

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.

The Dominion

CANADA'S GRASSROOTS NEWSPAPER

WWW.DOMINIONPAPER.CA • DECEMBER, 2005 • Vol. II, #14



Privatization in BC

Unions and government face off once again.

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Beautiful—Privatized—British Columbia?

Health care workers, teachers, fight government over policy

by Dru Oja Jay

When British Columbia's teachers defied laws passed by Gordon Campbell's Liberals to stage an "illegal strike" in October, it was the second major showdown with organized labour since the Liberals took power in 2001. The health care workers' strike in April 2004 had seen 43,000 workers in 11 unions join picket lines.

The Liberal government imposed contracts on health care workers and teachers, bypassing collective bargaining and arbitration by legislating their terms directly. "The government tore up the collective agreement in both cases," said Larry Kuehn of the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF).

Before the 2001 election, Campbell had told the Health Employees Union's (HEU) newspaper, the *Guardian*, that "I don't believe in ripping up agreements....I have never said I would tear up agreements.... I am not tearing up any agreements." Once in power, however, the Liberals imposed pay cuts and replaced over 6,000 public sector workers with corporate contract positions.

While the Campbell government did not cut teachers' positions directly, it did not provide the funding to back up legislation of a 2.5 per cent per year salary increase and other increased costs. School boards were forced to cut teaching staff by 2,600, or eight per cent, and 100 schools were closed. Anger over increased class sizes, lack of separate classes for special needs students and the attack on bargaining rights fueled the decision of 42,000 teachers to go on strike.

The question remains, however: why would Campbell's Liberals actively pick fights with some of the province's largest trade unions?

The initial answer tends to be either that the government



Teachers, union members and other supporters march on the provincial legislature in Victoria.

Janine Bandcroft/BC Indymedia

has a deep disdain for BC's powerful unions, or that BC politics have always been characterized by showdowns between labour and business-backed right wing governments—depending on who is asked.

"The government doesn't like some of the big public sector unions," said Marc Lee, Senior Economist at the BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). "To injure those unions, they're willing to engage in some fairly bad public policy."

Under the dislike, however, is an agenda. According to some observers, the real motivation is tax cuts and privatization, to which the unions are a significant barrier.

Lee explained that tax cuts provided the justification for deep cuts to public services. When the Liberals first came to power in 2001, they legislated \$2.3 billion in tax cuts from an overall budget of around \$26 billion. The result, says Lee, was "the biggest deficit in provincial history." Public services budgets were cut by one third, while funding for education was merely frozen.

According to Lee, "the deficit that came from the tax cuts was used as a justification"

for cuts, which in turn are driving privatization. In the case of health care workers, privatization was a key element in the government's agenda. 6,000 public sector jobs were replaced with corporate contracts.

In the case of education, however, privatization is more subtle.

The BCTF's Larry Kuehn says the Liberals are taking "inch by inch measures" to privatize parts of the education system.

"They are making things more difficult for the public schools," said Kuehn. "It encourages private schools."

"If the public system is starved of funding then people will tend to gravitate towards private alternatives," said Lee. "It is not privatization per se, but does boost the private system."

Kuehn points out that private schools—including, he notes, religious, elite and fundamentalist institutions—receive 50 per cent of the funding per student that public schools get. "They just expanded provisions for special needs students to 100 per cent of what public schools get," said Kuehn. This has been seen by some—especially public school teachers—as a first step to increasing overall funding for

private schools.

Dr. Ernie Lightman, a professor in Social Work at the University of Toronto and former faculty member of the London School of Economics, called the tactics used in BC "very analogous to what Margaret Thatcher did in Britain."

"If you're going to do something the other guy doesn't want done, you beat up on his symbol," said Lightman. In Thatcher's case, "Privatization was a way of wrecking the unions."

Lightman, who has studied the tenure of Mike Harris' Conservative government in Ontario, said that privatization in BC is driven by a long history of polarized power struggles between "big labour and big business".

Harris' cuts, he said, were more ideological, and didn't require a showdown with unions. "They said 'we're cutting taxes and we're going to reduce the deficit.'" "They shut down womens' shelters because they didn't want to 'break up families,'" said Lightman.

Lightman explains that the relative power of unions in BC is due to the history of natural resource extraction, which is "absolutely essential" to the province's economy. Workers in mining and timber were more vulnerable.

"If you're in an isolated mining town in BC, your work is your life, there's no distinction." "You need a union more than you do in Toronto," where the automobile industry plays a significant role. According to Lightman, the culture of strong, organized labour that developed in the natural resource sector has carried over to the public sector trade unions in BC.

Stephen Howard of the BC Government Employees' Union was optimistic about the future of the ongoing battles over public policy in BC. A "rigid agenda for

Of Sturgeon and Hydro Québec

Food from the rivers we are losing

by Carole Ferrari

On Saturday, November the 5th, 2005, Hydro Quebec flooded another 600 square kilometres of James Bay territory to fill in a new reservoir across the Eastmain River. Hydro-electric development has destroyed the Eastmain river and with it the spawning grounds of the fish that used to swim there, including the lake sturgeon.

The sturgeon has been called "the most valuable fish in the world." Its eggs, or caviar, sell for an astonishing \$7,000 a kilo. Around the world, caviar is considered a culinary delicacy and an aphrodisiac. But there's a lot more to sturgeons than their economic value and powers to increase human sexual confidence.

Sturgeons are known to be friendly and to actually like humans; they seem to enjoy human presence. They grow slowly - lake sturgeons grow to be a metre long - taking seven to eight years to reach sexual maturity. And they eat slowly. They dine on the bottom of lakes, riverbeds and oceans, tasting their way across the muddy bottoms feasting on insect larvae, worms, crayfish,



Sylvia Nickerson

snails, and other small fish as they migrate up to their spawning beds.

The species of sturgeon that inhabited the Eastmain is likely as old as the river itself. The life span of a sturgeon is anywhere from 50 to 150 years long, but sturgeons as a species are so old they knew the dinosaurs. The species is thought to be 80 mil-

lion years old. They are called living fossils and act as a vital link to our pre-historic past.

Almost all kinds of sturgeon are endangered because of over-fishing, water pollution and hydroelectric development. HydroQuebec is trying to develop new spawning runs for the sturgeon and other fish whose spawning grounds have been destroyed by the Eastmain dam. But previous dam and dike developments for hydro-electricity in the James Bay have led to unhealthy levels of mercury in the fish in the area.

This sturgeon recipe is an old one from Miss Leslie's Directions for Cookery. Written by Eliza Leslie the cookbook was first published in 1837. I chose this recipe because it is simple and I imagine it to be best enjoyed somewhere between the 51st and 54th parallel, cooked on an open fire near the shores of a mighty river, the way sturgeon was probably enjoyed by the James Bay Cree for so many thousands of years.

Sturgeon

Carefully take off the sturgeon's skin, as its oiliness will give the fish a strong and disagreeable taste when cooked. Cut from the tail-piece slices about half an inch thick, rub them with salt, and broil them over a clear fire of bright coals. Butter them, sprinkle them with cayenne pepper, and send them to table hot, garnished with sliced lemon. Squeeze lemon over the fish before eating.

According to Environmental Defense's Oceans Alive, the most eco-friendly sturgeon to eat for its meat and for its caviar is farmed white sturgeon from the Pacific coast.

~ ISSN 1710-0283 ~

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The Dominion is a pan-Canadian media network that seeks to provide a counterpoint to the corporate media and direct attention to independent critics and the work of social movements. *The Dominion* is published monthly in print and on the web.

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Card Carriers

Artist's Trading Cards (ATCs) are art for everyone

by Max Liboiron

There is a new currency on the market that measures 2 1/2 x 3 1/2" and can be made of anything from ticket stubs to porcelain. This creative currency's value is measured in communication, accessibility, and exchange, and is known as the Artist's Trading Card.

The only rules for ATCs are that they measure the standard card size and that they be exchanged for other cards. There is not money involved, no media restrictions, and sometimes, no Artists. The point of an ATC is that it can be made by anyone and that the exchange of them brings people together; cards are traded by mail, on the internet, or in face-to-face trading sessions organized throughout the world. In fact, if there is an elitism to be found in the practice, it is that some traders consider face-to-face trading to be the "only true" form of ATCs.

