war is over, and 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 has remained 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 consuming 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 has given birth to a 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 has escalated beyond that of the initial invasion, and US troops are stuck in the middle of



Iraqi children frisked by US soldiers on outskirts of Fallujah, April 2004.

to stay in Iraq." – Letter from 2nd Brigade, 3rd ID soldiers

A letter from the soldiers of the 2nd Brigade, 3rd ID sent to family members in the US outlines the level of troop morale felt in Iraq. In a survey published by the pentagon seventy-two percent of the soldiers in Iraq reported low or very low unit morale. Soldiers in Iraq report that their low morale is based on the increasing amount of attacks on US coalition

rate of suicide among soldiers. Since the invasion of Iraq the rate of soldier suicide has inflated to twice the normal rate for the US army. The increase in the suicide rate is a direct result of the conditions that US soldiers live in. High death rates, poor medical treatment, constant attacks on coalition forces, and all the aspects of low morale that are distressing US troops can be traced to the strategy of imperialist war and plunder.

The medical conditions of wounded soldiers in Iraq have turned into a source of alienation between troops on the ground, and the US government. Many soldiers feel that the US has little to no interest in the protection of their troops stationed in Iraq. One officer has described the living conditions for the wounded by stating, "they're being treated like dogs."

While a constant count of casualties has been reported in the media, the count of combat wounded veterans has been left untold. On average close to 100 soldiers are wounded a week in Iraq. 22,000 soldiers had been evacuated from Iraq by the end of 2003 due to battlefield injuries.

Due to the widespread public pressure these facts would create against the war, the US government has been reluctant to release information about the numbers of wounded troops in Iraq. Injured troops are also being forced to stay in Iraq while waiting for medical treatment, because the US fears the publicity of injured troops returning home.

Conscientious Objectors

Extended tours of duty in Iraq have taken their toll on US troops. Many soldiers in Iraq have had their service extended to three times the length expected. The reason for the extension of tours of duty is because the US simply does not have enough troops to rotate, while maintaining a force strong enough to continue the occupation. The re-enlistment rate has also dropped by 40% leaving the army with a large percentage of soldiers refusing to return to duty, while 49%

of soldiers now in Iraq said it was "not likely", or "very unlikely" that they would stay in the military once their current obligation is complete.

Recently a number of Conscientious Objectors have emerged, signifying the widespread opposition to the occupation of Iraq. From troops missing from service in Iraq, to soldiers refusing to return combat after leaves of absence, a new voice of dissent has appeared amid the population of America. Cases like that of Sgt. Camilo Mejia's, who turned himself in after going AWOL (absent without leave), have set a precedent for other soldiers applying for conscientious objector status. Mejia's has become a voice of opposition within the army, along with others such as Brandon Hughey and Jeremy Hinzman, two GI's applying for refugee status within Canada in an attempt to escape military service in a war they see as an "illegal act of aggression". While speaking out against the actions of the US and occupying forces in Iraq, soldiers who object to the unjust war are setting an example that many are beginning to follow. Shortly after Mejia's came to the public with his dissent, a wave of Conscientious Objector applications were filed.

Calls to the GI hotline have increased by 75% since early October, with a large percentage of calls requesting information about the penalties of going AWOL. One caller said he was going to shoot himself in the foot so he could go home. Desertion has become a very real action for many troops in Iraq, who see themselves as having no options.

Exposing The Truth About The US Led Occupation

The exposure of photographs of US coffins returning home has also created a situation that poses a very serious threat to US imperialism. Since 1991 media coverage of dead soldiers returning from duty has not been permitted, and just before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, the army clamped down on media coverage of troops

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 in coffins, it's becoming hard for imperialists to legitimize their occupation of Iraq to the American public. The push to undermine the increasing casualty rate in Iraq is a desperate move on behalf of the ruling class. In order to maintain control in Iraq, in the US, and continue to exert hegemony over the world, 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 declared that the policy of censoring photos is to protect the interests of families of the dead. However it is more likely that the possibility of these photos generating momentum for a movement to withdraw troops from Iraq has the ruling class scared.

From Vietnam to Iraqnam, Imperialism Fails

In Iraq troop demoralization is similar to that of the Vietnam war, where the prolonged state of war and high numbers of soldier deaths generated a great deal of momentum for the anti-war movement. During the Vietnam War, a movement developed where dissenting officers played a key role in organizing the resistance in America. Vietnam Syndrome is the name that was given to this aspect of the anti-war movement. Since the Vietnam War the US ruling class has desperately fought to escape this syndrome, where US citizens no longer supported the military actions of the US. From the gulf war to the march 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US ruling class has hoped to overcome Vietnam Syndrome, and gain the support it needs for its imperialist agenda of war and occupation. Now with the occupation of Iraq falling into a quagmire very similar to that of Vietnam, the ruling class has lost and will continue to lose support for the war.

In Iraq, the US is in a position that they cannot escape from. While troop desertion and application for conscientious objector status are on the rise the US is failing to rejuvenate the army it desperately needs to maintain control in Iraq. Forced to constantly rebuild the occupation forces, and legitimize the state of occupation to soldiers, they cannot continue this level of attack forever. As the war drags on the US government continues to lose support for the war on Iraq, at home and among soldiers in Iraq. Just to continue the occupation of Iraq, the US is being forced to use strategies that demoralize troops, and further the growing demand to withdraw troops from Iraq both by US soldiers and the Iraqi people.

BRING ALL TROOPS HOME NOW! STOP THE MASSACRE OF IRAQIS!



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

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 felt by US troops. Throughout the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the US has changed its strategy many times, and by doing so, many of the soldiers stationed in Iraq are questioning the legitimacy of their mission. What US troops are experiencing in Iraq is that Iraqis are opposed to the US led occupation. After a year of battling "insurgents" many soldiers have admitted that they are waging a war on the Iraqi people. This means soldiers in Iraq are being forced to face the fact that the US is an unwanted force and their mission has become unclear.

Demoralization Hits US Troops

"Our morale is not high, or even low. Our morale is non-existent. We have been told twice that we were going home, and twice we have received a stop movement

forces. On the ground in Iraq US troops are facing an estimated 20-30 attacks per day. During the first two weeks of the invasion, 82 American troops were killed. Now in April 2004, just over a year later, and in just over two weeks, more than 100 troops have been killed. So many Iraqis are opposed to the US occupation, that troops have declared they cannot tell the difference between "insurgents", and civilians. As the resistance becomes an increasingly mass popular movement, the US can no longer target insurgents by labeling them as terrorists. The people of Iraq are resisting the occupation and soldiers can no longer claim the role of liberators. In recent pole, 31% of soldiers express that they see little to no point in continuing the war on Iraq. Most of the soldiers surveyed felt that their mission was "unclear", or "not clear at all".

Very revealing of the state of troop morale is the increasing

Democracy for Iraq or Democracy for Corporations?

How US Corporations are Plundering Iraq

By Nic Brown

With the current occupation of Iraq just passing the one year mark, the mainstream media has provided more than ample daily coverage of suicide bombings, firefights, and fresh attacks stemming from the so-called “Iraqi insurgency.” Following these germane updates (and usually book marked between sound bites of George W. assuring America that they will “stay the course” and details about the latest ‘behind the scenes’ book covering the events that lead up to the war) come the recent reports of the progress being made by Iraq’s reconstruction. Names of giant corporations such as Halliburton and Bechtel are mentioned alongside the continuing effort to rebuild Iraq, provide jobs, and restore democracy. Additional reference is made to private contractors employed by firms such as Blackwater working to provide security and stability. Indeed, if this corporate media spun language were to be stripped away, the reality of deteriorating living conditions, 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, sewage, and water systems is being handled by the California based company Bechtel, who has also been awarded the contract to repair the damaged power system. The contract was awarded just prior to the so-called “end of the war” last May, 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 somewhere between 20 – 30% of what is required. The repair of schools and sewage seems to be progressing just as slowly, if not just as poorly. Reports 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 \$61 million so far) than repairing Iraq’s oil infrastructure.

War on Working and Poor People

Despite the claims of new jobs for Iraqi’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 \$60/month, and a small 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 Iraqi’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 conditions 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: US-UK CORPORATIONS OUT OF IRAQ, and END THE COLONIAL OCCUPATION NOW!

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 to talk to the finance ministry, which had to get permission from the coalition forces. The coalition forces control the finances--and our wages.” – Detrala Beshab, president of the Al Daura refinery’s new union.

As Iraqi workers face military attacks, arbitrary raids of homes and workplaces and mass killing at the hands of Coalition forces, they also face an occupier that controls every aspect of their working lives. The Iraqi people have no illusions about who is responsible for their desperate situation, as any attempt to organize for improvements in working conditions are met with American and British bullets. Because of the US/UK’s drastic approach, Iraqi working people are becoming the central force of resistance to the occupation.

It is clear that there will be no improvement

in the situation until Iraq, as a nation, gains some level of stability. Beyond that it is also clear, that as long as the Iraqi people are focusing all their energy on fighting against occupation, there will be no stability for Iraq without self-determination.

How Iraqi people are responding

Iraqi resistance to occupation means many things. Currently (in April) it means 50-70 armed attacks on US troops everyday. It means hundreds of thousands of angry people in the street. It means refusal to surrender to the criminal occupation. It means workers defying all CPA laws that cripple their organizing.

On March 16 2003, in the main office of the Transport Union in Baghdad, a meeting was attended by about 400 trade unionists. The meeting formed the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) and elected a National Committee.

According to a press release issued by the Federation:

“Since then [the March 16th meeting] the following unions have been established: the Oil and Gas Union, the Railway Union, the Vegetable Oil and Food Staff Union, The Transport Union, the Textile Union, the Leather Products Union, the Construction and Carpentry Union, the Transport and Communication Union, the Electrician and Municipalities Union, the Printing Union, the Mechanics’ Union, the Service Industry



Former Iraqi soldiers protest against loss of jobs, June 2003.

Union and the Agriculture and Irrigation Workers Union.

These unions organize in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Wasset, Dyla, Kurbala, Al Najif, Babel and Mesan.”

The release continued on to outline the conditions facing organizers and workers:

“...The task of building a new movement is a difficult one. Some of these difficulties derive from the occupation and its martial laws, high unemployment due to disruption of the production cycle, but also as a result of lack of funds. The new movement faces shortages of transport, communication equipment and basic office facilities. No union officials are paid. And the movement’s money is still frozen in banks.”

The Federation was established on basic demands for workers rights: encouraging the increased role of women in unions, paying special attention to the social and economic needs of disabled people and most importantly focusing on “a new democratic trade union movement actively involved in

influencing economic and social policies and rebuilding civil society, together with other social movements.”

Fighting for these demands has been faced with incredible suppression by the US. All demands to repeal laws making unionizing illegal are simply met with no comment and no response from the CPA.

Unable to enter into collective bargaining, unable to legally negotiate wages and working conditions, Iraqi unions are paralysed. As more businesses and industries fall into the hands of foreign corporations, Iraqi workers are laid off and have no legal way of holding employers accountable.

As the war of occupation continues, Iraqi workers understand that their fight primarily lies in combating the occupation. The goals of the IFTU clearly cannot be met unless the people of Iraq gain control of their government.

This has meant the unification of demands for wages with demands for sovereignty.

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The Illegitimacy of the US-led Occupation of Iraq

From page 10

political crisis they are facing. After building up a case for war by condemning the atrocities committed under the Saddam regime, they are now willing to reinstate elements of it to aid in the US-led suppression of the people of Iraq.

‘Al-Qaida’ cells in Iraq, have proven to be just as hard to track down as weapons of mass destruction. Ever since the occupation began, when the US claimed that the much of the resistance was carried out by ‘terrorist groups like Al-Qaida from other countries,’ it was clear that this was a lie. According to the US military’s numbers, at most 5% of the people who have attacked US military forces have been from other countries.

2nd Breach of Legitimacy: The Failure of ‘Bringing Democracy’

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’ is meaningless, and this was obvious within days of its signing on March 8th, as it has little support even among members of the US-picked Iraqi Governing Council. Before and after the signing, members of the 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 Iraqi people. On top of this, support for US policy by the Governing Council itself has dropped significantly, especially over the current massacres in Fallujah. Three members of the council have resigned in protest of the massacre of Iraqis in Fallujah, which one council member, Ghazi Ajil al-Yawer, described as ‘Genocide.’

The US Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) established the Governing Council as a way to provide an Iraqi face for the imperialist occupation. But since even the US knows that it is a face without any body or substance, it cannot rely on the Governing Council for anything. Collin Powell emphasized this recently when he explained how the June 30th handover of ‘sovereignty’ to the Governing Council was one of ‘limited’ sovereignty, and the US would still make all major decisions concerning the occupation. ‘It’s sovereignty but some of that sovereignty they are going to allow us to exercise on their behalf and with their permission,’ he said in an interview with Reuters on April 28th 2004.

As part of their failure to establish a US-friendly puppet government that can actually rule over Iraq, the US also finds itself unable to establish functioning Iraqi police and military forces to aid in their effort 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 “actually worked against” U.S. troops during the recent resistance in Iraq, and an additional 40 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 to set up even remotely ‘democratic’ institutions in Iraq, the US-led occupation forces have also repeatedly suppressed the 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.



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

3rd Breach of Legitimacy: The Failure to Establish a Viable Economic Program

The US has done nothing but make the economic situation in Iraq worse, a situation that was already extremely grim after thirteen years of UN-enforced economic sanctions and almost complete isolation from the world economy. Unemployment in Iraq is currently at 50-70%, and the US plans for privatizing state industries will only lead to more job losses. This in a situation where Iraq is facing what some analysts have called a ‘youth explosion,’ where in the next five years the amount of Iraqi youth entering the workforce will jump from 2.7 million to 4.1 million. The US is not only incapable of dealing with current unemployment, but it also has no program for dealing with increased unemployment for future Iraqi workers.

