

FIRE THIS TIME



The Newspaper of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice

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FREE

STOP THE WAR ON THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ

Canadian Troops Out of the Middle East!

By Shannon Bundock

On November 17th, Vancouver saw the first big demonstration against the latest threat of war on Iraq. Tens of thousands took to the streets to protest the US war on Iraq and to demand that Canada refuse to involve itself in an unjust imperialist attack. On January 18th there were demonstrations in 30 cities from coast to coast, with 15,000 reported in Vancouver, 25,000 in Montreal, 5,000 in Toronto, 7,000 in Saskatoon, and smaller actions elsewhere. The anti-war sentiment in BC is growing rapidly. The latest polls show that 60% of British Columbians are opposed to unsanctioned US intervention, with a large number of these people opposed to the attack on Iraq regardless of UN approval. February 15th is the date of the most recent march called by the broad based November 17th Peace Coalition

in Vancouver. This action will coincide with demonstrations that have been called in towns and cities across the globe.

With the potential for war increasing each day, people are feeling an urgency to take action. Recent census data has shown that nearly 20% of Canadians are foreign born: this clearly results in a local population with an international perspective. People living in Canada have family and friends worldwide and are not isolated from those living in parts of the world being targeted in these imperialist military assaults. This has led to an analysis of what this push for war means and there is the possibility for great sharing of experience and perspective when people are brought together through an anti-war movement. However, the numbers in the streets are still only a fraction of those that oppose the US-led war drive. Oppressed people are able to see through the thin veil



Anti-war March and Rally in Vancouver, January 18th

of "anti-terrorism" and recognize that this war is yet another attack by imperialist capital on oppressed people.

The Arab world joined the international effort by demonstrating in Gaza and Nablus in Palestine; Amman, Jordan; in Bahrain, and in Baghdad, Iraq, commemorating the anniversary of the beginning of the Gulf war 12 years ago.

Demonstrators in Lahore, Pakistan had to face soldiers and police as they tried to march to the U.S. Embassy, and although capitalist India and Pakistan are at odds, Indian workers also demonstrated against the Iraq war on Jan. 18. There were a series of demonstrations in the Philippines and another action has been set for Bandung, Indonesia. In addition, there were demonstrations and other acts of protest of thousands

in cities across Japan on Jan. 18-19.

Overall, there are over 500 cities, with representation from all over the world, planning to participate in the action on February 15th. And the protests have not gone unnoticed; the city of New York has already taken action against this threat of numbers by refusing to grant a permit for the proposed Feb 15th march in New York.

The anti-war movement shows clearly the divide between the ruling class and working and poor people; despite the millions calling for a stop to the pending attacks, the imperialist nations are only responding by increasing their threats on Iraq. Working and poor people across the world have strength in unity and numbers. We are fighting and must continue to fight by taking to the streets and demanding an end to imperialist threats and wars.

Immigrant Rights, Refugee Rights, Workers Rights

By Mike Krebs

"Canada and the United States have the same commitment to refugee protection and the same international obligations."

-Denis Coderre, Canadian Minister of Immigration

Last year, the Canadian Government made significant changes to immigration and refugee policy, designed to further restrict the rights of those not born within the borders of

Canada. The new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (formerly bill C-11), which came into effect last June, increased the ability of immigration officials to make "strategic detentions", and made it more difficult for people to make refugee claims in Canada. The act also included the creation of the 'Maple Leaf' Card, which is required for all landed immigrants in Canada.

There are several more changes that the Canadian government is currently looking into which

will severely restrict the rights of immigrants, refugees, and those with Canadian citizenship. This includes Bill C-18, the proposed Citizenship bill, which not only makes it more difficult for people born abroad to obtain Canadian citizenship, but also creates a new process to 'revoke the citizenship of a person who has acquired, retained, renounced or resumed citizenship by false representation or fraud'.

Another proposed measure is the granting of "safe third country" status to the US, meaning that refugees who come to Canada first through the US would be forced to return to the US and file a refugee claim there, even though their ability to be granted refugee status is even more restricted in the US. This is a completely arbitrary measure to restrict the rights of refugees, since there is no real reason why it matters whether refugees travel directly to Canada or land in Seattle, then head up to Canada where they will face less of a chance of being deported back to an oppressive country. This is similar to the 'continuous journey rule' that Canada had in the past, which was explicitly designed to restrict

immigration from India. This use of arbitrary law to restrict immigration based on country of origin underlines the racist nature of Canadian immigration and refugee policy.

The minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada has also proposed a new national ID card equipped with biometric identifiers such as iris scans, facial recognition and fingerprints embedded in the new card. The Federal Privacy Commissioner George Radwanski has criticized this proposed National ID card system, including what he referred to as a 'Big Bother Database' that would be used to keep track of people in Canada. Using the hysteria of 'terrorism' and threats to national security, the democratic rights of all people living in Canada will be attacked if this system is put into place, monitoring the actions, movements, and associations that people have.

The smokescreen of 'anti-terrorism' is used to justify all of these policy changes, which are really about restricting the rights of the poor and working people who did not happen to

be born in Canada. With the new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, 'terrorism,' 'membership in a terrorist organization,' or posing a 'danger to the security of Canada' are all grounds for immigration inadmissibility and for denying a person access to refugee protection. But what exactly constitutes 'terrorism' and these other charges is never legally defined in the *Act*, and according to a member of the York Centre for Refugee Studies, this leaves refugees and immigrants open to 'unprincipled, arbitrary and even unconstitutional decision making with wholly inadequate opportunities for meaningful review or recourse'. Many political acts, especially those carried out by dissidents against oppressive regimes, can be characterized as terrorism, in the view of the oppressive government in control in that particular country. Even within the Canadian Federal Court system, Judges have acknowledged that terrorism 'is not capable of a legal definition that would be neutral and non-

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Parade of Pretenders: Venezuela at a Crossroads

By Azad

Monday, February 3rd, saw the end of the so-called general strike in Venezuela. For over two months, the majority of the poor and working people have been forced to endure starvation while the mostly white capitalist class has fought to retain pieces of its privilege. This is not the first time, and probably not the last, that the oppressed people of Venezuela have been punished for stepping out of line.

In 1962, Venezuela was producing close to half of world oil production when President Romulo Betancourt announced the cessation of oil exploration concessions to private companies. In retribution, international oil companies immediately pulled their investments and the Venezuelan currency dropped dramatically in value. Starvation of the lower class was justified punishment for refusing to pay the foreign oil companies to plunder the riches of Venezuela.

President Carlos Andres Perez nationalized

the oil industry in 1974, and the central bank in 1975. Like Iran, Iraq, and Libya who nationalized their oil industries, Venezuela was severely punished for the attempt. Economic warfare raged until the heads of the new nationalized oil industry were thoroughly corrupt. Soon poor and working people in the cities and across the countryside of Venezuela began to realise that, while foreign control of oil bankrupted, oppressed and exploited them, corrupt nationalization had not freed them or brought wealth to anyone but the already wealthy classes in their country.

Recently, Hugo Chavez was overwhelmingly elected into office on a platform of progressive social change, and he has tried to deliver. A new socialist constitution has been written, land redistribution had been introduced to help feed the poor, and laws enacted to force profitable companies to give back to the communities with the most need. The capitalist ruling class and their American corporate backers have responded to these

efforts with the recent general lockout meant to overthrow the Chavez government and re-instate the old status quo greed and corruption.

Early last year, the Chavez government embarked on a campaign to end corruption, but when they started in on the nationalized oil company, chaos ensued. The wealthy heads of industry, fearing for their profits, organized the small, mostly white, middle class to protest against Mr Chavez and all of his new reforms. A violent coup was plotted, and for almost two days, Chavez was replaced by the totalitarianism of an imperialist few. The constitution was thrown out, congress suspended, the Supreme Court was ignored, and, of course, the capitalists were given back their place at the head of the national oil company.

This would have worked, except the poor and working people who had voted for progressive change were willing to fight for it. They took to the streets in record numbers, demanded and won the return of

Hugo Chavez as President. But those who had just stolen back their billion dollar industries were determined to hold on to them.

