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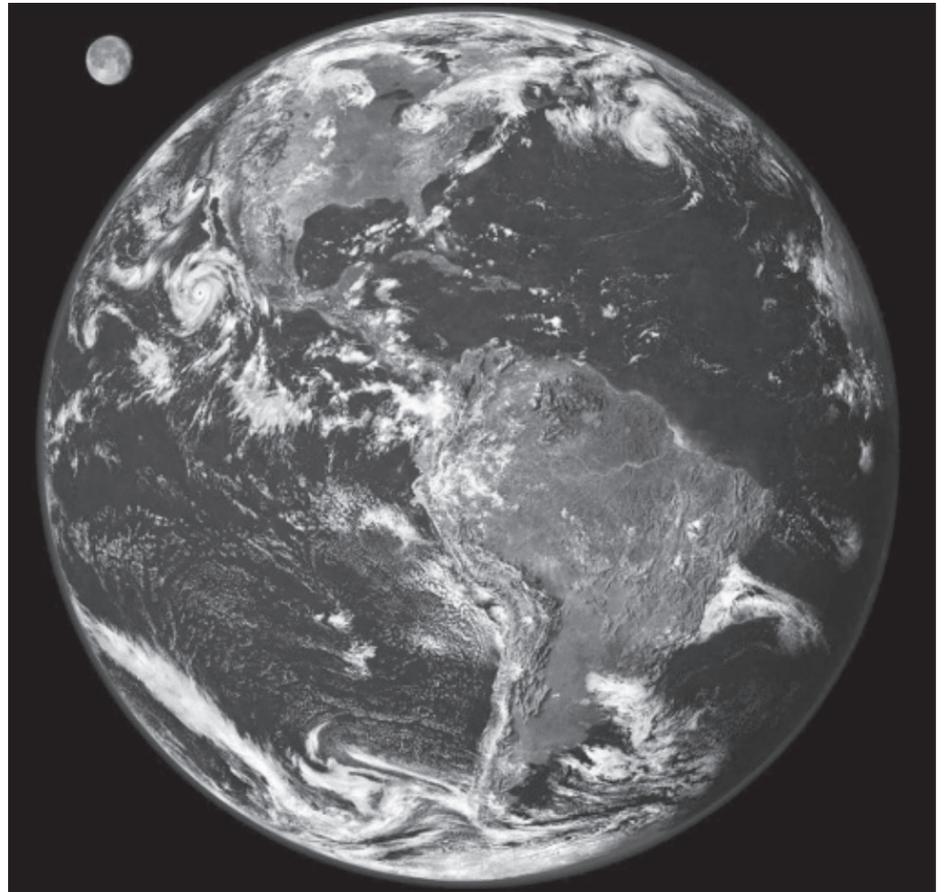
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The UN Special Rapporteur on Occupied Palestine has resigned because Israel refused to give him access to Palestinians living under military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A political viewpoint from the Manitoba election

By **Johan Boyden, Central Organizer, Communist Party of Canada**

Campaigning with our comrades in the Manitoba election, I was struck by the cynicism as voters prepared to go to the ballot on April 19 – or not. After all, at the last election in 2011 which returned an NDP majority, only 56% of Manitobans did find the time to vote.

By the time this People's Voice gets to readers, the election results will be known. Our analysis of the outcome will appear in a later issue. But the voices we heard on the streets sounded something like this: "For the first time in thirty five years, I'm not voting"; "I want nothing to do with the election, they're all rubbish"; "I'm not interested, they're all the same."

Even Dave Sauer, President of the Winnipeg Labour Council, simply appealed to his meeting that, while he knew of many sisters and brothers in the room who had not got what they wanted from the current government, the Tories could be much worse.

Sauer was correct, of course.

But unlike the NDP, the six Communist Party candidates in the Manitoba election were campaigning on a positive message of a pro-people and pro-working class alternative agenda – not just fear.

In the campaign I worked closely on the streets with our new candidates Paula Ducharme and T.J. Petrowski as well as Darrell Rankin, Party leader, and Frank Komarniski, who are both experienced at elections.

Notwithstanding the usual naysayers, once we overcame the election angst, we got a very good response – whether it was campaigning among new parents, students and young workers at River and Osborne, or at the Indigenous Family Centre across from the Bell Tower in the North End. Voters were happy to talk with a working class party that hadn't drunk the Neo-liberal Cool Aid.

Wherever we went, however, there was one election that people in Winnipeg were very keen to discuss: the US primaries. (From what I can tell, Hillary would have a hard battle to win a Manitoba primary – but both Bernie and

Trump certainly have their followers.)

I already knew that film crews shoot movies at the windy corners of Portage and Main to re-create wild scenes of rum-running gangster-era Chicago. But, to be sure, neither interest in the US elections (even overshadowing our own politics in Canada) nor the strong socio-economic links to directly south of the border, are unique to Winnipeg.

Reading the federal budget you get the strong impression that, like the corporate agenda of Harper before Trudeau, the Liberals desire to continue re-orienting the export side of the economy towards the "developing nations," especially the Asia-Pacific region, through the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. But, at the same time, signing the TPP would not be a re-orientation away from the United States.

Chinese economic commentator Wu Sike, writing in the world edition of the Huffington Post, is not the only analyst to describe the TPP as "economic NATO" aimed towards China. He writes how, on the one hand, the TPP creates a



Some of the Communist candidates and campaign workers in Manitoba's April 19 provincial election.

"de-Sinicized' industrial chain" where certain countries provide raw materials, others countries manufacture goods and, in terms of sales and marketing, a zero-tariff zone is created.

On the other hand, Wu Sike says, unlike previous trade deals, the TPP features the opening of the financial sector: "the partnership aims to construct a core financial system that will be dominated by the US dollar, so as to guarantee the future position for the [US] dollar in the world."

Both tactics aim to significantly challenge China.

Interwoven with this mix, and adding pressing energy, is the decline in commodity prices (especially oil and gas) and the continuing slow growth in the Eurozone. Indeed, the global economic crisis is key to unlocking the logic behind the 2016 federal budget, which runs much deeper than just federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau's favorite quotes by the IMF.

For example, take this quote in the Budget, from the IMF and G20: "near term fiscal policy should be more supportive where appropriate and provided there is fiscal space, especially through investment that boosts both the demand and the supply potential of the economy."

The Liberals consider that there

is several billion dollars of "fiscal space," but scientific advances in construction and the post-NAFTA economy means that major infrastructure projects don't hire as many workers as they did sixty years ago. How many jobs will actually be created through the mere \$11.9 billion spent on "social infrastructure"?

And, as we learn now from the Parliamentary Budget Office investigation: are the numbers which the budget is based upon even real?

Meanwhile, people in Manitoba are crying out for affordable housing, more jobs and higher wages. Many, it seems, have a strong gut sense that the Neo-liberal Cool Aid has not been working. No doubt many of the NDP delegates who recently gathered in Edmonton felt the same way, as do supporters of Bernie Saunders — both north and south of the border.

As working class and progressive forces continue to struggle to forge a way forward in the new context of new governments, "TINA" is a fallacy the Communist Party is well suited to combat -- not just in terms of the latest economic crisis, but in regards to the fundamental problems: capitalism and need for socialism. ●

Fund Drive reaches \$22,255

Another \$5273 has arrived towards this year's People's Voice Press Fund Drive since our previous issue. As of April 11, about half-way through our annual campaign, we can report a total of \$22,255, or 44.5% of our \$50,000 target.

We reported last time that the first region to achieve its target is Newfoundland & Labrador, where our amazing supporters have now contributed \$775, almost double their \$400 goal. Moving into second place, our Saskatchewan readers have turned in \$720, which is 20% over their \$600 provincial target. The Nova Scotia/New Brunswick region has raised \$400, which is 67% of their \$600 target, putting them in third place overall. The Editorial Board expresses our deepest appreciation to each of these areas for your solidarity and generosity!

Ontario has pulled ahead of BC for fourth place at this point. With \$10,545 raised, Ontario is at 47.9% of their \$22,000 provincial target. Meanwhile, our British Columbia readers have raised \$9017, or 43% of that province's \$21,000 target. We have also received \$138

from Quebec (27% of their \$500 goal), and \$310 from Alberta, which is 8.8% of their \$3500 target. Our Manitoba readers have been working on the April 19 provincial election, so the Fund Drive there was on hold, but they have raised \$250 (25% of \$1000). Finally, a U.S. supporter has sent another generous \$100 contribution.

As explained in our previous issue, People's Voice has established an e-transfer system with our credit union, allowing any reader with access to Interac banking through your financial institution to send us donations or subscription renewals by email. It's pretty simple: using your online banking arrangement, send funds to <pvoicepayment@gmail.com>, along with your personally-chosen test question. (For example, one supporter who sent a contribution by this method asked us for the capital of the first socialist state.) For the growing number of readers who do most of their banking and bill payments online, this is an easy way to avoid digging through desks and filing cabinets looking for paper cheques. Just remember to include your regular address, and details

regarding how much of your transfer is for renewal or donation. If you have any questions about e-transfer funds, call our office at 604-255-2041, we'll be happy to walk you through the process!

Some British Columbia readers have been calling our office to ask about the dates of press fundraisers. At this point, we can tell you about two of our annual events. This year's traditional Pancake Breakfast will be held on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 9, from 10 to 11:30 am. The price is the same - \$12, or \$6 for children - but the location has changed. Our BC Press Committee is hosting the Breakfast at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver. Call us at 604-255-2041 with any questions. In our next issue we will provide the location of our 24th annual People's Voice Banquet, but we can ask you to hold this date: Saturday, June 11. ●

News for people, not for profits!



Have you sent a donation for our 2016 PV Fund Drive?

Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

Enclosed please find my donation of \$ _____ to the 2016 People's Voice Press Fund Drive.

Name _____

Address _____

City/town _____

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Send your contribution to:

People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1

MAY DAY 2016 GREETING ADS

To mark May Day 2016, People's Voice will print greetings from a wide range of labour and people's organizations in our May 1-15 issue, which will be distributed at events across Canada. The deadline for camera-ready ads will be April 22; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 21. Please check with us about the format if your ad is being sent electronically.

Ad rates (based on 5 column page):

One column-inch.....	\$15
One column x 2 inches.....	\$25
One column x 3 inches.....	\$35
Two columns x 2 inches.....	\$45
Two columns x 3 inches.....	\$60
Two columns x 4 inches.....	\$75
Two columns x 5 inches.....	\$90
Three columns x 4 inches.....	\$110
Two columns x 7 inches.....	\$130
Three columns x 7 inches.....	\$180

**Send greetings to People's Voice at:
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1
E-mail: pvoice@telus.net**

Solidarity with Black Lives Matter and the fight against racist policing in Ontario

PV Ontario Bureau

In recent weeks, public anger against racist actions by Toronto police and anti-Black racism in Ontario has resulted in sustained protests by Black Lives Matter-Toronto. From March 19 to April 4 BLM-TO maintained a Tent City outside Toronto Police Headquarters in the city's downtown.

This action was organized in response to a series of racist developments that occurred in a short space of time. These include the city of Toronto's move to claw back the Afrofest event from two days to one, the slaying of two Black community members, and the decision by the police Special Investigation Unit to not charge the police officers responsible for the separate murders of Andrew Loku and Jermaine Carby. The Tent City quickly attracted support and solidarity from a wide range of labour and progressive activists and organizations, particularly after Toronto police attempted to forcefully disperse the protest.

On April 4, BLM-TO dismantled their Tent City and issued a 300-hour ultimatum to the Toronto police: "We may no longer be present at 40 College, but we have not stopped. To Toronto Police Services and to those in power who are not serving the people - You are on notice. Your anti-blackness has been exposed. We are not done. You have 300 hours to meet the demands of BLM-TO. #BLMTOBLACKCITY? #JermaineCarby? #AndrewLoku?."

Among the supporters of the Tent City was the Communist Party of Canada (Ontario), which issued a statement of full solidarity with the ongoing actions of Black Lives Matter-Toronto and the struggle against racist policing and anti-Black racism in Ontario.