The US has failed to increase oil production in Iraq, which it hoped would be the major source of revenue to maintain its occupation of the country. During 2003, the 1st year of occupation, oil production was less than half of what it was in 2002, and with

constant attacks and sabotage on oil pipelines and infrastructure by the Iraqi resistance, it is unlikely that the US will be able to significantly improve the levels of oil production in Iraq.

4th Breach of Legitimacy: Improving The Lives of Iraqi People

The astonishing level of unemployment in Iraq is only one of 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 Iraqi schools are in dire need of repair, and according to estimates by the Coalition Provisional Authority, 1.4 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.

The conditions of hospitals in Iraq are one of the more appalling 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-Iskan, sewage drips from the roof of the premature babies’ ward, leaking from waste pipes above.” The article also reported that the rate of secondary infections in hospitals is 80 percent, meaning that 4 out of every 5 Iraqis catch a new infection when they are admitted 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. Is it any wonder, under these conditions, that Iraqi resistance to this brutal occupation has steadily increased?

5th Breach of Legitimacy: Moral Failure

“We have uncovered the treachery and barbarity of the U.S. army.” – Ali Abdullah, resident of Fallujah, interview with Reuters

April 28, 2004

The massacre of people in Fallujah by US forces is only the latest example of atrocities committed by the US-led forces since the war and occupation began in March 2003. Hundreds of Iraqis have been killed in other areas of Iraq, especially near Najaf, where on April 27th 2004 US forces reported killing 64 Iraqis in one day.

The US-led occupation forces have also repeatedly drawn international criticism over the torture and killing of prisoners in US custody. On April 29th New York Times reported a case that involved American soldiers at a prison outside Baghdad that have been accused of forcing Iraqi prisoners into acts of sexual humiliation and other abuses in order to make them talk.

With the failure to establish a puppet government in Iraq, coupled with sharply rising anti-occupation sentiment, the US-led

occupying forces are left with no strategy except a military one. The current conflicts in Fallujah, as well as the conflicts with Shi’ite resistance fighters led by Moqtada al-Sadr, were provoked by the occupation forces. A CNN/Gallup Poll released on April 28th 2004 shows that 57% of Iraqis polled thought that US and British forces should leave Iraq ‘immediately,’ and this poll was conducted before the current assaults on Fallujah began. The US-led occupation forces hope to crush the Iraqi resistance now before it gets even stronger.

Part of the coalition forces’ strategy is to isolate Sadr from the established Shi’ite leadership. The established Shi’ite Leaders have been forced to show implicit support for the actions of Sadr, or at least not condemn him publicly, because he represents the growing anti-occupation sentiment among Shi’ite Iraqis. This is putting pressure on Shi’ite leaders like Sistani who until this point have advocated a more moderate approach. The US hopes that in an attempt to avoid a US invasion of 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 strategy may be for the US-led occupation forces, with the failure to establish legitimacy on any front, it is the only way the US can maintain 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, deputy director of operations for the US military in Iraq, outlined this US strategy in an interview with AFP on April 29th: ‘We 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 mission for ‘Liberation.’ One year after the war began, the US has not established any ‘democracy’ for the people of Iraq, nor has it improved the economic and living conditions in the country. What it has done to the people of Iraq is killed, tortured, and terrorized them. The US continues to threaten Iraqis with violence showing that the atrocities committed in the last month are ‘paddy cake’ compared to what it is willing to do if resistance continues.

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 put together. These demonstrations of their ability to organize are on top of the voluntary work being done by everyday Iraqis in their hospitals and schools to try and improve the conditions 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, whether it is led by the US or the UN, whether it is ‘unilateral’ or ‘multilateral’. This includes the military presence 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 working and oppressed people worldwide of the path that imperialists are leading us on as they launch further wars and occupations in the coming decades. We must extend the demand of self-determination to newly occupied Haiti. We must also demand self-determination for Afghanistan, Palestine, and Indigenous people, as a united, international struggle against war, occupation, and destruction.



Afghanistan 3 Years After Occupation: A Country Without Government

By Kira Koschelanyk

“...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 – April 2004.

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 2003, 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 \$8.2 billion was pledged with \$4.5 billion for the first year. The majority of international aid money so far has gone towards the US military operations hunting down Osama Bin Laden and others, to no avail, while Afghan people live in abandoned cars, cramped by the hundreds into gutted buildings, the vast majority unemployed and starving. Success for who?

The war the United States began in Afghanistan on Oct 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 to the implanting of the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA), a weak puppet government with no popular support. 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, she has seen no government capable of leading the Afghan people anywhere but deeper into this crisis.

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 self-immolation.

Statements such as those of Ambassador Khalilzad’s lauding the progress made in Afghanistan are becoming more and more common as the US, UK, Canada and NATO try to convince the world that they have something to show for the past 2 ½ years. However, crisis continues to assault the people of Afghanistan on nearly all fronts. Afghan people still make up one of the single largest groups of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world, second only to Palestinians.

The situation of women in Afghanistan has yet to improve as most reports cite that any change in conditions has been for the worse.

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 had grown accustomed to a freer life there. There have been several documented cases of nurses and teachers burning themselves to death in Herat, just 100km from the Afghan-Iranian border. Suraya Sobah Rang, Deputy Women’s Minister, has said, “Women in this country are in a very bad 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 badly treated, but this phenomenon was never as prevalent as it is today.”

Children are also one of the most vulnerable groups suffering under the chaos of the occupation. Aside from growing up 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: longstanding conflict, lack of internal security, poverty and 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 arms 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 despicable lie as we see all people in Afghanistan forced into increasingly unstable and desperate situations. Clearly, 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,



Afghan men inside a prison in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Afghanistan’s security rests with NATO and its economic development depends on foreign aid.” – The Guardian Newspaper, UK, March 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 Afghanistan 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, constituencies 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 in 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 round 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 political solutions that they are lacking.

Afghan Transitional Authority – A Government Transitioning from Bad to Worse

“On the one hand different countries of the world are promising to give eight billion dollars in aid,

Kabul - A Poem

Ah! How beautiful is Kabul encircled by her arid mountains
And Rose, of the trails of thorns she envies
Her gusts of powdered soil, slightly sting my eyes
But I love her, for knowing and loving are born of this same dust

My song exhorts her dazzling tulips
And at the beauty of her trees, I blush
How sparkling the water flows from Pul-i-Bastaan!
May Allah protect such beauty from the evil eye of man!

Khizr chose the path to Kabul in order to reach Paradise
For her mountains brought him close to the delights of heaven
From the fort with sprawling walls, A Dragon of protection
Each stone is there more precious than the treasure of Shayagan

Every street of Kabul is enthralling to the eye
Through the bazaars, caravans of Egypt pass
One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs
And the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls

Her laughter of mornings has the gaiety of flowers
Her nights of darkness, the reflections of lustrous hair
Her melodious nightingales, with passion sing their songs
Ardent tunes, as leaves enflamed, cascading from their throats

And I, I sing in the gardens of Jahanara, of Sharbara
And even the trumpets of heaven envy their green pastures

Saib-e-Tabrizi 17th Century
Translated by Dr. Josephine Davis

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Bolivarian Revolution: Venezuela, a Progressive Example for Latin America

By Carlos López

Translation by Carlos López
and Shannon Bundock

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 while in Vancouver on April 25th.

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. 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 access to pre-school up to 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. The first 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 cut it, 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

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Revolucion Bolivariana: Venezuela, un ejemplo positivo para Latinoamerica

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 situacion 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 revolucion Bolivariana de Chavez

La nueva Constitución es el reclamo de la mayoría del pueblo venezolano que antes se encontraba excluido. Éste, diseña el país que nosotros queremos constituir a partir de ahora. Reseñado en cinco aspectos fundamentales, nosotros le llamamos los equilibrios: el equilibrio político que es la construcción de la democracia participativa y protagónica del pueblo en la educación bolivariana; en segundo lugar el equilibrio social que es trabajar en función de la justicia social, tercero es el equilibrio económico que es la diversificación de nuestra economía; en cuarto lugar el equilibrio territorial que esta dirigido a potenciar nuestra tierra, el espacio territorial y; el equilibrio internacional que es el planteamiento de trabajar en función de un nuevo orden económico mundial que consiste en una propuesta de la multipolaridad en el mundo, sin hegemonía de ningún país por mas poderoso que sea.

La importancia de la educacion en la revolucion bolivariana

Bolivar decía que “moral y



Dario Vivas, member of parliament from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, speaking in Vancouver, April 25th 2004.

luzes son nuestras primeras necesidades”; por lo tanto, la educación de nuestro pueblo es bien importante y mas aún cuando se trata de transformaciones, de cambio y de participación popular, la gente no puede participar si no sabe leer ni escribir; si no se contribuye para que se forme, para que se eduque. En ese sentido nosotros le damos mucho énfasis al aspecto educativo y ahí lo catalogamos como un derecho humano fundamental. Decimos en nuestra Constitución y en el ejercicio de gobierno que

la educación es gratuita y estamos dando facilidades de preescolar hasta la Universidad y Posgrados para que todos se incorporen a la educación. Hemos abierto una campaña alfabetizadora para erradicar definitivamente el analfabetismo en Venezuela y, al mismo tiempo hemos abierto lo que denominamos ‘Escuela Bolivarianas’ para que el joven este ahí desde la mañana hasta la noche y tenga posibilidades no solo de estudiar sino también de alimentarse, de recrearse; una escuela mas dinámica y

participativa que contribuye a la educación integral del joven.

El riesgo de intervención norteamericana contra el pueblo y la revolución bolivariana

Hemos atravesado por diversos obstáculos. Primero son los sectores de la oligarquía, la cúpula de la Iglesia Católica y los grandes medios de comunicación que asestaron un golpe de Estado financiado por el gobierno de Bush, pese a ello hemos seguido avanzando sistemáticamente. En este proceso democrático hay sectores que conspiran contra la

democracia y la Constitución, nosotros por lo tanto tenemos que informarle al mundo de que a nuestra democracia pretenden cortarla, eliminarla; para que no continúe este proceso de transformación que estamos realizando.

Solidaridad Internacional

En primer lugar nos dirigimos a los sectores propensos a ser objetivos y solidarios con los procesos de transformación democrática en el mundo; que conserven permanentemente la unidad para establecer una red de información

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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 their future...others, mainly Israel, will decide for them.” – Report from JINSA, a US-based Zionist think tank, April 15th 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 while 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

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 crisis-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 #5 last June, “the faulty construction of the road map is 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 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’

dollars every year in military and financial aid?

The continued killing of Palestinians 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 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

Since 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 is 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 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 Palestinian people, 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 homes. In order to 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!



Palestinian youth throwing rocks at Israeli tank in Gaza.

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,’ Israeli Prime Minister 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 to insure that the goal that self-determination for Palestinians never happens.

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.

ensured 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

Iraqi Workers and the Antiwar Movement

From page 13

“...what we will have a total shut down of, is exports...One of our assumptions is that soldiers will occupy the pumps. If they do, 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 Company Union.

The resistance movement in Iraq is a broad and popular movement. It is made up of millions of Iraqi people, and the majority of those millions are poor and working Iraqis. As a result the budding trade union movement holds a strategic position within the resistance movement. Organizing together to improve the position of the Iraqi working class means unifying with the main fight of the Iraqi people: the fight against occupation.

Labour Union Under Attack

Of course, a successful union movement, a movement that is part of beating back imperialism, is also a movement facing tremendous threats and challenges. Beyond the simple refusal to recognize unions, the CPA has actively attacked demonstrations, arrested organizers, raided homes and workplaces and fired on and killed many active workers.

A major example of the attacks by occupation forces was the Dec 6th raid on

IFTU headquarters. According to a press statement from the IFTU on Dec 8th “*The American occupation forces, using a force of about ten armoured cars and tens of soldiers, attacked the temporary headquarters of the IFTU...and arrested 8 of its leaders and cadres, who were handcuffed and taken away to an unknown destination.*”

Since that time there has been no explanation of the raid, no apology and no compensation, despite statements of condemnation from labour organizations across the globe, including the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In addition to such high profile attacks, the day-to-day life of workers is characterized by instability and fear. With demonstrations and pickets being organized frequently, Iraqi workers know that participating means they could face arrest, detention and imprisonment for unknown periods of time.

What is clear is that the US occupation forces have not responded lightly to the development of trade union organizing in Iraq. They know that the strongest threat that they face is a unified Iraqi working class. Poor and working people fighting for their rights in Iraq means Iraqis fighting to drive occupiers out. The US wouldn’t bother to pay heed to the workers movement if it weren’t for two things: one, the Iraqi workers represent the broadest section of the population and the most important layer economically and

two, their resistance to occupation is gaining ground.

International Anti-war Movement Must Support Iraqi Workers and Echo Their Demands

We must learn from the Iraqi trade union movement. We must follow the leadership of poor and working people in Iraq and unite the struggles of workers everywhere by understanding our common interests. Working people in Iraq are demanding an end to occupation as the primary step forward in their fight for their rights. Understanding and solidarity leads to strengthening the global anti-war movement with workers from all over the world.

Unionizing in Iraq opens the opportunity to build solidarity with poor and working

people all across the world. Strengthening connections and solidarity between working people globally can put real and effective pressure on imperialist nations. As support of the Iraqi resistance to occupation develops in the US, working people are able to attack the US government from another front. Pressure from the anti-war movement, with major involvement of labour unions means weakening the position of US imperialism overall.