The capitalists embarked on a campaign of economic disruption and ultimately locked out their entire workforce, the whole while blaming the economic hardships on Mr Chavez and his government. Violence erupted on the streets, mostly started by anti-Chavez protestors, but blamed on their victims. When an anti-Chavez police district and its corrupt mayor fatally cracked down on pro-Chavez protestors, the monopolized media decried the brutality as atrocities committed by the repressive Chavez government.

These anti-Chavez elites claim to be fighting for democracy, human rights, and economic freedoms, but in reality fight against the majority vote, punish the poor to influence the government, and demand the right to have their corrupt monopolies. They are wolves in sheeps clothing, pied pipers of the poor, and they are not alone.

The same thing happening in the war drive against Iraq and the false divisions enforced in the Koreas. There are accusations of possession of nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction, but the ones pointing their fingers have almost all weapons of mass destruction and the most powerful nuclear arms in the world. The imperialists that condemn the "axis of evil" for gross human rights violations have committed the worst human rights violations in recent history. None of this has anything to do with justice, freedom, or democracy, but everything to do with power and greed. Where is the justice, where is the freedom, where is the democracy in Afghanistan these days?

In Latin America, Hugo Chavez and his government have re-awakened an idea that is so horrible, so terrible to the ruling class that the US media cheered the recent military coup attempt in Venezuela as a victory for democracy. Chavez believes that third world countries should band together to fight the exploitation inflicted on them by the first world nations. It is for this idea, and the actions based on it, that the international ruling class is up in arms against Chavez. For this, the international media has advertised the general lockout as a democratic fight against an oppressive regime. For this, economic retributions continue to starve Venezuelans by the thousands.

The lockout in Venezuela may be over for now, but this is not a fairytale ending. War, hunger, oppression, and wage slavery are spreading world wide as the transnational capitalists consolidate their power, and there can be no real end to this hardship as long as we continue to dance in this parade of pretenders.

Locked in: Changes to the Imprisonment of Women in BC

By Luise Croft

We have seen many changes to the prison system for women in Canada over the years. In recent years women have been moved to five new regional prisons, including the Okima Ohchi Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan, and we have finally witnessed the complete closure of the Prison for Women in Kingston. Though these changes sound progressive, the reality for women in prison continues to be bleak. The greater majority of women are in prison for crimes of poverty, not violent crimes, and should not even be in prison. However, the numbers of women in prison are increasing and continue to include a hugely disproportionate number of First Nations women.

Changes to prisons rarely benefit prisoners, but recent developments in B.C. stand to make a bad situation unbearable. It is clear that these new changes to women's incarceration in B.C. will result in more repressive conditions constituting cruel and unusual punishment. Since the announcement that the Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (BCCW) will be shutting down in 2004, there has been much concern about what will happen to the women

incarcerated there. It has recently been revealed that the provincial (sentenced to under 2 years) women will be sent to two separate locations; minimum and medium-security women to the secure setting of Allouette River in Maple Ridge, and the maximum-security women to the Surrey Pre-trial Centre.

There are serious concerns about housing women in men's prisons and this is the situation that the women who are sent to the Surrey Pre-trial Centre face. This institution is essentially a men's lock-up and this is an unacceptable place for women, particularly when the majority of female prisoners have suffered abuse by men. Questions are also raised as to what sort of programs and activities would be available to these women as well as access to the gym, the yard, and school programs. In a city lock-up there is little opportunity for recreation and mental stimulation as prisoners are locked-down in their cells most of the time. Pre-trial centres have few programs available to the prisoners they contain and whatever facilities there are will no doubt be dominated by the larger male population.

The federally sentenced (2 years or more) women at BCCW will be incarcerated at

the Sumas Centre outside of Abbotsford. Though these women would have a range of security ratings, the security is always set at the highest need. This means that it will be a maximum-security prison and all prisoners will live under the same restrictive conditions. These conditions will in fact be harsher than the standards set for minimum, medium and maximum-security men. For six months women will be locked-down in their cells to come out only for visits, during which they will be shackled and in leg-irons. Women will receive rewards for good behaviour but these so-called rewards are human rights, which should not be taken away in the first place. Placing women in men's prisons and increasing security in prisons for women are both extreme measures displaying a philosophy of warehouse, punish, and repress. This trend threatens to overthrow reforms and rights prisoners have fought to obtain. Many women will suffer not just loss of liberty, but also increased deprivation and dehumanization to a devastating degree. This will not serve them or society well.

Luise Croft is an organizer with Joint Effort.

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discriminatory in its application.' The sections in the *Immigration and Refugee Act* dealing with 'terrorism' are about discrimination based on 'guilt by association,' where one could be criminalized based on their political affiliations, or based on their country of origin.

It is important to realize that these attacks on immigrant and refugee rights are not intended to stop migration into Canada. The minister of CIC, Coderre, even said himself: "Our policy is not based on building walls but controlling the doors and that's exactly what we're doing." These policies restrict the rights of immigrants and refugees in order to make their situation in Canada

more insecure and uncertain, in order to make it easier to exploit them as workers. Those who face risk of being reported to the authorities or deported back to countries from which they are fleeing persecution are forced to accept substandard working conditions, and live in a constant state of fear that they will be deported if they dare speak out against the conditions they are facing.

Canada depends on this large group of exploited migrant workers, and it always has. In the early 20th Century, people from China trying to migrate to Canada were subjected to a racist Head Tax, as well as other restrictions that the Canadian Government imposed on "any immigrant of any Asiatic race." But people from China were not completely barred: Chinese workers built the foundations of Canada, especially in

the West, and faced horrible conditions building railroads and working in factories. It was the restrictions on their rights to citizenship, on their rights to mobility, and on their rights to live safely and securely in the country of their choosing, which forced them to work in these conditions.

This exploitation of migrant workers continues in Canada. The garment industry in Vancouver, which consists mostly of sweatshops, employs primarily immigrants and refugees in desperate situations, and forces people to work in horrible conditions, often at less than the minimum wage. According to the Maquila Solidarity Network, there have been reports of gross violations of employment standards at

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Bloodthirsty US War Machine Rolls On

By Ali Yerevani

"A foreign war ever has been the refuge of tyrants from the danger of turbulent elements at home."

Daniel De Leon, the revolutionary labour thinker, from "Capitalism means War!"

On January 31 George Bush claimed, "Saddam Hussein is not disarming... This issue will come to a head in a matter of weeks, not months." With this, the count down to the war against people of Iraq began. This is to be the second US imperialist war against people of the third world in less than 18 months. In the latest example in the history of modern imperialism, another poor country of the third world is paying for the crises of the capitalist world economy. In what promises to be the bloodiest war ever since Vietnam, the measure of destruction for Iraqi people will be huge. The consequences will take Iraq back 50 years in terms of modern and civil society. Estimations reported by various media sources indicate that approximately 140,000 US troops and 5 aircraft carriers carrying more than 250 airplane and hundreds of cruise missiles are already stationed in the Persian Gulf countries. The US is not alone; the UK with 25,000 soldiers and huge military machine, as well as thousands of additional troops from other countries including Canada have joined this war drive. The war in Afghanistan was used as a probe by the US capitalist class to test the start of the third world war on their rival imperialist countries. The war in Iraq is the start of a new era in human history which will leave the world in complete human disaster and fascism. Only the effective unity and resistance of poor and working people will stop this aggression on human kind and humanity.

The people of the world have not been convinced of the necessity of the war, despite the US ruling class' mighty propaganda machine and its fabrication of facts, its brutal lies and manipulative excuses for waging war. The campaign against terrorism has been exposed as an embarrassing joke by the ridiculous rational that that we must attack Iraq because Bin Laden and Al Qaeda are a danger to US national security! The international charitable moral excuse hinges on restoring democracy in Iraq -of course in US style; the catch is that they have to kill another at least 100,000 people to restore it! This is the same sort of "bloody democracy" that the US has installed throughout Latin America. The argument for urgent escalation to war demands the disarming of Iraq; but the question is, who is disarming whom? Does US has the legitimacy of disarming Iraq?

