

¶ Norma Jean MacPhee on MEC and Nike ¶ Argentinian workers on self reliance and direct democracy ¶ Max Liboiron on what art is ¶ Reading on Afghanistan ¶ and more...>>

# The Dominion

**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.

CANADA'S GRASSROOTS NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • SEPTEMBER 27, 2003 • DOMINIONPAPER.CA

## African AIDS Crisis Linked to Globalization

Recent weeks have seen an escalation of urgent calls to deal with the African AIDS crisis. In a recent speech in Nairobi, Canadian United Nations special envoy Stephen Lewis pointed out that only 1 percent of the millions of Africans suffering from AIDS have access to even minimal medication. Lewis harshly criticized rich western countries, calling the failure to provide minimal levels of aid "the grotesque obscenity of the modern world."

"We can find over \$200 billion to fight a war on terrorism? And we can't find the money to provide the antiretroviral treatment for all of those who need such treatment in Africa?"

In the months after George W. Bush famously pledged \$15 billion in AIDS relief in his State of the Union speech, the proposed level of AIDS funding the 2004 budget has fallen to \$2 billion--only \$500,000 more than the aid pledged before the speech. Former South African president Nelson Mandela warned that the AIDS crisis threatens to wipe out all social progress made in Africa in the past decades. He said that a "social revolution" similar to that against apartheid was required to deal with the problem.

In Pretoria, South African Human Sciences Research Council labour expert Jocelyn Vass said that the global AIDS crisis is at its worst in the same places that have been negatively affected by globalization.



**A paramilitary group in Colombia. The country is one of the principle recipients of US military aid.** *Colombia Journal*

She said that HIV prevalence "reflects inequalities in social structure", which is why it is highest in sub-Saharan Africa, India and China." Vass also said that there was an "interdependency" between the response of the corporate sector to globalization and its response to AIDS. In both cases, she said, corporations responded by trying to limit the effect on profits by changing employment contracts, relocating to other countries, and slashing benefits. (*News24, Washington Post*)

## Australia Seeking a Nuclear Arsenal?

Recent changes to Australia's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Safeguards Act have renewed questions about the country's non-nuclear status. Sydney's *Herald Sun* compared the "anti-whistleblower" legislation to the laws used by Israel to jail former nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu for 18 years. He was imprisoned for revealing details of Israel's secret nuclear weap-

ons program.

The legislation is part of overall tightened security at the government's Lucas Heights nuclear reactor, which is developing technology that scientists say could be used for civil purposes, or as a part of an effort to make a bomb.

Government officials called the suggestion that Australia was working on weapons technology "ridiculous", and said that the new legislation was to prevent information from falling into terrorist hands. (*Sun Herald*)

## Sharp Increase in US Military Aid to Latin America

A new report released by three Washington foreign policy groups shows the US military aid to Latin American countries has almost tripled in the last five years, while economic and social aid has generally declined. The report also complained that information about military aid is increasingly difficult to

obtain, due to "systematic" efforts by the Bush administration to repeal measures that require reporting on military aid programs. (*Common Dreams*)

## Latino Soldiers More Likely to be Casualties: Study

A recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center found that while Latinos make up 9.5 percent of the US armed forces, they are overrepresented in the most dangerous combat assignments, and make up over 17.5 percent of soldiers serving on front lines in Iraq and Afghanistan. The study also found a casualty rate of 13 per cent for people of Hispanic origin serving in Iraq. (*Inter Press News*)

## Amanpour: US Media "Muzzled"

With Iraq fading slowing from the headlines, several high-profile journalists have expressed concern with media coverage of the Iraq war. "I think the press was muzzled [in the runup to war in Iraq], and

I think the press self-muzzled," said CNN war correspondent Christiane Amanpour. "There are horrors that were completely left out of this war," said MSNBC war correspondent Ashleigh Banfield. CBS anchor Dan Rather expressed similar sentiments in the aftermath of the Afghanistan war: "one finds oneself saying, 'I know the right question, but you know what? This is not exactly the right time to ask it.'" (*USA Today*) •••

## First Nations Women Fight Oppression

A 24-year-old Mik'maq woman committed suicide in a Miramichi, New Brunswick, police holding cell earlier this month. Amy Patles died in hospital on September 9 following two days on life support. She had been arrested on charges of robbery and breach of bail conditions. Fredericton Police are conducting an external investigation of the incident.

Following Patles' death, Aboriginal women in the province are speaking out against systematic oppression.

Christine Augustine, a University of New Brunswick Master's student in education from Eel Ground First Nation, said the injustice Aboriginal women suffer is like an onion with many layers.