Issues of art versus craft, or of artist versus non-artist, or of commercial viability are mixed and defied in trading sessions. If done through the mail, a participant accepts the condition that anyone can make a card anyhow. And when it comes to trading, a similar attitude is adopted. Don Mabie, who is associated with trading sessions at The New Gallery in Calgary, says, "I have never refused



ATCs can be made by anyone and that the exchange of them brings people together.

to trade with anyone, and, in principle, I would not refuse to trade with anyone. We do get a number of non-artists that regularly attend and make most interesting cards."

Mabie has collected some 8,000 cards, and keeps them all in binders in plastic sheets to facilitate trading. He stresses the importance of the social exchange of the trade above the material trade. "Traders look forward to attending the sessions to see each other and see what the new cards look like this month, to see what new approaches regarding ATCs have evolved during the past month. I have been trading for some eight years and it never ceases to amaze me regarding

the endless creativity."

The movement has similarities to scrap booking, where collage, personal taste, and found materials combine to allow anyone a creative outlet. And like scrap booking, the commercial market has taken notice and slick anthologies and "how to" books as well as commercial starter kits have become available. While these aids do not jeopardize the exchange or loose rules that are the focus of ATC, they do tend to be formulaic in their recommendations for design, and romanticize the cards and the aesthetic.

The "real charm" of ATC is the diversity and freshness that comes from people creating miniature art without commer-

cial or elitist constraints. There are not too many venues where Leonardo could be trading work with an eight year old while discussing the pros and cons of using duct tape versus glue guns in collage. The fun and social emphasis of the cards can make ATC a grassroots public art without the stratifications, elitism, and inaccessibility that more institutionalized forms of art can carry.

For more information or to find a group to trade with check out: <http://www.artist-trading-cards.ch/>, <http://artisttradingcards.meetup.com/>, <http://www.canadiancontent.net/> and <http://www.thenewgallery.org/atc.html>

Defining "Art"

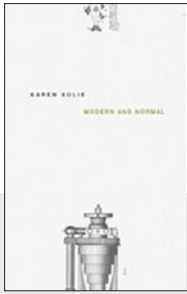
In my society there is no single word for 'art.' We have no distinction between 'art' and 'craft.' All are creative activities requiring skills and a sense of aesthetics. The aesthetic qualities of arts are not only determined by the language of art (i.e., rhythms, balance, shapes, lines, texture, etc.) but

by the ethics or values of the people. Several art forms can be combined for a purpose. For example, music, sculpture, pottery, painting, textiles and dance may be used simultaneously. (A man may dance to a drum while wearing a mask and a special costume with his body partially painted—while

carrying a ceremonial pot.) Art is a necessity, an integral force and a part of living—an essential role in everyday lives of Ghanaian communities. A particular work of art may be destroyed after use, no matter how beautiful or expensive it may be. We also have taboos: A blacksmith should not strike a person with

his bare hands. A carver should not work when annoyed. Tools and materials need respect. The arts are not the privilege of a few selected people.

Kwegyir Aggrey of Ghana
From artistsincanada.com and *Robert Genn's Weekly Letters*.



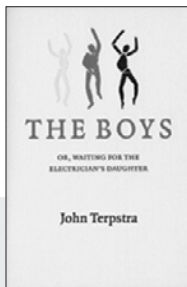
Modern and Normal
Karen Solie
Brick Books, 2005

The compressed spaces of these poems string together to form a hard, true collection like a series of cruddy motel rooms in which someone has been reading Wittgenstein. Focus and register are constantly shifting, and the speakers shift too; the “I” of “Cardio Room, Young Women’s Christian Association” claims she has “evolved/ in a flash, like the living flak/ of a nuclear mistake”, and certainly Solie’s

ability to throw her voice into disparate personae feels sinister at times. Even the ‘found’ poems, from sources like calculus textbooks or ornithology guides, have an almost unholy savour. While Solie never wows us with a shiftless access to beauty we haven’t earned, keeping her observations for the most part “dry-eyed and frost-bit”, there are a few poems that rush blind and headlong into

romance. These employ complex structures that circle back on themselves, pronouns that change halfway through. These poems, and the book as a whole, pull off the trick that our most important interactions do—we glide through confidently, then reach the end and realize we haven’t understood a thing.

—Linda Besner



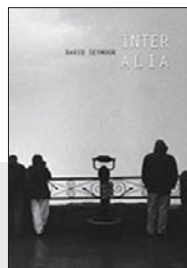
The Boys, or, Waiting for the Electrician's Daughter
John Terpstra
Gaspereau Press, 2005

Terpstra’s brothers-in-law—known in the family as “the boys”—were born with Duchenne’s muscular dystrophy, a debilitating illness which killed all three while still in their late teens or early twenties. Terpstra’s project—assembling the fragmented, interwoven stories of their lives—has produced this memoir without page numbers, structured by numbered segments from a phrase to a page long. His writing has a staccato lyricism, shifting con-

stantly between the reflective and the matter-of-fact. “The boys” died more than twenty-five years ago, and this memoir asks, “Whose story is this?” as Terpstra grasps after illuminating information beyond his own memories. At times Terpstra’s description feels excessive, as in the three pages explaining how Eric and Paul shot baskets from their wheelchairs. However, the reader comes to realize the import of the minutiae of movements and positioning that

were central to the daily life *The Boys* recreates. Terpstra shows us a familial world operating on a different scale from that of the “able-bodied” everyday, one of both constant detailed discomfort and vast, irrepressible personality. “The boys proved it,” Terpstra writes. “The simple fact of your created being is sufficient for all time. They proved it by being themselves and having no ‘future.’”

—Jane Henderson



Inter Alia
David Seymour
Brick Books, 2005

This book, Seymour’s first, opens with a series of short, breathtaking pieces on the “Nomenclature of the Semi-Precious.” Each improvisation launches from the name of a gemstone into luminous observation on some facet of life on earth, whether it’s prehistory, in “Amber”—stones Seymour calls “fossils of regret”—or impending mortality, in “Black Opal.” Here and throughout, objects artificial and natural are the

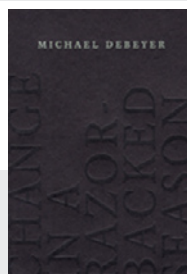
poet’s prisms, through which he deftly triangulates our place in the world.

Less successful is the final section, a “Fugue for the Gulf of Mexico,” designed for three distinct voices. Over ten pages, phrases and stanzas repeat themselves in different positions on the page and, dismayingly, in differently-coloured inks. The classical-music counterpart is evoked, but the effect is not texture or resonance—just distract-

tion. Perhaps this piece must be performed to be believed.

Other moments reveal Seymour as a newcomer still finding his subject, as in a letter to a newborn baby that cloyingly commiserates “I was sorry / to hear about the bris.” On the whole, these bright, confident poems approach the world carefully, but always with an engaging readiness to play.

—Regan Taylor



Change in a Razor-backed Season
Michal deBeyer
Gaspereau Press, 2005

Any reader who enjoys long perambulations pondering the quality of light, grand epistemological questions, and the veracity of the senses will feel right at home with the poetic voice in this collection. Even a poem like “The Party”, rather than focusing on the people gathered, examines an object and its philosophic import; in this case it’s wine pouring from

a cask into two glasses, and the possibilities for failure and success therein, that receives the author’s attention. The other delight in this book is its unique “echolalia” technique. In these paired poems, a page length prose poem is followed by an echolalia—a repetition of select words and phrases, arranged with line-breaks and spacing that twist the original syntax

of the phrases and torque the images to reveal new meaning. The superlative poems here—such as “Why Ghost Towns”, “Imagining a Black Bear into the Parking Lot”, “To Draw Blood from Stone”—tend to be the result of a lighter and more playfully imaginative tone than deBeyer exhibits in the rest of the collection.

—Matthew J. Trafford

McOrganic?

Is corporate organic changing the organic landscape in Canada?

by Hillary Lindsay

“Would you like an Organic Fair Trade™ coffee with your Egg McMuffin, Ma’am?”

Fantasy? Not if you wander into any one of 658 McDonalds scattered across the Northeastern United States. Transfair USA and Oxfam America have welcomed the fast food giant’s decision to serve Newman’s Own Organic Coffee. “We are excited about this regional launch, and we hope to see it spread across the country,” said Seth Petchers, coffee program manager for Oxfam America. But is having a 100% Organic Fair Trade™ coffee with your Big Mac really a sign of victory for the organic movement?

Rebecca Kneen, co-owner of Crannóg Ales, a certified organic farm and micro-brewery in BC’s Okanagan Valley, concedes that if organic and fair trade standards are being met, there will be some benefit to farmers but hastens to add that “this is a tiny action in a company that pollutes massively, has obscene hiring practices and labour relations and devalues food.”

