

leaflet

PULP, PAPER AND WOODWORKERS OF CANADA

Government goes from bad to worst

Canadians need a rebuilt welfare state, not a broken one

RALPH NADER, the famous American consumer advocate and perennial presidential candidate, writing recently in *The Nation*, recalled sitting at the family dining table when he was growing up and listening to his father talk about capitalism and socialism. “Capitalism will never die,” his father would say, “because socialism will always be used to save it”.

Nader cited the recent worldwide multi-billion-dollar bailouts of the banks and other floundering financial institutions as proof of the validity of his father’s claim. The bankers, financiers, tycoons, and major investors whose unrestrained greed caused the money market meltdown should have been punished. Instead the world’s governments gave them a lavish infusion of public funds, most of it coming from the tax payments of the bankers’ middle- and lower-class victims.

This policy of “socialism for the rich, capital-

ism for the poor” also flourishes in Canada. It was no coincidence that Stephen Harper, in his first press conference after the re-election of his minority government, announced plans for a similar multi-billion-dollar rescue plan for Canada’s money lenders, should they need it.

Typically, Harper, like most other political leaders around the world, made not the slightest reference to the unbridled greed that is the root cause of the global financial turmoil. Why not? Because greed is not just tolerated in the money markets, but actually encouraged and rewarded. The greedier a money lender is, according to the “greed-is-good” gospel, the better the financial system works, at least for the biggest lenders, investors and speculators. The market’s financial wheelers and dealers must be free to move money in ways that generate the highest returns.

When their avarice goes too far and turns the market’s booms into busts, the financiers can count on their political pals to bail them out. The big savings and loans meltdown in the US in the 1980s cost taxpayers hundreds of billions to bail out the

continued on page 5

side
in

VOL. 46 NO. 1
JAN-MAR 2009

Income gap

Real earnings decline for all but the richest

4

Poverty

BC needs a plan to reduce extreme poverty rates

9

Food

Here’s a completely different way to look at “fast” food

14

“It included plans to end pay equity, suspend federal civil servants’ right to strike, cut off financing for political parties.”

HOW THE COALITION FORCED THE HARPER GOVERNMENT TO BACK DOWN

Canadians had barely digested the results of the October election when the country was jolted into a parliamentary crisis.

The kinder, gentler, more co-operative approach Stephen Harper promised he would bring to his second term disappeared in a nano-second when he tabled his economic update on November 27.

Not only was the update devoid of a coherent financial stimulus package, it included plans to end pay equity, suspend federal civil servants’ right to strike, cut off financing for political parties, cut back on services and sell off federal assets.

Within days, the Liberal and New Democratic parties had formed the basis for a coalition government, supported by the Bloc Québécois, and were ready to vote down the Conservatives.

Labour and other progressive forces rallied to support the coalition. Harper escaped the impending non-confidence vote by getting the Governor-General’s permission

to prorogue parliament until January 27.

The Liberals replaced Stéphane Dion with Michael Ignatieff.

And Canadians of all political stripes were left to sort out what had happened.

Because of the coalition, Harper was forced to backtrack. Within five days, Harper reversed his attack on women and pay equity. He reversed himself on funding for political parties, and he backed down on taking away the right to strike from public-sector workers.

Throughout the rapid-fire events that led up to the proroguing of Parliament, many Canadians were genuinely confused about such issues as the role of public financing for political parties, the role of the Bloc Québécois and the overall legitimacy of a coalition government.

Harper was attempting to weaken the opposition by eliminating public financing for Canada’s political parties, a system that with few exceptions is used worldwide, including in the US.

Canada’s finance laws ban donations from corporations and unions, and put a \$1,100 cap on the amount of money indi-

viduals can donate to a political party. Each party also receives \$1.95 per vote from the public purse.

It’s not a lot of money, but it’s definitely in the best interests of the public to spend that small amount to keep big money out of politics.

As for the idea that the coalition shouldn’t make deals with the Bloc Québécois, it was cheap politics that led Harper to attack Québec so he could save the West. There was never an agreement to give a special deal to Québec.

The real issue is that Canadians want politicians to work together in parliament to solve the country’s problems. And, by Canadians, we also mean Québec.

Some of us may not like the Bloc’s brand of separatism, but the fact is, it was democratically elected. It holds 50 seats in Parliament.

The coalition government represented 62 per cent of Canadian voters, while Harper’s Conservatives stood at 38 per cent.

In the *Globe and Mail* on December 4, Ed Broadbent accused Harper of unleashing “a barrage of deliberately gross distortions.” He lashed out at Harper, his ministers and

his party for spreading such falsehoods as: the Bloc is part of the Liberal-NDP coalition (it’s not); the Bloc was promised six Senate seats (it wasn’t); the Canadian flag did not appear behind Dion, Layton and Duceppe during their press conference (it did); and the Bloc would have a veto on all the actions of the coalition government (not true).