"We salute the recent victories that were a result of a Black Lives Matter-Toronto's March 19th-April 4th Tent City outside Police Headquarters in downtown Toronto. This bold and necessary action resulted in the reinstatement of the full length of Afrofest, which was previously cut in length due to anti-Black racism, and some commitments from Toronto City Hall and the Premier to review the Special Investigation Unit which is supposed to investigate murders, sexual assaults, and assault resulting in serious injuries perpetrated by the police."

The CPC(O) statement notes that "Violence by police, including extreme violence and murder, continues to be a regular occurrence, especially against Black, Indigenous and Trans communities across Ontario. The immoral lack of support for those struggling with mental health also claims many lives when desperate people are shot by police instead of receiving the help they need. Institutionalized police practices of racist harassment in Ontario, especially through "carding" or "street checks", which Queen's Park has decided to regulate instead of eliminate, making the Premier complicit in racial profiling and ongoing systemic



racism.

"When murder does occur and the perpetrator wears a uniform, the system fails to press charges in almost all cases, especially if the victim is a racialized person. This is proven most recently with the murders of Jermaine Carby in Brampton and Andrew Loku in Toronto."

In the statement the CPC(O) reiterated its demand for real civilian control over police in every Ontario jurisdiction, and declared its support for the demands of the movement against racist policing including:

- * That the names of the officers who killed Andrew Loku and Andrew Wettlaufer be made public, that charges be laid and a coroner's inquest take place;
- * That Premier Wynne and Toronto City Hall make good on their promises to review the SIU,

with consultation from Black communities, and that this results in the creation of civilian control over police and that police impunity be ended;

- * That "carding" be fully

eliminated in Ontario in all cases, including the deletion of all previously recorded data, consistent implementation across different police boards, and concrete disciplinary measures for officers who continue to card.

Black Lives Matter – Toronto has shown that unity and militancy can win, even in the face of police repression, cold weather, racist media reports, and intimidation from the racist far-right. This is a struggle that involves broad sections of the Black community in Toronto, and its allies in the labour movement, student movement, Indigenous organizations and many other progressive organizations.

The struggle against racism, and for equality and justice, will continue. With increasing and broadening active support, it is a struggle that will achieve many more victories. ●

Covered Bridge workers gain support

As the strike by UFCW Canada Local 1288P members at Covered Bridge Potato Chips holds strong, thousands of activists from around the world are adding their voices to the call for a fair first contract at the snack food processor. The workers at Covered Bridge, located in Hartland, New Brunswick, went on strike January 5, after the company continued to refuse bargaining for a fair first contract, with a living wage and basic workplace rights including seniority. Workers voted to join the union more than two years ago. Since then, the company has violated the province's Labour Act five times, and has been ordered to stop intimidating union supporters.

A leafleting, web, social media, and radio campaign across the Atlantic region has cut into sales, as consumers, retailers, bars, restaurants, and campuses refuse to purchase Covered Bridge Potato Chips until the strike is over. Add your support to the "Campaign for Fairness at Covered Bridge" by visiting ufcw.ca/coveredbridge. ●

Environmental crisis and the working class

The 38th Central Convention of the Communist Party of Canada will be held on the May 21-23 weekend in Toronto. People's Voice is reprinting brief excerpts from the Draft Political Resolution for the Convention. We invite readers to read the complete Draft online, at www.comunist-party.ca, and to share your views. This issue features paragraphs dealing with the environmental crisis and the working class.

A second key feature of the current international situation is the deepening global environmental crisis. In all countries, the working class and people experience the symptoms of rapidly approaching environmental disaster—carbon emissions, global warming and climate change, food scarcities, deforestation, toxic water and lands, fracking-related earthquakes, threats to biodiversity, melting polar ice caps and sea level changes. Tens of millions of refugees and migrants—the highest numbers since the Second World War—are fleeing ecological crises and armed conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, sub-Saharan Africa and other areas.

The 2015 COP21 Climate Change Conference in Paris was a focal point for world attention and hope that climate change would be reduced through mutual action of the states of the world. The outcome was disappointing—no legally binding emissions limits; no commitments from developed countries to adequately fund mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions by renewable energy and halting deforestation) or adaptation (preparing for future

climate change by improving infrastructure and techniques); no legal liability for developed countries to pay for loss and damage; no full inclusion of human rights, particularly those of Indigenous peoples; and no protection from investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) challenges, which undermine climate actions (policies, regulations, legislation) that would impact future corporate profits.

At the same time, while trade trumped action at the COP21 table, action trumped legislation on the streets of Paris. In defiance of bans on public demonstrations and a state of emergency, thousands of protesters gathered to demand a halt to climate change. These rallies were matched by more than 2500 demonstrations worldwide, including 45,000 people in Sydney, Australia, 50,000 in London, England and 25,000 at the 100% Possible March in Ottawa.

The COP21 conference demonstrates two realities of climate change and the overall environmental crisis. On the one hand, corporations and imperialist governments are consistently working to undermine action for environmental security and

sustainability, because they realize it is a barrier to maximizing profit and power. On the other hand, the working class and peoples of the world increasingly recognize that this corporate agenda is incompatible with their interests, and they are prepared to mobilize on a worldwide scale.

In Canada, the Harper Tories assumed an outright aggressive view toward the environmental movement. This was especially true with respect to the tar sands and pipelines developments domestically, and mining interests internationally. The Tories' notorious, and repeated, statements that anti-pipeline and anti-tar sands activists posed security and terrorist threats reveals the depth of the contradiction between the corporate drive for profit and environmental sustainability.

While Justin Trudeau has indicated that he wants to consult and engage Indigenous and community opponents of the tar sands and pipeline projects, he is very clear that he supports their continued development. Our Party will continue to support the Indigenous and environmental organizations—including the Idle



No More movement and the Council of Canadians—who have been mobilizing against these destructive projects. Furthermore, we will step up our efforts to promote the urgent need for public ownership and democratic control of energy resources and industries, as outlined in our People's Energy Plan for Canada.

Although the communist movement has not always placed the environment as one of its central issues, the revolutionary working class analysis of the environment has continued to develop since the earliest days of the communist movement. In 1876, Frederick Engels wrote: "With

every day that passes we are acquiring a better understanding of these laws [of nature] and getting to perceive both the more immediate and the more remote consequences of our interference with the traditional course of nature. In particular, after the mighty advances made by the natural sciences in the present century, we are more than ever in a position to realise, and hence to control, also the more remote natural consequences of at least our day-to-day production activities."

As the global environmental crisis continues to deepen, humanity is increasingly faced with a stark choice. We can continue with the current socio-economic system that jeopardizes the environment in its pursuit of profit. Or, we can switch course to a new system that rejects the logic of capitalist accumulation and militarism, and instead promotes equitable and sustainable development that is in balance with the environment.

The struggle for environmental sustainability is urgent and building. It is interconnected with the fight against imperialist militarism and war. Coming out of this convention, our Party commits to engaging and building this struggle in Canada, and projecting a transformative, socialist vision into the environmentalist movement. ●

EDITORIALS

Earth Day and the working class

First celebrated in 1970, Earth Day is officially marked on April 22, although thousands of related global events take place throughout the month. Nearly half a century later, the threat of environmental disaster has become increasingly serious. Carbon emissions have grown rapidly, bringing the consequences of global warming and climate change, rising sea levels, famines, deforestation, and the most rapid loss of species diversity in the history of our planet. Ecological crises are a critical factor in the spread of armed conflicts in many countries, forcing tens of millions of people to become refugees and migrants.

But while this crisis is almost universally recognized, the political will to tackle the issue remains severely limited by the power of the transnational energy monopolies. To greenwash their deadly track record, many of these companies donate to Earth Day activities, even as they resist serious action at events such as last December's COP21 Climate Change Conference. The outcome in Paris fell far short of expectations, with no guarantees for the rights of Indigenous peoples, and no protection from investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) clauses in corporate deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Despite the "green" rhetoric, capitalist interests and pro-austerity politicians remain the major roadblock against putting the interests of people and nature ahead of private profits.

The corporate agenda, and capitalism itself, are incompatible with the interests of the working class and peoples of the world, who are increasingly taking action to achieve environmental justice and global sustainability. We need a new system, one which rejects the logic of capitalist accumulation and militarism, and instead promotes equitable and sustainable development in balance with the environment. The environmental movement itself requires a socialist vision and working class leadership to move towards the sweeping transformation of the global economy which is so desperately required to save our common future.

Solidarity with Postal Workers

It looks like Canada Post and the new Liberal government are gearing up to take yet another run at the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. We urge full solidarity with CUPW in this critical struggle to defend jobs and public services.

Negotiations for a new collective agreement had barely started when Canada Post filed for conciliation, preparing to push matters to a head. The union warns that the crown corporation refused to even consider its proposals, instead putting a huge list of concessions on the table, including rollbacks on pensions, benefits, job security, leave time, vacations, and much more. Rural and suburban mail carriers would be denied leave during November and December, and temp workers face a pay freeze and a cut in vacation pay. Cheaper labour and temp workers would be hired for the parcel delivery business, and mail carriers would be forced to deliver heavier unaddressed airmail pieces in a shorter time. Canada Post even wants to remove the right of mail carriers to have a place to wash their hands, use the washroom and get a drink on our meal breaks. The list goes on and on, ad nauseum. Readers can see the entire shocking list at the union's website, www.cupw.ca

But many previous federal governments have tried and failed to smash the Postal Workers and to impose sweeping concession demands on its members. This attempt will also meet powerful resistance from one of the most militant and progressive unions in the country, and from its allies in the rest of the labour movement and the general public. PV readers can help by contacting your MPs with a resounding demand to force Canada Post to negotiate a fair collective agreement, and to restore urban mail delivery put under the ax by the defeated Tory government.

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LETTERS

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706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1 or
pvoice@telus.net

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Ecuador's President demands release of all the Panama Papers

The Panama Papers, confidential files from the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca, were leaked on April 3, ensnaring high-level Latin American politicians in a sprawling tax evasion scandal.

Among the politicians implicated are Argentine President Mauricio Macri, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, Peruvian presidential front-runner Keiko Fujimori and Brazilian lawmaker Eduardo Cunha, who is leading a fierce attempt to impeach President Dilma Rousseff.

The set of over 11.5 million documents links the influential politicians in a scam to hide assets in shell companies and offshore tax havens, further entrenching the region in an ever-growing web of corruption.

One of the most shocking revelations is that U.S. protected multinationals and many of their allies around the world have US\$32 trillion in tax havens. The leaked documents identify at least 12 heads of state among 143 politicians from 50 countries, their families and close associates who have been using offshore societies located in 21 tax havens.

Meanwhile, Ecuador's President Rafael Correa took to Twitter on April 10, challenging journalists to release all of the documents that link influential people and politicians in a scam to hide assets in shell companies and offshore tax havens.

"We must make a global

campaign to loosen ALL the 'Panama papers,'" Correa tweeted.

Correa referenced an investigation by the local daily El Telegrafo, which found that prominent figures in Ecuador's opposition, including Guayaquil Mayor Jaime Nebot and opposition legislator Andres Paez, were linked to companies registered in Panama.

Paez's brother, Alvaro Paez has 25% of the shares in the Metrovalores Casa de Valores SA, whose main shareholder incorporated in Panama. Jose Nebot Saadi, brother of the long-time Guayaquil Mayor, was president and director of Summa Financial Corporation, which was dissolved in 2002.

However the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which lead the investigation in conjunction with select journalists from dozens of countries, has so far released only 3 names of Ecuadoreans accused of involvement in the scandal: current Attorney General, Galo Chiriboga; former president of the Central Bank of Ecuador, Pedro Delgado; and Javier Molina, an ex-member of the National Intelligence Secretariat.

Marina Walker, coordinator of research ICIJ said that "all the names" would be published in early May. Days later, ICIJ director Gerard Ryle told Wired that they have no plans to release the entire database Mossack Fonseca.

