

TURKEY IN REVOLT!

By YASIN KAYA

ISTANBUL—Since May 31, Turkey has been the scene of a popular uprising. As of June 5, numerous protests have spread across 77 of the 81 major provincial cities. More than a million people protested in the streets of Istanbul, and hundreds of thousands in Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Bursa, and Hatay.

The revolt grew rapidly after the Turkish police brutally attacked protesters in Taksim Gezi Park, an urban green space that the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul wants to demolish and replace with a shopping mall. The protests spread to the other cities in the following days, as they have become popular upheavals against the increasingly anti-democratic AKP government.

The masses won a partial victory when the police had to retreat from Istanbul's central Taksim Square on June 1. Gezi Park has become a festive place where the protesters meet in solidarity and discuss the course of events. Clashes with police continue in other parts of Istanbul and in other cities. According to the Turkish Medical Association, 43 civilians were severely wounded and two protesters were killed as of June 4.

Is this the Turkish Spring? Is Taksim the Turkish Tahrir Square? Not until the workers' organizations actively take the lead.

The left-wing labour union confederations, KESK and DISK, launched a solidarity strike. And leftist protesters call for a general strike. Important meetings are held to mobilize the progressive, as well as conservative, labour unions, which have issued timid statements, at best. There were numerous but fragmented strikes in several sectors and workplaces, like the Turkish Airlines strike, before the revolt. Uniting and politicizing these struggles with popular demands and helping the workers to initiate a strike wave remains a central task.

Not surprisingly, the leaderships of the biggest union confederations and of the largest unions are holding back. In Turkey, unions are organized on a national scale along occupational/sectoral lines. In most cases, there are two or three competing unions that are members of different confederations, and these did not actively support the protests, as they are controlled by Prime Minister Erdogan's AKP (Justice and Development Party). The labour bureaucracy is an obstacle in the path towards organized labour joining in the revolt and fostering a Turkish Spring.

This is a popular uprising bringing together people with widely different cultural backgrounds. The protesters



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Reuters

are mostly young workers, mostly employed in the service sector, as well as students. Since June 3, many high school students have joined the protests.

The energetic and creative character of the youth is visible in the way they use technology. Social media outlets have been very useful because all major TV stations first avoided covering the protest news, and then distorted it. For example, protesters communicate tips and tricks about how to reduce the effects of pepper spray and tear gas used by the police. They circulate lists of equipment needed.

This is not merely a protest of and by youths, though. People of all ages are protesting in the streets. Clanging pots and pans protests are growing in the neighborhoods. People are building barricades in Istanbul's historic streets.

This revolt is already among the big-

gest popular political actions since the coup d'état in 1980 in Western Turkey. The nationally oppressed Kurdish people are familiar with huge protests.

However, while many young Kurdish people are in the protests, the leadership of the Kurdish national movement does not actively support the revolt. That leadership could mobilize over a million people, just in Istanbul and could easily spread the movement to the cities of Eastern Turkey. But it is reluctant because it negotiated a so-called peace process (ending the armed struggle in exchange for a series of democratic reforms concerning Kurdish national identity. Thus it is an important task to link the Kurdish movement and its leadership to the revolt.

The broad movement lacks a political leadership. In other words, no political organization in Turkey is ready to lead

(Above) June 8 New York rally in solidarity with Turkish struggle.

(Left) Protesters in Istanbul.

such a massive movement with a wide social base.

The main opposition, CHP (Republican People's Party), is a bourgeois party. It supports the movement against Erdogan's AKP. More specifically, its decision to cancel its previously arranged mass demonstration set for Taksim was a significant factor in the police retreat from the square.

But the CHP is concerned about the protests' posing a challenge to capitalist rule. This was the worry when the Istanbul stock market crashed on June 3, with the flight of short-term foreign capital. CHP softened its rhetoric and joined the chorus warning the masses against "marginal groups" and "provocations."

Nevertheless, CHP leadership does not fully control the militants in its rank and file. There is a huge possibility that its militants will break away from the bourgeois CHP if the revolt advances.

The movement embodies a strong secular outlook. There has long been a tendency to equate secularism with Kemalist elitism and anti-democratic militarism. But now, the links between democracy, freedom, and secularism are being re-established.

Although some segments of CHP and the ex-Maoist (now Eurasianist) Workers' Party (Aydinlik) raise pro-military and Kemalist slogans to appeal to secu-

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Workers march worldwide on May Day

By LISA LUINENBURG

May 1, celebrated around the world as International Workers' Day, celebrates the anniversary of the Haymarket riots in Chicago. When workers struck for an eight-hour day in 1886, an unknown person (likely a police provocateur) threw a bomb into the peaceful crowd, killing several people and provoking a riot. Over 100 years later, with austerity measures and attacks on workers on the rise around the globe, the significance and impact of May 1 becomes even more relevant.

This year, thousands of workers demonstrated in the streets around the world. Unions in Greece called a strike, bringing ferry and train services to a halt while people demonstrated peacefully in Athens. In Istanbul, Turkey, clashes occurred when police tried to stop protesters from demonstrating in Taksim Square. In France protesters demonstrated against President Francois Hollande and his government's fiscal plans, calling him "the president of the rich."

Over 100,000 people poured into the streets in Spain, demonstrating against austerity and an unemployment rate that has reached 27%, while another 400,000 marched in Germany. In Dhaka, Bangladesh, workers protested the deaths of hundreds of garment workers when a factory collapsed. One worker shouted from the back of a truck, "My brother has died. My sister has died. Their blood will not be valueless."

Tens of thousands of workers in Indonesia, Cam-



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

bodia, and Taiwan demanded higher pay and better working conditions, and protested pension cuts. In Mexico, public school teachers peacefully marched in Mexico City and Chilpancingo, hoping to blocking education reforms that would hurt unions. Tens of thousands marched in Havana, Cuba, in a demonstration dedicated to Venezuela's Hugo Chavez.

Here in the United States, the majority of the May 1 marches called for the passage of a new immigration reform that would benefit the some 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States. With a new bill now being discussed in the Senate, thousands of immigrants marched in the streets on May 1 in cities like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Salem, Oregon, with numbers slightly up from last year. Smaller-scale marches were also held in cities such as Minneapolis and San Francisco.

However, despite a strong sentiment for a general

legalization within the immigrant community, many of the marches were organized by reformist forces that support the Senate Gang of Eight's draconian proposal for immigration reform. The White House-approved immigration reform bill proposes an overhaul of the current immigration system that includes plans for a beefed-up border patrol, an expanded guest worker system, and a long and arduous "pathway" to citizenship (lasting 13 years and costing each immigrant thousands of dollars).

Even major unions such as the SEIU and the AFL-CIO are supporting the bill.

Many of the May Day marches this year featured as speakers politicians supporting the immigration reform bill instead of local organizers, and focused on local campaigns like driver's license bills, instead of calling for unconditional legalization for all. This sucked much of the potential power out of the immigrant rights movement and instead diverted attention onto weak reforms.

Despite the watered-down nature of many of the May Day marches in the United States this year, we must not lose sight of the potential of the working class to fight back. The immigrant community has proven in the past that they have the ability to turn hundreds of thousands of workers into the streets at a moment's notice when they are threatened by a draconian legislation and discriminatory laws.

And the impressive turnout from workers in countries around the world this year on May 1 shows that the working class is not defeated by any means. Although we have a long struggle ahead of us, the fight is just beginning.

(Photo) Close to 2000 workers, including domestic workers and sugarcane cutters from Haiti, participated in the annual May Day march in Santo Domingo.

A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq & Afghanistan! No war on Iran! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

- 5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

- 6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

- 7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

- 8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

- 9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

- 10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

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The rich don't pay taxes!

BY JEFF MACKLER

Armed to the teeth with a scalding report prepared by researchers of the U.S. Senate Permanent Committee on Investigations revealing that Apple Computer had avoided paying billions of dollars in taxes on its nearly unprecedented foreign profits, members of the Senate were momentarily outraged. The senators took to the corporate media to pillory Apple's top executive, Tomothy D. Cook, for a few days until they got the word from on high to back off.

"The Corrosive Effect of Tax Avoidance by Apple and other Multinationals," headlined the May 24 *New York Times*. Yet it was a scandal that most Americans understand is the rule, not the exception. The rich get richer and pay little, or no, taxes while the rest of us become poorer and are taxed to the hilt to pay the government's bills. These bills include "obligations" to bail out failing and/or profitable corporations, banks, hedge funds, agribusiness, and insurance conglomerates and bills for the endless wars that bring trillions to the military industrial complex and its secretive super-spy spinoffs like Homeland Security and the CIA.

For several days Apple was accused of stealing from seniors' Social Security benefits, and from all other social programs that have been brutally slashed in Washington's austerity game of "sequestering" working people to pay for the annual trillion-dollar deficit and largess to the failed banks and corporations. This time, the Senate committee led by Republican John McCain and Democrat Carl Levin set out to publicly expose the big guys, who everyone knew got away with the same tax evasion practices that almost all U.S. corporations employ daily. A few days into the farce, however, in late April, the word came down that Apple's "tax transgressions" were really above suspicion, and indeed, practiced by virtually every corporation in the country.

Apple's Timothy Cook confidently appeared before the Senate committee, texts and "experts" in tow, to present proof positive that his corporation—which has "off-shored," or better, *sheltered* from taxes a record \$108 billion in overseas profits—had simply followed the adopted regulations in the U.S. tax code.

Floyd Norris' May 24 "High and Low Finance" *New York Times* column made this point quite clearly. Said Norris, "The shameful thing about Apple Inc.'s ability to structure its business to avoid United States taxes was not that it did it. In fact, as Apple executives tried to point out at the Senate hearings at which their tax strategies were detailed, they could have chosen to pay much less in American taxes than they did."

Norris continued, "The shameful thing is that we have a tax system that seems to allow multi-national corporations to choose what they want to pay."

Cook said that Apple was not to be blamed for shifting its multi-billion-dollar foreign profits to low-tax jurisdictions, or sneaking them into Cayman Islands or Cyprus-type tax havens. This is commonplace in the world of high finance, where ruling-class "lobbyists" actually write the tax codes and/or related regulations into the "law," as was revealed in the case of Citibank in late April. Who else would write the tax laws but the corporate hired guns who work for the same ruling class that runs the government?

In Apple's case, its much praised "legal team," according to Norris, "found a way to move a large part of its foreign income to Apple subsidiaries that claimed to not exist anywhere, at least when it came to paying taxes."

Apple simply transferred its foreign profits to an Apple-owned entity incorporated in Ireland that is not subject to U.S. tax law. Indeed, Apple even transferred its huge Irish subsidiary profits to Manhattan banks and used them for whatever investments it deemed necessary while legally "deferring" paying U.S. taxes on the profits until such a time that Apple decided to officially "repatriate" the profits.

