

The Dominion

CANADA'S GRASSROOTS NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FEBRUARY, 2005 • DOMINIONPAPER.CA • Vol. II, #7

UN Report: Ending Global Poverty "Utterly Affordable"

A UN report released this week called on industrialized nations to double their foreign aid budgets in order to meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) designed to lift 500 million people out of poverty by 2015.

Headed by Columbia University economist, professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, the report predicts that the MDGs are achievable only if developed nations increase foreign aid budgets from one-quarter of one per cent to one-half of one per cent of GDP. The previous commitment by wealthy nations to allocate 0.7 per cent of GDP to aid has been met by only a handful of countries. The US places at the back of the pack at 0.15 per cent.

Sachs recommends focusing on at least a dozen poor but well-governed nations - including Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique - as a kick-start for the plan. He specifically focuses on some "quick win" policies such as eliminating school fees and providing free mosquito nets in areas where malaria is endemic, along with more far-reaching investment projects in infrastructure, health, agricultural productivity and education.

Professor Dani Rodrik of Harvard University warns that cynical criticism may be dangerously close to recommending doing nothing at all. "[The UN report] has the potential to making a difference in a number of countries that take



Clinton, Gates, Mbeki, Blair and Bono pose together at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Media flocked to Davos, largely ignoring the grassroots World Social Forum. WEF

this opportunity and put it to good use," he said. "One has to ask the question: If not this, what else?" -Nathan Lepp

Competing Visions: Social Forum, Economic Forum

Tony Blair discussed climate change and AIDS in Africa, the world's two richest men lamented the US dollar's continued decline and growing US debt, and the Chinese economy was extensively discussed at the World Economic Forum. An exclusive gathering of CEOs, celebrities, and world leaders, the conference is held yearly in the resort town of Davos, Switzerland. While speeches by Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac highlighted the plight of the poor, reports indicate that discussion was dominated by China's rapid economic growth and the "excitement" of renewed energy for World Trade Organization talks.

According to *BusinessWeek* magazine, one of the issues of concern in China is rapid salary growth and the "growing shortage of single women workers willing to accept very low wages."

An annual protest against the Davos gathering, the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil drew a record-breaking 100,000 social justice activists from around the world.

The Forum is mainly a networking session for activists to form international alliances to counter the increasingly concentrated global reach of corporations. -Dru Oja Jay

Access to Care Could Have Saved 900,000 African American Lives

According to an analysis published last month in the *American Journal of Public Health*, over 886,000 deaths of African Americans could have

been prevented with access to basic health care similar to that available to white Americans.

The analysis attributes the disparities in health coverage to racial inequalities in income and socioeconomic position.

"Access to care is a big factor. African Americans and Hispanics are much more likely to be uninsured and underinsured and underserved," co-author David Satcher told the *Washington Post*.

"An intriguing question is whether more lives are saved by medical advances or by resolving social inequities in education and income," the authors wrote. (*Washington Post*)

Former Reporters Attempt Fox Shutdown

Accusing Fox News Corporation of "intentionally airing false and distorted news reports," former reporters Steve Wilson and Jane Akre have filed a challenge against the company's license to broadcast using publicly owned airwaves.

The reporters, who worked for Fox in 1996 and 1997, say the station ordered them to put a favourable slant on an investigative report about growth hormones that were manufactured by Monsanto Corporation and administered to dairy cattle to improve milk production. "The FCC has said that rigging or slanting the news is a most heinous act against the public interest," Wilson was quoted as saying. "If the FCC is concerned about obscenity, there is nothing more obscene than lying to the public." (*Orlando Times*)

Study Shows Non-Profits Provide Best Daycare

A study released by the University of Toronto shows that non-profit daycares provide a 10 per cent better quality of service than those operated on a for-profit basis. The two authors of the study, economists Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky, examined 325 daycares across Canada.

In the study, each of the daycares was rated on a scale of one to seven in 42 different categories. Forty-three per cent of the non-profits scored an average of five or better, while only 26 per cent of the for-profits achieved scores that high. Most of the top ranked daycares were non-profits, and most of the lowest ranked were for-profits. The federal government is scheduled to start discussing a national daycare strategy in February, and Cleveland says that the participants should pay attention to the study's results. "They can't ignore quality in these discussions," he says.

Canadian Media Missing from World Social Forum

The Canadian media have been criticized for their lack of coverage of the World Social Forum in Porto Allegre, Brazil this year. While Canadian and American media flocked to Davos, Switzerland to cover the World Economic Forum, an exclusive gathering of CEOs, celebrities and world leaders, they were, according to critics, completely missing in action from this year's Social Forum.

Paradoxically, the meeting of 100,000 representatives of social movements in East Asia, India, the Middle East, Africa, Oceania, Europe and the Americas was the largest ever and was touted by some attendees as a breakthrough for global justice movements.

The Globe and Mail and Toronto Star did not run any stories on the World Social Forum. And while the CBC web site featured three wire stories that mentioned the Social Forum, it featured 24 stories on the World Economic Forum.

Dr. Elizabeth Smythe, a professor of political science at Concordia University College in Edmonton who attended this year's forum, said that the lack of attention to the Social Forum is part of a larger pattern in Canadian media coverage. "Much of the focus even of our news is on isolated events, individuals and what might more broadly be called infotainment... [not on] social structures and economic processes that generate inequality."

"When media focus on politics, it is often in the context of electoral competitions and scandals of individual politicians, not on citizens participating in their community life... what the WSF is about."

—Dru Oja Jay

Report Examines Low New Brunswick Social Assistance Benefits

A recent report from the School of Social Work at the University of Moncton shows that people relying on social assistance in New Brunswick have lower incomes and spend much more of their incomes on housing compared to those on social assistance in other Canadian provinces.

The report, authored by Chantal Bourassa and Ysabel Provencher, concludes that in all categories studied – single employable, single with disability, single with one child, and a couple with two children – New Brunswickers on social assistance receive incomes substantially lower than other provinces.

For example, a single employable person in New Brunswick received a mere

\$3,383 in 2003. In Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia, this figure was anywhere between \$6,000 and \$7,000. For this category, the "low income cutoff" (the "poverty line") is \$13,558. The single employable person therefore reaches only 25 per cent of this figure. Other categories fare slightly better, as a couple with two children hits the high level at 80 per cent of their poverty line.

Perhaps the most shocking figures in the report concern the percentage of social assistance benefits that go towards housing. A single employable person simply cannot afford housing, as the average rent for a bachelor or one-room apartment in any New Brunswick city far exceeds the monthly assistance.