As poor and working people, as a union members, as people opposed to war and occupation we must unite behind the struggle of Iraqi workers, which is the struggle of oppressed people everywhere. STOP THE ATTACKS ON IRAQI UNIONS! END ATTACKS ON WORKERS AT HOME AND ABROAD! US UK OUT OF IRAQ!



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!

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 spineless puppet 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 invasion, US forces provided 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 legitimized “Regional Governors” of various 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 Karzai 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 discredits any arguments that the occupation of Afghanistan has advanced the human rights of the Afghan people, or granted them any more freedoms.

The regional leaders have caused more problems for the occupiers. In many cases, they will challenge Karzai and the ATA when they attempt to extend their authority into their territory. On April 25, President Karzai visited Kandahar for the first time since an assassination attempt on his life in September 2002. That Karzai has to be escorted by foreign bodyguards wherever he goes, his former Afghan bodyguards were involved in the assassination plot, has also increased negative opinion among Afghans.

Karzai is under much political pressure to be seen as delivering reconstruction and progress to the people. Aside from the weakness of having no legitimacy among the people, his administration is also riddled

with corruption. The UN special envoy on the right to adequate housing, Miloon Kothari, reported in late 2003 on homes being destroyed in Kabul’s Shir Pur district to make way for new homes for ministers. After an earlier visit and report, the UN housing envoy accused the defense minister and others in government of grabbing land from 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, most of whom are women and children. 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 rife with instability and corruption does not bode well for the future of this imposed “democratic” government.

Canada in Afghanistan: Bloody Hands Get Bloodier

“Our long-term security requires the spread of freedom around the world.” – Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, April 29, 2004

Since January 2004, Canada has had a leading role in the occupation of Afghanistan. Canada is the largest troop provider to the international force stationed in Kabul and Canadian Lt. General Rick Hillier is the leading commander of the 6,500-troop strong force with 34 contributing nations. If by “freedom” Paul Martin means spreading spheres of influence for the ruling class at the expense of exploiting and making chaos of the lives of millions of people around the world, then he is right. If Canada is to dig itself out of the deepening hole of the current global capitalist crisis, then it does have to spread this “freedom”; freedom for corporate and ruling class interests to plunder as they go, to save their own necks from extinction.

Currently, Canadian forces are preparing to deploy the second rotation of Canadian troops of Operation ATHENA to Kabul and the Government has recently released details on the vague statements made in recent months regarding keeping troops in Afghanistan past the already established withdrawal date. Stating that Canada will maintain a “meaningful military contribution to ISAF after the drawdown of our current contingent in August 2004”, the government

is establishing that with the 600 troops deployed in August, this will be a part of its new strategy of furthering Canada’s interests through intervention in third world countries. At the Berlin donor conference this past month, Canada pledged \$250 million to reconstruction in Afghanistan, to be delivered from 2005-2009, with \$5 million of that to be allocated to the election process. These donations can be seen as investments in establishing Canadian interests in the Middle East.

Also recently announced, the Canadian government is in the process of a comprehensive international policy review, the first in a decade. As released on the Government of Canada website “*This review will help us clearly define our interests and articulate our values in the area of foreign and defense policy, aid and trade,*” This statement follows similar comments made by Paul Martin in the beginning of 2004 that Canada needed to step up its involvement on the world stage, ie improve its status as an imperialist nation. The overall shift to the right of the current Canadian government and with the current international policy review, the Liberal government of Canada is setting the stage for prolonged and intensifying involvement abroad to secure its interests in international trade agreements and strategic military positioning.

Canada Out Now!

“*Empire is being built on the backs of Afghans and it is up to us as antiwar activists to recognize it and address it.*”
– Sonali Kolhatar, Co-director, Afghan Women’s Mission in “What are YOU doing about Afghanistan? An Open Letter to Anti-War Activists”

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 Home Now!” and “US/UK Out!” 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

“non-involvement” was much touted last year when Canada declined to send troops to invade Iraq. Meanwhile, Canada was quietly sending thousands of Canadian soldiers to Afghanistan to relieve US soldiers for that exact purpose and also 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 combat Canada’s peaceful image and propaganda and expose the over 500 year old colonial nature of this country, connecting the colonial war on the Indigenous people of this land with the colonial wars abroad.

Self-Determination: An Inalienable Right and the Only Solution

The people of Afghanistan have an awe inspiring history of anti imperialist resistance dating back to the early 1800s; between 1836 and 1921 the Afghan people heroically defeated three British invasions. Afghans have 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, though unfortunately the government was dragged into factional fighting followed by the coup d’etat that opened the door for Soviet invasion in late 1979. This was followed by the growth of armed Islamic groups and the intervention of the US and CIA to fund and help to arm them. Thus began a dark era, and the appearance of the Taliban.

But the Afghan people don’t have to prove that they can take care of themselves. The right to self-determination, the right of a people to govern and direct their own nation and to decide how they will use and distribute their resources is a basic human right, and one that has been denied to Afghans during decades of imperialist intervention.

Afghan peoples’ voices are getting louder as the US, UK, Canada and NATO try to suppress them even further. The anti-war movement globally, and in Canada, has the responsibility of echoing their calls and demanding: Canada Out of Afghanistan! Bring ALL troops home now! Unconditional Self-determination for the people of Afghanistan!

‘And the Struggle Must Grow and Will Grow! There is No Option!’ By Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro, the head of the revolutionary government of Cuba, gave this speech on January 3rd, 2004 in Havana, Cuba, for the anniversary of the Cuban revolution. This talk is basically the analysis of the world political situation and the tasks and responsibilities that have to be carried out in order to overcome the misery and destruction created by imperialism and to build a better world for all human beings. In our opinion, reading this speech is a must for everyone who seeks a human solution for this capitalist decay. This talk is an action program for confronting the era of war and destruction we are witnessing today. We are confident that to share this valuable piece with our readers will advance our outlook for fundamental change.

Ali Yerevani, Editor

SPEECH GIVEN BY FIDEL CASTRO AT THE KARL MARX THEATRE ON JAN. 3, 2004, FOR THE 45TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

Dear fellow Cubans;
Distinguished guests:

Many of us who had the privilege of witnessing that exciting day are still alive; many others are deceased. On January 1, 1959 the overwhelming majority of those here tonight were less than 10 years old or had not been born or there were still 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 found ourselves obliged to write what has turned out to be an unprecedented page in the annals of history. Unhappy with the social and political situation in our country, we simply resolved to change it. This was not something new in Cuba; it had happened many times for almost a century.

We believed in the rights of the peoples, including the right to independence and to rise up against tyranny. It was from the exercise of such rights in this hemisphere, conquered by European powers by fire and the sword, mass slaughter of indigenous peoples and the enslavement of millions of Africans, that a group of independent nations emerged, one of which was the United States of America.

When, on July 26 1953, the Cuban Revolution fought its first battle against an illegal, corrupt and bloody regime, 8 years had not yet gone by since the end of World War II unleashed by fascism in 1939, which took the lives of more than 50 million people and brought about the destruction of the economies of all the then industrialized countries, with the exception of the United States, which 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 in 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 this point even further when it proclaimed: "When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for the people and for each portion of the people the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties".

The fascist ideas also clashed head on with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter after the gigantic battle that was World War II. Among the principles the Charter proclaimed to be essential prerequisites of a world political order are respect for the rights of the people to sovereignty and independence.

Actually, the rights of the peoples have never been respected throughout humanity's brief known history, 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, at that 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 nations, including human groups that still lacked a national identity, were formally recognized as independent States. It was a time that greatly favored illusions and



Fidel Castro.

deception. The overwhelming majority of countries that formally received the status of independent states was made up of former colonies, dominions, protectorates and other forms of oppressing and controlling countries that the most powerful nations have used for centuries.

Their dependence on the former colonial powers was almost total; their struggle to attain greater sovereignty and act on it has been difficult and often heroic. The dreadful harassment to which they are submitted in Geneva to get them to support the US resolutions or, as a last resort, to abstain from voting against them is proof of this. The way these states behave in the United Nations General Assembly is admirable. An expression of this is the growing and almost unanimous support for Cuba against the blockade.

The worst of all is that a considerable number of those countries that were supposedly independent before that conflict was unaware of just how little independence they really had, and Cuba was one of them. Almost all of the Latin American countries were on that sorry list, as would become blatantly clear. As soon as our heroic people achieved real and full independence, almost all of their governing elites joined with the United States to destroy the Revolution and prevent the social and political accomplishments we were rapidly achieving.

The aggression began as early as 1959 with the use of all possible economic and political measures, including violence, terrorism and the threat of the massive use of US military might.

What happened to Cuba would help showing all of the illusion and deception contained in those elegant texts about principles and rights proclaimed by the United Nations Organization.

Might and not rights would continue to be the basic fact of human life, as it has been the case through the millennia.

All that has happened up until the present, since the first known historical facts were registered, is the result of the natural and spontaneous, torpid 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, to a greater or lesser extent, ignorant of the others' existence,

talking about something that goes beyond the noble and completely justifiable wishes for justice, beyond the deep desire that all 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 Greeks and our age lies not in the intellectual capacity of our species but in the exponential and seemingly infinite development of science and technology that has taken place in the last 150 years, and which completely eclipses the negligible and ridiculous political capacity we have 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 equivalent to 20,000 tons of TNT 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, varied and accurate 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 small group of countries that have a monopoly over such weapons have taken upon themselves the exclusive right to produce and improve them. Meanwhile the contradictions and interests of its members change and humanity develops under a web of nuclear weapons that threaten its very existence. Someone could say something similar to what that Persian emperor said as he and his huge army closed in on the 300 Spartans defending the pass at Thermopyles: "Our nuclear weapons shall hide the sun".

The lives of the billions of human beings who inhabit this planet depend on what a few think, believe and decide. The worst of it all is that those who wield such great power do not have psychiatrists to look after them. We cannot just accept this. We have the right to denounce it, to exercise pressure and demand changes and an end to such an absurd, unheard of situation, which makes hostages of us all. No one should ever have such powers or else no one on this earth will be able to talk of civilization again.

There is another lethal problem as well: nearly 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 extremely sensitive issue was then put on the table for the first time. Quite a few people thought it was just some alarmists exaggerating, a kind of neo-Malthusianism, like in previous centuries.

They were, in fact, well-informed and intelligent people who took to building a public awareness on this issue, at times worried sick that it was too late to take useful measures. Regrettably, those 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 mortal danger. And the struggle must grow and will grow. There is no option.

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

In Rio de Janeiro, I was a witness to the deep concerns and fear of representatives from small islands in the Pacific and from other countries threatened by the risk of being either partially or totally submerged by the seas because of climate change. This is sad. The first to suffer the consequences of environmental damage are the poor. They do not have cars, or air conditioners; it is possible they do not even have furniture, if they have houses, that is. The effects of huge emissions of carbon dioxide causing atmospheric warming and the destructive effect of the ultra violet rays that pass through the damaged ozone layer filter

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“O cambia el curso de los acontecimientos o la Humanidad no podrá sobrevivir”

Discurso pronunciado por el Presidente de la República de Cuba Fidel Castro Ruz, en ocasión del aniversario 45 del triunfo de la Revolución Cubana
el 3 de enero de 2004

Queridos compatriotas;
Distinguidos invitados:

Muchos de los que tuvimos el privilegio de ser testigos de aquel emocionante día aún vivimos; otros muchos ya murieron; la inmensa mayoría de los aquí presentes tenían menos de diez años, o no habían nacido, o estaban lejos de nacer el Primero de Enero de 1959.

Nuestros objetivos nunca fueron la búsqueda de gloria, honores ni reconocimientos individuales o colectivos. Los que hoy ostentamos el legítimo derecho de llamarnos revolucionarios cubanos nos vimos obligados, sin embargo, a escribir lo que ha resultado una página sin precedentes en la historia. Inconformes con la situación política y social de nuestro país, estábamos simplemente decididos a cambiarla. No era algo nuevo en Cuba, había ocurrido muchas veces a lo largo de casi un siglo.

Creíamos en los derechos de los pueblos, entre ellos el derecho a la independencia y a rebelarse contra la tiranía. Del ejercicio de tales derechos en este hemisferio, conquistado a sangre y fuego por las potencias europeas -incluidas las matanzas masivas de los aborígenes y la esclavización de millones de africanos-, emergieron un conjunto de naciones independientes, entre ellas los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica.

Cuando la Revolución Cubana libra su primer combate el 26 de julio de 1953 contra un régimen ilegal, corrompido y sangriento, no habían transcurrido todavía 8 años desde el final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, desatada por el fascismo en 1939, que costó la vida a más de 50 millones de personas y causó la destrucción de la economía de todos los países industrializados de entonces, con excepción de la de Estados Unidos, fuera del alcance de las bombas y los cañones enemigos.

Las ideas del fascismo que dieron origen a tan colosal contienda estaban en total contradicción con los principios proclamados en la Declaración de Independencia de las 13 antiguas colonias inglesas de Norteamérica el 4 de julio de 1776. En la misma se afirmaba textualmente: "Sostenemos como verdades evidentes que todos los hombres nacen iguales; que a todos les confiere su Creador ciertos derechos inalienables entre los cuales se cuenta la vida, la libertad y la consecución de la felicidad [...] que siempre que una forma de gobierno tienda a destruir esos fines, el pueblo tiene derecho a reformarla o abolirla, e instituir un nuevo gobierno que se funde en dichos principios y organice sus poderes en la forma que a su juicio garantice mejor su seguridad y felicidad."

La Declaración Francesa de los Derechos del Hombre, a raíz de la Revolución de 1789, fue más lejos todavía sobre este tema, al proclamar: "Cuando el gobierno viola los derechos del pueblo, la insurrección es para éste el más sagrado de los derechos y el más imperioso de los deberes."