The Big Boxes of the new suburban landscape are going organic. “We are particularly excited about organic food, the fastest-growing category in all of food,” said Walmart’s CEO Lee Scott at a recent shareholders meeting, according to the *New York Times*. Loblaw’s President’s Choice Organics line has expanded beyond organic produce to include organic chicken noodle soup, frozen entrees and cookies.

Even products that look so wholesome that one imagines they were made in a local hippie’s kitchen often carry a multinational logo. Phil Howard, a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Agro-ecology and Sustainable Food Systems, notes that according to one estimate, 40% of the packaged organic foods on the shelves of natural food stores are produced



Is organic agriculture mirroring the global industrial agriculture system it was created to combat?

by some of the biggest companies in the world. For example, Kellogg owns Kashi, a supplier of organic whole grain cereals and Kraft has bought out Boca, a maker of organic soy burgers. The corporate interest in organics goes beyond food to include things like organic cotton and organic seeds. Select Walmart stores now sell a limited line of organic cotton supplies for yoga, bath and baby. M&M/Mars has bought Seeds of Change, an organic seed company. “Many organic seed varieties are now available only through a giant seed company called Seminis, which earlier this year was acquired by Monsanto,” reports Howard.

The corporate takeover of organics can be seen as both a success and a failure for the organic movement, believes Howard. “On the one hand, the acreage devoted to organic production, without synthetic pesticides, increases every year to meet the market demand. On the other hand, some of the ideals of the organic movement, which was in a large part a response to industrial agriculture, have fallen by the wayside.” Organic agriculture increasingly resembles the global, industrial agriculture system it was created to combat, says Howard.

Kneen agrees, “Even though a 50-acre field of broc-

coli may not be sprayed with noxious chemicals, it is still mono-cropped, mechanically harvested and transported thousands of miles before it is eaten.” Kneen argues that organic or not, industrial agriculture negatively impacts the environment through the loss of crop and seed diversity and fossil fuels required for large machinery and long-distance shipping.

Organic produce - even vegetables that could be grown locally, like garlic, potatoes, carrots and apples - is regularly trucked thousands of miles to arrive on supermarket shelves. In fact, 85% of organic food in Canada is now imported. Howard describes why supermarket chains (like Whole Foods in the US) rarely stock local organic produce. “Whole Foods has centralized their distribution of produce, and it’s easier for them to buy from a large-scale grower in Mexico than a small-scale farmer next door,” he explains. “The price premiums that small-scale farmers once relied on to stay in business have been declining as they are forced to compete with massive farms that grow only a single crop. These mega-farms have economies of scale but externalize more costs to society and to ecosystems in comparison.”

Peter Johnston, a garlic farmer on Lasqueti Island in British Columbia, has noticed that the niche market for small organic farmers has quickly disappeared. “Before supermarkets began [stocking organic produce], it was bought either directly from the growers or from health food stores. We sold to a couple of them on Vancouver Island. These either no longer exist or don’t carry produce anymore. The chains aren’t interested in buying from small, local, seasonal producers.”

Sea Spray Atlantic Growers Cooperative was formed three years ago partly in response to the Atlantic Superstores interest in selling organic produce. But Norbert Kungl, whose organic farm Selwood Green is part of the cooperative, reports that sales to the Superstores have shrunk significantly. “When we have local production, they will order, but the orders are discouragingly small,” said Kungl. One member of the cooperative began growing large quantities of baby spinach and salad mix because the Superstore had indicated interest in purchasing it, but by the time it came to sell, Superstore was no longer interested. “They would not take those items because they had a deal or were in the process of a deal with PC Organics and some large companies in California,” explains Kungl. Kungl has learned to expect this from the Atlantic Superstore. “We know that if they can get anything as a PC Organic Product they will not have competing local produce in the store.”

According to Johnston, most consumers do not distinguish between local and corporate organic foods. Johnston describes the frustrating attitudes of many shoppers, “If it’s organic, it’s good, even if it is shipped from Mexico or Europe. The lowest possible price is important.”

Low prices are coming at a high cost, says Kneen, includ-

Tremblay's Remote Control

Democracy and Sustainability in Montreal

by Van Ferrier

Citizens in countries like Canada are suffering from the effects of ill-planned cities and environmental degradation, says Executive Director of UN-Habitat Anna Tibaijuka leading up to the third session of the World Urban Forum to be held in Vancouver next spring. At the heart of this crisis, she says, is a failure to consult and to allow the full participation of ordinary people in the development of cities.

Montreal, the city Prime Minister Paul Martin picked to host this year's International Climate Talks on behalf of Canada, is a poignant illustration of Ms. Tibaijuka's message, according to Ray Tomalty who teaches Urban Planning at McGill University and runs a research institute on urban issues in Montreal.

Tomalty explains that on January 1, 2006 Montreal's Mayor Gerald Tremblay will take control of the new Agglomeration Council that was created by the province of Quebec to manage common services such as police and fire departments, water treatment facilities and public transit for Montreal Island municipalities.

The coverage of these services will include several suburban communities that voted to de-merge from the city. But rather than achieving the autonomy from what these fifteen communities perceived as a highly centralized Montreal City Hall, the de-mergers have actually increased dependency on the Mayor's executive committee.

Tomalty says these communities were hoping to become independent cities, "but got a dictator and more taxes instead."

Rather than allowing all Montreal city councillors to sit on the Agglomeration Coun-



Tremblay in Montréal. ICAO

cil—which will manage the taxes of most residents in the metropolitan area—Mayor Tremblay appointed his handpicked executive committee to administer it. The Quebec government recently approved this move.

Richard Bergeron—leader of a new force in local politics called *Projet Montréal*—says this is what Montrealers have come to expect from Tremblay's style of governance.

"The executive committee sits behind closed doors under the Tremblay administration, and a culture of secrecy reigns at City Hall," says Bergeron. "Our mayor would like to transpose this type of governance to the Agglomeration Council. This tactic is intended to muzzle the opposition."

Incumbent Montreal city Councillor Alan de Sousa is responsible for sustainable development on Mayor Tremblay's executive committee. He says his team has moved Montreal forward and will continue to do so with a 20-year plan that will commit the city of Montreal to clear sustainable development objectives. Bergeron has doubts Tremblay will follow through on these commitments.

Mayor Tremblay, who was re-elected for a second term November 6 built his politi-

cal support in the suburbs of Montreal by promising the de-mergers. The Mayor continues to maintain that support by investing in infrastructure, which according to *Projet Montréal* makes suburban life more comfortable with new highways and bridges at the expense of the overall health and well-being of urban residents.

"For 60 years, Montreal has been locked into a dead-end development path that has put us in a very vulnerable position," says Bergeron. "But we must wake up from this 'American dream' attitude that is keeping us from achieving our goals."

Bergeron says the Mayor's agenda goes against what most Montrealers want. "Citizens want to live in complete communities that are healthy, well maintained, safe and clean," he says. "By building houses in clusters around public transportation hubs, we can minimize traffic, noise and pollution with energy efficient dwelling units that conserve heat and electricity."

Public transport-oriented development is precisely the kind of innovative initiatives that Bergeron—an urban planner with twenty years of experience in Quebec and abroad—is proposing for Montreal. It is also the foundation upon which Scandinavian countries learned to develop participatory local governments that are some of the most accountable and sustainable in the world.

Montrealers had the rare opportunity to discuss municipal environmental issues with city officials during the municipal election environmental debate. High expectations were placed on de Sousa who was forced to defend both his administration's environmental record and what Tomalty calls City Hall's "closed bureaucratic culture" that has become notorious among Canadian cities for

lacking transparency and failing to encourage citizens to participate in the democratic process.

"We are facing monumental challenges that require a completely different mindset," Bergeron says during the debate. "We see Montreal slipping behind many other cities in North America that have made the step towards sustainable planning through better governance."

For example residents of Vancouver are finding that the Greater Vancouver Regional District—the regional authority that oversees key services in the greater Vancouver area and facilitates provincial cooperation on common policy issues—has given them a solid foundation upon which new projects and policies are being built with a vision for sustainability.

So why hasn't Montreal achieved similar results? Tomalty says its because despite having a regional authority that includes 64 municipalities, the Metropolitan Community of Montreal (*Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal*, or CMM) is not accountable to the citizens it is supposed to represent. Vancouver city officials, on the other hand, have encouraged greater public participation via public consultations, ideas fairs, and other visible commitments to democratic inclusion.