According to Correa, the Ecuadorean journalists involved - all linked to right-wing publications - had the documents for close to a year, and had yet "not found anything."

"They spent almost a year looking for something against the Ecuadorean government and found nothing."

Since its release on April 3, the allegations of corruption and tax evasion have rocked numerous government and has already forced the exit of Iceland's Prime Minister, Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson. However only a small portion of the 11.5 million documents - 2.6 terabytesworth of information drawn from Mossack Fonseca's internal database - have been released, and only certain publications have been able to access the documents.

Whistleblowers Wikileaks are among those who have criticized the form in which the ICIJ has handled the release of information.

Correa, who is known for his blunt criticism of media bias, called on citizens to demand the release of the documents.

"Now it's up to the citizens: let's demand all the information. The 'selective' fight against corruption is just ... more corruption!," Correa concluded.

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Disposable law, disposable workers, disposable morality

By Sam Hammond

William Shakespeare drew extensively on a couple of thousand years of ruling class mayhem intrigue and murder for his story line in dozens of masterful literary works. One can only wonder what he could have done with modern politics. Imagine Shakespeare as an observer to the Brian Mulroney/Karlheinz Schreiber handover of bags of cash money in hotel rooms, or the shift of Air Canada maintenance jobs to Israel a year after Stephen Harper (accompanied by an Air Canada CEO) made a state visit. Corruption, apparently, is the result of coincidence and even government inquiries have conveniently failed to find the relationship between the hand and the cookie jar.

Air Canada has been in and out of that cookie jar so many times it is just plain confusing. Trans Canada Airlines, TCA, was created by government request under the management of Canadian National Railways, then a Crown Corporation, in 1937. It morphed into Air Canada, still a Crown Corporation, in 1965. It was privatized in 1989 under the Mulroney government. To set the stage for this Mulroney in 1986 fired the entire management team and replaced them with his own choices. The backroom boys were now in the parlor, or the cockpit.

The 1988 Air Canada Public Participation Act (ACPPA) set out the conditions for the privatization of Air Canada. The dirty deed couldn't be done without at least a modicum of recognition to jobs, language and national economies. The ACPPA ensured that Air Canada would continue to operate in both French and English by making the newly privatized corporation subject to the Official Languages Act (the OLA). A further provision required Air Canada to maintain its head office in Montréal, and operational centres in Winnipeg, Montréal, and Mississauga. The majority of its

maintenance workers were in Montreal.

The privatization took place in 1989 with the government predictably absorbing large debt and selling for a bargain basement price, but that is another story.

How we see it...

Because of the ACPPA Air Canada was subject to the Official Languages Act in its entirety. The Act compelled Air Canada not only to provide communications and service to the public in both official languages, but also to maintain a bilingual workplace. In addition, Air Canada is subject to provisions that ensure equal opportunities for employment and advancement, as well as a requirement that its workforce reflect the presence of both official language communities. The importance of this Act to workers, especially to Franco-phone workers, and their unions is apparent.

In 1968, when it was still publicly owned, Air Canada created Air Canada Technical Services (ACTS) a subsidiary under the ACPPA to handle its maintenance. By this time it had added maintenance workers in Vancouver to its Montreal, Mississauga and Winnipeg facilities. In total more than 4000 highly skilled maintenance workers were involved, probably about 3000 of them in Montreal and all represented by the Machinists Union. By 2003 the new owners, venture capitalists and number crunching corporate plunder specialists, had managed to drive Air Canada into Bankruptcy Protection, which put restructuring in the hands of the courts and opened up the opportunity for a cabal to gain control under the umbrella name of Ace Aviation Holdings. In 2005 Ace Aviation

holdings moved its maintenance ACTS subsidiary into membership with a group of international companies called Airbus MRO Network. This was still under, and in compliance with the ACCPA; the jobs were still protected in Canada and the Official Languages Act was still in force. ACTS was still owned by Air Canada but taking part in a consortium. When the name "Airbus" comes up the image of Mulroney and bags of cash appropriately flashes on the screen.

ACTS is by 2005 a separate but wholly owned division of ACE Aviation Holdings/Air Canada and a member of a consortium called Airbus MRO Network. The stage is set for an end run around Parliament and the ACCPA; the Machinists Union is uneasy and the corporate chess players are ready to move some pieces.

In 2007 ACTS purchases 80% of the shares of an aircraft maintenance company called AEROMAN, located in San Salvador and doing maintenance for TACA Airlines. The Machinists Union sounds the warning bell. This could lead to shipping Air Canada maintenance jobs offshore, in violation of ACCPA. Within months ACTS is acquired by 70% US investors and changes its name to AVEOS. Air Canada acquires a minority interest in AVEOS and AEROMAN is separated into a stand-alone company.

In 2011 about 2600 Air Canada maintenance workers are transferred to AVEOS, despite a legal challenge by the Machinists Union to prevent this transfer. Slowly but surely Air Canada started taking maintenance work away from AVEOS and sending it to Germany, China and El Salvador. About 90% of AVEOS work was from Air Canada, and its disbursement offshore, in direct violation of ACPPA, caused AVEOS to file for bankruptcy in 2012 and put 2600 workers on the street. In January 2014, the Air Canada CEO accompanied

Stephen Harper on the PM's official visit to Israel. A year later, Air Canada signed a maintenance deal with Israel Aerospace Industries, a company wholly owned by the government of Israel.

The Attorney General of Canada filed a law suit against Air Canada for breaching the ACPPA, and in February 2013 the Quebec Superior Court found Air Canada guilty of violating the Act. In December 2015 the Quebec Court of Appeal upheld the decision. The governments of Quebec and Manitoba joined in litigation against Air Canada with the two Quebec Court decisions under their belt, but in February 2016 the Quebec government dropped their litigation when Air Canada announced it would purchase 45 planes from Bombardier. The Manitoba government dropped its litigation when Air Canada promised to expand jobs in Manitoba.

Georges Bujold of the Machinists Union, with the wisdom gained from many battles, warned his members that Air Canada would drag the issue to the Supreme Court and it could take years for a decision. The question on everyone's mind is, what will the Federal Government do? Will they modify the Act? Well here's the answer and it didn't take years. On March 24, the Federal Minister of Transport, Marc Garneau, filed

a bill that modifies the ACPPA and eases Air Canada's obligations in respect to jobs and conditions of work that the airline previously had to maintain in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

Previously in February, in a letter to the Minister, Dave Ritchie, Vice President of the Machinists Union had this to say; "This would allow Air Canada to circumvent the recent decision of the Quebec Court of Appeal on this issue, based only on Air Canada's vague promise to have some of its maintenance work performed in Quebec at some point in the future, if it proceeds with its order to purchase Bombardier C-Series aircraft." Absolutely correct, but correct, militant, vigilant and tenacious the Machinists have been for decades in defense of their members and parliamentary democracy.

The Tories refuse to enforce an act of Parliament and the Liberals decide the violations can be handled by conveniently changing the ACPPA to bring it in line with the corporate agenda. Apparently the rule of law is a casual affair for the smiling young Trudeau, and the dispersal of Canadian jobs to El Salvador, Israel and Europe is part of the new agenda. TPP anyone?

- Sam Hammond is a member of the Communist Party's Central Executive Committee. ●



Gerardo Hernández welcomed to Toronto

Text of greeting delivered by Miguel Figueroa, on behalf of the Communist Party of Canada, at an April 3 public meeting in Toronto to welcome Gerardo Hernández, one of the Cuban Five heroes. The event was held at the Steelworkers Hall, with over 250 attending. Gerardo was also welcomed at events in Montreal and Vancouver in early April.

Good afternoon everyone. On behalf of the Communist Party of Canada, its Central Committee and Cuba Bureau, we join in welcoming compañero Gerardo to Toronto and wish him a most successful and enjoyable visit to our country. We have waiting a very long time for this day – and not waiting in a passive sense, but



Miguel Figueroa

rather working very hard to see this day. And now you are finally here!

This moment is sweeter than any of us could have imagined. In September 2012, the Friends of the Cuban Five and other organizations collaborated to organize a Peoples' Tribunal & Assembly on the case. Several prominent Cuban and other international guests participated.

I would like to share with you a few lines from the Tribunal's final declaration: "Despite all of the obstacles prolonging the injustice against the Cuban Five, we are not discouraged. We remain steadfast in our knowledge of the rightness of this cause, convinced that truth and justice will ultimately triumph. We draw strength from the victories – large and small, and are renewed by every solidarity initiative which helps spread

awareness and build support for this struggle. Most of all, we are inspired by the Cuban Five themselves, by the remarkable courage and grace they have maintained through all they have endured over their long period of incarceration. We leave this Tribunal with a renewed sense of

urgency, to broaden and deepen our solidarity. We will not be deterred. We will never give up this just fight."

It has been more than 15 months since the last of the Cuban heroes were liberated from their long ordeal, but this victory is still fresh in our minds. We acknowledge

and thank all those thousands upon thousands across Canada who helped – by joining local committees, coming out to public rallies, walking on picket lines, writing letters and passing resolutions. Here in Toronto, we should especially thank three activists – three remarkable women – for all their work on behalf of the Five: they are in no particular order because they all worked incredibly hard for many years – Heide Trampus, Lisa Makarchuk, and Elizabeth Hill.

Together, across Canada and around the world, we helped the Cuban government and people to secure this victory, and to force U.S. imperialism to finally abandon its vicious, unjust and immoral efforts to strangle the Cuban Revolution and the principles for which it stands. More work remains however – to end the blockade completely, and to repatriate Guantanamo to the Cuban people, but we are confident that these triumphs will come as well.

Long live free, sovereign and socialist Cuba! ●



Gerardo Hernández, one of the Cuban Five heroes. at the Steelworkers Hall in Toronto. PV photo by Ed Bil

Trans-Pacific Partnership: devil is in the details

Commentary by Celia Wexler of the Center for Science & Democracy, posted by the Union of Concerned Scientists, <http://blog.ucsusa.org>

Finally, after six years of negotiation, and a final agreement reached late last year, the massive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal is making the headlines.

Negotiated in secret, its text considered classified information that limited access even to members of Congress, the TPP largely has been influenced by a small group of trade advisors, most of whom represent corporations or business trade groups.

While it has been agreed to by the U.S. and 11 Pacific Rim nations, TPP can't move forward without the approval of Congress. Members of Congress who support the deal, including House Majority Leader Paul Ryan, are reluctant to bring it up for a vote until they are sure it will pass. Recent polls show public wariness about trade and its benefits.

When TPP does come up for a vote, perhaps not until after the election, it will pass under a "fast-track" process Congress approved last year. The deal can't be amended, and can be passed with just 51 votes in the Senate, escaping the threat of a filibuster, which would require 60 votes.

Why is TPP getting so much push-back? The mainstream media mostly has termed this a fight between labour and business over jobs, and whether this trade deal will be good for workers. But now that the public finally has access to the full text of the sprawling agreement, more than 5,000 pages in length, it's clear that there are other reasons that TPP has raised

so many concerns among those who care about the environmental, public health and safety, and addressing climate change.

Looking under the hood

The TPP has been agreed to by the U.S. and Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. Together these 12 countries comprise 40 percent of the world's GDP, and 30 percent of global trade. Its 30 chapters detail agreements on scores of separate issues, ranging from food safety to protection of endangered species and federal procurement policies.

The U.S. Trade Representative hailed the agreement because it "advances both our interests and our values abroad." But the devil in such a wide-ranging treaty is in the details, and the details have raised a number of concerns. It is not enough to look at individual chapters of the deal, you have to look at those chapters in the context of the entire agreement.

Take the TPP's environmental chapter. A few environmental groups, including the World Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservancy, have praised the TPP's environmental chapter. WWF stated that its "conservation commitments ... could be game changers." But WWF went on to say that whether the commitments worked would depend on going "beyond good words and intentions in the agreement to support and implement effective environmental protections as TPP requires."

However, the BlueGreen Alliance, Natural Resources Defense Council and the Sierra

Club all have opposed the TPP, and contend that the treaty fails to protect the environment.

