

Readings on National Missile Defense ¶ Hillary Lindsay on dragnet fishing ¶ Amanda Jernigan on John Metcalf's *An Aesthetic Underground* ¶ Excerpts from Thom Workman's *Globalization in Atlantic Canada* >>>

The Dominion

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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.

Foreign Minister: Poland In it for the Oil

Poland's Foreign Minister, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, admitted that Poland was motivated to support the US invasion of Iraq by the possibility of access to Iraq's natural resources. "We have never hidden our desire for Polish oil companies to finally have access to sources of commodities," he told a Polish News Agency.

Poland currently has 250 soldiers in Iraq, but the country will send 2,500 more in September as a part of a peacekeeping force. Poland has been a staunch supporter of the US-led invasion. At the time of Cimoszewicz's interview, a group of Polish companies had signed a deal with Halliburton, which has been granted multi-million dollar contracts in Iraq by the US government. US Vice President Dick Cheney was CEO of Halliburton before entering the 2000 Presidential campaign. (Middle East Online, *Washington Times*)

Dell Stops Using Prison Labour

Dell Computer has cancelled a recycling contract with UNICOR, a Washington D.C. based company that makes use of prison labour. The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, a California environmental group, had recently released a report calling Dell's UNICOR operation a "primitive" system that exposed inmates to dangerous chemicals. CEO Michael Dell claimed the report had nothing to do with the company's decision. Prison labourers in the US are paid as little as one dollar per



Prisoners at camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay, their faces and eyes covered: unnamed detainees are denied access to lawyers and face secretive tribunals. photo: US Navy

hour for their work, though contractors pay the federal minimum wage to the prison. One prison official quoted by the *Daily Texan* said that "the idea was started to get prisoners to pay for their own incarceration." UNICOR (also known as Federal Prison Industries) is run by the US department of justice, and offers prison labour for work in electronics, textiles, graphics, services, and other areas. Over two million people are currently incarcerated in the US. (AP, *Daily Texan*, www.unicor.gov)

Israel Occupies New Land

Even as Israeli forces relinquished control of Bethlehem and parts of Gaza, the government appropriated hundreds of acres in the West Bank, north of Jerusalem. The first phase

of the road map requires Israel to stop confiscating Palestinian property and to freeze all settlement activity.

Palestinians and Israeli human rights activists say Israel is taking land to further a plan for a "greater Jerusalem". The Israeli official in charge of the land seizures told the *Guardian*, "this is nothing special. My work is enforcing the law. I can't talk". (*Guardian*)

Terrorism Suspects: Confess or Die?

According to American legal sources cited by The *Observer*, "two British terrorist suspects facing a secret US military tribunal in Guantanamo Bay will be given a choice: plead guilty and accept a 20-year prison sentence, or be executed

if found guilty." The sources said the dilemma was designed to ensure "maximum cooperation". Prisoners in the US prison at Guantanamo have not been allowed access to lawyers, and Amnesty International has alleged that many captives have suffered "severe abuse". According to the Associated Press, the Pentagon has said that it may "continue to hold the suspects even if they are acquitted by a tribunal". Military officials asserted that prisoners' status as "unlawful combatants" is separate from guilt or innocence on charges brought before a tribunal. (*Observer*)

Apartheid by Any Other Name

Of 45 million South Africans, 31 million are black, 5 million white, 3 million colored and one million are Indians. Whites, however, still control roughly three quarters of equity in South African businesses, leaving the majority of the population at a major economic disadvantage.

The recent introduction of legislation of "Broad-based Economic Empowerment", also known as "Black Economic Empowerment", has highlighted existing political divisions in the country. White business groups claim that the legislation places too many restrictions on investors, and could scare away international investment. Labour leaders and black business groups say the plan doesn't go far enough to create jobs and basic services for the country's poor and unemployed. (*Manila Times*)

continued on page 8 »

International News

Canada In Review

The City of Vancouver won the right to host the 2010 Olympic games; the announcement was met with widespread jubilation. The estimated cost to taxpayers ranges between \$2 billion and \$6 billion, depending on which projects are included in the total. Olympics organizers have claimed that the games will create over 250,000 new jobs; a study conducted by an economist at the University of British Columbia estimated that BC would gain 1,400 full time jobs lasting seven years.