Since 1890, the US has intervened militarily at least 115 times in different

countries around the world. Not to mention that the same United States used "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD) in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing hundreds of thousands of peoples in matter of a couple of hours. The US military and the CIA used biological and chemical weapons against Vietnam and Cuba hundreds of times, and this is the same country that holds the biggest arsenal of nuclear bombs and warheads in the world. Obviously, the logical conclusion is that the people of Iraq should disarm the US government. How



about the evidence that Iraq has Weapons of Mass Destruction? Unfortunately, the military satellite pictures that Colin Powell showed two weeks ago in the UN Security Council proved to be of an abandoned military site and totally worthless. Tony Blair's document of Iraq's WMD also proved to be a falsified document from a doctorate paper from one of California's universities. Now that Iraq has agreed to let American U2 spy planes fly over all of Iraq, one can wonder that what the next US excuse will be.

UN security council (UNSC) resolution 1441 for the total disarming of Iraq causes another problem for the US war drive. Each imperialist country has its own interpretation of the resolution according to its own national interest in this war race. The different interest in Iraq and ultimately the Middle East has caused the deepening of differences amongst imperialist rival countries and Russia. The German, French and Belgian veto of the US proposal for war in the recent NATO meeting did not happen because these countries object to the war, but because it is not clear how these countries, together with the US and other imperialist countries, will share the wealth of the Iraqi people after the occupation. France, Germany and Russia stand to lose hundreds of billions of dollars - having already loaned billions to Iraq and investing in oil, military and infrastructure contracts there - in US overthrowing Saddam's regime, if there has not been any compensation or agreement to share Iraq's wealth. France, Germany, Belgium and Russia's push for a second UN resolution

and putting pressure here and there on US is done, hoping to ensure the best deal they can get from the US in the collective plundering of Iraq after Saddam. They learned their lesson from the first Gulf War in 1991; if they don't participate in US war drive in Middle East, they won't have their share of the pie and that will result in their isolation. No wonder many European countries and Russia are doing their best to prevent the US from becoming the lone sheriff of the region. Their argument is based on simple notion of "tell me what is in it for me, I will be there with you." Arguing compassionately about the humanitarian crises within the imposing war on Iraq is the crocodile tears and the cover for their delay tactics until they get their final deal. When everything is settled amongst these hyenas, there will not be a single veto left in the UN security council.

Unfortunately, out of the demoralization of being unable to stop the monstrous US war drive, and under the pressure of liberal propaganda, part of the progressive anti-war movement has been drawn into the trap of arguing, "The war is only legitimate if UNSC approves and directs," and, "War is the last option when all other alternatives have been exhausted," and so on. It must be remembered that this same UNSC with the strong backing of United States -don't forget Canada- has imposed sanctions upon Iraq since 1991 which have resulted in the killing of 1.5 million Iraqi people, more than half of whom have been children under 5 years old. The UNSC, has been a political killing machine for US foreign policy for years, and it is not a friend of the poor and innocent people of Iraq. All these UN resolutions and the presence of UN inspectors and their work, all and all, are violations of international law that undermine the sovereignty and self-determination of Iraqi people. The liberal argument is simply to impose a CONDITIONAL WAR, which, in the end, is still war.

All that has been said about "no blood for oil" and that "this war is about oil", is true and undeniable. Considering the significance of the oil reserves in Iraq and the Persian Gulf, together the largest in the world, control of oil and gas supply is of vital importance for the US and other imperialists. However, oil is not the only factor for this brutal and disgraceful war. The recent American military killing machine in the Persian Gulf is part of a bigger strategy that the US has been pursuing in the Middle East and throughout the world for the last two decades. Global economic conditions have had a dire effect on the internal American economy while bruising capital interests abroad. If the demand for oil in the US was to reduce to half, for whatever hypothetical reason, the US would still attack Iraq. Understanding this is the key to understanding the strategy

of the United States in the world today.

The declining average rate of profit and continuing trend of bankruptcy for giant financial and industrial institutions has intensified the level of tense competition between rival imperialists. For these countries, which the profiteers behind these corporations live in, this competition translates into a race for control of the plundering of the world's natural resources. In spite of the economic and political dominance of multi-national and trans-national corporations, ultimately, each imperialist nation-state pursues its own national interest. George Bush is the executive management chief of the ruling capitalist class of United States, and he understands what he was hired to do: consolidate the hegemony of the US in the broadest territory possible.

We are witnessing a new dividing of the world by imperialists in which the biggest, mightiest and of course, bloodiest takes all. Condoleezza Rice, national security advisor for George Bush, in a recent interview with Ted Coppel, ABC Nightline clearly stated that this war is about changing the regime in Baghdad and pursues a longer strategy. Bill Emmott, editor-in-chief of the London based magazine "Economist", and one of the chief spokespersons of western capital, in his long and comprehensive article in June 27, 2002 states clearly, "Third, a pacified, disarmed Iraq, under a new government, would provide the chance for a new start in America's dealings with the rest of the Arab world. It badly needs one. Thanks to unholy but necessary trade-offs made in past decades it is not only tarred with the brush of supplying Israel with money and arms but also with doing the same for a repressive regime in Egypt, as well as offering support to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Democracy exists nowhere, but economic failure and popular disenchantment exist almost everywhere. This is the swamp in which fundamentalist or messianic terrorism has been able to breed, directed first at local regimes (especially Egypt's) but then, during the 1990s and on September 11th, at America. Somehow, the swamp has to be disinfected, even if it cannot be drained altogether. The first step in doing so will be the removal of Saddam Hussein. But that will be only the beginning of a long journey."

In every imperialist war political and military preparation, equally, are the main important factors. Even if the US army was ready to go to war today, Washington would still have some homework to do. The battle of public opinion is ongoing, and the American ruling class has to elevate it to a satisfactory level before they can start the war. Before Bush can win the battle of Iraq, he has to win the battle of public opinion in the US. The readiness of public opinion in the homeland is so

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these Canadian sweatshops, 'including wages as low as \$4.50 an hour, long hours of overtime with no overtime pay, and the complete absence of statutory benefits.' Though not as extreme, this exploitation exists in other sectors as well, especially in the service sector, where a large number of workers earning the minimum wage are born outside of Canada, and are frequently forced to accept unsafe working conditions and work overtime without pay. With over twenty

percent of people in Canada having been born outside of the country, it is clear that this denial of rights and potential for super-exploitation affects a significant amount of the population.

Were it not for the racist immigration and refugee policy of the Canadian Government, this level of exploitation would not exist. This is why the fight for immigrant and refugee rights is a struggle for the democratic rights of workers. The ability of workers born outside of Canada to organize and fight back against this exploitation is

seriously inhibited by Canadian Immigration Policy: fighting for the rights of immigrants and refugees means expanding those rights, which in turn opens up space for the most exploited segment of the working class to organize.

The fight for immigrant and refugee rights is important for all poor and working people, both those born in and outside of Canada. Labour organizing in the textiles industry and the service sector is crucial to any mass-based working class movement in Canada, and we have to fight for

peoples' right to live where they choose to enable these workers' rights to organize.

There is another important reason why immigrant and refugee rights are important to all of us: many people who migrate to Canada are fleeing political persecution because they are political organizers. The experience they bring in organizing and political activity is an invaluable resource for the movement in Canada. However, as with other immigrants and refugees, their ability to remain in Canada is highly unstable, which

prevents many from continued political activity in Canada, at least until they are able to obtain citizenship. Fighting for the rights of these organizers and activists ensures that their experience and skills as organizers are put to use in our struggle.

* From the "Summary" of Bill C-18, available on the Government of Canada's website at www.parl.gc.ca/37/2/parlbus/chambus/house/bills/government/C-18/C-18_1/90203eE.html.

† For more information, check out the Centre for Refugee Studies Website at www.yorku.ca/crs.