The report also reminds that working full-time at the New Brunswick minimum wage will still not get a person above the poverty line. For those on social assistance, the situation is much more grim. The authors call on the provincial government to raise the minimum wage and social assistance benefits in order to help people rise out of poverty. —Mark Parker

PEI Considers Banning Genetically Modified Crops

The provincial government of Prince Edward Island has attracted international attention with its plan to hold hearings on a possible ban on the growth of genetically modified (GM) crops. US and Canadian experts and citizens groups opposed to GM foods are directing their energies to setting a precedent on the island province.

Industry groups like the PEI Federation of Agriculture are urging a more cautious approach. "We need to make sure that any decisions that affect farmers are based on truth and science," a spokesperson was quoted as saying. "Right now, GMOs are legal

crops in Canada, approved by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency."

Critics of GM crops also claim the side of truth and science, arguing that new organisms were approved because of corporate political pressure, not because they were proven safe -- a process they say would take years. Other critics say that GM crops are a sophisticated and possibly dangerous means of asserting corporate power insofar as they are used to control the food production process and extract profit with no benefit to Canadians.

Polls have shown that as many as 70 per cent of Canadians want GM foods labeled, but citizens' groups say that the government has been intransigent.

"Ottawa has ignored Canadians' repeated calls for a public debate on GE foods. The federal government has done nothing to address concerns about the potential harmfulness of these products to our health, environment, and economy," says Nadège Adam of the Council of Canadians.

Several municipalities in Canada have passed resolutions banning the cultivation of GM crops. Except in Europe, where distribution without clear labeling is largely banned, banning the sale of GM crops is another matter. An estimated 60 per cent of processed food in North America contains some GM material.

Industry groups have not responded directly to criticism from citizens' groups, instead focusing on economic arguments. "If the PEI government decides it wants to seriously consider a GMO ban, it had better make darn good and sure those markets really do exist for the non-GMO products - enough to sustain producers who are currently making a living on GMO products," the PEI Federation of Agriculture spokesperson was quoted as saying. —Dru Oja Jay

Record Crowd Demands Closure of “School of Assassins”

by Stuart Neatby

For me, November 20th began with an early morning plenary at a business convention centre in Columbus, Georgia. By 9 AM, the ballroom of the Centre was filled with about a thousand people. As the organizers of that day's protest explained what was planned, there was a hum of activity and noise as people came and went from the room, met with their affinity groups, lazed about on the floor and generally prepared themselves for the coming day of action. At one point, the mike on the stage was turned over to a young woman, Linda Aguilar, who was a student at the University of San Francisco.

“I've been coming to these protests for the past three years,” she explained above the din of conversation, “but I have known about these atrocities even before I could understand them... my parents are from Guatemala and most of my family still lives there today.

“For the past two years I have been carrying crosses with the names of my two family members who were kidnapped and tortured in Guatemala. My uncle, Carlos Sandoval and my cousin, Michelle Sandoval were both kidnapped, shot in the head...”

She stopped for a moment, and began to cry.

“Both got their arms or legs broken before their bodies were thrown in the river...”

All activity inside the room had stopped. All heads were turned toward Linda Aguilar as she attempted to control her emotions while explaining how her uncle and cousin had been murdered by a US-financed military regime. She then explained her experience illegally crossing onto the base during a demonstration in November of 2002. This act would result in a \$500



A protester climbs over the fence at the annual School of Americas protest in an act of civil disobedience. Others carry crosses with the names of victims of SOA alumni.

fine and a sentence of 12 months probation.

“Even as the cops pulled us away, I felt at peace.”

So began the first morning of this year's protests and actions against the School of the Americas, a US military training camp located within Fort Benning, Georgia. These demonstrations have been taking place at the gates of Fort Benning for fourteen years. The SOA, recently re-named the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), has trained soldiers from Latin America (and Canada) in counterinsurgency techniques, psychological warfare, urban warfare, and related topics for more than fifty years. Often, graduates of the school have gone on to commit massive human rights violations against the population of their own country. For example, Generals Efraim Rios Montt and Romeo Lucas Garcia, whose presidential terms of Guatemala extended from 1979-1983, were both graduates of the School of the Americas. It was during the presidencies of these two men that the atrocities, political killings, and massacres of

Guatemala's brutal civil war reached a peak, and even rose to genocidal proportions, according to a 1998 report by the UN Truth Commission

The “school of coups” has also been implicated in military overthrows of governments throughout the hemisphere. In April of 2002 two SOA graduates, Efraim Vasquez and Ramirez Poveda, helped lead a failed coup in Venezuela against the democratically elected leader Hugo Chavez. Leading members within the cabinet of the Haitian dictator Raoul Cedras, who came to power in a coup in 1991 and remained president until 1994, received training at the School of the Americas. The majority of the members of the paramilitary force which overthrew democratically elected Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide last February also received US military training within the last ten years, though outside of the SOA.

These are a few examples among thousands. The School has trained over 64,000 soldiers during its history, and most have gone on to commit massive human rights abuses in

El Salvador, Honduras, Chile, Argentina, Panama, Mexico, and elsewhere. Colombia, whose government and military have the worst human rights record in the hemisphere, continues to send more troops to this military facility than any other country in Latin America.

continued on page 14 »

~ ISSN 1710-0283 ~

www.dominionpaper.ca
dru@dominionpaper.ca

PO Box 741 Station H
 Montréal, QC H3G 2M7
 (613) 787-0356

The Dominion aims to provide a counterpoint to the mainstream papers and direct attention to independent, critical journalism. *The Dominion* is published monthly in print and on the web.

Coordinating Editor

Dru Oja Jay

Arts Editors

Max Liboiron
 Jane Henderson

Canadian News Editor

Mark Parker

Environment Editor

Hillary Lindsay

First Nations Editor

Kim Petersen

Health Editor

Andrea Smith

Int'l News Editor

Geoff Hamilton

Media Analysis Editor

Anthony Fenton

Review Editor

Linda Besner

Copy Editors

Kate Andronov
 Lisa Marie Blahy
 Alex Hollenberg
 Amanda Janes
 Mark Parker
 Antoni Wysocki

Ottawa Coordinator

Jane Scharf

Description and Excess

An interview with Carmine Starnino

by Linda Besner

Carmine Starnino's third poetry collection, *With English Subtitles*, was published by Gaspereau Press in 2004, winning the A. M. Klein Prize for Poetry from the Quebec Writers' Federation in November. Starnino, resident of Montreal, is an associate editor of *Magazine Maisonneuve*. His new book on criticism of Canadian poetry, *Lover's Quarrel*, will be released this year. Here, Dominion Review Editor Linda Besner discusses love, descriptions, and the nature of Canadian poetry from *With English Subtitles*.

