

The Dominion

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US Racial Gap Deepens: Study

Analysis of recent US Census data by the Pew Hispanic Centre has shown that black and hispanic families have borne a disproportionate share of the hardship of economic downturns since 1999. The study found that the median net worth of white households was 11 times greater than Hispanic families and 14 times greater than that of African-American families.

"We have always known about the wealth gap, but what is new and disturbing is that the gaps are increasing," said Roderick Harrison, a demographer at the Joint Centre for Political and Economic Studies. (*Guardian*)

UN Reform Proves Difficult

In the face of charges that the UN is ineffective and unable to respond to crisis situations affecting international peace and security, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has commissioned a panel to reform decision-making procedures within the multinational body. Conclusions from the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change are due out in December.

Central to the reform debate is the amount of power concentrated in the Security Council, particularly the permanent five (P5) members: the US, Russia, the UK, France and China. Observers speculate that reforms will include an increase



Joseph Kabila, president of the Congo, takes a stroll in rebel-controlled eastern Congo.

in both seats and vetoes and will likely include an option to establish semi-permanent members serving a four or five-year term. Japan, Germany, Brazil and India are among those pushing for a higher profile role.

Critics are skeptical that simply increasing the number of seats and vetoes will prevent the gridlock (most recently over Iraq) that has plagued the world body over the last decade. While diversifying and expanding representation in the Security Council to more accurately reflect UN membership is seen as a start, observers point out that the selection of candidates will likely serve the interests of the current P5. In a move that supports this view, the US has indicated that it will support Italy's council candidature over that of Germany based on Italy's support for the war in Iraq. (*Nathan Lepp*)

Israeli Officer Cleared of Alleged "Confirmation Killing"

An Israeli officer who shot a 13 year old Palestinian girl repeatedly at close range has been cleared of any wrongdoing by senior military officials. The officer was accused by fellow soldiers of repeatedly shooting at the girl, who the army says was in a restricted area, after she was felled by an initial shot. The practice, known as confirmation killing, is officially banned by international convention. The girl's parents claim that she was on her way to school.

Sources quoted by Al-Jazeera state that the officer "put his weapon on the automatic mode and emptied his entire magazine." Other soldiers who watched said that he emptied "his entire magazine to her head." Palestinian doctors said that the corpse had

dominion, n. 1. Control or the exercise of control. 2. A territory or sphere of influence; a realm. 3. One of the self-governing nations within the British Commonwealth.

approximately 15 gunshot wounds, while a magazine carries 30 rounds. Sources in the Israeli army said that the officer had been firing into the ground to deter gunfire from Palestinian militants. (*Guardian*)

Hardliners Tighten Grip in Myanmar

Prime Minister Khin Nyunt has been arrested on corruption charges in Myanmar, formerly Burma, and placed under close custody.

Widely regarded as a comparative moderate, General Khin Nyunt's removal suggests that Myanmar's military ruler, Senior General Than Shwe, thought him too soft on political opponents. In particular, the hardline junta is keen on preventing a political role for Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's main opposition leader. She remains under house arrest and is viewed as a danger to the junta's future. In 1990 she won a landslide election victory that has never been honoured. The new prime minister, General Soe Win, has been accused of organizing an attack on her convoy in 2003. (*Nathan Lepp*)

Congo's President Promises Elections

Congo President Joseph Kabila visited the town of Kisanгани in the rebel-controlled eastern part of the country last week in what appears to be a run-up to an election campaign. President Kabila recently reaffirmed his commitment to hold

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Media Democracy Day addresses monopoly ownership, censorship

Censorship, media monopoly, bias and deregulation came under fire during Media Democracy Day events in Toronto last weekend.

Events in Toronto and Montréal were sponsored by a variety of University groups and alternative media outlets. On Oct. 15, Amy Goodman, author and co-host of the television show, "Democracy Now," spoke on the theme of Independent Media in a Time of War and Election. On Saturday, documentary screenings, workshops and an alternative media fair took place at Ryerson University.

This was the largest roster of events ever scheduled for Media Democracy Day in Toronto. Most of the documentary coverage centred on the United States and the presidential election, although workshops allowed participants to bring the message closer to home.

Gender, aboriginal voices and the 2004 Canadian election were just some of the topics discussed during the day. Although criticism of American media was high, the Raging Grannies were on hand to remind participants that two companies claim 50 per cent of Canadian newspaper readership.

The day's documentary screenings wrapped up with a question and answer session with Barrie Zwicker, producer of "The Great Conspiracy, The 9/11 News Special You Never Saw" who titled his talk "How the Left Media Failed Us on 9/11." However, he spoke mainly about what is on everyone's mind in the run-up to the 2004 presidential election—the enormous power of media and government to influence the outcome for the worse. Regardless of the outcome, Zwicker counseled the audience not to accept defeat.

"We shouldn't imagine that forces of death and destruction have more power than they do," he said.

Zwicker criticized the left media for ignoring the causes of 9/11. However, Canadians and people around the world are facing down a variety of threats to their freedom and democracy. In a competitive market, the alternative media's resources are stretched thin. A quick glance around media fair held simultaneously showed the enormous effort being made to bring a diversity of voices to Canadians.

Martin Excused from RIO Report Card—For Now

The Sierra Club of Canada has recently released its twelfth annual "RIO Report Card". The report doles out grades for both the federal and provincial governments on how they have performed in terms of meeting international environmental commitments.

Overall, the results of the report card show that there has been good progress in urban areas, with an improving green infrastructure and a start of an industrial strategy for cities. However, marks went down for protecting parks, endangered species, and oceans.

Provincially, PEI received an A- for measures to address climate change, while Ontario was most improved after its government change. Alberta received the worst grades, with Fs in both the biodiversity and climate change topics. BC fared almost as poorly, with only its progress on the Great Bear Rainforest keeping it from receiving two Fs as well.

Normally, the report card is released in June in honour of the 1992 Earth Summit, but this year, the report was delayed until after the federal election. Because of this, the federal grade was split between the last six months of Chretien's

term, and the first six months of Martin's. Because of the short time period, Martin's government was given an "incomplete" mark.

Pharmaco Funding Compromises Drug Approval Process: CCPA

A new study released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), authored by Dr. Joel Lexchin, Associate Professor in the School of Health Policy and Management at York University, finds that drug regulation in Canada is not as open, as safe, and as efficient as it should be. The study, entitled "Transparency in Drug Regulation: Mirage or Oasis", argues that Health Canada and the brand-name pharmaceutical industry are too closely tied to each other for the consumer's good.

The report shows that "about half" of the Therapeutic Products Directorate (part of Health Canada) drug testing budget is funded by the pharmaceutical industry. This "cost recovery" fundraising is to offset deep budgeting cuts by the federal government in the 1990s. Dr. Lexchin writes that this relationship seriously compromises the safety and efficacy of the drug approval process.

Dr. Lexchin also writes that "There is no justification for Canada's failure to match the US standard." In the US, the report shows, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) drug approval process is more transparent, and thus safer for eventual users.

"Jumbo" BC Ski Resort Draws Controversy

The proposed "Jumbo" year-round ski resort near Invermere BC has been given preliminary approval from the provincial government, but not

everybody in the area is happy. Many are opposed to the plan, which is to develop what would be North America's highest ski facility, with 23 lifts, costing \$450 million.

The Jumbo Creek Conservation Society says that the resort will cut off important grizzly bear migration corridors. Developers have already downgraded the size of the resort to 40% of the original proposed size, but the Society says that it is still not enough. Others think that the resort will ruin the idea of a pristine landscape that many people already come to the area for.

Opinions are divided around Invermere on whether the resort is a good idea. Some say that the resort—55 km away—is too far away to have a positive economic impact on the town. Yet many others are in favour of the development, and think it will be an economic boom to the community.

Amnesty Int'l: Government, Police Failing Aboriginal Women

Amnesty International has released a report in which it finds that the plight of indigenous women has for far too long been marginalized or simply ignored by many levels of Canadian society and services. The report is part of a global campaign to stop violence against women, and illustrates its finding by using heartbreaking case studies and examples involving abductions, violence, prostitution, poverty, and murders taking place across Canada.