With Kyoto delegates in town from November 28 to December 9, the biggest challenge for Montreal's commitment to sustainable development is not whether it can play host to important international meetings on climate change. Montreal city officials and citizens should be asking themselves how they could make sound contributions to improving health and well-being by improving the democratic accountability of City Hall.

Reconstructing Disaster

Profiteers and Pink Slips Ravage the Gulf Coast

by Rob Maguire

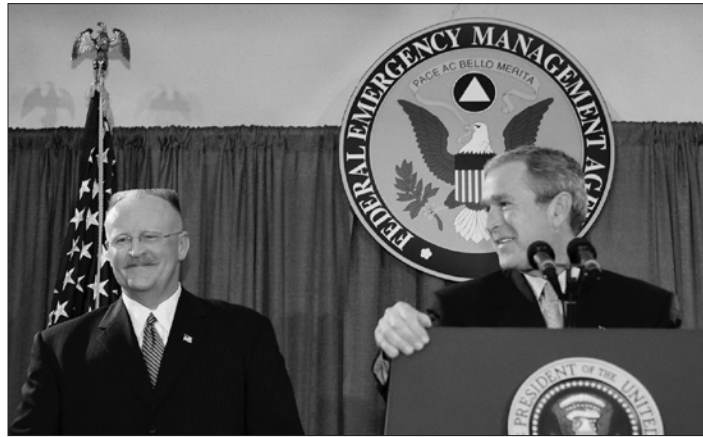
Three months have passed since Hurricane Katrina, and the high drama of disaster has been replaced by the less glamorous task of rebuilding lives and communities. While the people of New Orleans struggle to adjust, wealthy corporations are reaping the rewards of reconstruction.

The US Congress has already approved US\$62 billion for reconstruction in the Gulf Coast, with earmarked funds expected to exceed \$200 billion. Much of this money has already found its way into the hands of corporations with close ties to the Bush administration. This has come as no surprise to critics, including Federal Communications Commission Inspector General H. Walker Feaster. "When so much money is available, it draws people of less than perfect character," said Feaster.

Soon after funding was approved, contractors gathered in Washington for a "Katrina Reconstruction Summit." Hosted by Republican Senator Mel Martinez and sponsored by Halliburton, the conference brought together some 200 corporate representatives, lobbyists and government bureaucrats to network and receive advice on "opportunities for private sector involvement" in the reconstruction efforts.

Several well-connected multinationals have already cashed in, securing lucrative reconstruction contracts. Two such corporations are the Shaw Group and Halliburton. Both firms currently employ the services of lobbyist Joe Allbaugh, George W. Bush's former campaign manager, past head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and, according to a headline in the online magazine *Slate*, America's foremost "disaster pimp."

Allbaugh's Shaw Group



Bush with Allbaugh.

White House

stands to receive at least \$200 million in contracts from FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers for housing management, construction and engineering services. News of the reconstruction contracts propelled Shaw's stock to a three-year high. It also spurred the following announcement on their web site: "Hurricane Recovery Projects: Apply Here!"

Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown & Root has been contracted to rebuild navy bases at three separate Mississippi facilities. The work is part of a \$500 million contract signed between Halliburton KBR and the US Navy. Since the storm, Halliburton shares have risen over 10 percent to \$65. US Vice President Dick Cheney, who formerly served as Halliburton's CEO and received nearly \$200,000 in deferred pay from the company in 2004, is the official in charge of evaluating the Bush administration's response to the disaster.

Other corporate beneficiaries include California-based Bechtel Corporation, which has received a \$100 million FEMA contract to provide short-term housing. Bush named Bechtel's current CEO to his Export Council and placed its former chief executive in charge of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. AshBritt Environmental secured the largest

Katrina contract thus far, worth up to \$1 billion, for debris removal. AshBritt head Randal Perkins has donated tens of thousands of dollars to Republican politicians, including the host of the Katrina Reconstruction Summit, Florida Senator Mel Martinez.

A particularly poor deal for taxpayers came in the form of a \$236 million no-bid contract that FEMA signed with Carnival Cruise Lines to house evacuees on ships for six months. Assuming the ships will be filled to capacity with 7116 people, this works out to \$1275 per person per week—entertainment notwithstanding. This far surpasses the cost of an actual seven-day cruise from Carnival, which can be had for \$599.

While these deals have left shareholders smiling, Washington has done little for the 53,000 families still displaced from the storm. For example, FEMA refuses to pay shelter costs beyond December 1 for most evacuees. Unemployment is another critical problem. Forty percent of Louisiana's businesses have been damaged or destroyed, leaving nearly half a million people without work.

With the massive amount of reconstruction work to be done, and billions in federal funds at play, the potential for economic growth and job creation is tremendous. Rather than ensuring

that federal funds support local businesses and create decent jobs, the Bush administration has focused on paying political dividends to their powerful corporate backers by helping them maximize profits during the reconstruction phase.

Bush unilaterally repealed the Davis-Bacon Act, legislation requiring federal contractors to pay workers "prevailing" wages for the region. Although the prevailing wage in New Orleans is a mere \$9 an hour for construction work, contractors may now pay as little as the federal minimum wage, currently five dollars and fifteen cents.

Other government departments have played along, dropping sanctions for companies who hire illegal workers, suspending requirements concerning the employment of women and minorities and exempting industries in the region from environmental regulations. Bush also plans \$2 billion in tax breaks for corporations operating in the "Gulf Opportunity Zone."

Edward Sullivan, president of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, the largest labour union federation in the US, called the measures "legalized looting of these workers who will be cleaning up toxic sites and struggling to rebuild their communities, while favoured contractors rake in huge profits from FEMA reconstruction contracts."

In its handling of the Gulf Coast reconstruction efforts, the Bush administration has successfully facilitated a significant transfer of wealth from workers to well-connected multinationals. By favouring subsidies and high profit margins for its corporate allies, the White House has exacerbated the suffering of those affected by Hurricane Katrina and is jeopardizing the region's chances of a successful recovery.

Land Claims and Treaties and Bands, Oh My!

First Ministers' Meeting coverage limited to official story

by Dru Oja Jay

When those with decision making power and access to the media come to a consensus, it is often easy to conclude that their account reflects reality—that, to the extent that one understands the official story, one understands the situation itself. While the usual suspects may not dispute such an account, dissent can nonetheless be found by those willing to look.

The First Ministers' Meeting in November was, according to media coverage, a "historic summit" held in Kelowna, British Columbia where \$5 billion in spending was announced to "alleviate poverty" and "improve the quality of life" of Indigenous people in Canada. The plan focuses on housing, health care, education, economic development, and relations between natives and provincial and federal governments.

Reporting typically presented a positive outcome, despite difficulties in reaching agreement. A *Globe and Mail* report, for example, referred to a "feud" between the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) over whether wording would include natives without government-recognized status.

Criticism of the process was tempered by an overall impression that progress was being made. "The government is doing the honourable thing, but it does have the stink of desperation to it," NDP native affairs critic Pat Martin told the CBC, referring to the imminent fall of Paul Martin's Liberal government.

In a brief foray outside of this narrow range of views offered by the political establishment, the *Globe and Mail* made mention of some deeper criticisms of the process. The *Globe's* Bill Curry quoted Arthur Manuel of the Grassroots Peoples Coalition (GPC) as saying



The Grassroots Peoples' Coalition protests outside the First Ministers' Meeting in Kelowna, BC.

GPC

that "The minute you recognize our economic and treaty rights, our poverty would disappear immediately." The *Globe* report also noted that the deal signed in Kelowna made no mention of treaty rights.

While the media failed to provide the minimal context for Manuel's remarks—indeed, the CBC, the National Post, the Canadian Press and others ignored the grassroots perspective completely—the information is readily available for those who look.

"The federal government has co-opted the Assembly of First Nations... as Aboriginal and Treaty rights are traded off for the modern day equivalent of 'trinkets and beads,'" Manuel wrote in a GPC communiqué.

In the analysis of Manuel and many others, the federal government and Canadian corporations have made hundreds of billions of dollars on resources and land that, by law, belongs to Indigenous peoples. By one estimate, the value of oil revenues from unceded land in Alberta totals over \$70 billion for the last 12 years.

There was, in fact, considerable dissent about the meeting.

One has to search the website of CBC North, however, to

learn that "about 200 bands from across Canada" boycotted the meeting. "It's as if the agreements were already prewritten with the AFN in Ottawa," Bill Namagoose of the Cree Grand Council was quoted as saying.