They argue that while the environment chapter is big on lofty goals, and asks member nations to make efforts to improve their protections of endangered flora and fauna, it largely fails to impose strong, enforceable environmental requirements.

The future of science-informed regulation

While the TPP will reduce tariffs, this trade negotiation also is valuable to multinational corporations primarily because it promises to eliminate what many members of the public consider crucial regulations to protect public health and safety and the environment, but what businesses often consider "trade barriers." Business groups have actively promoted efforts to "harmonize" regulations, with the aim of reducing the cost of compliance.

The TPP creates a regulatory cooperation council that in theory will bring together regulators from 12 trade partners to discuss strategies to "harmonize" their



public health and safety, worker and environmental regulations. In theory, this could raise the standards of all nations. But when you read the chapter on regulatory cooperation, it is clear that better standards will not be the goal of such a council. Instead, regulators will be asked to assess their rules based on whether they help or harm trade, and conform to "good regulatory practices."

"Good regulatory practices" as defined by the TPP means a regulatory process that considers the cost of compliance along with the benefits, even though cost-benefit analysis is likely to exaggerate the costs of compliance, since those costs are provided by regulated industries, and minimize the value of benefits in terms of protecting public health and safety and the environment, which often are much harder to quantify. What is the monetary value of IQ points lost to lead poisoning, or a childhood free of asthma attacks?

"Good regulatory practices" also means considering alternatives to regulation that might be friendlier to business, and giving regulated industries the opportunity to comment on proposed rules. Another benchmark for good practices is whether a nation periodically reviews existing rules with an eye to cutting or relaxing them.

This focus on making regulations work for business raises serious questions: Will our science-informed regulations that protect us from tainted food, unsafe drugs and medical devices, defective consumer products, and polluted air and water be weakened and compromised in the future?

If regulators have to consider the impact of rules on trade, and if their approaches are monitored by an extra-national body, at the very least, this could delay needed regulations, and may discourage strong regulations that benefit the public.

Impact on fossil fuel use

The deal opens the door to unrestricted exports of natural gas from the U.S. to Japan, now the largest importer of natural gas in the world. Vietnam also is interested in natural gas.

Canada also will be able to export "billions of dollars" worth of crude oil to the U.S. without paying duties. This not only encourages more use of fossil fuels, but will make it more difficult for nations to address climate change by transitioning to renewable energy and reducing energy consumption.

Malaysia is a party to the TPP, and it is likely that will encourage the export of palm oil from that

country. This increase in demand could exacerbate the problem of palm oil plantations that expand by using fire to clear forests, adding to carbon emissions, and harming public health. Deforestation also contributes to global warming.

Investor State Dispute Settlement and climate change

The TPP also will permit a foreign corporation that feels a state, local or national government has taken an action that unfairly harms its profitability to bypass domestic courts and sue for damages before an international tribunal. Since the TPP partners have 9,000 subsidiaries in the U.S., the potential for a trade suit is quite high.

ISDS lawsuits have grown substantially over the past several years, and America's exposure to suits through the TPP now has been roughly doubled.

A lawsuit under ISDS doesn't force a country to change its laws or regulations, but it can have a chilling effect. Faced with the pressure of multi-billion-dollar damages, countries or state and local governments may think twice before imposing strong protective environmental and public health standards. When threatened by a lawsuit, they may settle by relaxing those standards.

ISDS also may have a profound effect on state and regional agreements to address climate change. A foreign corporation that believes its profits have been harmed by policies to address climate change can bypass domestic courts and sue in an international three-person ISDS tribunal. The judges come from the arcane world of international trade, many of them trade lawyers with ties to corporations.

Late last year, when the Obama Administration cancelled TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline project, the company used the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to sue the U.S. under ISDS, asking for \$15 billion in damages.

Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer (CA) has raised concerns that her state's landmark AB 32 law, which commits the state to sharply cutting its carbon pollution, could be sued under ISDS.

For Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren, ISDS alone is reason enough to oppose the TPP. The trade deal as drafted, and unable to be revised by Congress, she writes, will make things "more dangerous for American families."

Nobel-prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz agrees. The TPP, he writes, "may turn out to be the worst trade agreement in decades." ●



Liberals shouldn't back Harper's TPP deal, says CUPE

From the Canadian Union of Public Employees, <https://cupe.ca>

The massive Trans-Pacific Partnership puts corporations, not Canadians, first and the federal Liberal government should not sign it.

The deal was reached in the dying days of the Harper Conservative government and during a federal election. The full text was only made public in November. The new government is still analyzing the 6,000-page text and has yet to carry out an economic impact assessment. So why the rush to sign?

"You or I would never sign a contract without reading the fine print," says CUPE National President Mark Hancock. "But that's exactly what the Liberals are about to do. It's a serious mistake that will have consequences for decades to come."

What we already know about the TPP is bad news.

The TPP gives new rights to the world's richest corporations, while workers and the environment lose ground. The deal supports privatization, will drive down wages, and increases the cost of health care and education. A recent study shows Canada will lose at least 58,000 jobs in the first decade under the TPP.

Independent analysis confirms the TPP is not about helping Canadian exports – 97 per cent of our exports to TPP countries are already duty-free.

The TPP extends the length of patents on prescription drugs – a move that could cost our health care system up to \$630 million a year, and is a major roadblock to a universal national prescription drug program. The TPP's longer and stricter copyright protections could mean higher costs for schools, universities and libraries.

The TPP's investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) system will let foreign corporations sue governments if a law or regulation

interferes with their investments – and profits. Under these NAFTA-style rules, Canada is already the most-sued developed country.

"Governments, not corporations, should set our country's laws and policies. The TPP stands in the way of immediate and bold action on climate change," says CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury.

The Harper government tried to buy its way around some of the deal's consequences, promising billions in compensation for auto parts makers, as well as dairy, egg and chicken farmers. And the full social and economic costs of the TPP are only now being tallied.

"The TPP is a corporate rights deal. It rewrites laws and regulations in the interests of big business, at the expense of citizens and the environment," says Hancock. "Canada should not sign this dangerous deal." ●

The Single Payer Movement in the US is growing

By Kay Tillow

The private, for-profit insurance industry controls the health care system in the United States. That fact is at the heart of our high costs and lack of care. The US is the only industrialized country that has not yet moved to a system of universal healthcare. That failure takes a toll on our health, our lives, our economy. The US pays over \$9,000 per capita annually for health care yet the median for the countries that make up the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development is under \$4,000.

In the US, we pay more but get less. We rank 19th out of 19 countries in preventing deaths due to causes that were amenable to medical care. The US does poorly in life expectancy — 43rd in rank among the countries of the world. Our infant mortality rate puts us at 38th behind all the other wealthy nations. The US rate for maternal mortality is 14 per 100,000 live births. Canada's is 7.

In 2009 as the Obama administration prepared the health care reform bill, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), single payer activists organized demonstrations. Thousands protested and held "sit-ins" at insurance companies across the country. Many went to jail. Senator Max Baucus, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, ordered the arrest of single payer activists who attempted to speak. Single payer was banned from the nation's discussion. There was already a deal in place. Private insurance companies would be assured billions in public money to subsidize the purchase of health care by those who could not afford it. The drug companies would be guaranteed massive profits in return for minor concessions.

Money flowed, mostly from foundations, to support those groups who would stand for health care reform but against single payer. The ACA, basically a Republican plan originating with the right-wing Heritage Foundation, has mandates to force employers and individuals to buy insurance. It was passed by the Democrats with no Republican votes.

Despite passage of the ACA,

vast inequalities persist. African Americans are much more likely to be uninsured and to die younger. Undocumented immigrants are banned from purchasing health insurance in the exchanges. Women who work for employers whose workforce is predominately female are still charged higher prices for health coverage. Insurers who sell on the exchanges can charge up to three times the regular premium because of age. The drugs and care crucial to those with AIDS, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, leukemia, cancer, mental health and a host of other problems can be priced beyond the reach of patients. Discrimination has not ended.

Premiums rise by double digits. Deductibles, the amount the patient must pay each year before the insurer pays, are now in the thousands of dollars. Insurance is no longer a guarantee against bankruptcy. Doctors and hospitals are off limits in the networks set up by the insurers. The insurance company determines what doctor or hospital a patient can use, and can deny care if it disagrees with the physician.

In December 2015 the Kaiser Tracking Poll reported that 46% of the population views the ACA as unfavourable while 40% view it favourably. That is not all attributable to the crazed campaign of misinformation perpetrated by the right. The very real problems

that were not solved by the law plague us with differing impacts on various strata, but leaving no one truly protected.

While it is true that the ACA expanded coverage to include an additional 18 million people, we are still left with 30 million uninsured. That fact alone causes 30,000 unnecessary deaths per year. Further, because costs of premiums, deductibles, and co-pays have shifted the burden to patients, 25% of those who have insurance either delay or forgo care because of cost. That figure goes up to 46% for those with low incomes.

In 2003 the Physicians for a National Health Program published their proposal for national single payer health care in the Journal of the American Medical Association. It was signed by 8,000 physicians. That same year the proposal was introduced as legislation into the House of Representatives by Rep. John Conyers, Jr., Democrat from Michigan. He has reintroduced that bill, HR 676, into the House every two years since. Subtitled "Expanded and Improved Medicare for All," it has 62 out of 435 representatives signed on as cosponsors.

The bill guarantees coverage for everyone through a publicly funded single payer system. All necessary medical care would be covered including physicians,



hospitals, therapies, dental, eyeglasses, hearing aids, mental health, drugs, and long term care with no co-pays, no premiums, no deductibles. It would remove the barriers to care, ban for-profit insurance companies, hospitals and nursing homes, and use the system's buying power to force down drug prices.

HR 676 has been endorsed by 624 union organizations, including 44 State AFL-CIO federations, 157 Central Labour Councils, and many national unions, locals and district labour organizations. As a result of this grassroots effort, the national AFL-CIO endorsed HR 676 in 2009.

The single payer movement works to win support from cities, counties, state legislatures and other political bodies. The Houses of Representatives in Kentucky, New York, New Hampshire, and Maine endorsed HR 676. So did the city councils of Philadelphia, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Tuskegee, Louisville and many more.

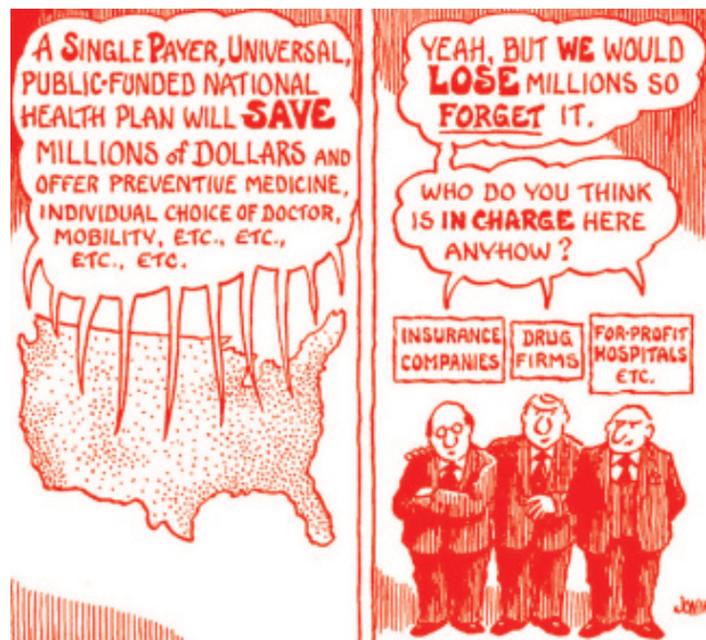
There are single payer organizations in at least 43 states, educating, making public presentations, speaking on radio and TV, and protesting. Each year in July, celebrations of the anniversary of Medicare held in scores of cities demand to improve it and expand it to everyone. Recently 170 medical students from 50 schools met in Nashville to promote single payer and to build their organization, Students for a National Health Program.