The report points out that police services provide an inadequate standard of protection for the women, and also that a history of ineffective government policies has resulted in poverty, homelessness, and prostitution. The authors point out that men prey on the women due to both

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Kerry on Vietnam

The recently defeated presidential candidate, 33 years earlier

by John Kerry

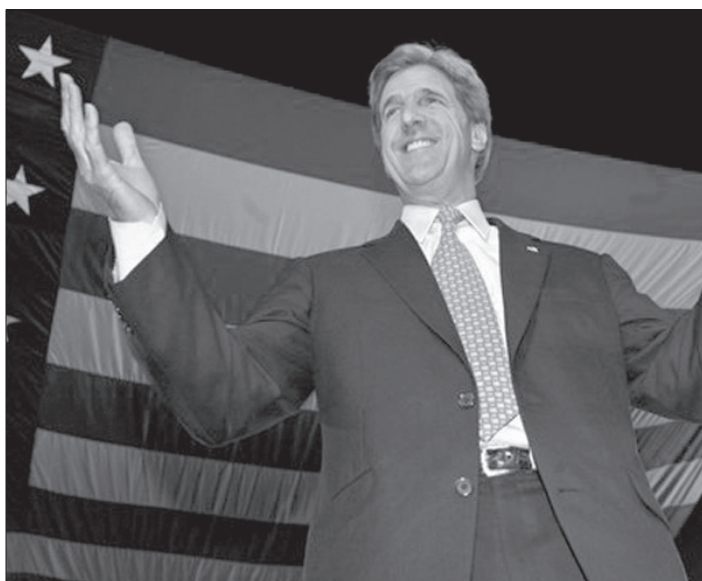
The following are excerpts from remarks made by John F. Kerry in 1971, during his testimony to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate. At the time, Kerry had recently returned from service in the Vietnam war. —ed.

I would like to talk, representing all those veterans, and say that several months ago in Detroit, we had an investigation at which over 150 honorably discharged and many very highly decorated veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia, not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command.

It is impossible to describe to you exactly what did happen in Detroit, the emotions in the room, the feelings of the men who were reliving their experiences in Vietnam, but they did. They relived the absolute horror of what this country, in a sense, made them do.

They told the stories at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, tape wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the country side of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war, and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.

We rationalized destroying villages in order to save them. We saw America lose her sense



Kerry, presidential candidate, campaigns in 2004. *Johnkerry.com*

of morality as she accepted very coolly a My Lai and refused to give up the image of American soldiers who hand out chocolate bars and chewing gum.

We learned the meaning of free fire zones, shooting anything that moves, and we watched while America placed a cheapness on the lives of Orientals.

Now we are told that the men who fought there must watch quietly while American lives are lost so that we can exercise the incredible arrogance of Vietnamizing the Vietnamese.

Each day to facilitate the process by which the United States washes her hands of Vietnam someone has to give up his life so that the United States doesn't have to admit something that the entire world already knows, so that we can't say that we have made a mistake. Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be, and these are his words, "the first President to lose a war."

We are asking Americans to think about that because how do

you ask a man to be the last man to dies in Vietnam? How do ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? But we are trying to do that, and we are doing it with thousands of rationalizations, and if you read carefully the President's last speech to the people of this country, you can see that he says, and says clearly:

"But the issue, gentlemen, the issue is communism, and the question is whether or not we will leave that country to the communists or whether or not we will try to give it hope to be a free people."

But the point is they are not a free people now under us. They are not a free people, and we cannot fight communism all over the world, and I think we should have learned that lesson by now.

Suddenly we are faced with a very sickening situation in this country, because there is no moral indignation and, if there is, it comes from people who are almost exhausted by their past indignations, and I know

that may of them are sitting in front of me. The country seems to have lain down and shrugged off something as serious as Laos, just as we calmly shrugged off the loss of 700,000 lives in Pakistan, the so-called greatest disaster of all times.

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Yes Means No!

The Yes Men dish up artistic critique to straight-faced corporate audiences

by Max Liboiron

Batman and Robin have been replaced. Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonnano have updated crime fighting to fit the times: they steal the identities of the rich and deliver crap burgers to the poor. They call themselves the Yes Men and they have been making some of the freshest, most effective art I've ever seen.

The Yes Men started out as an unanticipated addition to their Web site, GATT.org., which is a parody of the World Trade Organization's main Web site. As a result, unobservant people looking to contact representatives of the WTO for public appearances reached the Yes Men instead. And the Yes Men gave them exactly what they wanted: two men in business attire delivering PowerPoint presentations and debates expounding the benefits of an ultra-capitalist world economy.

They state: "Small-time criminals impersonate honest people in order to steal their money. Targets are ordinary folks whose ID numbers fell into the wrong hands. Honest people impersonate big-time criminals in order to publicly humiliate them. Targets are leaders and big corporations who put profits ahead of everything else."

In Tampere, Finland, Andy posed as the intended speaker and delivered the keynote address originally intended for GSO textiles representative Hank Hardy Unruh. He claimed that the American Civil War was history's most unprofitable and avoidable war, since slave labour would have eventually and naturally been replaced by cheap sweatshop labour. Andy delivered the lecture wearing a gold unitard "leisure suit," complete with a giant inflatable penis containing a monitor for the control of remote workers.

The audience was polite and asked no questions.

In fact, even the most uncompromisingly fascist statements made by the Yes Men in various presentations received little more than well-bred applause. Despite a presentation about selling votes to the highest bidder, a petition to expedite the onset of global warming, and a comment during a debate about how private education will cause the children of anti-globalization protesters to think along the lines of the WTO, no mouths dropped. It seems that political rhetoric, especially in North America, has become perverted so that even an outright call for dictatorship, couched in appropriate corporate lingo, is accepted in stride. Mike and Andy set out to shock their audiences with the WTO's uncensored ideology, but instead were shocked themselves when audience members revealed their Orwellian acceptance.

The only presentation that was heard rather than swallowed by audiences was delivered to a group of economic students in Plattsburg, New York. The crux of the presentation was the WTO's partnership with MacDonald's to end world hunger by recycling Western consumers' feces into new burgers in developing nations. The students recognized the idea as racist, classist and disgusting. The session ended with the budding economists throwing things at the Yes Men. The Yes Men were proud.

In most cases, the Yes Men reveal their "true" identities in press releases following public



Yes-man Andy pitches his golden "leisure suit" control centre to textile executives. *Yes Men*

appearances. After an address in Sydney, Australia, in which Andy informed a roomful of reporters that the WTO had decided to disband because it was doing more harm than good, several thousand notices went to media all over the world. Alliance MP John Duncan even brought the WTO's "newest development" to the floor in Parliament.

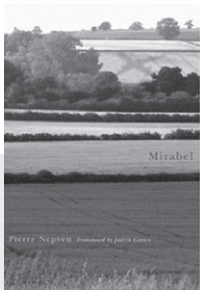
Mike Bonnano is a professor of Tactical Art Media in the United States. He has been performing his Identity Correction interventions since the 1990's. An earlier "piece" you might remember was the 1993 Barbie Liberation Organization, in which the BLO bought three hundred talking Barbies and G.I. Joes and switched their voice boxes. On Christmas day, youngsters found their Barbies saying "Dead men don't tell lies," and their G.I. Joe's confessing, "I love to shop!" If the goal of art is to reach the viewer in such a way as to prompt new thoughts and initiate change, then this type of interventionist performance is perhaps the most effective art form currently in use. Most art "sits on its ass in a gallery" and preaches to the converted, whereas the Yes Men present their work to the general public where political

art is most needed. This type of art is like an interactive form of graffiti.

Their current target for Identity Correction is, appropriately, the Bush administration, an administration that solicits its support mainly through words and presentations (not to mention tax cuts). The spoof Web site accompanying the campaign

against Bush is www.GWBush.com, with the tag line "drug free since 1974." As in their WTO presentations, the rhetoric on their Web sites is not easily identified as parody, since much of the language employed by international businessmen and politicians is empty of real meaning (for example, the concept of pre-emptive self-defense). In a press conference, George W. Bush responded to a question about the Web site by saying "There should be limits to freedom." It seems that the Yes Men are already scripting for the President of the United States.

Many of the Yes Men's adventures and appearances are well-documented on their Web site, www.theyesmen.org. They have also been featured in a new film called *The Yes Men*, directed by Dan Olman, Sarah Price, and Chris Smith, whose previous credits include the 1999 Sundance Winner *American Movie*. The film has been viewed by audiences in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, as well as those in a number of American cities. If you are able to catch the film, please do - it is both hilarious and deeply disturbing; my favourite artistic combination.