"Women's lack of influence in the running of their communities is the first layer of injustice," she said, adding that there are no female Chiefs and very few women elected as Band Counselors in the province. "Men are very worried about resource-based concerns and oftentimes there are women, like Amy, who are overlooked. We are losing women to the system and it is our women who need to help each other."

An urgent appeal to all members of the New Brunswick Legislature issued in July by the Elizabeth Fry Society (EFS) painted an image of women's suffering in the provincial prison system.

"We are literally seeing women dying before our eyes because of their addictions," wrote EFS Saint John President, Marianna Stack. She urged the provincial government to implement addiction treatment to end the revolving door cycle of women's incarceration.

"Amy pleaded with the judge not to send her back to jail but to drug rehabilitation instead," said Augustine. "We have to use Amy's memory so that no other women will fall



Svend Robinson in Parliament.

through the cracks."

Patles' biological mother, Doris Knockwood, told *The Dominion* that she has questions about her daughter's death that she needs answered, including why she was not allowed into Miramichi Regional Hospital to be beside her daughter during the final hours of her life.

"I hope that they will find out exactly what happened to Amy in there," she said. "I hope that this will never happen again to an Aboriginal person."

Staff Sergeant Tim Kelly of the Fredericton Police and Sergeant Earl Campbell of the Miramichi Police each declined to comment on the incident, citing the ongoing investigation.

—ANDREA MARKEY

## Anti-Hate Legislation Passed

Bill C-250, an Act to include "sexual orientation" in existing hate propaganda sections of the Criminal Code, passed in Parliament on September 17 by a decisive vote of 143-110. Svend Robinson, MP for Burnaby-Douglas, first tabled the bill in 1990.

"As I sat there watching the votes being counted and as I realized that the bill was going to pass, I was thinking about

friends who had been gay bashed, beaten and murdered--and I thought, in a small way, hopefully, the passage of this bill will make the lives of gay and lesbian people a little more safe and respected," Robinson told *The Dominion* a day after the vote. "I think it is absolutely safe to say that Canada now leads the world in recognition of equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans people and that is something we should all take a sense of pride in.

Vancouver has one of the only police forces in the country that maintains statistics of hate crimes based on sexual orientation. In 2002, these accounted for 62 per cent of the city's total hate crimes. Queer activists increased pressure on the government to pass Bill C-250 following the vicious murder of Aaron Webster in Vancouver's Stanley Park two years ago.

"Based on what we see [here], we believe that there is a need to have legislation for hate crimes against individuals based on sexual orientation," said Vancouver Constable Sarah Bloor.

The queer liberation struggle in Canada has not ended with Bill C-250.

"As long as young gay people take their own lives and feel alone and alienated and lacking in support from their family and their friends and their church and other institutions, we still have a lot of work to do," said Robinson.

"Gay and lesbian people in many parts of the world have to hide their existence in order to survive. They are beaten, they are sometimes tortured and executed, and so, whenever we get complacent and think we have really made it here in Canada, we just have to remember that there is still so much work to be done for our brothers and sisters around the world."

Robinson was first elected

to parliament in 1979, and came out publicly during a CBC interview in 1988. At the time he was one of only four openly gay elected national politicians in the world.

—DARON LETTS

## Pesticide Use Highlighted as PEI Election Nears

Things are different on PEI during election time.

For years, members of the PEI environmental organization, Earth Action, have focused public attention on the industrial agriculture policies of the Pat Binns government. Islanders now anticipate annual fish kills in the rivers and streams that wind through the province's massive potato acreage. The province also has the country's highest asthma rate.

Earlier this month, the spraying of Roundup, Monsanto's most popular pesticide, on the province's Confederation Trail came to public attention and Earth Action released a critical statement.

"Glyphosate is a relatively new chemical and we're only just beginning to find out what harm it causes," it read. "It is an extremely persistent chemical and lab studies have found adverse effects in both humans and wildlife."

One of the group's spokespeople, Sharon Labchuck, suggested to the Minister of Transportation and Public Works that vinegar be used instead of pesticide to kill weeds on the province-wide walking trail.

"Researchers are looking at commercial applications of this less-toxic alternative," she wrote.

Within 24 hours, the department replied.

"We've decided to cancel the Round Up as you have suggested," wrote Deputy Minister Steve MacLean. "We'll try the vinegar."

The vote will be held September 29.

—DARON LETTS

## Afghan Funds Spent on Bribes, Weapons, Five Star Hotels

More than \$10 billion has been spent on Afghanistan since October 7 2001, most of it by the US. More than 80 per cent of this has paid for bombing the country and paying the warlords, the former mujahedin who called themselves the "Northern Alliance." The Americans gave each warlord tens of thousands of dollars in cash and truckloads of weapons. "We were reaching out to every commander that we could," a CIA official told the Wall Street Journal during the war. In other words, they bribed them to stop fighting each other and fight the Taliban.

