

Privatization: Strictly Unhealthy Conflict of Interest

by Jim Lipkovits

It appears that Government documents obtained by the opposition are more evidence that the B.C. Liberals are putting the interests of private investors ahead of the interest of patients and families when it comes to delivering health care in British Columbia, according to New Democrat health critic Adrian Dix.

The documents and correspondence indicate that Kip Woodward, an investor in the Cambie Surgical Clinic and now new chair of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Board, has been urging the government to consider increased privatization of medical services.

"Last fall, Mr. Woodward was pushing Minister Falcon to pursue medical tourism, hand over more contracts to private clinics, and lease out public MRI spaces during a time when wait times are in excess of a year. But despite this, this month Mr. Falcon chose Mr. Woodward as the new chair of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. This raises serious questions



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about the B.C. Liberals' so-called push for 'innovation' in health care," said Dix.

Briefing materials from the Ministry of Health detail Woodward's proposals for a November 30, 2009 face-to-face meeting between him and the Health Minister, and contain correspondence sent earlier in September and October. Woodward, who

at the time was chair of Providence Health Care, raised several proposals with the Health Minister, which included:

- > Medical tourism, including selling cardiac care and treatments for eating disorders;
- > Allowing private clinics to bid for services leasing;
- > Leasing out 'excess' MRI capacity to private insurers for contracted work;
- > The creation of boutique for-pay services for chronic disease, alcohol and drug rehabilitation and treatment for HIV-AIDS.

"The excess MRI capacity Mr. Woodward wants to lease out only exists because the B.C. Liberal government is failing to use the public's investment in diagnostic equipment to tackle wait lists," said Dix. In 2009, the B.C. Liberals cut over 8,000 publicly-funded MRI procedures in Metro Vancouver, increasing wait times exponentially for residents.

Similarly, Woodward is proposing selling treatment for eating disorders when British *see Privatization ... p.2*

LIVING WAGE

2010 living wage shows the real costs of raising a family in Metro Vancouver

\$18.17 is the 2010 family living wage, according to a report that calculates an hourly wage based on the real costs of raising a family in Vancouver.

Working for a Living Wage 2010: Making Paid Work Meet Basic Family Needs in Metro Vancouver updates the first Metro Vancouver calculation published in 2008, and was released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, and the Metro Vancouver Living Wage for Families Campaign.

The announcement follows the news that New Westminster's city council voted unanimously to adopt a living family wage for city and contract employees, making it the first municipality in Canada to do so.

The living wage calculation includes basic expenses (such as housing, child care, food and transportation) for a two-earner family with two young children, as well as government taxes, credits, deductions and subsidies. It finds that each parent would need to work full-time at an hourly wage of \$18.17 in Metro Vancouver in order to pay for necessities, support the healthy development of their

see Living Wage... p.3

Calling a Refugee a Refugee

Time to Update the UN Definition

by Carole Pearson

In the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, one of the first actions by the US was to send five Coast Guard ships to join American navy vessels already close to Haiti to make sure no boatloads of fleeing Haitians reached American shores.

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has been economically burdened with heavy debt right from its independence from France in 1804. Since then, international lending organizations like the World Bank and corrupt political regimes have caused 76 percent of Haitians living below the poverty line.

When January's earthquake turned Haiti's cities to rubble, even more Haitians were driven to escape their misery by crowding into rickety boats and heading to neighbouring countries across the water. In just two examples, more than 100 Haitians were picked up by military police off the Turks and Caicos Islands and 62 Haitians were intercepted by two Royal Bahamas Defense Force vessels and faced immediate deportation.

Under the UN definition, these people are not refugees but migrants. The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status

of Refugees applies only to people who "have to move if they are to save their lives or preserve their freedom. They have no protection from their own state." In other words, political refugees.

To qualify as a political refugee, a person must legitimately fear persecution due to their religion, race, political beliefs or social affiliation. According to the UN Convention, the 147 signatory countries (including Canada) are obliged to provide shelter, financial assistance, education, and counseling to those managing to reach their borders and claim refugee status.

Even conditions of extreme poverty, another cause of Haitian migration attempts, is not sufficient for refugee status since, under the Convention, people who flee their homelands for this reason are "economic migrants" because they "choose to move" for a better life.

It is the lack of recognition of environmental refugees that is particularly disturbing because many natural disasters are destined to increase in number and severity with greater dislocation of populations due to global warming.

Oxford professor Norman Myers' defines environmental refugees as "people

who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification (when once-fertile land is dried up), deforestation and other environmental problems, together with associated problems of population pressures and profound poverty."

"More people are displaced by environmental disasters than war," according to the International Red Cross. UN University's Institute for Environment and Human Security estimates the number of environmental refugees has doubled since 1999 to 50 million today.

According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, global warming has raised the surface temperature of the oceans by 50 percent over the past 30 years. As ocean temperatures increase, more heat is given off and this is a key ingredient for hurricane formation, says hurricane historian Jay Barnes. Hurricanes of greater intensity and frequency are predicted.

Severe hurricanes leave a path of widespread devastation. In May 2008, as many as 3.2 million Burmese people were left homeless and another 138,000 reported dead or miss- *see Refugees ... p.2*

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**P.O. Box 2633 MPO., Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 3W8
Tel: 266-6552 Fax: 267-3342
www.columbiajournal.ca**

Publisher Jim Lipkovits
Contributing Editor Marco Procaccini

Contributing Writers Tom Sandborn
Carole Pearson
Brad Yung
Alan Zisman
Ian Sinclair
Jacques Lejeune
Marl Bignell
Legal Department David Handelman
Layout/Production GeeWiz Graphics

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

e-mail: cjournal@telus.net

Refugees (con't)

ing in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, according to the Centre for Refugee and Disaster Response.

More recently, in October 2009, the Philippines experienced some of the worst flooding in 50 years when Typhoon Ketsana flooded more than two million homes and displaced 380,000 people.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates sea levels could rise by at least one meter in this century due to global warming. Around the world there are 100 million people living on land that is below sea level or in danger of storm surge.

In other parts of the world, serious concerns are raised over a shortage of water. The World Water Council says, "Up to 45 percent of reported deaths from natural disasters between 1992 and 2001 resulted from droughts and famines."

In China's Gansu province, 4000 villages are in danger of becoming abandoned as the nearby Gobi desert is increasing in size by 100,000 square kilometers a year.

Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, each losing one thousand square kilometers of productive land a year to desertification. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says, by 2020, between 75 and 250 million people in Africa alone will suffer water shortages as a result of climate change.

Professor Meyers predicts there will be 150 million environmental refugees by 2050. It is clear the UN definition of "refugee" must be expanded to include those driven from their homes by environmental conditions, especially those affected by global warming. *

Call for Release of Intelligence Files on Tommy Douglas

No justification for keeping decades-old information classified

CPPNews

New Democrat Public Safety Critic Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) is calling on CSIS to release its intelligence file on former Saskatchewan Premier and NDP Leader Tommy Douglas.

"We live in a democratic country, and public access to information is at the heart of our democracy," said Davies. "Fourteen years after Douglas' death, and decades after the information was gathered, there is no legitimate security reason for keeping this file secret."

The Canadian Press has gone to court to get the decades-old documents that CSIS has steadfastly refused to release. Parts of the file were released through an access to information request in 2005, but CSIS refused to make a full disclosure, arguing there were national security reasons to keep it private even though many of the files are more than 50 years old.

"Tommy Douglas was voted 'the Greatest Canadian,' and he is beloved and respected across party lines as the father of Canadian public health care," said Davies. "I can appreciate that this intense scrutiny of a Canadian icon might prove embarrassing to CSIS – but avoiding embarrassment is not justification for their extreme efforts to block the release of this information."

Douglas' daughter Shirley, members of the press, and intelligence experts have all filed affidavits supporting the release of the file.



Privatization (con't)

Columbians are facing a wait-time of over eight months for this specialized care. Dix noted that, in many cases, receiving this treatment is a matter of life and death.

Woodward was vice chair, and then chair of Providence Health Care when it sold MRI time to Timely Medical Alternatives, a private firm which then charged patients upwards of \$1,400 for faster access. Mr. Woodward's sanctioning of queue-jumping based on the ability to pay resulted in the B.C. government being fined under the Canada Health Act.


Dix noted that Woodward's ideas are echoed by Falcon. "Mr. Falcon has repeatedly raised the idea of increased medical tourism. Giving wealthy Americans privileged access to B.C. public hospitals is a key part of his vision of health care," said Dix.

Beyond providing insight into the government's direction on health care, the Woodward letters raise issues of conflict of interest.

Woodward is one of the original investors in the Cambie Surgical Centre, which is leading the charge to dismantle the Medicare Protection Act. Presently the Act codifies that need, not ability to pay, determines access to health care. Although written on the letterhead of Woodcorp, Woodward's family-owned private investment corporation, the letters were in the name of Providence Health Care, a key part of B.C.'s public health care system. The letters advocate initiatives that could serve the commercial interests of Mr. Woodward's investments.

"Mr. Woodward is of course free to advocate for the Americanization of health care as a private citizen and an investor. I welcome the debate. But he has been given a key position by this Health Minister in our public health care system, and has been actively advancing an agenda that undermines public health care. British Columbians are not served by this appointment," said Dix. New Democrats have been holding the B.C. Liberals accountable for breaking their word on the HST, and for backtracking on their election promises to protect health care, education, and other vital services. *

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Living Wage (con't)

children and participate in the social and civil life of their communities.

“For six years running, BC has had the highest level of child poverty in the country, which is very much a story about low wages. More than half of poor children in BC have at least one parent working full-time, full-year,” says Adrienne Montani of First Call. “A living wage would also enhance the well-being of immigrant families, which are more likely to be in the low-wage work force.”

“The living wage is not the same as the minimum wage, which is the legislated minimum set by the provincial government,” explains co-author Seth Klein of the CCPA. “The living wage calls directly on employers to meet a higher standard for their direct staff and major contractors. It allows lower-income families to avoid having to make impossible choices, such as whether to buy clothes or heat the house, feed the children or pay the rent.”

Co-author Tim Richards points out, however, “The living wage is based on a very modest budget. While it allows families to escape severe financial stress it doesn’t allow for home ownership, serious family emergencies, debt payments, saving for retirement or children’s post-secondary education.”

The 2010 living wage of \$18.17 is an increase of \$1.43 over the 2008 calculation. What’s driving the increase? One factor is the rising cost of food. “Since the initial calculation of the living wage, the cost of nutritious food for a family of four in Metro Vancouver has gone up considerably,” says Janice Macdonald of the Dietitians of Canada. “If people cannot afford to buy healthy food then their health suffers and that means we all pay with higher health care costs.”

Rent increases are another big driver. According to CMHC, the median rent for a three-bedroom apartment in Vancouver went up about 7.8 per cent over the two years.

“The costs of these essential items that low-income families cannot avoid have increased by more than the general rate of inflation (CPI),” notes Seth Klein.

Child care costs also took a big jump of \$113/month over the two years. “In the wake of federal and provincial cuts, child care fees have seen a steep increase, effectively cancelling out what families receive in the federal Universal Child Care Benefit each month,” says Susan Harney, chair of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC.

“Child care is the second most expensive item in the living wage family budget calculation (after shelter),” notes Harney. “If we had a publicly-funded universal child care plan, it would be a huge burden lifted off the shoulders of young families struggling to make ends meet.”

“Child care is an excellent example of how governments can reduce wage pressures on employers by enhancing public programs,” says Klein. “Employers who would find the living wage challenging should urge governments

to strengthen the public services and supports that enhance our economic security.”

The Living Wage for Families Campaign has designed a Living Wage recognition process, which formally recognizes employers that pay the current living wage to all their staff and main contractors, providing consumers with the first certification process of its kind in BC. A number of organizations have signed up already and many more are considering applying.

One of these is Atira Women’s Resources Society (with 150 employees). According to executive director Janice Abbott, “We believe it’s just good business practice. Our staff turnover and training costs are low and morale is high. In the end, we are a women’s organization – many of our staff are single moms and we know we need to pay them a wage that supports their health and dignity and allows them to provide their children with an environment that promotes healthy childhood development. It is the right thing to do.”

A living wage calculation guide for other communities will be available soon at www.policyalternatives.ca. Employers wanting to apply for living wage certification should visit www.livingwageforfamilies.ca.

Working for a Living Wage 2010: Making Paid Work Meet Basic Family Needs in Metro Vancouver may be downloaded at www.policyalternatives.ca.

City of New Westminster adopts first ever living wage policy in Canada

(CPPNews) “A living wage is the difference between severe financial stress and a decent quality of life,” says Seth Klein, Director of the CCPA’s BC Office. “Families should not have to make impossible choices, such as whether to buy clothes or heat the house, feed the children or pay the rent.”