Police Brutality and the Downtown Eastside

An interview with John Richardson of PIVOT Legal Society

By Ivan Drury

John Richardson is the founder of the Pivot Legal Society; a group of lawyers and law students that is committed to furthering the interests of marginalized people. Throughout 2002, they carried out an affidavit program. The affidavit program involved taking affidavits, legally recognized interviews, from drug users and sex trade workers in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver (DTES) regarding misconduct they had been subjected or directly witnessed others subjected to at the hands of police officers. These affidavits were stamped by volunteer lawyers, like John Richardson, as legal documents and compiled into a report that was released publicly as part of Pivot's campaign against the misconduct of the Vancouver Police Department in the Downtown Eastside.

This report, "To Serve and Protect, A report on policing in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside" can be viewed at www.pivotlegal.org.



By Ivan Drury

Recently, there was a seemingly strange story in the media about five cops picking up a couple of kids from Granville Mall in Downtown Vancouver, driving them out to Stanley Park, and beating them up under the cover of night. In fact, this was a strange story, not because these sorts of actions by police are a strange or uncommon occurrence, but because this particular instance was noticed and covered in the media at all.

On the streets of the Downtown Eastside, where police brutality is such a common occurrence that it is considered acceptable and even expected, these Stanley Park beatings are known as "starlight tours" and they are hardly surprising or irregular. Police harassment and brutality of poor and oppressed people is not restricted to the Downtown Eastside or even to urban Vancouver. This "police misconduct" is not an abomination or gross side effect of policing; it is a regular component of policing; it is a necessary function of the police as part of their mandate to protect the power, property and privilege of the ruling class in Canadian society. Brutality cannot be blamed entirely on individual "bad lieutenants", it is a systemic requirement of the job; necessary to keep poor people poor, necessary to keep marginalized voices unheard, necessary to keep migrant people uprooted, and necessary to keep working people from organizing their communities to survive and fight back against the government

FTT: Why do police exceed their authority: harass, beat and torture people as outlined in the Pivot report?

John: I think the core problems are the systemic problems. Police officers are required to enforce drug laws that have very little merit, and very little effect, against a marginalized population that is basically unable to assert its rights in defence against police misconduct. On the one hand, we have police officers that are frustrated by the lack of impact they are having on the huge drug problem in the DTES. They are unaware, unconscious that they are hurting people more than they are helping them. On the other hand we have a marginalized population who is extremely unlikely to defend themselves or assert their rights or protest against police misconduct and are only too happy to be able to walk away from these instances and forget about it. So those two factors together create an enormous power differential. It's a systemic problem.

FTT: We see that while poverty exists in all of British Columbia, it exists in the DTES in its most abject example. Does the policing we see in the DTES exist in the rest of the province in

a similar but watered down way?

John: I think so. The DTES is a litmus test in a lot of ways. When scientists want to explore the properties of chemicals or elements they expose them to extreme heat, extreme conditions, high temperatures, high energies, and they see what those compounds or elements do. That's what we see in the DTES. We have a range of extreme conditions and we see the true nature of things; how they react when they are exposed to these conditions. That's policing in the DTES.

FTT: Do you think that if there are improvements made in the DTES, specifically around policing, that this would affect the rest of the province and the policies of policing in the rest of the province?

John: Pivot's mandate is to further the interests of marginalized people. It just so happens that there is an extremely high concentration of marginalized people in the DTES. That is both an awful thing, given the high rates of poverty and human despair and suffering that you see here, but its also an opportunity to identify systemic problems that undermine the

quality of life of marginalized people and then take strategic steps to change them. By strategic steps, I mean strategic legal steps, to address systemic issues affecting marginalized people, you can advance the position of marginalized people as a whole. The nature of the law is such that progress in one geographic area has immediate effects on all other jurisdictions that have the same or similar types of legislation. For example, if Pivot is successful in addressing police misconduct, that will have an impact on the way that complaints happen in general in the police commissioners office, it will have an effect on how accessible the complaints process is for marginalized people, it will have an impact on the way that investigations are done. All this together will have global impacts for marginalized people wherever they are. The DTES is the battleground but the victories are much more widespread. In our perspective, the DTES is best viewed as a unique opportunity to identify the concerns of marginalized people who are diffused throughout the population. These concerns can be addressed in a systemic way because of the concentration of the population here.

State Repression and the Myth of "Police Misconduct"

and corporate interests that keep them down. Above all, the police use harassment and brutality to protect private property and whenever it is necessary to break an individual or a group from their actions, behaviours or convictions. They do not exceed their authority arbitrarily, but as demanded of them by their superiors: captains, chiefs, government officials and business and property owners. If we are to fight against police brutality, we cannot focus on individual cops, but on the system behind them that instructs and commands their misconduct.

The year 2002 was an important year for resistance against the government in BC. After years of popular anti-government sentiment being limited mostly to grumblings in the papers and around water coolers about incompetence and corruption, the people of BC were re-learning how to take to the streets. While the homeless organized and marched with unionists, while Vancouverites crossed the Georgia Straight to march on the legislature, while indigenous peoples blocked roads to defend their unceded land, while radical youth flexed their determination alongside hospital workers in occupations and direct actions, Gordon Campbell watched. Between periods of hockey games, he called the police to protect his big business government against the people of the province who rattled his gates and called for his defeat.

Whenever popular organized dissent disrupted the easy flow of business as usual in the streets of Vancouver and around the province, the police were there with clubs, pepper spray and guns. Sometimes, their armed presence was brutality enough to keep the crowds restrained, but often they unleashed their violent power to remind the people targeted by Liberal government legislations that there are further targeted consequences if they step out of line. At the BC Federation of Labour rally on February 23rd of 2002, the thirty thousand people

that thronged the Victoria Legislature knew that the riot police sweated and waited anxiously in the basement of the Empress Hotel just across the legislature lawn.

When Campbell was scheduled to speak at the Vancouver Art Gallery, only the pepper spray and retractable batons wielded by the police kept the protestors from tearing the fence away from the top of the steps that kept them from the stage. The two arrests made meant to issue a warning from the police to the demonstrators against more militant action.

In Squelkwew'telt, the RCMP swept in and tore apart the camp, arresting native protestors, young and old to re-open the Sun Peaks resort for business and further development on native land. These protestors received jail sentences made repressive by the racism of Canadian colonial courts and a judge that said they have to "make an example" of these people before they pick up guns.

When homeless people and their supporters seized the long abandoned Woodward's building as housing, hundreds of riot police descended upon them, beat and arrested fifty-four people and confiscated and disappeared their meagre belongings. This didn't break the momentum of the social housing movement and the people returned immediately to the sidewalk outside the building. The police came back the next night, tossed people back into jail and their tents, sleeping bags and backpacks straight into a garbage truck.

On October Third, a ribbon cutting ceremony that Campbell was supposed to speak at the Britannia Community Centre in East Vancouver was cancelled by a protest. The police started a riot, arrested nine people and injured many more with pepper spray, clubs and their fists.

All this time the cops managed to maintain their constant campaign of harassment and brutality in the Downtown Eastside, in the Latino community in East Vancouver,

throughout the racialized communities in Whalley and Metrotown and in the areas around Reservations throughout the Province.

All of these instances of police brutality illustrate that the police are a tool of suppression for the government. All organized and community resistance to government and business attacks similarly threaten the power of the government and are similarly held down by the force of the police. The actions of the police cannot be divorced from the actions of the government and corporate interests they represent. The everyday struggles of oppressed people cannot be divorced from organized mass movements. In the streets of the Downtown Eastside, in work places around the city, on picket lines, at protests, on reservations and in rural communities, on berry fields and in maquiladoras, people are struggling to survive, resist and fight back. All this time, the police are mobilizing to keep the yoke of monopoly capital and big business around our necks, driving us on and keeping us separated and hopeless. To fight against this is to fight for the rights of all oppressed, poor and working people in Canada and around the world. We cannot forget that the continuous police attacks on oppressed communities around the province are as relevant as the crack-downs upon demonstrations and protestors. When we connect the need to confront police brutality whenever and wherever it reveals itself to the corrupt power structure that depends on this brutality, we can fight back. The cops that beat the kids in Stanley Park, the cop who punched the thirteen-year old kid at Britannia must all be fired and criminally charged. As many examples as there are of police attacking oppressed people, there are more examples of these same people drawing together, fighting back, and driving police brutality out of their communities.