Linda Besner: I'm going to start by talking about *Yukon Postcards*; there's a quote in there that says,

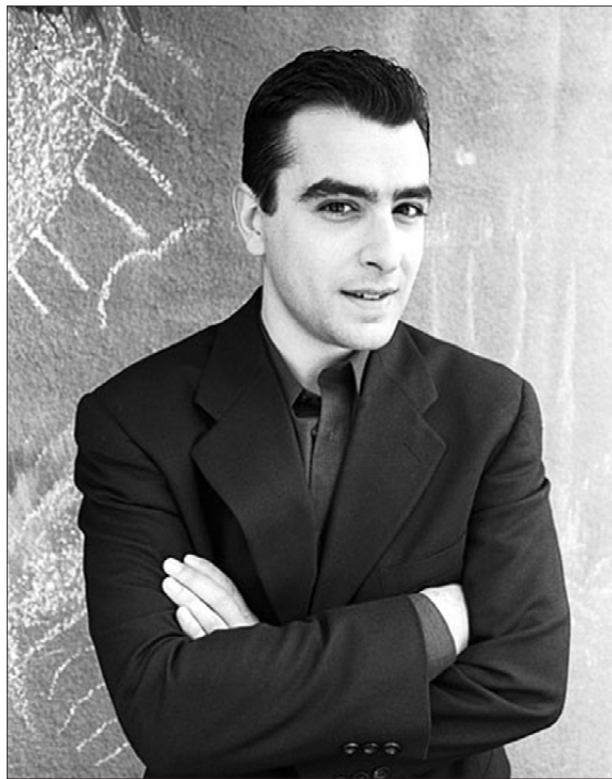
if description is an act of love

I record for you fern-roofed
orchestras
of white mountain heather
with their tiny
woodwind flowers."

So, where does this idea of description come from?

Carmine Starnino: It's an old idea in love poetry, the idea of investing the intensity of emotion in a poem through the accuracy of the description. It's not as old as you would think, but certainly since the 19th century it's been very important for poets to see things clearly.

In writing that particular poem I was feeling that there's been an awful lot of editorializing when it comes to love poetry and that maybe the best way I could show feelings for the woman the poem was meant for, and maybe to show the shock—the visual shock—of being in the Yukon, was to communicate what I was seeing as succinctly as possible and hope that the



Carmine Starnino. Terence Byrnes, Véhicule Press

emotion would seep in. It was a little zen in the sense that I thought if I could see something clearly and try to express that as clearly as possible then the language would take care of what I wasn't exactly saying, which was I miss you I love you I wish you were here.

LB: I was wondering where descriptive language comes from—whether it's something that stems from the object or whether it's something coming from you, that's imposed onto that object.

CS: There've been studies done of how descriptive language is actually sort of recent in terms of the tradition; certainly when you look at Shakespeare—and he's often celebrated and justly so for the genius of his wordplay—he wasn't very interested in actually seeing things clearly. There are lots of new words

being coined and there's lots of very bold metaphorical play, but he's not interested in making sure that what he was seeing could be communicated clearly like a photograph.

That photographic accuracy is more recent—since Ruskin certainly—and it's a tradition I've never completely understood. The French tradition, for example, is much more abstract than the English tradition, one that lives in the head. The English tradition especially since the 19th century, late 18th, is one that lives in its senses. It tries to create drama in the theater of the senses.

So the idea for me in "*Yukon Postcards*," and the book as a whole, is finding the ways in which the world gives you the words it needs to utter itself. My greatest fear was misappellation—not finding the right word. The *mot juste* for me was often a very descriptive word

which often forced me to turn to a part of the language that was a bit high octane. I had to be a bit careful not to overdo it and I think I may have overdone it in some places but you know, as Beckett says, "fail again, fail better."

LB: When you talk about using too many words, in the search for the right word, one thing I wonder about in the collection is that it seems very adjective heavy, very alliterative. I'm wondering how you walked the line between using words judiciously and veering over into what could be considered ornamental.

CS: Well, I think that's the risk in writing this kind of poetry, that ornament is always a danger. I just felt that, previous to the collection, I had been writing poems I didn't enjoy reading. For this book I wanted to go back to the pleasures that drove me to poetry in the first place—language, wordplay, melody. Music. I do find that in a tradition like ours in terms of Canadian poetry that we are used to less, and so when someone comes along who tries to do a bit more our ears hear it as messy. I think the fear of offending that neatness sensibility is one that keeps people from taking the kind of risks that might be interesting.

There's a critic, James Wood, who says that a writer's dream is to touch every word in the language once. That's not a particularly Canadian dream; the Canadian dream is to touch as few of them as possible. I thought it would be interesting if you took Wood's idea seriously—what if you did touch every word in the language once? I think we forget that a need for excess drove poets to write. It wasn't a need to pare down, it was a need to add to.



King's (Mere)
by Nathan Dueck
Turnstone Press

What a shock to find the private voice of William Lyon Mackenzie King exhumed and tampered with, blasted open, and then to find Dueck twirling underneath catching pieces of King on his tongue. This frenetic collection is a poetic interpretation of the life of the former prime minister, reconstructed through examination of his letters and diaries, as well as from news sources of the time and subsequent scholarly analysis of King's personality and career.

Dueck veers from straightforward if elliptical commentary on King's famous relationship with his mother-- "She was a widow under glass framed by a window. King wrote of looking at her through the book open to the hills of her lap. The sun's tongue dawned on her and blinded me"-- to garbled strings of association and wordplay-- "a malaise/ mother? my belle?/ la belle hells/ without mercy/ this mailman/ whore son/ rise sun/ her(i)son/ rex within/ ear-

shot up/ humped/ like dogs/ he feared/ on his/ route". There may be just a touch too much space left for the reader in this ambitious project; those who are unfamiliar with the events and characters of King's life do not get much from Dueck in the way of explanation. However, Dueck may be well within his rights in telling us to look King up in a Who's Who rather than expecting him to baby us along.

—Linda Besner



Teethmarks
by Sina Queyras
Nightwood Editions

Sina Queyras' first book, *Slip*, was named "2002's sexiest book of poetry" by Tanis McDonald at Prairie Fire, and her second collection continues to offer stunning erotic moments: "There is dust on your lines, she says, dull wit cramps your damp bed. Crack/ your spine: it's about desire, the triangulation of,/ intensity of the other, not self, split in two".