A report by Campaign 2000 found that the number of children living under the poverty line in Canada has increased by 21%, to one in six, since 1989. One in three children in Toronto lived in poverty in 2001; the number had increased by 21,800 between 1995 and 2001, a period of economic growth. The city of Toronto is set to spend \$10 million on an outdoor concert designed to allay fears that the city is unsafe due to the recent SARS crisis. In less than four years, Canada dropped from its number one spot in the United Nations Human Development Index to number eight, just behind the United States. In Quebec, Jean Charest's Liberals are promising budget freezes and cuts in every area but health care and education. Quebec's vaunted universal, \$5 per day child care program is rumoured to be among those programs facing substantial cuts.

Health Canada announced that it will sell dried marijuana for \$5 per gram to medical patients. The Bush Administration criticized plans to set up a safe injection site for heroin addicts in Vancouver as "immoral". Federal cabinet officials hinted that they would block US cattle imports if the Americans did not drop their ban on Canadian beef. Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham warned politicians not to gratuitously insult the US. Florida Governor Jeb Bush reassured Canadians that relations have

not been damaged irreparably by Canada's nominal opposition to the US invasion of Iraq.

Air Canada pilots agreed to a 15% pay cut and the firing of 317 pilots. Air Canada is seeking to cut \$1.1 billion in labour costs. The Irving Shipyard in



A drug deal in Vancouver's downtown eastside: home to the highest population of intravenous drug users in Canada, and one of the "worst HIV epidemics in the developed world." *City of Vancouver*

Saint John will be closed due to "fierce" international competition. The plant currently has 400 employees, though the plant employed as many as 4,000 workers at a time. The Art Gallery of Ontario cut 29 staff positions, blaming a 25% drop in admission revenue due to Toronto's SARS scare.

The Canadian Heritage Department announced hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding cuts for Canadian magazines. Hardest hit will be large magazines like MacLean's and Chatelaine. The five largest publishers currently receive over \$28 million in federal funding annually. The Correctional Service of Canada is considering a safe-tattooing program for federal inmates aimed at reducing the spread of HIV in prisons.

Dru Oja Jay

Crackdown Worsens HIV Epidemic

Vancouver is home the largest population of intravenous drug users in Canada and, not coincidentally, to one of the worst epidemics of HIV/AIDS in the developed world. As many as 40% of the addicts living in Vancouver's downtown eastside

tional human rights guarantees, contributed to driving drug users underground and away from life-saving HIV prevention and other health services."

With the Olympics coming to town, activists say that the temptation may be too strong for city officials and police to "clean up" the city's downtown eastside, which is uncomfortably nearby to some key Olympics sites, by force. But the report warns that indulging the pressure to cover up the city's problems could make them worse. "Experiences from around the world have shown that HIV transmission increases with the incidence of abuse and stigmatization faced by those most at risk of the disease."

Dru Oja Jay



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Repudiating Restraints

Let me simply point out that a missile defence system as presently being put forward by the U.S. administration is integrated into a much larger set of issues. You can call them counterforce issues, you can call them spectrum dominance, or you can call them pre-emptive, but they basically are a repudiation of the notion that security can be fostered and developed through a series of verifiable restraints that countries agree to on limiting the supply of weaponry in the world. That's been a basic notion we've worked on assiduously; rather than dealing with threat and risk by counterforce and counter-threat, it's important to introduce into those discussions restraint, agreements, covenants, and protocols. That is not the position of the present U.S. administration.

Therefore, when one looks at missile defence, you have to put it in the same context as the recent decisions to seriously consider the resumption of nuclear testing and the development of mini nuclear devices. You have to look at it in the context of the substantial reduction in export controls on missile technology; and you have to look at it in the so-called pre-emptive strike capacity, coming out of national security defence, which was clearly expressed as part of the rationale for the invasion of Iraq. All of those things are tied together; they are not separate pieces, but are woven into a strand. You can't take one piece of that strand and one thread and pull it out and say that's what we belong to. If you become attached to that one piece, you get involved in or woven into the entire fabric.

—From **Lloyd Axworthy's** testimony to the Parliament Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, concerning Canada's involvement in the US missile defence plan.