While Harper was telling Canadians there was no need for further economic stimulus, another 42,000 manufacturing jobs disappeared. Fewer than half of the people who lose their jobs can expect help from our Employment Insurance system.

As events continue to play out in Ottawa, with no sure sign of how Harper will proceed, it’s clear his actions will be under greater scrutiny than in the past. And, Canadians expectations for genuine leadership during an escalating economic crisis will be that much higher.

Jim Sinclair is president of the BC Federation of Labour.

Patty Gibson is a communications officer with the Hospital Employees Union in BC.

- *Guardian/HEU/CALM*

Ask not what my union can do for me

BY SEAN REEL INTERIM EDITOR

IDON'T KNOW IF you have noticed, but it seems the world is a bit of a confused place lately. We just get brainwashed into believing in the universal benefits of rogue capitalism, anything-goes free trade and personal over-consumption, and now we are being conditioned to accept welfare for corporations and frugality for the citizenry. I wonder what this kind of whiplash does to our DNA over time.

If there is any Marx/Leninist literature that avoided being burned a few years ago, we should be getting it out for some good quotes to re-confuse the issue all over again. By now most of us have read enough history books and newspapers to realize that, out of the millions of experts speaking every minute, none know anything more than anyone else about what works, what makes the world go around, and what people are going to do with their lives and societies.

It is somewhat a discomfoting thought, perhaps, to finally be aware we are not being led or guided by some kind of received wisdom, but rather fumbling along day by day and pretending we are all experts. But what the heck? For the most part it works. Global shakeups have been with humankind from the beginning. There is a collective faith that eternally tells us somewhere along the way we will hit rock bottom and then, thankfully, we will get going again.

One thing you can count on is your union. As organized workers we don't care whether we are dealing with capitalists or communists or whatever stripe of political ideology. The union is one force that is working for all people as equals. Like any other entity devised and run by humans, unions have their share of human folly, but they are generally much less quixotic than most other political contraptions.

Unions have done more for working people and their families than any other organization whether it is political, religious, utopian, or nihilistic. The orga-

nization of labour has done much, but it is almost always at the beginning and having to fight the same issues every day. They never go away.

I recently read that when the idea of abolishing slavery first made the news in England, the Chamber of Commerce fumed and fought against this insane proposal, which they said "would cause untold damage to the economy". I guess that would be the 19th century equivalent of the "6 bucks sucks" gesture.

The foundational principles of unionism are simple and they work. You may have heard in your lifetime such phrases as: "an injury to one is an injury to all" or "united we stand, divided we fall".

That's all that it's about and that's all that it takes. The power of unions comes only from the level of support of the membership. Whether it is a worker-operated union such as the PPWC or a business-agent type, union power exists only in relation to the level of commitment

and action of its members. So as much as one may say, "yes, I am a union supporter", that is an absolute minimum. The union needs active members,

people who will take the role of leadership at whatever level they can. Your union is your greatest strength in the workplace if "you make it work".

I am under no illusion about labour law in BC and how biased toward the employer the whole setup is but, as I mentioned above, we face the same issues over and over again. As frustrating as that may be, unions and their members must stand up and do the "good fight" everyday. And if you're really committed you'll learn to love it. Support your Local in any way you can.

UNIONS HAVE DONE MORE FOR WORKING PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES THAN ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION WHETHER IT IS POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, UTOPIAN, OR NIHILISTIC.



LOCALS • Executive members report on Local activities at December Board meeting • Pulp and paper industry pension plan is doing well **6**

PROVINCIAL • WorkSafe BC approves amendments to Occupational Health and Safety Regulations • Groups call on all political parties to implement poverty reduction plan **8**

Majority of BC families can't get ahead

Study reveals 30-year decline in incomes for all but the richest

A NEW STUDY reveals that BC's poor and middle class families are in worse financial shape than their parents' generation. The study, released recently by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, finds that fully 60 per cent of families with children are earning less than their counterparts in the late 1970s, while incomes for the wealthiest 10 per cent have increased dramatically. The result is a widening gap between the rich and the rest of the population.

Among the study's key findings:

- Between 1976 and 2006, real earnings (before taxes and transfers) decreased for the bottom 60 per cent of BC families with children, the worst performance in Canada along with Newfoundland.
- The poorest 10 per cent (or decile) were hit hardest, with earnings falling by 74 per cent. However, even the sixth decile saw their annual earnings fall from \$70,000 on average in 1976 to \$65,000 in 2006.