Las ideas fascistas chocaban también frontalmente con los principios consignados en la Carta de las Naciones Unidas después de la gigantesca batalla de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, entre los que se proclamaba, como prerrogativa esencial del orden político mundial, el respeto al derecho de los pueblos a la soberanía y la independencia.

En realidad los derechos de los pueblos nunca han sido respetados a lo largo de la breve historia conocida de la humanidad, repleta de guerras de conquista, imperios y las más variadas formas de saqueo y explotación de unos seres humanos por otros. Sin embargo, en ese momento del devenir histórico y pese al hecho real de que las potencias victoriosas impulsieron un orden político mundial con privilegios cada vez más irritantes para un minúsculo grupo de los Estados más poderosos, muchas naciones, instituciones y personas, concibieron la esperanza de que se iniciaba una nueva y prometedora etapa de

la humanidad. Más de 100 naciones o grupos de naciones, incluso grupos humanos que no habían alcanzado todavía un sentimiento nacional, recibieron el reconocimiento formal como Estados independientes. Fue una época sumamente propicia a la ilusión y el engaño.

El grupo numeroso de países que recibieron formalmente el status de Estados independientes estaba constituido, en su inmensa mayoría, por antiguas colonias, dominios, protectorados y otras formas de someter y controlar países, impuestas a lo largo de siglos por las potencias más poderosas.

Su dependencia de las antiguas metrópolis era casi total; su lucha por alcanzar y actuar con mayor soberanía ha sido difícil y no pocas veces heroica. Lo demuestra el terrible acoso a que son sometidos para apoyar los proyectos de Estados Unidos en Ginebra, o abstenerse de votar contra los mismos en último término. Admirable resulta el comportamiento de esos Estados en la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas, que se expresa en el creciente y ya casi unánime apoyo a Cuba contra el bloqueo.



Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, circa 1964.

Lo peor era que no pocos de los países que antes de aquella contienda eran ya supuestamente independientes, ignoraban hasta qué grado carecían de independencia, entre ellos Cuba. La casi totalidad de los países latinoamericanos estaba en esa triste lista, lo que se demostraría con creces. Tan pronto nuestro heroico pueblo logró una verdadera y plena independencia, la casi totalidad de sus élites gobernantes se unieron a Estados Unidos para destruir la Revolución e impedir las conquistas políticas y sociales que rápidamente estábamos realizando.

Desde el propio año 1959, se iniciaron las agresiones con el empleo de todos los medios económicos y políticos, incluidos la violencia, el terrorismo y la amenaza del empleo masivo de la fuerza militar de Estados Unidos.

Lo ocurrido con Cuba contribuyó a demostrar cuánto había de ilusión y engaño en los elegantes textos sobre los principios y los derechos proclamados por la Organización de Naciones Unidas.

La fuerza y no el derecho, como ha venido ocurriendo a lo largo de milenios, continuó siendo el factor fundamental en la vida de la humanidad.

Cuanto ha sucedido hasta hoy, a partir de los primeros elementos históricos con que contamos, es fruto de una evolución natural y espontánea, tórpida y desordenada, de la sociedad humana. A nadie podría culparse de los distintos sistemas políticos, económicos y sociales que se han sucedido a lo largo de cinco mil años.

Las distintas civilizaciones surgidas en las más apartadas regiones del mundo: China, India, Medio Oriente, el Mediterráneo, Centro y Suramérica, obviamente en mayor

o menor grado se desconocían entre sí, eran independientes, aunque en muchas cosas evidenciaron extraordinarios alcances en sus conocimientos. Algunas nos eslumbran, como por ejemplo la llamada civilización griega: su arte, su filosofía, su literatura, sus conocimientos de historia, física, matemática, astronomía y otros campos.

Es creciente lo que se conoce sobre los mayas y otras civilizaciones preincaicas, lo que demuestra que el ser humano, aun separado por decenas de miles de años en el tiempo y decenas de miles de kilómetros en el espacio, era ya creador y capaz de extraordinarias obras; pero en todas las civilizaciones que nos precedieron y en la actual, de una forma u otra, hubo y hay imperios, guerras de conquista, formas de esclavitud y de feudalismo, ricos y pobres, clases sociales privilegiadas dominantes y clases explotadas, marginadas y excluidas. Ignorarlo sería ignorancia extrema.

Debo darle razón a Marx cuando esbozó la idea de que cuando existiera sobre la Tierra un régimen social verdaderamente racional, justo

y equitativo, el ser humano habría salido de la prehistoria.

Si todo el desenvolvimiento de la sociedad humana ha sido inevitablemente caótico, desordenado, imprevisible y sumamente cruel e injusto, la lucha por crear otro mundo diferente, verdaderamente racional, digno de la inteligencia de nuestra especie, constituye en este momento de su historia, que en nada se parece a cualquier otra etapa previa de la humanidad, algo que no era posible y ni siquiera imaginable en otras circunstancias: un intento de que los seres humanos por primera vez programen su propio destino.

Soñar con cosas imposibles se llama utopía; luchar por objetivos no sólo alcanzables, sino imprescindibles para la supervivencia de la especie, se llama realismo.

Sería erróneo suponer que tal objetivo obedecería simplemente a una motivación ideológica. Se trata de algo que va más allá de nobles y muy justificables sentimientos de justicia y profundos deseos de que todos los seres humanos puedan alcanzar una vida digna y libre; se trata de la supervivencia de la especie.

La gran diferencia entre la época de Grecia y la actual no está en la capacidad intelectual de nuestra especie; está en el avance exponencial y aparentemente infinito del desarrollo de la ciencia y la tecnología que ha tenido lugar en los últimos 150 años, que supera por completo la exigua y ridícula capacidad política demostrada para enfrentar los riesgos de perecer como especie que realmente la amenazan.

Hace menos de 60 años se hizo evidente, al estallar sobre Hiroshima el primer artefacto nuclear equivalente a 20 mil toneladas de TNT,

que la tecnología había creado un instrumento cuyo desarrollo podría poner fin a la existencia de la vida humana sobre el planeta. Desde entonces no ha parado un solo día el desarrollo de nuevas y hasta cientos de veces más poderosas, variadas y certeras armas y sistemas de este carácter. Hoy existen decenas de miles de ellas, sólo muy pocas han sido eliminadas en virtud de engañosos y limitados acuerdos.

Un reducido grupo de países de los que monopolizan tales armas se arrojan el derecho exclusivo de producirlas y mejorarlas. Las contradicciones e intereses de sus miembros sufren cambios, y la humanidad se desenvuelve bajo un tinglado de armas nucleares que amenaza su existencia. Alguien podría afirmar algo parecido a lo que aquel emperador persa exclamó al aproximarse con un enorme ejército a los 300 espartanos que defendían el paso de las Termópilas: "Nuestros misiles nucleares oscurecerán el Sol."

Las vidas de miles de millones de seres humanos que habitan el planeta dependen de lo que piensen, crean y decidan unas pocas personas. Lo más grave es que los que poseen tan fabuloso poder no cuentan con psiquiatras. No podemos resignarnos. Tenemos derecho a denunciar, presionar y exigir cambios y el cese de tan insólita y absurda situación, que nos convierte a todos en rehenes. Nadie debe poseer jamás semejantes facultades, o nadie en el mundo podrá volver a hablar de civilización.

A este se suma otro letal problema: hace apenas 40 años algunos comenzaron a expresar preocupaciones sobre lo que se ha dado en llamar el medio ambiente, a partir de una civilización bárbara que estaba destruyendo las condiciones naturales de vida. Por primera vez se pone sobre el tapete ese delicadísimo tema. No pocos pensaron que se trataba de personas alarmistas y exageradas, un neomalthusianismo al estilo de pasados siglos. Eran en realidad personas bien informadas e inteligentes que iniciaban la tarea de concientizar a la opinión pública sobre el tema, con la angustia a veces de que fuera demasiado tarde para adoptar las medidas pertinentes. Quienes por sus altas responsabilidades políticas debían mostrar las mayores inquietudes, no mostraban más que ignorancia y desprecio.

Han pasado ya más de diez años desde la Cumbre de Río de Janeiro convocada por Naciones Unidas, y pese a la habitual proliferación de discursos, compromisos y promesas, muy poco se ha hecho. Sin embargo, la conciencia del mortal peligro crece. Debe crecer y crecerá la lucha. No hay alternativa.

Hace muy poco se produjo en La Habana un encuentro sobre desertificación y cambio de clima convocado igualmente por Naciones Unidas, un importante esfuerzo de información, concientización y llamado a la lucha.

Fui testigo en Río de Janeiro de la inquietud y el temor de los que representaban a las pequeñas islas del Pacífico y a otros países amenazados por el riesgo de quedar sepultados por las aguas de forma parcial o total debido al cambio de clima. Es triste. Los primeros en sufrir las consecuencias de la afectación del medio ambiente son los pobres. No poseen automóviles, ni aires acondicionados, posiblemente ni siquiera muebles, si es que disponen de vivienda. Sobre ellos caen más directamente los efectos de las grandes emanaciones de dióxido de carbono causantes del calentamiento de la atmósfera y el efecto pernicioso de los rayos ultravioletas que atraviesan el deteriorado filtro de la capa de ozono. Cuando se enferman, bien se sabe que no existen para ellos y sus familiares hospitales, médicos ni medicamento alguno.

Un tercer problema: en el más conservador de los cálculos posibles, la población mundial tardó no menos de 50 mil años en alcanzar la cifra de mil millones de habitantes. Esto ocurrió aproximadamente en el año 1800, cuando se iniciaba el siglo XIX. Llegó a dos mil millones 130 años después, en 1930, siglo XX. Alcanzó tres mil millones en 1960, treinta años después; cuatro mil millones en 1974, catorce años después; cinco mil millones en 1987, trece años después; seis mil millones en 1999, sólo doce años después. Cuenta hoy con 6 374 millones.

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Fidel Castro January 3rd Speech continued

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Es verdaderamente asombroso que en sólo 204 años la población mundial se multiplicara 6,4 veces desde la cifra de mil millones alcanzada en 1800, después de no menos de 50 mil años, calculados de forma relativamente arbitraria y conservadora para disponer de un punto de arranque que deberá ser considerado ulteriormente. Pueden ser muchos más años, limitándonos sólo al tiempo en que alcanzó su capacidad actual.

¿A qué ritmo crece en este momento?

Año 1999: población, 6 002 millones de habitantes; crecimiento, 77 millones.

Año 2000: población, 6 079 millones; crecimiento, 75 millones.

Año 2001: población, 6 154 millones; crecimiento, 74 millones.

Año 2002: población, 6 228 millones; crecimiento, 72 millones.

Año 2003: población, 6 300 millones; crecimiento, 74 millones.

Año 2004: población calculada, 6 374 millones; crecimiento, 74 millones.

¿A cuánto ascenderá la población mundial en el año 2050?

Los cálculos más reducidos afirman que a 7 409 millones; los cálculos más elevados aseguran que a 10 633 millones. Según el criterio de muchos

expertos, la cifra será alrededor de 9 mil millones de habitantes. La gran alarma provocada por esta colosal explosión demográfica, unida a la acelerada degradación de las condiciones naturales elementales para la supervivencia de la especie, ha causado verdadera consternación en muchos países, ya que casi el ciento por ciento de los crecimientos mencionados tendrán lugar en los países del Tercer Mundo.

Conociendo el creciente deterioro y reducción de los recursos de tierra y agua, las hambrunas que tienen lugar en muchos países, la indiferencia y el despilfarro de las sociedades de consumo, así como los problemas educacionales y sanitarios de la población mundial, si no se resuelven, es como para imaginarse una especie humana en la que sus miembros se estarían devorando entre sí.

Sería bueno preguntarles a los campeones olímpicos de los derechos humanos en el mundo occidental si alguna vez han dedicado un solo minuto a pensar en estas realidades, que en altísimo grado son consecuencia del sistema económico y social; qué piensan de un sistema que, en vez de educar a las masas como cuestión fundamental para avanzar con el apoyo precisamente de la ciencia, la técnica y la cultura en la búsqueda de soluciones viables y apremiantes, gasta un millón de millones de dólares cada año en

propaganda enajenante y consumista. Con lo que se gasta en uno solo de esos años para sembrar ese singular veneno, se podría alfabetizar y elevar hasta el nivel de noveno grado a todos los analfabetos y semianalfabetos del mundo en menos de diez años, y ningún niño pobre carecería de enseñanza. Sin educación y otros servicios sociales, el delito y el consumo de drogas jamás podrán reducirse y hasta casi eliminarse. Lo afirmamos desde Cuba, el país bloqueado durante 45 años, acusado y condenado no pocas veces en Ginebra por Estados Unidos y sus socios más incondicionales, que está a punto de alcanzar servicios de salud, educación y formación cultural con niveles de calidad que jamás el Occidente desarrollado y rico ha soñado siquiera, y además absolutamente gratuitos para todos los ciudadanos sin excepción alguna.

La globalización neoliberal impuesta al mundo, diseñada para un mayor saqueo de los recursos naturales del planeta, ha conducido a la mayoría de los países del Tercer Mundo, y de modo especial a los de América Latina, tras el fatídico "Consenso de Washington", a una situación desesperada e insostenible.

El primer fruto de esa funesta política fue la "década perdida" de 1980, en que el crecimiento de la región se limitó a uno por ciento; asciende a 2,7 por ciento entre 1990 y 1998,

muy por debajo de las falsas ilusiones y de necesidades apremiantes, para volver a caer al uno por ciento entre 1998 y el 2004.

La deuda externa que en 1985, año del traicionero "consenso", ascendía a 300 mil millones de dólares, se eleva hoy a más de 750 mil millones.