The single payer movement rests on majority opinion that all

people should get the care they need, and that the responsibility rests with the government to assure that happens. The December 2015 Kaiser poll showed that 58% want a Medicare for All — an expansion of the country's single payer program for the elderly to everyone. Over 81% of Democrats agree with this. So do 60% of independents and even 30% of Republicans. The single payer movement seeks to turn popular will into political reality.

Democratic Presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders' support for national single payer health care has given the issue new media prominence. When Sanders speaks of single payer, the crowds roar their approval. The issue will not go away. The average annual cost for family employer-based health insurance is over \$17,500. The worker must pay \$5,000 of that; about \$100 is deducted from the paycheck each week before he or she ever sees it. That just covers the premium — thousands more must be paid if anyone in the family really gets sick.

Marcia Angell, MD, former editor of the New England Journal of Medicine, says that under the current market-based system, the US cannot simultaneously improve care and lower costs. Improving care costs more. Cutting costs cuts care. To change those dynamics, we must remove the cause of the problem — the profit-based insurance companies. That will allow us to apply the savings to extending care to everyone and improving it for all. ●



"Unpaid, unequal, undervalued" - new report on women's work and wages

Women are unpaid, undervalued and unequal, says a new report published by Oxfam Canada and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

The recovery that followed the 2008 financial crisis has not benefited everyone equally. To respond to increasingly slow growth today, we need to understand how inequality is putting the brakes on our economy. "Making Women Count" looks at how women in Canada and around the world are affected by rising inequality, including the burden of unpaid work, the undervaluing of work in predominantly female fields, and the unspoken social norms that see men offered higher wages and rates of promotion

than women.

Brittany Lambert, Policy Advisor for Oxfam Canada, said: "Women make up some of the poorest and lowest paid workers in the global economy. And as our report shows, women are doing more and more work to grow countries' economies without seeing equal benefits."

Kate McInturff, Senior Researcher at the CCPA, said: "Social inequality has become a perverse benefit in our upside down world — where the fact that women are paid less than men is good for profits. It's clear from our research that global economic growth is not leading to gender equality."

"In a world where so many women are still left behind, addressing the unequal economics

of women's work will have a transformative impact on our economy," McInturff added.

Oxfam Canada and the CCPA's research shows that women continue to bear the burden of unpaid work. In low and middle-income countries, women spend three times as many hours as men on unpaid care work each day. The situation in Canada is only slightly better, with women performing



nearly twice as many hours of unpaid work each day as do men.

In spite of high levels of education among girls and women, the wage gap in Canada is getting bigger, not smaller. In 2009, women earned 74.4% of what men earned, in 2011 it was 72%. The gap is worse for marginalized women, including Aboriginal and racialized women.

The industries women find themselves working in are undervalued. For example, in Canada, truck drivers — the majority of whom are men — are paid an average of \$45,417 per year, while Early Childhood Educators — the majority of whom are women —

are paid \$25,252 per year.

The report offers a number of solutions to help make women count, including a shift towards policies that support better wages and access to employment for women, better financial support of public services — like health and child care — to reduce the care burden on women, and a greater focus by governments to prioritize women's rights.

Lambert said: "Women's rights must be at the center of economic development — whether in Canada or the global south. In 2016, it's time to level the playing field and make women count." ●

See <http://oxfam.ca/sites/default/files/making-women-count-report-2016.pdf>



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Bahrain teacher leader free after 5 years in prison

On April 4, Mahdi Abu Dheeb, leader of the Bahrain Teachers Association, was finally released from prison. He had been held in detention since 2011, when he was sentenced to prison for calling for a teachers' strike in support of democratic reforms.

The international community has closely monitored Abu Dheeb's case, and decried the blatant disregard for human and trade union rights by Bahraini authorities. Education International, the umbrella federation of teachers' unions, has worked with a large coalition of affiliates and civil society organisations to ensure his release.

Amnesty International started a Twitter Countdown to raise awareness about his impending liberation. One of EI's affiliates in the UK, NASUWT, launched an online campaign, and another UK affiliate, the NUT, had keynote speaker Jeremy Corbyn and conference delegates at their annual conference show their concern. Many other EI affiliates around the world, especially of countries which have diplomatic representations in Bahrain (e.g. the United States), expressed their solidarity and appealed to Bahraini authorities over the years.

EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen welcomed Abu Dheeb's release. "Mahdi didn't commit any crimes. He called for quality public education for all and asked for the unions to be involved in the reforms. He fought for freedom of speech and freedom of assembly," he said. "In our view, the authorities' harsh reaction and Mahdi's long imprisonment were not justified. We do hope that this is a sign that trade union rights and quality education can become a reality for all in Bahrain. EI will continue to monitor the human rights situation in the country closely."

Gunfire aimed at strikers camp

On April 2, gunmen opened fire on a camp set up by agricultural workers in preparation for their strike in Pantukan town, Compostela Valley, Philippines. The Kilusang Mayo Uno Southern Mindanao Region said the shooting followed an attempt to burn down the camp set up by the workers of Musahamat Farm 2, who had voted to go on strike on March 28. None of the three union members manning the camp was hit during the incident, which happened just after midnight. Eight .45 caliber shell casings were recovered after the firing.

The shooting and the attempted arson prompted Carlo Olalo,

secretary general of KMU-SMR, to urge the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) to intervene to prevent any harm from happening to the workers, who are striking to demand the reinstatement of 52 of their colleagues at the banana plantation who were illegally dismissed. Olalo took the DOLE to task for doing nothing when the military tried to intervene and mounted a



vilification campaign against the KMU during the certification election won by the Musahamat (Farm 2) Workers Labour Union, an affiliate of the National Federation of Labour Unions.

"By being silent, (DOLE) is being complicit in the apparent campaign to silence the workers in Pantukan by any means possible, including murder," Olalo said, adding that the management of the banana plantation and the Army's 46th Infantry Battalion were continuing the campaign against the union.

Workers organize at Trump hotel

Overruling objections filed by Donald Trump's corporation, the National Labour Relations Board has officially certified a union for more than 500 workers at the Trump International Hotel just off the Las Vegas strip. The workers, who voted to unionize last December, are now demanding immediate contract negotiations. Yet management has indicated they will appeal the NLRB decision, in keeping with longstanding efforts to prevent the employees from organizing.

As soon as a majority of the 523 workers in Trump's hotel voted to unionize with the Culinary Workers Union on December 5, management tried to have the results thrown out, claiming that workers were intimidated by the union into voting yes. After weeks of reviewing their claims, a local NLRB officer sided with the workers in February, saying Trump management provided "insufficient evidence" of wrongdoing. The company then appealed to the regional board of the NLRB, which also shot down their claims and recommended the workers' union be certified.

The vast majority of Vegas hotel

workers already enjoy the benefits of union contracts.

Teachers strike in Argentina

Teachers from public and private schools in Argentina held a national strike on April 4, their first since Mauricio Macri became president in December, to protest the government's failure to comply with agreements reached with teachers' unions in February regarding salaries and working conditions.

The demonstrators gathered early in the morning and marched to the Ministry of Education in Buenos Aires. Across the country, college professors from all national universities joined the strike to demand the government begin salary negotiations and talks on other work-related issues.

The Education Workers' Confederation and the Union of Private School Teachers, the unions that bring together elementary and high school teachers in Argentina, also protested against massive layoffs in the public sector.

María Laura Torre, secretary of the Education Workers' Confederation, said that the observance of the national strike was very high and that the call had proved very successful.

The 24-hour strike also called on the government to continue investigations into the 2007 killing of Carlos Fuentealba, a chemistry professor.

"Teaches from across the country will strike and we will rally this April 4 in light of the lack of compliance by the government regarding agreements already signed, against impunity in Carlos Fuentealba's case and to reject the criminalization of social protest," the Confederation of Education Sector Workers of Argentina said in a statement.

Anti-austerity rallies in Greece

Thousands of people marched on April 7 in major Greek cities to protest against a new package of austerity measures which cuts supplementary pensions and hike taxes for self-employed and workers. The marches were held in the framework of a 24-hour strike in the public sector called by the main trade union ADEDY, and other professional groups also joined.

In Athens, demonstrators marched through the streets to Parliament, where they demanded an end to austerity policies, privatization and submission to the dictates of international creditors. Protesters said the new laws will not save Social Security, and denounced the SYRIZA government, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund for implementing "violent and neoliberal" measures.

The pension system changes will increase the retirement age and reduce benefits, worsening the situation created by previous government cuts. A new tax law will increase direct and indirect taxes, causing impoverishment of

workers, professionals, scientists, freelancers and farmers, and encouraging young people into exile.

In Thessaloniki, the second largest city of Greece, a large rally by unions and left organizations was reinforced with the arrival of dozens of migrants from a nearby refugee camp, demanding the opening of borders.

Strike at Peru copper mine

Workers at Freeport-McMoRan's Cerro Verde copper mine in Peru began a 48-hour strike on April 8 to protest the near disappearance of their profit-sharing bonus this year.

The Arizona-based company, which owns a majority stake in the mine, has informed workers they are scheduled to receive an average bonus of \$146 (483 soles) this year based on 2015 profits, down from about \$9,090 (30,000 soles) in 2014. The union said it would stop all activities for an initial period of 48 hours, which would then be extended to 72 hours and finally moved into an indefinite strike until its demands are heard.

While Freeport has reacted to low copper prices by making several cutbacks at existing operations, the company has gone ahead with a \$4.6 billion expansion of its Cerro Verde open pit mine, which has been in production since the mid-1800s. The project would triple capacity at the concentrator plant to 360,000 tonnes per day and it is set to catapult Cerro Verde to the top three global copper operations by 2017.

Mining investments in Peru, which drove economic growth during the past decade, have fallen dramatically in the past two years as anti-mining sentiment grows stronger. It is estimated that about \$22 billion worth of projects have been cancelled or delayed in Peru, the world's No 3 copper producer, where mining accounts for about 60% of export earnings.

Labour unrest in Gulf states

At a recent event to showcase how the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is trying to make labour laws more understandable, workers instead discussed unscrupulous bosses, abuses and poor conditions rampant across the Gulf Arab states.

Wearing handed-out white baseball caps reading "I (heart) UAE," workers praised the translation of labour laws, but complained about stagnant wages and being suckered by agents into jobs they didn't want.

"The companies are gaining. They are making all the profits. What about the labourers?" asked Adnan Chaudhry, of Pakistan, who works in human resources at a copper manufacturing plant. "The managers are up, up, up and the labourers are down, down, down."

Gulf nations long have relied on migrant labour to build oil-funded skylines, drive taxis and clean hotel rooms. In the UAE, a federation of seven emirates on the Arabian Peninsula, foreign workers vastly outnumber locals.

On April 6, Emirati officials gathered before several hundred workers at a model residential camp on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi, the capital. They answered questions from workers as politicians moved through the crowd, trailed by television cameras. But even here, with security guards holding trays full of expensive chocolates, taxi drivers discussed how their housing didn't allow them to cook meals. Others talked about being in small rooms split in two, with 10 men sleeping inside at a time.

Gulf Arab nations have come under increasing scrutiny over their treatment of low-paid workers. Unions are not allowed and strikes are illegal in the UAE, though protests sometimes occur. Hundreds of migrants staged a rare protest last November near the airport hosting the opening day of the biennial Dubai Airshow.

Join the Communist Party of Canada



The Communist Party of Canada, formed in 1921, has a proud history of fighting for jobs, equality, peace, Canadian independence, and socialism. The CPC does much more than run candidates in elections. We think the fight against big business and its parties is a year-round job, so our members are active across the country, to build our party and to help strengthen people's movements on a wide range of issues. All our policies and leadership are set democratically by our members. To find out more about Canada's party of socialism, contact the nearest CPC office.

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Many items in our "Global Class Struggle" column are from the Labour Start website, www.labourstart.org

El Hermano Obama and Compañero Fidel

By Zoltan Zigedy, March 31, 2016, miltoday.com

US President Barack Obama came to Havana with a cautiously crafted, calculated message to the people of the world, the people of the US, and the people of Cuba.