- After-tax income also dropped for the bottom 60 per cent of BC families, unlike in any other province, where stronger tax and transfer systems helped compensate for the loss in earnings.
- The income gap has widened to the point that the top 10 per cent of BC families now earn more than the entire bottom half of families.

The study focused on families with children under 18. These families make up nearly half of the population, and are the main factor in determining the success of the next generation.

"Many recent studies and media reports have focused on the worsening situation for poor people in BC, and economists have warned that this could deteriorate even further in the recession," says report author Iglia Ivanova. "But our study shows that the middle class is vulnerable, too, and much more so than in the rest of Canada."

"These findings point to a disturbing growth of inequality in this province," Ivanova says, "and they

help explain why even during our recent economic boom, many people have found it hard to get ahead. This study shows us that economic growth does not automatically translate into higher incomes for most people, especially for those at the lower end of the scale."

"We can't blame these figures on the current recession," she says. "The most recent year for which data is available is 2006, when the BC economy was still thriving."

The study, *BC's Growing Gap: Family Income Inequality 1976-2006*, outlines concrete policy recommendations for reversing the trend of increasing income inequality and protecting British Columbians from the most severe impacts of the recession. Measures include making the tax and transfer system fairer, expanding public services and social programs for all citizens, adopting a comprehensive poverty reduction plan, and improving conditions for low-wage workers. The study analyzed custom data supplied by Statistics Canada.

BC's Growing Gap: Family Income Inequality 1976-2006 is available on the CCPA's website: www.policyalternatives.ca.

The author of the study, Iglia Ivanova, is an economist and public interest researcher for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

GOVERNMENT GOES

continued from page 1

major S&L institutions. The latest global rescue package for the sub-prime-mortgage peddlers is much bigger, but the fact that it was considered necessary to prevent a total economic collapse is significant. It shows that the political response to the financial crises caused by venal money brokers hasn't changed since the 1970s. It still consists of simply applying quick-fix trillion-dollar patches to the system's leaky pipes, instead of firing the plumbers and installing a new latrine.

Of course it's still heresy to disagree with the basic free enterprise tenet that the captains of free enterprise, when they run out of private money, must have it all replaced with public money. The fanatical adherents of neoliberalism still have a tight grip on the economic and political levers. They keep insisting, despite all evidence to the contrary, that all that's needed

“Harper will be doing the opposite of what’s needed to save capitalism once again from its own greed-driven excesses.”

is a bigger bailout package, not a serious reform of the capitalist system itself. Once we get over this latest downturn, they assure us, it will be back to business as usual.

Well, maybe, maybe not. The recent meltdown probably won't be as catastrophic or prolonged as the Crash of '29 and the ensuing Great Depression, if only because so

many governments have poured so much public money into cash-depleted private vaults. But what Harper and most other bailout-besotted politicians around the world seem to be forgetting is that, when governments in the 1930s finally did come to capitalism's rescue, it was not just by providing emergency funding. It was by resorting to large-scale government intervention in ways that were clearly and undeniably socialist.

The preservation of capitalism from the consequences of the disastrous slump it caused more than 80 years ago was engineered by the brilliant British economist John Maynard Keynes. His radical welfare-state policies were first implemented in the mid-1930s by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose “New Deal” measures created more jobs and provided a better social safety net. (They also served to dampen the growing appeal of communism, which at that time was widely viewed as a humane alternative to job-destroying capitalism.) Other countries, including Canada, then jumped on the Keynesian bandwagon, and their combined adoption of socialism—though they never called it that—led to a few decades of prosperity shared by most people in the industrialized world.

It's not much consolation to know that, in doing the opposite of what's needed to make our society more fair and compassionate, Harper will also be doing the opposite of what's needed to save capitalism once again from its own greed-driven excesses.

Ed Finn is the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative's senior editor.

The complete article is available on the CCPA's website: www.policyalternatives.ca.

Women's Day quotes

“Women are the real architects of society.”

- *Harriet Beecher Stowe*

“Nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission.”

- *Eleanor Roosevelt*

“The history of all times, and of today especially, teaches that ... women will be forgotten if they forget to think about themselves.”

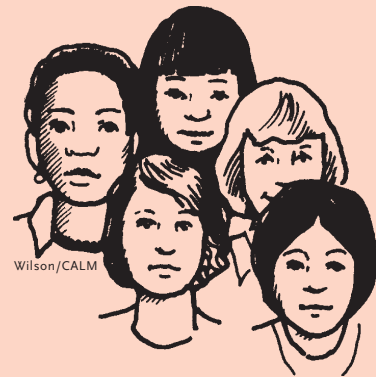
- *Louise Otto*

“A free race cannot be born of slave mothers.”

- *Margaret Sanger*

“If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman.”