In short, Apple used a "legal" tax scheme to defer taxes until such time as it could "negotiate" a deal with the government to reduce the tax rate to a level below the current 35 percent—a rate that virtually no corporation or business pays. Cook boldly told the Senate that a rate sufficient to entice Apple to pay any taxes would have to be "in the single digit" range.

U.S. Senate praises Apple tax scandal



Such "tax holidays" or "amnesties" simply require the insertion of a few words, usually written by the top corporate lobbyists, into some obscure section of the tax code to satisfy the various congressional committees assigned to "oversee" or perhaps *overlook* such standard "legal" transactions. Our readers should remember that—as with President Obama's kill list or his now-requested rules as to who may be spied on or murdered with drones, or tortured or held indefinitely in prison without recourse to due process—everything is "legal" in America, provided only that it is approved by Congress—that is, made the "law of the land."

Even so, invoking U.S. "national security" interests by the president virtually always negates whatever formal rules or regulations might exist to protect basic democratic rights. Today this includes theft disguised as tax law or murder legalized as necessary to protect the "national security interests" of the capitalist state. Corporate stealing is daily legalized in the volumes of unreadable and largely unscrutinized tax codes that collectively legalize corporate tax corruption.

The often-heard hue and cry emanating from the Republicans (the Democrats' partners in crime) to the effect that U.S. corporations have the highest corporate tax rates in the world is a myth. Graham Bowley, writing in the May 24 *New York Times*, says it well: "Some of the biggest and most powerful companies in the United States are fighting for a cut in the official tax rate, arguing that it is necessary to allow them to compete effectively in the global market."

Bowley notes that "the vast majority of American businesses, including some large and prominent Wall Street firms, actually do not pay corporate taxes at all."

This is the result of the tax code invention of "pass through" companies in the 1980s wherein corporations, initially small businesses and partnerships, were excused from paying corporate taxes and instead distributed their profits to their shareholders, who were then supposed to pay on the basis of their personal income taxes.

Today, the "brilliant" corporate tax specialists representing giant ruling-class firms have largely converted their mammoth operations to "pass through" entities, thus evading federal corporate taxes entirely, and even more so when the 1986 "tax overhaul" slashed personal tax rates below corporate levels. Bowley properly concludes with a stunning tax fact:

"Of the 34 million business tax returns filed in 2009, the most recent tax data available [demonstrates that] 32 million were pass throughs [paying zero in federal corporate taxes]." This figure "represents 70 percent of all net business income..." That is, 70 percent of all corporate income was excluded from taxation, as opposed to 25 percent in 1980.

Further, with recourse to new laws lowering personal tax rates on capital gains, the ruling-class few are further able to lower their tax rates to 20 percent, not counting the myriad of additional deductions pressed into law by the corporate elite that further reduce this

figure, in many cases to zero or less—"less" meaning that the government gifts them tax refunds!

Meanwhile, working people—by means of a steady stream of tax and related mechanisms daily introduced at the national, state, and municipal levels—are compelled to make up for the trillions that corporations are gifted, including the across-the-board austerity measures implemented in every aspect of daily life. This includes massive college tuition increases, cuts, or outright elimination of pensions, cuts in virtually all social programs, doubling and tripling of health-care costs, and nearly hidden hikes in the cost of food, home heating, and fuel.

Despite all these trillions allocated by the always bought-and-paid-for bipartisan capitalist politicians, there is no end in sight in the U.S. or anywhere else in the world. Austerity measures of every type are imposed everywhere—proof positive that the capitalist system is incapable of anything other than pursuing the ever-widening division of wealth between the ruling rich and all others (the 99 percent). Capitalism's inherent contradictions are today fully operative, evidenced by the wars against working people at home and the ever-increasing wars around the world—wars to impose neocolonial regimes subordinate to the biggest imperial players.

World capitalism's last major economic catastrophe, the 1929 Depression, gave rise to a world war that took the lives of tens of millions of people. The horrific destruction of the economic infrastructure of much of the world was required to resolve the system's inherent contradictions. On the ashes of this world horror and with the U.S. emerging as the only virtually unscathed participant—free from the economic competition of its wartime allies and enemies alike—the system of plunder and exploitation gained a new lease on life.

Today, the competition between the major industrial and military players has again reached fever pitch. A rebuilt and re-arming world system, based on the endless and deadly struggle once again stemming from ever-declining profit rates due to fierce world-wide competition, has no choice but to resolve its crises at the expense of the world's exploited and oppressed.

Apple Computer amassed its super-profits at the expense of Asian workers who are paid near slave wages—while American workers saw theirs ever approaching poverty levels, with vast numbers of unemployed, partially employed, and casual workers (not to mention immigrant and prison workers) today comprising a near majority of the work force.

Apple's rules of conduct with regard to taxes and all other aspects of capitalist production are the norm for all corporations. Were this not the case, they would have folded long ago and, indeed, many of the weaker competitors have been destroyed, absorbed or merged into giant entities that, like their equivalents abroad, rule over the world economy, increasing

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(Left) French armored vehicle guards the airport at Timbuktu, Mali.

Imperialists tighten their grip on the Sahara-Sahel

By CHRISTINE MARIE

The two-month period of April-May 2013 will be remembered as marking a significant advance in the imperialist project in the Sahara-Sahel region of Northern Africa. On April 29, the UN authorized the deployment of 11,200 troops to Mali. Beginning on July 1, this large international force will function alongside the French troops remaining from the European intervention begun in January and from the U.S. operations and drone bases in neighboring Niger.

On May 24, French Special Forces joined troops from Niger in attacking Islamist fighters who had claimed credit for suicide bombings in the part of Niger that is home to the French Areva uranium-mining compound.

On May 15, a new U.S.-backed Nigerian military offensive against the indigenous Islamic rebel group Boko Haram, in the north of Nigeria, resulted in horrific civilian casualties. Military officials, whose operations in the northern areas of Nigeria that border Niger are conducted without media scrutiny, also sensationally announced the discovery of a Hezbollah arms cache and cell in the urban center of Kano.

Finally, France announced its "willingness" to provide troops to "secure" the border between Niger and Libya. Altogether, these initiatives are elements of the growing militarization of the Sahara-Sahel region, a militarization that has long been a goal of the imperialist powers competing with China over the rich resources of Africa.

In Mali, according to the *Guardian* newspaper, the military intervention has been accompanied by promises of \$4.4 billion in aid "with strings attached." The strings include demands that the Malian government "manage public resources" according to an economic roadmap developed by the European Union.

The details are not yet clear, but historically, European aid to Mali has been tied to acquiescence to neoliberal privatization schemes that displaced small farmers and leased important agricultural lands to export-oriented agribusiness. In fact, before the French intervention, Malian peasants had been at the center of organizing efforts by the international peasant movement, Via Campesina, against imperialist land grabs.

Malian agriculture was once productive enough to be eyed as the breadbasket for oil-rich but soil-poor Libya. But in recent years, hunger has become widespread in the north of Mali, largely due to drought and desertification. France has done nothing to alleviate the food crisis. Unexploded mines and fighting are preventing farmers from working their fields. Seventy thousand residents of Gao are facing a cholera epidemic because broken pumps and electricity are not a priority for France or the United States.

The Nigerian military offensive against Boko Haram is exacerbating food shortages for the entire Sahel. The northern Nigerian grain trade typically supplies half of all the cereals consumed in the region. Sixty-five percent of the farmers of the war-torn north of Nigeria have reportedly fled from their fields.

According to a UN humanitarian affairs news report, in the week following the May 13 declaration of a state of emergency and the accompanying attack by Nigerian fighter jets on suspected Boko Haram camps, tens of thousands of the residents of the state of Borno quickly fled to Niger or Cameroon. The same agency reports that the Nigerian government has imposed a "food blockade" on the whole north of the state where the insurgency is rooted.

A USAID report says that security measures in the north have raised costs for farmers, and these, combined with flooding and a rise in the market price for more profitable export crops like cotton, have come together to create a regional shortage of staples.

The food blockade, like the military conflict in general, has seemingly affected civilians more dramatically than the relatively small force of Islamic insurgents. While Boko Haram has never grown larger than 4000 fighters, Human Rights Watch estimates that the conflict so far has resulted in the deaths of about 3200 Nigerians, not a small number of whom were killed in extrajudicial killings by the Nigerian army.

Like the Tuareg rebellion that touched off the crisis giving France the pretext for its invasion of Mali, the insurgency in northern Nigeria was born of the scarcity mandated by the international financial community and the corruption of local elites unwilling to spread the wealth.

Anthropologist Caroline Ifeka states in the *Concerned Africa Scholars Bulletin*: "The principal cause of growing youth militancy mobilising around ethnicity and Islamic reformism is the ruling class's failure to 'share' the 'dividends of democracy'—e.g. rental incomes from 'traditional' community owned strategic resources as oil, gas, gold, bauxite, uranium, water."

Unfortunately for Nigerians and the rest of the region, Europe, the U.S., and local elites have been able to use the emergence of Boko Haram and other Islamic forces to fortify the claim that trans-Saharan-Sahel military operations anchored with French, U.S., and UN troops will somehow bring security and democracy to the farmers and poor of the region.

In fact, both France and the U.S. are really concerned about being in the best competitive position vis-a-vis their imperialist rivals. Anyone paying attention to the January invasion of Mali learned about Malian gold and Nigerian uranium. Nigeria, until its recent displacement by Angola, was number three on the U.S. list of countries supplying petroleum imports.

Antiwar activists eager to push back U.S. government aggression around the world learned more about the stakes and background of these recent outrages by attending the United National Antiwar Coalition panel at the Left Forum in New York City on June 8. The speakers included Patrick Bond, professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Margaret Kimberly of the *Black Agenda Report*; Abayomi Azikiwe of the Pan-African Newswire; and *Virginia Defender* leader Ana Edwards, who visited Mali at the time of the invasion.

UNAC hoped that the panel would be one of many efforts this year to focus the attention of activists against drones and U.S. military interventions abroad on the increasing war being waged for profit against African peoples. ■

SF Pride leaders reject Bradley Manning

By ANN MONTAGUE

On June 7 the San Francisco Pride Board issued a statement that it was refusing to back down from its decision to overrule the vote to select Bradley Manning as grand marshal for this year's LGBT Pride Celebration. This was despite an angry May 31 community meeting at which many people had urged the board to reconsider.

On April 26, former grand marshals of San Francisco Pride, meeting in the organization's "Electoral College," announced that Pfc. Manning had been selected as honorary grand marshal for the June 30 event. Manning is currently being prosecuted by the U.S. military for disclosing information to WikiLeaks. The 82-year-old Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the "Pentagon Papers" in the midst of the Vietnam War, planned to be the stand-in for Manning in the parade.

Immediately, Lisa Williams, the president of the San Francisco Pride Board, rescinded the decision and issued a statement proclaiming that "Manning will not be a grand marshal in this year's San

Francisco Pride celebration."

She called the Electoral College selection "a mistake."