Yet in *Teethmarks*, Queyras seems to be deliberately moving away from the sexual territory covered in *Slip*, and to be delving into new subjects, like the relationship between mother and daughter, or American politics. The former is achieved largely through "untitled film stills"-- a more fragmented, imagistic form than that evident in Queyras' earlier work.

This innovative section walks a precarious line between the accessible and the overly personal. The poet's political voice is boldly empathetic, and "Me Victorious" is perhaps the fiercest and most fervent piece in a competent and explorative second collection.

—Matthew J. Trafford



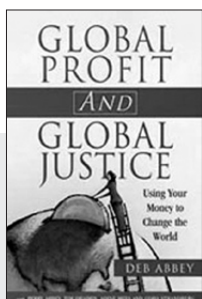
Spine
by K.I. Press
Gaspereau Press

Spine is poetry about the physical and imaginative properties of books, in which classic characters are revisited and darkly revised. Press also takes us behind the chosen typeface with the broken "Joanna", into the editor's office in the satirical "Slush Pile", and into the mind of the great publisher Aldus Menutius in "Hurry, Slowly". Books and the act of reading form the allusive and emotional backbone of the literary addict. *Spine*, however, is far from a

bibliophile's affectionate romp through the canon. Moments of literary comfort contend with that creeping sense that this fulfillment comes at a price; perhaps, while devotedly reading, one is missing out on something called "real life" found elsewhere. Nostalgia, too, Press evades, inviting us to love old books only "sadly/ seeing why we loved them/ then". Most satisfying is when Press weaves allusions into larger abstractions to show the formative powers of

the literature we've consumed. This shows up in a meditation on "Buoyancy", in which "Everyone's a suicide/ bomber these days fits happen/ on every living-room floor, you'd think/ we still believed in Freud,/ in eating men like air, in crying". Though its organization feels random at times, *Spine's* poetic range awakens its readers to the greater implications of the very act being performed.

—Jane Henderson



Global Profit and Global Justice
by Deb Abbey
New Society

This essential tool for socially concerned investors and consumers addresses one of the unavoidable truisms of our time: "With governments becoming increasingly reluctant to put restrictions on business, consumer activism is one of the ways that citizens can affect global and national social policy. In some ways, it's becoming better to shop than to vote". Abbey and her four

other contributors address the main categories of investing, consuming, and giving. Several different types of investment funds are profiled to explain their relative histories and goals, and a number of companies are examined to explain why the authors include them in the "ethical fund" category. In terms of consumption, Abbey discusses the history and efficacy of consumer boycotts, and

describes the factors that allow consumers to make informed and conscientious purchases. She also points to relevant and extremely useful websites, like www.responsible shopper.org, and www.IdealsWork.com. Finally, the handbook gives some keen advice on how to customize the most effective giving strategy based on your ideals and your donation budget.

—Amanda Janes

Dam Locally, Warm Globally

First Nations take lead in protecting Boreal forest

by Kim Petersen

Around 400 kilometers north of Winnipeg lies Asatiwisipe Aki (Poplar River First Nation), an Ojibway people. The remote community is comprised of roughly 1,200 members, of which over 900 are on reserve. The traditional Asatiwisipe Aki territory, delineated by the registered trapline district of Poplar, lies between 50 and 55 degrees north latitude and extends far east from Lake Winnipeg, almost reaching the Ontario border.

As set out in Treaty 5, the Asatiwisipe Aki Reserve #16 is located at the mouth of the Asatiwisipe (Poplar River). The area is host to a number of rivers that flow west through a pristine landscape (the boreal forest), which plays a critical role in the global and local ecosystems. The trees and peatlands of the vast northern boreal forest comprise one of the planet's largest carbon reservoirs. Boreal forests retain carbon that, if released, would accelerate global warming. Its wetlands filter millions of gallons of water each day.

In 1998, the Manitoba government, the Manitoba Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO - Cree consortium for northern Manitoba) signed an Memorandum of Understanding in which it was stipulated that "Protected areas will not infringe upon any existing aboriginal or Treaty rights of First Nations peoples."

In spring 2000, protected area designation was sought for the remaining traditional territory in a proposal to the Manitoba government.

There are historical grounds for Asatiwisipe Aki to pursue protection for the surrounding environment, and there has always been external interest in exploitation of the area's resources. Logging interests



Canada's boreal forest is among the largest intact forest ecosystems in the world. *Natural Resources Defence Council*

offered to open up the area with an all-weather road, but the offer was refused by the Cree Elders. They also refused the promises of jobs, economic prosperity, and the modern life.

In the philosophy of the Asatiwisipe Aki elders: "The Creator has given us life, he has given us land to live from, without that land our people will die." Stewardship of the land for future generations is inculcated, as preservation of the intact boreal forest region is key to the Asatiwisipe Aki world vision.

Logging is not the only concern for First Nations in the boreal forest. Environmental NGO Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC) issued an alert on 19 October 2004 that the government of Manitoba had given the "green light to yet another dam that could have far-reaching consequences for the wildlife and indigenous people of Canada's boreal forest."

NRDC noted that many First Nations communities are largely dependent on the boreal forest for survival. Previous hydropower developments had already wreaked havoc on First Nations people: flooding the forest, ruining ancestral waterways, clogging lakes and rivers with sediment, and destroying aquatic life.

Fluctuations in water levels still pose a danger of erosion to

sacred burial sites. According to NRDC, promises from Manitoba Hydro and the governments of Manitoba and Canada to alleviate this terrible damage have not been fulfilled.

Now Manitoba Hydro wants to build the Wuskwatim dam. This is to be the first in a series of hydroelectric projects, further threatening the boreal forest by cutting roads and transmission lines through some of North America's last unspoiled wilderness. The plans to construct hydroelectric projects in Manitoba's boreal forest are in large part to supply US consumers.

NRDC has joined with other environmental groups and First Nations in a campaign to save this pristine forest region. There is an ambitious proposal to create a United Nations World Heritage Site out of 4.3 million hectares in Manitoba and Ontario. The site would include two provincial parks in addition to the traditional territories of involved First Nations. The proposal has federal government backing, but the governments of Manitoba and Ontario have yet to publicly support it.

Most of the world's original forests have already been cut. However, about 80 percent of the Canadian boreal forest is still undefiled. Most of the 1.3 billion acre Canadian Boreal is

predominantly owned by the government and inhabited by First Nation peoples. They live in and rely on the forests for their food, their livelihoods, and their spiritual connection to the world.