Las privatizaciones enajenaron en cientos de miles de millones de dólares bienes nacionales que se crearon a lo largo de muchos años, los cuales se esfumaron a la velocidad con que de estos países se fugan los capitales hacia Estados Unidos y Europa.

El desempleo alcanzó cifras récord.

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May Day in Hvanna, 2003.

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have a greater impact on them. When they fall ill, it is common knowledge that there are no hospitals, doctors or medicines for them or their relatives.

A third problem: according to the most conservative estimates possible, world population took no less than 50,000 years to reach one billion. This happened around 1800, just as the 19th century was beginning. It reached two billion 130 years later, in 1930. It reached 3 billion in 1960, thirty years later; 4 billion in 1974, fourteen years later; 5 billion in 1987, thirteen years later; 6 billion in 1999 only 12 years later. Today, it stands at 6.3 billion.

It is really amazing that in just 204 years world population increased by 6.4 times from the figure of one billion reached in 1800, after no less than 50 thousand years, calculated in a relatively arbitrary and conservative way so as to have a point of reference, but that should be further analyzed. It could have taken many more years, if we limit ourselves only to the time it took to reach its current capacity.

At what rate is it growing now?

1999: population 6,002 million; growth 77 million.

2000: population, 6,079 million; growth 75 million.

2001: population, 6,154 million; growth 74 million.

2002: population, 6,228 million; growth 72 million.

2003: population, 6,300 million; growth 74 million.

2004: est. population, 6,374 million; growth 74 million.

What will the world population be in the year 2050?

The lowest estimates say it will be 7,409 millions; the highest say 10,633 millions. According to many experts, there will be around 9 billion inhabitants. The enormous alarm generated by this colossal demographic explosion plus the accelerated degradation of the natural conditions needed for our species' survival have caused people to react with true dismay in many countries, since almost one hundred per cent

of the growth I mentioned will take place in Third World countries.

Aware of the growing deterioration and reduction of land and water resources, of the famines in many countries, of the indifference and wastage in consumer societies and the educational and health problems facing the world population, one could imagine that if all of these problems are not solved our human society might become one where its members devour each other.

It would be a good idea to ask the Olympic champions of human rights in the West if they have ever used a single minute to reflect on these realities, which to a very large degree are the result of the current economic and social system. It would be worth asking them how they feel about a system that, instead of educating the masses as a fundamental element for making progress in the search for urgently needed, viable solutions, with the support of science, technology and culture, spends one trillion dollars every year on alienating consumerist advertising. With the money spent in just one of those years to spread this peculiar poison, all the illiterate and semi-illiterate people in the world could be taught to read and write and even reach ninth grade in less than ten years and no poor child would have to go without schooling. Without education and other social services, crime and drug abuse can never be reduced or eradicated. This we proclaim from Cuba, a country blockaded for 45 years, accused and condemned more than a few times in Geneva by the United States and their closest allies but which is about to provide health, education and cultural development services the like of which the developed and rich West has never even dreamed of and, what is more, these are absolutely free for all citizens, with no exceptions whatsoever.

The neoliberal globalization imposed on the world, designed to facilitate greater looting of the planet's natural resources, has, in the wake of the fateful "Washington Consensus" led most of the countries in the Third World, and especially those in Latin America, into a desperate and unsustainable situation.

The first fruit of this disastrous policy was the "lost decade" of the 80s during which economic growth in the region only reached 1%; it rose to 2.7 % between 1990 and 1998, much lower than false hopes and pressing needs, to drop again to 1% between 1998 and 2004.

The foreign debt, which in 1985, the year of that treacherous "consensus", was \$300 billion, today stands at more than \$750 billion.

Privatizations wiped out hundreds of billions of dollars worth of national assets that took many years to create but which evaporated with the speed at which capitals flee from those countries to Europe and the United States.

Unemployment reached record heights. Of every 100 new jobs created, 82 are in the so-called "informal sector" which includes a long list of those who earn their living any way they can without any kind of social or legal protection.

Poverty has grown alarmingly, especially extreme poverty; it has grown by 12.8 % involving 44 % of the population. Development is stagnant and social services are deteriorating by the day. Neoliberal globalization, as was to be expected, caused a veritable disaster in these services, first and foremost health and education.

If old and new forms of looting, such as unequal terms of trade, the unceasing, forced flight of capital, the brain drain, protectionism, subsidies and the WTO's edicts are added to this, then no one should be surprised by the crises and other developments in South America.

Latin America is the world region where neoliberal globalization was applied most rigorously and exactly. Now it is facing the challenge of the FTAA which will sweep away national industries and turn the MERCOSUR and the Andean Pact into appendages of the US economy: it is a last assault on the economic development, the unity and the independence of the Latin American peoples.

But, even if this attempt at annexation is successful, this economic order will still be unsustainable, both for

the Latin American peoples and for the people in the United States whose jobs are threatened by plentiful cheap labor recruited by the *maquilas* 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 oligarchies can offer on a grand scale.

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 other planet we can move to. There is no atmosphere, no air and no water on Mars, neither is there any transportation for us to emigrate there *en masse*. Either we save this what we have, or many millions of years will have to go by before another intelligent species arises that can start all over again the adventure we have gone through. Pope John Paul II has already explained that the theory of evolution is not irreconcilable with the creation doctrine.

I must draw my talk to a close. There is much work 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

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 ganan la vida de cualquier forma sin protección social ni legal alguna.

La pobreza ha crecido de forma alarmante, en especial la pobreza extrema, 12,8 por ciento hasta alcanzar el 44 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 la salud de la población, como era de esperarse, la globalización neoliberal produjo un verdadero desastre.



COPE and the Future of Vancouver City Council An Interview with Tim Louis

By Shannon Bundock

As capitalism falls further into crisis all around the world, all levels of government are faced with confronting this economic calamity. Internationally we see the Canadian government waging war and occupation on third world countries, such as Haiti and Afghanistan. Provincially we see increasing attacks on poor and working people at all levels, most recently and severely with the BC liberals forcing the Hospital Employees Union into a province-wide strike. Municipally, Vancouver City Council is facing growing homelessness, dealing with transit issues and pressure from higher levels of government.

Before the scheduled April 3rd Annual General Meeting of the Coalition of Progressive Electors, (COPE) rumours were flying in the media of a controversial Translink plan, the near expulsion of three COPE councillors (Fred Bass, Anne Roberts and Tim Louis) and of deepening rifts in COPE. Amid the controversy COPE membership grew to over 3,000 members, 800 of whom came out to the April 3rd AGM. Unable to accommodate the high turn out, the COPE AGM was cancelled. Since then, COPE has dropped off the front pages of Vancouver weeklies and reports are now surfacing of an attempt within the coalition to build unity.

Fire This Time sat down with Tim Louis, a Vancouver City Councillor to talk about the recent situation facing COPE and what his vision is for the future of Vancouver City Council.

Fire This Time: Last month, leading up to the COPE AGM, there were a number of stories in Vancouver press, radio, TV and print media that talked of a split developing in COPE. Despite differing positions represented, it was agreed upon in all reports that a significant division had developed. Can you explain, from your perspective, to what level this division developed and what the political issues were or are?

Councillor Tim Louis: Well that's a very good question it's sometimes difficult to answer those questions without exacerbating the split, and I think it's in all our best interests not to exacerbate the split. So sometimes my answers to those types of questions are a bit guarded and aren't as elaborate as I would like them to be. But in a nutshell, in a broad coalition, my perspective, my opinion is that we need to have diversity, that we need to embrace diversity, that we need to celebrate our differences of position on issues and that's what makes a truly successful coalition. If it's a broad coalition, as ours is. A broad center-left coalition its not realistic, its not healthy to pigeon-hole everybody into one very narrow point on the political spectrum.

So, not only are there going to be political differences between us on issues, but more importantly (I think unfortunately), there is a difference of opinion as to whether or not there should be public differences of opinion between us on issues. It's that second difference that is of concern to me.

So in a nutshell, I welcome difference of opinion on issues, but I'm concerned a bit ... that there are two differences within the caucus as to whether or not those differences are healthy

FTT: According to the Vancouver weekly paper, *The Georgia Straight* on March 25th, in the lead up to the AGM, COPE membership swelled to 3,000 and rumours going into the AGM were that



Fire This Time coordinator Shannon Bundock interviews Vancouver City Councillor Tim Louis, April 2004.

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

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 caucus at the AGM. At the AGM every year there is an election to the executive, our executive is the Board of Directors, and the membership elects 11 people to that 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.

FTT: And on the level of pressure that was facing you?

Councillor Louis: Well I don't think it's any secret that on the Translink plan there were two different views, one view was that "warts 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,

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

By Ivan Drury

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

In Newfoundland and Labrador on April 1st, 20,000 public employees 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 began. The two major similarities are the reason that this strike is important for working people and unionists in BC: these similarities are the forces of the ruling class against the forces of working people.

The ruling class attacks...

The Tory government under Danny Williams in Labrador-Newfoundland took power in order to manage for the ruling class the same capitalist crisis that Gordon Campbell rose to manage in BC. Williams immediately set his radar on the public sector as the place to begin his attack on unions and poor people in Newfoundland-Labrador.

When he first came to power, Premier Williams said, "I wouldn't be having major cuts in the public sector."

On March 30th, the contracts expired for both the Newfoundland and Labrador Union of Public and Private Employees (NAPE) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Danny Williams announced the cutting of 4,000 jobs from the public sector and massive roll-backs.

The workers fight back!

The most important thing to note from this struggle is the fact that there was a struggle: the workers fought back.

The day after the massive cuts to public services was announced, including lost jobs, frozen wages and cuts to sick leave for future employees, both NAPE and CUPE demanded a 21% pay raise over a three year period and 21,000 workers walked off the job.

Although essential services were maintained, such a broad range of public sector workers went out on strike that the struggle demanded massive support from other working and poor

people to survive. Emergency Air Services, Collage of the North Atlantic Support Staff, General Services, Health Professionals, Hospital Support Staff, Lab and X-Ray Technicians, Marine and Operational Services, Marine Services, School Boards, Liquor Corporation and School Assistants all went out on strike at the same time and stayed out for a full month.

The ability to fight against the reactionary cuts of the P.C. government was dependant on both solidarity amongst all of these under attack and solidarity from workers in other unions, non-union workers and poor people dependant on the services these workers provide.

Back to work order

After a month of stalemate, with the Province refusing to negotiate any of the points with the unions and refusing to compromise, Danny Williams introduced an incredibly punitive back to work legislation. The legislation includes the firing of any worker who refuses to return to the job and the fining 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 strikers 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 18 in Newfoundland was postponed until Monday May 3rd, so that negotiation could continue over the weekend. Monday May 3rd 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 ended the HEU strike and cancelled 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 two days earlier in BC.

Bill 18 passed in Newfoundland in the early hours of the morning after 11 hours of debate and included all the elements that the workers had walked out for a month before: a two year wage freeze and a reduction of sick leave for new employees to 12 days a year. The Premier stated after the Bill was passed that the government would stick to its plan to eliminate 4,000 public sector jobs within the 4 year imposed contract period.

Solidarity: Coast to Coast and Beyond

On May 1st in Vancouver, over 10,000 working people gathered together in solidarity with health care workers and against the BC Liberal government. On May 4th, about a hundred public sector workers gathered in St. Johns in a funeral procession to commemorate the death of collective bargaining.

Although union leaders in both Newfoundland and in BC told their members to go back to work with their 'heads held high' after a strike well fought, it is clear that from Vancouver to St. Johns to Baghdad, the struggle is just beginning. In this life or death struggle against the destructive forces of capitalism and imperialism, we must remember that the principle of solidarity still stands. An injury to one is an injury to all. Also, that each victory can strengthen us all.

The imposing of contracts on unions by reactionary governments under the cover of 'back to work' legislation is a dangerous development that is poisonous to the rights and securities of all working people in BC and across the country. It is not a coincidence that the Newfoundland government imposed a contract on 20,000 public sector workers just days after an extremely punitive contract was imposed by the BC Liberals on the HEU. These same connections extend to the struggle against these capitalist forces by working and poor people from coast to coast and beyond. By extending these connections into the unity of active solidarity and supporting strikes and struggles equally of workers locally and internationally, working and poor people will be able to drive back these shared enemies and win.

Defend Women's Centres, Welfare & Social Housing!

An Interview with Anti-poverty Activist Lilly Longcar

By Ivan Drury

On April 1st 2004, the BC Liberal government launched two major attacks on people in BC: The end of funding for women's centres throughout the province and the implementation of the 2 year time limit on eligibility for welfare.

The Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA) 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 out of 5 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 Viaduct off of Main Street. By the time the march arrived, a line of police had already formed, blocking in the horseshoe 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 people made homeless 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 protestors 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 City Council, which would be modeled after similar tent cities in Seattle and Portland.

The crisis of homelessness is much greater than the tragedy of over 1,200 people sleeping on the streets of Vancouver every night. Over 60,000 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 crisis and real estate speculation and are at best a band-aid solution. However, DERA, as a social service organization in the Downtown Eastside (DTES), 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 and main organizers of the Woodward's squat 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



Lilly Longcar.

highlight what this government has been doing to people. How they have been attacking poor people, attacking women, basically attacking everything that matters to people in our society. Everything that people have fought for and died for throughout the past hundred years. They are just dismantling it.

One of the ways they did it today was by introducing a budget that has cut millions and millions of dollars from social services. Today we wanted to highlight that. What happens when government cuts social services? What happens is that people are out on the street with no food and no money.

What we wanted to do today was to send a message to Victoria, that we are not going to stand for it any longer that we are going to fight them.