Mirabel
by Pierre Nepveu
Signal Editions, 2004

This new English translation of the 2003 Governor General's Award winner *Lignes Aeriennes* gives anglophone Canada an eerie, slanted glimpse into one of its most unlikely epic disasters: the birth and death of an airport just outside Montreal. The first two sections of the book, entitled Surveyor's Notebook, Summer 1969, and Disturbances, focus on the animate and inanimate

communities displaced by the construction of the monster airport. "I counted my steps to that boulder," the surveyor says, "the size of a bull, with no memory but of himself, his folds of moss soaked with dew, his belly wrinkled like an old woman's." From here, Nepveu cuts straight to 1997, when the airport is an obsolete dungeon for "Ghosts of suitcases turning round and round in an eternity

of non-arrivals". Despite some regrettable repetition—the word "lamentation" appeared lamentably often, and "women" was used with uncomfortable frequency as a stand-in for the concept of helplessness—Nepveu's elegy is darkly, cleanly worded, forcing us to contend with a past which has left the spacious fabrications of the present rattling empty.

—Linda Besner

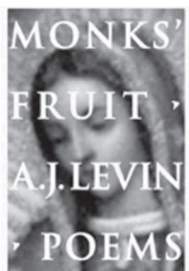


Making Light of Tragedy
by Jessica Grant
Porcupine's Quill, 2004

In a choice story, "Bellicroscopic", the speaker, who is an editor for a literary journal, takes seriously for a moment the joke that she might be illiterate. "Eye problems were her best bet. She would feign blindness while she learned to read. Hooked on Phonics tapes in the car. What car? You're blind. Right." There is a comedian's voice musing here, that sense of mutability of meaning, as the speaker takes the long way round or a shortcut connection that mock-

ingly goose-steps alongside sense. Grant's representative speaker is the type who not only wonders if walking like a pregnant woman could actually fool her body into being pregnant, but tries it. There is nothing silly about this collection: the humour is a digging tool, scraping away the assumptions that deaden our engagement with our surroundings and ourselves. The characters here are innocently intelligent, with strong plain questions, always

open to—indeed attracted by—the possibility that so far they have been wrong about everything. In Grant's world view, security should never be taken for granted, and calamity is a viable option for any story, any prediction. She surprises us, however, by allowing any given character's penchant for seemingly destructive action to bring them only somewhere different, often somewhere better. Generously, she allows us to come with them. —Linda Besner

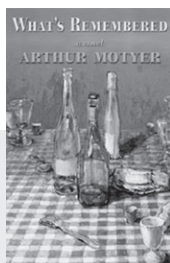


Monk's Fruit
by A.J. Levin
Nightwood, 2004

Some lines and images of this collection are memorable: from "The World's Oldest Toast", the grumpy admission, "So on the day my daughter/ your grandmother,/ was born—the first thing we liked about/ the New World—my wife Chana saved/ a piece of toast. There wasn't/ enough money for bronzed booties." Especially when we hear that it was "revered unbuttered" through

the Depression, Levin's piece of toast makes the leap from quirky cultural jetsam to small but valiant raft capable of bearing symbolic weight. Often, however, Levin's attempts to invent surprising word pairings provokes nothing more than a physical sensation of distaste: "Why work markings onto paper,/ tree corpse, when it could warm/ the winter dust, our iced stew?" With its

unsettled mix of classical and popular settings and themes, Levin's verse feels a bit garbled; in particular, his preoccupation with identifying ethnicities verges on the obsessive. Levin's first collection feels like a series of elbow nudges in the ribs, as he hashes over old material without arriving at many new insights. —Linda Besner



What's Remembered
by Arthur Motyer
Cormorant, 2004

The novel is framed in a Toronto bar where an English professor, Peter, tells his life story to Chris, an artist he met just three hours before. Moving at memory's pace, sometimes glossing over whole years in a few sentences, sometimes lingering for pages over a single course at a dinner party, the book captures the emotions and experiences of a generation of

gay men often forgotten, one that lived in the closet but still, through the gaps in the slats, witnessed the birth and slow growth of the gay civil rights movement. Motyer ends the book in 1979, before the AIDS crisis, a move which infuses the book with both a sense of hope and a macabre dramatic irony. Unrequited love and anonymous bathhouse sex contrast

with Peter's quest to understand the Romantic ideal of love and to discover if—between two men—this kind of love is possible. While Motyer's reliance on literary allusion sometimes traps him in pretension, on the whole the writing is meditative, intelligently guiding the reader through an intricate and complex era. —Matthew Trafford

The Struggle for Haida Gwaii

Sovereignty, resources and culture at stake, say Haida

by Kim Petersen

Located in the northwest of British Columbia are the peaks of a volcanic ridge that form the archipelago of Haida Gwaii. It is a remote area of old growth rainforest surrounded by fish-laden seas that has been dubbed Canada's Galapagos. The colonial moniker for the archipelago is the Queen Charlotte Islands—named after the wife of Britain's King George III. The people of the Haida Nation, skilled carvers and seafarers, claim to have inhabited the islands for 10,000 years.

Long-term tenure by the Haida has been legally established. Justice Douglas Halfyard concluded that the Haida people have inhabited Haida Gwaii without interruption since 1776. The Crown first claimed sovereignty in 1846. The Haida were never conquered and have never relinquished their title. The Haida have decided to forego protracted territorial negotiations and go the legal route to establish their sovereignty.

In the 1997 Delgamuukw decision, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the importance of dealing with aboriginal title, and prodded provincial governments to get on with negotiating treaties with First Nations in order to unburden the court system with legal proceedings on the matter.

The Haida already have one major legal victory. Up against the BC government and US corporate timber conglomerate Weyerhaeuser, the Council of the Haida Nation secured a ruling from the BC Court of Appeal that tied the hands of the province over direct disposal of Crown land where aboriginal title might exist since it would be a legal "encumbrance" upon the First Nation. Establishment of the Haida Nation's proof of aboriginal title on Haida Gwaii



A 19th Century artist's rendition of Haida civilization on Haida Gwaii. The Haida are now in the midst of an extended legal battle.
"Totem Poles at Kitsegukla", by Emily Carr. Photo by Trevor Mills

is still pending. Even though title is as yet legally unproven, the BC government must consult with the Haida Nation on land utilization.

Weyerhaeuser had sought to cut a stand of old growth cedar trees that hold great cultural importance for the Haida. For a people as bound to nature as the Haida, there is much concern that the current rate of logging is unsustainable and would threaten the existence of the large trees for future generations. The Haida have used the towering cedar trees on Haida Gwaii for canoe building and erection of their elaborately carved totem poles. Old growth cedar plays a vital part in Haida culture.

The lawyer for the Council of the Haida Nation, Lousie Mandell, said that the case raises the question of "the province's capacity to infringe on aboriginal title and rights, and where that line should be drawn."

"If Weyerhaeuser's tenure is so complete that aboriginal title cannot be accommodated, then they have crossed that line."

The legal battle boils down to the question of sovereignty.

The BC government refuses recognition of any territorial claim by the Haida. Justice Halfyard, however, has said that he considers it very likely that the Haida will be able to establish aboriginal title to at least some areas of Haida Gwaii.

A recalcitrant province insists it won't play the odds when deciding how to dispose of Crown land in British Columbia. It contends that aboriginal title must be proven in court before it will be acknowledged. The Haida demand the odds have to be taken into account, and argue that to do otherwise would be a violation of their charter rights.

The federal government, for its part, jointly recognizes the Haida Nation in administration of the large park on Gwaii Haanas, also known as South Moresby Island.

A new threat looms on the horizon for the Haida Nation. BC has had a decades-old moratorium on offshore drilling. Under Gordon Campbell, the current Liberal government has been agitating to lift this moratorium. Some estimates point to \$300 billion worth of oil and gas lying in the seabed near Haida Gwaii.

Haida leader Guujaaw, however, supports a continued moratorium. He says, "You cannot buy the lifestyle we have with money."

The Haida have reason to be skeptical about the possibility of revenues "trickling down" to them. Of the timber wealth on Haida Gwaii, Guujaaw lamented, "We've been watching the logging barges leaving for years and years. And we have seen practically nothing for Haida."