“And besides, it won't cost Canada anything”

I do want to say that the assurances that the foreign affairs committee has conducted a comprehensive foreign policy review are simply not accurate. In fact, despite the urging of some opposition members, two of whom are here at the table, the call for a comprehensive review of [National Missile Defense] (NMD) was strenuously resisted. In fact, they weren't even prepared to reinforce the status quo by saying we should take extreme caution with respect to Canada entering into some kind of participation in NMD.

This really brings me back to this sense—which I think we all have and which was certainly expressed by witnesses this morning—that we seem to be barrelling ahead with this with a sense of inevitability. At the foreign affairs committee, we've heard government members say both formally and informally, we don't agree with it and we don't think it makes any sense, but you know what, I think we have to do it to repair relations with the United States, for having had the audacity to chart our own independent course with respect to the war in Iraq—and besides, it won't cost Canada anything.

—**Alexa McDonnough**, during a meeting of the Parliament Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs.

Canada, the global arms dealer

According to the Canadian Defence Industries Association, (CDIA) “Under the existing conditions, Canada can expect, at a minimum, about \$270 million in NMD-related exports over the next 15 years. With appropriate levels of Government and indus-



Sylvia Nickerson

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try action, there is a potential for that to increase to more than \$1 billion in exports.” [emphasis added]

CDIA figures show that Canadian ‘defence’ industry revenues grew 35% between 1998 and 2000, far outpacing growth of the rest of the economy, which grew at approximately 3%. Canada’s ‘defence’ market grew from \$3.7 billion in 1998 to \$4.08 billion in 2000, up 22.6%. Exports to the USA grew by 17% from just under a billion to \$1.25 billion. And our arms exports to the rest of the world grew a staggering 75% in the same period from \$798 million to \$1.5 billion.

—From “Canada the Global Arms Dealer”, by **Stephen James Kerr**. Z Magazine.

The best offence is a good National Missile Defence

Effective ballistic missile defenses will be the central element in the exercise of American power and the projection of U.S. military forces abroad. Without it, weak states operating small arsenals of crude ballistic missiles, armed with basic nuclear warheads or other weapons of mass destruction, will be in a strong position to deter the United States from using conventional force, no matter the technological or other advantages we may enjoy. Even if such enemies are merely able to threaten American allies rather than the United States homeland itself, America's ability to project power will be deeply compromised.

—From page 24 of “Rebuilding America's Defenses”, a report released by the **Project for the New American Century**, whose signatories include Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Jeb Bush. The September 2000 report has been cited as highly influential with the Bush administration after September 11th.



Antiglobalization protesters in Quebec City. Workman argues that globalization at its most basic is about access to cheap labour. *Dru Oja Jay*

Social Torment: Globalization in Atlantic Canada

Excerpts from Thom Workman's book on neoliberal policy and its effect on workers

At its core, Thom Workman's thesis is simple: labour is a major cost for businesses of all kinds, and thus an impediment to profits. As such, "transnational capital" seeks constantly to lower the cost of labour; when they do this by breaking down "trade barriers" to gain access to cheap labour or invoke international competitiveness to roll back wages, the process is called globalization. In *Social Torment*, Thom Workman starts by outlining the history of this shift from the "class compromise" of the twentieth century to the newly invigorated attacks on unions and the working class. And then he does something interesting; rather than spinning together a series of anecdotes to support his case, Workman looks at the numbers. The account that emerges is more powerful for its engagement with exceptions, as well as startling in its conclusions. What follows are a series of excerpts from the more broadly focused sections of the book. If you want Workman's close analysis of the maritimes, *Social Torment* is available from Fernwood Books (www.fernwoodbooks.ca), or through your local independent bookseller.—*Dru Oja Jay*

[An] account of globalization in terms of its growth in hardship has been undertold and, for the most part, silenced in the records of officialdom. Nevertheless, this is the account understood by those who bear the brunt of the globalization push. A more truthful portrait of global life does not have to circulate publicly to be known and widely appreciated by its victims. A richer and more rounded story about globalization, one that recognizes that its successes and achievements have been at the expense of vulnerable people around the world, will resound equally well with a young Malaysian woman toiling away in a semiconductor facility and a single mother part-timing in a

call centre in New Brunswick. Ironically, it is precisely this side of globalization neglected by pundits, journalists, intellectuals and politicians that Atlantic Canadians are more likely to experience. Although the region is increasingly plugged into the globalizing world, the glamorous dimension of globalization is not as obvious in the region as it is elsewhere. Globalization does not sparkle in Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island the way it does in Toronto, New York and Tokyo. ...