Don Sullivan, executive director of the environmental group Boreal Forest Network (BFN), asks, "If diversity is the key to life then why are we globally moving toward homogeneous economy - one based on the need to consume at all costs? Protecting and preserving a 4.3 million hectare intact boreal landscape will in its own little way affirm the need to both protect a fully functioning intact boreal ecosystem and a culture and by doing so, all of humanity will be richer for it."

"The BFN support the five First Nation communities who are seeking to have their traditional territories nominated as part of a World Heritage Site, as we see it as a way for these communities to move forward with their aspiration to manage, plan, control and protect the natural resources in their traditional territories and a step forward towards protecting the foundation of their culture - the natural resources. For us the most endangered species on the planet are the indigenous peoples and cultures who still practice their traditional ways. A culture that still hunts, fish, trap and use the plants (a culture that is not yet alienated from nature) requires, no demands, a healthy fully functioning ecosystem. A culture that seek balance with nature rather than domination of nature is worth learning from and certainly worthy of respected."

The two lead First Nations working on the World Heritage Site proposal and sustainable development on their own traditional territories are Asatiwisipe Aki and Pikangikum First

continued on page 14

Depo-Provera and Bone Loss

Women's health groups say "I told you so"

by Lisa Nussey

On November 18, Pfizer Canada Inc. released a safety update on their long acting, injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera (medroxyprogesterone acetate), citing ongoing research that points to significant Bone Mineral Density (BMD) loss amongst its users. Pfizer warns health care professionals that

a treatment for endometriosis and endometrial carcinoma. Despite persistent lobbying from Pharmacia and Upjohn, the original manufacturers of the drug before it was acquired in 2003 by Pfizer, the FDA would not approve it as a method of birth control in the US, citing doubts about long term effects and potential connections to cancer.

Provera- an umbrella group of over 80 Canadian organizations. They lobbied not to have the drug approved for contraceptive use in this country because of their concerns about what was yet unknown about Depo-Provera and about the social misuse of the drug that had already been witnessed.

In addition, they demanded the creation of a registry of Depo users, both for purposes of tracking long-term effects and to ensure that if problems with the drug were discovered the women could be easily contacted. This registry was never created. They were successful in their request for a set of nationwide hearings to be made available to women with experience with the drug, which took place in 1986. Following these hearings, Health Canada again denied approval of the drug.

Finally, in 1992 the drug was approved in the US, and then in 1997 in Canada. Consistent with current Health Canada policy, the data from the trials on which these approvals were made was never made available to the public.

Information that has been made available by the drug companies says that a woman needs to be extremely healthy in order for her body to cope with persistent levels of synthetic progesterone. A detailed history and physical exam is suggested before prescription, with periodic reevaluations throughout the course of use.

According to many critics, Depo-Provera is targeted at women on the margins of North American society, women who have inadequate access to health care and who usually suffer disproportionately from poor health.

Women in Canada have long been outspoken about the effects of Depo-Provera. In their 1991 letter to then federal Health and Welfare minister

Benoit Bouchard, the Canadian Coalition on Depo-Provera pointed to a growing body of research connecting Depo use to breast cancer and osteoporosis. In addition, they cautioned about the side effects reported by women which include irregular or no menstrual periods,

"Consistent with current Health Canada policy, the data from the trials on which these approvals were made was never made available to the public."

weight gain, decreased libido and depression.

In response to Pfizer's announcement, the Canadian Women's Health Network (CWHN), pointing to the history of the drug's approval, said that "women's health groups can be a far more reliable and informed source than either the drug companies or Health Canada." Madeline Boscoe, executive director of the CWHN and co-founder of the Canadian Coalition on Depo-Provera says that "my frustration is that they didn't listen to us and now our worries have come true."

According to groups like the CWHN, the history of women's medicine is characterized by such a silencing of women. In what they call repeated cases of experimentation without consent, such as Depo-Provera or last year's hormone replacement therapy revelations, women are consistently reassured that the pharmaceuticals they are using are safe, only to learn after the fact that their therapies are potentially doing more harm than good.



Depo-Provera, a progesterone derived from soybeans, is a long-acting, injectable contraceptive that works by inhibiting the secretion of hormones responsible for ovulation and thickening the uterine lining.

"bone loss is greater with increasing duration and may not be completely reversible. It is unknown if the use of Depo-Provera during adolescence or early adulthood, a critical period for bone accretion, will reduce peak bone mass and increase the risk of osteoporotic fracture in later life."

Women's health groups say that the findings come as no surprise. For decades, activists have challenged the manufacturers and drug regulating bodies regarding both the political and health implications of the drug that is disproportionately prescribed to marginalized women at home and abroad.

Depo-Provera was first approved in the US in 1960 as

While Pharmacia lobbied for approval in the US, Canada and Europe, the drug was being exported to poor countries as part of a global population control strategy, despite the opposition from health groups in most of the affected countries. The export of Depo-Provera is often discussed in the same vein as the infamous Dalkon Shield IUD, banned in the US for its abysmal safety record, but continually sold to the underdeveloped world at a 48% discount.

In 1985, Pharmacia and Upjohn again challenged the FDA for approval, without success. At the same time women's and community health groups across the country formed the Canadian Coalition on Depo-



The sun slips through the clouds in the Los Altos (the highlands) region. Geographically, Chiapas is one of Mexico's most diverse and beautiful areas. 70 percent of Chiapas's dwellings are overcrowded, 51 percent have earthen floors and more than 35 percent lack drainage or electricity, even though Chiapas produces 60 percent of the hydro electric power used in Mexico City. These objective realities, along with 500 years of cultural destruction and humiliation for Mexico's (and Canada's) indigenous, created the conditions for rebellion.

Reflecting on Ten Years of Resistance in Chiapas

photos by Chris Arsenault
(except where noted)

On New Year's Day 1994, the day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect, 3,000 poorly armed indigenous peasants seized 6 towns in Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state. The Zapatistas demanded work, land, housing, food, healthcare, education, autonomy, freedom, democracy, justice and peace. Their rebellion wasn't an attempt to seize state power; the Zapatistas' stated goal was to draw attention to brutal poverty and ill-effects of NAFTA, which

they called a "death sentence". NAFTA allowed heavily-subsidized US crops to flood the Mexican market, eliminating market access for millions of small farmers. As a precondition to the agreement, the Mexican government removed Article 27 from the constitution, an amendment dating to the first Mexican revolution which guaranteed communal land access for small farmers. The Zapatistas' uprising received worldwide attention, and drew much of its support from tens of thousands, particularly in North America and Europe. In the days following the insurgency,

the army counter-attacked. Their capacity to destroy the Zapatistas was undisputed, but there was too much popular support behind the rebels; 100,000 rallied in Mexico City, chanting "we are all Zapatistas", and support demonstrations erupted at Mexican embassies and consulates around the world. Twelve days after fighting began, the army agreed to a ceasefire. After a series of fruitless negotiations with the government for indigenous rights and autonomy, three federal administrations, and a 2001 march on the capital drawing hundreds of

thousands of supporters and the attention of the world media, the Zapatistas say they are coming to grips with the old maxim, "if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself." Unable to compel the government to negotiate in good faith, they are creating their own political structures, schools, health clinics and economic cooperatives. This photo essay looks back at eleven years of zapatismo, and provides a window onto the future of what the New York Times called "the first post-modern Latin American revolution."