- *Margaret Thatcher*



“The fastest way to change society is to mobilize the women of the world.”

- *Charles Malik*

“Remember, Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, but backwards and in high heels.”

- *Faith Whittlesey*

“Men who treat women as helpless and charming playthings deserve women who treat men as delightful and generous bank accounts.”

- *Author Unknown*

“Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity.”

- *Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*

- *Internet*

What's new in your local? Write to your union. Keep us all in the know. Contact louise@ppwc.ca.

LOCAL 1 CASTLEGAR

Celgar is hiring

The membership, who had earlier agreed on the pension bridge pop-up clause, accepted the tentative agreement by 92 per cent.

The woodroom is undergoing a \$13-million upgrade to increase the mill's chip capacity from 10 per cent to 40 per cent. This should be finished sometime in December. Also, the woodroom, which has run on one shift for almost forever, has gone to a two-shift operation.

Believe it or not, Celgar is still hiring employees, both staff and union. We expect about 8 union employees to be hired in December, and Celgar has hired 4 new supervisors.

DENIS NURSEY, NEB MEMBER

LOCAL 8 NANAIMO

Harmac mill is back in production

Harmac Pulp Mill started up during the first week of October and continues to operate one of its three lines. The second line, which was slated to start up in the December-January period, has been delayed until the situation in world pulp markets becomes more clear.

It has been fairly chaotic in the mill with many things that were taken for granted in the past that are presently not available.

Harmac was able to piggy-back on the receiver's pay system for a short period. However, Nanaimo

Forest Products has now purchased an "off the shelf" system that has taken time to get set up; for example, the union dues are just now able to be deducted.

Local 8 has re-joined the PPWC-Employer Health and Welfare Trust, as well as the Pulp and Paper Industry Pension Plan, and deductions from pay are just now happening.

Quite a few of our members have been lost through retirements and people are moving on. The Community Development Trust initiative has been a great opportunity for our members.

BOB SMILEY, NEB MEMBER

LOCAL 18 MACKENZIE

Things are not improving

Local 18's situation pretty much remains the same as the last NEB meeting. Lumber prices are lower, so we anticipate our closure to last for some time. Our sawmill roof is under repair, which has brought back a few members for maybe two months.

I believe some 30 members have taken the government transition, with others who are just short of age 55 hoping this will be available again in the spring.

The last remaining hope on the Pope and Talbot pulp mill was dashed when they [the new owners] decided to put the mill into a cold shut. With that news, all interest in the two Abitibi-Bowater sawmills appears to have dried up.

Most of our members will see their health and welfare benefits run out between now and February, 2009. The company has been good enough to send letters out to our members letting them know we have 60 days to sign on with SunLife to pay for a reduced benefit package most won't be able to afford.

We have a grievance on severance, which the company refuses to pay, because it claims the closure is temporary.

DAVE SERIGHT, NEB MEMBER

LOCAL 25 PRINCE GEORGE

Local is gone but not forgotten

Let me start by thanking the PPWC for continuing to support what is, in effect, a defunct Local. Your continual backing is appreciated more than you can imagine.

Since our last NEB meeting, Local 25 members have allowed its executive to work and choose in their best interests on all outstanding grievances. This has given Local 25's executive the ability to quickly resolve the number of outstanding grievances from 48 down to 13. With more negotiating, we have reduced that number to 6 grievances at the arbitration level.

We have a number of Local 25 people who came from other Canfor mills. This has led to discrepancies and confusion over what the correct value of severance packages should be. This issue is in ongoing negotiations.

JYMM KENNEDY, NEB MEMBER

How safe is the pulp and paper industry pension plan?

WHILE OTHER plans still find themselves maintaining their position, the Pulp and Paper Industry Pension Plan (the "Plan") is doing very well with an ongoing surplus.

Recent events have increased the uncertainty and volatility in all markets and will no doubt result in you wondering about the security of your pension. The majority of the Plan's assets are invested in high-quality bonds in the Canadian market. Although a small portion of the assets is invested in the stock market, the Plan's assets as a whole have been virtually unaffected by the recent declines in global equity markets. The trustees are confident the assets in the Plan are more than sufficient to cover current pensions in pay and the accrued obligations for all active and terminated vested participants.

The trustees have adopted an investment strategy where most of the Plan's assets are invested in a portfolio of Canadian high-quality government- and corporate-issued bonds. The trustees believe this portfolio provides the most effective protection to pension benefits against the threat of decreasing interest rates and the volatility of the stock market. It also ensures the trustees are able to meet their benefit payment obligations if interest rates increase or stay the same. This strategy allows the trustees to meet their primary investment objective, which is the delivery of benefits with a high degree of certainty. It also avoids the risk and volatility asso-

ciated with the stock market.