In a unanimous city council vote, New Westminster unanimously adopted a living wage policy, making it the first municipality in Canada to accept this practice. It’s a policy that requires both direct City employees and contract employees to be paid at or above an hourly family living wage, calculated annually by the Living Wage for Families Campaign and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

City Councillor Jaimie McEvoy, who initially brought forward the policy, said the city was especially concerned about child poverty. “It was disconcerting to learn that over half of the children who live in poverty in BC have a parent who works full-time. At the end of the day, for people who work for the city on contract, we want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.”

New Westminster joins over 140 US cities and scores of British cities that have living wage bylaws on their books. The Living Wage concept is receiving a lot of attention by policy makers worldwide as effective anti-poverty tool. The US Federal Government is considering using it as part of the criteria for awarding stimulus contracts and it has been included in the election manifesto of the ruling Labour party in the current British general election campaign.

New Westminster’s decision on April 28 underscores the fact that the living wage is now being taken seriously here in Canada as well. This is especially important given Canada has one of the highest rates of low-wage workers among rich countries, according to the OECD.

The Living Wage for Families Campaign and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives congratulated New Westminster City Council for taking national leadership on poverty reduction by adopting this policy.

The campaign calls on large public and private sector employers to pay a family living wage. The 2008 living wage calculation reflects basic costs of living for a family of four with two young children living in Metro Vancouver (with both parent working full-time). The full calculation is detailed in “Working for a Living Wage: Making Paid Work Meet Basic Family Needs in Vancouver and Victoria in 2008”. *

Education Survey Results

Public Opinion Survey Finds Most British Columbians Think the Government is Not

Doing Enough to Fund Schools

CPPNews—

The BC Society for Public Education (BCSPE) late in April released the results of a province-wide public opinion poll conducted by Angus Reid Public Opinion. The poll asked people’s opinions about the provincial government’s support for and funding of public schools.

Eight-one percent of those polled said that the provincial government should do more to protect public education. Seventy-nine percent said that the provincial government should increase funding to public schools.

The third and last question, asked if the province should continue to provide funds to private schools. Two out of three people surveyed did not agree with continued public funding for private schools.

BCSPE spokesperson, Catherine Evans, says her society commissioned the survey to find out what the majority of people throughout BC are thinking about the government’s current direction on public education. “We were surprised by the strength of the response. It is clear that most British Columbians can see through the governments’ messages. This survey tells us that most people understand that government funding has not kept up with rising costs.”

Up till now, funding shortfalls have hit small schools and students needing extra support the hardest. This year, however, year virtually no student will be untouched as boards try to balance their budgets by cutting staff and programs. “We have a world class public school system in BC but we’re concerned that the system cannot sustain continued year-over-year funding decreases without eroding the quality of education for BC’s students,” notes Evans. “It also seems a substantial number of British Columbians are also questioning whether it is government’s role to fund private schools.”

Survey Methodology

From April 12 to April 14, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 800 randomly selected British Columbia adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.5%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of British Columbia.

The British Columbia Society for Public Education (BCSPE) was formed in early 2005 by a group of parents committed to protecting and improving public education in British Columbia. The goal of BCSPE is to provide clear, accurate and accessible information to students, parents, the general public and decision-makers at all levels of government about the state of affairs in BC Schools. The full survey report is available online. For more information visit: www.bcspe.ca. *

Government Lacks Transparency and Credibility on Prison Costs: Davies

Budget officer’s analysis shows government unprepared for the impact of its crime bills

CPPNews –(VANCOUVER) –

New Democrat Public Safety Critic Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) says a new report from the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) shows the government has not been honest with Canadians about the impact of their crime and punishment agenda.

“The analysis shows that just one crime bill will cost taxpayers \$5 billion over the next five years,” said Davies. “That doesn’t account for the impact on provinces, which will be billions more.”

The report released by the PBO modeled the financial impact of the Truth in Sentencing Act, one of the bills passed in the last Session of Parliament. The Act removes the 2-for-1 credit for pre-trial custody that judges awarded because of the backlogs in the court system.

“We’ve come a long way from the government’s initial assurance that this Bill would cost only \$90 million, and have little or no impact on the provincial and territorial prison systems,” said Davies. “The government is quickly losing all credibility on the crime file.”

“Equally troubling are their efforts to block the independent budget officer from completing his work. The government refused to turn over any data, and Correctional Service officials refused to meet with him.”

“This comprehensive report is a clear indictment of the government’s approach on crime policy,” concluded Davies. “Spending on crime prevention is going down. The mental health crisis in our prisons remains untreated. But the government can find \$5 billion for prisons.”

“This government lacks transparency. It lacks credibility. And its approach to crime is the most expensive and least effective way

Contagion and Collateral Damage

The Aftershocks of Global Financial Crisis

by Bruce Campbell

Just when the world economy appeared to be settling down, Greece — that cradle of civilization, the birthplace of democracy — exploded with financial and political angst.

The Greek/Eurozone debt crisis continues to send shock waves through the global financial system. It is the new fault line of the 2008 financial crisis — the new contagion that threatens many other nations around the world.

Contagion, a medical term referring to a highly transmissible disease, has become the metaphor for a world of highly interconnected and deregulated financial markets; a situation where a debt crisis in one country can quickly spread to other countries.

Eighteen months ago the G20 economies collectively put together a massive financial bailout to quarantine the contagion, and a \$5 trillion (U.S.) fiscal spending program. Without that government intervention, the world would have plunged into an even darker economic scenario.

But now that the danger is supposedly past, the G20 political leaders, despite paying lip service to the still fragile and uneven state of global economic recovery, are planning to rapidly eliminate their deficits — the very mistake governments made during the 1930s.

Powerful forces are aligning to flick the world back into its previous ideological default position — a move that is turning real live people into collateral damage. Starting with Greece.

Last Fall, private credit rating agencies — whose own incompetence and/or corruption contributed to the toxic subprime mortgage fiasco that sparked a worldwide recession — began downgrading Greece's debt rating. A speculative feeding frenzy ensued.

In early May, European governments and the European Central Bank put in place a \$1 trillion (U.S.) rescue package in an effort to shut down the speculators and stop the financial contagion from spreading to other countries.

Draconian austerity measures are now being imposed on the Greek people as a condition of "rescue:" severe pension rollbacks and wage cuts for public servants, additional government spending cuts amounting to 10 per cent of GDP.

These measures are guaranteed to deepen and prolong Greece's recession and paradoxically weaken its ability to manage its debt.

Collateral damage is what happens when contagion hits people who live and work in the real economy, and who pay the price of reining in the financial market excess that caused the contagion.

Many thousands of Greeks are losing their jobs, their homes and their businesses. They are the collateral damage in this recession. They are paying the price of a crisis that was



created by banks and corrupt elites, and they are expressing their outrage with general strikes and massive, sometimes violent, street protests.

Yet it's the banks, not the people, who remain protected. What is happening is an income transfer from the Greek population to mainly foreign banks — a scenario that threatens to play itself out in other indebted nations, reviving fears of another plunge into global recession.

Could Canadians experience another round of collateral damage from the spread of the Eurozone debt crisis? It's possible.

Canadians are not immune to this contagion. Though it appears Canadian financial institutions have little direct exposure to European sovereign debt, the real threat is indirect. The contagion could spread from creditor banks to the global inter-bank markets and, ultimately, to Canadian banks. It could choke off the flow of credit to business and consumers, just like in the fall of 2008.

Our Prime Minister is busy promoting rescues for banks and financial elites while advising other nations to step back from interventions that sustain investment, create jobs and protect real people.

Though Canada's federal debt is a moderate 35 per cent of GDP (one-fifth of private debt), the Harper government — egged on by the bank economists and its own ideological instincts — is preparing to shrink its own deficit and debt even as unemployment and underemployment afflict 11.5 per cent of the Canadian work force.

At the Toronto G20 meeting, Harper secured agreement to cut deficits in half by 2013, raising the probability of a backslide into global recession. He also lobbied hard to kill an international bank tax that would help rein in the speculators that put the global economy in crisis in the first place, and provide a major new source of government revenue.

So the poor and the vulnerable will pay the price of deficit reduction via social program cuts and continued high unemployment. They are collateral damage while the perpetrators get back to business as usual.

The destructive free market mindset — the real source of the contagion here — was not extinguished two years ago and proponents such as Harper and other G20 leaders have worked hard to keep it alive.

Clearly, they have not yet learned the lesson of this dramatic market meltdown. Until they do, the cycle of contagion and crisis will recur. And people — the collateral damage in this dangerous high stakes game — will continue to pay a heavy price.

Bruce Campbell is the Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Who? Me!

Bankers jailed, sued as Iceland seeks justice.

REYKJAVIK — According to Agence France-Presse a year and a half after Iceland's major banks failed, all but sinking the country's economy, police have started arresting some bankers while other former executives and owners face a two-billion-dollar lawsuit.

Even after Iceland's three largest banks -- Kaupthing, Landsbanki and Glitnir -- collapsed in late 2008, their former executives and owners have largely been living untroubled lives abroad.

Following the publication last month of a parliamentary inquiry into the island nation's profound financial and economic crisis signaled a turning of the tide, laying much of the blame for the downfall on the former bank heads who had taken "inappropriate loans from the banks" they worked for.

On Wednesday, the administrators of Glitnir's liquidation announced they had filed a two-billion-dollar (1.6-billion-euro) lawsuit in a New York court against former large shareholders and executives for alleged fraud.

"I think this lawsuit is without precedence in Iceland," Steinunn Gudbjartsdottir, who chairs Glitnir's so-called winding-up board, told reporters in Reykjavik.

"It is about higher figures than we have ever seen," she said, adding that she expected Glitnir to file more lawsuits going forward, but that "it is unlikely any will be this big."

Glitnir said it was suing "Jon Asgeir Johannesson, formerly its principal shareholder, Larus Welding, previously Glitnir's chief executive, Thorstein Jonsson, its former chairman and other former directors, shareholders and third parties associates with Johannesson for fraudulently and unlawfully draining more than two billion dollars out of the bank."

The bank also said it was "taking action against its former auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for facilitating and helping to conceal the fraudulent transactions engineered by Johannesson and his associates, which ultimately led to the bank's collapse in October 2008."

Glitnir's suit, filed in the New York state Supreme Court on Tuesday, blamed most of the bank's woes on "Johannesson and his co-conspirators," who had "conspired to systematically loot Glitnir Bank in order to prop up their own failing companies."



Johannesson, the former owner of the now-defunct Baugur investment group with stakes in a number of British high street stores including Hamleys, Debenhams and House of Fraser, said he was shocked by the lawsuit.

"The distortions and the nonsense in the lawsuit are incredible," he told the Pressan news website.

Glitnir's administrators "can get a 10-year-prison sentence for misusing US courts in this manner," he insisted.

The bank's chief administrator Gudbjartsdottir took his comments in stride.

"I didn't expect him to be happy with the lawsuit," she said.

In addition to its New York suit, Glitnir said it had "secured a freezing order from the High Court in London against Jon Asgeir Johannesson's worldwide assets, including two apartments in Manhattan's exclusive Gramercy Park neighbourhood for which he paid approximately 25 million dollars."

Gudbjartsdottir said Johannesson had just 48 hours to come up with a satisfactory list of his assets.

"If he does not give the right information he faces a jail sentence," she said.

Four former Kaupthing executives, who all live in Luxembourg, have meanwhile been arrested in Iceland in the past week and Interpol has issued an international arrest warrant for that bank's ex-chairman, Sigurdur Einarsson.

Former head of the bank's domestic operations, Ingolfur Helgason, and former chief risk officer Steingrimur Karason were arrested late Monday on arrival from Luxembourg, just days after former Kaupthing boss Hreidar Mar Sigurdsson, along with Magnus Gudmunsson, who headed the bank's unit in Luxembourg, were taken into custody.

The 49-year-old Einarsson, who lives in London, said late Tuesday he had no plans to travel to Iceland to be arrested.

"I'm absolutely flabbergasted about the latest news," he told the Frettabladid daily.

"There is in my opinion no need for the arrests or custody rulings, and I will not of my own free will take part in the play that it appears is being staged to soothe the Icelandic people," he said.

"I'll put the human rights I enjoy here in Britain to the test and will not therefore come home (to Iceland) to these conditions without being forced," he added. ✱

The Campaign to Suppress Free Speech (Part Two)

A Witch Hunt Worthy of the Name

by Mordicai Briemberg

You know the expression – “a rose by any other name is still a rose”. And a witch-hunt by any other name still is a witch-hunt. The C-P-C-C-A is that other name, but a name does not change the reality. And the C-P-C-C-A is a witch-hunt. As an acronym C-P-C-C-A is a mouthful, and an even bigger mouthful when written in full: Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-semitism.