Stopping the Privatization of Health Care: An interview with HEU President Fred Muzin

By Ivan Drury

This interview was done the morning of Wednesday, February 12th, 2003. In the past two months, the HEU has fended off attacks by the provincial government with an incredible tenacity. They have had demonstrations nearly every week, including many marches, pickets and rallies, a blockade of a privatized laundry shipping plant in Chilliwack and a wildcat walkout picket and march of four thousand members. Fred Muzin was amongst those arrested in Chilliwack for blocking the driveway of the plant that ships hospital laundry to Alberta to be cleaned under a recently privatized contract. The courts have dropped the charges against those arrested but the private company still has the option of pursuing independent charges. The HEU is not broken, they remain the load-bearing pillar of the trade union resistance to the BC Liberals' corporate agenda.

FTT: Why is the Liberal Government attacking health care and health care workers?

Fred: There's a lot of reasons for it: the main one is ideological. It's Thatcherism, they don't believe there's any responsibility of the government to the citizens, that people should pay their own way, that we shouldn't do anything collectively or communally. Health care consumes a third of the provincial budget, so if you're trying to make your friends rich, that's a big attraction for them also in going after health care. If you're looking for tax breaks, there's huge profits that can be made, especially if you have no commitment to service. Plus, health care is an area that is predominately dominated by women: 87% of our members are women. It's a government that does not believe in pay equity, it does not believe in fair wages for women so it provides a lot of opportunities for privatization. People are willing to believe that the private sector is more efficient, that things are cheaper, without really understanding the nuts and bolts of the work. People don't think about health care until they are being wheeled into emergency. It's very easy for them to peddle the Fraser Institute line that health services are no different than hotel services and so it's a lot of things; but primarily it's that there's a lot of money to be made and it's an opportunity for them to enrich their friends.

FTT: What do you think the overall strategy and agenda of the BC Liberals really is?

Fred: They're really into this divide and conquer. They really want to break unions. Campbell doesn't like unions; he doesn't like anyone questioning or challenging anything he does. It's a matter of them increasing their power, and part of that is increasing the polarization between the haves and have nots. It's basically class warfare politics. For instance, look at the changes to human rights, look at their attitude towards people with disabilities, towards the poor, seniors; it's just a divide and conquer politics. Right now they have, in effect, a de facto dictatorship, with a 75-seat majority in the house. But some of



their members are very vulnerable and you're starting to see that with the announced recall campaigns.

FTT: The HEU has very much set the bar for struggle in BC and has fought consistently against the government, most dramatically with the laundry blockade in Chilliwack and the wildcat walkouts. Why have your efforts not been more successful and why has the fight not grown into an overall effective movement against the government?

Fred: I think it has grown. It got off to a slow start because people did not believe that the government was serious about breaking collective agreements and there was not a lot of notice about that. Now, as people realized that the government doesn't care if it hurts or in effect kills people, because that is what some of its actions, especially regarding seniors, has done, you've seen public opinion shifting. We've been able to delay the public-private partnership in Abbotsford for a year and now they're talking about the middle of 2004, which puts you into the year of the next election and surely that's going to affect them. With a government that's this ideological, that doesn't believe in democracy, there's a fundamental question; what is the meaning of citizenship between elections when you have a majority government? Now you're seeing occupations, you're seeing blockades like the one in Chilliwack, you're seeing job action like we took on the 28th when four thousand members were off work. We

“It's not up to the government to define what society looks like, it's up to people.”

have to develop a culture of resistance that, quite frankly, we have gotten away from in this province. That's why it's good to see some of these social justice groups that understand where it's going. It's all predicated on the destruction of Medicare in this country and people haven't quite made that connection yet.

FTT: What do you see the most effective role of unions in coalitions with grassroots organizations? Conversely, what do you see the most effective role of grassroots organizations in coalitions with unions?

Fred: Building social justice takes building very, very strong coalitions so you don't get singled out as being special interest. There's a basic justice that everybody in our society deserves. Health care is very tied to economic status, level of education, homelessness, (and) poverty. If those underpinnings of society, those basic rights of citizenship don't exist, then those people don't have access to healthcare, and more, they can't be all that they can be. I think a lot of dialogue has to continue to happen. I think we've gotten over the fear and resentment where unions are seen as privileged, where people feel more comfortable and there's more dialogue and people understand that it's a common

housing that seniors can't afford. Basically it's pushing them back on a lot of fronts so they realize that they have a responsibility; not just self-aggrandizement, but they have a job to do to create a better society. I think in the long term, the real victory will be if people understand that they have a responsibility as citizens and that between elections they have to participate because the world is run by those who show up. People can't just go out to the poles one day and then do nothing for the next four years, that's not the way it works at all. In order for government to be responsible and accountable, people have to accept that there's a responsibility and a right to protest. If you have a government that is



HEU Job Action and Rally in Vancouver, January 28th

struggle and I don't think that's always been true. There has been sort of a fear of the unknown. The Woodward's squat has been very helpful, a lot of our members and other unionists were able to go down there and see that these are people who have had a tough time and they need our help. Similarly, I think the barriers have broken down so people are feeling free to talk to unions, to understand that they are just representing their members, that they are not just this de facto bureaucracy that doesn't care about people. I think that's

been very helpful and I think we have to continue to do that, to interact so people feel free to interact, and define what they want as a society. It's not up to the government to define what society looks like, it's up to people to define

what they want and the government to use the common resources to accomplish that.

FTT: What is your vision of “winning” the struggle against the BC Liberals?

Fred: Well, it's not just the BC Liberals; I guess from our members point of view it would be the repeal of Bill 29, plus backing off on the tax breaks until the economy can afford tax breaks, reinstating things like welfare rates, not stealing federal money intended for low-cost housing to be spent on seniors

not responsive then you have to be willing to engage in civil disobedience. There is a time and place for general strikes and there is a time and a place for direct action, and if you're not willing to engage that at the appropriate time, you're never really going to be free. In the long term, you get what you fight for, what you're willing to fight for, if you don't compromise your principles. Any government, whether it's the Liberals or the NDP or Greens or whatever, any government will only be as accountable as the people are willing to hold them to. I think that would be the ultimate victory: people taking ownership of democracy.

FTT: Any closing comments?

Fred: It's very important that even when there's not times of tremendous adversity, that we use those opportunities to build coalitions, that we integrate people from all sorts of aspects of society into the work that we do as unions. Unions cannot become like business unions that get seen as different, that get seen as privileged and separate from the class struggle. The gains that we make, the only real gains are the gains that benefit other people in our society. Say, for instance, we do very well for our members but there's people starving in the streets, then we haven't really accomplished creating a better society. It's important that those links are continuous and that there's a degree of comfort in interacting and that that doesn't go away depending on who's in power in Victoria.

Canadian Immigration Policy: Racism, Detention, Deportation

By Shannon Bundock

On Monday February 3rd, Fire This Time held a public forum on Canadian Immigration Policy. The panel consisted of three speakers: Khaled Baraket of Palestine Solidarity Group and No-One Is Illegal Vancouver, Myriam Hernandez of Latin America Connexion and Building Bridges, and Shannon Bundock of Fire This Time.

Approximately 60 people attended the forum, a diverse crowd, predominantly from immigrant communities.