The Haidas' greatest concern is for the environment. They have already witnessed the devastation left behind by resource extraction. Clearcutting around the Ain River has left the landscape blighted and saw the salmon runs—a food staple for the Haida—disappear.

There is an ongoing contest over the resources in Haida Gwaii, particularly timber. That the outcome of the struggle will have ramifications for the archipelago is adduced by the destructiveness of unsound corporate resource management in contrast with the successful record of Haida conservation. Guujaaw said of the Haida Nation: "We have so far successfully protected approximately 50% of the islands as intact old growth forests."

On March 6, 2002 the Haida Nation began legal action in the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The Haida are seeking an unprecedented sovereignty over the land, seabed, and surrounding waters of Haida Gwaii. Guujaaw stated, "The Haida Nation has no treaties and on that basis has challenged Canada's claims to Haida waters and the validity of all licenses issued by the Crown. The Haida Territorial waters include halfway to the mainland and Vancouver Island, all the

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Counterbalance to Reality

Canadian Media Coverage of Haiti

by **Dru Oja Jay**

Editors place a great deal of importance on maintaining the appearance of objectivity and impartiality. Sometimes this leads to “forced balance”, a term first used by media watchdog Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR). FAIR was referring to coverage of the US elections, where it found that journalists were assuming “that both sides must be found equally guilty,” and attempted to dig up the same amount of dirt on both candidates, even when doing so misrepresented the events being covered.

There are no Canadian journalists filing regularly from Haiti. As a result, media coverage of the situation has come almost entirely from the US-based Associated Press (AP). The CBC, *Toronto Star*, *Globe and Mail*, and *National Post* have all relied heavily, in some cases exclusively, on AP stories.

In the case of the situation in Haiti, the AP has taken the practice of forced balance to extreme lengths, using facts that are nominally accurate to construct a depiction that is directly at odds with reality.

There are two basic narratives that have appeared in Canadian newspapers: Aristide supporters attacking police, and thousands starving in the aftermath of hurricane-related natural disasters.

The cycle of violence that has been the focus of these reports began on September 30th, when a massive protest demanding Aristide’s return had been planned. According to reports from independent observers and the Haiti Information Project (a group of independent journalists in Haiti), the march began at approximately 10 a.m., with an estimated 10,000 participating, and many thousands more expected later

in the day. Although the organizers had received permits approved by the government, the Haitian National Police (PNH) began shooting into the crowd at 10:30 a.m.

Initial AP reports ignored this incident almost completely, focusing instead on three police officers that were killed in a counterattack by armed Haitians, presumably Aristide supporters. AP reports gave prominent placement to assertions by government officials that three policemen had been decapitated in an action that was reportedly named “Operation Baghdad” by the resistance. However, human rights officials were never allowed access to the bodies to determine what had happened. The AP only acknowledged the PNH’s attack on the crowd in later reports, which described the attack as mere “allegations” by protesters, despite interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue’s admission that at least two people were killed.

According to independent journalist Kevin Pina, many other atrocities are being ignored by the international press. Pina points to the 600 corpses that appeared in a Port-au-Prince morgue in the month of October. Widespread reports of repression, arrests, and murder of Aristide supporters have scarcely been covered by the AP, which only reports that “at least 50” people have been killed.

“When I read the international press, I’m not sure that I’m living in the country they are describing,” Pina told a reporter.

Amnesty International recently reported that “the interim government has swiftly moved to arrest members of



US-appointed interim Prime Minister Latortue. The Canadian press has largely ignored substantive criticism of his regime. *White House*

former President Aristide’s Fanmi Lavalas Party,” which it accuses of corruption, “but has not acted with the same commitment against accused or convicted perpetrators of grave human rights violations”. Most recently, Amnesty has condemned the arrest of Jean Juste, a Haitian priest and popular advocate of poor people.

Some have described Amnesty’s criticism as soft, given that the government acknowledges that Haitian prisons were emptied of common criminals, murders and thieves, and have since been filled with thousands of dissidents.

On October 27, 30 members of the United States Congress called for the release of political prisoners in Haiti. Signatories included Dennis Kucinich, Maxine Waters, Barbara Lee and James McGovern. Earlier this summer, 32 members of the US Congressional Black Caucus refused to meet with Latortue, referring to him as a “puppet”.

AP stories have not mentioned any of these, or any of the many other human rights reports and experts that make similar claims.

Despite extensive coverage, the AP (and thus, Canadian media), media reports have almost universally neglected

strong criticisms of the US-appointed government’s handling of the humanitarian situation in Haiti. In a news release, the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a Washington DC-based research institute, explained that

Latortue and his confederates were not even competent enough to take the basic step of establishing an emergency national radio grid over which they could have broadcast calls to the population to go to high ground in order to escape from the flooding. This abdication of responsibility alone should have been enough to justify calling for his and his colleagues’ resignations.

In a September 23 interview with Flashpoints, Kevin Pina explained that the Civil Protection Bureau, a network of community-based disaster relief organizations organized under the Aristide administration, had been dismantled since Aristide’s ouster on February 29. “People who were associated with [the Civil Protection Bureau] were also driven from their offices, [their] offices were burned, and they were driven into hiding,” said Pina.

No mention of these criticisms, or the facts behind them, was made in any of the Canadian coverage of the situation in Haiti. With these criticisms in mind, one might imagine that a lively debate might ensue about the manner in which Paul Martin’s liberal government handled the situation in Haiti. The government chose to ignore President Aristide’s pleas for help with security for a full month, sending in troops only after Aristide had been removed from office by US Marines.

As it stands, such a debate is not possible, as the most basic and essential facts about Haiti’s ongoing crisis are not available in the media sources that most Canadians rely on.

Multiculturalism: It Hurts Us All

Why Canada isn't, never was, and probably never will be a multicultural nation

by Susana Ferreira

On a recent broadcast of CBC Radio One's Metro Morning, the Toronto-based programme broached the topic of undocumented construction workers in the city's undocumented economy. Katherine Jacobs, Manager of Research and Analysis for the Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS) was on hand to divulge the details of the OCS' most recent media campaign—"The Underground Economy: It Hurts Us All!" Jacobs outlined the concerns of the OCS management and the provincial labour ministry, explaining that billions in revenue is lost yearly by way of untraceable income and uncollectable income tax, and painted the under-the-table cash transactions as comparable to robbing the province of education and healthcare dollars. What Jacobs, host Andy Barrie, and the entirety of the OCS' radio, television, and web campaign neglected to expand upon, however, was the delicate, complex nature of the underground economy. Specifically, who are these faceless, thieving workers, and why have they been forced to work "under the table"?

Immigrant, refugee, and illegal people of colour constitute the majority of the underground economy in the Greater Toronto Area's residential and industrial construction market. A large portion of this group is made up of members of the Portuguese-speaking diaspora—of Portuguese, Brazilian, and East/West African decent. (Their female counterparts make up the backbone of the industrial and domestic cleaning and textile labour markets.) The OCS' public attack on the underground economy and illegal or immigrant workers of colour immediately calls to mind the xenophobic threat tactics of the Canadian government

during the first several waves of non-British immigration. White Canadians, legitimized by their skin, felt as though they had an inherent right to be protected against this foreign influx of People of Colour.

Aside from issues surrounding legality, immigration policy, the conduct of immigration officers, and the tactics of the OCS, a simple question begs to be addressed: just what does it mean to be Canadian? Is it a sheet of paper, stamped and signed by the Citizenship Office that makes one Canadian? Does Canadianness reside in skin, in speech, or in cultural customs? In common history or religion or political affiliation? Can one marry into Canadianness or be born Canadian? What gives one person the right to be treated as Canadian while that same right is denied to another? The OCS, for example, would like to measure Canadianness in terms of income tax revenue and union fee payment.

At an emergency meeting held in the heart of Toronto's Portuguese-speaking community in early October, local politicians, social workers, and members of the underground construction market came together to express concern, to outline the many-tiered nature of the threats being leveled against them, to bemoan their own misinformed perceptions of citizenship and legality, and to lobby for a collective amnesty. They argued that while the cash-only, untraceable nature of their income earnings preempts them from paying income taxes, they do work hard, contribute to the economy, pay property taxes, pay their bills, put their children in school, and contribute to community cultural events. If they work so hard to be productive, positive members of Canadian society, and if they have consistently filled a giant gap in the labour market, then why must the only source of income



A Brazilian family is interviewed outside a public discussion about the status of undocumented immigrants. *Tanja-Tiziana Burdi*

available to them be wrested away? Choosing to comply with OCS's proposed strictures means choosing between unemployment and deportation—a no-win situation.