Referring to the alleged charges against Manning, Williams said that the SF Pride leadership would not tolerate "even the hint of support for actions which placed in harm's way the lives of our men and women in uniform." In making the statement, Williams chose to disregard the fact that investigations have shown that no members of the military were harmed by Manning's actions.

A protest rally was called for the following evening at the office of the SF Pride Board. One of the organizers, Michael Petrelis, reported on the event: "A big thank you to the 200-plus individuals who participated in our 90-minute rally early this evening at the SF Pride office, on behalf of accused gay whistle-blower Bradley Manning. Not a single elected official, homosexual or straight, attended, and a rally without a



(Above) S.F. chapter of Iraq Veterans Against the War and Civilian-Soldier Alliance rally to demand that Bradley Manning be reinstated as grand marshal in the June 30 Pride celebration.

politician to suck up activist energy is a great rally!

"The man who leaked the Pentagon Papers, Daniel Ellsberg, spoke to rousing cheers and announced he would attend

his first Pride March in June when he marches with the Bradley Manning contingent. Our call-and-response went like this: 'They say court martial! We say Grand Marshal! There was a strong lesbian and women's presence.'

Joey Cain, who had nominated Manning, explained, "He is an LGBT person who put his life on the line not only as a soldier but as a whistle blower, who exposed the lies of the U.S. military. He represents an aspect of the best of who we are as LGBT people."

There have been rumblings in every city about Pride becoming a corporatized, assimilationist event. Even organizations like Gay Shame have been formed specifically to protest what they saw as Pride's abandoning its original purpose.

Many people are amazed that an event that memorializes rebellion, liberation, and celebration of community has become a tool of corporations. But this action of the San Francisco Pride Board seems like a turning point.

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U.S. court frames Somalis for 'terrorism'

By STEFANIE LEVI

On May 16, a group of about 200 Somali people—mostly women—and their supporters from other communities assembled at the federal building in downtown Minneapolis. The people came to support Hawa Mohamed Hassan, 64, and Amina Farah Ali, 35, both residents of Rochester, Minn., at their sentencing hearing. The courtrooms were filled to overflowing.

An all-white jury convicted the women in October 2011 of the "crime" of volunteering to raise money for charitable organizations that support Somalis affected by ongoing wars back home. Their humanitarian actions have been framed as "providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization (FTO)." Amina Ali received a 20-year sentence and Hawa Hassan a 10-year sentence from Judge Michael J. Davis.

The women's trial followed that of several Somali men who had their homes raided and phone lines tapped by the FBI in 2011. The men were accused of providing material aid to the "FTO" al-Shabab. Some of the men had left the U.S. to fight in Somalia; some had provided humanitarian aid, as did Amina Ali and Hawa Hassan. The defendants in the 2011 case were given sentences ranging from two to 20 years.

"Zakia," a young Somali woman living in Minneapolis who was present at the women's trials and sentencing hearings, spoke openly with me about the response from the Somali community to the profound miscarriage of justice.

Zakia said that the local and international Somali diaspora communities believe that neither Hassan nor Ali should have been convicted of the charges in the first place since the women did nothing to perpetrate terrorism or violence. There is the belief that Somalis are being singled out and targeted as a community because of their Islamic faith and their culture: "Is our crime being terrorists, or is our crime being Moslems?"

Hawa Hassan and Amina Ali were involved in efforts to provide clothing and money for devastated people in their homeland. Al-Shabab was the organization that they and other Somalis trusted for the purposes of collecting and distributing such aid.

Al-Shabab was formed in 2008 by people formerly allied with the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), the body that had ruled most of southern Somalia for about a six-month period in 2006. Al-Shabab gathered strength as a resistance force against the occupying Ethiopian military. With U.S. military training and monetary support, Ethiopian troops invaded southern Somalia at the end of 2006. That was when the international Somali Diaspora community came out to provide aid for their war-torn country's people.

Much confusion ensued in the Diasporan Somali communities after the designation of al-Shabab as an FTO in 2008. Many people, including Amina Ali and Hawa Hassan, continued to organize and send aid. When the FBI raided their homes without providing search warrants,



Hawa Mohamed Hassan (left) and Amina Farah Ali leave St. Paul, Minn., federal courthouse in 2010.

they found no "material" evidence for the case. The only "evidence" they collected was recorded telephone conversations.

An article written by Carl Bloice for *Black Commentator* and also posted in *Global Research* on May 14, 2007, provides important insight on the parallels between the U.S. involvements in Iraq and Somalia and a brief history of the precursors to the conjoint U.S.-Ethiopia invasion, occupation, and further devastation of the latter. Here are some highlights:

Since the late 1970s, tens of millions of dollars sent into Somalia by the U.S. destabilized the country and set off civil and clan warfare; the U.S. push for IMF-imposed structural readjustments led to agricultural collapse and famines. The U.S. bombed Somalia in late January 2007, as the World Social Forum was underway in Nairobi, Kenya (and bombed the country again in March 2008).

Beginning in the summer of 2006, when the UIC took control of the Somali government, the U.S. and Ethiopian governments participated in collaborative planning to invade and occupy Somalia. The U.S. gave a thumbs-up for the Ethiopian government to go against the U.S. ban on weapons purchases from North Korea; U.S. troops participated in the invasion and occupation.

Nunu Kidane, network coordinator for Priority Africa Network, summed up U.S. intentions in Africa: "The U.S. political and military alliance with Ethiopia—which openly violated international law in its aggression towards Somalia, is destabilizing the Horn region and begins a new shift in the way the U.S. plans to have permanent and active military presence in Africa."

In 2007, the geopolitical reality for Somalia included a plan—placed on hold due to ongoing conflicts—for approximately two-thirds of its oil fields to be divided up by U.S. oil companies Amoco, Chevron, Conoco and Phillips. A proposal was put forward by its U.S.-backed prime minister that a new oil law be enacted to entice

foreign oil companies back to Somalia.

As is clear in Zakia's account, Somalis living here in the "land of the free" experience the Islamophobia and xenophobia experienced by their sisters and brothers in their African homeland at the hands of the U.S. military and its cronies.

Judge Davis appeared to have applied his own misperceptions and cultural biases in both his questioning and the sentences he handed down. The prosecuting attorneys were present at the sentencing hearings, but it was Judge Davis who did all the questioning. Many of his questions focused on religious themes.

An example was when the judge asked Hawa Hassan, "Would you agree that only conservative Moslem women dress the way you do?" Hassan replied, "This is what God has expected me to do. And I dress this way because Allah has ordered me to do so."

A local attorney who observed some of the sentencing proceedings told this reporter: "I was struck with the African American judge's air of 'American' cultural superiority and exceptionalism. I was surprised to hear him say things like 'my people came here in chains' in the same breath with which he then stated that it normally takes new immigrants three generations to fully assimilate into this great American cultural melting pot. He kept pressing for essentially an apology from anyone who may hold protective nationalistic views of their original homeland because it interferes with assimilation.

"His over the top 'Americanism' was too sappy and seemed designed to please the prosecutors and the press. It also seemed that he was trying to scare the mostly Somali spectators out of their 'failure to assimilate.'"

The attorney pointed out that the crime these women were charged with "comes with disproportionately onerous statutory punishments that do not equate with the gravity of the crime." On one day, al-Shabab is not a designated foreign terrorist organization, and therefore supportive charitable activity that has any connection to the organization is not criminal. The very next day, upon an administrative determination by the Secretary of State that labels the organization an FTO, the same activity has become a criminal offense.

"The judge," said the attorney, "has a signed photo of Nelson Mandela in his chambers. If Mandela's African National Congress were still struggling to end apartheid in South Africa today, it would be labeled an FTO."

As a result of the injustice served on the Somali community, many people are fearful when there's a knock on the door or they hear the doorbell ring. They are aware that they have rights with no teeth.

Still, the community will support Amina Ali and Hawa Hassan's appeals to the higher courts. A statement from Somali Community Members in Minnesota reads, "Amina Ali and Hawa Hassan have great hearts. These women will go beyond their ability to help others. Both are highly respected by many in the Somali community. They have touched the lives of so many of us here in the Twin Cities. ... Amina Ali and Hawa Hassan are great humanitarian workers."

There is deep respect for these two women as well as astute recognition of the lack of justice received from the court system operating in the belly of the beast.

... Bradley Manning

(continued from page 4)

Cain was outraged: "This is the first time that I know of that Pride has put its foot down and said to members of its own organization and community: 'You are not welcome. Your choice is not valid.' Even when they arrested members of Gay Shame [for rushing Gavin Newsom's car at Pride 2003], the Pride Board went to the police and said, 'Hey, you need to let these people go.' That's what made Pride what it is today, the notion of radical inclusivity."

Even *Guardian* reporter Glenn Greenwald, who lives in Rio de Janeiro because Brazil recognizes his relationship for immigration purposes and the U.S. does not, decided to weigh in. He wrote about the actions of the SF Pride Board in relation to the major corporate sponsors they have embraced for this year's march. He picked out AT&T and Verizon, the telecom giants that enabled the illegal warrantless eavesdropping on U.S. citizens and later were shielded from all criminal and civil liability. Corporate sponsors also include Bank of America and Wells Fargo, who are being sued for mortgage fraud.

Greenwald pointed out, "Also in good standing with the Pride Board is Clear Channel, the media outlet that broadcasts the radio programs of Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Glenn Beck; a pension fund is suing this SF Pride sponsor for making cheap, below-market loans to its struggling parent company. The health care giant

Kaiser Permanente, another proud SF Pride sponsor, is currently under investigation by California officials for alleged massive privacy violations in the form of recklessly disclosing 300,000 patient records, and was previously targeted with criminal and civil charges, which it settled, for dumping a homeless patient, still in a hospital gown, on skid row."

Is this what Pride has become? Of course, most cities are not receiving grants from city government. Nor do they have a "Pride Board" with a CFO. But as we head for home we always feel like we have just become "their" market and wonder where we can find the spirit of Stonewall.

Sean Sala, who calls himself an "LGBT National Military Activist," is calling for a boycott of the parade. In his statement he says, "San Francisco has spit in the face of the LGBT military by using a traitor to our country as a poster child. Manning makes Gay military, the Armed Forces and the cause of equality look like a sham. He deserves no recognition. I am calling on all LGBT military and National LGBT news to announce a boycott for San Francisco Pride."

The organizers of the Bradley Manning contingent are organizing to make sure it is large and loud. They are amending their estimate for the contingent from 150 to 500 but believe it will be even larger. They expect a number of veterans who support Bradley Manning to join their contingent, and Joey Cain says there are many people who had stopped coming to the parade who have said they will come and march this year. ■

Lakota file genocide charges against U.S. government



Charmaine White Face (left) and Canupa Gluha Mani flank Tracy Toulou, an official at the federal Office of Tribal Justice. The Lakota activists delivered their petition and charges to the U.S. government in Washington, D.C., on April 17.