We were also going to provide places for people to get off the street and sleep and get out of the weather. The government doesn't want to provide housing for people, the government doesn't want to help people, they don't give a shit... so we were going to provide shelters and feed people. That's what we were going to do today.

FTT: Who were you organizing this tent city for? Who are the people most affected by the cuts of the BC Liberal government?

Lilly: I think women, poor women especially, are most impacted. Aboriginal women, Aboriginal people. They are the ones who are being victimized, women especially, by the cuts to Women's Centres, the cuts to welfare. All poor people, but disproportionately single parents and usually women with children and Aboriginal people. People who are disabled, women who

have addictions... the most vulnerable people in our society are being impacted by these cuts.

FTT: You organized a march from Victory Square to the park here just off of Main street and there were a number of temporary shelters set up in the park. Why did the police surround the park? Why did they respond the way they did?

Lilly: We're not sure except that they are an instrument of the state, and the state does not want to house people. The state does not want us to provide shelter for people. They're not here to protect us obviously. We were just walking down the street, we have a right to peaceful protest, we have a right to have our voices heard. We were walking down the street the way we should be and then they stopped us and they threatened us. I think they were trying to incite us so they could arrest us and so they could beat on us... because we were doing nothing wrong.

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, will not vote for 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 let their government reps know that they will defeat them, that they [the BC Liberal government] are not going to be around much longer.

Key Issues for Vancouver City Council

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was that the plan was absolutely dreadful and that it should be defeated.

We totally respected, and continue to this day to respect, the view of others that the plan should have been approved. Unfortunately, some didn't have that same level of respect for our view, our position to vote against the plan. The plan in a nutshell ... in my opinion went against the COPE platform, the COPE platform that was approved by the membership at an open, transparent, democratic policy convention prior to the last election.

The platform contained planks on many different issues including transit. And the plank on transit, in summary, said that COPE was opposed to any further fare increases and was supportive of a significant shift in the Translink budget away from mega-projects and towards the backbone of the transit system, buses. That was the COPE platform approved by membership and anybody running for COPE in that election committed themselves to implementing that platform as best they could, if they got elected.

After the election the Translink plan was developed and the Translink plan explicitly called for an increase in fares and explicitly promoted a 1.7

billion dollar RAV 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 perhaps most importantly of all the Translink plan reduced the goal for the number of buses. Under the old Translink plan the goal had been 2000 buses by the year 2000. And if we look at the calendar 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 RAV line, sucking money like a black hole away from buses, and given the memberships 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 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 being that the executive was capable of replacing the membership's position on an issue. That the executives motion to endorse

the Translink plan now became new COPE policy. The other view, the view that I subscribe to, is that between elections it was not possible that in a closed meeting, behind closed doors, for a very select few 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 after 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 developed 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 high turnout (over 800 COPE members). At the cancelled AGM, what was your assessment of the composition of the membership and their reasons for coming out? Did you find a high level of support from 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

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Anti-War Movement: Past, Present, Future

In the Era of Imperialist Wars and Occupations

By Shannon Bundock

The world today is plagued by poverty, crime, unemployment, famine, death and destruction. The criminal military machine of imperialism has brought war and occupation to third world nations across the globe. From Iraq, to Palestine, to Afghanistan, to Haiti, there is no doubt that we live in an emerging era of war and occupation. Even within western nations, we feel the effect of this war through attacks on organized labour, regressive immigration legislation, and an overall shift to a far right and neo-liberal agenda.

The roots of why there was a shift and transition into this era of war and occupation can be uncovered through understanding the economic conditions that exist in the world today. As inflation and unemployment skyrocket, major advanced capitalist countries around the globe are facing economic crises and are struggling to combat and slow them.

What this means for capitalism is the transition into a higher form of imperialism wherein the US, Canada, France, UK and Germany, all must compete for control of the world's wealth and resources. In order to survive, imperialist nations must wage war and occupy oppressed nations to gain control and plunder their wealth and resources. Imperialist rivalry is developing and turning Baghdad, Port Au Prince, Kabul and Jenin into battlegrounds.

If these battlegrounds were vast and empty spaces filled with unclaimed wealth and resources, then perhaps the agenda of imperialism would stand a chance. But these battlegrounds hold within them nations of people who have been defending their interests against imperialist intervention for decades. These battlegrounds are third-world nations that are showing pre-Revolutionary potential as imperialist attacks increase. And ultimately, within these battlegrounds lies the leadership of anti-imperialist organizing worldwide which poses the threat of a fatal setback to imperialism, which imperialists cannot ignore.

Birth of a New Anti War Movement

In the lead up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq there was a major anti-war sentiment growing all across the world. Demonstrations were held for months prior to the invasion with thousands and then tens of thousands of people in the street demanding "No War!" By February 2003 the movement had expanded and over 40 million people were in the streets across the globe.

This build up showed everyone the potential of people across the world to organize against imperialist attacks. Iraq was the target of the US-led war drive, and people across the world united with Iraqi people to fight back.

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



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

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 meant 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.

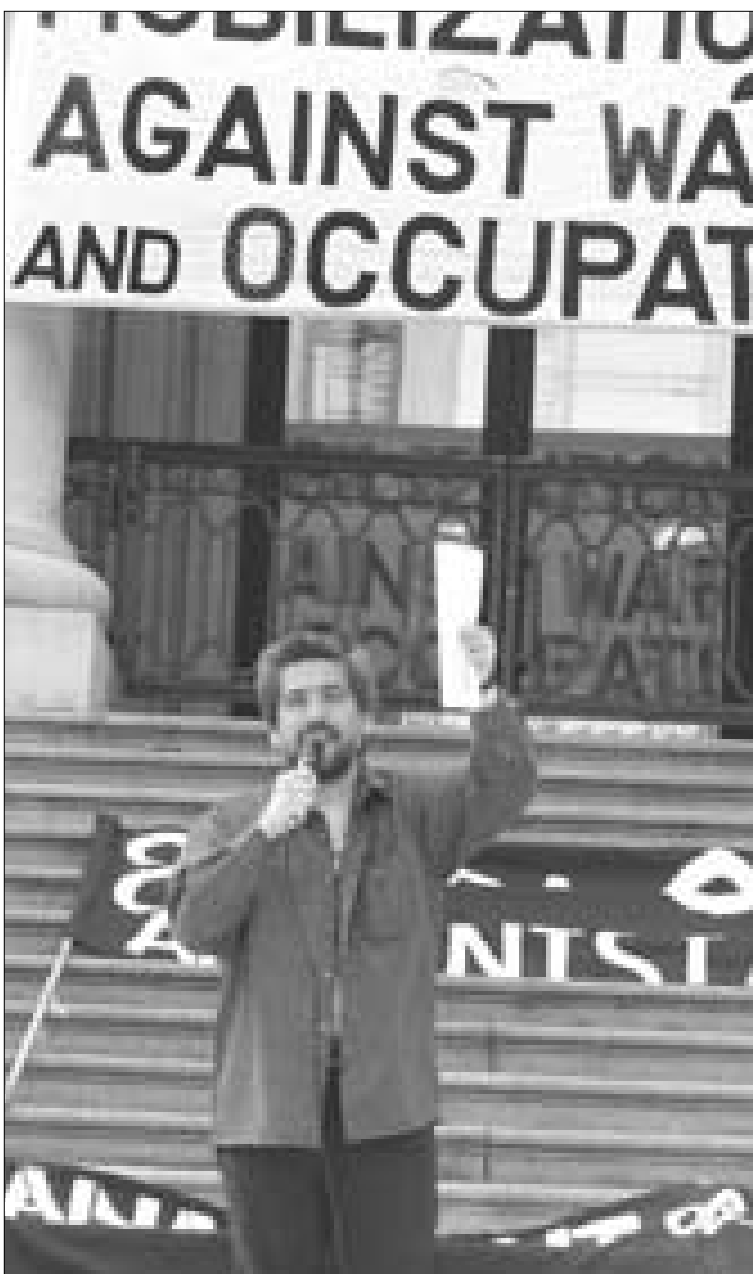
MAWO was carried by the political weight of the global movement and the development of the Iraqi resistance into an organized, popular and effective machine. MAWO rallied at the Vancouver Art Gallery, less than one month later, with over 40 endorsing members and hundreds of supporters.

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 "place 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.



Fire This Time editor Ali Yerevani speaking at 'Canada Out' rally organized by MAWO, April 24th 2004.

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Hands Off Iraq!

Vancouver Demonstrators Demand US-UK Out of Iraq

*By Nicole Burton,
Kira Koshelanyk,
& Aaron Mercredi*

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 co-MC for the day, "Today in Iraq, a coalition of 37 different organizations marches with hundreds of thousands on the streets of Baghdad, with us and the rest of the world, demanding an end to the continued occupation of their country!"

Kelly White, a long-time indigenous activist and host of Coop Radio's *Kla How Ya FM*, opened the rally with a ceremonial song and spoke intimately and passionately about the colonial occupation of Canada. **Kira Koshelanyk**, MAWO co-chair and coordinator of Youth-Third World Alliance, established the political nature of the day in Vancouver, by introducing Mobilization Against War and Occupation,



MAWO march and rally against war and occupation on March 20th, 2004.

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. This call was then 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 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 peacekeeping – 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!

MAWO Joins May Day in Vancouver

By Tamara Hansen

On Mayday 2004 over 10, 000 people met in downtown Vancouver to march and protest against the injustices being committed on workers both at home and abroad. Similarly to the rest of British-Columbia, Vancouver saw an outpouring of support and solidarity for striking HEU workers. This event was a strong demonstration of working class unity and solidarity. This could be seen as participants marched through the streets of Vancouver carrying hundreds of colourful union flags, as well as thousands of banners and placards containing support for HEU strikers.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) joined the action on May 1st to show solidarity with working people around the world. As active members in the march and rally MAWO hoped to link the fight of workers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Haiti to that of workers in Canada. To do this we made a banner, which read: "From HEU to Fallujah, Stop Attacks at Home and Abroad."

This slogan was used to start discussions about working class unity and solidarity. We opened a different dimension to this world-wide struggle by focusing on the US's war and occupation of Iraq. The

power and unity of poor and working class people in Iraq can be seen in the city of Fallujah, where within one month of resisting occupation, the US military has moved away from their city. The resistance in Fallujah marks a major victory for Iraqi people in their battle against US occupation. At home the assault on workers can also be seen, with Gordon Campbell's attacks on oppressed people, most recently and importantly the Hospital Employee's Union.

Many anti-war groups and organization also participated in Vancouver May Day. Among these groups were MAWO and the Korean Student Network Against War, who also brought their banner which helped link the anti-war movement to workers struggle in Korea.

Before the march people gathered at Queen Elizabeth Plaza where we distributed materials about war and occupation and also in support of HEU strikers. There were many engaging, lively and invaluable conversations with fellow workers on the streets, on the march and on the sidewalk. Several people expressed that they were tired of feeling divided and under attack while at the bargaining table. These people also expressed the urgency of standing together now, as many feel that it is only a matter of time before the government comes after their jobs as well.

Once the march arrived at the Art Gallery there were several speakers from The BC Federation of Labour and The Hospital Employee's Union. Angie Schria, MC of the rally and speakers Jim Sinclair from BC Federation of Labour, Chris Allnut from HEU and Deb Crithley from the Vernon Women's Centre, all criticized the Campbell government for its attacks on workers, including cuts to women's centres, job layoffs, and the privatization of BC's industries.

MAWO set up a table along with many other organizations, at the Vancouver Art Gallery. There we engaged people in discussions about MAWO's campaigns around the occupation's of Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, Palestine and Indigenous territory in Canada. Participants at the rally signed our petitions to get Canadian troops out of Haiti and Afghanistan, which gave us another opportunity to connect the attacks on workers at home and abroad.

The huge participation of unionized working people as well as the general public in the event established a new era of militancy and growing consciousness in BC. This remarkable event showed that the working people of this province have the power, potential and willingness to fight back the Campbell offensive and put an end to this dark era of British-Colombia's history.

Operation: CANADA OUT!

MAWO Campaign Against the Canadian Military Machine

By Shannon Bundock

The countries that economically dominate the world today are facing a crisis of untold proportions. The US is attempting to deal with an economy which is threatening to crack under the pressure of inflation, high unemployment and over production. At the same time, Canada is feeling a similar threat. It is well understood by the Canadian government that if the US and UK are carving up the wealth and resources of the Middle East, Canada's survival depends on being right along side them, ready to fight for a piece of the pie. It is in this climate that Paul Martin announced the intention of Canada to put itself on the "world stage" in 2004.

From the Middle East to Latin America: Canadian Imperialism Invades and Occupies

On Oct 7, 2001 the US began a war and invasion in Afghanistan. Since that time, NATO troops have taken control of the occupation, recently with Canadian forces in the lead. After 2.5 years of occupation, contrary to imperialist allegations, no level of security or stability has been established for either the occupiers or the Afghan people.

The situation for Afghan people, in particular children and women, remains dire. Lack of access to education, raids and arrests by occupying forces, and desperate levels of poverty continue. Since the invasion and occupation, Afghanistan has faced total instability, every day leading deeper into crisis.

By positioning themselves in charge of the job in Afghanistan, the Canadian occupying forces have been able to take a leadership role in the era of war and occupation. Firmly planting the Canadian military in Afghanistan is the most effective way for the Canadian government to protect its interests in the Middle East.

Canadian interests don't end with the Middle East however, and we have seen the arm of Canadian imperialism reaching South as well as East.

In February 2004 a window opened in Haiti that Canada, France and the US swiftly moved to shut. As the people of Haiti sunk deeper into poverty, Jean Bertrand Aristide was failing to quell the fears that imperialism had, fears of unrest in Haiti developing into a pre-revolutionary situation.