Another major issue, palpably absent from the CBC's report on the situation, but still very relevant to the illegals and immigrants that gathered in October, is the effect these threats and deportations have on the workers' children. Many undocumented families have been in Canada for a decade or more, having chosen the route of illegal residency following immigration policy changes in 1990 and political and economic unrest in their home countries. Their offspring—born, raised, and educated via Canadian schools and pop culture—are caught in one of the most unpleasant positions imaginable for any family. If their parents are deported back to Portugal, Brazil, Angola, or Mozambique, then they must choose to either stay behind in Canada alone or in foster care, or be deported with their parents. The latter option means life in a country and culture (and often a language) these children have little to no connection with, exiled

from the only home they know.

The question of Canadian Identity is a familiar and prominent one. Canadians spend so much time agonizing over our lack of solid, touchable, definable identity that it has practically become a national pastime. Some would argue that it is this agonizing itself that best defines our national identity.

Having a static national identity, as much as we covet this particular luxury, can have treacherous effects. A static identity has defined borders and properties; it can be both threatened and defended. To Giller Prize-winning, Canadian author M. G. Vassanji, our problem is not that we lack a solid, tangible identity:

The problem is, what constitutes that core; and in the demographically changing society doesn't its definition end up being exclusionary and divisive, potentially destructive and ultimately redundant? I believe that if such an essence [as Canadian identity] exists... it is or will be more subtle than being comprised of a mere response to nature, making a fetish out of low temperatures, or turning away and looking north out of a mule-headed

defiance of the south.

Furthermore, a firm identity of what *is* requires a firm identification of what *isn't*—commonly referred to in academic circles as “Other”. Canada is a nation made up of racial hierarchies and Others, where the dominance or legitimacy of one group (the White, European core) relies on the existence and juxtaposition of lesser players. Educator, activist and author Himani Banneranji recounts her own experience, as a landed-immigrant-turned-citizen:

There has emerged an ideologically homogeneous identity dubbed Canadian whose nation and state Canada is supposed to be...the identity of the Canadian ‘we’ does not reside in language, religion or other aspects of culture... Colour of skin is elevated here beyond its contingent status and becomes an essential quality called whiteness, and this becomes the ideological signifier of a unified non-diversity. The others outside of this moral and cultural whiteness are targets for either assimilation or toleration... Even after years of being an ‘immigrant,’ and upon swearing allegiance to the same queen of England from whom India had parted, I was not to be a ‘Canadian.’ Regardless of my official status as a Canadian citizen, I, like many others, remained an ‘immigrant.’ The category ‘Canadian’ clearly applied to people who had two things in common: their white skin and their European North American (not Mexican) background.

Canada has taken the non-stance of leaving the question of identity open—making it easy to slip into laziness, apathy, blame-shrugging indifference and irresponsibility, and effectively shutting down dialogue. The government made this approach official in 1996 when the national census featured “Canadian” as a possible response to the ethnic origin question for the first time ever. Much of our *laissez-faire* approach to identity has to do with our broad embrace of

Multiculturalism. Introduced to us by Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Canadians have been touting this happy badge of tolerance and progressive-mindedness for decades, not really taking pains to understand its basis or implications, and taking for granted that our non-identity is a mask for an established, deep-rooted White European identity. The very concept of Multiculturalism is based on inequality—essentially, having a core “norm” surrounded by Others.

The process of nation-building is tied to space, language, education, and common or shared knowledge. The failure of the Multiculturalist model is evidenced in our failure to incorporate non-White cultures in how we organize our living and work spaces, in how different languages or dialects are disrespected (French is included in this, despite its token “official” status), in how our public education system continues to be framed according to Eurocentric models of learning and history, in how our popular culture and mass media is unrepresentative of even the largest cultural minority groups. While hardly an excuse, Canada’s divisive history and proximity to the United States’ cultural monster have much to do with our inability or unwillingness to take an active role in reshaping this country’s political, economic and social structures to reflect our changing demography and official policy. Sherene Razack, a professor in the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, published *Race, Space, and the Law* in 2002, in which she identifies Canada’s strong and seemingly unshakable connection with our White Settler Society roots. In a White Settler Society, she says, the White European continues to be seen as “the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship,” while “people of colour are scripted as late arrivals.... In this way, slavery, indentureship,

and labour exploitation... are all handily forgotten...”. She also cites the “racialized structure of citizenship” that operates in this country and roles played by Anti-Terrorist and Immigration laws in denoting who should have the right to be called Canadian and who should not.

Responsibility for race-based inequalities in Canada—which may include inequalities within different labour markets, the ghettoization of neighbourhoods, cultural groups with consistently low levels of education, a high concentration of poverty among particular groups, etc.—is attributed to something called “the linear theory”. This theory is based on the principle that all newcomers face difficulties when they first arrive in a country, but as they learn to adapt and integrate, they eventually fare as well as native-born citizens. Framed around that old myth (we’re all on a level playing field and success depends on an individual’s ability to work) the linear theory, coupled with the concept of Multiculturalism, shirks responsibility for the racist structures and hierarchies that have held up Western society for centuries.

With this in mind, Canadianness becomes something obtainable via assimilation to White, Western mindsets and practices. However, the politics of visibility (i.e. “I can see that you are different, therefore foreign”) makes assimilation to the Canadian ideal a physical impossibility for those without the prerequisite Whiteness. White Privilege, invisible and all too powerful, is inherent in the negotiation of Canadian Identity.

In a position paper delivered at The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in South Africa three years ago, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) took careful pains to unravel popular misperceptions of immigrants, Canadians of

Colour, and the non-role of Multiculturalism:

The multiculturalism policy, while it embraces folkloric and cultural particularities, does not address issues of, nor guarantee access to the privileges of citizenship to ALL Canadians. The greatest weakness of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act is, thus, its limited effectiveness in the modification of the fundamental structure, and organizational cultures of Canadian institutions whose practices reflect systematic and institutionalized racism...[It] does not address nor challenge integration and citizenship issues as they are affected by the Whiteness ideology that is prevalent in Canadian past and current consciousness... Colour blindness is a powerful method for people in the media to deny the existence of power relations of our everyday lives and how they are affected by race... Based on the merit principle, this discourse denies the fact that everyone is not on a level playing field and historical factors do influence achievement and privilege.

The CRRF’s criticism also extended to the situation of immigrant and refugee offspring—the Second Generation Canadians of Colour. This is of particular interest, given that the linear theory of immigrant acculturation no longer applies; their setbacks and hurdles cannot be brushed off as anything but race-based discrimination.

...Most children of colour are currently attending schools where their identity is not given due recognition within the curriculum... Racialized children continue to be taught euro-centric history that does not accurately reflect the contributions of their own ancestors, resulting in them experiencing feelings of unimportance and also rendering them invisible and inconsequential to others...

The double bind of Canadian birth and alien origin—evidenced in the skin—makes Second Generation Canadians of Colour the most able critics of Multiculturalism, and

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Insisting on Working

An interview with *The Take* director Avi Lewis

by Derrick O'Keefe

Avi Lewis is the director of The Take, a documentary about factory occupations in Argentina. The Take opened in Canadian theatres on October 29th. A longer version of this interview originally appeared in Seven Oaks Magazine (sevenoaksmag.com).

What was your initial motivation in making this film?

Avi Lewis: We set out to make a resolutely hopeful film. We wanted to find people constructing real alternatives to corporate capitalism. And we looked all over the world where people were doing interesting things, and it just happened, when we were looking, that in Argentina it was on fire—a laboratory of democracy.

You are from a very well known social democratic family here in Canada. What lessons do you think the movement in Argentina, what's depicted in the film, has for the labour movement here?

I think this film—and this movement—is a real challenge to the traditional labour movement. And an opportunity, I would add. What they do down there is they invert the traditional labour action. Instead of withholding their labour, which—in a globalized era of downsizing and closing of public services—is exactly what they want us to do, they insist on working. A strike is kind of meaningless in that context, when a factory is closing. But insisting on working is an inversion of the traditional labour action. In terms of optics it's incredible because you put the onus on the authorities to stop people from working. And in an economy where people are desperate for work, here



The workers of the Brukman textile factory march in Buenos Aires. The Brukman factory, which was successfully taken over by its workers after the owner closed shop, is one of several hundred such factories in Argentina, which are the subject of Lewis and Klein's *The Take*. *Argentina Indymedia*

and there, that's a very powerful symbolic statement.