Another layer still obscures understanding of the situation: the band system itself. The band council system was imposed in 1884, with the Indian Advancement Act. Traditional systems of government were outlawed. Typically, traditional government held chiefs as spokespeople rather than decisionmakers, and decisionmaking power rested with the people of the nation. By imposing a system against the will of the affected communities, the federal government transferred control to the Ministry of Indian Affairs.

To this day, the Federal government controls band funding, and can withdraw it as it sees fit. A resident of Grassy Narrows, a community in western Ontario, told independent journalist Macdonald Stainsby that "The council and the chief make a good living, and get a very good income. In this very poor community, that's why people join the council. They have no real power, but they are scared to risk their funding."

In a communiqué sent after

the meeting, Manuel raises yet another major issue not mentioned in media reports. Since Lester Pearson, the federal government has insisted on calling its funding to band councils "humanitarian assistance", instead of its legal obligation under Canadian law. Manuel writes:

We view programs and services as part payment from the Canadian and provincial governments using and benefiting from our lands. The AFN and [others] have let the Canadian and BC government off-the-hook by unlinking programs and services from Aboriginal and Treaty Rights.

Why aren't these challenges to the most basic assumptions upon which the plan to "lift natives out of poverty" is based reported in the media?

Is it because the claims are outlandish? Probably not. The 1996 Royal Commission report came to essentially the same conclusions outlined above.

According to the Commission,

Aboriginal peoples' right of self-government within Canada is acknowledged and protected by the constitution. It recognizes that Aboriginal rights are older than Canada itself and that their continuity was part of the bargain between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that made Canada possible.

The remaining explanation is that instead of understanding things as they are, journalists chose the shortcut of understanding things the way the political establishment presents them. Whether journalists were unable to look beyond the official line, were not allowed to, or didn't want to, is a analysis for another day—analysis that requires insider access. That Canada's journalists told a woefully incomplete story, however, is a matter of the public record.

Where's the Boss?

Worker cooperatives look to spread democracy

by Hillary Lindsay

Peter Cameron is sipping a pint of fair trade cocoa stout, a beer made collaboratively by La Siembra, an Ottawa based worker cooperative specializing in fair trade chocolate, and La Barbarie, a worker cooperative microbrewery based in Quebec City. The beer, coined La Solidarita, is not yet on the market, and much like the worker cooperative movement itself, is still in the early stages of development. "As a movement we're still very young," notes Cameron. "The Canadian Worker Cooperative Federation (CWCF) is only fourteen years old. Ontario didn't even officially recognize worker cooperatives until 1991-92."

Cameron is worker-owner for Planet Bean Coffee, a worker cooperative in Guelph Ontario specializing in fair trade organic coffee. He's come to Montreal for CWCF's annual conference held from November 17th to 19th. The conference is not large, but with 110 registered participants it's the biggest one yet - and according to Cameron, the worker cooperative movement is on the rise.

There are an estimated 350 worker cooperatives in Canada employing around 11,000 people in sectors as diverse as forestry, retail, information technology and entertainment. To a customer, they may appear no different from a regular business, but an employee would never make the same mistake.

"You can see it in new workers who come in. They're looking for the boss," says Melissa Hoover, with a laugh. Hoover works at Inkworks Press, a worker cooperative based in Berkeley California. Like other worker cooperatives, InkWorks is worker-owned and democratically run by its employees: There is no boss.

Inkworks employees meet regularly to make collective decisions about how the business



Conference participants discuss new workplace models. Dru Oja Jay

should be run. At Inkworks this process is reflected in a workplace with a strong health plan, a press that only uses recycled paper, and a policy to donate or discount printing done for local social justice organizations. According to Hoover, Inkworks' priorities are not unusual for a worker cooperative. "There's a lot of research about how coops are innately more accountable to their local and physical environment because that's where the people who work in them live. They have a track record of being more sustainable, more accountable, more involved, going above and beyond status quo environmental and work practices."

This kind of workplace conscience does not make worker cooperatives less competitive in the cut throat world of business, insists Cameron. In fact, it makes them more competitive. In the capitalist system, he explains, companies exploit workers and the environment in order for the ownership class to pocket a substantial profit. "That's a gap we can use to be competitive and take care of our workers. Plus, we have less strikes, we have less days off due to pissed off workers. People won't rip off the company cause it's *their* company."

The worker cooperative model is one that will appeal to young people, especially those involved in the anti-corporate

globalization movement, says Ajamu Nangwaya, a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education who is studying cooperative entrepreneurship. "A lot of young people are dissatisfied with their experience in the workplace. They do not have a lot of control over decision-making. They see the disloyalty of companies, they've seen parents lose their jobs after twenty or more years with a company. There is a certain level of cynicism." Though many young people are aware of the bleak working conditions that exist both here and overseas, many are not aware of the alternatives, says Nangwaya. "For the worker cooperative movement it is our challenge to raise awareness and have the services in place to help them form worker cooperatives."

CWCF has taken on this challenge, and several young participants in this year's conference rewarded their efforts. Krystal Payne and Nick Scott were representing their newly incorporated youth-run worker cooperative. The Underground Cafe opened in Fredericton this year to a crowd many times the size of the Cafe's capacity. The vegan cafe specializes in local, fair trade and organic menu options. Geneva Guerin and Melissa Garcia Lamarca gave a presentation to the CWCF conference on the Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG),

the coop they co-founded with three others. SSG is a research and consulting firm that is also run by people under the age of thirty.

Although there were many young faces in the conference crowd this year, almost all were white. "It's very obvious when you go to a cooperataive gathering that there are some of us who should be at the table who are not at the table," notes Nangwaya. "In the US it's the same challenge. There are not enough minorities and oppressed racial groups in the worker cooperative movement. This is something we have to change as a movement."

For Nangwaya, once one starts thinking about workplace justice and democracy, one inevitably must address the injustices of society as a whole. "As a coop movement it's important for us to realize that we should be working to displace capitalism," he believes. "What we're struggling for is not just decent jobs and democratic work places but to transform society and economics. It is important for us to see the necessity of building democratic structures inside the communities in which we operate so that the worker cooperative is embedded in a community decision making process."

Nangwaya's vision for a new democracy is a far cry from the top-down approach most Canadians are familiar with. "Rarely do people get a chance to practice democracy in our own lives," agrees Hoover. "Not at school, not at home, not at work, so we don't have a lot of training in democracy. I think coops are the one place where people can feel their power as people and make democratic decisions." Hoover believes that coops could help transform societal democracy, because once people know what real democracy feels like, they want more of it. "I've seen it happen."

Give 'em the Boot!

Zapatistas and solidarity activists step “no sweat” campaign up a notch

by Chris Arsenault

It's been almost twelve years since the Zapatistas of southern Mexico said *ya basta* (“enough”) to neo-liberalism and initiated a struggle for “a world where many worlds fit.”

Today, the Zapatistas are creating a variety of participatory economic institutions to meet community needs: women's artisan co-ops, amber producers' co-ops, fair-trade coffee cooperatives and a non-sweatshop boot co-operative.

On a sunny July day, myself and a delegation of foreign solidarity activists tramped the muddy hills around Oventic Caracole, in the Los Altos region, to visit the First of January Boot Co-op. Rafael Hedeze, a leading activist with the co-op, and several other *compañeros* welcomed us with cokes and bowls of snow-tire-tough beef soup stewed on an open fire.

Inside the workshop (basically a barn with corrugated iron roof, one of the higher-end buildings in a region of thatched farm huts), a dozen or so men were busy cutting leather, tracing patterns, and heating branding irons. Large blue flames erupted as glue was melted to attach the soles.

After showing us around, Hedeze proudly explained the ownership structure of the workshop to us. “We have no owner. Here we are all equals,” he said.

“When something is needed, or when problems arise - all jobs have problems - then we have a meeting or a general discussion. If we want to do something without consulting the rest, we can't do that. We must present the job on behalf of everyone,” said Hedeze.

The co-op began on Jan 1, 1998, when two activists traveled from Chiapas to Mexico City to spend six months learning the trade. The independent workshop that trained Hedeze

and others has since shut down, due to a huge influx of low-cost footwear from China - but the First of January Co-op survives.

Its first priority is to provide high-quality, low-cost footwear for the surrounding communities. “We sell to the indigenous for 150-220 pesos (approx 25 USD), just enough to recuperate the cost of the materials,” said one co-op member. “Here in San Andres there are shoes for 100 pesos, but they will only last for a season.”