After the first half, where Canadian immigration policy was outlined and criticized by the panelists,

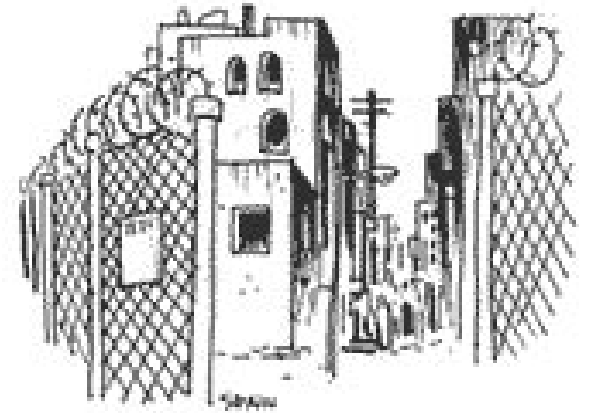
an educational discussion took place. People emphasized the importance of solidarity and the need to build networks of working class people to defend the rights of immigrants and refugees. Comments were made regarding the impact of immigration policy on women and the necessity of integrating women's rights into a fight against attacks on immigrants and refugees. As well, people emphasized their awareness of the growing rise of right wing politics that is being used to control, restrict and ultimately eliminate the rights of refugees and immigrants.

The discussion wrapped up with a comment that all focus must be set on building a mass based

movement ... it is not enough to organize immigrants and refugees; we must organize all workers and poor people to build this movement and resist these attacks that are taking place and attempt to separate and isolate us.

Overall, the forum was successful in facilitating political discussion and knowledge sharing. Fire this Time hopes to continue this form of popular education with the next forum on The War on Iraq. It will be happening Feb 17 at the Burnaby Public Library, at 6:30pm.

We have included excerpts from the presentations of Myriam Hernandez and Shannon Bundock from the February 3rd forum. Myriam's presentation appears both in English and Spanish.



Refugio y Migración en Canadá

Myriam Hernandez

Haber pasado por el proceso de refugio fue una experiencia que me permitió conocer aspectos generales y particulares sobre este tema.

Desde el inicio, el curso burocrático que se tiene que seguir para ser aceptado o rechazado se convierte en una especie de tortura psicológica. Contiene muchas formas de presión psicológica y emocionalmente desgasta a cualquier ser humano. En lo personal, considero que los solicitantes de refugio son la población más vulnerable de esta sociedad, porque tienen un desconocimiento casi total del medio y se les presentan muchas barreras para tratar de adaptarse e iniciar una nueva vida.

cuentan con familiares ni amigos que puedan aminorar la carga que esto representa.

Se tiene la barrera del idioma, ya que los exiliados no dejamos nuestros países de origen por gusto, es el último y el más doloroso recurso que tenemos. Depender totalmente de traductores es un verdadero problema, duplica los tiempos en todos los trámites y muchas de las veces pone en riesgo hasta el mismo caso desde el punto de vista legal.

Un solicitante de refugio no es un emigrante común, no trae planes ni deseos ni dinero para invertir, no se preparó estudiando inglés y no llega en condiciones de adaptarse rápidamente. Somos personas que venimos huyendo de la violencia, de situaciones

como formas de rechazo y opresión. En muchos sitios por donde forzosamente se tiene que acudir, se reciben desprecios, se dan toda clase de abusos; comenzando por oficiales de migración, y trabajadores en oficinas de asistencia social, ya que algunos de estos servidores públicos no son gente amigable o comprensiva. Da la impresión de que son otra clase de policías racistas que tratan a las personas que solicitan refugio como si fueran criminales.

Legalmente se les da autoridad para violar impunemente Artículos incluidos en la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos y en el acta de convención de refugio.

Hablando de la comunidad latina, conozco muchos casos de abuso e injusticias, yo misma los sufrí, denunciar estos hechos siempre es importante. Al ver las deficiencias del sistema y por invitación de agencias, participe junto con otras compañeras en la elaboración de un estudio sobre la situación de las mujeres solicitantes de refugio en Vancouver en el 2000; dimos nuestro punto de vista e hicimos críticas al proceso en general, pero obviamente son problemas que requieren ser atendidos desde una perspectiva de protección social real y dar soluciones de fondo, lo cual es contrario a la agenda neo-liberal. En otras palabras, fue un esfuerzo en vano. Con los cambios a la ley, lo que se ha hecho es empeorar la situación.

Hasta la fecha mantengo cierto contacto con algunas agencias de orientación y servicios, porque siempre se presentan casos de recién llegados que requieren de apoyo en este sentido y aunque la ayuda sea limitada se tiene que recurrir a lo poco que existe.

Una de las principales deficiencias del sistema es la actitud burocrática de los abogados de migración, que dan prácticamente

una atención nula a los casos. Otro serio problema es la falta de coherencia en el criterio que emplea el jurado para emitir una decisión. He tenido oportunidad de leer respuestas negativas y son tan absurdas que, da la impresión de que están refiriéndose a otro caso distinto. Han eliminado el derecho a la apelación y el famoso PRAA es una vía acelerada de deportaciones.

Desde mi punto de vista, la vieja y nueva Ley es un deficiente, selectivo y discriminatorio control del flujo migratorio y no un compromiso serio de respeto a Refugiados y a Inmigrantes en general.

Sobre la nueva Ley de migración y refugio, muchos de los que ya pasamos por ese proceso, abogados y personas de las agencias de servicios, opinamos que no existe nada que haya mejorado o que beneficie a los nuevos emigrantes. Solo responde a las demandas de una opinión pública mal informada, con prejuicios y temores infundidos por los medios de comunicación. La psicosis de terrorismo y el tráfico de drogas son algunos de los mitos y engaños que se utilizan sin sentido de análisis y sin sentido de responsabilidad y nos estigmatizan injustamente.

En el caso particular de América Latina, los mexicanos encabezan la lista de solicitantes de refugio desde hace varios años (aproximadamente un 48% abandonan los casos y solo un 3% de los restantes son aceptados), los colombianos y los centroamericanos son los que siguen en la lista. Los mexicanos no requieren visa para entrar a Canadá y son a quienes les resulta menos costoso viajar. La nueva Ley cierra las puertas de acceso a todo aquel que transite por tierra y haya cruzado por los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, queriendo obligar a la gente a solicitar refugio en ese país vecino, donde sabemos que

existen las peores Leyes de Migración y con toda seguridad, los envían de regreso a sus países de origen con órdenes de deportación.

Si bien es cierto que muchas de las personas que llegan a este país no entran en la clasificación de refugio y que se fabrican historias para obtener estancia legal, es la falta de una instancia adecuada lo que podría evitar este problema. Creo que muchos compartimos la idea de que debería existir la categoría de refugio económico.

Para legitimar socialmente los tratados globales comerciales y extender los beneficios a la población, Canadá debería abrir un espacio al libre tránsito de las personas que vienen en calidad de desplazados económicos y darles un trato más adecuado a los exiliados; ya que las condiciones de pobreza e injusticia social de los países del tercer mundo, en parte son producto de la extracción de materias primas y la explotación humana por parte de las grandes potencias, donde esta incluida esta Nación.

Los emigrantes tenemos un gran potencial para contribuir al desarrollo social, cultural y económico de este país. Parece que a muchos Canadienses se les ha olvidado ya, que ellos mismos llegaron a este continente como emigrantes pobres, sin la elevada preparación académica que ahora exigen en los nuevos emigrantes. Y parece que la selectiva memoria histórica que explota los medios de comunicación, es utilizada por el gobierno de manera subliminal para imponer políticas de racismo, discriminación social y violaciones sistemáticas a los derechos humanos. El reto para nosotros como sociedad, se duplica, requiere de mucho esfuerzo y trabajo crear una base social capaz de cambiar ese tipo de leyes de corte fascista.



High school students tear down fence during demonstration at Immigration Detention Centre at Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Australia.

Los pos traumas de persecución, tortura o cualquier otra clase de abuso que haya puesto en riesgo la vida, son aspectos que muchas veces no setoman en cuenta. No existe un programa de atención profesional y tratamiento especializado, accesible en tiempos y en nuestro idioma. A la par, son tantas las citas con la burocracia, los problemas con la asistencia social, que la gente muchas veces termina llorando o queriendo morir de desesperación. En la mayoría de los casos son personas que no

de peligro reales y aquí nos encontramos desterrados por necesidad.