By JEFF ARMSTRONG

The May 10 conviction of Guatemala's Efraim Rios Montt for genocide perpetrated against the Maya Ixil people of that tortured land—though reversed at least temporarily on May 31 by a 3-2 margin of the oligarchical elite's Constitutional Court—is a world historical precedent that started 13 years ago with a small but determined group of survivors of the U.S.-sponsored massacres of the 1980s.

Like the Ixil, the grassroots people of the Lakota (Sioux) nation are appealing for international support in their struggle to survive against a genocidal onslaught by the U.S. that began more than one and a half centuries ago and continues to this day. Long among the most formidable internal opponents to U.S. colonization, the Lakota remain at the forefront of indigenous resistance to corporate and governmental hegemony at the state, national, and international level.

When a delegation led by Lakota grandmothers attempted to file a formal complaint of genocide against the U.S. and its constituent states with United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on April 9, the elders and their supporters were penned in like cattle and blocked by security agents from entering the UN headquarters in New York.

"Our nation is experiencing genocide, and we have been coming to this house called the United Nations since 1984 asking for help, and they never, ever allow us in. We should be in there, we should be able to use the International Court of Justice," said Charmaine White Face. "No one wants to stand up to the United States. They're too scared of the United States. But who is the United States? It's every one of you."

Not surprisingly, the Lakota's efforts, like those of the Ixil, have been shunned by the corporate media, but they continue to gain momentum on many fronts. On June 3, they were scheduled to testify to the UN Human Rights Commission but were forced to reschedule the event to the following week due to alleged threats to the elders.

As evidence of genocide, the Lakota cite "the murder of Lakota people both past and present, persistent and ongoing mental and physical harm of Lakota; ongoing forcible transfer of Lakota children to non-Lakota and non-Native custody; forced sterilization of Lakota women; and ongoing genocidal conditions of life, including radioactive pollution, leading to the destruction of the Lakota Oyate as a distinct, and separate national, ethnic, and religious group." The Lakota grandmothers and their allies in the Lakota Solidarity Project have even produced a powerful, full-length documentary, "Red Cry."

But the UN complaint is just one facet of a multi-pronged legal, political, and educational movement by the Lakota to stop the state removal of children from

The UN complaint is just one facet of a multi-pronged movement by the Lakota to stop state removal of children into white foster homes.

their families into white foster homes and institutions, arguably the most salient and best-documented evidence of ongoing U.S. violation of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Article 2 of the genocide convention states: "... any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Historically, one could make a case for the applicability of most, if not all, of the above provisions to official U.S. policies against all indigenous peoples over more than two centuries. Certainly, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the Wounded Knee massacre (of which the perpetrators have yet to be stripped of their Medals of Honor), and Sand Creek slaughter perpetrated by the U.S. military in the latter part of the 19th century, the General Allotment Act of the same time period, the Termination/Relocation policy of the 1950s, the FBI's war on the American Indian Movement, and the cumulative legal decisions validating the above on explicit or implicit grounds of racial or cultural superiority come to mind as constituting violations of contemporary international standards of crimes against humanity, if not genocide per se.

Indeed, the ink was scarcely dry on the Genocide Convention before the U.S. deliberately set out to violate Article 2(e) by arbitrarily removing Native children from their families as part of a comprehensive strategy of abolishing reservation boundaries and absorbing indigenous peoples into the states that surround and besiege them.

In 1950 President Truman appointed Dillon S. Meyer, fresh from his experience administering the Japanese internment camps with an iron fist, as Indian Commissioner to carry out the final solution to the Indian Problem (i.e., their stubborn refusal to fade into the mists of history, itself a genocidal concept) that has haunted this

nation since its inception. It was the formal policy and procedure of the United States at the time to forcibly transfer indigenous children to white homes and boarding schools as a component of a strategy to "terminate" tribes as distinct peoples, meeting the essential threshold of intent under the Genocide Convention.

It would have been embarrassing to say the least if the Soviet Union or its allies would have initiated legal genocide charges against the self-avowed fount of human liberty at the United Nations. So it was that the U.S. celebrated its victory over genocidal Nazi imperialism by rebranding the practice in Indian Country as emancipatory individualism and refusing to ratify the 1948 convention until nearly 40 years later.

Ironically, it was the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 that enabled the U.S. to ratify the Genocide Convention by manifesting its intention to stop the wholesale removal of Native children from their families and tribes. ICWA established minimal protections of due-process rights for indigenous parents and recognized the exclusive jurisdiction of existing tribal courts to adjudicate child welfare cases within reservation boundaries, also allowing tribes to intervene in state cases.

Ratified by the U.S. in 1986, the Genocide Convention was not implemented until 1989, and then only after denying universal jurisdiction and limiting prosecutions under the act to a five-year statute of limitations for violations of the federal crime of genocide.

As a measure of the government's commitment to punishing the ultimate international crime, the federal offenses of arson, art theft, immigration violation, and some crimes against financial institutions all carry a statute of limitations period longer than five years. Rios Montt himself would be immune from prosecution under the federal genocide act.

Thwarted by the five-year limitation, the U.S. Justice Department indicted former Rwandan official Lazare Kobagaya in 2009 for allegedly lying about his participation in genocide on his application for citizenship, but the government failed to prove his involvement in the 1994 bloodbath and eventually dropped the charges.

A remarkable 2011 National Public Radio series, "Native Foster Care: Lost Children, Shattered Families," revealed that the federal government not only fails to enforce the baseline standards of ICWA against the states but actually underwrites the removal of Native children in some cases with additional funds, adding an economic incentive to the racial and cultural ones.

Focusing on South Dakota, a year-long investigation by NPR reporters Laura Sullivan and Amy Walters, found that 90% of the 700 Native children taken from their homes yearly in that state were placed in white foster homes or group homes, in blatant violation of ICWA provisions mandating that any Indian child taken into foster care be placed with a family member, tribal member, or other Native family in the absence of "good cause" to the contrary.

Far from punishing states for violations of ICWA, despite its finding that 32 states systemically violate its terms, the federal government effectively promotes the legal abduction of children by offering a \$12,000 bounty to the state for permanently removing "special needs" children from their natural families to adoptive placement, a designation the state of South Dakota applies to all indigenous children, according to NPR. Foster families in South Dakota receive as much as \$9000 annually for each child. While the federal government also provides ICWA workers for each reservation, these typically serve as flunkies for the states, at most tepidly attempting to shift federal funds to tribal coffers.

Perhaps the most damning revelation of the NPR report is its tracing of South Dakota's kidnapping-for-profit scheme to the state's highest official: "Critics say foster care in South Dakota has become a powerhouse for private group home providers who bring in millions of dollars in state contracts to care for kids. Among them is Children's Home Society, the state's largest foster care provider, which has close ties with top government officials. It used to be run by South Dakota's Gov. Dennis Daugard.

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“An NPR investigation has found that Daugard was on the group’s payroll while he was lieutenant governor—and while the group received tens of millions of dollars in no-bid state contracts. It’s an unusual relationship highlighting the powerful role money and politics play in South Dakota’s foster care system.” If the federal government were to uphold its obligations under ICWA and the Genocide Convention, Gov. Daugard would seem a fit candidate for the first indictment of a U.S.-born citizen under the federal genocide statute.

Daugaard declined to attend the May 15-17 Great Plains Indian Child Welfare Act Summit, despite a personal invitation from U.S. Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn, the top federal Indian bureaucrat. So Daugaard is not only aware, thanks to the NPR report, of the genocidal effects of policies from which he personally profited, but is unwilling to meet with the victims toward rectification of the crimes of his Department of Social Services, which include the cover-up of cases of sexual assault in white foster homes and extensive pharmaceutical drugging of children without parental consent. Following the governor’s lead, no South Dakota officials attended the historic meeting, in which nine tribes and top federal officials participated, along with more than 200 aggrieved tribal members.

The tribal summit and the NPR series were spearheaded by the Lakota People’s Law Project (LPLP), which has relentlessly challenged the state legally and politically and is bringing increasing pressure on the federal government to act. Dan Sheehan, chief legal counsel for the LPLP and director of the Romero [formerly Christic] Institute, said South Dakota officials are “into a total dialectical, confrontational stance. They’re feeling like they’re under siege from the tribes, so they’re circling the wagons and getting ready to fight.”

Sheehan said the South Dakota legislature has appropriated \$2.3 million to defend the state from a pending class-action federal civil rights lawsuit.

Sheehan traced the institutionalization of state kidnapping of Native children back to the late William Janklow, a former South Dakota congressman, governor, and attorney general notorious for his role in what the Lakota refer to as the “Reign of Terror” on the Pine Ridge Reservation in the years following the American Indian Movement-led occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973.

According to Sheehan, members of the George W. Bush administration tipped off Janklow on a Texas strategy to grab millions of dollars in federal subsidies by administering a psychological test devised by the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical corporation to children taken into pro-



Our nation is experiencing genocide and we’ve been asking the UN for help — but they never let us in.

— Lakota elder Charmaine White Face

(Above) Lakota elders and supporters carry petition to the United Nations in New York in April.

services to the tribes and to persuade the U.S. Justice Department to serve as lead plaintiff in its civil rights suit against the state. The latter is currently on hold pending the Supreme Court’s decision in the atypical “Baby Veronica” case, which challenges the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Sheehan says tribal officials have yet to determine whether they will support the Lakota Grandmothers’ UN genocide petition, suggesting their decision may hinge on whether the Justice Department exercises its responsibility to take up their cause domestically.

While it is unlikely that President Obama or Chief Justice Roberts (who termed the minimal protections of ICWA placement standards “extraordinary rights” in oral arguments) will ever be called to account by an international tribunal for complicity in genocide so long as the U.S. refuses to accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, they may wish to consider the potential damage to their personal reputations and that of their nation that even an unenforceable international verdict could bring. Just ask Lazare Kobagaya. ■

tective custody. Replicating the strategy, South Dakota developed a mental health test failed by 98% of Native children, who then become “special needs” cases under federal law, with the state receiving up to \$79,000 for each Indian child and the child being placed involuntarily on psychoactive drugs.

“They ask questions like ‘do you feel like people are staring at you when you go out in public’ in racist Rapid City, or ‘do you feel you’re treated unfairly’ to a child who’s just been uprooted from his home and placed with strangers,” said Sheehan.

The immediate priorities of the LPLP, Sheehan says, are to affect the transfer of South Dakota child-protection

... TURKEY IN REVOLT!

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lar segments, secularists seem to be slipping from their grasp. That said, seeing many portraits of Mustafa Kemal, and hearing chants like “we are Mustafa Kemal’s soldiers” is no surprise.

The banners of ODP (Freedom and Solidarity Party), EMEP (Labour Party), TKP (Turkish Communist Party), and the other left organizations now decorate Taksim Square, displacing commercial signs. However, these parties are small and they are far from leading the movement.

In numerical terms, the largest left party is the Turkish Communist Party. Like its sister party in Greece, the KKE, TKP followed a sectarian path until the revolt. For example, when thousands were fighting with the brutal police to try to gather in Taksim Square, the TKP held its own May Day rally in a different square. TKP militants are now with the masses. This illustrates an historical tendency for the rise of mass movements to marginalize sectarianism.