With significant national and international interest in *zapatismo* (a fluid political movement that strives to create change without seizing power), the cooperative decided they could use sales to non-indigenous supporters to help finance the development of the workshop. “We sell high boots to foreigners for 350 pesos and medium for 300. This is the price for those who are in solidarity with us, who,” stresses Hedeze, “are also Zapatistas.”

Before ending his presentation, Hedeze stressed the democratic essence of the organization. “This is the factory for everyone. We are all the owners. We are the coordinators who manage the workshop.”

Democratic values notwithstanding, the factory has many practical problems: the machinery is very outdated, significantly reducing productivity, and component parts that can't be made on site, such as soles and laces, must be bought from a middle-person in San Cristobal de Las Casas at inflated prices.

Enter the Black Star Boot Collective - a Canadian youth-run organization dedicated to finding international markets for Zapatista boots and, more importantly, raising money to improve the workshop. They sell boots over the Internet and facilitate workshops to raise awareness about alternative models of production and social organization. “We try to orga-

nize ourselves along the same principals as the First of January Co-op,” said Amanda Smith, an anthropology student in Halifax and a member of the Black Star Boot Cooperative.

“Organizing co-operatively,” admits Smith, “is certainly trying. None of us have experience working with boots. It's a little disorganized, frustrating and often inefficient, but the project came directly from the Zapatistas, and at this point, it seems like the most useful thing we can be doing.”

“It's less about selling boots than it is about the example we are trying to set: economic interaction based on international solidarity and workers producing quality goods without bosses,” Smith added.

Since the uproar against sweatshop abuses in the early 1990s, major textile corporations have spent millions on public relations to showcase “good corporate citizenship”.

Some positive examples of non-sweat apparel production have sprung up in the last couple years: Sweat X was paying high wages to US workers (until it shut down), and American Apparel, who just recently opened a store in Toronto, pays workers in Los Angeles decent wages to produce un-branded high quality t-shirts and other clothing.

Commendable as these examples may be, their praxis is fundamentally flawed. They seek a half-hearted return to the post-war “New Deal,” naively hoping decent paying nine-to-five factory jobs can thrive again in the era of neo-liberalism. And although workers have more say over their lives at the American Apparel factory than in a Nike or Adidas outsourcing operation, the non-sweat factories still operate within a centrally planned hierarchy.

In a sense, the Zapatistas—basically an agrarian movement—have leap-frogged

the entire wage system with their forays into industry. Co-op members receive no salary for their labour; all profits are invested back into entire community, mostly to pay for public services, specifically health promotion.

“We have a difficult situation,” admits Hedeze, who is married with several children. “We sustain ourselves through what little we can grow in our milpas (fields). We have two days a week for working in the fields. We also buy various things, but very little.”

At first glance, working roughly 40 hours a week as a volunteer seems over-zealous, if not downright exploitative. But factory activists have realized they can't pull themselves out of poverty individually, one by one. Key pillars of *zapatismo* like health, education, and work with dignity demand collective action, cooperation and mutual aid.

The First of January Boot Workshop is not a perfect model of economic democracy. The component parts for the boots—soles, laces, etc.—are bought from coyotes (middlemen) in San Cristobal de las Casas, and are presumably imported from sweatshops in China.

And, in the Chiapas highlands, the “glory” of worker-self-management exists alongside deplorable poverty that the Mexican government characterizes as “acute marginalization.” Many of the workshop activists can't afford proper shoes for their own children.

Poverty is ubiquitous in Chiapas (and indeed, in much of the world), stifling opportunities for alternative economic arrangements - for however clearly you articulate your vision of a participatory economy, you can't make something from nothing. The workshop wants to expand production, but it's unlikely they'll get a bank loan for new

Masala and the Rainforest

Future of Kermode bear and rainforest “uncertain”

by Kim Petersen

The spectacular northwest coast of colonially designated British Columbia contains one of the world's great temperate rainforests. Here, the open Pacific Ocean and meandering fjords lap at the shore of the ancient rainforest where millennia-old cedar trees and towering Sitka spruce grow amid the glaciated Coastal Mountain chain. The rich ecosystem is intersected by streams that host salmon, upon which apex predators such as killer whales, black bears, grizzlies, wolves, and eagles feed. The salmon are also a nutritional mainstay for First Nations people.

The region is named the Spirit Bear Rainforest because it is home to masala, a rare white-colored bear also referred to as the spirit bear or Kermode bear. Masala—the original designation from Sm'algyax (the Tsimshian language)—is a genetic variation of the black bear whose distinctive coloration is the result of a single recessive gene expressed phenotypically in as many as one in ten of these bears.

Biologists estimate a population of 1,200 black and white spirit bears—400 of the white coloration. The spirit bear lives in greatest numbers on the islands in the territory of the Gitga'at (people of the cane) First Nation: Gribbell Island (up to 30 percent of the bears are white) and Princess Royal Island (up to 10 percent are white).

This ursine rainforest denizen and other forest-dwelling wildlife have been threatened by clearcut logging practices. According to the BC environmentalist organization Valhalla Wilderness Society, the long-term prospect for masala's survival is “Uncertain, at best.” Particularly disconcerting is the felling of old-growth trees whose hollowed-out trunks provide winter dens for bears



The Kermode bear's distinctive white coloring appears in roughly 30 per cent of the bears in the Spirit Bear Rainforest.

ronthiele.com

on the BC coast.

Logging and road-building also mean the loss of critical food sources and protective cover from poachers. Denudation of the rain-soaked mountain slopes causes landslides and erosion. Salmon habitat will be smothered, killing the salmon and decimating an important food source of masala.

A 1996 investigation by the Sierra Legal Defense Fund revealed that clearcutting accounted for a startling 97 per cent of logging in the temperate rainforest. Pressure from First Nations, environmental organizations, and public concern led the BC provincial government, in April 2001, to announce a “Spirit Bear Protection Area” of approximately 135,000 hectares.

However, this sanctuary remains unprotected until the BC government passes legislation that accords with First Nations priorities for the Spirit Bear Protection Area which falls within the traditional and unceded territories of four First Nations: the Kitasoo/Xais-xais, Gitga'at, Heilstuk, and Haisla/Hainaksula. Treaty negotiations over territorial claims are ongoing with the BC government and federal government.

A 2005 status report called into question the protection of the Spirit Bear Rainforest from

clearcutting. The status report, authored by the David Suzuki Foundation, concluded that 80 per cent of crucial spirit bear habitat is still at risk.

According to some observers, however, the report's conclusions are a bit alarmist. Art Sterritt, a former chief treaty negotiator for the Gitga'at First Nation, is now the executive director of the Coastal First Nations, a grouping of First Nations working together to forge an ecologically sustainable economy. Sterritt acknowledges that some clearcutting is still going on in the Spirit Bear Rainforest but says that “major, major advances have been made to improve” the situation.

The rainforest and masala are important to his people. Sterritt relates how the Gitga'at First Nation has been living in “co-existence with masala forever ... [and] have won the right to use the bear as a crest”—exclusively for the hereditary chief.

Today, First Nations continue to fight for recognition and treaty rights to their ancestral lands. Few treaties were signed with the First Nations of BC. Sterritt describes the treaty discussions as “pretty disappointing,” being “bogged down in bureaucracies,” “stalled,” and “not moving along well at all.” The “snail's pace” of the process—which many say is deliber-

ate—serves the interests of the province well.

But progress is near on a land use deal, says Sterritt. “The First Nations are on the verge of striking a new deal with the BC provincial government.”

The Gitga'at and Kitasoo/Xais-xais First Nations have developed land-use plans that go a long way to protecting some of masala's essential habitat.

The Kitasoo/Xais-xais First Nation has already designated protected areas—the Nakami Weld—where resource extractive industries will be prohibited. The remaining land base of the traditional territory will be managed according to Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) principles: sustainable use of the land and resources. The purpose is to foster economic development and job creation while respecting ecological values and conserving wildlife and marine life.

According to Sterritt, the EBM should be fully implemented by 2009.

Territorial sovereignty is delayed, but the First Nations of the Pacific Northwest and environmentalists have achieved an ecological victory. In so doing, a large expanse of intact rainforest is preserved for Original Peoples and their culture to flourish and for masala and other wild species to thrive.

A New Canadian University Begins...

Founding meeting stresses principles of ecology and social justice

by Wilma van der Veen

What would a university based on principles of ecology and social justice look like, and one that was tuition free? This fall, individuals from across Canada converged on Arundel Nature Centre just outside Montreal, Quebec. Like the project itself, the community of Arundel is small and relatively unknown; by the time the weekend was over, however, the potential for the project began to gather energy and momentum.