This bond portfolio has been designed to generate sufficient funds to pay the amount of future benefits estimated by the actuaries, which the trustees have promised to all Plan members. Although this portfolio may increase and decrease in market value as interest rates move correspondingly down and up, the portfolio will nevertheless always produce the income needed to provide the expected benefit payments. This very important feature of a bond portfolio cannot be duplicated from investment in the stock market where, as we have seen recently, many other external factors affect changes in the value of stocks.

This investment strategy puts the trustees in the unique situation of not being concerned about adverse stock market performance or whether or not interest rates increase or decrease. In either event, the security of your benefits is protected.

JIM KING, PRESIDENT



Greg Hall is elected vice-president of the Confederation of Canadian Unions

In early October I was contacted about running for the Confederation of Canadian Unions vice-president position that was left vacant when Julie Carew quit her job at the College of New Caledonia. Although I am a strong supporter of the CCU and believe it can continue to be relevant, I had to consider the previous NEB motion to not travel outside the province for CCU business. I believe this was proposed purely as a cost-saving measure. I was informed the CCU covers travel costs for executive officers, and the position is only until the convention next October,

which is to be held here.

In any event, I was elected in absentia, so I am asking the NEB to endorse this.

The CCU table officers are now from York University Staff Association (YUSA) and Nova Scotia Union of Public and Private Employees (NSUPE), with no representation from the west. As a national labour central, it is appropriate to have all the regions represented on the executive, and PPWC National is one of the original affiliates.

GREG HALL, FIRST
VICE-PRESIDENT

Top puns

Reader advisory: could cause acute discomfort

- 1 A vulture boards an airplane carrying two dead raccoons. The steward looks at him and says, "I'm sorry sir, but only one carrion allowed per passenger."
- 2 Two fish swim into a concrete wall. One turns to the other and says, "Dam!"



- 3 Two people were in a kayak waiting for a polar bear to re-surface. They were getting chilly so they started a small fire in the boat. The fire burned through the kayak's skin and the kayak sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it, too.
- 4 Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, "I've lost my electron." The other says, "Are you sure?" The first one replies, "Yes, I'm positive."
- 5 Did you hear about the Buddhist monk who refused a local anaesthetic during a root canal? His goal was to transcendental medication.
- 6 And, finally, there is the person who sent ten top puns to friends hoping that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. But no pun in ten did.

- Internet/CALM

BC updates health and safety regulations

The Board of Directors of WorkSafe BC has approved a number of amendments to the province's Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (OHSR). Most of the changes will come into effect on January 1, 2009.

Derived in part from a public hearing process that took place over 2008, the amended regulations provide guidance on new standards, practices and procedures in a number of areas including avalanche assessment, environmental tobacco smoke, chemical and biological agents, the operation of cranes and hoists, employer transport of workers and construction, excavation and demolition.

- CLV Reports

Hydro customers will pay more in coming years

BC Hydro customers can expect their electricity bills to escalate dramatically in coming years, thanks to the provincial government's energy policy. It bans BC Hydro from developing new power generation, instead forcing the Crown Corporation to buy more and more energy from high-cost private developers, at prices far higher than those of other options.

"Our electricity bills are going to be hiked, but the citizens of BC won't get any new assets or long-term energy security in exchange," says John Calvert, author of *Sticker*

Shock: The Impending Cost of BC Hydro's Shift to Private Power Developers, released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Calvert examines the high costs of the growing number of new energy purchase agreements between BC Hydro and private power developers, and calculates the impact they will have on future electricity rates. He finds that:

In its 2006 tender call, BC Hydro committed to \$9.5 billion in new electricity generation contracts from private power developers over the next 25 years at prices far, far higher than current electricity market rates.

Major workplace violence survey underway in BC

A major survey is underway in British Columbia to assess violence in health care workplaces across the province.

Workers are invited to participate by filling out a 10-minute questionnaire online or by downloading the survey and faxing responses toll-free:

(http://www.ohsah.bc.ca/EN/violence_in_healthcare_survey/).

"About 12 per cent of BC health care and social assistance claims between 2003 and 2007 were related to violence," the agency says.

"This survey is the first tool of its kind that will help identify priority areas for violence prevention efforts. If you are a BC health care worker, you are eligible to complete our survey and be entered in a draw to win an iPod."

- NUPGE

The time is now for a legislated poverty reduction plan

ON FEBRUARY 5, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative's BC Office joined with 200 other organizations from across the province as signatories to an open letter calling for a legislated poverty reduction plan. Together these groups launched a website where individual British Columbians can add their voices to the call, www.bcpovertyreduction.ca.

Two hundred organizations from across the province joined together recently in a call for all-party support for a legislated BC poverty reduction plan.