There's also a real debate between how much of our energy, as activists and people who want to change the world, we put into electoral politics versus outside the electoral system; and I believe that you don't have to choose. At election time, we should get out there and try to get rid of the worst Campbells and Kleins, and Paul Martins, and try to get the slightly less bad politicians. But not think, in that way that my parents' generation and my grandfather [David Lewis] did, that we're actually going to see real change at the legislative level anytime soon, because all of their hands are tied by the same trade agreements and by the same forces of international capital. And things have gotten dramatically more globalized and more centralized in globalization since my grandpa's day.

And so I think that the grassroots movements and the electoral movements have to work together, and I don't think we have to choose. But right now, where we feel the energy [is best used] is outside the political system.

There's a segment in the film where one of the central characters invites you back to film a sequel, to see the movement's progress. In terms of sequels, are you considering looking at the process in Venezuela, where you have that interplay between government and grassroots, and where there's a growing cooperative sector?

There's a huge amount of autonomous organizing in Venezuela. It's a totally different situation because the space is being created by the state. And there's a

lot of debate about how much is being co-opted by the state and how much Chavez is actually creating community media and community services that are autonomously run and are not politically indebted the way the Peronist machine uses all social services to keep people in the service of The Party.

I haven't been [to Venezuela], so I wouldn't be able to weigh in; I know it's a big debate. But in terms of the sequel: I think it's being lived right now all over the world. I'm interested in seeing the sequel in Canada. I'm really interested in seeing what happens as these ideas leak into Canadian communities that are losing work and the increasing number of places where the crisis has arrived in Canada. And where people are fighting back and building things, not just protesting.

Sacrificing Belledune

New Brunswick community to host 100,000 tonnes of toxic soil

by Hillary Lindsay

Belledune is a small community in Northern New Brunswick that is home to just over two thousand people. It will soon also be home to 100 000 tonnes of toxic soil from Manville, New Jersey. This picturesque hamlet on the shores of the Bay of Chaleur is becoming known to some as a 'sacrifice zone.'

After Bennett Environmental Inc. was refused by governments in Ontario, British Columbia and Massachusetts, their proposal to operate a 'thermal oxidizer'—called a toxic waste incinerator by their opponents—was quietly accepted by the province of New Brunswick.

David Coon, Policy Director for the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB), believes the approval process in New Brunswick was deeply flawed. "It allowed the project to go forward without a full public environmental impact assessment and reversed a long-standing public policy in the province of prohibiting the importation of hazardous waste without public discussion," said Coon.

Lacking a full environmental impact assessment or broad public consultation, it is difficult to know what the environmental and health impacts of annually treating 100 000 tonnes of contaminated soil might be. What the citizens of Belledune do know, however, is that the Bennett facility in St. Ambroise, Quebec, has raised the dioxin levels around the plant and that the Ontario Ministry of the Environment shelved plans for a similar plant in Kirkland Lake due to questions raised about the quality of Bennett's environmental study.

Gaétan Dugas' family has been in the oyster business on the Bay of Chaleur for the past 230 years. He is concerned



False and defamatory or fatal and destructive? Environmental groups, officials disagree about the impact of a proposed hazardous waste dump in Belledune, New Brunswick.

about how pollution from the plant may affect his business and the region's fisheries, aquaculture and tourism industries. "It is the worst thing that could happen to the local economy," he says.

The Mayor of Belledune, Nick Duivenvoorden, disagrees. He believes that the plant will not only have a positive economic impact by creating twenty-five jobs in the community, but will also have a positive environmental impact. "Bennett is treating something that is not only useless but is a hazardous substance, and if they can turn that into something useful, I can't help but think the good outweighs the bad." According to Duivenvoorden, toxic soil treated by the plant will be safe enough to be used to grow crops for use in animal grain. "Bennett is on the leading edge of environmental technology. If there's a process that can treat that [toxic waste], how can you say it's environmentally bad?"

Whatever the environmental impacts of the Bennett plant are, they will be an addition to the pollution that already exists in the region. Along with a sawmill, power plant, and gypsum processing facility, Belledune is also home to one of the world's largest lead and zinc smelters. Not surprisingly, air, water and soil pollution are problems in

this remote community.

A recent CCNB study found unacceptable levels of lead in 24 locations where children may come in contact with soil, such as playgrounds and bus stops. According to a CCNB May 4th press release, fourteen of these sites exceed the lead level, which is supposed to trigger immediate action on the part of the Department of Environment and Local Government. In addition, six locations in the vicinity of the lead smelter and Renviro Park have lead levels exceeding 1000 ppm, well over the national safety guidelines for industrial sites.

Soil contamination has resulted in some residents tearing up their vegetable gardens, a source of food which they had always assumed to be healthy. The lead smelter has also been a part of a bizarre scenario where Noranda (the smelter's operator) buys cadmium-contaminated lobsters from local fishermen at market prices. These lobsters are then burnt by Noranda to prevent consumption.

The environmental degradation in the region angers local resident Florian Levesque, "Just check out the level of pollution in the Belledune area and look at the toxic load they want to add....I don't want to live in a sacrifice zone."

"Sacrifice zones are communities identified as possible locations for industries that other communities have refused to accept," explains Mary Ann Coleman, Coordinator for the New Brunswick Environmental Network. "Sacrifice zones lack political clout, money and resources. Often marginalized, they are deemed an expendable environmental cost to maintain North American culture...Belledune fits the profile of a sacrifice zone."

Many area residents are determined not to become a dumping ground for the waste created by another community's wealth. Opposition to the Bennett plant has included demonstrations, information sessions, press conferences, court challenges, a benefit concert and petitions signed by over 40 000 people.

For one group, opposition to the plant has not come without a cost. Bennett has filed a lawsuit against the Conservation Council of New Brunswick for "false and defamatory statements" made by their representatives.

A press statement released by the Friends For The Legal Defence of the Conservation Council details some of the comments included in Bennett's Statement of Claim. Included is a response made by David Coon to a Telegraph Journal reporter in August 2003, "...Coon stated that toxic pollutants are released from incinerators that treat hazardous waste and that these end up as contaminants in the environment. In its Statement of Claim, Bennett alleges that the statement was false and defamatory of their company, and maliciously stated."

Jean Arnold, Director of the Falls Brook Centre in Knowlesville New Brunswick,

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Ottawa Editorial

From the very lowest end of the carrot patch

[The following was dictated over the phone by Jane Scharf on September 28th. After 38 days in jail, Jane was released and her bail conditions removed by a judge. -ed]

I am speaking to you this time with a strained voice from inside the Ottawa Detention Center. How did I get here, you ask?

The strike started on July 1st, 2004, and we demanded better police treatment for panhandlers, homeless, and protesters, as well as humane solutions to homelessness.

Over the next two months the strike—which was dubbed Camp Where-Else by Rob Richardson—expanded to 11 tents, with approximately 20 persons; and it continually gained credibility and momentum. More and more pressure was being put on the mayor for the city's violent treatment of panhandlers and homeless protesters.

I was arrested for "obstructing police" unrelated to the protest on July 18th and bail orders were placed on me prohibiting me from attending the protest area. The police moved in the next day and tried to shut down the strike unsuccessfully because the homeless protesters stood their ground.

After police banished me, young homeless protester Ryan McGrath reiterated the strike demands in writing to the mayor. The strike demands received endorsements from a broad range of labour organizations, activist groups and concerned citizens.

On August 16th, 2004 the strikers called a rally in the form of an arrest the mayor event. We plastered wanted posters all over town. The poster warned that the renegade mayor is wanted for continually inciting police to violence against panhandlers, homeless persons and protesters.

Over the next two days a



The Ottawa Detention Center. Aaron Perras

peaceful resolution was reached. In it, the city agreed to:

1. An inquiry into the city's mistreatment of panhandlers and homeless people.
2. An inquiry into the city's mistreatment of protesters.
3. Human solutions to homelessness, beginning with a comprehensive response to the needs to our homeless protesters.

Conclusion of the strike was agreed upon for 4 o'clock on August 28th.

On August 26th two of the protesters had an enhanced housing assessment at the Catherine Street welfare office, marking the beginning of the implementation of the peaceful deal.