Why a new university? Although a clear vision of what a new university should be did not yet exist at the start of the weekend, many arrived with strong opinions of what a new university should not be. "The current university system provides the necessary education to fill the jobs necessary in the capitalist system, while normalizing this system's destructive and dangerous operations providing a system of rewards for the participation in this destruction [e.g. labour and human rights' violations, environmental degradation, and a growing underclass]," said graduate student Steve Turpin. "It is clear that in order to contest these systems of domination and destruction, a new university will have to work towards a holistic learning environment based on mutual respect and reciprocity - both socially and environmentally". Laird Herbert, a student and prime initiator of the meetings, had similar frustrations with the choices available, "There aren't any post-secondary educational institutions in North America that are based on sustainable ecological principles and simultaneously are affordable."

The weekend focused on developing a vision with associated statements, an initial strategy for realizing such a project and next steps. "The time has come to at least imagine what



It is key that the university become a community onto itself but also be intimately interconnected with the community in which it will reside.

Philip McMaster (info@cool.ca)

an institution of higher learning would look like that was born in Canada, of Canada, and by young Canadians attuned to the spirit and rhythms of the twenty-first century," said Tony Hall, a University of Lethbridge professor and author of *The American Empire and the Fourth World*.

Ecological principles were to be the foundation upon which to base other principles, ecological considerations being incorporated into all dimensions: from the physical infrastructure using environmentally sustain-

able building materials, to the production and consumption of organic food, to research creations that would not be harmful to the planet. It was key that the university become a community onto itself but also be intimately interconnected with the community in which it would reside.

Practical matters that would realize this project were also explored. Discussions covered the use of active and inclusive decision-making processes drawing upon consensus models; mutual learning where

educators and support staff would also be students, and students and support staff would also be educators; and innovative funding strategies, such as the "working college model" where students are also workers at the university. As was practiced at the meeting, the new university would exercise bilingualism to more accurately reflect the nature of Canadian society, incorporating more languages in the future. While an initial physical location would be sought, virtual and satellite campuses across the country would be pursued.

As for curriculum, the notion of a living curriculum was accepted where as needs of those involved changed, subjects taught would be modified. This would be inclusive of all subject matters for all students from the most basic of learning how to feed, shelter and clothe oneself, to more traditional intellectual pursuits.

"I was really impressed," reflected Herbert after the meeting ended. "Something has begun even though I was pessimistic about this whole idea coming to anything." A determined optimism seems to have now infected participants at the meetings who are now investigating the possibility of the first campus being situated in or around Arundel, the location of what will likely be considered the historic first meeting of a new Canadian university.

"The process of actually implementing our visions, as we are beginning to do after this magic convergence of energy and minds at the Arundel Nature Centre, can inspire a sense of hope," Hall commented as the meeting came to a close.

The next organizing meeting will be held the weekend of January 13-15th. Those who would like more information can check out www.newuniversity.net

Remembering Bureaucracy

Not all war veterans are remembered

by Chris Arsenault

It is the year of the veteran, and as cannons blare and politicians make speeches praising the sacrifice of soliders, one group of Canadian freedom fighters dwindles without a penny in pensions or official recognition.

Jules Paivio was 19, working in a Sudbury department store when he decided to head for Spain along with more than 1,200 other Canadians, to join the fight against fascism.

The year was 1936. General Francisco Franco led a military coup against Spain's elected leftist government. Western democracies, trying to appease an increasingly aggressive Adolph Hitler, issued an arms embargo against the Spanish Republic.

"I saw the agony of the Spanish people on the news reels and it touched me," said Paivio, now 88.

The Spanish Civil War is seen by many historians as the classic case of right versus wrong: an elected government supported by peasants, workers and small business people standing against a fascist dictator backed by the military, industrialists, large land owners and Church officials.

It inspired Pablo Picasso to paint his famous *Guernica*, Ernest Hemingway to write *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and much more poetry, prose and intellectual discourse.

William Lyon Mackenzie-King's Liberal government forbade Canadians from fighting in the war, so Paivio with other young communists, anarchists and believers in the Republic bused to New York, sailed to France, and crossed into Spain joining 40,000 others in the international brigades.

"I didn't tell my folks I was going," he chuckles.

Paivio received three weeks of training with old Canadian



Jules Paivio receives no veterans' benefits for fighting in the Spanish Civil War.

Rachel Rosen

Ross Rifles, before being shipped to the front, trying to defend Madrid, the Spanish capital, from fascist encirclement. After three months of trench warfare and some intensive training, he was put on a campaign to break through enemy lines.

"They (the Spanish people) were always happy they had international volunteers helping them. Everyone understood 'no pasaran,' (they shall not pass) so if they didn't speak English they understand no pasaran and that fist, that salute," reminisces Paivio. In 1996, the Spanish government invited surviving veterans back to Spain, and honoured them with Spanish citizenship. Nearly half the Canadians who served died fighting fascism.

The attempts to break fascist lines were unsuccessful. And the tide turned against the anti-fascists. The left, as it so often does, turned on itself. "The Trotskyites cut our supply lines," said Paivio.

While Franco's fascists received planes, weapons and soldiers from Germany and more than 100,000 Italian troops, Paivio's Republican side had no international support, other than a few Soviet military advisers and an insufficient supply of weapons. "We always held out that the democracies would come around and provide us with weapons. But it was not to be," he said.

Paivio was captured and spent a year in a prison camp facing beatings with rifle butts, burns from cigarettes, constant interrogations and a bad case of scurvy. He was freed in a swap for Italian prisoners in 1939 as the war wound down and Spain succumbed to fascist control.

"It was in Spain, that [my generation] learned that one can be right and yet be beaten, that force can vanquish spirit, that there are times when courage is not its own recompense. It is this, doubtless, which explains why so many, the world over,

feel the Spanish drama as a personal tragedy," wrote French writer Albert Camus after the fascist victory.

After his release, Paivio made it to France and hopped a steamship home in secret, "so there wouldn't be demonstrations in our honour." Thousands still turned out at Toronto's Union Station to greet one group of returning vets.

"When we got back, we resumed our political activity and tried to find jobs," he said. But for Paivio, the call came again soon. When World War Two broke out, he had married but he enlisted again, legally this time, teaching map-reading in Petiawawa because the army wouldn't send him overseas.

The government and veterans' groups continue to deny official recognition for Spanish Civil War fighters. "Veterans' benefits are only available to veterans who served in a war in which Canada was an official participant," said Janice Sumnerby, spokesperson for Veterans Affairs.

"Obviously, many Canadians went on their own to serve but did so without government encouragement. This is an issue that has been debated in the House of Commons and various governments have decided to stick with the status quo," she said.

Trade unions, student groups, and progressive entertainers have raised funds over the years for memorials in Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa.

When speaking of the situation today, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the old model of socialism, Paivio, still a communist, admits, "There is not that clear understanding of right and wrong, where you can serve and do your bit. It was kind of a unique situation at the time; there were a people who you could help and support. That's why it was so easy to get volunteers to go," he said.

Did you hear the one about...

Deconstructing a Canadian Indian in the privacy of your own home

by Stewart Steinhauer

Hmm. Deconstructing Canadian Indians in the privacy of your own home? Reverse engineering intellectual property? That's a tall order for a short space. Flipping open the Master's toolbox, he grabbed the monkey wrench and tossed it into the cogs of the Machine. For a nanosecond, things lurched to a halt, and, in that short space, Steinhauer said:

"Canadian Indians, circa 2005, are a social construct created out of the remnants of Indigenous Peoples surviving genocide by subjecting them to a social engineering project spanning several centuries. As such, they can be properly thought of as the intellectual property of western civilization, Canada division."

Steinhauer looked at his atomic clock; there wasn't much of that nanosecond left. Reverse engineering. Was it going to be like playing country and western music backwards, where your dog comes home, and your spouse and kids, too, and there's a great crop, and you get to keep the farm? Looking back in his own family lines, Steinhauer saw ancestors from the Cree, Ojibwe, Metis, Mohawk, Irish, and Scots Nations. In true colonial fashion, his only functional language was English, just like most other modern Cree, Ojibwe, Metis, Mohawk, Irish and Scots people.