Unless we are to believe naïvely that leisure and luxury crystallize out of thin air, we must recognize and acknowledge that the comforts of globalization are reaped from the

labour and toil of others. The only thing trickling down to the world's masses is more work and greater hardship. The impressive accomplishments of the last three decades are entwined with the deepening oppression of working people the world over. Despite the protestations of countless economists and politicians to the contrary, the fruits of the new world economy are not to be shared by everyone. Its beguiling comfort zones, zones that touch the owners of capital and extend to a wealthy managerial strata, high end professionals and a legion of intellectuals ruminating away in designer personas, do not emerge out of the toil, sweat, and, indeed, blood of those who enjoy them. One-sided sketches of globalization that celebrate its prosperity unforgivably trivialize the poverty and hardship of the vast majority of the world's people. Worse still, they cannot even begin to recognize the necessary link between the leisured life of the privileged few and the swelling ranks of the exhausted, the poor and the hungry.

The skilled labourer in the early twentieth century understandably resisted refinements to the labour process and played a significant role in the generalized resistance of workers, who often resorted to strikes, sit-ins and marches to improve their lot. In the end, worker rest-

lessness throughout the early decades of the twentieth century contributed to rising real wages, and to a considerable extent this rise helped to pacify all workers. The corporate establishment grudgingly accepted the higher wages since it meant that people could consume more products. Indeed, many leaders of industry openly acknowledged this, and Henry Ford's famous \$5 workday—a strategy intentionally designed to allow Ford's workers to purchase his automobiles—captured this crude formula well. Companies that lacked Ford's social perspicacity fought tooth and nail with their workers over wage hikes, but unrelenting pressure from below continued to nudge the social wage upward.

Getting more out of its workforce for less money is a defining feature of transnational capital in the era of globalization. But it has not stopped there. Countless firms have offloaded their labour conflicts through the combined use of short-term contracting (supply contracts renegotiated every few weeks or months); subcontracting (enlisting the services of outside companies to manufacture goods); outsourcing (enlisting firms to assemble products and to manufacture component parts); and contracting out (especially supportive services and special tasks). The practice of sub-

contracting stands out among corporate strategies that intentionally download labour problems to smaller firms. Nike Corporation, for example, does not own one production facility. Nike and so many other leading corporations dole out the manufacture of their products to secondary facilities around the world. These firms must then recruit and manage local workers drawn from the masses of poor and desperate citizens. The threat of losing future contracts with the parent corporation is enough to persuade the local entrepreneurs to manage their work force aggressively—resorting to ferocious anti-unionism, firings, threats and harassment—to maintain poor wages and working conditions and to avoid production interruptions. When workers do make meaningful advances against their local employers by modestly improving their wages or bettering their working conditions, the subcontracts are not as lucrative for the local elites. And, in a typical scenario, as standards for working people rose in South Korea and Taiwan, leading transnationals moved their contracts from those countries to Indonesia and Thailand during the 1980s and to Vietnam in the latter part of the 1990s (which, by the way, is the subtext to the thawing for U.S.-Vietnamese relations).

We must momentarily take notice of the fact that a free reign in its struggles against labour is not quite the same as a free market. Except for the boasts of ideologues, who are charged with the task of glorifying the free market, the corporate echelons have few illusions about the real effects of free-market evangelizing. The support for open trading regimes, for example, has less to do with free markets in any competitive sense than it does with gaining access to cheap labour and then establishing unrestricted intra-firm trading across borders so that the advantages of the cheap labour are not cancelled out by high tariffs.

The social equation of neoliberal policy reforms is clear: social austerity equals low wages. The choking of social assistance programs and other reforms drive people into low-wage jobs with poor working conditions. Neoliberal social policies, to employ gentler language, help moderate the social wage. Even in the face of irregular hours, daycare challenges, sexual harassment from bosses, customer mistreatment and chronic workplace stress, workers are now more likely to calculate that it is better to persevere through a rotten job rather than face the crushing indignities of severely eroded

“The social equation of neoliberal policy reforms is clear: social austerity equals low wages.”

social assistance rates. In this manner the culture of austerity forces otherwise reluctant workers into the labour market thus helps keep wages down. ...