The 200 groups are signatories to an open letter calling on all political parties to commit that, if elected in May, they will implement a comprehensive poverty reduction plan that includes:

- Legislated targets and timelines to reduce BC's poverty rate by one third within four years, and end street homelessness within two years; and,
- Policy actions in seven key areas that would end deep poverty, improve conditions for the working poor, and focus on groups that are most vulnerable to poverty.

"BC's high poverty rate is unfair and avoidable," says Ted Bruce, president of the Public Health Association of BC. "Over half a million British Columbians live in poverty, making it the highest poverty rate in Canada. People work hard to overcome poverty, but society must ensure policies are in place to help them achieve an adequate standard of living. Unfortunately, our policies are failing."

"Too many people in our community are vulnerable," says Michael McKnight, president and CEO of the United Way of the Lower Mainland. "We know that poverty hits children and seniors especially hard. Resilient families living in healthy, caring and inclusive communities provide the social infrastructure we need for all of us to be successful."

"People living with low income and poverty have fewer opportunities to adopt healthy behaviours such

as participating in regular physical exercise, maintaining a healthy diet, and refraining from smoking, which can lead to an increase in the number of cancer cases," says Kathryn Seely, public issues manager for the Canadian Cancer Society's BC and Yukon Division. "According to Statistics Canada, Canadian men and women from the lowest income groups are more likely to develop colorectal cancer than men and women in the highest income households."

"BC has been a new home for thousands of newcomers each year from all over the world who are capable of making a tremendous contribution to our economy," says Sherman Chan, director of Settlement Services at MOSAIC. "But poverty is still a fundamental challenge for many of them."

"Over half a million British Columbians live in poverty, making it the highest poverty rate in Canada."

them."

"A rock solid poverty reduction plan is needed, not another program or charity," says Ernie Crey, senior policy advisor to the Sto:lo Tribal Council.

"All faith traditions call us to help the poor," says David Dranchuk,

coordinator for Societal Ministry, Diocese of New Westminster of the Anglican Church.

"Christians too often have responded to this call with soup kitchens and food banks. This is charity and charity is good. But charity alone isn't enough. We are also called to do justice. And that means challenging the institutions that create and perpetuate poverty."

"Poverty is not a problem for individuals, it is a community problem that we all have a role in resolving," says Patrice Pratt, chair of VanCity Credit Union. "We need to make the community investment now and have our political parties commit to legislated targets and timelines to reduce poverty and homelessness in BC."

"More and more we see people who go to work every day, but still struggle in poverty," says Judy Darcy, secretary-business manager of the Hospital Employees' Union. "Some of them belong to unions and many don't. There are policies that would make a dramatic difference."

FOOD CRISIS

Companies across the world are buying huge quantities of foreign land for mass production

THE WORLD MAP IS being redrawn. Over the past six months, China, South Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other nations have been buying and leasing huge quantities of foreign land for the production of food or bio-fuels

for domestic consumption. It's a modern day version of the 19th-century scramble for Africa.

This year's bubble in food prices, driven by financial speculators, bio-fuels and compounded when some countries halted food exports to ensure their own supplies, led to pain for nations dependent on imports.

Alarm bells rang, with many governments alerted to what might lie ahead as climate change and soil destruction reduce the supply of food on the world market. The result, a huge international land grab, raises many troublesome issues.

Although governments are encouraging the trend, the acquisitions are generally made by the private sector. Along with agribusiness, corporations and food traders, investment banks and private equity funds have been jumping on board, seeing land as a safe haven from the financial storm.

Yet from a global perspective, it is difficult to see how such investments can deliver long-term food security. The investors will want a quick return. They will practise an industrial model of ag-

riculture that in many parts of the world has already produced poverty and environmental destruction, as well as farm-chemical pollution.

Furthermore, many local communities will be evicted to make way for the foreign takeover.

The reason this year's food crisis had such a harsh impact, particularly in Asia and Africa, was that many countries had been pushed by the International Monetary Fund and other institutions to produce food crops for external markets. They would have been far less vulnerable if they had concentrated first and foremost on feeding their populations through local production.

Many of the countries that are rushing to outsource their food supplies should perhaps be looking first to see if they can produce more of their food locally, even if it means carrying out difficult measures like land reform.

Sue Branford works with Grain, an international organization that supports farmers in their struggle against the privatization of biodiversity.

- Adapted from guardian.co.uk

Selling out the farm in Ontario

BY RAY BURLEY

“WHY DO THEY bury dead farmers only two feet deep?” asks the farmer. “So they can still get their hand out.”

It is gallows humour, the kind of canary-in-the-coal-mine commentary used by race comedians. Many farmers tell the story because they want to pre-empt what they believe the rest of society is already thinking. It also has the echo of the bittersweet hopelessness of bluegrass music.