Socialist militants are more vocal than ever. They feel less isolated as millions join them in chanting their slogans against the AKP’s authoritarianism. For many, this is their first political action. They are receptive to new ideas, including the socialist ones.

The revolt in Hatay has a particular significance, and not only because the police killed a young militant there. Hatay is near the border with Syria, and its residents are increasingly affected by Erdogan’s war drive aimed at Syria. Only a couple weeks ago, many died in a terrorist attack, which is thought to be a consequence of Erdogan’s aggressive foreign policy.

Currently, Erdogan is on a tour of North Africa. In his absence, the AKP officials, and President Abdullah Gul, who used to

be an AKP big shot, half-heartedly apologized for the police brutality.

The bourgeois press shifted gears. It now tries to calm the masses, instead of simply ignoring them. However, the business media increasingly point fingers at the so-called “marginal groups” and “provocateurs.” Videos of non-uniformed cops with clubs who are attacking people illustrate who the real provocateurs are. On June 5 scores of young people were arrested for sending twitter messages! If the movement loses momentum, there is a risk of heightened repression. The police can target and arrest key militants, as their counterparts did in the aftermath of the Quebec student strike in 2012.

The revolt is far from over. Already it has enabled the masses to realize their political power. It is now at a crossroads. Its demands can be co-opted by the bourgeois rulers (which is the current trend), and remaining protesters can be marginalized; or the revolt can regain its momentum by challenging not only the rule of the AKP but the corporate agenda. Its success depends on engaging organized labour and the Kurdish national liberation movement.

This popular uprising underscores the urgent need for an independent mass labour party in Turkey. It demonstrates how obstructionist the corrupt labour bureaucracy can be. If the working class had its independent and organized political voice, this revolt could grow enormously and effectively to challenge the rule of capital.

This popular upheaval also demonstrates that social/political revolt is not a thing of the past. And when revolts begin, time accelerates! Turkey is already a different place than when my plane landed at Istanbul’s Ataturk Airport on May 30. But such upheavals require a revolution-



ary leadership equipped with the knowledge of history, and the experience of social movements, and a concrete programme and strategy, in order to claim political power and abolish capitalism.

As we say to our friends in Canada, and around the world, such a party should be built *prior* to the revolts, because during revolts there often isn’t sufficient time to build the necessary party that would be capable of uniting protesters around radical demands and leading them forward with correct tactics and a revolutionary strategy for power.

The revolt is in its essence a movement against the neo-liberal Islamist AKP, which has an anti-democratic character suited to ruling in the context of the present crisis of decaying global capitalism. Since capitalism is international, so should be the class struggle. Supporting the Turkish revolt is a part and parcel of building the international struggle against capitalism.

This revolt is not merely about defending a public park. It has a great potential to become a mass movement aiming to

take political power from the 1 per cent, by and for the 99 per cent. It can bring anti-labour Erdogan down if organized labour whole-heartedly supports the resistance. Workers in North America should demand that their organizations actively support the revolt. The progressive unions in Turkey need solidarity, and the conservative ones need to be pressured to act in the interest of the working class.

Turkish communities in major cities across North America have organized solidarity demonstrations. Kurdish communities should be encouraged to participate with their just demands. Any form of Turkish nationalism will alienate the Kurdish people.

Demonstrations should aim to put pressure on the Turkish state to halt the repression, release political prisoners, and meet the demands of the mass movement. In this framework, youths and workers, together with the Turkish and Kurdish communities in North America, should picket Turkish embassies and consulates. ■

Demand compassionate release for Lynne Stewart!



BY JEFF MACKLER

I returned last week from a Memorial Day weekend visit with my dear friend of some 50 years, the innocent political prisoner and victim of trumped-up charges of conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism, Lynne Stewart.

Lynne, 73, is incarcerated at the Federal Medical Center Carswell in Fort Worth, Texas. She has been transferred from a cell with six other women to a slightly less odious isolation and lockdown facility due to her vulnerability to infection following two chemotherapy treatments and other necessary but terrible chemicals that reduced her white blood-cell count to dangerously low levels.

Lynne suffers from Stage Four breast cancer, which has metastasized to her lungs, shoulder, back, and sternum. Her application for compassionate release was approved by the Carswell prison warden in early May. Federal probation officers in New York have since inspected and approved her residency at the Brooklyn home of her son Geoff Stewart. But Lynne's completed paper work has nevertheless remained without action on the desk of Bureau of Prisons Director Charles E. Samuels in Washington, D.C.

The bureaucratic powers that be have thus far declined to decide her fate. They will either follow the law and immediately grant Lynne freedom and "time served" and quickly usher her to the world-class Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan or, as is the tragic norm today, stand mute while Lynne remains in prison until irreparably consumed by her illness.

A Dec. 10, 2012, *New York Times* editorial told the story well: "Federal sentencing law has been indefensibly harsh for a generation, but in theory it has contained a safety valve called compassionate release. The 1984 Sentencing Reform Act gives federal courts the power to reduce sentences of federal prisoners for "extraordinary and compelling reasons," like a terminal illness. In practice, though, the Bureau of Prisons and the Justice Department, which oversees the bureau, have not just failed to make use of this humane and practical program, but have crippled it. That is the disturbing and well-substantiated conclusion of a new report by Human Rights Watch and Families Against Mandatory Minimums:

"From 1992 through this November, a period in

which the population of federal prisons almost tripled from around 80,000 to close to 220,000 inmates, the bureau released 492 prisoners under this program. This is a mere two-dozen or so on average each year, and the number has so far not surpassed 37. The percentage of prisoners released has shrunk from tiny to microscopic."

Prison officials first discovered in September that Lynne's breast cancer had reappeared in one lung but declined to notify her until a month later—by which time it had spread to the other lung. Lynne has been shackled hand and foot and around her belly while being shuttled to and from the Fort Worth medical facility for treatment and evaluation.

By the time she was informed of the modest improvement in restraining her disease's relentless progression in her lymph nodes and sternum, but not in her lungs, additional weeks had passed, and her wholly inadequate treatment was further delayed.

Meanwhile, doctors at Sloan Kettering state openly that the moment Lynne enters their facility, assuming that we can force the federal bureaucracy to act, Lynne will receive the finest state of the art options available to medical science—perhaps even sufficient to permanently defeat her aggressive cancer and allow Lynne to live at least some years more with family and friends close by, or even to enjoy a full life.

Some 20,000 have signed petitions for Lynne's immediate release, and thousands more have called Director Samuels as well as the offices of U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and President Obama. Now is the time for every progressive social movement to re-double their efforts to win Lynne's immediate compassionate release, including calls and letters to public officials and ceaseless protests in the streets everywhere.

My 14 hours with Lynne at Carswell were both joyous and yet filled with grief and pain as I watched her bravely endure this terrible suffering. Lynne is filled with energy and imbued with the revolutionary passion and dedication that has guided her life since childhood. She receives radical and socialist publications from virtually the entire movement as well as *The New York Times*. She is absorbed by and endlessly moved by great works of poetry and fiction and is ready

to discuss and debate the daily victories and defeats of every struggle to advance humanity's cause.

We met in a large cafeteria-like setting, with some 35 other women prisoners, often surrounded by their loved ones, including scores of children and relatives who snuggle close as if to share the suffering and humiliation attendant to prison life. I see no "guilty" human beings at Carswell, only victims of a hardened and cruel social order that denies all too many the basic elements for a decent life and optimistic future.

Lynne, a highly sophisticated and conscious life-long fighter for the poor and oppressed, cannot but be humiliated by a state of existence in which cold-faced guards refer to her as Mrs. S., disregarding her humanity and life accomplishments while occasionally instructing her that holding the hand of her beloved husband Ralph Poynter is against the rules. These endless rules are continually and arbitrarily spouted, and always with the threat of punishment close by, as when Lynne offers aid and comfort to a fellow prisoner in need of assistance.

I feel compelled to report an occasional tear falling from Lynne's loving and compassionate eyes as she contemplates the insanity of her dehumanizing state, including the dread death that inevitably awaits her if we cannot win her freedom now.

Lynne receives and reads countless letters from friends everywhere while managing a daily hour allotted for e-mail correspondence with her closest collaborators.

Today we need to flood the authorities with additional petitions and calls. All the necessary information is available at LynneStewart.org. Go to "Justice for Lynne Stewart," where you can sign the petition and make the calls to compel this cruel and hateful system to abide by the peoples' will. Checks can be made payable to the Lynne Stewart Defense Organization and mailed to: 1070 Dean Street, Brooklyn, NY 11216. ■

Call today:

- U.S. Bureau of Prisons Director Charles E. Samuels: 202-307-3198-ext. 3
- U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder: 202-514-2001
- President Obama: 202-456-1111

Jeff Mackler is the West Coast Coordinator of the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee.

A Letter from Lynne

Dear Friends and Supporters:

Four months ago I made a request for compassionate release, which was honored by the warden at Carswell Federal Medical Center. Today the papers are still on a desk in Washington, D.C. even though the terminal cancer that I have contracted requires expeditious action.

Although I requested immediate action by the Bureau of Prisons, I find it necessary to again request immediate action from you, my friends, comrades, and supporters, to call the three numbers listed above on Thursday, May 30, and request action on my behalf.

This could result in my being able to access medical treatment at Sloan Kettering so that I can face the rest of my life with dignity surrounded by those I love and who love me. Please do this.

Yours truly,
Lynne Stewart FMS CARSWELL-53504-054

A film on environmental activism

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

The documentary film, "Elemental," written and directed by Gayatri Roshan, should be seen by every cognizant human being on the planet, not only for its impact on one's perception of climate change, but also for the realization that one person can make a difference. It focuses on three individuals in disparate parts of the world—India, Canada, and Australia—who are passionate about doing what it takes to save a dying earth.

Eriel Tchekweie Deranger, mother of a pre-teen, is an Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations (ACFN) member. She be-

came aware of how the extraction of oil from tar sands in Alberta was impacting the land on which she and her family had lived for hundreds of years. A daughter of a 1970s activist, she began organizing protests locally, then worked as an activist throughout Canada and the U.S.

Rajendra Singh, a one-time government official in India, saw that the Ganges River had become so polluted as to cause disease and death, and that the river itself is dying. People toss dead bodies and refuse in the river daily, yet they bathe, worship, and wash everything in it. He started speaking out.

Jay Harman is an inventor and naturalist who got away from crowds and cities by escaping to the woods or the sea. He takes cues from the designs formed by shells and plants to engineer quieter, more effective fans. He has invented a device modeled on how nature cleans the atmosphere, which will do the same on a much larger scale, thus eliminating the

toxic pall that covers much of the earth.

Eriel, Jay, and Rajendra are not part of any environmental organization. Eriel did gain the support of the Rain Forest Action Network but was dropped because she was radically outspoken—which, she was told, didn't sit well with wealthy contributors.