With terrifying force, the Machine spit the monkey wrench across a half-vast universe, and time slouched on again. Enough day-dreaming on the job, thought Steinhauer, it's back to work. Getting out his reverse engineering tools, he sighted down that slouching time line of his ancestors, past row upon row of engineered humans. If he wasn't going to be intellectual property of the Canadian sector of western civilization, then who would



Steinhauer hammer finishing around lettering at base of "Surviving Genocide".

he be? Author Tanya Wasacase has explained how identity is a function of a way of life, rather than a function of skin, hair, or eye colour, or any of the other theories of identity proposed by western civilization. Anonymous Indigenous language activists have explained how language is the spiritual/ mental/ emotional/ physical story-telling voice which interactively shapes and describes that way of life. With a sudden startle reaction, Steinhauer realized that reverse engineering must begin at home; slamming shut the Master's toolbox, he got up and took the few short steps from his office to his home.

That night he had a dream. A medieval siege catapult was lobbing plague-bloated corpses onto Turtle Island, from across the big water. Countless millions of African Peoples were being dragged under that water, chained together in a seemingly endless line. The sky was dotted with mushroom-shaped clouds, while turbulent weather buffeted the surface of the earth. A full moon stood just clear of the weather, on the eastern horizon, and onto its surface a giant satellite-mounted projector was casting an alternating set of images, going from the Coca-

Cola logo to Dick Cheney's face mouthing "War Is Peace" to the Pepsi logo, then back to Cheney, endlessly.

The following morning the first fall snow had melted away, but the chill of the coming winter had definitely stayed. While the Italian steam pot bubbled up espresso from the Zapatista coffee grounds, Steinhauer fired up the laptop and contemplated addictions. Deconstructing Canadian Indians has got to have something to do with addictions, doesn't it?

From liberalism he picked out individualism, and re-branded it as isolation. From the liberal concept of private property he picked out the enclosure of the commons, and re-branded it as dislocation. From the global order created by the crossing of individualism with private property he picked out labour as a commodity, and re-branded it alienation. Steinhauer was about to say "combine this unholy trinity, and you could make an addiction out of absolutely anything", but the steam pot started making those come and get it noises that all true coffee addicts can't resist.

If resistance is futile, then why bother trying to organize

a resistance? Points #201 to #203 from The Final Report On A Study Of Treaties, Agreements, and Other Constructive Arrangements Between States and Indigenous Populations, United Nations Economic And Social Council, Commission On Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Prevention Of Discrimination And Protection Of Minorities, prepared by Miguel Alfonso Martinez, Special Rapporteur to the UN, the product of 25 years of study into the subject, said:

201. In this context, let it be said that the Special Rapporteur's historical research has shown, in his view, that not all indigenous nations made the wisest of choices at all times. That is to say, at some crucial moments in their history, some indigenous nations were not capable of putting the need to unite among themselves over their individual interests, even though unity was necessary to confront properly encroachment on their sovereign attributes. This was true even when the ultimate intentions of the newcomers were already apparent. The terrible consequences inherent in allowing themselves to be divided appear not to have been totally perceived.

202. In addition, on more than one occasion they seem not to have recognized the advantages and disadvantages, in all their dimensions, nor the final consequences, of a policy of alliance with European powers. This can be said both of those who adopted this policy of alliance in line with their own on-going fratricidal struggles and of those who decided to favour one of the non-indigenous powers over the others in the military confrontations that took place in their ancestral lands.

203. Further, it is also apparent that they could not fully appreciate (or that they widely underestimated) the

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questionable role played, and still played, in many cases, by religious denominations or their representatives as effective instruments of the colonial enterprise in its various stages.

Then again, what if resistance is fertile? Inside Steinhauer's coffee-addled brain, a thought flitted past. "We can't get together to fend off the fiends, but we can sure get together to make babies". It brought to mind the old Cree couple who lived nearby the Catholic Church on their reserve. It was a Sunday morning, and the old woman was admonishing the old man to hurry, and change into his church clothes. The bell started

to ring, and she rushed into the bedroom to urge him on, only to discover him half undressed, and in a peculiar state. When you're old, sometimes things don't work when their supposed to, and then, by surprise, they suddenly work when they're not supposed to. The old woman grabbed him and threw him down on the bed. "What are you doing?" he cried. "We'll be late for church." Hoisting her long skirt, the old woman replied, "The church will still be standing there next week, but I'm not so sure that this will be."

But if le pièce de résistance, fertility, is futile, what then? Feeling at a loss, Steinhauer remembered old Pete Gregory's words, describing an experience

he had one day, as he sat by the roadside watching life go by, on the Okanagan Indian Reserve # 1. A real estate salesman stopped to ask for directions. "Do you know which way to Kelowna?" Pete looked at him and said, "I don't know". "Well then, which way to Vernon?" "I don't know." Exasperated, the salesman said, "Don't you know anything, old man?" to which Pete responded, "I know I'm not lost."

Yeah. We're not lost. If we can stand our ground, keep our languages alive, keep on making babies, keep at least the memory of our way of life alive, we'll never be lost.

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capital; a 1994 memo from the Chase Manhattan Bank urging the Mexican army to "eliminate the Zapatistas" demonstrates how global capital deals with those who seek alternatives.

Still, the workshop's production is based on a key principle of zapatismo: "Everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves."

"Those of us with the privilege of a Canadian passport, who are 'also Zapatistas' by Rafael's definition, have a responsibility to help build participatory structures in re-developing areas," said Black Star organizer Dennis Hale. "And not just because we're nice guilty liberals, but because we need them more than they need us."

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privatization regardless of the cost—to taxpayers, in decline of quality of service," said Howard, is leading to "mounting anger", evidence of which can be seen in the public support for the striking teachers.

The high profile strikes, he said, have "helped galvanize public opinion against privatization." The BCTF strike was

"a huge victory for the labour movement."

"Audiences outside of BC don't realize the extent that the government has thumbed its nose at workers' rights," said Howard, citing "nine separate occasions" where the government was convicted of "violating basic and fundamental rights of working people" by the

International Labour Organization in the last three years. BC, he added, has the "worst record of any provincial government" when it comes to labour.

According to Lee, privatization is losing credibility. "The cost savings aren't materializing the way they planned," he said, citing an "increase in absenteeism" and a "decrease in produc-

tivity" in the health care jobs targeted by the government in 2004.

Lightman thinks that the unions are waiting out the government, which is significantly weaker than it was after winning a vast majority of provincial seats in 2001. "They'll make a symbolic stand, and wait and hope for an NDP government."

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ing weakening local economies, causing the disappearance of mixed farms with diverse crops and damaging "the entire rural fabric of Canada, which is based on small farms and the culture and skills developed by farmers and ranchers."

Large companies are often able to sell one organic product at a low price by subsidizing it with a line-up of non-organic products, thus undercutting the small organic producer. But according to Kneen, small organic producers, like Crannóg Ale's Micro-brewery, offer the customer and the community far more than a cheap product. "What we do is focused on high quality products, locally sourced ingredients, supporting the local economy and creating as little environmental impact as

possible throughout our entire process," explains Kneen. "Corporate beer is focused on the bottom line."

Small farmers are frustrated by an organic certification process that fails to differentiate between the organic potato grown by a small mixed farm next door and the organic potato shipped from an industrial monoculture farm in Mexico. "Some of us would like to include fossil fuel audits in the certification process," explains Johnston. "Not a hope with the corporations involved though. [With corporations], there is and will be constant pressure to produce enough product at the lowest possible price."

"Constant vigilance will be required to resist attempts to weaken the USDA stan-

dards in ways that benefit corporations at the expense of everyone else," warns Howard referring to organic standards in the US. "Some [small farmers] have already given up on the term 'organic' to describe their values. They would rather explain exactly how they grew the food, or even invite customers to see their farm, than pay hundreds of dollars for a certification that they see as a sort of lowest common denominator."

For the bewildered conscientious food shopper, Kneen's advice is unequivocal: "Buy local!! Ignore corporate organic, and buy locally produced food directly from the farmer or through a food co-op."

Sea Spray Atlantic Growers Cooperative is hoping customers will follow advice like

Kneen's. The cooperative is refocusing its energy away from Atlantic Superstores towards selling produce directly to customers. This kind of exchange can happen at farmers markets and through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) boxes, which deliver boxes of fresh produce from the farm directly to consumers' doors.

Johnston agrees with the emphasis on local. He adds, "I'd also like customers to buy basic, wholesome food rather than processed convenience foods. But supermarket chains and food corporations won't encourage this. It isn't profitable." When food shopping, Johnston asks customers to stay smart. "Are organic twinkies really a good idea?"