After 20 years of farming, my wife and I made the decision to quit. We were forced out because in the world of corporate monopoly of processors and supermarkets, there is virtually no price competition for the food we produced. At the same time the costs of farm inputs—things like fuel, machinery and fertilizer—were rising precipitously. These sectors too are controlled by giant agribusiness corporations that reap usurious profits. For us, the arrival of Mad Cow Disease was the tipping point, but in truth our enterprise would probably have perished anyway.

No matter how powerful a person’s ability to rationalize, there is a sense of failure and loss in being forced to abandon a fulfilling undertaking. To farm is to enter into a union with nature that is as foreign to most urbanites as the surface of the moon. There is a close association with the tenacity and cycle of life, with the weather and the seasons. Each season is a preparation for another: planting in spring to harvest in the fall, haying in summer to feed in winter, breeding in one season to calve or lamb in another. The years flow together in an indefatigable, bucolic continuum.

We bought our farm in 1988 and, starting with just three cows, built a herd of 80 beef cows and a flock of 45 ewes over the next decade.

OUR PROBLEMS began on May 20/03, when a case of BSE, or Mad Cow Disease, was discovered in western Canada. Borders in the US and around the world were slammed shut. Before BSE was discovered, 75 per cent of Canada’s beef stock went to the US as either processed meat or live animals. A glimmer of hope came in September when the US announced it would permit the import of processed boxed beef from animals less than 30 months old. The US transnationals

that control 70 per cent of the processing industry cleaned up. They were able to buy Canadian beef for a pittance and then process and ship it to the US, where it sold at inflated prices. As a result, the profits of the Canadian subsidiaries of Cargill and Tyson Foods increased by 280 per cent.

By fall, calf prices had risen slightly but were still barely half those of the previous year. We, like many farmers, decided to keep stock that we would normally have sold. This meant not only a loss of income, but also the added expense of feeding the cattle through the winter. The crisis was not resolved and we continued to haemorrhage money.

“To farm is to enter a union with nature that is as foreign to most urbanites as the surface of the moon.”

producing food at a loss. It was time to sell.

“What have you lost?” people ask. “How do you feel?”

TWENTY YEARS is barely a heartbeat in history. Yet over that time an entrepreneur built a nine-square-kilometre water plant next to our farm. Pig factories soiled the air. Tractor-trailer tankers of city sewage sludge were parked in neighbours’ fields. Giant wind turbines, to feed the urban need for air conditioning, sprouted like burdocks. Depressed land prices allowed wealthy stockbrokers and lawyers to build monster ski chalets and horse palaces.

What is lost? First, a dream. Second, a steward of the land. Third, a bond with a culture and a community. Fourth, an engine of the rural economy. Fifth, a sustainable and safe source of food.

How do we feel? Relieved. In the end some Mennonite farmers bought us out. The land was not suited for stockbrokers. Too close to the water factory.

Ray Burley used to farm in southwestern Ontario.

- New Internationalist

Technical difficulties

Dear World:

We, the United States of America—your previous top quality supplier of the ideals of liberty and democracy—would like to apologize for the 2001-08 interruption in service.

The technical fault that led to this eight-year service outage has been located, and the software responsible was replaced November 4.

Early tests of the newly-installed program indicate that we are now operating correctly. It has been fully functioning since January 20.

We apologize for any inconvenience caused by the outage. We look forward to resuming full service and hope to improve in years to come.

We thank you for your patience and understanding.

Sincerely, The United States of America

- *Internet/CALM*

Useful work tips

Here are some helpful ways to get along at the workplace:

- If you are good, you will be assigned all the work. If you are really good, you will get out of it.
- You are always doing something marginal when the boss drops by your desk.
- People who go to conferences are the ones who shouldn't.
- If it wasn't for the last minute, nothing would get done.
- When you don't know what to do, walk fast and look worried.
- Following the rules will not get the job done.
- Getting the job done is no excuse for not following the rules.
- The last person who quit or was fired will be held responsible for everything that goes wrong.

Canada is second worst on climate change

A new index produced by the social policy organization Germanwatch and the Climate Action Network-Europe has dropped Canada even further down an international climate change performance ranking.

The 2008 index ranked Canada 53rd out of 56 countries. The rankings are based on a country's current greenhouse gas emission levels, emissions trends, and an evaluation of their climate change policy.

- *CUPE/CALM*

Saskatchewan trade unionist remembered

Hubert Samuel ("Hub") Elkin, one of Saskatchewan's longest-serving and most-influential trade union leaders, has died at the age of 92. Born on February 11, 1916, Elkin first joined a union in the 1930s and helped organize workers at a meat-packing plant in Moose Jaw, where he worked as a labourer earning 18¢ per hour.