Above left: A member of *Mujeres por la dignidad* (women for dignity) a 1,000 member Zapatista cooperative, weaving art-crafts. (photo by James Daria) Zapatista women are empowering themselves economically as well as socially. Several women-run cooperatives have sprouted up, producing blankets, crafts, hammocks, etc.

Top right: Activists putting the finishing touches on boots at a Zapatista run workshop. Even key Zapatista activists still can't afford proper footwear. In response to this need, the

movement started the 1st of January boot cooperative, which sells high quality boots at cost to local communities. The factory is a thriving example of worker self-management. According to one of the volunteer employees: "We have no owner. Here we are all equals. When there is something necessary, or when problems arise, all jobs have problems, then we have a meeting or a discussion in general. If we want to make something without consulting the rest, we can't do that. We must present that job on behalf of everyone."



Above right: Students crowd the classroom at the autonomus Zapatista school in Francisco Gomez. Education is a key demand of the Zapatistas. In many regions, government schools simply don't exist. Government schools neglect indigenous history and are inaccessible to many communities. The Zapatistas have opened dozens of their own schools, with volunteer teachers giving free classes in local languages (tzotzil in this community), Spanish, math, humanities and natural sciences.



Top: Mural for women's education and dignity in Oventic. (photo by James Daria) According to Commandante Ramona, the matriarch of the Zapatistas, "Women have been the most exploited... We get up at three in the morning to prepare corn for our husband's breakfast and we don't rest until late at night. If there is not enough food we give it to our children and our husbands first. So the women now have decided to take up arms and become Zapatistas." Women comprise fifty percent of EZLN (the Zapatista armed wing)'s leadership. One third of those fighting on New Year's Day 1994 were women.

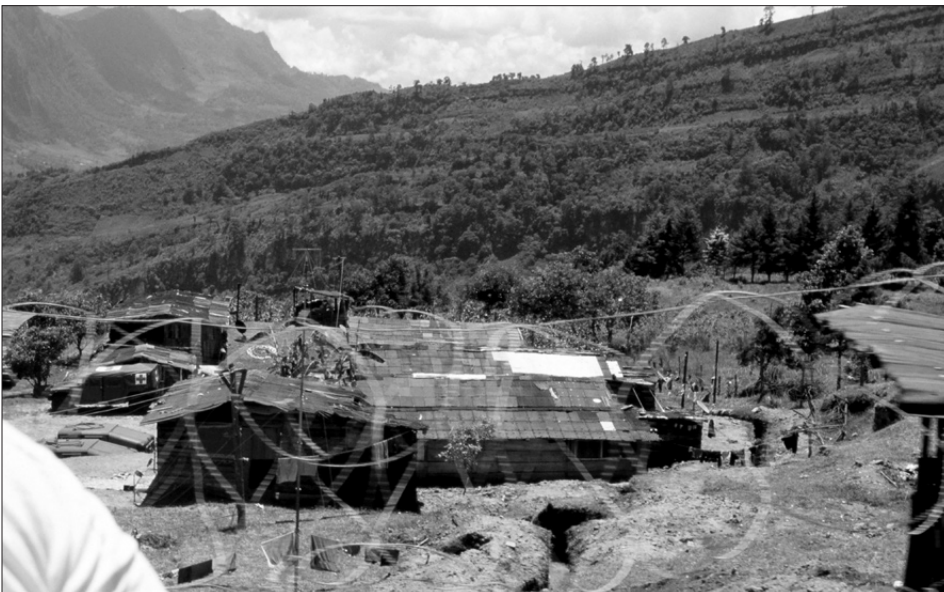
Above left: A farmer tests his corn for genetic contamination. Genetic Modification has become a global consumer issue; in Chiapas it is a question of identity. The Mayans consider themselves, "the people of the corn"; when you change the corn, you're changing them. These farmers walked for eight hours to bring samples from families in their area to be tested for contamination. All the tests came out negative, but they say that could change any day.

Above right: Military patrol outside the Zapatista community of Francisco Gomez in the Ocosingo region, 1999. At the height of tensions, observers estimate that 60 000 troops or one-third of the Mexican federal Army was stationed in Chiapas. There are deep seated economic and political interests in Chiapas, a state rich in oil, uranium, timber and other resources. In 1994, Chase Manhattan Bank sent a memo to high-ups in the Mexican Army urging them to "eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate effective control of the national territory."



Top: Members of the Junta of Buen Gobierno for Los Altos region stand in their office, Oventic Caracole, 2004. In 2003, the armed wing of the Zapatistas passed the power of governance off to a civilian political authority; the Juntas of Buen Gobierno (good government boards). This shift represents a key development for the movement-cemented autonomy. The Zapatistas say they need to create their own structures, functioning outside the hegemony of state political power or “free-market” domination.

Middle: Military base in the Los Altos region, 2004. Vicente Fox of the rightist National Action Party was elected president in 2000, ending 71 years of one party rule in Mexico. During the campaign, he promised to end the conflict in Chiapas in “fifteen minutes”. Although he removed some troops, there are around 18,000 in Chiapas today. The occupation continues.



The rebellion itself consisted of 3000 or so Zapatistas taking over 5 towns, including the tourist Mecca San Cristobal de las Casas. Prior to New Year’s Day 1994, people in Chiapas used all the classic protests: sit-ins, road blocks and demonstrations, but no one listened. According to human rights groups, the Zapatistas never violated the Geneva Convention, both during and after the armed phase of the rebellion. The same, according to the Zapatistas and human rights groups, cannot be said for the Mexican Army.

Bottom: A child in the Zapatista refugee camp of San Pedro Polho. After the 1997 Acteal Massacre where paramilitaries killed 45 unarmed indigenous men, women and children as they prayed in their church, thousands of Zapatista supporters fled their homes and ended up in this overcrowded camp. According to the Mexican Government, 80 percent of Chiapas’ municipalities are facing “acute marginalization”. Chiapenco children, like this boy in San Pedro Polho, have a one in five chance of dying before age five.