Neoliberal policy reforms also [target] working people directly. These include a sustained decline in the real minimum wage, the weakening of enforcement mechanisms for labour laws, the stagnation in labour codes and regulations, the erosion of universal legal protections by permitting shop-floor agreements to override existing labour standards, and a greater tendency to resort to back-to-work legislation and to broaden the definition of “essential service.” These practices have been accompanied by a protracted public condemnation of unionized workers throughout the North for their supposed “inflexibility” in the face of increased global competition. Many organized workers, especially public sector workers, have faced a kind of “worker bashing” akin to the bashing

of poor people that figures so prominently in the neoliberal agenda.

Globalization demonstrates poignantly that the nationally based labour compacts of the twentieth century were handicapped when capital decided to internationalize aggressively. But capital’s advantage is a short-term one. It can roll back regional class compacts by virtue of its capacity to globalize, but labour will eventually and inevitably “catch up” with capital and begin to ratchet up labour standards once again. A renewed worker internationalism will inevitably follow this phase of globalization. These immanent historical tendencies cannot be sidestepped by anyone, least of all the families of capital. For all of the ideological mystifications associated with globalization—mystifications that have done their part to distort labour’s response to the globalization push over the last three decades—it is worth bearing in mind that unbelievably vast quantities of brutish repression and coercion have become necessary throughout the south to stop labour from driving up workplace standards and wages. And when this finally happens, when the roll-backs of globalization have been reversed and then some, new crises will emerge that will inevitably shake the system to its very foundation. There will be no place for capital left to run.

Capital is not antidemocratic; it is antiworker. If throwing a democratic bone or two to “citizens” would do it any good, transnational capital would embrace any element of democracy in an instant. Discussions that centre around the notion of “democracy” are likely to miss the crucial and most important point about the evolving globalist agenda, namely, that the purportedly democratic institutions of the state are being attacked and usurped to undermine the relative power of working people. Almost invariably, these overworked drama-

tizations about the erosion of democracy give themselves over to genteel concerns about the importance of salvaging great nations such as Canada. Analysts must do more than chase the shadows of a world that emits such cruelty and suffering.

Globalization is alive and well in Atlantic Canada, but the story has little to do with the erosion of democracy. Voluntary structural adjustment and its antiworker consequences are amply evident in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. Provincial governments have enthusiastically embraced every aspect of

“The interests and claims of working people have very little meaningful bureaucratic presence in the leading institutions of the Canadian state or in the country’s leading political parties.”

the neoliberal agenda, and, as in the case of New Brunswick, have sometimes prided themselves for the leading role played within the Canadian federation. Throughout the 1990s, New Brunswick’s Frank McKenna boasted that the province was “Canada’s Laboratory,” willing to forge ahead experimentally with neoliberal policies while the rest of the country took notes. The neoliberal policy framework, including the rising concerns about public debt, the celebration of the free market, extensive restructuring to social assistance, stagnating minimum wages, the downsizing of government, the privatization of public firms, the weakening of labour laws and municipal

continued on page 8 »

Dragged into Court

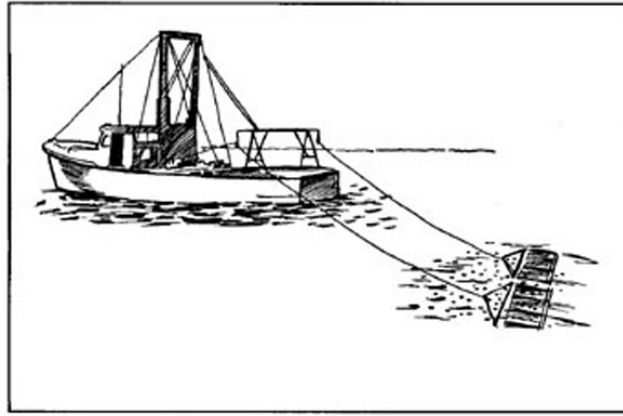
Ecology Action Centre challenges DFO on dragnet fishing policy

by Hillary Lindsay

A small NGO in Halifax is taking the Canadian government to court. The Ecology Action Centre (EAC) is accusing the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) of violating its own legislation to protect fish habitat. DFO's decision to reopen George's Bank, an important fishing ground in Atlantic Canada, to dragger boats, without first conducting an environmental assessment, spurred the EAC to take legal action in 2001. The case is expected to come before a judge this summer.