To the people of the world, Obama was signaling, on his part, a new posture towards the Republic of Cuba. His expressed desire to remove the blockade and to open up relations must be taken at face value and welcomed. How far he intends to pursue this goal and with how much energy is to be seen. That it is part of a carefully cultivated "Obama Doctrine" blossoming in the last year of his Presidency should be apparent.

In his confessional series of interviews with Jeffrey Goldberg for *The Atlantic*, he makes his posture towards Latin American anti-imperialism clear: "When I came into office, at the first Summit of the Americas that I attended, Hugo Chávez—the late anti-American Venezuelan dictator—was still the dominant figure in the conversation," he said. "We made a very strategic decision early on, which was, rather than blow him up as this 10-foot giant adversary, to right-size the problem and say, 'We don't like what's going on in Venezuela, but it's not a threat to the United States.'"

Obama said that to achieve this rebalancing, the U.S. had to absorb the diatribes and insults of superannuated Castro manqués. "When I saw Chávez, I shook his hand and he handed me a Marxist critique of the U.S.—Latin America relationship," Obama recalled. "And I had to sit there and listen to Ortega"—Daniel Ortega, the radical leftist president of Nicaragua—"make an hour-long rant against the United States. But us being there, not taking all that stuff seriously—because it really wasn't a threat to us"—helped neutralize the region's anti-Americanism.

If we substitute "anti-imperialism" for "anti-Americanism" (tellingly, Obama doesn't count Latin America as America), we can see that the Obama Doctrine is a more clever and, therefore, more insidious policy to maintain US dominance in the region; overt tolerance coupled with covert intervention promises more success than an earlier strategy of saber-rattling and brute force.

To the people of the US, Obama was underscoring what he hopes to be perceived as his foreign policy legacy, an opening to Cuba that will stand with Nixon's rapprochement with the Peoples Republic of China and Reagan's overtures to Gorbachev's USSR. Like Reagan's move, Obama's Cuba trip was a charm offensive meant to sell the image of a benign super power putting aside long-standing differences in order to "open up" opportunities for business and bring Cuba back into the Western fold.

But unlike his predecessors, Obama presses his initiative late in his term, leaving the heavy lifting to those who will follow. The fact that he never tackled the Helms-Burton Act early in his service (and a host of other promises and expectations) when he inherited a

super-majority in the legislative branch demonstrates both a slug-like caution and a shallowness of conviction, a less flattering part of his legacy.

To the Cuban people, Obama brought to Havana a caricature of past relations and the attitude of a friendly big brother. He made his point of selling market reforms, outside investors, and Western-style "democracy," wrapping it with a ribbon of smarmy good-neighborliness. While the Western media and liberals saw this as a moment of Obama's greatness and

Fidel reminded the US President that the revolutionary government "swept away racial discrimination" in Cuba and persistently fought manifestations of racism. Unlike in the US, the Cuban people fought racism along with their government, not against the government's promotion of it; where racism persists in Cuba, it is in spite of the government, not because of it.

magnanimity, one man saw it differently. Charged with protecting Cuban sovereignty and dignity for the last fifty-six years, Fidel Castro Ruz wrote from retirement, reminding the world that while Cuba seeks normal country-to-country relations with the US, it neither forgets nor forgives the transgressions of the past.

Nor does it trust the promises of

the future. In a not-too-subtle reminder—direct enough for even the planners and speech writers in the State Department — Fidel quotes Antonio Maceo, Afro-Cuban leader of the mambises [guerrilla fighters] in the liberation struggle against Spain: "Whoever attempts to appropriate Cuba will reap only the dust of its soil drenched in blood, if he does not perish in the struggle." Fidel offers "brother Obama" a history lesson in the long and relentless effort to overthrow the Cuban revolution by its "neighbour" to the North.

Nor will he allow the neighbour to the north to shrug off the Cold War as merely a past misunderstanding. He reminds Obama that the Cold War battle lines in Africa divided colonialism and apartheid from African liberation. Without embarrassing Obama with the fact that the US stood with those opposing African liberation, Fidel revisited Cuba's intense, principled and long support for Africa's freedom.

In contrast to the truncated, simplistic, and self-serving account of the struggle for racial equality in the US offered by Obama ("But people organized; they protested; they debated these issues; they challenged government officials. And because of those protests, and because of those debates, and because of popular mobilization, I'm able to stand here today as an African-

American and as President of the United States. That was because of the freedoms that were afforded in the United States that we were able to bring about change.")

Fidel reminded the US President that the revolutionary government "swept away racial discrimination" in Cuba and persistently fought manifestations of racism. Unlike in the US, the Cuban people fought racism along with their government, not against the government's promotion of it; where racism persists in Cuba, it is in spite of the government, not because of it.

Fidel, with a Marxist dedication to historical context, understandably views US overtures with some skepticism, doubting that the changes mark an epiphany from

the long-standing policy of defeating the revolution. But as one of its leaders and staunchest defenders, he makes his position clear: "No one should be under the illusion that the people of this dignified and selfless country will renounce the glory, the rights, or the spiritual wealth they have gained with the development of education, science, and culture... We do not need the Empire to give us anything."

Cubans should be filled with pride that they enjoy the wisdom and vigilance of one of the last century's greatest revolutionary leaders. We should all be appreciative of the exceptional commitment to truth and principle of this warrior for socialism and peace. ●



President Obama at a ceremony in Havana's Revolution Square during his historic trip to Cuba, with the iconic image of Che Guevara in the background.

UN Special Rapporteur on Occupied Palestine resigns

Commentary by Richard Falk, who held the post of UN Special Rapporteur on Occupied Palestine for six years, completing his second term in June 2014

Makarim Wibisono, the UN Special Rapporteur on Occupied Palestine, has resigned his position. The prominent Indonesian diplomat says that he could not fulfil his mandate because Israel has adamantly refused to give him access to the Palestinian people living under its military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "Unfortunately, my efforts to help improve the lives of Palestinian victims of violations under the Israeli occupation have been frustrated every step of the way," Wibisono explains.

His resignation reminds me in a strange way of Richard Goldstone's retraction a few years ago of the main finding in the UN-commissioned Goldstone report, that Israel intentionally targeted civilians in the course of Operation

Cast Lead, its massive attack on Gaza at the end of 2008.

At the time I responded to media inquiries by saying that I was shocked, but not surprised. Shocked because the evidence was overwhelming and the other three distinguished members of the UN fact-finding commission stuck by the finding. Yet I was not surprised because I knew Goldstone — a former judge of the South African constitutional court — to be a man of strong ambition and weak character, a terrible mix for public figures who wander into controversial territory.

In Wibisono's case I am surprised, but not shocked. Surprised because he should have known from the outset that he was faced with a dilemma between doing the job properly of reporting on Israel's crimes and human rights abuses and gaining Israel's cooperation in the course of gathering this evidence. Not shocked, indeed grateful, as it illuminates the difficulty confronting anyone charged with

truthful reporting on the Palestinian ordeal under occupation, and by his principled resignation Wibisono doesn't allow Israel to get away with neutering the position of Special Rapporteur.

It is worth recalling that when Wibisono was selected as my successor, several more qualified candidates were passed over. Although the selection guidelines stress expert knowledge of the subject matter of the mandate, Wibisono apparently gained the upper hand along with the acquiescence of Israel and the United States precisely because of his lack of any relevant background.

I can only hope that now the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) will redeem its mistake by reviving the candidacies of Professor Christine Chinkin and Phyllis

Bennis, both of whom possess the credentials, motivation and strength of character to become an effective Special Rapporteur. The Palestinians deserve nothing less.

When I met with Wibisono in Geneva shortly after his appointment as Special Rapporteur was announced, he told me confidently that he had been assured that if he accepted the appointment the Israeli government would allow him entry, a reassurance that he repeated in his resignation announcement. On his side, he pledged objectivity and balance, and an absence of preconceptions.

I warned him then that even someone who leaned far to the Israeli side politically would find it impossible to avoid reaching the

see PALESTINE, page 10



Makarim Wibisono

Massive rise in homophobic killings since Honduras coup

A report issued on April 6 reveals how LGBT campaigners in Honduras have risked torture, prison and assassination since the US-backed 2009 coup.

The British-based Index on Censorship used data gathered from local NGOs. It said 215 LGBT people were murdered between 2009, when left-wing president Manuel Zelaya was ousted by a military coup, and 2015, with 37 deaths in 2015 alone. By contrast, just 20 gay or transgender people were murdered between 1994 and 2009.

Honduran gay rights activist Donny Reyes said: "I've suffered torture and sexual violence because of my activism, and I've survived many assassination attempts."

In another development on the same day, President Juan Orlando Hernandez said several top police officials had been suspended over the killings of three drugs prosecutors. Audio recordings indicate that assassins were paid about \$20,000 to kill Julian Aristides Gonzalez in 2009.



Robeson fought Jim Crow, lynching, and McCarthyism

Paul Robeson: The Artist as Revolutionary, by Gerald Horne, Pluto Press, 2016, 174 pages. Review by Tony Pecinovsky, peoplesworld.org

Gerald Horne has made an amazing contribution to African American radical history with the newly published biography *Paul Robeson: The Artist as Revolutionary*.

Though not as widely known as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Malcolm X - at least, not among most white activists - it is impossible, as Horne argues, to understand their lives without first understanding Paul Robeson's.

"Like Malcolm, he [Robeson] was a militant: a turning point in his dramatic fall was when he confronted President Harry S. Truman face-to-face in the White House, berating him because of the lynching of African Americans..."

Additionally, Robeson, who lived abroad for years, "developed a global appeal that dwarfed what the Muslim Minister only sought to accomplish in the final months of his life."

Further, "Like Dr. King he had a mass appeal among African Americans. But, unlike the Nobel Laureate, Robeson was not only an artist whose performance stirred emotions and fealty worldwide, he was also allied with a then rising socialist left and allied trade unions...providing this performer with a reach that even Dr. King at his height found difficult to match," writes Horne.

Time magazine in 1943, would claim Robeson was "probably the

most famous living Negro..." The Worker in 1964 would proclaim Robeson "the best known American in the world," though he would ultimately also become "the most blacklisted performer in America..." as Pete Seeger, the well-known folk singer, told his fellow performer.

As a political biography, Horne does a great job connecting Robeson's internationalism with the emerging socialist camp - and the concomitant rise of Communist Parties - as the Rutgers educated sportsman, actor and activists' thirst for language, enabled him "to communicate more effectively with diverse audiences" around the world.

Robeson intently "deepen[ed] his knowledge of languages," which "introduced him to the unity of humankind and thus dovetailed with his developing socialist beliefs..." Horne writes.

Arguably a product of his times, Robeson was a man one generation removed from slavery who grew up in a country practising its own form of racist apartheid known as Jim Crow. As a Black man who eventually became a world-renowned actor and artist, early in his career Robeson's "groping as an actor in his attempt to grasp the lineaments of Othello was of a piece with his groping as a black man seeking to grasp the lineaments of capitalism, colonialism and white supremacy."

Seeking to make a living as an actor, it was in London where Robeson got his first big break - and began his life-long relationship with communism. For as Horne writes, while Robeson was very

close to U.S. Black communists like Ben Davis and William L. Patterson - and while he never shied away from supporting the CPUSA - he repeatedly denied membership, though "his closeness to London comrades raises questions - rarely asked, hardly

Communists; no, far from that. I will defend them as they defended us, the Negro people. And I stand firm and immovable by the side..." of the arrested CPUSA leaders. "Their struggle is our struggle."

Though he was at times an extremely wealthy man - making

though his "voice continued to resonate abroad." In fact, argues Horne, "...Robeson's consistent internationalism, his maniacal study of languages and cultures was redeemed...when a great wave of humanity demanded that his right to travel be restored."