Chris Arsenault is a Halifax based freelance writer. He has covered the situation in Chiapas for CBC radio, the Halifax Herald and Z Magazine. Chris has also worked with Students Taking Action in Chiapas and the Black Star Boot Cooperative, grassroots organizations working on the ground in Chiapas.

Haiti and the Globe

Facts, research missing in action

by Yves Engler

The Globe and Mail, Canada's national newspaper, finally decided to report on Canadian operations in Haiti. In Saturday's paper Marina Jimenez wrote about Canada's ongoing role in the hemisphere's poorest nation.

But did Jimenez look into the veracity of Paul Martin's claim that there are no political prisoners in Haiti? Did she discuss why Canada has released aid--and demanded other governments do likewise--to a regime with absolutely no democratic legitimacy? (This only two years after refusing aid to Haiti's democratic government based on claims of electoral irregularities in seven of 7000 elected positions.)

Did Jimenez focus on Canada's connection, as head of the United Nations police force, to the increasingly murderous Haitian police, who target poor youth and even journalists who witness their misdeeds?

No. While Jimenez at least quoted a Haitian saying "you, the Canadians, the French and the Americans... sent Mr. Aristide into exile" the article mostly focused on the tough job facing a brave Quebec City police officer who volunteered to help out. (This is one of the few times I have seen the mainstream media report that Haitians believe Canada helped overthrow their elected government, even though on a recent trip there every Haitian I interviewed said as much.)

Surely a responsible journalist owes it to her readers to check out "facts" before citing them or at least to report conflicting versions of what is going on. Instead Jimenez writes that Aristide "from his South Africa exile" is "funding" and "directing" a "war." She reports about an "Operation Baghdad" (also



Demonstrators in Cap-Haitien demanding the return of Aristide. The banner reads: "Operation Baghdad is a plot by Group 184 to put an end to Lavalas. They will Fail!" Englers says that Canadian reporters have uncritically reported that "Operation Baghdad"--the alleged name given to the beheading three police officers--was a committed by Aristide supporters. HaitiAction.net

used in the front-page teaser) that is supposedly a pro-Aristide campaign to murder police officers, but makes no mention that independent observers say this is an invention of the interim government. Or that on December 16 in Cap-Haitien more than ten thousand pro-constitution demonstrators marched behind a banner claiming "Operation Baghdad" was a plot created by the pro-coup forces to demonize Lavalas supporters.

Nowhere in the 2500-word article is it mentioned that the Caribbean community recently reaffirmed its rejection of Haiti's current government until elections are held. Nor did Jimenez, or the rest of Canada's mainstream media, report on the recent murder of Haitian journalist Abdias Jean. According to Reuters and the Associated Press--news services that Canadian media use regularly--Haitian National Police killed Jean after he witnessed the police execute three people in the slum of Village de Dieu.

These killings come on the heels of an exhaustive human

rights report by the University of Miami School of Law Center for the Study of Human Rights confirming the brutality of the installed Gérard Latortue regime.

Don't reporters at the Globe and Mail do at least some minimal background research before they go off on a foreign assignment? If Jimenez had read the University of Miami report she would have known about the growing role of former military thugs within Haitian police ranks. The report includes an interview with Andy Apaid, an American sweatshop owner and head of Group 184, a Canadian and U.S. funded organization that was instrumental in overthrowing the elected government. Apaid discusses his patronage of a gang that terrorizes Lavalas supporters in Cite Soleil. The report, which focuses on U.S. involvement in Haiti, also documents Canada's role in undermining Haiti's elected government through strategic funding of a "human rights" organization. It also reveals that the second highest official

in the current "justice" ministry is currently on the payroll of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and has been for more than four years. This is the ministry that is ultimately responsible for over 700 political prisoners and an unknown number of random killings by the Haitian National Police.

The mainstream media seems almost totally unwilling to highlight Canada's connection to the coup and aftermath of violent political repression. After my return from Haiti I sent an opinion to most of the major papers in the country. Even though the article was politically tame, well edited and of proper length no paper was interested. The foreign affairs editor at the Toronto Star wavered on a news piece I submitted a couple of weeks ago and then told me the paper already has a freelance journalist, Reed Lindsay, there. I like Lindsay's work but his reporting barely touches on Canada's involvement in Haiti (he is from the U.S.). When I sent the same news article to Paul Knox, the foreign editor at the Globe and Mail, he told me he couldn't use it "as it has a lot of commentary and opinion woven through it."

I find this ironic after reading Jimenez' article. Is there no "commentary" in a story that focuses on a brave Canadian police officer who only wants to help Haitians? When an American reporter goes to Iraq and writes a laudatory profile about a brave Marine doing his job we see the "point" of the article as justifying an illegal U.S. invasion. But, of course in our case, it is "commentary" only when a story challenges the dominant assumption of Canada as a force for good in the world.



Otesha Project

Biking Uphill

The Otesha Project “takes action for a sustainable future”

by Shannon Hines

At 18-years-old, Simon Moll had to make a decision. It was either go back to school after his Canada World Youth experience in Vietnam, or bike across Canada for a cause he believed in. He chose the latter. One year later, Moll is one of three coordinators of the Otesha Project's Coast2Coast bike tour, aimed to educate Canada's youth on environmental issues.

“We always tell them, ‘Be the change you want to see,’” says Moll, who will start the second Otesha tour this April.

The idea for Otesha (Swahili for “reason to dream”) was born in Kitale, Kenya in February, 2002 to Jocelyn Land-Murphy and Jessica Lax. The then 21-year-olds were studying sustainable development in a traveling field school when they caught a glance of Canada from the outside. According to their website, the view wasn't pretty: “There is no doubt that our

current way of life is harming the planet and its inhabitants.” Determined to make a change, they created the Otesha Project with the hope to “empower our generation to take action towards a sustainable future. [The project] is based on the belief that there are alternatives to our consumer society, and that we all have the opportunity to have a positive impact.” Action came in the form of four bicycle tours, one of which takes participants from the Pacific Coast to Canada's Atlantic East.

“The process is like a product,” Moll says of the Coast2Coast tour. Last year, he and 32 other members of the Otesha Project completed the 164 day trip, biking the entire country from Spring until Fall. But the tour is more than just scenery; participants made over 250 presentations at schools and community centres, with a total estimated audience of more than 12,000 youth. At an average of 100 km a day, that's

no easy task. Moll suggests that the tour itself is a metaphor for projects like Otesha, working

“There are alternatives to our consumer society, and that we all have the opportunity to have a positive impact.”

for change and awareness. “I always say my favorite part was biking up hills,” he says. “When you have an understanding of a world you want, the top doesn't matter. It's the hope that's driving you on.”