She got the attention of environmentalist Robert Kennedy Jr. at an event in which he was the featured speaker. After reluctantly giving her the name of an important contact, Kennedy barked: "Don't screw this up!" and then disappeared into a crush of adoring sycophants.

Singh tells people, "You love Mother Ganges, you worship Mother Ganges, yes? Would you throw garbage at your own mother?" He brings his message to villagers and their leaders, gaining dedicated followers wherever he goes.

Cinematographer Emily Topper gives us breath-taking views of the verdant foothills of the Himalayas, where Singh

and his people trace the source of the Ganges. She allows the camera to linger, then raises it to capture the majesty of the range.

She also filmed the vast tar sands operation in Alberta, Canada. From the air, one sees wide dirt roads snaking through areas that look like death. Grey and brown scars curve over earth for miles, where no green tree or shrub can be seen.

In his debut non-fiction book, "The Shark's Paintbrush," out now, Jay Harmon continues to solve destructive or ineffective industrial problems, claiming it can be done by utilizing nature's designs, which he calls "biomimicry."

It is important that we take the messages that these three dedicated, passionate people deliver. Join Eriel Danger, Jay Harmon, and Rajendra Singh in their activism to ensure that generations to come—our children's children—will have clean air, water, and a living, breathing, vibrant earth. ■

By DAVID BERNT

Growing resistance to UPS contract proposal

A groundswell of resistance has developed among rank-and-file workers to a proposed concessionary contract at shipping giant United Parcel Service. Details of the five-year tentative agreement, which covers 240,000 workers represented by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, were revealed in early May at a meeting of local union officers. The UPS contract is the largest collective bargaining agreement in the United States.

When negotiations began, IBT General Secretary Ken Hall declared that the talks were going to be about gains for the members and concessions were off the table. Hall declared he would hold the line on pensions and health care and negotiate significant wage increases for low-paid part-timers, new full-time jobs, protection from management harassment, and reduce mandatory overtime for drivers, among other contract improvements.

Unlike most union bargaining these days, the IBT stated it would go on the offensive—looking for improvements instead of simply attempting to stop the bleeding of concessions. Many rank-and-file Teamsters applauded the move, considering UPS's \$4.5 billion in after-tax profits and its dominance in the parcel market.

Despite being a massive bargaining unit at a highly profitable employer, UPS Teamsters have a laundry list of grievances. The majority of union workers at Big Brown are part-time warehouse workers, who are paid poverty-level wages. The company seeks to make these jobs so unattractive in order to encourage turnover, so workers don't stay around to enjoy increased pay and benefits. Those who do stay are harassed so management can replace them with cheaper new hires.

Full-time opportunities take years to get, and if a part-timer doesn't or can't go driving it could take decades to get a full-time warehouse job. Full-time drivers, on the other hand, are paid well—yet they endure insane production standards, forced overtime, and management pressures.

For UPS drivers, 11 and 12-hour days are the norm, as the company prefers to make them work long hours instead of hiring more drivers and thus incurring the health-care and pension benefit costs. Drivers are constantly harassed about their production; they are time-studied and given a daily report about their performance. Injuries are common. Drivers are forced away from their families and personal lives, and deal with constant harassment from management.

However, the focus of bargaining shifted quickly after UPS proposed that members covered by UPS's company health-care plan pay \$90 a week in premiums, up from the current \$0 premi-



Labor Notes

(Left) Teamsters' UPS strike in 1997. The ranks were invited to participate in the contract campaign — unlike today.

um. Hall declared to members that this was unacceptable and that UPS Teamsters "won't pay \$90, \$9, or 9 cents." The IBT organized rallies across the country in UPS parking lots and union halls to defend health-care benefits. The calls for contract improvements took a backseat to "defend our health care."

When the contract language was revealed, UPS Teamsters were disappointed to find few gains. Wage increases in the new contract are less than under the current contract. There are no additional raises for part-timers, and starting pay will be a measly \$10 per hour for the life of the contract. Only 2350 new full-time warehouse jobs will be created, as compared to the 20,000 created in two previous contracts; in many buildings part-timers need 15-20 or more years of seniority to bid a full time warehouse job.

Wage progression to top scale for full-time jobs is increased from three years to four. The anti-harassment language is weak, and many UPS drivers fear it won't be enforced. Harassment is a critical issue especially for drivers, as UPS has installed GPS and sensors that monitor everything drivers do throughout their work day. Management uses the slightest infractions as a pretext to discipline and terminate drivers. Drivers were also looking for improved language to stop forced overtime; the contract again came up short.

However, what has really enraged UPS Teamsters is a new health-care plan that will cover 140,000 members. Members in the Central, Western, and

Southern states would be moved from the current UPS-run health-care plan to a union-run plan with inferior benefits. Under the new plan members would pay higher deductibles, get a worse dental plan, pay more for prescriptions, and have higher co-pays. While the new benefits would still be better than what most working people have, most working people don't work for the largest and most profitable transportation company in the world.

UPS rank-and-file workers are asking why their union is taking concessions at a company that is making record profits. UPS reported they made over a billion dollars in profit in the first quarter of this year on the very same day news broke of the tentative agreement. Many part-timers have stuck with the company despite the low wages and lack of hours exactly because of UPS's good health care. Every co-pay and deductible could be a serious hardship for many part-timers.

Additionally, health-care premiums for both current and future retirees will be raised from \$50 a month to \$300 by the end of the contract.

It is important to note that the driving force for UPS's demand for health-care concessions is Obamacare. The Cadillac tax, which penalizes employers who offer health-care plans deemed too generous, is giving companies the green light to slash benefits.

As details emerge from the Obama-care regulations, it has been revealed that union-run health plans will be disadvantaged in terms of access to

state-run exchanges, and low-wage workers in these plans will be ineligible for subsidies like workers in company plans or those who buy insurance. This has led to fears that UPS workers' benefits will further erode in the future when costs and penalties increase.

UPS rank and filers have not taken these attacks lying down. A "vote no" campaign has spread like wildfire throughout the country. Self-made "vote no" t-shirts and signs have been distributed among members. Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a nationwide reform caucus, is distributing leaflets with information on the contract at hubs across the country. A "Vote No" Facebook page has attracted thousands of members. Louisville Local 89's executive board has recommended a "no" vote on the national contract.

Rank-and-file activists are optimistic that the pushback to this concessionary contract may produce results. A "no" vote on the national contract is not out of the question. In addition to the national contract, members vote on regional supplements; if any supplement is voted down the national contract cannot be implemented. In the areas where the "vote no" campaign is strongest, a "no" vote on supplements is highly likely.

Local 705 in Chicago, which has a separate contract representing 9500 workers, is still in negotiations. Local 705 has a militant tradition and usually holds out longer than the IBT and gets more. In the last UPS contract 705 bargained down to the date of expiration and extracted major concessions.

Regardless of the outcome, the "no" vote campaign that has developed is evidence of the potential for rank-and-file mobilization to affect bargaining. When former president Ron Carey led the Teamsters, the power of the ranks was unleashed to fight the bosses, culminating in the historic 1997 UPS strike that shut down the company and won major gains for the workers. Instead of being pushed to the sidelines and forced to run "vote no" campaigns, the ranks were invited to participate in contract campaigns, and when the union went on strike, to lead mass picket lines.

A return to this type of leadership in the Teamsters, and every union, is the only way to stop the bleeding that is slowly killing the trade-union movement. ■

... Apple & taxes

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at the expense of each other and all humanity.

The McCain tiger's public attacks on Apple quickly gave way to great praise, with the right-wing senator ending his examination by asking CEO Cook why his antiquated cell phone was ever in need of changed apps. The Senate committee ended up praising Apple for its "incredible legacy," and according to *The New York Times*, "gushed over its products," calling Apple a "great company" that had managed to "change the world." Arch-libertarian free-marketer Rand Paul insisted that corporate attorneys who failed to take advantage of existing tax loopholes might be guilty of criminal negligence.

What we have said about Apple applies equally to the concomitant de-

struction of the environment, with all rational solutions to the rapidly advancing fossil-fuel-induced climate change set aside as in conflict with the deadly struggle for profits.

Capitalism's boom days, won at the cost of as many as 80 million dead in World War II, and hundreds of millions more killed in the wars since that global conflagration, are over. Either working people organize to challenge the system, including the construction of mass working-class and revolutionary socialist parties deeply implanted in all the inevitable struggles ahead, or humanity's future is bleak indeed.

History demonstrates again and again that the vast majority has the power to build the world on new foundations and bring into being the socialist future that thrives on the collective satisfaction of the needs of the overwhelming majority as opposed to those of the rapacious few. ■

... Monsanto

(continued from page 12)

chase Monsanto products year after year.

GMO seeds are not meant to help poor societies feed themselves. On the contrary, the promotion of these seeds dovetails with the take-over of agricultural land by vast chemical-dependent, oil-dependent, and water-wasteful corporate farms.

These farms are geared toward producing mono-crops like soybeans or corn for the processed food industry—while spewing pollution into the waterways and air, and poisoning our bodies.

Monsanto and GMOs are an especially flagrant example of how the drive for capitalist profits operates to destroy

what is best for health and the environment. It is unjust and immoral to harness scientific discovery to the production of environmental Frankensteins like GMO seeds; instead, science should be utilized in an emergency program to clean up pollution, halt global warming, replenish the natural environment—and really end world hunger.

Monsanto and its friends in government must be stopped. Big agribusiness and the biotech labs should be nationalized under the control of workers and family farmers, and realigned to produce food and other items that can nurture people and the natural environment.

Ultimately, we need to build a movement that can end the profit-hungry capitalist system entirely, and bring about a worldwide socialist society. ■

Henry Morgenthaler and the fight for reproductive rights in Canada



By ROBBIE MAHOOD

Crusading pro-choice doctor Henry Morgenthaler died in Toronto on May 29 at the age of 90. His death came three months after the 25th anniversary of the 1988 Supreme Court decision striking down Canada's federal abortion law. That victory for women's reproductive rights was the product of more than 20 years of struggle in which Dr. Morgenthaler played a key role.

Born in 1923, Morgenthaler grew up in Lodz, Poland, the son of a trade-union organizer affiliated to the Socialist Jewish Bund. In 1939, at the age of 16, his family was thrown into the maelstrom of the Nazi occupation and the impending Judeocide. Morgenthaler's father perished early on, and so subsequently did his mother and sister. But Henry and his brother managed to survive their internment at Aushwitz and Dachau.

Morgenthaler emigrated to Canada in 1950, settling in Montreal. In doing so, he chose to throw in his lot with a country and a province still rife with anti-Semitic prejudice. Israel did not attract the young Morgenthaler, and in this sense he took his stand with the tradition of Jewish universalism rather than with the exclusivity and colonial ambitions that underlay the Zionist project.

Having completed his medical studies in French at Université de Montréal, Henry established a practice in the working-class east-end of the city. There, he encountered the burden of unwanted pregnancy and the desperation of women who sought to end it. He re-oriented his practice first to contraception, and then began to perform abortions in his clinic in defiance of the law. He had earlier joined the Humanist Society and became a prominent public pro-choice advocate.