Is CPCCA a parliamentary committee? Not at all, though they have chosen a name that might make people believe they are. But there was no decision in parliament to form this committee, not even discussion of such a possibility.

CPCCA is a committee of members of parliament who simply have self-selected to act as a lobby group, holding hearings on the premises of parliament, however, bringing people in agreement with their purposes to Ottawa from across Canada, Europe and Israel.

Members of this “coalition” come from all four parties in the House of Commons: Conservative, Liberal, NDP, and Bloc. Can you recall such an all-party “coalition” ever being formed before?

Pat Martin and Judy Wasylcia-Leis, NDP members of Parliament from Winnipeg, joined this coalition without their caucus ever discussing or approving the decision. It is unlikely the Bloc members were approved by their caucus either. Irwin Cotler (Liberal) and Jason Kenney (Conservative) are the driving force in this lobby group, and perhaps their parties and leaders have given them their blessing, but if so -- not publicly.

You may ask who finances the CPCCA? Months and months ago they promised to reveal the source of their financing. So far all they have managed is to say who they are not financed by: not the government or NGO's they say. As for who does finance them, we are told we must wait until a “future date”. How strange: they are firm and eager to say who they are not financed by, but have found no time as yet to say who they are financed by.

The purpose of this lobby, the coalition says, is to “combat anti-semitism” in Canada, anti-semitism that CPCCA are trying to convince us is at a fever pitch as it once was in Nazi Germany. You may be flabbergasted to hear this. For indeed organizations like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which has a multi-million dollar annual budget to monitor and record anti-semitism in the United States, reports that the latest figures for anti-semitism are at the lowest level since ADL began their surveys decades ago.

Let's be serious about bigotry in our country. Let's deal with all the groups that experience bigotry, above all the first nations. But why raise anti-semitism as more urgent than prejudice against first nations, visible minorities and Moslems, or anti-woman violence in Canada? Where are the “parliamentary coalitions” to tackle these undeniable discriminations?

So what is the real purpose of the CPCCA? As explained in part one of this series (Gaza and the “new” anti-semitism), the advocates in Canada for Israeli government policies and practices know that the massacre early this year inflicted on the Palestinians in Gaza aroused the indignation and grief of larger numbers of Canadians than never before. To shut the door on that indignation and grief, these advocates for Israel have launched a campaign to smear and silence voices critical of Israel. And they think they can succeed by accusing critics of Israel of being “anti-semites”.

As real anti-semitism by all evidence has diminished, the advocates of Israel have to invent something they call “new” anti-semitism. They say “new” anti-semitism is criticism of Israel for its apartheid structures, criticism of Israel as a Jewish state, and advocacy of non-violent boycott campaigns as the way to end the injustices Israel inflicts on Palestinian people.

The smear and silence campaign targets those who make political criticism of Israel, both Jews and non-Jews. The campaign targets those internationally renowned– from Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu to South African Jewish lawyer and judge Richard Goldstone – to ordinary members of Mountain Equipment Coop who simply lobby their management to stop purchasing products from an Israeli, military connected, manufacturer.

Witch-hunts are by nature arbitrary and nasty. To see this we need look no further than the amazing scene of the Harper government's campaign to smear the Liberals. In the midst of uniting together in the CPCCA as coalition partners who want to turn political criticism of Israel into a “hate” crime --- in the very midst of this effort to launch a sweeping witch-hunt -- the Conservatives have begun smearing their own coalition partner. Targeting constituencies with significant Jewish voters, including that of Irwin Cotler, the Conservatives are circulating literature accusing the Liberal party of being soft on “anti-semitism”.

If the Conservatives, simply for electoral advantage, are smearing Irwin Cotler with the label of “anti-semitism”, then who won't they smear? Liberal MP from Vancouver Joyce Murray said in the House of Commons that the Conservative literature “makes a mockery” of the work of the CPCCA. In fact it exposes the true nature of the CPCCA, which aims to use this same tactic – just targeting different people. Once open, free political debate about Israel is shut down by dishonest accusations of “anti-semitism”, McCarthyism will be the order of the day.

Cotler (and the Liberal Party) respond by shouting “I'm as pro-Israel as you are”. But our country doesn't need blind pledges of allegiance of Canadian parliamentarians to a foreign country. What we need is open, unintimidated discussion of Israel and its policies and practices.

Let's start with the character of Israel as a “Jewish state”. Should this be open to debate? From the earliest days of the Zionist movement until today, individual as well as organized groups of Jews have held varied, and intensely different views about this political movement. Jews, neither in the past nor today, have a uniform response about whether the policies and practices of the State of Israel express and defend, or violate and threaten, their own values and interests. Israel and Jews are two different things. Being critical of the first is not to be critical of the second.

Take an example. In 1919 more than 300 prominent Jews in the US (members of

Congress, diplomats, judges, officers of major Jewish organizations) sent a letter to President Wilson at the Versailles negotiations, saying: “As a future form of government for Palestine will undoubtedly be considered by the approaching Peace Conference, we, the undersigned citizens of the United States, unite in this statement, setting forth our objections to the organization of a Jewish State in Palestine as proposed by the Zionist Societies in this country and Europe and to the segregation of the Jews as a nationalistic unit in any country.”

Another example: in the aftermath of the Israeli assault on Gaza, Dov Yermiya, an Israeli military officer who fought and was wounded in the war of 1948, wrote to a circle of friends saying: “I, a 95 year old Sabra [native born Israeli Jew], ... declare herewith that I renounce my belief in the Zionism which has failed, that I shall not be loyal to the Jewish fascist state and its mad visions, that I shall not sing anymore its nationalist anthem....”

Were the 300 Jewish Americans and Yermiya living today in Canada, expressing publicly such views, who would propose prosecuting them for spreading “anti-semitism”? And if not them, why should any Canadian with similar opinions be treated differently? After all would you want Canada to be declared a “Christian state”, with privileges for Christians that were denied all other citizens?

As there is nothing bigoted about Canadians having differing and passionately opposing views about the policies and practices and guiding ideology of the governments of Canada, even the very legitimacy of the Canadian state, so there is nothing bigoted about Canadians – whatever their background -- having differing and opposing views about the policies and practices and guiding ideology of Israel. No one proposes criminalizing the former. Why does CPCCA work to criminalize the latter?

These fundamentally are political matters, and freedom to express, explore and exchange political ideas in public is indispensable to democratic culture. And exactly the same is true when it comes to discussions of apartheid in Israel. Former US President Jimmy Carter wrote a book describing Israeli imposed apartheid in the territories it has occupied since 1967 in defiance of the United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council and the World Court of Justice. Ronnie Kasrils, a Jewish South African member of the Mandela government and decades long activist against apartheid in his own country, speaks of the same apartheid injustices existing in Israel since its creation.

And why should it be illegitimate to try and remedy the injustice that gives citizens of Israel different rights according to their ethnicity and religion? Why should popular, peaceful campaigns for pressure on the State of Israel by organizing economic boycotts, cultural boycotts, divestment from corporations that contribute to apartheid be ‘okay’ for other countries – like they were for South Africa – but ‘illegitimate’ in the case of Israel?

Justice is universal, or it is not justice at all. Laws apply to every country, or there is no rule of law at all.

For more information check the website of the Seriously Free Speech Committee: <http://seriouslyfreespeech.wordpress.com/> and click on CPCCA at the top of the page.

Part 3 of this series will discuss the movement to defend the right to free speech on Israel and Palestine.

Privatization Honcho Heads Vancouver Coastal Health

Appointment raises concerns about government's commitment to defend Medicare

The BC Health Coalition is calling into question the provincial government's commitment to defend public health care in the courts in the wake of the recent appointment of Kip Woodward as chair of Vancouver Coastal Health – the province's second largest health authority.

Woodward is a former Board member of the for-profit Cambie Surgery Centre and his family investment firm, Woodcorp Investments Ltd., is an investor in the controversial private clinic run by Dr. Brian Day.

Cambie Surgery is at the centre of the pivotal BC Supreme Court case launched by Day and a consortium of private for-profit clinics against the BC Medical Services Commission and the provincial government. The clinics aim to have key provisions of provincial health legislation declared unconstitutional so that they can sell necessary health services to patients who can afford to pay a premium to jump the queue and open up BC to US-style health insurance.

“Mr. Woodward is a known advocate of privatized, for-profit health care,” said BCHC Co-chair Rachel Tutte, referring to recent letters written by Woodward last fall to Health Minister Kevin Falcon on Woodcorp letterhead, but in the capacity of Chair of Providence Health Care. In these letters Woodward stated that Providence's previous relationship with Vancouver Coastal “held us back” and he expressed a desire for “new funding models and new delivery processes.”

One of the letters goes on to outline numerous “revenue generating” and “cost recovery” schemes that could not possibly avoid violating Medicare's principles of accessibility and universality and that would further advance the interests of for-profit health care investors.

“Health minister Kevin Falcon has a responsibility to defend our public health care system in the courts and to protect patients from this attack on BC's Medicare laws,” said Tutte. “Now, he is appointing an investor in one of the key players in this legal attack on public health care to run our Medicare system.” *

Flawed analysis props up BC public private partnerships

by Marvin Shaffer

Many will have heard Premier Gordon Campbell and his cabinet colleagues talk in glowing terms about public private partnerships (P3s) for major projects like hospitals, highways, bridges and sewage treatment.

Traditionally, governments borrow money for things like hospitals and bridges. They use that money to pay the private sector to design and build the projects. Once built, the facility or infrastructure is wholly owned, operated and maintained by government on behalf of the public.

In P3 projects, however, the government typically enters into multi-decade contracts with private corporations to design, build, finance and operate facilities, whether that be hospitals, toll highways or sewage treatment systems. Rather than financing and operating these facilities, the government effectively leases them from the private partner, paying for the right to use them over the life of the contracts.

How does government decide when to stay public and when to do a P3? That's a good question. In August, after more than six years in the business of assessing and promoting P3s, Partnerships BC finally released the methodology it uses to decide whether to build something publicly in the traditional way or to use a P3. And sadly for B.C. taxpayers, who are locked into \$10 billion worth of spending on P3 projects over the next 30 to 40 years, the methodology is fundamentally flawed.

In its methodology document, Partnership BC explains how it calculates value for the 'risk transfer' to the private partner and the benefits from long term performance guarantees it achieves with P3s. Partnerships BC doesn't explain why risks can't be transferred under traditional fixed price design-build contracts, and why long-term performance can't be guaranteed with bonds or similar mechanisms as is commonly done in traditional (non-P3) contracts. That is problematic in itself.

However, the major and most obvious failing of Partnerships BC's methodology is that it only focuses on the benefits of P3s and completely ignores the cost side of the equation. When private companies finance public projects, they pay higher interest rates on what they borrow and require a high rate of return on what they

invest. The higher costs of private financing for P3s are built into the lease rates that taxpayers ultimately pay, and are much higher than the debt service costs that government would pay if it financed the projects itself. For large, expensive public infrastructure, that can add hundreds of millions of dollars to the total expenditures government incurs over the life of the project.

For inexplicable and certainly unjustifiable reasons, Partnerships BC completely ignores the higher financing costs of P3s in its assessment methodology. It pretends the financing costs are the same. In other words, its methodology looks at the potential benefits of P3s without considering the costs. And it compounds that problem by giving very little weight in its analysis to the future tax burdens the P3s impose.

No wonder all of Partnerships BC's so-called 'Value for Money' assessments find that P3s are preferred to the more traditionally procured, publicly financed approach. Its methodology, which provides estimates of benefits, and which assumes incorrectly there are no costs, guarantees the result.

All of this would be rather amusing if it were just a silly error on the part of an over-exuberant Partnerships BC. But it isn't just that. This is the methodology government is relying on to justify the many P3s it is entering into. And the fact of the matter is: Partnerships BC's assessment methodology provides no justification for selecting P3s over more traditionally procured publicly-financed projects, and in fact, evidence suggests taxpayers will pay more in the long run.

In very simple terms Partnerships BC's analysis is flawed and shortsighted, doing a disservice to future taxpayers who must pay the extra costs of the P3 for the full length of the contract. With \$10 billion tied up in P3 projects, the questions raised by Partnerships BC's methodology should raise the alarm about any real value for money for taxpayers.

Marvin Shaffer is an economist and author of two cost-benefit studies for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

From the Publisher

New Face of UberPolice Politics

With over nine hundred people arrested and detained in Toronto over the weekend of the G20 Summit, Canada appears ripe to accept the nomination as the latest poster boy for the jack-booted crowd. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's gift to his natural constituency, the police and the army resulted in the spectacle of the new and much more expensive uberpolice state and its' outrageous handling of Toronto over the weekend of June 25, 26, and 27. The cost? Three police cars – 60,000.00, 900 Canadians jailed, dozens of plate glass windows smashed – 1,200,000.00, and the rest of the security costs – priceless (probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1,100,000,000.00) The security operation was a demonstration of overkill on a tenfold scale. An incomprehensible waste of public money.