Los activistas políticos pasan a ser neutralizados, desarticulados, en algunos casos porque se teme una respuesta negativa si se tiene aquí participación política y en consecuencia ser enviados de regreso a sus países. Pero también, existen otros factores culturales y sociales que influyen de manera muy drástica.

En el medio existe mucha hipocresía y violencia sutil,

Canadian Immigration Policy and Racism

By Shannon Bundock

Last April, Denis Coderre became Canada's Immigration Minister. One of the first measures he took was to lift the moratorium on deportations to Algeria. This was lifted at the same time that the Canadian Foreign Affairs Department maintained in a travel advisory that Algeria was so violent that Canadians should avoid traveling there. On the contrary, Coderre alleges, after a four day trip to Algeria, that it is a safe country as it is in the 'midst of reforms' and no longer employing the death penalty. This reasoning is obviously based on false logic as it assumes that the only threat that refugees are facing are those which come in the form of just laws; that they do not need to fear jail time, torture, or perhaps even execution outside lawful process. This kind of action, taken by the Canadian government, coupled with increased deportations and new restrictive legislation, creates a picture of Canadian immigration policy where Immigration Canada launches attacks that are constantly increasing in severity and frequency against immigrants and refugees.

On January 17th, a case of deportation was what spurred Fire this Time to emphasize refugee and immigrant issues in our Legal Defense Campaign. Kobra Natghi gained media attention when she fled from custody at the Vancouver International Airport. Kobra and her son Hassan were being deported despite the fact they were both very ill and facing serious persecution if they returned to Iran. A group mobilized around this attack and tried to bring light to the racist policies of Immigration Canada. Unfortunately, Kor-

bra and Hassan were still forced out of the country.

What happened to Kobra and Hassan and what is happening to the Algerian community in Canada is not isolated or exceptional. It is extremely common and therefore extremely important to mobilize around these issues. According to the most recent census the proportion of the Canadian population born outside the country is 18%, the highest it has been in 70 years. Issues that affect immigrants and refugees are issues that affect a huge number of people in Canada.

To understand why Immigration Canada is attacking, one can look at where these attacks are being targeted. First of all, the changes that are being implemented ensure that people entering Canada with little or no money will be affected disproportionately. Consequently, those being targeted by Immigration Canada for deportation and review are mostly refugee seekers from countries with high numbers of people living in poverty. This targeted affect can be seen in the new legislative changes. Bill C-11, which has a heavy enforcement emphasis despite the fact it is presented as a "protection act", allows for expanded powers of detention and has broadened the inadmissibility provisions for refugee seekers. Bill C-11 allows a lot of discretion to be given to immigration officers, and it leaves much of the concrete rules to regulations. This "tough" nature of this bill is not something that Canadian Immigration is attempting to deny or hide. Instead the government is promoting a justification for their racial profiling and targeted attacks. This justification is based

on the notion that people from certain countries and classes are more likely to be terrorists and criminals. People are being divided into legitimate and illegitimate refugees, legitimate and illegitimate immigrants - enforcing the false race divisions between working class people by characterizing immigrants and refugees as a threat to security and democracy. A large part of our work is to reject these divisions.

The attacks by Canadian Immigration can also be seen in the context of the current provincial attacks against low wage workers as well as other neo liberal attacks against oppressed people globally; again, attacks along



Immigration Minister Denis Coderre

class lines. It remains that people fleeing from persecution in other parts of the world are faced with increased restriction, surveillance and invasion when they arrive in Canada. This is not done necessarily to deter people from entering Canada, but rather to maintain control over them once they arrive as they are a large segment of the working class, and capitalist neo liberal governments must

maintain control over their cheap labour pools.

Bill C-18 is the new Citizenship Bill, which just ended its 2nd reading and is pending approval. It contains new legislation that is very troubling in its attacks on immigrants living in Canada who already have citizenship, and is deeply alarming in its complete disregard for due process in the new provisions that have been introduced regarding the revocation of Citizenship. Bill C-18 aims to repeal the current citizenship act and introduce additional powers to deny and review citizenship. Bill C-18 grants broad powers to Cabinet to refuse citizenship, on the basis that a person has

"demonstrated a flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society" without ever defining what these values and principles are. As well, Bill C-18 contains sections specifying that the granting of Canadian citizenship and refugee status will be affected by charges and convictions outside Canada. Many people entering Canada are doing so because they are being politically persecuted. Part of that persecution is to arrest, charge, convict and jail the dissenter. People being targeted by corrupt legal systems are the exact people that should be granted refugee status.

Overall, Bill C-18 serves not only to assault those seeking refuge in

Canada, but also those who have gained citizenship in the past. This, coupled with the provincial attacks on immigrants, refugees and illegal workers by way of legislative changes affecting the low wage work force, has created an environment where these communities are being continuously terrorized, marginalized and restricted no matter where they move globally. Despite this new legislation seeming incredibly severe and drastic, it is important to remember that these attacks are not new. What we are seeing in Canadian Immigration policy is another extension of Canada's racist history.

Immigrants and refugees are an essential part of building the movement in BC, as they make up a significant part of the working and poor classes. Taking on the struggles of immigrant and refugee communities allows us to broaden our analysis and approach building a movement in BC with an internationalist perspective. One of the highest priorities when organizing in the current political climate in Canada is working class unity. We can do this by taking on struggles of specific constituencies, and through our outreach, approach and analysis we make the direct and indirect affects of legislative attacks clear. Systems that attack immigrants, refugees, and illegal workers are the same systems that attack all working people - these assaults are inseparable. We reject Canadian immigration policy in its entirety as racist, classist and overwhelmingly anti-immigrant, anti-refugee. And what kind of immigration policy do we want? We maintain that no person is illegal; no worker is illegal: Canada must open its borders.

Refuge and Migration in Canada:

The Experience and Analysis of a woman, refugee, immigrant, and political organizer

Myriam Hernandez

Translated by Claudio Ekdahl

To have gone through the refugee claim process was an experience that allowed me to learn general and particular aspects on this subject. From the beginning, the bureaucratic course that one must follow to be accepted or to be rejected becomes a kind of psychological torture. It contains many forms of pressure tactics, psychologically and emotionally it wears out any human being. Personally, I consider refugee applicants to be the most vulnerable population of this society; they have an almost total ignorance of the refugee process and they need to confront many barriers to try to adapt to a new life.

The traumas of persecution, torture or any other class of abuse that put someone's life at risk, are aspects that often are not considered in the refugee process. There is a lack of accessible

programs for professional attention and specialized treatment, available in our own language. Similarly, there are so many appointments with the bureaucracy and problems with social assistance that people often end up crying or wanting to die of desperation. In most of the cases, they are people who do not have relatives nor friends who can provide support.

A refugee applicant is not a common immigrant, he or she does not bring plans neither desires nor money to invest, that person did not prepare by studying English and does not arrive in conditions to adapt quickly. We are people who come fleeing from violence, of real situations of danger and here we are, exiled by necessity.

Political activists become neutralized and disarticulated, the reason in some cases is because of fear to be refused if one is politically active here and as a consequence, being sent back

to their countries. There are also cultural and social factors that have a very drastic influence in this.

In many areas around the process there exists hypocrisy and subtle violence as forms of oppression. Refugees commonly face abuse beginning with officials of immigration, and workers in offices of social assistance. It gives the impression that they are another class of racist police, treating refugee claimants as if they were criminals. They are given legal authority to violate with impunity articles included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the refugee convention act.

Speaking of the Latino community, I know many cases of abuse and injustices, I myself underwent some, and to expose these facts is always important. As I realized about the deficiencies of the system and by invitation of agencies, I participated along with other companeras in a

study on the situation of women refugee applicants in Vancouver in the year 2000; we gave our point of view and critiques of the process in general, but obviously these are problems that need to be dealt with from a perspective of real social protection and need to be given real solutions, which is in opposition to the neoliberal agenda. In other words, it was a fruitless effort as the situation continues to deteriorate.