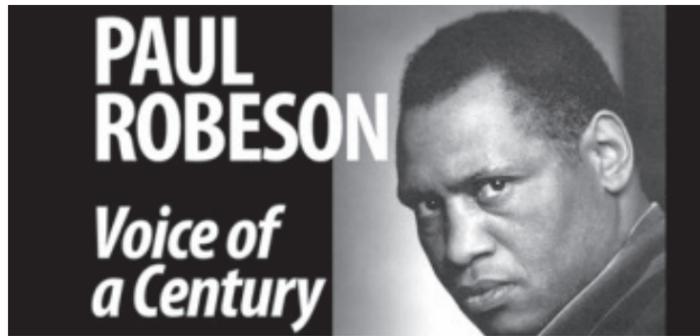
The attempted isolation of Robeson wasn't just about silencing him as an African American man who embodied the challenge to domestic Jim Crow, racism and international colonialism. It was also about silencing the domestic communist-led Left, dismantling a long fought for and hard won Red-Black alliance and the organizations which this alliance birthed. For, as the Party-led Civil Rights Congress and CAA were being destroyed - as other organizations, especially those tied to Dr. King filled the vacuum - it became increasingly apparent that they "did not have the international ties of the CRC, nor the global reach of the CAA, which amounted to a net loss for African-Americans and their allies," writes Horne.

In a relatively short book, Horne has captured the essence of Paul Robeson as both a domestic leader for African American equality, as well as an international icon promoting decolonization and socialism. I hope a new generation of activists - Black and white - read Horne's insightful book. ●

\$100,000-plus a year in the late 1940's - he was also always broke, as he donated considerable income and time to working class and revolutionary movements, often singing and/or performing for free or donating the proceeds to progressive political causes. One example was the Council on African Affairs (CAA), "the vanguard organization in the U.S. campaigning against colonialism," headed by W.E.B. Du Bois and W. Alphaeus Hunton.

As McCarthyism enveloped the United States, Robeson's passport was confiscated, eliminating his ability to travel and earn a living,

Gerald Horne has written books on a wide range of neglected but by no means marginal or minor episodes of world history. He writes about topics he perceives as misrepresented struggles for justice, in particular communist struggles and struggles against imperialism, colonialism, fascism and racism.



answered definitively - as to whether he was ever a member of the party in Great Britain, more of a likelihood than U.S. membership."

Gus Hall, the CPUSA's long-time chair, would later claim in 1998 that Robeson was in fact a member of the Communist Party, USA. He told attendees at a Robeson centennial tribute in that year, "My own most precious moments with Paul were when I met with him to accept his dues and renew his yearly membership in the CPUSA. I and other Communist leaders, like Henry Winston...met with Paul to brief him on politics and Party policies and to discuss his work and struggles."

Regardless of Robeson's actual membership status, he unabashedly supported communists - even at the height of McCarthyism, telling a crowd of 5,000 in Harlem in June 1949, "...I'm not afraid of

UN Palestine Rapporteur resigns...

continued from page 9

conclusion that Israel was guilty of severe violations of international humanitarian law and of human rights standards, and this kind of honesty was sure to anger the Israelis.

I also told him that he was making a big mistake if he thought he could please both sides, given the reality of prolonged denial of fundamental Palestinian rights. At the time he smiled, apparently feeling confident that his diplomatic skills would allow him to please the Israelis even while he was compiling reports detailing their criminality. He told me that he was seeking to do what I did but to do so more effectively by securing Israel's cooperation, and thus short-circuiting their objections. It was then my turn to smile.

It is correct that the mandate itself is vulnerable to criticism as it does not include an assessment of the responsibility of Palestinian administering authorities for violations of human rights, and only looks at Israeli violations. I tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade the HRC to have the mandate enlarged to encompass wrongdoing by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.

The arguments against doing so were that it had been difficult to get agreement to establish the mandate, and opening up the issue of its



Palestinian woman defies Israeli soldiers.

scope was risky, and also that the overwhelming evidence of Palestinian victimisation resulting from the occupation resulted from Israel's policies and practices. Hence, it was argued by several delegations at the HRC that attention to the Palestinian violations would be diversionary and give Israel a way to deflect criticism directed at the occupation.

What I discovered during my six years as Special Rapporteur is that you can make a difference, but only if you are willing to put up with the heat.

You can make a difference in several ways. Above all, by giving

foreign ministries around the world the most authoritative account available of the daily realities facing the Palestinian people. Also important is the ability to shift the discourse in more illuminating directions instead of limiting discussion to 'the occupation', address issues of de facto annexation, ethnic cleansing and apartheid, as well as give some support within the UN for such civil society initiatives as the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement and the Freedom Flotilla.

By so doing, you have to expect ultra-Zionist organisations and those managing the "special

relationship" between Israel and the United States to react harshly, including by launching a continuous defamatory campaign that seeks by all means to discredit your voice and will mount inflammatory accusations of anti-Semitism and, in my case, of being a "self-hating Jew".

What both shocked and surprised me was the willingness of both the UN Secretary-General and US diplomatic representatives (Susan Rice, Samantha Power) at the UN to bend in Israel's direction and join the chorus making these irresponsible denunciations focused on a demand for my resignation.

Although periodically tempted to resign, I am glad that I didn't. Given the pro-Israel bias of the mainstream media in the United States and Europe, it is particularly important, however embattled the position, to preserve this source of truth telling, and not to give in to the pressures mounted.

My hope is that the HRC will learn from the Wibisono experience and appoint someone who can both stand the heat and report the realities for what they are. It is hampering the performance of a Special Rapporteur to be denied Israeli cooperation with official UN functions, which is itself a violation of Israel's obligations as a member of the UN. At the same time, Israel's

behaviour that flaunts international law is so manifest and reliable information easily available that I found it possible to compile reports that covered the main elements of the Palestinian ordeal. Of course, direct contact with people living under occupation would have added a dimension of validation and witnessing, as well as giving some tangible expression of UN concern for the abuses being committed under conditions of an untenably prolonged occupation with no end in sight.

Until the day that Palestinian self-determination arrives, the least that the UN can do is to keep open this window of observation and appraisal. After all, it is the UN that undertook back in 1947 to find a solution to the Israel/Palestinian struggle that acknowledged the equal claims of both peoples. Although such an approach was colonialist and interventionist in 1947, it has plausibility in 2016 given the developments in the intervening years.

The UN may not be guilty in relation to what went wrong, but it certainly has failed to discharge its responsibilities with regard to Palestinian fundamental rights. Until these rights are realised, the UN should give this remnant of the colonial era as much attention as possible. ●

- *Third World Resurgence*

CODIR calls for press freedom in Iran

The UK-based Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR), has called for urgent action to defend press freedom in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In particular, CODIR is concerned about the fate of Afrin Chitsaz, a journalist who was detained in November 2015.

Sources close to Chitsaz are concerned that she has not been able to appoint a defence lawyer. There has been no news from her, although it is known she is being held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. It is also not clear what the charges are against her and whether a date has been set for trial.

Chitsaz is one of five journalists arrested in November last year. Three others, Isa Saharkhiz, Ehsan Mazandarani and Saman Safarzaei, were arrested along with Chitsaz on November 2, 2015, by Iranian Revolutionary Guards Intelligence Agency. Davoud Asadi is the other journalist arrested around that time.

Isa Saharkhiz is an Iranian journalist, political figure, and former head of the press department at the Iranian Ministry

of Culture and Education during former President Khatami's administration.

Ehsan Mazandarani is the managing editor of the newspaper Farhikhtegan.

Afarin Chitsaz regularly writes editorials on foreign policy for the newspaper 'Iran' and her columns have been carried by the official Islamic Republic News Agency, IRNA.

Mazandarani, Asadi and Safarzaei were tried in late March on charges of "propaganda against the regime, insulting the leader and gathering and colluding with intent to harm national security" and are now waiting the ruling of the court on their sentences.

In addition, Saharkhiz has been accused of "spreading falsified information and insulting the head of the judiciary", but the date of his court hearing has not been specified. Due to frequent seizures Saharkhiz was transferred from prison to hospital where he is now detained.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council claimed last November

that, "The journalists will be freed in no time." Almost six months later, they are still in detention and the authorities have not agreed to their release on bail.

With 36 journalists and citizen journalists incarcerated, Iran is one of the world's five biggest prisons for media activists. In the World Press Freedom rankings in 2015, Iran was ranked 173 out of 180 countries in terms of its treatment of the press.

CODIR Assistant General Secretary, Jamshid Ahmadi, stressed the significance of the international community continuing to support the campaign for human rights in Iran.

"The detention of these journalists is symptomatic of the fate of many fighting for freedom of expression inside Iran," said Ahmadi. "Thousands of trade unionists and political activists are often detained without charge or for alleged 'crimes' which cannot be justified on any basis according to the laws of natural justice. The imprisonment of these journalists symbolises the attitude of the Islamic Republic to free speech."

Human rights have not been on the agenda with the Iranian regime in the discussions around its nuclear programme, which resulted in sanctions being lifted recently. CODIR has expressed concern that this may be taken as carte blanche by the regime to act as it pleases on the domestic front, as long as it fulfils its international obligations.

"CODIR will continue its campaigning for human and democratic rights in Iran and it is here that we focus our attention," continued Jamshid Ahmadi. "We welcome the lifting of sanctions and reduction of tensions between Iran and the rest of the world and in particular the US and the EU. However this should not be at the expense of liberty for Iranian human rights campaigners, democrats and peace activists."

CODIR has emphasised that human rights violations are part of a coordinated policy of the Islamic Republic, to maximise pressure upon human rights and trade union activists, their colleagues and family members. ●

In Memoriam – Howard Kaplan

The Central and Ontario Committees of the Communist Party of Canada mourn the passing of Howard Kaplan, on April 11, 2016. Howard was diagnosed in November 2015 with an autoimmune disorder and had been hospitalized since the beginning of March while awaiting an organ transplant.

Howard was the public school trustee for Ward 5 in the Toronto District School Board. He was first elected in 2010 and was reelected in 2014 by a landslide, winning every poll in the ward. Howard consistently and passionately defended equity and special education programs, fought against cuts to teachers and education workers, pressed for a needs-based funding model in Ontario and advocated for a single, secular public school system. He understood the key role that school trustees play in public education, and often spoke of the need to protect and extend local democracy in the face of attacks by neoliberal and austerity policies.

A long-time member of the Communist Party, Howard was a member of the Parkdale Club, was elected to the Ontario Provincial Committee for several years and was active on the Party's Public Education Commission.

In addition to his work in public education, Howard was a strong supporter of Cuba solidarity, peace and disarmament, LGBTIQ equality, and trade unions. He was very well informed about international issues, and was always eager to discuss politics and different movements for social progress.

We express our deep sympathy to Howard's family, including his partner Jo Anne, his children and his grandchildren. A celebration of Howard's life will be held at a date to be announced. ●

Jim Bridgewood

Following a brave struggle with cancer, Jim Bridgewood died in hospital April 7th in Brampton, leaving his beloved partner of 40 years, Kathleen Watling, his two sons and several grandchildren. He is also survived by his former wife, Betty Bridgewood. He was 85.

Jim spent his life as a leader and activist in the trade union movement. He was a steward and committeeman at local 707 CAW/UAW, at the Ford assembly plant in Oakville, where he fought hard against concessions bargaining adopted by the UAW in the US, and for the creation of the CAW as an independent Canadian union aggressively opposed to concessions and fighting for real gains for workers at the bargaining table.

He was also very active in the Oakville Labour Council, pushing

for independent labour political action as the best way to challenge the power of the corporations and right-wing governments, and for a united and militant Canadian trade union movement, able to defend and improve workers' wages and living conditions, and expand workers' rights on the shop floor and everywhere else. During the early 1970s, Jim was fired for attending a Communist Party school, but the firing was rescinded after a raucous public and legal struggle that helped kill the red clause in the union's constitution.

Jim was a candidate for the Communist Party in several elections, running in Hamilton, where he was also a member of the Party's local leadership. He also served for many years on the Central Committee and Ontario Provincial Committee and was an active member of the Party's Trade Union Commission.

Jim was also an active member of Trade Unionists for Peace, and spoke at many conventions and union meetings about the need for a new Canadian foreign policy of peace and disarmament, and redirecting military to civilian spending. He helped get many motions onto the floor of both OFL and CLC conventions where they were adopted after many a sharp debate.