These were the same warlords who, vying for control of Kabul after the Russians left in 1989, pulverized the city, killing 50,000 civilians, half of them in one year, 1994, according to Human Rights Watch. Thanks to the Americans, effective control of Afghanistan has been ceded to most of the same mafiosi and their private armies, who rule by fear, extortion and monopolizing the opium poppy trade that supplies Britain with 90 per cent of its street heroin. The post-Taliban government is a facade; it has no money and its writ barely runs to the gates of Kabul, in spite of democratic pretensions such as the election planned for next year. Omar Zakhilwal, an official in the ministry of rural affairs, told me that the government gets less than 20 per cent of the aid that is delivered to Afghanistan. "We don't even have enough money to pay wages, let alone plan reconstruction," he said. President Harmid Karzai is a placeman of Washington who goes nowhere without his posse of US Special Forces bodyguards.

In a series of extraordinary reports, the latest published in July, Human Rights Watch has documented atrocities "committed by gunmen and warlords who were propelled into power by the United States and its coalition partners after the Taliban fell in

2001" and who have "essentially hijacked the country." The report describes army and police troops controlled by the warlords kidnapping villagers with impunity and holding them for ransom in unofficial prisons; the widespread rape of women, girls and boys, routine extortion, robbery and arbitrary murder. Girls' schools are burned down. "Because the soldiers are targeting women and girls," the report says, "many are staying indoors, making it impossible for them to attend school [or] go to work."

In the western city of Herat, for example, women are arrested if they drive; they are prohibited from traveling with an unrelated man, even a taxi driver. If they are caught, they are subjected to a "chastity test," squandering precious medical services to which, says Human Rights Watch, "women and girls have almost no access, particularly in Herat, where fewer than one per cent of women give birth with a trained attendant." The death rate of mothers giving birth is the highest in the world, according to Unicef. Herat is ruled by the warlord Ismail Khan, whom US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld endorsed as "an appealing man... thoughtful, measured and self-confident."

"The last time we met in this chamber," said George Bush in his State of the Union speech last year, "the mothers and daughters of Afghanistan were captives in their own homes, forbidden from working or going to school. Today, women are free, and are part of Afghanistan's new government. And we welcome the new minister of women's affairs, Dr Sima Samar." A slight, middle-aged woman in a headscarf stood and received the choreographed ovation. A physician who refused to deny treatment to women during the Taliban years, Samar is a true symbol of resistance, whose appropriation by the unctuous Bush was short-lived. In December 2001, Samar attended the Washington-sponsored "peace conference" in Bonn where Karzai was installed as president and three of the most brutal warlords as vice-presi-

dents. (The Uzbek warlord General Rashid Dostum, accused of torturing and slaughtering prisoners, is currently defense minister.) Samar was one of two women in Karzai's cabinet.

No sooner had the applause in Congress died away than Samar was smeared with a false charge of blasphemy and forced out. The warlords, different from the Taliban only in their tribal allegiances and religious pieties, were not tolerating even a gesture of female emancipation.

[...]

Of all the great humanitarian crises of recent years, no country has been helped less than Afghanistan. Bosnia, with a quarter of the population, received \$356 per person; Afghanistan gets \$42 per person. Only 3 per cent of all international aid spent in Afghanistan has been for reconstruction; the US-led military "coalition" accounts for 84 per cent, the rest is emergency aid. Last March, Karzai flew to Washington to beg for more money. He was promised extra money from private US investors. Of this, \$35 million will finance a proposed five-star hotel. As Bush said, "The Afghan people will know the generosity of America and its allies."

—**John Pilger**, "What Good Friends Left Behind," *Guardian* September 20, 2003.

## Civilian Casualty Numbers Ignore Indirect Victims of Military Campaign

A *Guardian* report in February estimated [Afghan] casualties at between 1,300 and 8,000 deaths. A *Guardian* investigation into the "indirect victims" now confirms the belief of many aid agencies that they exceeded the number who died of direct hits.

As many as 20,000 Afghans may have lost their lives as an indirect consequence of the US intervention. They too belong in any tally of the dead.

The bombing had three main effects on the humanitarian situation. It caused massive

dislocation by prompting hundreds of thousands of Afghans to flee from their homes.

It stopped aid supplies to drought victims who depended on emergency relief. It provoked an upsurge in fighting and turned a military stalemate into one of chaotic fluidity, leading yet more people to flee.