In order to prevent a more challenging situation from developing, the US, France and Canada moved to take control of Haiti, and by extension, open a window of their own. Through this window they could establish the era of war and occupation in a new region: Latin America.

All in all, in 2004 it was fast becoming clear that Canada was not a minor player in world affairs. And as time goes on, in fact, the Canadian government is increasing the breadth and scope of its imperialist interventions. Likewise, the people of Canada are met with the challenge of increasing the breadth of our opposition to encompass a strong demand against Canadian-led attacks.

Against Canadian Imperialism: Educate! Organize! Mobilize!

On January 29th 2004, Vancouver's antiwar coalition, Mobilization Against War and Occupation, expanded its anti-war strategy and focus in a significant way. At a press conference at the Roundhouse Community Center, MAWO organizer Clayton Thomas Mueller, and MAWO co-chairs Shannon Bundock and Kira Koshelanyk were joined by supporters Lisa Barrett, Mayor of Bowen Island and Tania Ortiz of the Student-Youth Committee Against War, to launch *Operation: CANADA OUT!*

As a result of the escalating situation in Afghanistan the media response to the press conference was overwhelming.



Indigenous activist Kelly White speaks at 'CANADA OUT' rally organized by MAWO, April 24th 2004.

"The launching of the campaign coincides with the Jan 27th death of a Canadian soldier in Afghanistan. The death of Cpl. Jamie Murphy and the injury to three others adds to the two other soldiers killed in recent attacks and many others killed in US "friendly fire" bombings. Along with the thousands of innocent Afghans killed since 2001, the urgency is increased for all people in Canada to call for a withdraw of Canadian troops immediately." said Kira Koshelanyk, Co-Chair of MAWO

The campaign is focused on challenging the false justification that Canadian troops are "keeping" or "making" peace in Afghanistan. The campaign exposes the role of Canada as an imperialist nation and is focused on expanding understanding and awareness of Canada's interest in establishing itself as a leading force in political and economic control of resources in the Middle East.

When Canada positioned itself to be among the leaders in the recent occupation of Haiti, MAWO was again faced with the challenge of exposing the true agenda of the Canadian

government. The expansion of war and occupation into Latin America has opened up a new front that the antiwar movement had to effectively confront.

For *Operation: CANADA OUT!* this meant a natural expansion of the campaign, beginning with an emergency action against intervention in Haiti, which took place on March 7th 2004. (see below for a full report)

The Campaign

The strategy with which MAWO is pursuing Operation CANADA OUT! is based on solidly establishing the political foundations of the occupations of Haiti and Afghanistan and developing broad consciousness in opposition. This means a strategy of mass education through public forums, literature, brochures, petitioning and mobilization.

The campaign is structured as a petition campaign, with many educational and support actions being carried out as well. Through the petition drive tour, MAWO has been at campuses all across the lower mainland, collected upwards of 500 signatures in a

single stop. Through this drive MAWO has collected over 3,500 signatures from people across Vancouver, across British Columbia and across Canada.

The petition drive has been successful in making the campaign visible and in establishing the opposition to Canadian occupation. It has given us the opportunity to be challenged by people on the street and to return that challenge. *Operation: CANADA OUT!* is a campaign that forces all people in Canada to think critically about how they understand Canadian foreign policy. It has forced people to look at the history of Canada and to question the basis of Canada's "legacy" as a peacekeeping nation. *Operation CANADA OUT!* has brought the important demand for indigenous sovereignty and has served to unite the fight at home and abroad. *Operation CANADA OUT!* has also shown us the need for a focused educational campaign that can address the numerous confusions and questions that people have about why Canada is occupying oppressed nations and why we, as poor and working people in Canada must oppose it.

Since the campaign was launched, MAWO has held a series of forums that focus directly on the occupations led by Canada, as well as on the links and connections between US, UK and other imperialist attacks.

In addition, as the leading organizing force against Canadian imperialism, MAWO has been contacted by radio and newspapers across the lower mainland for interviews on the campaign and on the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Haiti. MAWO's focus on media work involved in the campaign is essential to the broad expansion of the campaign and to increasing awareness about Canadian imperialism.

Taking on the challenge of building an effective opposition in Canada to imperialist occupation means organizing at all levels. It means building a campaign that is politically connected to the most explicit examples of war and occupation globally. It means building a campaign that can expand the opposition to the war on Iraq led by the US, to opposition to the occupation of Haiti and Afghanistan led by Canada. Overall, it means increasing consciousness and unity among oppressed people in Canada and directing that into a movement for justice, for freedom and for dignity.

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 flood its soil with foreign militaries. The initial deployment of over 1600 troops to Haiti was within 48 hours

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 country, demanding an end to foreign invasion. This came simultaneously with statements made by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Union that they would boycott UN involvement in any "peacekeeping" operation in Haiti. And on March 7th, as speakers and performers led chants of "Troops out Now! US/France/Canada

Out!" in Vancouver, over 10,000 people marched on Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, demanding "NO to occupation". Such action signified that this day was part of a much larger world movement against occupation.

MAWO's emergency action was successful in its immediacy to respond to a world situation, and in building momentum within Vancouver around the occupation of Haiti by linking it with the occupation of Iraq, the occupation of Afghanistan, Palestine, and Indigenous territory in North America. It is important that additional response be made as events in Haiti unfold, and as the people of Haiti organize and build their resistance as part of a larger movement, capable of confronting and defeating imperialist war and terror.

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 Skwelkwek’welt, 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 Hadani Ditmars, a journalist, writer and poet 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



(From left to right) Mike Krebs, Kira Koshelanyk, and Shannon Bundock at the MAWO March 10th forum on the links between the different imperialist occupations going on worldwide.

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.

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 epoca de guerra y ocupación. Esta tarea es especialmente importante en comunidades de gente de color, con musulmanes, inmigrantes, refugiados, jovenes, estudiantes y comunidades indígenas: la gente mas profundamente afectada por la guerra y la ocupación.

MAWO es una organización que esta 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 construccion del movimiento.

Mientras esta era de guerra y ocupación continúe, MAWO continuará organizando, educando y movilizandose contra ellos. Te damos la bienvenida para unírte, pelear y hacer retorceder la maquina de guerra estadounidense, por el retorno de las tropas de Canada y por el FIN DE LA OCUPACION EN IRAK, PALESTINA Y AFGANISTAN!

Struggles For Indigenous Rights In Canada

Delta Must Go! Support the Struggle to Defend Secwepemec Territory

By Brennan Luchsinger

Sun Peaks ski resort is built on Secwepemec land, and since the early 1990s Delta Hotels and Sun Peaks ski resort have been destroying the traditional Secwepemec territory known as Skwelkwek’welt. The Secwepemec people set up the Skwelkwek’welt 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 Secwepemec 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 Secwepemec 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 Niska 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 Secwepemec land, and the necessity of building a movement than 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 Secwepemec 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 this basic right.

MAWO Forum Sparks Debate on War and Occupation

By Aaron Mercredi

On March 28th, Mobilization Against War and 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 Pilger 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 history of colonialism and foreign intervention in Haiti. He concluded that the most recent 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 political, moral, human rights and legal perspectives," 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



(From left to right) Bob Everton, Shannon Bundock, and Chandra Murdoch at the MAWO March 28th forum on the illegality of occupation.

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.

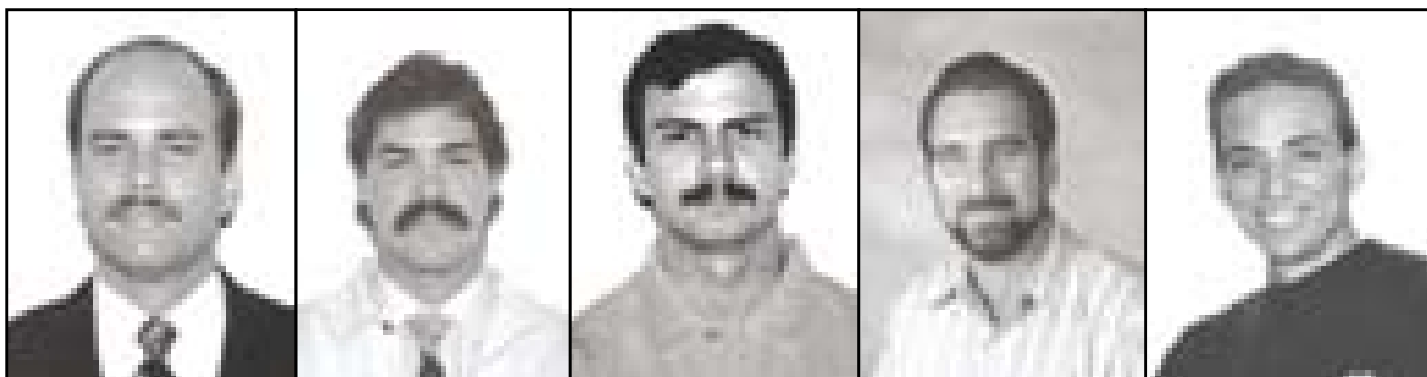
Letter of Solidarity to the Cuban 5

By Thomas Davies

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

I am writing as a representative of the Free The Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver to congratulate you on your progress with the essential work being done on your case (or the Free The Five case). 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 campus awareness initiative. Within these free public presentations we screened a film with Leonard Weinglass



The Cuban Five, from left to right: Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labanino, Fernando González, René Gonzalez, and Antonio Guerrero.

detailing the case of the Cuban Five along with a short film on the blockade of Cuba called *Desafío*. 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 committees 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 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

Join the Free the Cuban 5 Committee!

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

The Future of the Antiwar Movement in Vancouver

From page 24

Mobilization Against War and Occupation began to develop a campaign to expand the focus of the anti-war movement in Canada to include the demand of “Canadian Troops Home Now” and to enforce the existing demand of sovereignty for Indigenous nations in 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 in favour of US interests.

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 their demand and resistance flourished.

The Vancouver anti-war movement, though understandably smaller than during spring 2003, had expanded politically, and was regaining momentum. It remained the primary goal of those who were active in the movement, to build an effective anti-war movement in Canada as part of the global struggle. The vital strategy was, and continues to be keeping the focus on the issue of occupation. We must spread and deepen the understanding of how a movement against occupation can connect and unify the masses who are under direct military occupation with solidarity and effective participation of indigenous nations in Canada. For people in Canada to build a movement that is truly effective, we must attack Canadian imperialism at its foundations and we must expose its colonial history. A movement

against war and occupation in Canada must have roots in the demands of indigenous nations for sovereignty.

Furthermore, we must unify all poor and working people in Canada with the struggle of indigenous nations, on the understanding that we have a common enemy. The government that occupies Afghanistan is the same government that refuses to recognize indigenous sovereignty, it is the same government that has deported thousands of immigrants and refugees, the same government that is hacking away at healthcare and social services in Canada. We must unify as people under attack, whether those attacks are at home or abroad.

With this strategy of immediate solidarity and response to imperialist attacks, MAWO took to the streets March 7th, as Canada, France and the US invaded Haiti and expanded the era of war and occupation on a new front – the Caribbean and Latin America. *Operation: CANADA OUT!* was also expanded to include this new front of Canadian imperialism and the people of Vancouver demanded CANADA OUT OF HAITI!

The spring of 2004 has brought an unbelievable upsurge in the impact of Iraqi 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 thus far. To the chagrin of the US, after one year of attacks, the Iraqi people have remained intact and able to organize mass demonstrations, an expanding trade union movement, over 50-70 armed attacks daily as well as gaining international solidarity with their demands. This war has shown the power of masses of people, no matter how ill-equipped, to beat back imperialism. The resistance has put the US-led forces in a deep and downward spiralling crisis. It has dealt a fatal blow to the interest of imperialism and has improved the position of oppressed people globally.

The spring of 2004 has taught the people of the world the



Fire This Time Coordinator Shannon Bundock speaking at the MAWO April 10th emergency rally against the massacres of Iraqis, 2004.

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.

Future Struggle – Future Fights

For people living in Canada, people organizing and participating in the movement against war and occupation, it is necessary for us to learn from the lessons of the past year.

Our job today contains many aspects that are united under the strategy of building a broad and popular movement. This movement must be capable of uniting poor and working people across the country, which will have the potential to expand into an anti-imperialist and maybe even, anti-capitalist movement.

In order to expand we must establish the anti-war and anti-occupation movement in Canada on a basis that people in Canada can understand and relate to. Therefore, our focus must include opposition to Canadian-led intervention: Canada Out of Haiti! Canada Out of Afghanistan! We must also develop and popularize the demand for sovereignty for

indigenous nations in Canada beyond Indigenous communities and into the movement as a whole.

In order to be effective, we must organize frequently and dynamically, with focus on the most explicit attacks by imperialism, from Iraq, to Afghanistan, to Palestine, to Haiti. Through popular education we can develop an understanding of oppressed people’s position in the world and of their interest in opposition to the imperialist warmongers and plunderers.

Through our organizing, we must also focus on the layers of society that already have high anti-war consciousness and potential to mobilize. This means youth, students, people of colour, immigrants, refugees and indigenous people. As people under severe attack by the Canadian government, we have the ability and responsibility to orient the movement in favour of those under severe attack globally.

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 poor and working people at home and abroad. We need a movement with eyes on the global anti-war leadership, from Iraqi people to the people of Palestine and Afghanistan.

The movement must allow for rapid expansion and must be strategically orientated 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, of Cheam, and of Kabul. These are the united shouts that will shatter the US criminal military machine, and these are the shouts that will cause the defeat of war and occupation everywhere!

International Solidarity with Venezuela!

From page 16

motherland, giving healthcare for free. As well, in these communities they receive primary care from family doctors, and have access to ambulance services organized by communities.