Upwards of 20,000 members of police forces from every level across Canada were pressed into highly paid overtime service to control tens of thousands of peaceful protestors while simultaneously standing back and allowing some few hundreds of younger urban guerrillas and street fighters to engage in acts of senseless destruction and hockey crowd hooliganism.

From all appearances, the security apparatus, when it swung into action on the second day (Saturday), did not target troublemakers, but rather acted against large swaths of Canadians, mostly Torontonians legitimately taking to the streets in protest. Whole blocks of people exercising their rights to assembly and free speech in fact – corralling them with carefully planned manoeuvres which demanded precision control.

Over the 3 days of the summit meeting, approximately 900 people were arrested and detained, most of them illegally. Some of those swept up may still be in custody.

But is this what Canadians and the rest of the world have to look forward to when the agenda of the G20 is acted on. The G20 governments corporate and political elites have agreed in principle to austerity measures. This can only mean steep cuts to the public sector and its' employees, the creation of higher personal taxes, and reduction of benefits and social programs to working people and the poor. And it has been the Canadian taxpayer who has grossly overpaid for the privilege of being told we will have to tighten our belts so that Stephen Harper and his cronies in Big Oil and Big Business can continue to dominate our lives.

If we don't like it, the lesson in Toronto is that we have seen the lengths to which this Conservative government is prepared to go to deal with resistance and protest. This is NOT the lesson we want to accept.

It is not what we've become.



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JackAttack - on Libby Davies

Dear Jack,

I see that your wife, Olivia Chow, has today courageously defended those elected members of provincial and municipal governments who have been so cavalierly maligned by the vague innuendoes of CSIS director Richard Fadden as possible victims of influence by a foreign power. . . China.

I am extremely disappointed that you did not provide a similarly courageous defence for your colleague Libby Davies as she bore the brunt last week of "disproportionate" outrage by the unquestioning defenders of Israel reacting to her simple factual statements about the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

As Mr. Fadden warned this week about possible foreign influence over elected government officials, I was waiting for the state of Israel to be mentioned but, of course, it was not. Yet, it is well known and accepted that elected members such as Liberal Irwin Cotler, Conservative Jason Kenny, and even the prime minister himself place meeting the political needs of Israel high on their personal priority list. For example, Mr. Cotler and Mr. Kenny have created a pseudo-parliamentary committee, the CPCCA, for the apparent purpose of making criticism of Israel illegal in this country.

This week I have also read in the press that Mr. Cotler is demanding that Myanmar respect UN resolutions and human rights in its treatment of its citizens. Yet, Mr. Cotler has shown no such concern for UN resolutions and human rights when it comes to the Palestinians. In fact, he was displayed on Youtube advising the Israeli Defence Forces on media spin tactics to ameliorate the political fallout from their outrageous strike on a UN outpost in K'far Kana, Lebanon during Israel's war on Lebanon in 2006.

One must conclude that not only is Mr. Cotler's work with the IDF highly questionable for a Canadian parliamentarian but also that his advice to them on how to deflect the accusations by Human Rights Watch following the strike on the UN outpost was a direct rejection of the concern for human rights and support for the UN which Canada has always represented to the world.

I have not heard you challenge these morally questionable, hypocritical, and shameful actions of such members of parliament as Mr. Cotler and Mr. Kenny, yet you did not pause one moment before denouncing your colleague, Libby Davies.

May I assure you that Libby Davies has strong support in BC. We have watched her good work at the local and now the federal level for decades. She is a unique politician, firmly grounded in the real lives of people, whether they live on the downtown east side of Vancouver or in the Gaza strip. Your caucus' lack of support for Libby will certainly turn many people away from the party at a time when an alternative to the Conservatives and the Liberals is sorely needed.

I might just add that I do not speak with the voice of an anti-semitic but with the voice of someone who has worked for years in my community to uphold and promote the human rights of a number of groups including marginalized women, special needs children, immigrants, and working people. I am as concerned about the rights of people in the world outside my country as I am about those of my neighbours. (I also have a history of work with the NDP at all levels - local, provincial, and federal.)

Sincerely,
Sharon Shniad,
Surrey, BC

Our very own four Stooges

Wonder why Stephen Harper seems joined at the hip to Israel? There are several reasons, but in my opinion the main one is religious. Which may sound strange as Harper is not of the Jewish faith. However Mr. Harper is a man of faith. He is an Evangelical Christian of the fundamentalist variety who literally believes the Bible prophesy predicting Armageddon. In her new book "The Armageddon Factor" by Marci McDonald, Ms McDonald describes how The Battle of Armageddon is described in the Bible (Revelations) as the final battle on earth between "good" and "evil." The righteous is predicted to win, of course, even though the earth will be destroyed. But shortly before the final destruction the "rapture" will begin with Jesus Christ descending once again to earth. But none of this can come to pass, according to Biblical prophesy, until the Jews have gathered and have complete control over Jerusalem and environs. Harper is a quiet, literal believer in this biblical prophecy and is mindful of Genesis 12.3 "He who blesses Israel will be blessed, and He who curses Israel will be cursed".

Sounds weird? Yes, because it is weird. We have a prime minister who most people don't even realize is a fundamental evangelical Christian and that his religious beliefs are affecting Canadian policy in profound ways. Look at Stephen Harper's record on women's rights, environmental destruction, global warming, freedom of speech, dras-

It's Not Easy Bein' Green.....Or Is it?

Well perhaps not for Kermit the Frog, but seems it's a piece of cake for Gordon Campbell.

Do wonders never cease? Gordo recently returned from the 2009 Governors' Climate Summit in California held September 30 to October 02. This corporate puppet a.k.a. our duly elected dictator, continues to portray himself as organic green. It's nothing short of astounding!

Here's a clip from a press release by the Office of the Premier:

LOS ANGELES – Premier Gordon Campbell signed the 2009 Governors' Climate Summit Declaration on behalf of British Columbia, committing the Province to work cooperatively with all levels of government around the world to combat climate change.

"Climate change is a challenge on an unprecedented scale and calls for an unprecedented level of co-operation between governments at all levels – national, state, provincial and municipal," said Premier Campbell. "This declaration reaffirms our commitment to work collaboratively with other jurisdictions around the world, even as we take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within our own province. I want to thank California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and all host governors for giving a voice to sub-national governments on this important issue."

You got that folks! Now here's the real truth about the Gordon Campbell agenda.....

This government is actively supporting and endorsing the Northern Gateway Enbridge Pipeline across BC that will carry dirty Alberta Tar Sands oil to a proposed oil tanker port at Kitimat (ending a 30-year moratorium on coastal tanker traffic) that protected us from oil spills similar to the Exxon Valdez. This pipeline will allow a 50% increase in production from the Tar Sands, the biggest contributor to GHG emissions in Canada, and considered the most destructive project on the planet.

BC is currently one of the largest exporters of coal, providing carbon emitting fuel for power plants and steel production in Japan and South Korea. Is this "working with governments around the world to combat climate change"? A little hard to swallow!

On the lower mainland his proposed Gateway Project will produce more urban sprawl and build freeways gobbling up precious food producing Fraser Valley farmland while massively increasing single vehicle freeway traffic and consequently GHG emissions, instead of opting for increased rapid transit initiatives.

Gordon Campbell and the Fiberals are actively promoting off shore oil exploration and development and have provided 1.5 billion dollars in subsidies to oil and gas companies. That's your tax dollars by the way! Green Initiatives?

And then there's the issue of coal-bed Methane gas

tic downsizing of funds for the public while handouts to private wealth goes on unabated and the slashing of democratic procedures in general that are making us look like smucks internationally. It is Mr. Harper's private religious beliefs that are guiding public policies both at home and abroad. This is why Mr. Harper has not strongly condemned, or condemned at all, Israel's deadly attack on foreign nationals in international waters.

The other three party leaders? Why are they afraid to move on the matter? Fear of saying the wrong thing? Of alienating Canada's Jewish population? But by not voicing disapproval of Israel's actions are they alienating the Muslims? These three are paralyzed. None of them (Liberal, NDP, Green Party) are strong enough to actually voice disapproval of Israel. Is it possible they don't know that it is wrong for Israel to attack unarmed foreign nationals in international waters? What is wrong with these three? Has the possibility of losing votes so paralyzed their consciences' they truly don't know right from wrong when it jumps up and hollers in their faces? So we have a fundamentalist Evangelical Christian at the helm who is rooting for the Armageddon and three wanabees in the wings who are afraid to voice disapproval. God and Goddess help Canada. She is going to need all the help she can get from her people as her leaders are without sense or moral compass.

Betty Krawczyk

exploration by British Petroleum (BP) and coal mine development in the pristine Flathead Valley of southeastern BC, an area that many foresaw as a future National Park.

We cannot responsibly ignore Gordon Campbell. It's not so much a crime that he's selling himself and his political and corporate cohorts as green. That's mere hypocrisy. The crime is that the people of British Columbia buy into this gigantic lie. It's tragic.....we're being robbed of our geographic and natural heritage and ultimately our future. We follow like lambs to the slaughter as he gives away our province to corporate interests and the global new world order.

How does he get away with all this? Well, seemingly a bullet proof image (until recently) provided by his Public Affairs Bureau along with the "conscience soothing" carbon tax. And the corporately "dominated" mainstream media incessantly portrays him as a leader in climate change legislation.....based on what? Add to this scenario an NDP that offered no real alternative vision (in the last election)) and you've got a bogus carbon tax and a government seen in the eyes of the public as a panacea for fighting climate change. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

In light of the all the kudos Campbell receives for it, it's interesting to note the CT has accomplished nothing....with greatly fluctuating fuel prices at the pumps the carbon tax isn't even noticed, and statistics reflect that fact. Fuel consumption has actually increased since its implementation. Further, those in rural British Columbia who often use their vehicles because they have to, not because they want to, are screwed by this 'green wash' political tactic. The big polluters get off the hook, because anything they pay is returned to them in tax incentives and generous subsidies. Make no mistake, this government keeps them at work devastating our planet for personal gain, squeezing the last fossil fuels out of mother earth here in BC and Alberta.

These guys are not green, and they're selling us out at breakneck speed. It's really up to us folks.....together we can toss out this arrogant crook through recall or a general strike! The Americans got rid of Nixon.....we can do the same with Gordo!!!

Doug Pyper

Doug Pyper is a photojournalist and freelance writer based out of Nelson, BC www.dougpyperphoto.com

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Once Again into the Breach

photo by Paul Manly
paulmanly@shaw.ca

Peaceful marchers expressing themselves at the G20 Conference in Toronto were hijacked by serious troublemakers.

Diversity of Tactics

February 13 and the Black Bloc

by Tom Sandborn

On the morning of February 13, a group of marchers in downtown Vancouver were taped by mainstream media breaking windows at the Hudson's Bay, tipping newsboxes and dumpsters into the street, and in at least one case hitting a Vancouver cop with a stick.

Since then many of the thousands of us who were united in our opposition to the Olympics as an obscene waste of public resources occurring on un-ceded first nations land and designed to promote the interests of the corporate elite while the poor and the homeless were left waiting for justice have engaged in various forms of debate about whether the masked figures we saw in the streets that morning were valiant revolutionaries leading the way to more effective resistance, police provocateurs out to discredit the entire resistance to the Olympics or testosterone crazed suburban white boys posturing as Che wannabes instead of doing the long term and demanding work of building a movement for social change.

For many of us, the low points occurred when one public figure who had criticized the actions taken on the 13th was physically assaulted and denounced as a "traitor" at a public meeting, and when the debates about tactics became mired in personal attacks on those who expressed cautionary notes or outright criticism of the Black Bloc direct actions taken that Saturday. Apparently to many in the left communities in Vancouver a respect for diversity of tactics means no respect for a diversity of views or critical perspectives.

The attentive reader will already have guessed by the tone of my opening paragraphs that I am not to be counted as a big fan of the Black Bloc action on the 13th or of what I see as the anti-democratic and unproductively hostile response too many fans of diversity of tactics have displayed toward those who have expressed criticisms. I think the events of the 13th were an enormous gift to the supporters of the Olympics, who can now dismiss all criticism of the obnoxious commodity sports/advertising orgy as the work of crazy people who break windows. The claims made that the events of the 13th upped the ante of anti-capitalist struggle by window breaking or traffic inter-

ruption are hard to credit. The Bay has insurance to cover the minor property damage done, and whatever slowdown the demonstration worked on Lions Gate traffic hardly counts as a blow against the empire. Our movements for social change have no similar way of insuring ourselves against being portrayed as crazed and scary. Not scary to the cops or big business; scary to ordinary people watching the street action and wondering what all the macho posturing had to do with their lives or concerns. Those of us who do our political work unmasked have to live with the impacts of what the balaclava brigades did before they took off their costumes.