Counting these victims with accuracy is impossible. As Muslims, Afghans bury their dead within 24 hours and the graves of those who died in the mountains as they fled their homes are only known to their closest relatives.

—**Jonathan Steele**, "Forgotten victims." *Guardian*, May 2002.

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# The Piquetes

## Argentina's unemployed build direct democracy for basic needs

Translated from the Spanish by Ivan A. and eleusa

When Argentina's economy collapsed in January of 2002, thousands of Argentinians lost their jobs, and others lost their life savings when foreign banks closed suddenly. In the face of massive unemployment which existed well before the collapse, unemployed workers formed collectives to democratically petition the government for temporary employment ("plans"). After being consistently ignored, the poorest of the unemployed, often starving, began to set up roadblocks (piquetes) on important Argentinian roads in support of their demands for work. They have also set up bakeries, bartering systems, and occupied abandoned factories and restarted business as usual—without the owners and with a radically democratic model of organizing.

Middle class and poor Argentinians alike have rallied around the slogan "que se vayan todos". This means, roughly, "they must all go," an accusation of universal corruption in the national government. But instead of finding new, uncorrupted politicians to represent them, Argentinians have quickly come to take issue with the very idea of representation. Indeed, many familiar ideas have been reexamined in the light of the basic needs for survival and dignity. Many unemployed groups have found much in common between the seeming idealism of direct democracy and the basic pragmatism of survival; having used the tools of radical decentralization and direct democracy to achieve survival and dignity, these groups are now using their new means of existence to fashion a new kind of democracy and mutual aid throughout Argentina.

The following is a conversation between the Situaciones Collective and multiple members of the Unemployed Workers Movement of Solano (Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados Solano). The following is an excerpt of a conversation that originally appeared in the book *La Hipotesis 891: Mas alla de los Piquetes*, Ediciones de mano en mano, November 2002, pages 54-62. —DRU OJA JAY



Unemployed workers blockade a highway near Buenos Aires. Similar groups have moved from working for basic survival to building libraries, bakeries, democracy and collectively run factories. *Indymedia Argentina*

**MTD Solano:** I think that the piquetes blasted away our sense of helplessness, but in a new way. We shook the country out of the lethargic dream that [President] Menem and his politics were selling, like a bolt of bright new light. Together with many other struggles, we woke the country from the sweet dreams of post-modernity. They branded us with a name—the Piqueteros—but for us the piquete became the only way in which we could talk with the rest of the country, our way of telling them that there were other methods of struggle, other ways to fire up our lives with dignity.

**Collectivo Situaciones:**  
How did this idea arise?  
How did you get organized?

Sol: The piquetes began in the interior, in Cutralco, Tartagal, Mosconi, Santiago del Estero, and they spread throughout the country, blocking the trade routes that fed the most important cities. Once that had started, people started to take

the piquetes seriously as a way fighting, even here, in Buenos Aires, but there were tremendous arguments over the plans; over whether it was correct to ask for the work plans (1). Some said that we were only up to reformist self-help schemes. Instead of getting embroiled in that argument, we decided to put it into practice. At that point our organizing had only reached the level of church groups, but we were always talking about a greater struggle. We were always talking about taking over the Municipality, raising the stakes, and then there was the first road blockade. The first was somewhat improvised, and some of our compañeros were arrested. But, little by little, it started to come into evidence that a new way of fighting had been developed. The most important thing, however, was that our numbers started to grow; we started to build productive workshops, to enable people, to teach what we were learning, all of those things that are so much more important than the blockades. The blockades are only the most

visible element, and so it seems that they are all there is to see, but the struggle is really what we had been doing before.

» It's important to make it clear that from the beginning all of the left, including the progressives, accused us of begging, self-help, reformism, and did not see what the central demands of the organization entail: work, dignity, social change. At first, in the first blockades, we kept our faces completely uncovered, we did have some rocks, kept hidden, and we did not reveal them because we did not want to frighten people. It was a process; we suffered escalating repression and we started to cover our faces, so that we could not be identified. We only used violence as self-defense. We did not start to throw sticks and stones in order to attack, but to defend ourselves.

» There were some hard moments in the first blockades. We had strong disagreements on whether to keep our faces covered or not. It took time for people to understand that we needed some kind of self-

defense, that the security compañeros could not show their faces to the militias. We took that to the assembly, and the assembly decided that we might as well abandon the piquete if we were forced to go unmasked. The system considers the blockades as crimes. They are illegal, but to us they are entirely legitimate.