Section 35(1) of the Canadian Fisheries Act states that, "no person shall carry on any work or undertaking that results in the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat." According to Mark Butler, Marine Issues Coordinator at EAC, dragging heavy nets along the sea floor has a similar impact on marine habitat that clearcutting has on a forest, "dragging homogenizes the ocean floor, removing both biological and physical features, be it corals and sponges or humps and bumps. Juvenile cod and other groundfish species rely on the cover the bottom provides to hide from predators." The EAC accuses DFO of ignoring its own mandate by consistently refusing to evaluate the impacts that dragging, and other fishing methods, have on marine habitat.

A report published this May by the Marine Conservation Biology Institute (MCBI), titled *Shifting Gears: Addressing the Collateral Impacts of Fishing Methods In US Waters*, may add weight to the EAC's case against dragging. The report's findings are based on a survey of fishers, regulators, scientists and conservationists who compared and ranked the level of damage 10 major fishing gears cause to the marine environ-



Ecology Action Centre

According to the Ecology Action Centre, dragging heavy nets along the sea floor has a similar impact on marine habitat that clearcutting has on a forest.

ment. Dragging topped the list as most harmful.

Don Gordon, a DFO scientist, has read the report and concedes that there is now a wide consensus that dragging is the most damaging method for catching groundfish. However, he does not know how DFO will respond in terms of fisheries management policies.

Butler believes that "they [DFO] do not want to address the issue of gear because it would be a departure from long established policies and interrupt the status quo." Critics argue that after the collapse of the cod fisheries, DFO might reconsider the status quo.

According to Butler, however, little has changed over the past decade and the same combination of high risk technology and high risk management are still at work today, "Despite the ecological devastation, the human suffering and disruption and the massive amounts of taxpayers money spent, the collapses of the early 90s did not lead to any kind of public review... The same thinking, same policies, and same people remain largely in charge today."

Change within DFO may be slow, but change in the oceans is happening at a devastating

pace. Terry Farnsworth, a fisher from Digby Nova Scotia says his catch is down 75% from last year. He is being forced to move into deeper and deeper water to find any fish at all, "we went from fishing along the shore to being driven to explore areas I never thought I'd have to go... When that's gone, what'll I do next?? That's the last of them out there."

Farnsworth has been fish-

Terry Farnsworth, a fisher from Digby Nova Scotia says his catch is down 75% from last year.

ing for groundfish for over 25 years using a method called handlining. He chose handlining over dragging partly because it has less impact on the marine environment. Farnsworth has watched many of his friends give up handlining because they can no longer make a living with fish densities so low. DFO continues to license large dragger boats, however, which use large nets to catch more fish in a shorter amount of time. "How can they not see that it's irresponsible

fishing practices?" Farnsworth asks. "I cannot see how this kind of destruction can be profitable... maybe there's a different way of looking at profitable."

Les Burke, head of the department of economics at DFO, says, "fishing has become far more efficient because there is new technology that can tell us where exactly the fish are." According to Burke, by targeting the fish in certain areas, the overall damage to the ecosystem can be dramatically reduced. Burke says that by mapping the ocean floor, DFO is identifying sensitive areas to be protected and other areas that can be dragged with little negative impact. Although some areas are open to handlining but closed to dragging, the majority of these marine protected areas are closed to all methods of fishing. This approach does not satisfy Butler, "measures such as endangered species legislation or marine protected areas, while they encourage more sustainability in the fishery, are not the tools to fix the fishery and its fundamental problems."

According to Butler, a solution based on protected areas does not acknowledge that some methods of fishing are far more damaging than others. It also fails to encourage small fishers like Terry Farnsworth to continue handlining, when in the end, areas are either completely closed, or completely open, no matter what the gear type.