Everyone who enters into this debate runs the risk of being attacked on an ad hominem basis, and I expect no different. Granted, I serve on the board of the BC Civil Liberties Association, which has been attacked for not backing the Black Bloc tactics, and some of the people already being slammed for their critical perspectives are friends of mine. And I am an aging white man who lives in middle class comfort on Vancouver's west side, so there are many openings for those who want to sling insults rather than arguments. On the other hand, I have friends on both sides of this debate and in my four decades of activist work on a number of peace, justice and environmental issues, I have been a walking model of diversity of tactics. I have committed classic civil disobedience and waited patiently for the cops to come and arrest me. I have participated in direct action tactics that involved covert property damage against corporate targets, and I have attended marches, rallies and demonstrations too numerous to count. I have also tried to use my access to the public as a journalist to advance progressive agendas. So I do not rule out any tactic out of hand; what matters to me is the context and effectiveness of any suggested tactic, and some degree of open debate rather than invective when alternative tactics are discussed.

The events of February 13 and too much of the ensuing debate fail on both tests. The context did not demand or make sensible the "militant" tactics, and the tone of debate afterward was unfortunately sectarian and over personal.

We will never know, apparently, who the masked fig-

ures on Feb 13 were. I wish I could believe they were all police provocateurs, given what a gift the events were to the pro Olympics, pro business propaganda machine, and given my own conspiratorial turn of mind. But, while we know that ISU (the "integrated security unit" that policed the Olympics) refused to commit they would not use provocateurs, and we know at least one early resistance event featured an undercover cop posing as a movement bus driver, I am afraid that we have to go on the assumption that at least some of the masked marauders were members of our broader social movement.

To them I would say, with all respect and solidarity, please give your head a shake and reconsider before taking up such tactics again, and please lay off the personal attacks on those who disagree with you. There is no reason to think that a little property damage at the Bay and ostentatious scuffling with cops did anything substantial to diminish the power of capital or the police state apparatus, and many reasons to think the main legacy of this morning of boy's own adventurism and infantile leftism was to distract the public from the Olympics onto resistance tactics and to stir up a bitter and pointless round of personal attacks and recriminations on the left. If they were not cops, the masked figures probably acted out of the best of intentions - a desire to stand against oppressive power and do something dramatic and effective. Unfortunately, they did something merely dramatic and in the end as stupid as a sack of hammers. This is not the end of the world and it will not shape the entire legacy of Olympics resistance, but it is deeply unfortunate. A statement purporting to be from Black Bloc members shortly after the 13th said they were the folks who built community, attended public rallies, fed the hungry and supported above ground tactics like the tent village on Hastings.

These are all worthy things to do, but the same could be claimed by many of us who did not support the Black Bloc tactics. I urge us all to lower our voices, stop attacking personalities and debate the observable impacts of our tactics. The other side will do enough to weaken and divide the movements for social change. It is not necessary for us to do their work against each other. *

All over the world, the quality of democratic governance is declining

**Bertelsmann Foundation Report:
Restrictions on freedom of opinion and assembly are increasing.**

Although the number of formal democracies remains constant worldwide, in many cases their quality is showing a significant decline. This has had an adverse effect on core aspects of political participation, including elections as well as freedom of assembly and the press. It should also be noted that the governments of many developing and transition countries failed to take advantage of high growth rates, prior to the global financial and economic crisis, to fight poverty and inequality. Given conditions of global economic insecurity, these structural and social deficits bring with them considerable risks. This is the conclusion reached by the fourth survey of the Transformation Index (BTI), Bertelsmann Stiftung's international comparative study of 128 transition countries, which was released today. Among the countries

with the most successful governance over the past few years are Uruguay, Chile, Estonia, South Korea and Brazil. Those identified as having the worst political leadership are North Korea, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Somalia and Uzbekistan.

It would be a mistake to conclude from these latest data that the ideal of democracy is doomed. Indeed, the share of developing and emerging countries that hold free elections remains stable at 60 percent. Nearly four billion people live in democracies, as compared with only 2.5 billion in autocracies and dictatorships. However, in many cases social integration and opportunities for real participation in the political decision-making process are increasingly limited. Of the 76 democracies studied, 53 can be classified as "defective democracies" which – despite relatively free and fair elections – fail to afford adequate protection to political and civil liberties, and lack an effective separation of powers. The share of moderately defective democracies has dropped from 62 to about 49 percent over the past four years, while highly defective democracies now account for over 20 percent, up from about 10 percent four years ago. In other words, while the total number of democracies has remained virtually unchanged, among countries that rank below the top group of stable democracies there has been a significant decline in democracy's effectiveness and acceptance.

As noted above, this has also begun to affect core aspects of political participation. When it comes to holding free and fair elections, defective democracies now show substantially worse results than four years ago; this is particularly true of Kenya and Nicaragua. There has been a similar decline in respect for freedom of assembly and the right to organize. Particularly alarming are growing restrictions on freedom of expression, especially in Africa's defective and highly defective democracies, notably Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, South Africa and Uganda. Even such advanced democracies as Ghana, Croatia, Serbia and South Korea offer cause for concern.

While the factors behind these developments differ from one country to another, patterns are often similar: an inadequate anchoring in the rule of law, and a low level of political and social integration. "Weak checks and balances between the government, legislature and judiciary, along with a lack of judicial independence, open the door to despotism," project manager Sabine Donner points out. All of this makes it more difficult to oppose increasing restrictions on civil rights and rampant abuse of power. For years, the Transformation Index has identified fundamental aspects of the rule of law, such as a separation of powers and an independent judiciary, as among these



countries' greatest weaknesses. The social foundation that is essential to a democracy is often lacking as well. Donner notes, "Because of weak and unrepresentative party systems, and because civil society is lacking trust and social capital, it has often proved very difficult to prevent government attempts to limit fundamental rights. Over the long term, this undermines the quality and substance of democratic governments as well as respect for democratic institutions."

In the economic sphere, a decline in the credibility and reputation of democratic governments often goes hand in hand with government failure to ensure a basic social standard and equal opportunity. Despite high food and oil prices, coupled with the initial effects of the economic and financial crisis, economic conditions have been relatively favorable for most of the 128 countries during the past few years. "The Transformation Index has shown that many governments have exploited positive economic trends for personal gain," says project manager Hauke Hartmann. "They have failed to expand and develop their economies and to combat poverty and social ills." Opportunities to lay the groundwork for a better future and prepare for economically difficult times have been squandered.

Notable weaknesses include deficient social welfare systems, inadequate anti-poverty measures and too little investment in education and environmental protection. In one-fourth of the countries studied, the level of socio-economic development is so low that poverty and social exclusion are widespread; structural conditions make the problem even worse. Only 41 of the 128 countries studied receive moderate to good marks in this area. In a time of global economic insecurity, these structural and social problems bring with them considerable risks. Many governments may well find their stability threatened by dwindling financial resources and a lack of the economic prosperity that is essential to their legitimacy.

External supporters of development and democratic transformation would be well advised to take a closer look at countries that have managed to achieve a high level of democratic legitimacy and relatively good

governance, even though unfavorable structural conditions and the consequences of the economic and financial crisis have prevented them from making satisfactory progress in the socioeconomic sphere. External aid should focus primarily on these countries, before worsening poverty and an inequitable income distribution undermine the legitimacy of weak democratic regimes. However, it would also be wise to take a more differentiated look at the shifting patterns of legitimacy among those autocratic regimes that have achieved a particularly impressive level of economic output in recent years. This would allow for an appropriate response to

heightened repression as well as to trends toward increased participation.

Compared with other countries, the new Eastern and Central European EU member states continue to lead the pack. Slovenia and Estonia top the BTI Status Index, followed by Taiwan, South Korea, Chile and Costa Rica. The quality of political management is highest in Uruguay, with Chile, Estonia, South Korea and Brazil ranking next. The major losers of the past few years include South Africa, where a reform-based policy agenda fell victim to a polarizing power struggle between Mbeki, who served as president until September of 2008, and his challenger, Zuma. After North Korea, Myanmar (Burma) and Somalia rank lowest in terms of democratic development and a market economy, according to Stiftung experts.

About the Transformation Index:

Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index analyzes and evaluates the quality of democracy, the market economy and political management in 128 developing and transition countries. It measures successes and setbacks on the path toward a democracy based on the rule of law and a market economy flanked by sociopolitical safeguards. Detailed country reports provide the necessary information for assessing these countries' development status and problems, and for evaluating the ability of policymakers to carry out consistent and targeted reforms. Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index is the first international comparative index that uses its own data to measure the quality of governance and provide a comprehensive analysis of countries' policymaking success during processes of transition. ✱

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Interview

Antonio Giustozzi

by Ian Sinclair

In the introduction of his new book *Decoding the New Taliban*. Insights from the Afghan Field, Dr Antonio Giustozzi argues the public debate surrounding Afghanistan has been “dominated by superficial or plainly wrong assumptions.”

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of those violently resisting British and NATO forces in southern Afghanistan, I recently spoke with Giustozzi at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he works as a research fellow in the Crisis States Research Centre.

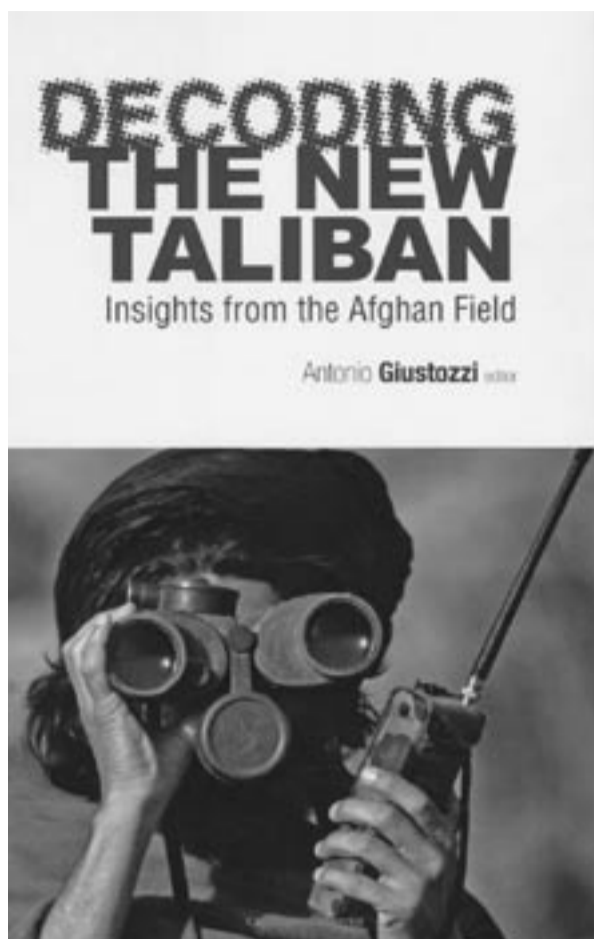
Since 2003 the 43-year old Italian academic has visited Afghanistan about three times a year every year, including twelve months working for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. This extensive fieldwork informed his 2007 book *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* and his new study - two academic volumes that have made him the foremost expert on the Taliban working in the UK today.

Giustozzi uses the term “neo-Taliban” or “new-Taliban” to refer to the Taliban who has been operating in Afghanistan since the US/NATO invasion and occupation in October 2001. “It has the same leadership”, he notes, but it is now “an insurgent force - essentially an underground operation.”

In southern Afghanistan, an area dominated by ethnic Pashtuns, the Taliban and the insurgency are essentially synonymous, he says. From 2001 to 2006, he explains the Taliban largely consisted of small groups of young, hardcore fighters based in remote, rural areas. “By and large there was a certain correspondence between clerical influence and the spread of the Taliban, for the obvious reason that during the Taliban government they were in power”, he says. “The judiciary was totally clericalised. Education was largely clerical. All the governors and ministers were Mullahs.” In areas where state education has been traditionally weak, such as the south, Giustozzi notes “the Taliban and clergy have been proportionally stronger.”

He estimates that between 10-15 percent of Afghans are linked to the clergy directly. “On top of this there are the people who are not Mullahs themselves but are very religious and likely to be influenced by the clergy”, he adds.

From this core base, the Taliban were able to gain additional support from margin-



Decoding the New Taliban. Insights from the Afghan Field

Dr Antonio Giustozzi
C Hurst & Co 2009
£16.99.

alised people dissatisfied with or opposed to the Government presence in their community, and through a gradual process of Talibanisation. “If the Taliban had been in a community a long time, the Taliban fighters would marry local girls, and the Taliban themselves would actively eliminate elders they didn’t trust”.