**Sit: We understand that what makes you different from other organizations of the unemployed is that you organize workshops, projects, task groups, that you have a burgeoning collective life: how does this difference manifest itself in the conception of the piquetes?**

Sol: Our common development, our formation, holds all of this together. That's its bedrock. Nobody imposes a drinking ban, or stops a compañero from drinking; we talk about these things at the assemblies. Basically, the coordinators don't get to decide whether drinking is forbidden or not, rather, we look for a consensus; we discuss the reasons why it might not be prudent. That's the great difference; it's not because you happen to wear a hood, or carry the biggest stick.

**Sit: We have discussed the heterogeneity of the piquetero movement on several occasions. How do you explain this heterogeneity?**

Sol: Our difference to that of other movements is becoming increasingly apparent. Many others still work in the classical way: they say, "we seize power from above and then we change things;" while we say "from below, without any desire to seize power, we struggle." Those other organizations see themselves as political actors and they have revolutionary strategies; we see ourselves, like the Subcomandante Marcos says, as rebels seeking social change. For example, they say that what we call popular education deforms

people rather than informing them. They don't make any attempt to tie popular education to political education, on the contrary. We were below, at the bottom, and we don't want to rise, we want to stay there; we will always be rebels. We are at the bottom and we don't want to come up. We have a lot of compañeros that stand out, but none that aspire to lead. We all lead, all of the time.

» In any case, these differences won't let us lose sight of the fact that we have to organize, that we have to coordinate and articulate, that it is necessary to go on discussing things and coming to agreements, struggling together. We are not saying that we know the truth and the others don't. We know that we build things differently, but these differences can be coordinated, just as long as we keep raising the call for social change, for dignity, and that we don't take advantage of people, say, by using them to win elections.

» I have heard some piquetero compañeros complain that they felt "useless," "forgotten," or "left behind," in their everyday lives, yet, at the blockades they feel different. They feel "empowered;" they feel that they "have a choice."

» It's true. It's a liberated zone, the only place where the cop won't treat you like trash. There, the cop says to you, "pardon me, we come to negotiate." That same policeman would beat you to death if he saw you alone on the street.

» It's true that you feel yourself to be in control of an area during a blockade, but I believe that the compañeros are aware that organizing empowers them; that it is not only the blockade, but the organization that makes you strong.

**Sit: People say that some of the compañeros have a purely pragmatic relationship with the movement; that they only come to get the plan. How does this actually work out in the piquetes?**

Sol: The majority of the compañeros that join the movement—more than eighty per cent—start out only because they have concrete necessities. They need something to eat, they don't have groceries, they don't have work; they have nothing. At first they come for the plans, but once there is a real process, things change, they begin to feel the excitement and the need to get organized. But yes, some compañeros only go because the assembly voted that those failing to attend the blockade don't get a plan.

**Sit: Some say that taking to the streets is a way of saying "no" to a model, "no" to a system. I think that this can be understood in two different ways: in the first we speculate that the model failed and that you represent the moment when the victims stand forth: those that are "left-out," those that beg, the impoverished, the forgotten. But, there is another way to see the issue, one where the model did not fail, where exclusion simply does not exist because there is no place of inclusion, where exploitation is merely a desirable variable in the system. Things being as they are, we feel that the stance taken by most of the people that participate in the piquetes is not that of the victims, rather, they present a very clear subjective desire to work and think actively.**

Sol: We don't want to be included. At least, I know that I don't want to be exploited ever again, to have Fortabat or Macri as bosses again, that's for sure. I have not struggled just to return to exploitation. I believe, personally, and I believe that many compañeros share this belief in regards to themselves, that I am not made to be included, but this is something else altogether.

» One of the things that we know with certainty is, precisely, what we don't want; getting

organized makes this clear. To discover where we want to go, what it is that we are building, that is what is uncertain, new, and this is something that has not been closed-off, it's unfinished, something that we think anew every day. The organization is dynamic, it changes and it reflects upon its changes. It's true that the blockades are exciting, but what is truly exiting about the organization is that it brooks no dissociation between that excitement and our everyday lives. That's where the reality of the organization lies; the piquete can only express what we have managed to build in our everyday life, otherwise it is useless. The system has nothing to offer us in regards to this task, and we are forced to build an alternate history. We don't demand things because we want to be included; we only demand things in order to continue getting organized.

**Sit: How is a piquete agreed upon, how and where do you block the road; who makes the decisions?**

Sol: Each and every zone reports on their situation. Then, depending upon each neighborhood's situation, a battle plan is proposed. We discuss whether we will march or blockade. Each neighborhood assembly decides upon their action first, then, at the table, we try to reach a consensus based upon the choices made by the different assemblies. We begin to see what we may be able to achieve as the proposals are presented. We never talk about the specific location that we intend to block at the assembly, for security reasons. We choose the method but not the details.