I went home that evening with what I thought was a reasonable and peaceful resolution, the implementation of which had begun in good faith. These feelings did not last long. Without warning or cause, the mayor ordered the police to shut down the protest by force at 1:00 am August 27th. Particularly disturbing about this police violence against homeless protesters was the desecration of their sign.

The sign read:

"The Land on which this structure stands is part of the traditional territories of the Algonquin Anishnabe people whose current home is a reserve at Golden Lake. We have occupied these lands since time immemorial. It is fitting that this symbol should stand here as a reminder of the suffering of oppressed people everywhere and of our faith in the wisdom of the Great Spirit and the promise of life, dignity, freedom and equality for all living beings. We welcome all who come here to share in our hope."

Police slashed the sign with a machete. It flapped in the wind as police continued to take down the homeless tent city by force.

I was arrested at the mayor's office for breach of bail conditions on August 27th when I went to complain against this violent attack on our protest after we have concluded a peaceful resolution which was in progress. I ended up in jail without bail because again this year police had used bogus charges and arbitrary bail orders to prohibit my attendance at the protest site.

In my bail hearing, the Judge ruled that I was no threat

to safety or property whatsoever. However, he still ordered that I be held in jail. He said that if I was released, people would lose confidence in the system.

Prison conditions in here are deplorable due to lack of resources and staff. In spite of the stress and discomfort on the regular women's dorms due to poor conditions and under staffing, I experienced great satisfaction in our complete solidarity and victories in making improvements in our conditions.

The strikers successfully obtained an inquiry into the city's mistreatment of panhandlers and homeless persons. However, the mayor is reneging on his commitment to investigate the mistreatment of the city's protesters.

I hope to get out soon because I am badly in need of emotional comfort. We do the best we can to comfort each other in here but we are all vulnerable and hurting badly from this outrageous assault on our liberty and dignity. And telephone contact and two twenty-minute visits per week behind glass with phones does not cut it.

Jane Scharf

Letter

From the very lowest end of the carrot patch

To the editor,

In July, panhandlers set up a tent city at the Human Rights monument. Within the fence of the adjacent Bluesfest, holders of \$30 tickets listened to music whose roots lie in the woes of the Southern U.S. poor: "Oh Lordy, I'm so broke". I pondered the irony, and watched police officers asking strikers to remove their laundry from the fence. It seems patrons might be offended by the sight of wet clothing. The consensus—"Fuck them, how else do we stay dry?" The laundry stayed.

I knew from experience that there is a gap between the noble sentiments inscribed in granite on the monument, and the reality of police action on the streets of our capital. An offer to help a protester had led to my being shoved along the street by police, and threatened with arrest. When I complained that my rights had been violated, the officer's response was: "Rights? Give me a break!", while pointing his finger at his temple, to indicate how crazy he thought I was. No, I wasn't crazy—just becoming better educated.

Through the summer, I learned from the strikers that the police problems of the street community are far worse than what I faced. Policing is profoundly discriminatory—if you are young, dress differently than the middle class, then... God help you. There is certainly little other recourse to arbitrary harassment and even assault.

Under the Safe Streets Act, it is illegal even to ask for a quarter at a payphone. In practice, aggressive policing goes beyond any law. Non-aggressive panhandlers are ticketed, and routinely handcuffed. The case of one striker I met illustrates this—a gentle, quiet, First Nations person. Depressed, he allowed me to treat and photograph the fresh cuff-cuts on his wrists, but declined to file

a complaint. Apparently, the arresting officer was demonstrating the correct procedure to a new recruit!

I witnessed the first skirmish with the police shortly after Bluesfest. A scuffle led to heavy-handed police action. Based solely on the word of one person, a pregnant striker was charged with assault, cuffed, and wrestled to the ground. Two others were arrested for obstruction, including strike organizer Jane Scharf. In spite of their promise to do so, police took no statements from any witnesses. Clearly, police exploited the situation in order to damage the protest.

I had come to arrange a midwife for the pregnant striker. I was sickened to see her carried off to hospital on a stretcher, with her hands cuffed behind her back. I myself was threatened with arrest for obstruction, because the arresting officer didn't like hearing my opinion of his actions. Repeated requests for an advocate to remain with the woman (which is her right) were ignored.

The police left, threatening to return the next morning. Perhaps they hoped that we'd all leave. There was certainly a somber mood that night. One young woman spoke up "It's because there aren't enough of us, isn't it?" But there were enough of us - the tent city stayed.

Help poured in from many sources. One conversation illustrates the spirit of solidarity of the local labor community: "How many copies do you need?" (of a flyer, protesting police action). "Ask Jane." "Well, she's been arrested again" (for going to court, believe it or not). There was a moment of silence as we both pondered the irony, broken by his statement "We'll make 700!"

Some media were unsympathetic: "Evict the Squatters" ranted an editorial in

the Ottawa Sun, "an unsightly clutch of tents manned by a disparate group of ragtag youths." Meanwhile the protesters were preparing press releases, building web pages...

In the end, the strikers took the protest to the Mayor's office. He promised help for the protesters and action by a city committee, but ordered the tent city taken down in the middle of the night.

I watched the committee meet with panhandlers and the street community. The deputy police chief reported issuing about panhandling 1,000 tickets yearly, yet claimed that the Safe Streets Act was not being selectively enforced against the poor. I confessed my own crime of asking for change on a bus, but he had gone by the time I spoke. Spearheaded by Councillors Cullen and Holmes, a number of recommendations were made for Council consideration.

Later, in the luxurious Council chambers, some councillors thanked the Mayor for appropriately ending the protest. Council refused to request that police stop enforcing the Safe Streets Act, but did "request

the Police Services Board to consider establishing a subcommittee to look at enforcement of the Act." Leaving, I wondered if it had been worth it. What the Mayor was afraid to ask the police to do in broad daylight, the bureaucracy would surely accomplish over time. Death by committee?

I'm writing this letter on International Anti-poverty Day. At City Hall, a statue symbolizing the fight against poverty is unveiled—a giant granite slice of bread. There is a reception with sushi in the elegant atrium—no homeless in sight. Councillor Holmes tells me it will take a year to implement concrete measures, such as allowing street commerce.

At least one of the strikers who was promised help is back sleeping under the bridge.

My conclusions? The government needs a nudge, the people's awareness needs raising. The strikers should be thanked for initiating what the politicians and media did not. But the fight is far from over.

**David Bryant
Ottawa**

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Vioxx Populi?

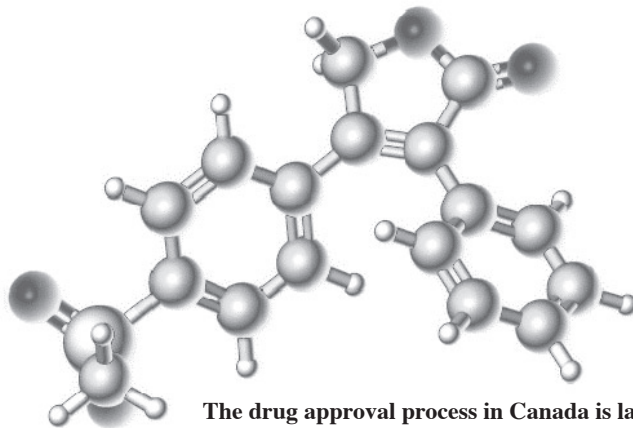
Withdrawal raises questions about drug approval in Canada

by Andrea Smith

On September 30th 2004, Canadians learned that Vioxx was being voluntarily withdrawn from the market by its producer, Merck & Co. Inc. A COX-2 selective non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), Vioxx had been approved in Canada since October 1999 for the treatment of acute and chronic symptoms of osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, acute pain and menstrual pain. At the time, Vioxx was tenth most commonly prescribed drug in Canada, with three million prescriptions for it written in the last year alone. Merck withdrew the drug following the results of a study of the drug's effectiveness for preventing colon polyps which demonstrated that people who use Vioxx for 18 months or longer have an increased risk of stroke and heart attack.

Since Merck's announcement, numerous class action suits have been launched against the company. The plaintiffs claim that Merck failed to adequately test the safety of the drug and warn physicians and pharmacists of the potential for adverse cardiovascular events. The case of Vioxx raises questions of how a drug with serious side effects made it to the market and stayed there for five years. More generally, it raises questions about the process of drug approval and consumer protection in this country.