Butler hopes that the court case this summer will force DFO to address fully and openly the different methods of fishing, and move away from a fisheries management strategy where marine areas are either 'open' or 'closed' and fish stocks are either there, or gone forever, "We are not trying to shut down all dragging, we just want to see fishing done right. They are certain species and habitats that can withstand the impacts, but right now there is no sense and no balance." •••

Riding the Aesthetic Underground

An Aesthetic Underground: A Literary Memoir, by John Metcalf. (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2003.)

There's nothing that makes the critics line up — nothing that makes them side and spit — like the publication of a new book of non-fiction by John Metcalf. In the Calgary weekly *FFWD*, Lee Shedden writes: "The release ... should be a Canadian national holiday; there should be drunkenness, jubilation, public nudity, mariachi bands, streamers, confetti." Meanwhile, in *The Danforth Review*, Gordon Phinn calls Metcalf a "rabid bulldog", and threatens to do unsavoury things to his "balls".

Metcalf once wrote that "CanLit suffers from terminal politeness." There's certainly nothing polite about Gordon Phinn's review. Have Metcalf's provocative tactics worked, then? At first glance, it appears so, but a closer look at the reviews reveals that the critics are not fussing over the writing; they are fussing over the man.

This problem is exacerbated by the genre of *An Aesthetic Underground*. When a critic reviews a memoir, she's inevitably tempted not just to review the author's presentation of his life, but to re-present that life in her own terms. Thus Judy Stoffman of *The Toronto Star* casts Metcalf, in Jekyll-and-Hyde fashion, as both "tireless worker" and "vociferous complainer". Shane Neilson of *The Danforth Review* presents him in imperial terms: "He arrived ready to establish himself on these shores, such as he found them, and he mostly found them lacking." And George Fetherling, in *The Vancouver Sun*, calls *An Aesthetic Underground* "an immigration narrative, pure and simple".

Not that the revisionist-biographer approach can't be helpful. Writing — strangely — in *Toro*, a new Toronto "men's magazine", Jeet Heer puts Met-

calf's literary pugilism into perspective:

The British literary culture of the 1950s [in which Metcalf came of age] was ... a contentious place. In order to win a hearing for controversial writers such as Eliot, the critics F. R. Leavis and William Empson and their contemporaries had developed a combative public presence.... Metcalf's literary mentors believed that literature thrives on debate and argument, a position he continues to hold to this day.

Still, it's a shame that Metcalf's person has obscured his prose, because his real skill lies not in throwing a punch but in turning a phrase.



photo: John Haney

John Metcalf: reviewers fuss over the man, not the work.

Metcalf writes, "I find that I often catch in fiction the essence of a place better than I do in exposition, probably because exposition is closer to reportage and fiction is a distillation." If, as Walter Pater wrote, art "aspires towards the condition of music", then memoir, for Metcalf, aspires towards the condition of fiction. Sometimes, Metcalf throws off the cloak of fact entirely and quotes from his published stories to illuminate

an era in his life. But the best parts of *An Aesthetic Underground* come when he resists the temptation to defer to earlier efforts and hangs onto the thread of his narrative, pushing the writing, as he would put it, to perform.

These moments are brilliant — and rare. *An Aesthetic Underground* reads more like a curated exhibit of a life than like a narration of one. But I suspect that's what Metcalf had in mind. Metcalf once wrote to me of the importance of having frameworks for my reading — that the books I encountered wouldn't make real sense to me if I didn't understand the context from which they emerged. In *An Aesthetic Underground*, Metcalf is trying to give us a context for his own work — not just his writing, but his editing, his anthologizing, and his correspondence.

Like any good curator, of course, he digresses, pausing to impart a bit of gossip or whimsy, spicing the historically significant with the genuinely weird. Thus we get the stories of Metcalf's four adopted children, of Al Purdy's drinking, of Alice Munro's opinions on the blues. But the real scoop in *An Aesthetic Underground* is not that Purdy slept with so-and-so or that Munro said such-and-such about Howlin' Wolf. It is that Metcalf is working on a new book of fiction, a collection of stories about Robert Forde. Metcalf writes that "Forde is a novelist and quite a few people have assumed he's an alter ego. There's a germ of truth in that but these Forde stories are not autobiographical in the usual sense." For my part, I have no doubt that the Forde stories are pure fiction — fiction being where a writer is freed, to take his best run at the truth.