» In the assemblies we determine the roles and the zones. For example, we determine which of the compañeros will take care of food, security and any injuries. That is to say, the different zones coordinate particular activities and then there is someone who is elected to serve as a nexus

# The Swoosh Swoops into Mountain Equipment Co-op

by Norma Jean MacPhee

Nike AGC cross trainers arrived on the shelves of Mountain Equipment Co-op's only Atlantic Canadian outlet this August.

Canada's largest cooperative said it is confident in Nike's commitment to greener products, sustainable practices and international labour codes.

"They're not perfect, but are certainly putting lots of effort and resources into changing their ways," says MEC's CEO Peter Robinson.

In the early 90's, considerable public backlash erupted against unfair labour conditions in foreign factories contracted by American shoe companies. Nike, the leading manufacturer of sneakers, became the target of fair labour and environmental campaigns after reports revealed physical and sexual abuse, low wages and forced overtime work in many of Nike's Asian factories.

Although MEC insists Nike has changed its ways and assures consumers the transnational corporation meets MEC's vendor policy standards, not all who shop at the cooperative are convinced of Nike's "green" rehabilitation.

"It really disturbs me that MEC would [choose Nike products] because as a MEC member you associate them with making ethical choices," said Halifax student Sarah Ryan.

In response to consumer pressure, many corporations, including Nike, adopted sustainability strategies in the late 1990s.

Nike's website said the company now follows a "triple bottom line" philosophy, that is, combining financial/economic goals with environmental and social responsibilities. These include the creation of 99% polyvinyl chloride-free sneakers. Greenpeace launched a campaign against PVC in 1998, as its production creates and releases the toxic chemical dioxin. The website also says new Nike stores and offices incorporate

"green" methods in their building practices. And, in Nike's Code of Conduct, it sets a minimum working age of 18 for footwear, whereas the International Labour Organization's standard age is 15.

Of Nike's sustainable promises, Ryan said, "I don't believe them because I think they're doing it to look good. They can still make their own rules, despite what's on their website."

A No Sweat campaign run out of the U.K. lobbies for living wages and better conditions for factory workers. On its website, No Sweat argues: "When the companies are accused of labour abuses they hide behind fine documents. They like to quote their Codes of Conduct which prohibit the threatening of union organizers, the use child labour etc. But they still do it. These companies hide behind the anonymity of vast production chains that make it very difficult to work out where, and under what conditions, their products are made."

MEC's CEO defends allegations that Nike is greenwashing consumers with their promises and said if Nike wants to do business in Canada, they will have to follow MEC policies. "We're not without our own weight. When the co-op makes suggestions, we're not ignored, we're listened to." Furthermore, Robinson doesn't think a company should be avoided based on past grievances.

"Don't abandon them, rather work with them to effect change," he added.

But Halifax activist Dave Ron feels the partnership is incongruent to the co-op's mandate.

"It's a simple question of stakeholder versus stockholder. Nike is structured as a sole proprietorship's profit is its driving force, as it's accountable to its stockholders," said Ron. "MEC, on the other hand, is non-profit and publicizes that it's a large family, that it acts in the interest of its stakeholders," said Ron. "In that sense, it begs the ques-



Young women on the Island of Cebu sew Nike shorts for North American export in a free trade zone. Daron Letts

tion of why MEC would decide to link itself with that entity."

The partnership between Nike and MEC is not a new one, as Nike was a regular on the co-op's roster until seven years ago. Robinson said the decision to bring Nike sneakers back fulfills MEC's primary purpose.

"The co-op, first and foremost, is about getting gear to people so they can enjoy themselves outside," Robinson said. And he said increased demand from MEC's 1.9 million membership for improved trail shoes led them to Nike.

Robinson explains MEC's three-screen method of examining potential new vendors: "First, is the specific functionality, quality and durability of the product. The second is whether the company meets MEC's stringent sourcing practices. And the third is the potential risk to MEC's reputation and brand by bringing on another brand."

The Nike addition was first proposed last fall, but employees at the managerial level objected because of concerns about the third screen, MEC's reputation. In the spring, however, Nike was accepted, on the condition consultations sessions would be held with stakeholders.

Dave Ron attended these consultations as a spokesperson for Dalhousie Students Against Sweatshops, but saw them as an exercise in futility, as the decision to accept Nike had already been made.

"I asked why they were having it, and they basically said, 'so that when public concerns are raised we can address them and say we talked to human

rights groups,'" said Ron.

"MEC was doing a lot of the leg-work and lip service to Nike," added Ron.

He said he thinks the addition is an economic one on MEC's side.

"Nike moves off shelves, the swoosh is fashionable," Ron said.