In order for a drug to be approved, Health Canada requires data from animal or laboratory tests and from clinical trials. The clinical trials must "prove that the drug has potential therapeutic value that outweighs the risks associated with its use." Typically, clinical trials involve between 2000-3000 people and only investigate the effects of a drug for a short period of time. New drugs



The drug approval process in Canada is largely controlled by pharmaceutical companies.

do not have to be tested against existing treatments—they only have to show that they are more effective than a sugar pill. And unlike the US, the data submitted to Health Canada is not available to the public, making it difficult for physicians and the public to evaluate a new drug. Some critics say that these policies enable pharmaceutical companies to produce and patent multiple and more expensive variations of the same drugs. These more expensive drugs are then marketed as new and improved treatments for the same conditions. Because the data is not public, and thanks to aggressive marketing campaigns, many doctors will prescribe the newer, more expensive medication without knowing whether it is more effective or not.

Most post-market research on pharmaceuticals is undertaken by the industry, generally to evaluate the effectiveness of the drug for other conditions, such as Merck's study of the usefulness of Vioxx in preventing colon polyps. This means that most studies do not get to be conducted by independent researchers who do not have a vested interest in a drug's approval.

Health Canada's Health Products and Food Branch reviews evidence of a drug's

safety and effectiveness submitted to them by the manufacturer, and makes the decision as to whether or not the drug is acceptable for marketing. After a drug is approved, it is monitored through the voluntary submission of adverse drug reactions reports to the Canadian Adverse Drug Reaction Monitoring Program (CADRMP). Consumers or physicians can report drug reactions—but consumers are not aware of the program, and there are no incentives for physicians to file reports. However, companies are required to report any further findings of adverse reactions.

Within its first year of being on the market, CADRMP received 151 reports describing 417 suspected adverse reactions to Vioxx. Of these reports, 91 were classified as serious, including 5 deaths associated with Vioxx and 25 reports of suspected cardiovascular reactions. As reports are made to the CADRMP on a voluntary basis, they do not provide an indication of the prevalence of suspected drug reactions. As a result of a study conducted in 2000 in which patients taking Vioxx experienced an increased risk of heart attacks and stroke, Health Canada issued an advisory in 2002 stating that Vioxx should be used with caution in patients with a history of heart

disease.

Concerns around the safety and marketing of pharmaceuticals are further fueled by proposed changes to Canada's Health Protection Act. Slated revisions include partial and full introduction of direct-to-consumer advertising. In the US, Merck spent \$160.8 million (US) in 2000 advertising Vioxx to Americans, and made \$1.5 billion (US) in sales. The US experience with direct-to-consumer advertising has driven up prescription drug costs, compromising public safety by encouraging the widespread use of drugs whose safety and side-effects are not well-known. While the Health Protection act currently forbids promotion of prescription drugs to the public via advertising, Health Canada has been extremely lax in enforcing the legislation since 2000. Direct-to-consumer advertising could mean that Canadians would be exposed to more prescription drugs, such as Vioxx, whose safety was uncertain.

As a recent editorial in the medical journal *The Lancet* observed, "[the] Vioxx story is one of blindly aggressive marketing by Merck mixed with repeated episodes of complacency by drug regulators." (*The Lancet*, October 7, 2004) Hopefully the example of Vioxx will be treated as an opportunity to re-evaluate slated revisions to Canada's Health Protection Act, and perhaps motivate efforts to increase the awareness of and incentives for adverse effects reporting, create a mandatory clinical trial registry that would force drug companies to report both negative and positive trial results, and enforce the prohibition of direct-to-consumer advertising. Because of Vioxx, Health Canada may have to convince the Canadian public that it is capable of serving the public's best interests.

International News, continued from page 1:

free elections in 2005 - the first in Congo since 1960.

He is campaigning on a "peace and security" platform: Congo will no longer tolerate foreign invaders, a promise that hits close to home in Kisangani which was pillaged by Ugandan and Rwandan troops in the 1998-2003 war. Kabila also promised to make peace with the rebels in the country's east and to begin paying civil servants, who have been living off

of bribery for years.

President Kabila, who was installed as head of state following the assassination of his father, Laurent Kabila, in the failed coup of 2000, is the favourite to win the elections if they are held. His main opponent is the former rebel leader and Congolese Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba, who is under investigation by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. Azarias Ruberwas

- another ex-rebel and vice-president - is even less popular, and his party is expected to lose most of its seats in the election, fueling fears that his faction may take up arms again.

In anticipation of elevated tension in the Congo, the UN has increased the number of peacekeepers in the country from 11,000 to nearly 17,000 and is promising to pressure President Kabila to follow through on his promises. (*Geoff Hamilton*)

Multiculturalism, continued from page 5:

the best-equipped to point out inequalities within our societal, economic and governmental structures. Perhaps the OCS sees it as decidedly wrong for bodies of colour, whether landed or without papers, to be earning as much as legitimate Canadian bodies within the construction industry. While it is still difficult to gauge whether a cry of "racism!" is justifiable in this case, one certainly does wonder—would they have treated assimilated, Canadian-born workers this way?

Multiculturalism, for it to be a meaningful, sincere element of Canadianness, precludes a complete re-evaluation and overhaul of current political infrastructures and cultural models. As it stands, Multiculturalism is little more than a song-and-dance distraction from bona fide inequalities and injustices. Our laissez faire



Jorge Da Costa, an activist in the Toronto Portugese-speaking community, speaks at a public discussion about the status of undocumented immigrants. *Tanja-Tiziana Burdi*

approach to Identity is matched by our shoulder-shrugging treatment of Canada's fast-changing urban and suburban demographic, and its quiet, invisible nature makes it far more harmful than most Cana-

dians realize.

Until a change comes—perhaps led by the Second and Third Generation—it is not unreasonable to say that Multiculturalism has failed us. Or, to be blunt, that we have failed it.

Belledune, continued from page 11:

suggests that the suit brought against the CCNB may be a "SLAPP suit". SLAPP stands for "Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation," and has become a part of many activists' vocabulary in the recent years. SLAPPs are typically used by industry to silence individuals and organizations that are speaking up against a corporate policy, proposal, or project. "They are an affront to our civil liberties and to the right of environmental organizations to speak out on environmental

issues," said Arnold.

Mayor Duivenvoorden believes that the CCNB may be speaking out of turn, "Environmental watchdogs are great, but they need to be motivated by more than passion and emotion...you must have accurate and precise data to back up what you're saying."

Whether or not the CCNB has the data to back up their statements will come out in court in the coming months. In the meantime, efforts to stop the plant continue. There are

several processes that could change the fate of the Bennett facility which has been built but is not yet operating. One of these is a case brought before the Provincial Assessment and planning Appeal Board by the Belledune Citizens Committee. If their appeal is successful, it could suspend the operation of the plant indefinitely.

Although permission was given to Bennett to build the facility, the provincial government has not yet issued a permit to operate.

Haida Gwaii, cont. from page 6:

way to Alaska (where Haidas also reside) and westward into the abyssal depths."

This sovereignty is sought within Canada and is not absolute sovereignty.

"We don't believe offshore oil and gas can be safely obtained, the technology doesn't exist, and we are not prepared to see offshore oil and gas drilling in any waters within a 200-mile limit surrounding Haida Gwaii," stated Guujaaw—an opinion shared by some environmentalists.

"They've come and wiped out one resource after another," said Guujaaw.

The Council of the Haida Nation believes that it can provide better stewardship over Haida Gwaii in a spirit of cooperation. Said Guujaaw, "Today the Haida people are engaged in every variety of occupations and careers, [and we] still maintain a strong relationship to the land. The population of Haida Gwaii [is] about half Haida, [and we] enjoy a good relationship with our neighbors. Last year, the municipalities signed a Protocol with our neighbors who recognize Haida Aboriginal Title, and who will represent themselves in any negotiations to reconciliation."

Guujaaw remarked, "What we're doing today is taking charge of our lives. We're going to design our own future, and we're going to make sure there is a future for the following generations."

Can. News, cont. from page 2:

racism and to knowing the history of judicial indifference.

Recommendations made by the report include more police involvement, more funding from all levels of government, more research programs, more indigenous police, more training on indigenous issues for those involved, and direct involvement from indigenous women themselves on carrying out each of these improvements.