He will be deeply missed by his many comrades and friends, including the GTA West Club of which he was a member, and so proud of its recent growth and growing influence in the community.

The Central and Ontario Committees extend sympathy and condolences to Kathleen, and to his sons. A celebration of Jim's life will be held in due course, and a notice will be published in People's Voice.

What's Left

Kamloops, BC

No to the TPP, speaker Liz Rowley, CPC leader, 7 pm, Monday, April 18, TRU International Building, Room IB 1020. Organized by Kamloops Club CPC.

Victoria, BC

No to the TPP, speaker Liz Rowley, CPC leader, 5 pm, April 21, organized by Scotty Neish Club CPC, info 604-254-9836.

Earth Walk for Peace and the Planet, Sat. April 23, starts 11:45 am from Legislature, walk to Centennial Square.

May Day March, Sunday, May 1, gather 11 am at Centennial Square, march to Fernwood Community Centre, 1240 Gladstone Ave.

Vancouver, BC

Canada-Cuba Friendship Association Vancouver, AGM, 2 pm, Sunday, April 17, at Chilean Housing Co-op, 3390 School Ave. For information, call 604-940-0420.

Black Lives Matter-Vancouver, rally at Art Gallery, 12 noon, Sunday, April 17.

NO to the TPP, hear Communist Party leader Liz Rowley, Wed., April 20, 7:30 pm, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive. For details of BC tour events, ph. 604-254-9836.

Left Film Night, Sunday, April 24, 7 pm, "PRIDE," at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive. For info, 604-255-2041.

May Day March, Sunday, May 1, starts 1:30 pm from 14th & Commercial, 2 pm rally and info tables at Grandview Park (1200 block Commercial). Organized by Vancouver & District Labour Council.

Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast, 10-11:30 am, Sunday, May 9, 706 Clark Drive,

\$12 (children \$6), proceeds to People's Voice Fund Drive, for info call BC Press Committee, 604-255-2041.

Toronto, ON

May Day Celebration, Saturday, April 30, 7-11 pm (doors 6:30), Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil Street. Free, food and childcare provided, great cultural program and speakers, organized by United May Day Committee.

"Honouring our labour roots", secular community Passover Seyder with music and full-course dinner, Sunday, May 1, 4 pm, at Sala Caboto, Villa Colombo, 40 Playfair Ave. (south of Lawrence, west of Dufferin). Sponsored by United Jewish Peoples Order-Toronto and Winchevsky School, 416-789-5502 for reservations & information.

Communist Party Convention Banquet, Sat., May 21, doors 6 pm, Casa da Madeira Community Centre, 1621 Dupont (near Dundas). Dinner, cultural program, tribute to outgoing CPC leader Miguel Figueroa. For tickets & info, 416-469-2446.

Brampton, ON

2nd Annual May Day Celebration, Sunday, May 1, 12:30-3:30 pm, Chinguacousy Ski Hill-Chalet, Lower Lounge Hall, 9050 Bramalea Rd. Join Brampton May Day Committee for revolutionary speeches, poetry and songs. Organized/Endorsed by: Rationalist Society; GTA West Club CPC; Indo-Canadian Workers Association; Committee of Progressive Pakistani Canadians; Kalma da Kafila; Progressive Nepalese in America; Punjabi Sabhyachar Manch; Senior Citizens' Club-Brampton.

People's Voice deadlines

May 1-15 issue: Thursday, April 21

May 16-31 issue: Thursday, May 5

Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1
<pvoice@telus.net>



La Trova Nuestra

Friday, April 29, 8 pm
"La Peña Nuestra"

Centre For Socialist Education, Vancouver
706 Clark Drive (Clark and Georgia st)
\$10 Entry

About Vancouver's 'La Trova Nuestra'

La Trova Nuestra is composed of 20 individual trovadores who originate from across Latin America and now reside in Vancouver. These trovadores are the keepers of a musical tradition which began with pioneers of the vernacular song. La Trova Nuestra incorporates this tradition interplaying music and poetry. At its foundation is the essence of a popular culture interpreting daily expression... an expression with origins deep within La Raza Mestiza (mixed roots) of Latin America - an expression of the explosive changes within the continent of Latin America today. La Trova Nuestra could be defined as 'The encounter between a man, a guitar and poetry -Voices pledging for a better world'.

2016 Federal Budget: new model car - not much gas

Statement by the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada

The 2016 federal budget proposes to make good on the slew of Liberal election promises that resulted in a Liberal majority last fall.

Fed up with the Tories, Canadians chose the Liberals as the preferred vehicle to drive the Tories out and move the country away from a decade of austerity, war and corruption, to the 'sunny ways' agenda of jobs, prosperity, democracy, and action on climate change.

This budget does move away from the Tories' draconian austerity policies, but it provides nowhere near the funding required to reverse a decade of catastrophic cuts, guts and losses. Nor will it provide the funding needed to address the critical issues of expanding universal social programs such as Medicare and the Canada Pension Plan, or create programs such as a universally accessible, affordable, quality public childcare program promised by the Liberals in 1993. Nor will it address the crisis of economic and social conditions on and off reserve for First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples, who will not see the largest part of the funds allocated before the next

election, and maybe not then either.

This budget can't deliver what's urgently needed, because the government has not addressed the revenue side of the budget, at the heart of which is the issue of corporate taxation and progressive taxation based on ability to pay. Without a substantial corporate tax increase, the only way to finance investment is to privatize public assets and services, cut public sector jobs and wages, and/or to increase the deficit and the debt. In Ontario, the Wynn Liberals have done all three, after winning the 2014 provincial election on a platform of massive spending on infrastructure and transit, and creation of a new public pension plan.

The Tories' trickle down economics resulted in massive tax cuts and super-profits for the corporations, and vanishing social programs, falling wages and declining living standards for working people and the unemployed. It's also resulted in smaller government with small public treasuries.

To deliver the agenda that Canadians voted for and expect, the government would have – and

should have – doubled the corporate tax rate in 2016 and then doubled it again in 2018, restored the capital tax and capital gains at 100% of realized and unrealized gains, introduced wealth and inheritance taxes on estates over \$1 million, reversed corporate tax

Despite the media hype, this budget is no New Deal. Medicare has been virtually by-passed, with transfers to provinces pegged at 3%. It does not come close to meeting the needs of more than a million people on waiting lists for affordable social housing across Canada... The investments for Indigenous peoples and communities are likewise inadequate to meet the crisis situation...

cuts, collected billions in deferred corporate taxes, and closed corporate tax loopholes like the one on CEO stock options (worth \$1 billion annually to the federal treasury) which the government has declined to close (or collect) in this budget.

This is why the banks and corporate Canada like this budget. For them, nothing much changes.

That's because the government has decided that the cost of this budget will be paid for by the public, by working people and the unemployed, and not by Big Business – now or in the future.

And that's also why the expenditures in this budget are so small, relative to the expenditures that need to be made:

- to create good jobs and raise wages, pensions and living standards;
- to develop an industrial strategy for Canada and protect and expand value added manufacturing and secondary industry;
- to build 500,000 units of affordable social housing across Canada, for rent and for sale, on an emergency basis;
- to expand EI to cover all the unemployed, including first time job seekers, for the duration of unemployment, at 90% of previous earnings;
- to introduce a Guaranteed Annual Living Income;
- to introduce progressive taxation based on ability to pay that puts the load on the corporations and the wealthy;
- to restore universality and expand Medicare to include pharmacare, vision and dental care and long

term care;

- to expand universal social programs and establish a universally accessible, affordable, quality public childcare system;

- to make post-secondary education universally accessible by eliminating tuition fees, abolishing student debt, and adequately funding post-secondary education;

- to scrap corporate trade deals like CETA and TPP in favour of mutually beneficial trade with all countries;

- to cut the military budget by 75% and redirect those funds to civilian spending including for refugees and immigrants;

- to close the tarsands and guarantee tarsands workers new green jobs and equivalent wages in a publicly owned energy and resource sector;

- to provide the more than \$6 billion promised (and urgently needed) to Indigenous Peoples for health, education, housing, jobs, preservation of culture and language, and to establish nation to nation relations with the Canadian government.

Instead of this kind of fundamental change, the 2016 budget will deliver some patch-work of public investment and funding in some sectors, with the largest number of dollars promised set aside for delivery after the next election.

Despite the government and media hype, this budget is no New Deal.

Medicare has been virtually by-passed in this budget, with transfers to provinces pegged at 3%; exactly half of the minimum requested and required by the provinces. Promises to renew the federal provincial health accord, providing stable funding for healthcare, are barely mentioned in the budget, leaving the door open for more privatization.

The Canada Child Benefit will provide some funds for low-income families with children, who need help with childcare and who are food insecure. But the program is means-tested, is not universal, and will not lift millions of children and their families out of poverty.

Restoring the pension age to 65 from 67 and an increase in benefits to the poorest seniors collecting GIS will not alter the deep poverty in which seniors collecting the GIS will continue to live. It won't change the reality where many seniors have to choose between food and prescription drugs on a daily basis.

While the budget puts some funds towards affordable housing and homelessness, it does not come close to meeting the needs of more than a million people on waiting lists for affordable social housing across Canada. As a result, most of the funds allocated will go to repair existing housing and provide more shelters for the homeless. Urgent and necessary, but inadequate on its own. Funding for new social housing won't kick

in until after the next election.

The budget also makes changes to EI, reducing the wait time to one week from two, and expanding the number of weeks for benefits to between 5 and 20 additional weeks. But it only applies in some parts of the country, and not anywhere in Quebec, New Brunswick, or Nova Scotia, which held the largest protests against Tory cuts to EI last year. And it will only help 50,000 people, when 60% of the 1.4 million unemployed have been excluded from collecting any benefits. Further, the budget removes \$6.9 billion from the EI fund to be used to fund other parts of the budget. But this money is insured deferred earnings that belong to the workers who contributed to the fund. The government has no right to 'remove' it.

Funds for aging infrastructure – long overdue, including for housing and municipal transit – are likewise back-ended, with the largest part held back until after the next election. In the meantime, some funds for water and sewage system repairs and replacements will be available, though the federal requirement that funds for public transit must be used for P3 projects



– for private companies and banks in other words – remains.

The investments for Indigenous peoples and communities are likewise inadequate to meet the crisis situation that exists. The funds being delivered for water and sewage treatment, public and secondary education, and for the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women is a very small down payment on what has been promised, what is needed, and what has been taken from Indigenous Peoples in lost lives, lost culture, and lost children, youth, and women.

Now that the budget is on the table, the labour and people's movements must mobilize to hold the Liberals' feet to the fire, to:

- deliver this budget in 4 years, not 10
- double the corporate tax rate, rescind corporate tax cuts, restore the capital tax and capital gains taxes at 100% of the gain, introduce wealth and inheritance taxes on estates over \$1 million, and collect deferred and unpaid corporate taxes, and
- cut the arms budget by 75% and redirect it to civilian spending

That would gas in the tank. That would be a New Deal for Canada. ●

Poverty increasing among seniors

A report from the Broadbent Institute reveals that poverty rates for Canadian seniors are on the rise. The report points to a worrisome trend of increasing poverty among Canadian seniors, with 2013 data showing one in nine seniors lives below the poverty line.

According to the report, poverty rates varied substantially by gender and marital status; with single women 30% more likely to experience poverty in their older age. The authors of the report predict that without government action, the trend is likely to continue – if not worsen.

One of the reasons the report gives for senior poverty is the lack of an employer pension in some cases, particularly among those who earned average incomes throughout their working lives. The author, statistician Richard Shillington, found that half of Canadian couples between the ages of 55 and 64 have no employer pension. Many of these couples have little to fall back on in retirement – with about half of families without an employer-pension having virtually no savings.

"A substantial proportion of middle-income Canadians without an employer pension plan will face a dramatic drop in living standards during their retirement years. There is an urgent need to address this situation," concludes Shillington. "[The results of the study] suggests an important role for incentives to expand workplace pensions, and to enhance benefits of the Canada Pension Plan."

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