However, Giustozzi sees the large-scale NATO deployment to the south in 2006 (the British to Helmand, the Canadians to Kandahar and the Dutch and Australians to Oruzgan) as “a turning point” in the conflict.

“Up to 2006 Helmand was not a stronghold of the Taliban”, he notes. “They were not able to fight openly. Then from 2006 there was a major upsurge in resistance against the British.” This resistance “was crushed” by the British forces, with thousands of Taliban fighters dying. However, Giustozzi says if you look at the fighting from the Taliban’s perspective “it gave an impression, not only in Helmand but throughout the country, of popular mobilisation, a people’s war against the British. Whole communities rising up.” In addition the large number of Taliban casualties meant whole “communities got disrupted and destroyed and people - particularly young men - were on the loose. These people become recruitable by the Taliban as core fighters.”

Similarly Giustozzi believes what has become known as The Battle of Pashmul was another example of what he calls the ‘Tet Offensive effect’ - when a superior military force is successful on the battlefield, but loses the propaganda war. Engaging a large Taliban force in the vineyards just outside Kandahar in summer 2006, the newly-arrived Canadian troops inflicted a heavy defeat on the Taliban. But, as Giustozzi explains, “in terms of perceptions it showed the Taliban were able to fight against NATO with all its power on open ground near Kandahar, and showed they were no longer a marginal movement but a big force to be reckoned with.” Just like the British experience in Helmand, this propaganda success “started to have a big effect in terms of recruitment, and opened new constituencies to Taliban influence”, he says.

Regarding President Obama ordering of an additional 30,000 US troops to Afghanistan, Giustozzi argues the “numbers don’t mean much.”

“It depends how they use the troops”, he says. “If the troops stay in the barracks it won’t have any effect.” However, if the US soldiers engage the Taliban - and the fighting is “indecisive, protracted and creates destruction” - he contends this is likely to have “a destabilising impact, certainly at the beginning. Also it produces extremists.”

Giustozzi’s description of growing support for the Taliban and his belief that between 60,000 and 70,000 Afghans are now actively involved in the insurgency jars uneasily with the dominant narrative in the West of the Taliban being very unpopular. In particular I ask him about the 2009 BBC/ABC opinion poll conducted in Afghanistan that puts support for the Taliban at around 9 percent and support for the Government at 65 percent.

“The 9 percent is an underestimate”, he replies. Having studied the methodology of previous BBC/ABC polls, he explains it is very unlikely the polling staff travelled to the rural areas in the south (“where the Taliban are”), instead focusing on the cities and provincial centres. “The sampling is very, very biased.. there are very few unemployed people, whereas even the Government says unemployment is 40 percent. In the poll 5 percent were police and army, whereas in Afghanistan the actual percentage of the population in the army and police is 0.2 percent. 14 percent were managers and directors. There were no Mullahs.” If the sampling was balanced, he estimates the Taliban would get around 15 percent support nationwide, and between 30-40 percent support in the south.

Interestingly, Giustozzi mentions that he has seen polls conducted by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) which use different methodologies and get very different results - much higher support for the Taliban and much lower support for the Government. “In ISAF polls in early 2009 support for [Afghan President] Karzai was 4 percent”, he reports. “They don’t release them, of course, because they show a completely different picture.”

After spending more than an hour speaking to Giustozzi, I certainly learned a lot, but couldn’t tell you what he personally thinks about the war in Afghanistan. Such is the nature of academic analysis, with its emphasis on objective and detached thinking, I suppose. Throughout the interview he continually highlights the contradictory nature of Afghanistan and the current war, and rarely provides blanket answers. Instead he chooses to highlight the importance of local factors, such as power struggles and individual self-interest, and bureaucratic explanations. Moreover, I am happy to concede this article has significantly simplified and shortened his often complex arguments.

However, there is no doubt Giustozzi’s careful and considered analysis - best encountered in his two academic books - is an essential stop for those interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the continuing British involvement in Afghanistan.

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review

The Prescription Errors

by Tom Sandborn

The clown who makes everyone else laugh while engulfed with private grief is a well known cliché in both literature and low-end visual art. How many versions have we all seen of the velvet painting of a clown with a tear running down his cheek? Less common, both in received wisdom and in reality, is the clown or comic who not only laughs and makes us laugh, but also draws on all the riches of contemporary philosophy, current events and political theory to give the laughs a ballast of intellectual gravitas. Kids, don't try this trick at home. Most attempts to marry the comic spirit with serious philosophic concerns are ham handed and unsuccessful. Most comedy has a serious underside, but very few comics, whether they work onstage doing stand up or in the even more demanding format of the comic novel, can successfully make you both laugh out loud and think genuinely new thoughts. Dean Swift could do it, and in our times Lenny Bruce was a master of the complex double artistry of serious comedy until he imploded in self destructive rage. The political essays of Molly Ivins and the Florida novels of Carl Hiaasen are more recent successes at blending laughter and serious thought, but the combination is far more often attempted than attained.

To the honor roll of writers who can make you literally laugh until you cry and make you think as well, add Vancouver's Charlie Demers. The unforgivably young and talented Demers will be familiar to city readers who haunt stand up comedy clubs and/or seri-



The Prescription Errors
By Charles Demers
Insomniac Press
Vancouver, 2009
\$19.95 194 pp

ous political events, where Demers often adds a welcome note of levity and self mockery to his role as MC. He is a stand up comic, a political activist, host of his own local TV comedy show, and a serious scholar with daunting familiarity with the whole pantheon of modern and post modern thinkers, an erudition he wears very lightly, and weaves into the comic context of his impressive debut novel *The Prescription Errors*.

The book's protagonists are Daniel, an East End comic who lives and struggles with obsessive compulsive disorder while he does endless research for a monumental work that is both a serious intellectual effort and one of the comic engines of the novel, and Ty, another comic whose big break in the US comedy world is created by someone else's tragedy. Daniel is a more sympathetic and fully drawn character than the self serving and shallow Ty, but both, like the novel's many colorful minor characters, are well drawn and believable. Daniel is a political progressive whose family is embroiled in a legal and censorship battle about children's books in a suburb much like Surrey, and his world of family commitment, grief and guilt is acutely observed and portrayed. Ty is an amoral shark, which makes him right at home in the entertainment industry, but Demers never gives in to the temptation to make Ty or his LA scenes into a simple farce of ego and ambition. Everyone is absurd in this book, and everyone is believably human. Demers has produced an amazingly accomplished first novel as a companion piece to his book of socio-political essays on Vancouver, *Vancouver Special*, which is being launched in November of 2009 by another local press. Taken together, the two books represent an impressive print debut. I predict that Canada is going to hear a lot from Charlie Demers. Some of it will make us laugh, some will make us wince in self recognition, and some of it will inspire deep, reflective thought. ✱

review

Red Zone

by Tom Sandborn

"I know what it is to lose a voice. I misplaced one for eight years (although I now think it ran off in search of that ultimate plate of nachos, or perhaps a landscape with fewer boundaries. My voice turned up one morning in the underpass with a lumpy garbage sack slung over its shoulder.....One night while my voice slept (purring like an air compressor), I crept into the kitchen and opened the bag. There must be a head-knocking expose' in here somewhere, some killer investigative piece on deep integration or child labour or the government sell-off of our rivers. But I was wrong. It's poems all the way."

This passage is taken from Kim Goldberg's new book of poetry, journal entries and photo art projects, *Red Zone*, and on the evidence available in this remarkable work, the voice she says she lost for so long is clearly back. Goldberg is a Nanaimo writer with five books and many magazine publications to her credit. *Red Zone* is the result of a three year process of investigation, contemplation and composition, an artful and moving book with a unique and compelling voice. The Red Zone is the area in central downtown Nanaimo from which the courts sometimes ban some of the more than 300 homeless people who live in and around the Vancouver Island city. Although Goldberg has not lived on the street herself, she has spent years now hanging out with the folks who live and die beneath Nanaimo overpasses and in its hidden squats. She turns on their lives the compassionate yet pitiless eye of a true poet, seeing everything and turning everything into genuine art. This is political poetry at its best, dense, thoughtful and passionate without ever stooping to slogans or rhetoric. The poet's voice is sometimes reminiscent of Marge Piercy or Alan Ginsberg at their best, or of Vancouver's own too-little recognized master poet George Stanley. Like Ginsberg and Piercy, Goldberg writes with a palpable compassion for the oppressed unsweetened by any sentimentality. Like Stanley, she crafts poems that are topographical maps of the mind at work, allusive, swift, glittering with intelligence. Her poems are sometimes as



RED ZONE
poems of homelessness
& urban decay
by Kim Goldberg
September 2009
150 pages, 60+ photos
Pig Squash Press
ISBN 978-0-9783223-7-3
\$18.95 (Canadian or US)
Contact: goldberg@ncf.ca

uneven and littered as the sleeping warrens beneath the overpass, as filled with human tragedy and dignity as the faces she took the time to actually see there among her wounded fellow citizens.

Red Zone is a wonderful, intelligent and moving, book, reflecting a passionately caring heart and an accomplished poet's talent. Read it for the unforgettable beauty of some of her lines, or read it for her documentation of this province's shame. We bill ourselves as living in the best place on earth, and we are content to leave some of our sisters and brothers to die on the street. In the face of such linked boosterism and heartlessness, we need artists with the kind of technical power and human decency Goldberg displays throughout her impressive performance in *Red Zone*. Her ambitions, both aesthetic and political, are sizable, and she accomplishes much of the task she sets for herself in another of the journal entries included in the book:

"I want to learn if utterance can change the thing being spoken about. Will these mastodon columns release their hallowed souls? Will Leonard's mashed-in nose become a cactus-dotted canyon sheltering a secret village? One never knows these things if poetry won't leave the haven of the coffeehouse, won't stand on the precipice, wind-smacked, tongue-kissing the infinite."

Shelley was wrong, or at least caving in to the wishful thinking that is such an abiding temptation in our efforts for social transformation. Poets are not the legislators of the world, acknowledged or unacknowledged. They are, however, sometimes the world's best, most anguished voice in the face of the near-inutterable suffering we inflict on each other in our prosier moments. Kim Goldberg has found her voice, and Canada

should be glad.

Kim Goldberg is an award-winning poet, journalist and author of six books. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies around the world. She has lived in Nanaimo for more than thirty years.. ✱

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Scrappy East Van Theatre Looks To Its Grassroots

by *Norah Holtby*

In 16 years, Theatre In the Raw's had its share of ups and downs. "The irony," observes artistic director Jay Hamburger, "is that, when the economy takes a turn, governments cut back on the arts. But that's when people need encouragement the most, and traditionally theatre; especially musicals, fill that role." Working with former journalist Bob Sarti, and BC Entertainment Hall of Fame inductee Bill Sample, Theatre In the Raw has undertaken an ambitious series of 3 musicals titled *Untold Stories of Vancouver*.

The first show, *Bruce – The Musical*, portrayed union member turned City Councillor Bruce Erikson's, efforts to raise the dignity of the Downtown Eastside. As often is the case, Theatre In the Raw was strapped for funds and hungry for exposure, so Sarti took advantage of the civic election as a way to promote the show. He appeared at nomination meetings with his "Vote for Bruce" campaign. Hundreds of flyers promoting the show were distributed and several people were given a personal history lesson by the playwright himself. The guerilla marketing worked.

Bruce ... was a hit. It was nominated for "Best Original New Musical" during the 5th Annual Ovation Awards. *Bruce's* partner, M.P. Libby Davies made a special appearance onstage opening night. "People loved it," says Raw administrator carol weaver. "Many came back two or three times. They wanted more. When it closed, people were still calling to demand tickets."

The second *Untold Story...* *Yippies In Love* is due in 2011. It's an insider view of the turbulent counter-culture days of Vancouver in the late 1960s and early '70s, when the city was the protest capital of Canada and the Yippies were its most unconventional and effective political movement, challenging the status quo.

Once again, Raw is getting the message out, this time to a younger audience. "We want to also connect with students," explains Bob. "It's important that younger generations understand that the Yippies were a political movement that had an impact. We're hoping to host talks and lectures with the original participants."



This time promotion is primarily via the internet. Theatre In the Raw's website hosts a Virtual Café. For each donation non-profits, artists, individuals and other groups receive a coffee cup icon with a live web link. The intent is to raise the profile of Theatre In the Raw and its supporters. Launched first on Raw's website and then on Facebook, the campaign is gathering steam. "It's been a great way for organizations to get publicity," notes Hamburger, "We've dug down with more grassroots organizing, looking for the bits and pieces that people can afford to give."

While the company inches forward with its current plans, they are also working towards the third *Untold Story*. The *Raymur Mothers* recounts how women in a low-income Vancouver housing project in Strathcona used direct action to challenge the city and a powerful railroad corporation.