Amanda Jernigan is arts editor of The Dominion.

New Media

**Manitoba
Up in Flames**
Leaf Records
Spring 2003
www.manitoba.fm



Dan Snaith is a stinking thief, of that I'm sure. His "Manitoba" alias might throw a few off his track, since he actually hails from Ontario, though I'm sure none of his cronies in London, UK, will ever notice. He lives there nowadays, and claims to be working on a PhD in pure mathematics. But don't let that fool you.

Just like teenagers dumb enough to videotape themselves committing acts of vandalism, Manitoba recorded an album to document his misdemeanours. Listening to it, I was sure that he had broken into my old primary school and positively raided the music room. Egg shakers, a glockenspiel, finger cymbals, and a pile of recorders that were once used to play "Hot Cross Buns" — you'll find them all on *Up in Flames*.

Does this man have no shame? At one point, it sounds like he followed unsuspecting children and recorded them giggling. Not to mention the countless copyright laws he's broken by poaching everything from drum breakbeats to saxophone solos, strings and toy music boxes. Sure, he may have programmed some original rhythmic spurts and sputters and sung a few silly choruses overtop the rest of his microsampled mayhem, but does that mean we should all turn a blind eye?

Yup. *Up In Flames* is one of the most eccentric, creative and playful sample-based albums I've heard, and frankly, I can't wait to hear what he'll steal next. —**Matt Brennan**



"Social Torment," continued from page 5 »

restructuring, is front and centre in the contemporary policy landscape of the region.

The Antiglobalization agenda coheres only by virtue of a vague sense of social injustice or political unfairness. It loses sight of the driving motive behind globalization, and its political ambiguity sits awkwardly against the logical and consistent guiding principles of transnational capital and the precision of its assault on workers. The antiglobalization agenda lacks a working-class centre; no singular, worker-friendly, organizing principle—say, "the dignity of working people"—guides its outlook. Cynically put, the antiglobalization agenda is a flexible agenda perfectly in keeping with the era of flexible production. It is, in colloquial speech, "all over the place," even as international capital targets working people relentlessly. Although it might be a very unpopular idea to

express, it is nonetheless true that a progressive agenda is not quite the same as an agenda set for working people. The point is not to find the right slogan but to address the absence of an appropriate political focus for the antiglobalization movement. Since globalization is about extracting more surplus value out of working people around the world, the organizing principle of the antiglobalization movement should reflect this.

Worker-friendly ideas appear at the margins of public discourse in Canada. Indeed, they are often condemned as antiquated, especially when worker-friendly policies are linked to state spending. The worker's story is not the guiding narrative of political and social commentary anywhere in Canada, and concern for the innumerable victims of globalization often appears as an afterthought. The prevailing concern in public life is for the econ-

omy—that is, profits—and concern about the well-being of people often seems rhetorical and insincere.

The agenda of transnational capital is extensively institutionalized in Canada. It is embedded in the state, in the leading political parties at federal and provincial levels and in international institutions such as the World Trade Organization. The radical free-market agenda structures the policy conduct of these bodies. Moreover, Liberal, Conservative, Alliance and New Democratic Party platforms across Canada are subordinated to neoliberal principles with modest variations in degree. In contrast, the antiglobalization agenda largely is external to the formal political structures in Canada. The interests and claims of working people have very little meaningful bureaucratic presence in the leading institutions of the Canadian state or in the country's leading political parties. ...

Continued from front page »

US and Iraq Briefs

The US has cut off military aid to over 30 countries that have not agreed to exempt US officials and soldiers from prosecution in the International Criminal Court. George W. Bush appointed a pharmaceutical executive to administer US AIDS relief funds. The Council on Foreign Relations released a report which concluded that US government agencies were vastly underprepared to deal with a terrorist attack.

Pentagon official Richard Perle told the American Enterprise Institute that "we have a responsibility, a stewardship, not to turn [Iraq] over to institutions incapable of seeing this through to a successful conclusion... the last thing the Iraqis need is French statism or German labour practices." (*Observer*, Ha'aretz, Washington Post, Inter Press News Service) ...