In the case of agriculture we are working to guarantee safety and access to food for our people. We are working for a different and better distribution of the land, where the land belongs to the one who works it.

These are two examples of the achievements that we have reached in this process of change. Through campaigns and efforts such as this, we are achieving our fundamental target. This target is one of social justice and of the overall improvement of the quality of life.

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 democratic transformation in the world. These processes are intended to permanently preserve the means to establish a network of information, which will allow us to communicate widely. Through this we will fight to broaden solidarity with 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 la distorsión que existe sobre Venezuela. Y al mismo tiempo podemos juntos difundir la injerencia del gobierno de Bush en los asuntos internos de Venezuela; que es lo mismo que hizo en Haiti, Irak y Afganistan. Tambien en este esfuerzo de solidaridad, difundir y denunciar la violación de los Derechos Humanos que el gobierno de Bush realiza manteniendo 600 presos en la isla de Guantánamo 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, dandoles 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 función de garantizar la seguridad y la solidaridad alimentaria de nuestro pueblo con una distinta y mejor distribución 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 fundamental que es el de la justicia social y el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida de los ciudadanos.

Interview With Tim Louis

From page 23

grassroots COPE that day. I saw people that were very concerned about reports that Bass, Roberts and I were within one vote from being expelled for the “crime” of voting against the Translink plan (that many might have said in fact was voting consistent with the membership’s policy).

I saw people that believe in the same values that COPE has always stood for, for as long as I’ve been a member of COPE , for almost 30 years. People that believe in openness and transparency, democracy and a grassroots movement.

I did not see a lot of developers, the gambling industry, the entertainment industry there, I saw workers and transit users and so on.

FTT: Since the cancelled AGM there has been talk that the two sides are working together to come up with a joint slate for the elections at the AGM. How is this process developing? Is it working? How is it working?

Councillor Louis: Well, I’m very, very hopeful that we will be able to reach an agreement that allows for a joint slate to be put before the membership. And any comments that I might make regarding those discussions might reduce the likelihood of that actually happening. So I’m not going to comment on the details, other than to say I’m very supportive of a joint slate and I want to see a united COPE that defeats the NPA at the next election. But not a united COPE that is simply the “NPA-lite”, that its not just the NPA in disguise. But a true broad coalition, that has room within it for all points on the political spectrum, including the current that I subscribe to that I believe in, that I champion, that I speak out on, and that would be a significant left portion.

FTT: Things seem to have cooled off since April 3rd. Can you explain about the current situation and what you see in the near future for COPE? Specifically, for yourself, Bass and Roberts, at the yet-to-be-scheduled upcoming AGM?

Councillor Louis: Well, we’re at a crossroads. We’re at a fork in the path. We’re either going to evolve into another conventional, stereotypical political party

where decisions are choreographed behind closed doors and where openness and transparency are a thing of the past.

Or we’re going to be an inspiration to the western world, that it is possible, at least at the municipal level, for a very vibrant, percolating political coalition with differences. Where we wear those differences on our sleeves and those differences are our strengths.

FTT: After all of this, let me ask you what do you think the next step should be for Vancouver City Councillors. What are the most important issues and main problems Vancouver City Council should address or prioritize? For example, as you well know homelessness is one of the big crises facing Vancouver how can City Council address this or other problems in Vancouver?

Councillor Louis: Well, on the issue of homelessness, I don’t know what the answer is. Other than the fact that I do know that it is literally impossible for any municipality to adequately address that issue on its own. We do have the financial resources to build enough social housing to provide housing for all the people that live within Vancouver today who are homeless.

But if we did that, the very next day, people who are homeless and are living in other municipalities, where those municipalities are not committed, would of course, (and I wouldn’t blame them, I would encourage them) move to Vancouver and we’d be right back where we started.

Housing is a national issue at best. It’s a provincial issue failing it being a federal issue. So what we really need to do is work in partnership with homeless individuals to put real pressure on the provincial government and if that means occupying provincial offices I would be there in solidarity even if it meant being arrested with people who are homeless. But the solution unfortunately is never going to be simply a municipal solution.

FTT: Any further comments, or anything you’d like to add?

Councillor Louis: I really enjoy your newspaper! That’s the only comment I want to add.

FTT: Thank you very much for this opportunity Tim.

Café Rebelde... Café Rebelde...

Café Rebelde is an opportunity for people to come together to celebrate and unite the various struggles for Social Justice in Latin America. 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 political socialization and participation. Café Rebelde can be defined as a place for conscious leisure.

Café Rebelde es un espacio para que la comunidad pueda celebrar y unir la lucha por la justicia social en Latinoamérica. Es organizado por una coalición de varias organizaciones Latino-canadienses. El proximo café rebelde se llevar a cabo **el 30 de enero de 2004 a las 7pm, en el 706 de la calle Clark esquina Georgia**. El tema ser: presos políticos en diferentes partes del mundo. El objetivo de este proyecto es promover la solidaridad con Latinoamérica. Busca abrir espacios para compartir la cultura latinoamericana y discutir temas de actualidad. Es un espacio para la socialización y participación política. Café Rebelde se puede definir como un lugar para el esparcimiento consciente.

Resisting Imperialist Terrorism

From page 11

The attacks of September 11th were used by the US and Canadian ruling classes to drive racist sentiments up amongst working class people in these countries. Through this racism, the ruling class tried to convince working and poor people in imperialist countries that these 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 Iraq, ‘our’ rights includes the rights of the people of Iraq. The victory of the Iraqi resistance will weaken the ruling classes in the US and Canada and put people in these countries in a better position to struggle for rights here.

In order to develop this movement in the world, poor and working people in Canada, US and other imperialist countries must build the anti-war movement around the model set by the Iraqi resistance. That is a model of unity across race, sex, ethnic, religious and all other divisions against this war and occupation. Luckily, this includes uniting with the most powerful force against US imperialism today: the Iraqi resistance.

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 in order to advance their cause of profit, power and plunder. The only way to fight against terrorism is to fight against 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!

www.fire-this-time.org

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 impulso capitalista por maximizar sus beneficios a expensas de la gente del mundo. Para oponernos a cada uno de estos crímenes contra la humanidad, debemos enfocar todo nuestro trabajo y acción para construir los cimientos para avanzar nuestros intereses en una amplia lucha contra el capital internacional, sus herramientas de división de la clase obrera y sus instituciones locales. El principio fundamental del Movimiento Fire This Time por Justicia Social es la unidad y la solidaridad activa de todos los pobres y gente de trabajo, local e internacionalmente. Debemos reconocer que este principio no tendría sentido sin una lucha activa porque la búsqueda de este principio es agudamente contraria al interés de la clase predominante, los cuales utilizarán todos los medios a su

disposición para mantenernos divididos y hostiles entre nosotros mismos.

Fire This Time es una organización política basada en la acción y comprometida a construir poder social y político de la gente pobre y de trabajo en British Columbia. Creemos que la única manera de desafiar con eficacia y amenazar al gobierno y su agenda corporativa es con la organización de masas de gente activa en lugares de trabajo y en las calles. Estamos dedicados a movilizar y a unificar a gente pobre y de trabajo contra el Gobierno Liberal, sus legislaciones y políticas en contra de los pobres y trabajadores. Estamos comprometidos a organizar con trabajadores y gente pobre de las comunidades más atacadas y explotadas del Lower Mainland y más allá: comunidades de gente de color, inmigrantes, refugiados, “illegales”, trabajadores de bajo-salario, gente lisiada, homosexuales, comunidades indígenas, gente

desempleada y familias de bajos ingresos. Nos oponemos a todas las formas de opresión y de explotación: desde sexismo al racismo, de la homofobia al colonialismo y a el resto de instituciones, de pensamiento, de creencia, de acciones y de los comportamientos que humille y degrade a gente para crear hostilidad y división entre nosotros.

La meta del Movimiento Fire This Time por Justicia Social es construir un amplio movimiento de base para derrotar al gobierno Liberal de BC. Nuestro trabajo es proporcionar las herramientas necesarias para unificar y para activar a la clase obrera en BC., para construir un movimiento amplio de base, fuerte y eficaz para oponernos a los Liberales de BC. y sus ataques contra la gente pobre y trabajadores. Este movimiento debe ser integrado en el contexto revolucionario más amplio de la lucha internacional contra el capitalismo e imperialismo; aunque nos

enfoquemos principalmente en política local, esencialmente el alcance de nuestro trabajo es internacionalista. El apoyo a las luchas de la gente opresa en otros países debilita la hegemonía y el poder de la clase capitalista en otras tierras y por lo tanto debilita su mando local, ayudando así en las batallas de la gente opresa en Canadá. Además, la práctica de la solidaridad internacional solidifica la cooperación, esencial en la construcción de un movimiento del mundo por justicia social. La agenda del Gobierno Liberal es parte de un programa de reestructuración global conocido como neo-liberalismo. Luchar a los Liberales de BC. es luchar contra el neo-liberalismo y capitalismo global. Debemos ampliarnos en esto, implícita y explícitamente para hacer las conexiones relevantes a neustras domésticas luchas diarias, para superar la división geográfica, y dejar en claro que cuando participamos en la lucha, no luchamos solos, sino

junto a millones de trabajadores y de gente pobre alrededor del mundo. En la globalización capitalista - imperialista no hay lucha local que no tenga un carácter internacional. Cada internacional es local y cada local es internacional.

El Movimiento Fire This Time por Justicia Social apoyará y trabajará con otros movimientos y luchas progresivas ya sea por demandas inmediatas o a largo plazo, localmente, nacionalmente e internacionalmente. Nuestra meta principal es abolir la pobreza e injusticia por medio de educación, participación y acción directa. Intentamos alcanzar un nivel colectivo de conciencia que permita a la gente oprimida, pensar socialmente y actuar políticamente para alcanzar justicia social por cualesquiera sean los medios necesarios.

- Translated by Claudio Ekdahl

Stand in Solidarity With Health Care Workers!

From page 2

their jobs in solidarity with the HEU. The BC Teachers Federation announced strike action at many of its locals starting the next day, and at least 15,000 CUPE BC members planned to walk off the job at the same time. CUPE president Barry O'Neill said, "By early next week it's probably going to be the vast majority of our 70,000 members." Electrical workers and Hydro workers throughout the province also talked of taking the same solidarity job action, said Wayne McIvor of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Fifteen thousand CUPE workers walked off the job on Friday April 30th in support of the HEU. The next day, on Mayday, 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 BC Federation of Labour sat in a closed room with the BC Liberals and the executive of the HEU. After a reported 48 hours of discussion, labour and the government reached a deal that forced an important setback on the struggle 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 contract that had been forced on them by the government. They claimed that the deal was a victory for working people in the province. HEU ordered their members back to work 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, Tsawwassen and Victoria. The entire town of Quesnel was shut down. High school students in Prince Rupert with HEU member parents organized a student walk out; but without the active unity of organized working and poor people throughout the province, the actions could not last.

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 make 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?

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 agenda 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 sand 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 leveled 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 against 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 Columbia. We need to take advantage of the opening that has 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 organize, educate and mobilize. WE WILL WIN!



HEU worker at Children's Hospital Picket, May 2nd 2004.

Interview with Fred Muzin continued

From page 6

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 draconian 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 was that we focussed too much on running the bureaucracy, and there's lots of meetings and its a large organization, but we have to re-focus more on communicating and doing member to member communication. We have to spend a lot more time on communication 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 lower mainland 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 kinds of things they want you to do so there's more accountability.

In large organizations there's a lot of bureaucracy and it does tend to tie up a huge amount of your time, so that will be a very very significant change as to how we approach the membership.

It's a good thing we still have the health care system because you look like hell.

F- I caught bronchitis somewhere along the line.

Thanks Fred.

Interviews with HEU Members

From page 9

They say we're the highest paid. We got this through equity ruling and we got this through comparability ruling. That is how we achieved these wages in the first place. It was a female dominated industry and we lost a lot of wages in the last 20-30 years of bargaining. In the last 15 years we went for comparability and equity, giving women the right to do the same type of job for the same money outside of the hospital. Compare the wages of a woman in housekeeping in a hospital to a groundskeeper in Victoria, we want the same 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 earning power against a man's earning power for getting the same job done. We achieved those through the years and now this draconian guy comes along and says, 'well, this female dominated industry isn't worth a shit.' And then he rolls back the wages. He also tells one of the female MLAs to 'fuck 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 that we're feeding here? Because that's the most powerful ego to feed, when you have complete power over a whole province 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 by the HEU?

They're not very happy at all. It's beyond what he's done to us, they need a strike to get rid of their frustrations over all the things that have happened over the last three years. It's not just the HEU having trouble, everyone's having the same trouble.

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 down the tubes.

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 leders want us to, I think the rest of the unions will be fair game for Campbell. he makes the rules, he makes the laws. If he gets away with what he's done with us he'll do it to all the other unions.

How have the cuts to health care up to this point had an effect on you and the people you work with?

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

That has changed the care in the hospitals themselves. It's not like it used to be. it used to be good. We were all together to give the health care, now it's not there. The attitudes of all the people. They're not focussing on the people, they're worried about their jobs.

Thank you.

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Fidel Castro continued

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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 ucases 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 latinoamericanos.

Pero si ese intento de anexión se consumara, 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 por las maquiladoras entre aquellos a quienes la pobreza, el desastre educacional y el desempleo reinantes les impidió obtener 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 encuentran 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 tal vez otra especie inteligente que pueda iniciar de nuevo la aventura que ha vivido la nuestra. El Papa Juan Pablo II ya explicó que la teoría de la evolución no era inconciliable con la doctrina de

la creación.

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 internacionalistas, 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 internacionalistas en cualquier paraje de más de 64 países, proeza humana 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!

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