No doubt it is challenging to keep any arts organization afloat these days, but the scrappy theatre company from East Vancouver, perseveres. ✱-

The Mass Arrests, the Security State and the Toronto G20 Summit

Socialist Project

The massive police presence in Toronto over this week has been officially justified on the basis of protecting the leaders of the G8 and G20 countries meeting in Huntsville and Toronto. We were told that the creation of the fenced-in fortress, the massive mobilization of police (estimates ranging from 10-20,000) from across Canada, and even the passing of a secret law on policing (by the executive of the Ontario government without reference to the Legislative Assembly and the opposition parties) that made it a crime to appear within five metres of the security fence, would protect our right to protest as well.

This is not what unfolded in Toronto over the weekend.

Thousands of protesters marched peacefully on Friday, challenging the purpose and agenda of the G20, although completely hemmed on all sides by thousands of heavily armed police over the entire march (and severely hampering the freedom of assembly). On Saturday, in the midst of a larger demonstration (estimated at between 10-25,000), organized by the labour, anti-privatization and peace movements, a series of unwarranted acts of vandalism by a small number of protesters against stores, vehicles and buildings, was used as an excuse for a massive unleashing of repression and attacks by police against the democratic rights of both protesters, and Torontonians as a whole. (Like what happened at the Montebello Summit of North American leaders in August 2007, it will come out over the next weeks how widely the police had infiltrated some of the key groups – especially the so-called Black Bloc, knew the planning and participated as agent provocateurs.)

There seemed to be no real effort on the part of the police to stop the attacks on the stores. As well, none of the massive police contingents tried to stop some of the small groups from burning three of their police vehicles. It was as if the police weren't all that concerned with these actions. Reporters from European broadcasters and newspapers reported that this was totally out of keeping with any real concern to prevent violence.

The police then unleashed waves of repression against the legitimate protesters. This included those who wished to push toward the security fence – in an effort to challenge

the militarization of the streets and demand that the G20 leaders respond to concerns about austerity and attacks on poor and working people; those who were simply voicing their concerns about the G20 agenda (with its radical austerity agenda of having the public sector and the poor pay for the bailout of the banks); and journalists and even innocent and curious bystanders. In one attack on a "free protest" zone (previously negotiated with the police) rubber bullets and tear gas was used, and people were indiscriminately taken down, beaten and arrested.

In all, by Sunday morning estimates were that some 500 people were arrested (and there have been hundreds more over the course of the day bringing estimates up to 900 detainees). It is impossible for anyone to know how many of these were instigators of violence and how many were people simply exercising their right to protest. But clearly the mass majority were only protesting and exercising their rights to assembly and free speech, which the Toronto police and the wider security forces have been systematically violating.

The temporary jail that protestors have been placed in is located at the old Toronto Film Studios on Eastern Avenue on the eastern edge of the downtown, converted into a series of cages in essentially a huge warehouse. The jail is described by inmates as a kind of Guantanamo North: cold, dirty and especially humiliating for those who were said to have refused arrest. People have been held for hours without recourse to legal representation, of which there has been a large legal team at hand. Protesters hoping to provide some type of support for those incarcerated, have themselves been attacked, tear-gassed and dispersed by police violence, with several more being arrested.

Listening to the mass media and the interviews with the police and security spokespeople for the City of Toronto and the Canadian state, one would have thought that there was full scale rioting, and that the massive, billion dollar spending spree on security for the Summit – that angered people across the country – was somehow worth it. As part of this, all protesters are being demonized and the police are being portrayed as heroes, notably by the political leadership and the Mayor of Toronto, David Miller.

The message of the protests (and of the thousands who

protested across the week at hundreds of talks, meetings, protests, cultural events) – that the G20 meeting reflected the underlying agenda of the corporations and the political elites, to make sharp cutbacks across the public sector, to impose wage cuts, to not raise significant (or any) new taxes on financial capital and to impose new forms of hardship in the form of higher taxes and cuts in benefits for working people and the poor – was drowned out in a demonizing of the entire project of the protest. The ruling classes in the G20 were doing everything in their power to have the working classes pay for the crisis and their project of re-constructing neoliberalism and the political hegemony of the banks and financial capital.

The police and much of Toronto's political and economic establishment sought to use the incidents to change the entire discourse of the G20 week.

At this moment, it is a point of fundamental solidarity to denounce, as forcefully as possible, the police repression being unleashed against G20 protesters. We insist that those incarcerated on Eastern Avenue have their full civil rights restored and that civilian authorities take control from the Toronto Police Services of oversight of these proceedings. They have proven incapable of protecting – and understanding – basic civil rights (starting from the special emergency powers asked for by Police Chief Blair, and granted by stealth by Premier Dalton McGuinty). The accused should immediately be released without charge, or be freed on bail and given the right to defend themselves in open courts (not the kangaroo courts with limited or no public access that have been operating over this week).

The police occupation of Toronto should end immediately, and our full civil rights – and especially our rights to our city and streets – be restored. There clearly will need to be a full and independent investigation about the role of the police in the violence of the last few days, the role of agent provocateurs and plants in the planning of these events and the astonishing violation of the rights of ordinary people and protesters alike on the streets of Toronto over the last week.

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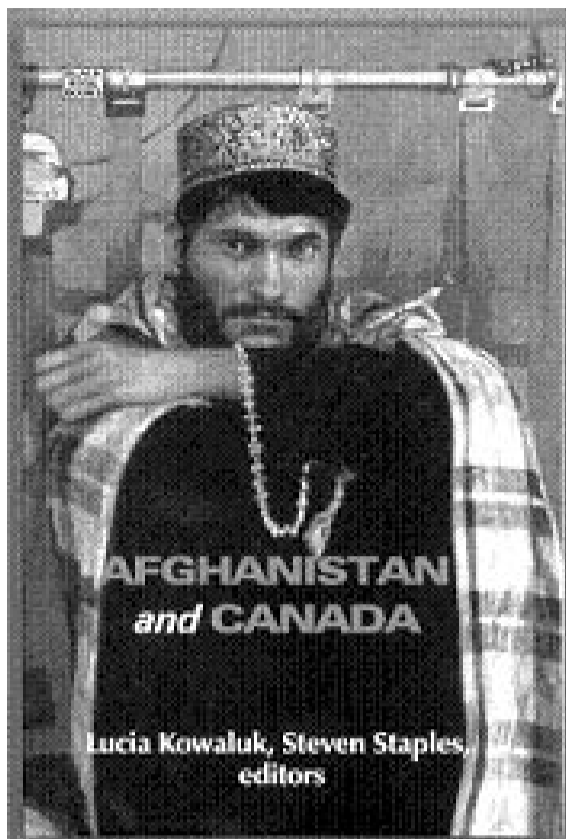
review Afghanistan and Canada

by Tom Sandborn

One of the classic political texts of the 1960s was Norman Mailer's typical passionate and eloquent novel *Why Are We In Vietnam?* It might have made both marketing and rhetorical sense for Afghanistan and Canada to have borne an echo title- "Why are we in Afghanistan?" This collection of essays on Canada's misbegotten "mission" in the blood soaked mountains and plains of Afghanistan is, although subject to the inevitable unevenness of tone and effectiveness that go with a mixed bag of authors, an extremely useful compendium of facts and opinion that should help Canadians conduct the much needed national debate about what our tax dollars and the blood of the young people we send to fight are doing there.

Yes, before any protests arrive at the Columbia Journal desk, I know that Afghanistan is not Vietnam and 2009 is not 1968. However, the Afghan war is this generation's version- a war that serves murky imperial and commercial agendas while its defenders invoke high moral issues to justify the carnage wreaked on innocent civilians. As Canadians, we are being asked to endure another two years of dead Canadian soldiers and extraordinary federal outlays that make dealing with pressing issues of social justice at home too expensive to consider, not to mention the heaps of minced civilians in pools of blood that result from the indiscriminate use of high altitude bombing, artillery barrages and assassination drones. We should be asking more questions about what purpose is being served, and this extraordinarily useful book can serve as a citizens' tool kit of information and possible challenges to the politicians who have committed us to yet another two years, even as we learn from a brave whistle blower in the diplomatic service that Canadian troops transferred Afghan prisoners to Afghan prisons where they were regularly and brutally tortured.

John Foster's two essays on geo politics and energy are particularly illuminating. They detail the western desire to create a reliable client state in Afghanistan in order to secure the route of a proposed natural gas pipeline from



Afghanistan and Canada
Lucia Kowaluk, Steven Staples, editors
Black Rose Press
Montreal/New York/London 2009
\$24.99 326 pp.

Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to India and Pakistan, thus at a stroke enriching petrochemical companies and improving the influence of the American empire in central and southern Asia, while frustrating similar ambitions for influence held by Iran, China and Russia. This was the pipeline route that was being negotiated with the Taliban right up to a few months before 9/11, Foster tells us. His carefully crafted and scholarly work (he is a retired petro-chemical engineer and energy economist) goes a long way toward answering why the Americans continue to insist, under their rebranded Obama war policy, that Afghanistan is the "good war," in contrast to the mistakes of Bush's Iraq adventure. What Foster cannot answer, of course, is why Canada is working so hard and at such

expense to further American imperial goals. Steven Staples' essay on what the war is costing Canadians gives us some hard figures, for a change, on those costs. He estimates that the war will end up costing Canada over \$28 billion if it runs to the projected 2011 end point. This costing includes the ongoing costs of caring for wounded fighters and the economic impact of shortened lives on the families left behind to grieve, and on the economy as a whole. He does not try to generate a similar accounting of what the war is costing Afghans, and it is not clear that anyone in the west has the information to accurately count up that butcher's bill. Suffice it to say that the highest costs are being borne by innocent civilians, as they always are in modern war.

We are told that Canada is in Afghanistan to stop terrorism, but the essays in this book make clear that the western forces there are creating new jihadis faster than they can be killed. We are told we are there to defend women's rights, but the interview included with Afghanistan's gallant and defiant woman legislator Malalai Joya puts that official piety in question, as does the official failure here at home to come to terms with violence against women in Canada. Steven Cornish's essay on the way the Afghan mission has contributed to a disturbing militarization of humanitarian aid is illuminating and adds another element to the complex picture being drawn in this collection. *Afghanistan and Canada* is an important and useful book that every Canadian should read. We are in Afghanistan for the wrong reasons, and our allies there, allegedly democrats and anti-terrorists, are too often war criminals and despots themselves. There may well be a role for Canada in genuinely supporting development and democracy, human rights and women's liberation in Afghanistan. But those desirable and honorable ends cannot be attained at the point of a gun or in harness with the world's new hegemon. We may want Canada to stay in Afghanistan in some fashion, but a fair read of this crucial new book argues persuasively that we need to get Canada out of America's foreign legion as soon as possible.

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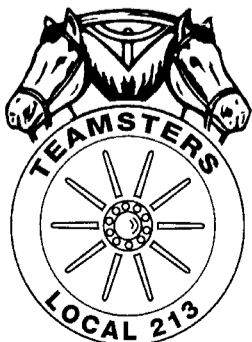
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Stamp of disapproval

Local leaders oppose reductions in postal service

by John Bail

In what appears to be a cost-cutting measure, Canada Post is reducing the level of service throughout BC. In a good example, the town of Castlegar in the Kootenay Valley will now have part of its local area mail sent to Vancouver in a 1200 kilometre trip there and back again for delivery within the town. Over the objections of union leaders and local politicians, Canada Post has decided to ship local mail even if only mailed across a couple of blocks, for sorting in Vancouver.

Colleen Frick, director of communications for Canada Post, explained the move won't impact customers or jobs in the area. "It's not just Castlegar," she said. "It's quite a few B.C. Interior communities. In those communities, we have twin boxes."

"Twin boxes" means that when you drop an envelope in a mailbox in a local mailbox you choose between two slots – one for local mail, and one for out-of-area mail. 'Local' refers to all mail in the local area (Kelowna, Vernon, Trail). As out-of-town mail is already sent to Vancouver for processing, the local mail can be sent with it then sorted by the mechanized system, and then the mail will be returned back to the "local" town with the incoming out-of-town mail. "We're just going to piggyback on what's already there," Frick said.

Most local residents don't accept the Canada Post line, believing instead that service will now be permanently reduced. Speaking out against the change are Castlegar's Mayor, the local NDP MP, and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW).

"It just doesn't make sense to me," said Castlegar mayor Lawrence Chernoff.

"If you're talking about corporate efficiencies, it probably applies Monday through Thursday, too. The machine is there all week, so what's to stop them from sending all mail there, and kiss those jobs good bye here? Is their priority service or efficiency, that's my question"

John Bail, national director for the Canadian Union of Postal Workers agrees "Yes, it sounds benign," "But they're going to risk any weather conditions or any backlog in Vancouver – in which case, your mail will go to the back of the line and there'll be delays.