It's hope that Otesha offers to their youthful audience. Presentations usually include personal storytelling, slide-shows, and theatre, all outlining better environmental choices accessible to young people. For

example, a play performed by Otesha addresses the choices one makes in a typical hour of the day, including personal water use, food and fair trade, clothing choices and getting creative with all of the above. Moll says that kids aren't always given enough credit when it comes to their interest in these issues. “They're really responsive,” he says, adding that the inspiration doesn't end when the presentation does. Students are given postcards, on which they record their environmental efforts and aspirations, and send them back to Otesha.

Moll admits he's a “hopeful hooligan,” and finds fulfillment in living his values. Like many of the Otesha members, he believes his international experience gave him a unique view of Canada, and the drive to concentrate on becoming the change, locally. “We have to understand that we're part of the problem,” Moll says. “But we're also part of the solution.”

School of Americas, continued from page 3:

US military officials have insisted in previous years that the training camp is simply an institution which promotes hemispheric defence. They point to the human rights courses offered to trainees as evidence of the positive values the facility instils in military personnel throughout the hemisphere.

At the heart of the yearly demonstrations against the SOA, organized by the School of the Americas Watch, has been an emphasis on non-violent civil disobedience. A total of 170 people, according to the SOA Watch, have served time for illegally entering into the base. Since 9/11, the penalties for such actions have become more severe. Crossing into the fort now carries a maximum prison sentence of six months.

Some have crossed onto the fort on multiple occasions. Cynthia Brinkman, a 68-year old woman from South Missouri, crossed the line in 2000 and was also arrested at last year's demonstration. She had just finished serving a six month sentence prior to attending this year's demonstrations.

"When our country says we have a war against terrorism... and then with the other hand we invite people up from Latin America to be trained as terrorists to go back and wage war on their own people, we cannot let that happen," she explained.

Another woman, 48-year old Alice Gerard, crossed onto the base this year for a second time. She had just finished serving a three-month sentence

for "illegal entry onto a United States military reservation" for crossing onto the base at last year's protest.

She explained her reason for going through the prison system once again: "I was in language school in Guatemala in 1987... and one of my friends was a fellow student... and her name was Sister Diana Ortiz. Two years after I met her, she was brutally tortured. And some of the people who tortured her were graduates of the SOA."

The organizers have largely been rooted within Catholic, Jesuit, and other religious traditions. Most of those who have been arrested for crossing onto the base seem to have been over the age of 40.

This year, however, acts of civil disobedience were deterred by the presence of a new "security fence" surrounding the outer wall and running up both sides of the road leading to the fort. The sign in front of the gates, which would normally declare "Welcome to Fort Benning" had also been enclosed by the fence and was newly covered over with a tarp, presumably to avoid the negative press which would result from photos of this iconic sign surrounded by protestors. In addition, the mayor of Columbus, a small town nearby, whose landmass is actually smaller than that of the Fort, had organized a "God Bless Fort Benning Festival" to coincide with the protests. The economy of Columbus is totally dependent upon Fort Benning, which is one of the biggest military bases in the United States.

Saturday's rally outside of the base was attended by more than 10,000. It featured speeches by actress Susan Sarandon, author Helen Prejean, members of the Guatemalan youth activist groups H.I.J.O.S. (Sons and Daughters of the Disappeared), and Elizabeth Corrie, sister of Rachel Corrie and a member of the group Atlanta Palestine Solidarity. Organizers also played a recorded message of solidarity from jailed US political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The main day of action occurred on Sunday, November 21st. Outside of the gates of Fort Benning, 16,000 pairs of vocal chords read out the names of thousands of men, women, and children who had been killed by SOA graduates in countries throughout Latin America. Each name was followed by the Spanish (and very catholic) chant of "presente!" by the crowd. Everyone carried a cross bearing the name of a victim of US-sponsored repression in Latin America. The whole assembly formed a massive funeral procession up and down the road leading into the base. By the time my end of the procession arrived at the gate, every available surface of the fence had been covered, jammed with crosses bearing the names of dead men, women, and children. Palestinian flags were also everywhere, as a show of solidarity for other victims of US militarism. A number of people dressed in black robes with white masks staged a die-in in front of the fence. Their

faces and hands were splattered with fake blood, and most lay beside black coffins adorned with names, slogans, and roses.

The crowd cheered as people climbed over the two layers of barbed wire fence, and entered the military base. My friend Sarah witnessed a 65-70 year-old man, who had been blind since birth, make the climb. He was arrested and escorted away by several officers. He would later demand that he be charged after accusing a county judge of discriminating against him due to the fact that he was blind. The judge eventually released him without charge.

The SOA watch is now reporting that 15 people were arrested for entering the base, although 3 others were detained for other reasons. One man was arrested as a result of a Georgian law which prohibited the wearing of masks.

Although this year's event was the biggest to date, it likely did not rattle too many feathers among the military leadership of the base. The Columbus chief of police would describe the whole thing as being "nice and quiet" in the local newspaper the next morning.

A congressional vote on whether to close the school is expected to occur early in 2005. At present, there are 131 congressional signatories to the bill. To coincide with their lobbying effort, SOA Watch organizers are calling for two days of action against the SOA/WHINSEC on Feb. 21-22 in Washington DC.

Boreal forest, continued from page 6:

Nation in Ontario. Paungassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation in Manitoba are also part of the World Heritage Site proposal. Bloodvein First Nation of Manitoba is the unofficial fifth community.

Louis Young is a former Chief of Bloodvein First Nation who supports World Heritage Site designation. "We are working to ensure that your children,

grandchildren and great-grandchildren have air to breathe."

At the 2004 World Conservation Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, Canada, and Russia were urged to "recognize, preserve and, protect ecological processes through which the overall health of boreal forest regions" and "acknowledge and respect the role of indigenous peoples in achieving conserva-

tion goals while respecting their traditional land management regimes and knowledge, in all conservation efforts."

Congress delegate Susan Casey-Lefkowitz of NRDC said, "This recommendation clearly signals the international importance of the ecological and cultural values of the Boreal." Casey-Lefkowitz emphasized the "innovative ways" in which,

especially First Nations, are protecting the boreal forest.

Elder Edward Valiquette speaks of the importance of traditional values: "We need to protect our land, to tell people what to do and not to do. The Elders did that. When they spoke everyone listened."