In 1970, his clinic was raided and he was arrested. Consecutive trials resulted in jury acquittals, until the jury verdicts were overturned by the Supreme Court and he was sent to prison. During his 10 month incarceration, he suffered a heart attack. Upon his release, he returned to providing abortions, finally securing an amnesty in 1976 from the first Parti Québécois government. Thereafter, doctors performing abortions in free-standing clinics were granted immunity, rendering the federal law null and void in Quebec.

On the basis of that hard-won victory in his home province, Morgenthaler launched an offensive in English-speaking Canada in the mid-1980s, opening clin-

ics in Toronto and Winnipeg. He continued to defy the state and powerful anti-choice forces until his Supreme Court victory in 1988.

Canada is one of a handful of countries in which access to abortion is not constrained by law. Access is still restricted because of geographic or funding disparities. Nevertheless, the 1988 judgment represented a great advance for women's physical and mental health and has produced a generation who regard abortion as an established right for all women.

One could criticize Morgenthaler's limited political perspectives or his personality quirks, but he was a true hero willing to sacrifice for a cause in which he and millions of others believed. His life is testimony to the important role exceptional individuals can play in history. At the same time, most of the commentary that greeted his death has given short shrift to the social and political factors that came together to make this breakthrough for reproductive rights possible.

At the very time that Morgenthaler was establishing himself professionally in Montréal, Quebec was on the cusp of a national and class awakening that shook the foundations of Anglo-Canadian domination that had prevailed for almost 200 years. Not the least of the many facets of this rebellion was the determination of Québécois women to throw off the yoke of the patriarchal system supervised by the Roman Catholic Church that was an integral part of their national oppression. To this day, conservative religious forces have been unable to restore their former ideological authority, including in matters of sexuality and gender oppression.

The arrival of so-called Second Wave feminism was an absolutely critical factor in the abortion rights struggle in Canada and Quebec. A key initiative was the 1970 Abortion Caravan, culminating in 35 women chaining themselves to the gallery benches of the House of Commons. In Canada, as elsewhere, the women comrades of the organizations affiliated to the Fourth International were important builders of the abortion rights campaigns.

During the contestation of the 1980s, a socialist feminist leadership schooled in that tradition successfully fought for two important positions—the insistence on mass action in the streets to counter the anti-choice mobilisations and the importance of defending the clinics from anti-choice harassment. These tactics were advanced not against but parallel to the lobbying efforts of the mainstream pro-choice

organizations and Morgenthaler's own legal challenge. Thus the unity of the movement was preserved at the same time as a mass response to the right-wing offensive was put into operation.

Socialist feminists took the struggle into the main institutions of the labour movement, notably the Ontario Federation of Labour and the New Democratic Party (NDP). Bringing the labour movement on side helped shift the balance of forces in English-speaking Canada, where there is a partial but nonetheless significant political polarisation along class lines.

In the end these factors were critical: the removal of Quebec as a reactionary backwater and the rapid embrace by the vast majority of Québécois of unrestricted access to abortion, coupled with a more polarised atmosphere in the Rest of Canada with powerful anti-choice forces but also a strong pro-choice response driving a wedge through society. These were sufficient to shift the consensus in Canada's highest court and to break the resolve and ability of the bourgeois parties to keep some sort of statutory limitation on women's right to choose.

In this respect, women in Canada and Quebec are in advance of their sisters in the United States and Mexico. On this issue at least, the relationship of forces is more favourable north of the 49th parallel, reflecting weaknesses in the Canadian bourgeois state.

However, no social advance is safe in this crisis-ridden epoch of capitalist decay. The failure of the NDP and the labour movement to challenge the offensive by the employer class have produced an aggressively right-wing government with a majority in parliament. The religious right figure prominently in the Conservative Party. Anti-choice forces are regrouping, ever alert to tactics that would erode the right to choose.

Harper's political instincts tell him a frontal assault on abortion rights is to be avoided. He keeps the anti-choice zealots in his caucus on a tight leash. But he has permitted a number of private member's bills to see the light of day. The latest of these takes aim against the phantasm of sex-selective pregnancy termination, trading on racist stereotypes about Asian parents. Of course, over 95% of abortions in Canada are performed before the sex of the fetus can even be ascertained. Of the remaining, almost all are terminations for genetic anomalies.

The anti-choice forces purport to defend women, laying a trap for the unwary. They are searching for potential wedges with which to pry open the lid that was closed to them in 1988, while hiding their true agenda—which remains the obliteration of women's reproductive rights.

Harper pretends to be above the fray. In reality, he offers a platform to the anti-choice zealots. In the international arena he has withdrawn funding from any organizations that include safe abortion in the measures they advocate for improving women's reproductive health. And the anti-woman agenda of the Tories is further underlined by its cancellation of the universal child-care program, abandonment of pay equity legislation, cuts to funding of dozens of women's groups, and refusal to hold a public inquiry into missing aboriginal women.

It is always more difficult to defend a social advance that is taken for granted even though it enjoys widespread support. That is the case with abortion rights in Canada today, including in Quebec.

How can we counter the renewed right-wing anti-choice offensive? If the struggle of the women's movement and Henry Morgenthaler teaches us anything, it is the importance of mass action, of not ceding the streets or public platforms to a powerful and ideologically motivated enemy.

Socialists want to see all abortions funded under medicare and oppose any move toward de-funding. That includes opposing the exclusion of refugee claimants from abortion coverage, part of Ottawa's shameful attack on refugee health rights. We support making abortion services more accessible for rural and geographically isolated women and in the meantime covering travel costs to centres where abortion is available.

For free access to safe abortion in all countries! Solidarity with women internationally, struggling for maternal health rights that include abortion! Take the defense of abortion rights once again into the unions and the NDP, the mobilisation of whose ranks was so integral to past advances. ■

Robbie Mahood is a member of Socialist Action / Ligue pour l'Action socialiste in Montreal. He is a former physician abortion provider.

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Right-wing governments in Canada seem to be on the ropes. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's regime is mired in scandals, the latest centred on a \$90,000 payoff by his former chief of staff to cover up misappropriation of funds by Conservative Senator Mike Duffy. Three Tory Senators accused of padding their expense claims now sit outside the Tory caucus as "independents" while the RCMP investigates.

Toronto's "stop the gravy train" Mayor Rob Ford claims he doesn't use crack cocaine. But two *Toronto Star* reporters, and the owner of U.S. website *Gawker*, swear they saw hizzonner in a video sucking the smokey contents of a crack pipe. Five staffers quit the mayor's office in the two weeks after the news broke. Ford insists there is no such video, but according to inside sources, he confided to his staff that he knew the location of the hidden video. And one of the people pictured partying with Ford was found by police dead of gunshot wounds.

Montreal's mayor, Gérald Tremblay, resigned in early November in the midst of an eyebrow-raising inquiry that revealed widespread corruption among city officials, contractors, and members of organized crime. Just a few days later, Gilles Vaillancourt, the head of Quebec's third-largest city, Laval, quit in the same context.

The Ontario minority Liberal government was rocked by revelations that it spent nearly \$1 billion to cancel the construction of unpopular gas plants west of Toronto, just to save Liberal seats in the Fall 2011 provincial election. After months of denial, and failure by former Premier Dalton McGuinty to release thousands of pages of incriminating evidence, new Premier Kathryn Wynne apologized for the wasteful fiasco.

Media pundits call it a right-wing meltdown. It's entertaining. It sells papers. In the case of Toronto, there was even a side benefit—it helped to kill a harmful downtown mega-casino project. But, looking at the big picture, scandal is no cure for austerity. Severe cutbacks and attacks on employment insurance, pensions, public services, environmental protection, scientific in-

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Right-wing meltdown is no cure for austerity



(Left) Toronto Mayor Rob Ford is under fire.

formation gathering, and civil liberties continue apace. The fact is, such measures are integral to the corporate agenda in force, regardless of the political stripe of the ruling party.

The situation in Toronto further illustrates the deeper problem. Liberals and social democrats, the main city council opposition to Ford's wilting ultra-right wing, are

chomping at the bit. They yearn to introduce new gas and sales taxes. They promote service fees, parking levies, and road tolls to fund rapid transit projects urgently needed to relieve traffic gridlock.

Instead of proposing to tax big business, giant banks, wealthy developers, rich property owners and untaxed religious institutions, Ford's opposition and the business media agitate for regressive taxes (the kind not based on ability to pay), which hit workers, seniors, students, and the poor the hardest.

All of this goes to show what the real problem is. It's the system. It matters little which eccentric leader, or authoritarian bigwig, or capitalist party happens to be at the top. Scandals are just a sign of divisions in the ruling class. They can be interesting, even mildly satisfying when they (however temporarily) humble the arrogant.

But scandal mongering is no substitute for mass action. Working-class political action is what's needed now to stop labour concessions, to reverse social cuts, to restore and extend democratic rights—in short, to win a Workers' Agenda. ■

BC election, Ontario budget show failure of NDP 'moderation'

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The obvious lesson from the May 27 British Columbia provincial election is "don't trust opinion polls." But what can we learn from the NDP campaign* besides the fact that the Toronto Maple Leafs is not the only team capable of blowing a lead late in the game?

Consider the observation of Tara Ehrcke, president of the Victoria Teachers' Association (affiliate of the B.C. Teachers' Federation): "My greatest disappointment about this election was not the outcome, but the fact that not a single party stood up and spoke out for a radical re-evaluation of the massive inequity in our society. No political party really spoke to the need to tax the wealthy and to reinvest that money in services that benefit everyone, collectively. Like every election in my adult memory ... the debate was between a neo-liberal party of the right, and an NDP trying to be a Blairite party of the centre who speaks left to a left audience, right to a right audience, and promises nothing to anyone for fear someone might not like it."

Reporter Justine Hunter wrote in the May 16 *Globe and Mail* (BC edition): "Over his two years as leader, Mr. Dix developed an agenda that was designed not to spook voters. The slogan was change, 'one practical step at a time.'" He courted business interests with the

promise that he would not try to move too fast.

Thomas Walkom, *Toronto Star* columnist, put it best on May 16, pointing out that British Columbia's election was "a test run for the new, moderate, incrementalist NDP. ..."

"It was at its core a strangely defensive campaign, as if the NDP were saying to voters: 'We know you're sick of the Liberals and wary of us. But don't be frightened. You can vote for us without fear of our doing much.'"

"The strategy didn't work. First, the NDP can't escape its own past. By any reasonable standard, it ceased to be a socialist party long ago. But no matter how many times it tries to purge its constitution of anti-capitalist language, a good many voters still view it as a party of the left.

"Christy Clark's Liberals seized on this. ... My guess is that the New Democrats nationally will run into the same problem during the 2015 federal election campaign. It will be difficult to convince those who mistrust left-wing parties that the new, moderate NDP has changed its spots. ... "Andrea Horwath's Ontario New Democrats, who prefer equally bite-size pieces of practical policy to broad vision might want to reflect on Dix's failure here."