"We've already done some tests, and it (mail) takes an extra day to process and be returned to the Kootenays, when it comes from the Kootenays."

Further, he has "serious" doubts to whether the new plan is going to remain a one-day-a-week-only proposition, as currently touted, but rather suspects it will become a six-days-a-week occurrence. "How long will it take before they decide to ship it every day – like they've already done in Victoria, which cost 68 jobs?" he said.

"We're not opposed to modernization, we're opposed to bad service. Our jobs depend on providing good service," he added.

The union locals in Nelson, Castlegar and Trail have a petition they're asking the public to sign to call on the public corporation that is Canada Post to consult with the public before making any of these changes. Contact 604-525-0194.

Local NDP Member of Parliament Alex Atamanenko (BC Southern Interior) is angry at the Canada-wide changes proposed by Canada Post that will see more local mail rerouted from rural communities to sorting centres in cities. "This completely defies all logic," said Atamanenko. "In this riding, the result will be that some letters will travel over 1,200 kilome-

tres, round trip, for processing in Vancouver on the weekends and back again prior to delivery on Monday."



M.P. Alex Atamanenko,
NDP (BC Southern
Interior)

Cloaked in the mantle of efficiency and cost-cutting, Canada Post, which has operated at a profit for several years, has yet to offer a satisfactory explanation for the unnecessary concentration of services in cities and the loss of work in smaller communities.

In Atamanenko's view, trucking locally addressed letters mailed on Fridays from Castlegar, Trail, Nelson, Grand Forks, Oliver and Osoyoos to Vancouver and back makes no sense, in part because it introduces unnecessary risks in the delivery of local mail.

The possibility of delays, especially during the winter when poor road conditions often prevail, has the potential to reduce both the level of service and the level of public trust in Canada Post. The BC Southern Interior Member of Parliament is also emphatic in his concern about the crown corporations gradual reduction in hours of work in rural communities. "Canada Post has admitted that part-time and overtime hours will be reduced in our area. Combined with the downturn in the forestry sector, further loss of jobs and hours worked make it increasingly difficult for families to stay in rural communities," he said. "Our national post office claims to „want to become known as Canada's most socially responsible corporation but this is clearly another nail in the coffin of rural British Columbia," the New Democrat MP concluded. *

British Columbians Support More Funding for Schools

The B.C. Society for Public Education recently commissioned a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion to find out what people think about public school funding.

Eighty-one per cent said that the provincial government is not doing enough to protect public education, while 79 per cent said that the government should increase funding to public schools.

Our public schools matter. They are a highly valued common resource. Internationally, our education system is widely admired, and we have succeeded in keeping the gap between the top and bottom students relatively narrow. This is not an accident. Our public school system was designed to give every child the opportunity to succeed and ensure that a family's wealth did not determine whether their child had access to a high-quality education.

So why, year after year, does our provincial government underfund public schools while increasing support for private schools? This creates a two-tier system that entrenches inequality and punishes poor communities.

Currently, most private schools in British Columbia receive between 35 and 50 per cent of the public school per-pupil grant. In the poll, 65 per cent of respondents said they disagreed with public funding of private schools. The Campbell government would do better to invest in the public system and restore confidence that our public schools can indeed provide a quality education for all children in B.C.

Catherine Evans, Director, B.C. Society for Public Education

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Microsoft Security Essentials

free and worthwhile if you really must run Windows

by Alan Zisman

In these columns and other places, I've often been critical of Microsoft, for the company's often bullying dominance of the personal computer industry and for the security issues that continue to plague Windows users. The latest thing for Windows-users to watch out for: scareware bogus antivirus applications that install themselves when you click on a flashing notice claiming your system is infected. If your system wasn't infected when the faux-notice popped up, it will be if you click on the notice, and you'll be asked to pay \$50 or so to remove the so-called security software.

I've recommended that users look towards alternatives, whether from Apple or the any of the various free Linux operating system and suite of applications varieties such as Ubuntu. Both Apple's Mac and Ubuntu and the other Linux variants remain safe from the plague of Windows-only security perils.

But you haven't listened. A Google Analytics report on visitors to columbiajournal.ca during the month of November, shows that 80% were running some version of Windows, about 17% used Macs, and about 3% were on Linux. There HAS been a move away from Microsoft's Internet Explorer only 48% of columbiajournal.ca visitors used that browser, with Mozilla Firefox (available for Windows, Mac, and Linux) a strong second place with 37%.

But I have to report that recently, Microsoft did something right.

No, I'm not talking about the recent release of Windows 7. That replacement for the poorly received Windows Vista is OK all in all, it cleans up many of the things that people didn't like about Vista: it starts up quicker and seems perkier overall, and nags less about trivial things.

In general, I think that Vista users should find Windows 7 a worthy upgrade, but that XP users will find it too difficult to upgrade their current systems. For those users: wait until it's time to buy a new computer.

A few weeks prior to the Windows 7 release, however, Microsoft quietly released software that may be more worthwhile for many XP users as well as many running Vista and even the new Windows 7 to consider.

The newly-released Microsoft Security Essentials is free for home and (a nice touch): home business use, promising 'real-time' protection from virus, spyware, rootkits, and other assorted malware. While the installation checks that you're running a legitimate copy of Windows, no registration or renewal is required. It's not a trial version and unlike some other free security products there are no attempts to move users on to a paid version with more features.

Most Windows computers sold to the consumer market include a trial version of anti-virus or other security software; often, however, users let the trial period run out without purchasing the full version. The result: millions of vulnerable and unprotected PCs. While some users have opted for one of several free antivirus programs, but often these unlike Microsoft's new release - offer no protection from spyware and other sorts of infestations, and in some cases lack real-time protection, only checking for infection during scheduled scans.

Microsoft estimates that between 50-60% of Windows users are running without up to date security protection these are the users Microsoft hopes will move to Security Essentials.

Security Essentials is built on the same technology as Microsoft's business-focussed Forefront Client Security, minus that product's network management and reporting features. It does a good job of running quietly behind the scenes, with a minimum of unnecessary pop-ups and nagging. For example, the program keeps itself updated without any fuss, without notifying the user unless a problem arises. Another plus: it uses a relatively low amount of system resources, resulting in minimal impact on computer performance.

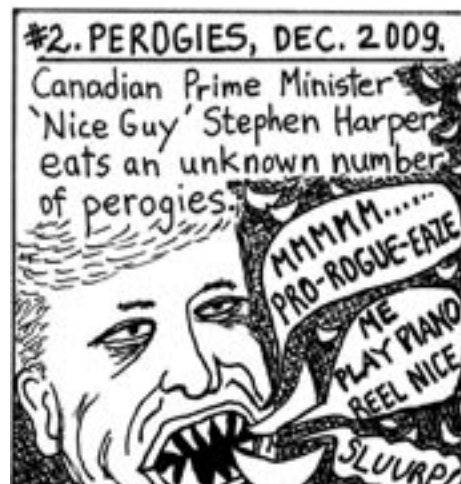
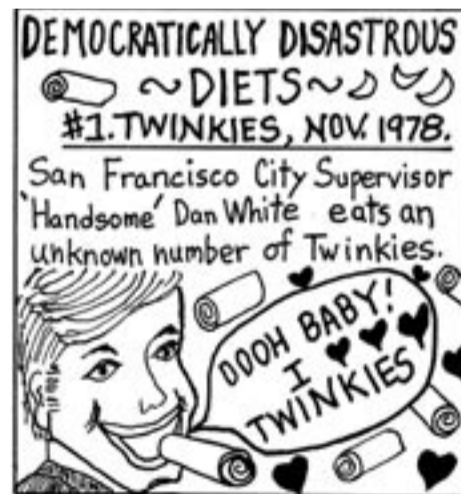
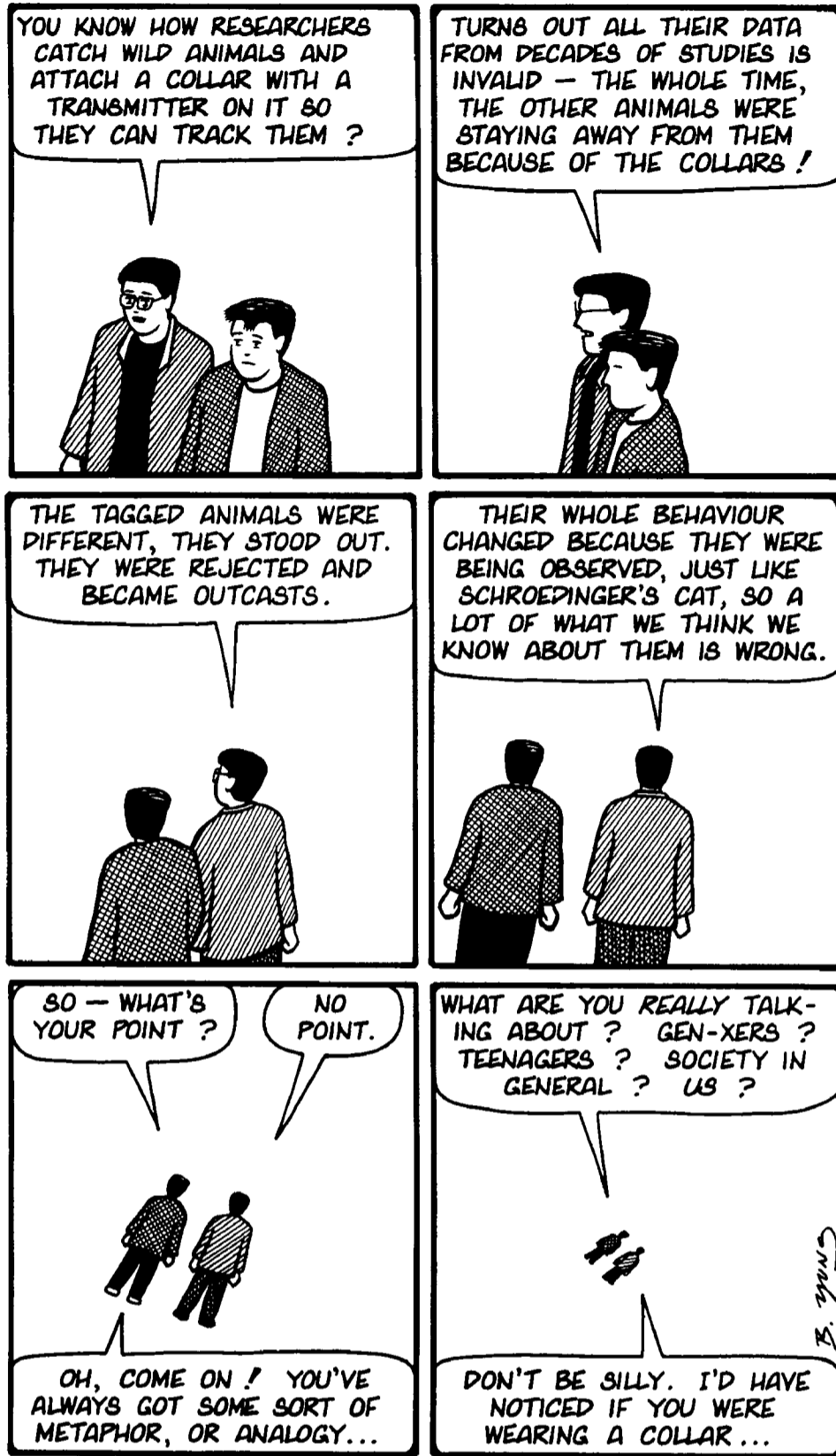
For a free product, Security Essentials does a fairly good job of detection and removal of malware. Microsoft has been releasing new definitions as often as several times a day. Security Essentials uses the company's new Dynamic Signature Services (DSS) feature, which will be included in the next release of its business-level Forefront security product. DSS responds to suspicious behaviours such as unexpected network connections or changes to core system settings and files to deal with malware that is not included in the currently-installed virus definitions.

My biggest concern: At one time, the company offered an antivirus program as part of MS-DOS; it quickly lost interest, leaving behind users who thought they were protected while their security software was no longer being updated. More recently, Microsoft offered and then dropped a free OneCare security product. Hopefully the company will remain interested in Security Essentials for the long term.

If you're among the 50% of Windows without an up to date license for a paid security suite you should check out Microsoft Security Essentials. It can be downloaded from microsoft.com/security_essentials. Note the separate downloads for 32-bit and 64-bit versions of Vista or Windows 7 and for Windows XP.

Better still, however, would be to break the Windows habit entirely and move to Linux or the Mac. Ubuntu Vancouver, for instance, is running a series of (free) sessions where Ubuntu users will help you try out or install that Linux version onto a computer that is currently running Windows. Check meetup.com/ubuntuvancouver for more. *

Stay as You Are – Brad Yung





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