MEC does not plan to sell other Nike merchandise, as Robinson said the sneakers were specifically selected to meet consumer demands.

The Nike ACG cross trainers will arrive in other stores across the country next spring if the response in Halifax is favourable.

So far it has been. Glen Whitehead, general manager of the Halifax store, said there's been no reaction at all to Nike's arrival, apart from people buying the shoes. "It's almost been a non-event releasing Nike into our store," he told *The Dominion*.

Further consultations are not planned for other locations across the country; Robinson said the consultation sessions in Halifax were sufficient.

Ron does not agree, however, and sees MEC's acceptance of Nike as taking momentum away from the struggle for social and environmental change. And he said, MEC's decision contributes to an already powerful, destructive force.

"There's so many powers already working against sustainable initiatives - market power, judicial, legislative - it just doesn't fit with MEC's vision."

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## What's the Art For?

by Max Liboiron

Does anyone else find it odd that after 17,000 years of accumulating examples of art, people are still asking, "But is it art... what is art?" Can't we answer that question by now?

Science has been around for as long as art has been, but you never hear anyone ask, "But is it science?" One difference between the two is that while all former forms of art stay valid, only the most current form of science is "right." Renaissance poetry is still valid; measuring someone's head to determine his criminal tendencies is not.

One of the most recent

ideas in art is that *anything* can be art. This was popularized by Marcel Duchamp (whom you might know as the guy who put the urinal in a gallery). His urinal declared that if an artist decides that an object is art and it's placed in an art space, then that object is art. A rebellion emerged (and is still alive and healthy today) against Duchamp's "readymades," but it's too late - the urinal stays. While you may or may not like this, it has been added to the accumulated ideas of what art can be.

So is it art? Yes. But still, what is art? Basically, from the cave paintings until tomorrow,

art is a way of relating findings. In science, you investigate your surrounding world -- investigate the tendency for people to fight one another, or how the eye sees the colour blue--and relate your findings and analysis in charts, essays, and numbers. In art, you investigate the world around you--the tendency for people to fight one another, or how the eye sees the colour blue--and relate your findings and analysis in paint, poetry, or sound. Art is an expression of experience: Duchamp expressed his ideas about the power of the artist and the limits of art with his urinal; striped paint-

ings investigate colour relations; randomly pulling words out of a hat to make poetry expresses the subconscious (apparently).

If you find yourself confronted with something that you suspect is art but you aren't sure ("there's this big rusted metal thing in the courtyard at work. It's huge and long and I have to walk all the way around it to get my lunch"), try to figure out what it's investigating. Maybe you'll like it. Maybe you'll find that striped paintings aren't so "pointless" after all.

So it's all art. Whether you like it or not is another question entirely.

## Paul Martin, Meet Shakespeare

by Jane Henderson

Recently a friend suggested I check out Paul Martin's online opinion survey about the Canadian definition of marriage. Also recently I saw an all-female production of *The Taming of the Shrew* performed in that Shakespearean Mecca, London's Globe Theatre. And perhaps oddly, these two things have quite a lot to say to each other.

*The Taming of the Shrew* marked the first performance season of the theatre's new women's company, and the latest in a trend of single-sex Shakespearean productions. The play is an interesting option in this phenomenon because the story is actually about the do's and don'ts of gender behaviour (The "shrew" to be "tamed" is Katherina, a woman so irritable as to be "unmarriageable" until the swashbuckling Petruchio arrives to humiliate her into submission.) Gender-bending is hardly new to Shakespeare; many of his plots depend on it, and most audience members know that his original casts were all-male. So what happens when this notoriously chauvinist script is performed without any men on stage?

First, its machismo becomes immediately, inevitably satirized. Probably this is

something of a relief to a contemporary audience, uneasily watching such a politically incorrect spectacle. Director Phyllida Lloyd took full advantage of this potential: Kathryn Hunter as Katherina, for example, made her final speech of submission gleefully over-the-top; the women cajoled into extending their palms for their husbands to tread upon did so, but sank to the ground due to laughter more than anything else.

But nowadays such "subversive" staging of the show has really become the norm. It was a surprise, then, that the Globe's same-sex production actually undermined any simple gender-equality message that might have been expected.

The actresses (particularly Janet McTeer, as Petruchio), offered a seriously sexy portrayal of swaggering machismo, to some surprise. The show's mixed messages built a more complex reality of desire than just plain political correctness might allow. Katherina really was smitten with the domineering Petruchio. On top of that, the audience got an additional erotic layer, as it seems two women kissing can still raise a bit of a buzz, even with one in male character.