That brings us to the budget of the Ontario Liberal minority government, which Ontario NDP Leader An-

drea Horwath decided to support in the third week of May. Let's be clear. Premier Kathryn Wynne's budget is a capitalist austerity budget. There is a 1% cap in annual programme spending; a 3% allowable annual rise in tuition fees; zero growth in hospital base funding; 2% growth in annual health care spending; \$100 increase in the monthly Ontario Child Benefit (instead of the \$200 promised in the Liberal poverty reduction plan), and income testing of seniors' drug costs. A 1% hike in social assistance rates; 0% increase in the minimum wage.

And, of course, all of this is built on a two-year wage freeze across the public service, and on the imposition of unjust terms and conditions forced on Ontario education workers, including suspension of collective bargaining and the right to strike. A working-class party that supports such an agenda ends up paying a big political price. Just ask Bob Rae.

For what they're worth, the latest opinion polls, following NDP endorsement of the budget, show the Liberals up, and the NDP dropping into third place, well behind the Tories. The NDP Socialist Caucus slogan sums it up best: To survive, the NDP must turn left. ■

*If the judicial recount confirms the NDP win in Coquitlam-Mailardville, the B.C. Liberals will end up with 49 seats in the legislature, the NDP 34, the Greens and independent Vicki Huntington one each.

CAW-CEP merger: Undemocratic from the start

By BRUCE ALLEN

At the end of August 2013 a new union, called Unifor, will be launched in Canada, with a membership of over 300,000 workers. At a convention in Toronto, the Canadian Autoworkers (CAW) and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP), will officially merge, creating the largest private-sector union in the country.

Potentially, Unifor will be more powerful and influential than either of its founding parts. But size is certainly not synonymous with effectiveness.

Increasingly, there are compelling reasons to view this merger with apprehension. CAW rank-and-file members have next to no idea what is going on. The merger process has been effectively shaped behind closed doors. Few even know who the people are on the committees that have been assembling the terms of merger of the two unions.

The bureaucracies of the two unions have exclusively shaped the process. Only

now are they engaging, in a very limited and controlled way, local union leaders and members via a series of information meetings and a conference call.

Initially, 14 information meetings about the merger were scheduled to take place across Canada. Half were in Ontario. Only one meeting each was held in the provinces of B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. None was held in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador. This was hardly conducive to accessibility and transparency.

But the most damning thing is that neither individual members nor local unions can send resolutions to the founding convention. What this effectively means is that the bureaucracy of these two unions is going to present a complete merger package for the delegates chosen by the membership. Delegates will have a choice between rubber stamping the entire merger package, or voting against it and effectively scuttling the merger.

Moreover, when the critical vote is held,

if past experience is indicative, there will be an element of intimidation at work. The person chairing the convention will likely make it a standing vote—never mind having a secret ballot. Thus, delegates who want to vote against the merger package will find themselves having to stand up with the eyes of everyone in the room glaring at them.

The process reveals there will be a real absence of democracy in the new union—which has been absent in the CAW at the national level since its inception, exemplified by the fact that, at the CAW's national council meetings, not one recommendation of the national president has been voted down since 1992.

Back in 1985, when the Canadian Region of the United Auto Workers broke from the UAW to form the CAW, large general membership meetings were held in which the union's rank and file could express their views without facing a wall of intimidation. They debated the issue of forming a new union, and then voted by a show of hands. Nothing comparable is

happening this time around.

This shows that rather than moving towards a stronger, more influential and democratic organization, what is emerging is one big unaccountable, self-perpetuating, privileged bureaucracy, over which the rank and file will have very little control.

Despite this generally bleak picture, some hope lies in the fact that the bureaucracies of the two unions have left huge issues unresolved. Foremost among these is the question of political action, which centres on the future relationship to the NDP. They have no answer for this, and it is certain to spark intense debate.

I am hoping this debate will lead to what veteran CAW and socialist militant Joe Flexer used to call "an outbreak of democracy." The task then will be to pour gasoline on the fire and break things wide open. That opening should include challenging the longstanding embrace of contract concessions by both organizations, and the tepid, selective support given to social movements resisting the austerity agenda. Only if these things are done will the merger constitute a historic step forward for the labour movement. ■

Millions join world protests against Monsanto and GMOs

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

An estimated 2 million people demonstrated worldwide on May 25 to protest Monsanto. The corporation, headquartered in St. Louis, is the largest producer and distributor of genetically modified seeds (GMOs)—which are a growing threat to the natural environment, the livelihood of small farmers, and a healthful food supply. GMOs are now in some 70 percent of the processed foods consumed in the U.S.

March Against Monsanto organizers said that events were held in at least 436 cities and 52 countries, from Britain to Argentina.

One of the largest U.S. demonstrations was in Portland, Ore., where the march was estimated at from 3000 to 6000 people. About 2000 marched in New York City, 2000 in St. Paul, 2000 in Eugene, Ore., 1000 in Miami, 800 in Orlando, 800 in Philadelphia, close to 1000 in Sacramento, 400 in Providence, and 100 in Duluth. Hundreds marched in Los Angeles, where home-made signs carried slogans such as “I am not a lab rat!” “Why is the government protecting Monsanto?” “Label GMOs; it’s our right to know,” and “Happy cows do not eat GMOs.”

In Hartford, Conn., from 300 to 500 people rallied in the rain outside the Statehouse—where legislators had recently defeated a bill to require labeling of GMOs to consumers. An organizer told the crowd that this should be a year of grassroots education, so that next year hardly a single person in the state would not know the story of GMOs.

The Monsanto protest movement grew amazingly in just a few months. It started in February when organizer Tami Canal created a Facebook page calling for mass demonstrations. Canal has told the press that the movement will build on the successful May 26 actions: “We will continue until Monsanto complies with consumer demand. They are poisoning our children, poisoning our planet.”

Genetically modified crops (GMOs) are grown from seeds that are altered for purposes such as facilitating plant growth and improving appearance; increasing shelf life; speeding the process of conversion to bio-fuel; repelling insects, viruses, and fungi; and tolerating chemical herbicides and pesticides. Studies have shown a link between the use of GMOs and increased allergies and organ toxicity. Moreover, the use of GMOs has spawned the use of heavier doses of herbicides and pesticides to combat mounting resistance to the substances by weeds and insects.

Throughout its history, Monsanto has been protected by federal and state government officials. The corporate media likewise can be depended on to promote the company line. Congressional legislation has virtually allowed Monsanto and other gentech and chemical corporations to regulate themselves, with minimum review by agencies such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In 1992, the FDA concluded that there was no difference between genetically modified and non-engineered plants.

The Obama administration is a strong cheerleader for genetically modified foods, swiftly rubber-stamping in recent years a dozen new seed products as safe and ready to be marketed. Monsanto executive and attorney Michael Taylor became a top official at both the FDA and the USDA under Bill Clinton, and more recently, after another stint at Monsanto, was re-appointed by Obama to the FDA and to the USDA Office of Foods. In the 1990s, Taylor had a key role in Monsanto’s suit against dairy farmers who had dared to label their products “rBGH-free” (referring to the use of recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone).

The May 25 demonstrations received additional momentum from the fact that two days earlier, the U.S. Senate had rejected a farm bill amendment to let states decide whether to require labels on food or beverages made with genetically modified ingredients. And on the same day, the Senate blocked an attempt



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

Throughout its history, Monsanto has been protected by U.S. government officials.

to repeal a measure dubbed the “Monsanto Protection Act,” which allows the Secretary of Agriculture to overrule any court injunction against planting seeds that had been deemed unsafe. Groups pressing for food protection have gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures on petitions against the measure.

In her new book, “Foodopoly,” Food & Water Watch director Wenonah Hauter comments: “It is not a surprise that the biotech industry is able to dictate policy to sitting presidents, members of Congress, and the regulatory agencies. Since 1999, the fifty largest agricultural and food patent-holding companies and two of the largest biotechnology and agrochemical trade associations have spent more than \$572 million in campaign contributions and lobbying expenditures.”

Monsanto was founded in 1901, and operated throughout much of the 20th century as a major manufacturer of drugs, plastics, and chemicals—gaining wealth through military contracts in wartime. It was one of the main producers of PCBs until the 1970s, DDT during the Second World War, Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, genetically modified plants in the 1980s, and recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone in the 1990s. In recent years, it has spun off most of its chemical and drug business, while acquiring a much larger stake in the distribution of agricultural seeds.

In the 1970s, Monsanto created glyphosate (Roundup)—the most widely used chemical weed-killer in the United States—which is still responsible for some 10 percent of the company’s profits. In more recent years, the corporation developed seeds that enable food crops to withstand Roundup. Many major U.S. crops are now grown from genetic modified seeds—engineered mainly for the purpose of being “Roundup Ready.” These crops include corn (88 percent was genetically modified in 2011), soybeans (94 percent), cotton (94 percent), canola (90 percent), and sugar beets (90 percent).

Monsanto and the FDA declare that Roundup is safe,

but laboratory studies have indicated that its ingredients, even in low concentrations, can cause human embryonic, placental, and umbilical cells to die. Other studies link Roundup with hormone damage and liver damage in lab rats.

Monsanto promised farmers that the use of Roundup Ready seeds and its other GMO products would reduce the amount of herbicide they needed to apply to their fields. But farmers are now seeing the reverse happen. Because “superweeds” have become resistant to Roundup on close to 15 million farm acres (especially in the Midwest), the growers in those areas feel compelled to use heavier quantities and stronger compounds of herbicide.

To answer this need, Monsanto’s main competitor, Dow Agrosciences, has a new product for farmers with significantly increased concentrations of 2,4-D—the main ingredient of Agent Orange, which the U.S. military employed in the Vietnam War in the 1970s to defoliate the jungle, and which is blamed for cancer and other fatal diseases.

A similar phenomenon is taking place in regard to animal pests; since rootworms, for instance, are becoming resistant to Monsanto’s GMO corn that is meant to repel them, growers have been greatly increasing the dosage of insecticide that they apply.

Monsanto responded to the May 25 protests with a press statement defending their products and alleging that their seeds help farmers produce more from the land while conserving resources such as water and energy. The corporation often touts its GMOs as part of the process to “end world hunger.” However, several studies have indicated that genetically modified seeds do not increase crop yields—quite the opposite.

A University of Wisconsin study in 1999 compared soybean yields in 12 U.S. states, and found that GMO varieties were 4 percent lower than with conventional plants. A University of Nebraska study in 2000 found that GMO soybeans were six to 11 percent lower in yield than conventional ones.

GMO seeds have not been engineered to help poor farmers. They have not been developed for laudable goals such as aiding plant growth in marginal soils or arid conditions, or reducing dependency on expensive chemicals and machinery. Instead, they are designed to force farmers to end their traditional practices of sharing and saving seeds (with threats of being sued for patent infringement), and to require them to pur-

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