One of the main deficiencies of the system is the bureaucratic attitude of immigration lawyers, who give practically no attention to the cases. Another serious problem is the lack of coherence in the criterion used by the jury to make a decision. I have had the opportunity to read some negative answers and they are so absurd that, it gives the impression that the jury is making reference to a different case. They have eliminated the right to appeal and the famous PRAA is an accelerated route for

deportations.

From my point of view, the old and new Act is a deficient, selective and discriminatory control of the migratory flow and not a serious commitment of respect to Refugees and Immigrants in general.

About the new immigration and refugee Act, many of us who have gone through that process, as well as lawyers and people who work in community agencies, are of the opinion that there is nothing in it, in way of improvement or that benefits new immigrants. Only that this new Act responds to the demands of a badly informed public opinion, with prejudices and fears influenced by mass media. The psychosis of terrorism and the drug traffic are some of these myths and deceits that are used without a sense of analysis and of responsibility and thus we are unjustly stigmatized.

In the particular case of Latin

Continued on page 8

'REFUGEE AND MIGRATION' from Page 7

America, Mexicans have been heading the list of applicants of refuge for several years (approximately 48% abandon their cases and only 3% of the rest are accepted). Colombians and Central Americans are those that follow in the list. Mexicans do not require visas to enter Canada and are those for which traveling is less expensive. The new Act closes the access doors to all those who travel by land and have crossed via the United States of North America, directed to force people to ask for refuge in that neighbouring country, where we know that the worst laws of immigration exist and with complete certainty, those claiming refuge there will be sent back to their countries with deportation orders.

Although it is true that many of the people who arrive in this country do not meet the criteria within the classification of refuge and that some resort to making up stories to obtain the legal right to stay, it is due to the lack of a suitable instance which could avoid this problem. I believe that many of us share in the idea that there should exist a category of economic refuge.

In order to socially legitimize commercial

global treaties and to extend the benefits to the general population, Canada would have to open up to the free transit of economically displaced people. It would also have to offer more suitable treatment to exile immigrants; since the conditions of poverty and social injustice of the Third World Countries, are partly product of the extraction of raw materials and the human exploitation on the part of the great powers, which this Nation is part of.

We as immigrants have a great potential to contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of this country. It seems that many Canadians have already forgotten, that they themselves arrived to this continent as poor immigrants, without the high academic preparation now demanded of new immigrants. And it seems that the selective historic memory, exploited by the mass media, is used by the government in subliminal ways to impose racist and socially discriminatory policies in systematic violation of human rights. The challenge for us as a society, has doubled, requiring much effort and work from us to create a social base able to change that type of laws of fascist cut.

'US BLOODTHIRSTY WAR' from Page 3

important that Bush can afford to sacrifice the public opinion of the world all together. The US capitalist-imperialist class learned its lessons during the Vietnam war. The anti-war movement at that time was one of the main factors for the US pulling out of Vietnam and accepting defeat. Today, this phenomenon is called, "Vietnam Syndrome". Fortunately, this Syndrome is active, and works against the brutal, war mongering US government.

The consciousness of the world against the US war drive is growing in a great magnitude. The United States is losing the legitimacy of their war drive. However, it must be said that this is just the beginning and there is a long way to go. A strong anti-war movement cannot be limited to the US lead war in Iraq. Like the imperialists' war drive, the anti-war movement needs a long run strategy. If the movement against war on Iraq and in the Middle East is to become an anti-war majority of working people in Canada, the focus must be directly against the war in Iraq. "No War On Iraq" is a common denominator that everybody can be in agreement with. Having said that, the anti-war movement must arm itself with two fundamental notions: First, a clear and uncompromising approach against

imperialists wars, and second, the capacity to develop and sharpen the anti-war program, based on the experience of masses of people in motion.

We need to understand that any successful movement must have a mass character, and we must adopt methods and demands so that the vast majority of the population can get involved. Focusing on main or central issues does not mean that every individual or organization is not free to bring their issues of concern. The broad range of people and groups can express their views in the rallies and other forms of protest. Our strategies must be the ones that help the movement to grow and not weaken the movement. Any related war issue must be foremost evaluated based on whether it will help broaden participation. The issue of diversity is also important.

We need an antiwar movement that includes a diversity of oppressed people, whether it is gender, sexual orientation, nationality, race or culture. Only when the Anti-war movement can capture

the perspectives, angers, and languages of all people can it become the viable, sustainable, and successful movement that it needs to be. We will win.

The Fire This Time Movement For Social Justice Basis of Unity

Humanity today is threatened by war, economic crises, starvation, poverty and crime: all created by the drive of capitalists to maximise their profits at the expense of the people of the world. To oppose each of these crimes against humanity, we must focus all our work and action to build a foundation for and advance the interest of an overall struggle against international capital, its tools of working class division and its local institutions. The fundamental principle of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is the unity and active solidarity of all poor and working people, locally and internationally. We must recognize that this principle is meaningless without active struggle because the pursuit of this principle goes sharply against the interest of the ruling class and they will use whatever means they have at their disposal to keep us divided and hostile amongst ourselves.

Fire This Time is a politically based action organization committed to building the social and political power of poor and working people

in BC. We believe the only way to effectively challenge and threaten the government and their corporate agenda is through the organization of masses of people in motion in workplaces and in the streets. We are dedicated to mobilizing and unifying poor and working people against the Liberal Government and their anti-poor, anti-working people legislations and policies. We are committed to organizing with working and poor people from the most attacked and exploited communities in the lower mainland and beyond: communities of colour, immigrants, refugees, "illegals", low-wage workers, disabled people, queer people, indigenous communities, unemployed people and low-income families. We oppose all forms of oppression and exploitation: from sexism to racism, from homophobia to colonialism and all other institutions, thought, beliefs, actions and behaviours that humiliate and demean people to bring hostility and division amongst us.

The goal of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice is to build a broad based movement

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fire this Time Presents:

WAR ON IRAQ WAR ON THE THIRD WORLD THIRD WORLD WAR

Monday February 17th at 6:30 PM
Burnaby Public Library, 6100 Willingdon
(Two blocks West of the Metrotown Skytrain Station,
near Willingdon and Kingsway)

Speakers:

Linda Morgan, Committee to End the Sanctions Against the People of Iraq
Ian Rocksborough-Smith, SFU student organizer and writer
Itrath Syed, Palestine Solidarity Group
Ali Yerevani, Fire This Time

A free public forum following the Feb. 15th anti-war rally to discuss the politics, interests and meaning of war for people at home and abroad.

Translations in Farsi, Arabic, and Spanish provided.



FIRE THIS TIME Public Meeting

February 24th at 6 PM
IWA Hall in Vancouver
2859 Commercial Drive
(Commercial and 13th)

To the Max: The Criminalization & Imprisonment of Women in Canada

Videos & Panel Discussion

Thursday February 20th at 7 PM
Video In, 1965 Main St. (Main & 3rd)
\$0-8 Sliding Scale
Presented by Joint Effort and Video In
Studios. For more information contact
Joint Effort at (604) 682-3269 ext 3019.

Raging Women's Conference For Women engaged in Struggle for Social Justice

Friday February 28th at 7 PM
to March 1st (All Day)
Maritime Labour Centre
1880 Triumph Street
(Victoria and Triumph)
Organized by the BCTF Feminist
Caucus. For more information contact
Judy Devries at (604) 856-7131
jdevries@uniserve.com

The Roots of War and the Paths to Peace

All day anti-war conference
March 1st 2003
Starting 11 am in room 2201 Douglas
College
700 Royal Ave. New Westminster

Presented by the Douglas Student's
Union and the International Solidarity
Movement. For more information go to
www.douglasstudentsunion.ca/peace.htm

International Women's Day: Women's Rights Have No Borders! Unite for Universal Rights!

March and Rally
Saturday March 8th at 11 AM
Gather at Thornton Park
(Science World, Main Street Station)
Rally at Noon at Victory Square
(Pender & Hamilton)
For more information or to volunteer call
604-708-0447

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