Janet McTeer as Petruchio. John Trampler

Seeing women play out the contest for 'domination' or 'submission' made the story much more about power than gender, without any clear judgment on what power roles each gender "should" want. The same-sex casting also allowed another interpretation, in which gender disappeared completely; suddenly the deprivation of fine foods and clothing meant that Katherina might be learning not decorous womanly behaviour, but a little class consciousness instead.

And the relation to [www.paulmartin.ca](http://www.paulmartin.ca)? Well, both art and politics are putting out ideas about the same thing; namely, they are imagining how people could identify and organize their experiences of attraction and devotion. Shakespeare's text is an inherited institution, as is the Cana-

dian federal definition of terms of marriage. Director Phyllida Lloyd has made a centuries-old romantic comedy an articulate participant in any current debate about "defining" roles in marriage. Thankfully, the theatrical space is designed for just such imaginative representations. Creative interpretations of Canada's legal marriage scripts, such as bann-calling or commitment exchange ceremonies by same-sex couples, for example, have been a little less legal, but still enacted, to fit a more complex reality than our legal texts acknowledge. Both acts invite their witnesses to recognize or realize a not-so-straight reality. Which, if enough politicians (not to mention online survey respondents) go to the theatre... they too may be emboldened to produce.

“Piquetes”, continued from page 5 »

for all these zones. In contrast, other organizations have leaders who decide who does security; yet the location of the blockade and, therefore, the security zone itself—in our experience it is security that decides where a blockade will occur—remains unclear to the leaders. There are many different kinds of organization.

**Sit:** It seems as if security and the political criteria of the blockade always respond to the internal needs of the organization, rather than to the political conjuncture or to any possible external support.

**Sol:** Yes, but these internal necessities entail much more than our “economic needs.” For example, we blockaded because of the events at Mosconi; those events implicated our identity, because if a compañero is affected in Mosconi, well, that also concerns us, even if it is something that does not seem to affect us directly in Solano.

» Likewise, we blockaded the Pueyrredon Bridge because the compañeros at La Matanza were under the threat of repression; we said to the government, “to repress over there, you’ll have



HEATHER MEEK '03 hlmk@mta.ca



BUT ONE THING STILL ANNOYS ME: "THE SECRET OFFICE." MRS. KEATS REWARDED ONE GOOD KID ON FRIDAY BY LETTING HIM OR HER WORK IN THERE. WHAT WAS THE SECRET OFFICE?



THE "BACK TO SCHOOL" SEASON MAKES ALL OF US NOSTALGIC FOR GRADE 2. WHEN LIFE WAS SIMPLE MULTIPLICATION AND FALL BULLETIN BOARDS



I HEARD RUMOURS, BUT A CODE OF SILENCE WAS RIGOROUSLY ENFORCED. EVERY WEEK I'D WAIT TO HEAR MY NAME CALLED TO USE THE OFFICE. IT WASN'T. I HATE MRS. KEATS...!

the conjuncture. We are not interested in elections, whether people should vote or not.

» Another example: when [Labour Minister] Patricia Bullrich organized an offensive, we

when a super-structural power tries to convene us, when an organization with a pre-determined political agenda tries to mobilize us; we analyze and decide upon a situation according to our own agenda.

» We don't want to foreclose anyone's space; we don't want to be a vanguard. We build because there is a reality that needs to be transformed, and we organize and join-up with those that are changing their situation. We are not interested in going to La Matanza to harangue and agitate, just in order to gain space. We don't conceive politics in that manner. Yes, we believe that the base needs to be organized, but it is up to the compañeros at La Matanza to organize their own area. We want to coordinate our movement with those that are building theirs, but we don't dispute them any political space.

» It can't be said, as others claim, that we are just a “base” movement. We do have a political project. In fact, we do know

how to read the current political conjuncture, but our project occurs at the neighborhood level, with the people. Our analysis is more comprehensive, precisely, because we work in this manner. They can't reproach us for lacking a strategy and a guiding political structure; that's a lie. The movement itself is a political tool; all of us, all the compañeros in the movement, constitute this tool and we all work on the analysis. When we are asked what our political project is, we explain that it is this: politics from below, a comprehensive politics from below. Our goal is the complete formation of the person, in every possible sense. Everything counts, everything is important.

» We don't believe that we need a national front, one that encompasses the entire country, in order to succeed. I don't believe that there will be an alliance or a front that will take power; there will be many fronts. ...



Young women at a blockade near Buenos Aires. *Indymedia Argentina*

to also repress over here.” We saw that they were beating our brothers (despite D’Elia and Alderete), so we had to come out to fight for them. Keep in mind, though, we do not build toward

said, “we have to come out because they want they want to cut our plans, they don't want to renew them.” It was an attempt to put a stop to our organization. What we never do is to come out