Despite having only a grade 11 education, he went on to become a founding member of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) and served as its first president in 1944-45. Later he worked as a conciliation officer for the provincial department of labour and served for 15 years as the deputy minister of labour until 1964 when he returned to work as the executive secretary of the SFL, after the left-leaning CCF government was

defeated in a provincial election.

He worked for the International Labour Organization in the Netherlands Antilles, and until his retirement in 1983, he was a labour rep on the Saskatchewan Workers Compensation Board.

Late in life he was instrumental in bringing to completion a history of unions in Saskatchewan, *On the Side of the People*, published in 2005.

- *CLV Reports*

Strike is lawful despite instructions

Just before a strike vote, two union members erroneously told members of the bargaining unit they had to be union members in order to cast a vote. The employer charged that the union had violated the *Labour Relations Act* and asked the Board to declare the strike illegal.

The Board's decision: The fact that a strike may be unlawful does not automatically require the Board to declare it to be so.

In this case, 28 of 53 employees in the bargaining unit have cast ballots in support of strike action. While it may very well be that as many as 10 employees were improperly disenfranchised as a result of the union telling these employees in error they could not cast ballots as non-members, there is no suggestion this was an act of bad faith.

There is, however, no challenge to the validity of those 28 ballots cast in support of strike action, nor the fact that these 28 votes represent a majority of employees in the bargaining unit.

The application was dismissed.

- *Adapted from CLV Reports*

International Women's Day still marches on

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900s. There was a great expansion and turbulence in the industrialized world that saw booming population growth and the rise of radical ideologies.

In 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights.

The following year, in accordance with a declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Woman's Day was observed across the U.S. on February 28. Women continued to celebrate National Woman's Day on the last Sunday of February until 1913.

In Europe, at a Socialist International meeting in Copenhagen in 1910, an International Women's Day of no fixed date was proposed to honour the women's rights movement and to assist in achieving universal suffrage for women. More than 100 women from 17 countries unanimously agreed to the proposal. Three of these women were later elected the first women to the Finnish parliament.

Following the decision made at Copenhagen in 1911, International Women's Day was honoured for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland and celebrated on March 19. More than one million women and men attended IWD rallies campaigning for women's rights to work, vote, be trained, to hold public office and end discrimination.

On March 25, 1911, the tragic Triangle Fire in New York City took the lives of more than 140 working women, most of them Italian and Jewish immigrants. This disastrous event drew significant attention to working conditions and labour legislation in the U.S. that became a focus of subsequent International Women's Day events. 1911 also saw women's Bread and Roses campaign.

On the last Sunday of February in 1917, Russian women began a strike for "bread and peace" in response to the death over two million Russian soldiers. Opposed by political leaders the women continued to

strike until four days later the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional government granted women the right to vote.

Since its birth in the socialist movement, International Women's Day has grown to become a global day of recognition and celebration across developed and developing countries alike. For many years the United Nations has held an annual International Women's Day conference to coordinate international efforts for women's rights and participation in social, political and economic processes.

Women's organizations and governments around the world have also observed International Women's Day annually on March 8 by holding large-scale events



that honour women's advancement, while diligently reminding people of the continued vigilance and action required to ensure that women's equality is gained and maintained in all aspects of life.

Now International Women's Day is an official holiday in Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. The tradition sees men honouring their mothers, wives, girlfriends and colleagues with flowers and small gifts. In some countries International Women's Day is equivalent to Mother's Day with children giving small presents to their mothers and grandmothers.

- UN IWD/CALM

Food is more than a commodity

Fasting purifies the body, mind and soul

HUNGER CREATED by human greed is an expression of a violent and unjust world, a world out of balance. Fasting is a conscious choice to connect with the body, the Earth and the cosmos.

Fasting, or upvaas as we call it in India, is a vital element of balance and harmony, not just at the level of the body, but between the body, the Earth and the cosmos. Fasting heightens our gratitude and awareness of food, and makes eating a sacred act.

Fasting has been used for the purification of the body, mind and soul. The body is purified by letting it rest and allowing it to cleanse itself through self-regulation. The mind is purified by the cultivation of self-control. The discipline of eating is not just a biological discipline; it is also a mental discipline. Above all, it makes us aware of the sacredness of food, the sacredness of our body, and the connection of our food and body to the universe.

In India, days of fasting are linked to the new moon and full moon and to different days of the week dedicated to different deities. Navratra, the festival of nine nights, is dedicated to the worship of the mother goddess in her diverse manifestations as Shakti, Devi, Durga, Lakshi, or Saraswati. During the Navrati fasts, foods that are avoided are onion and garlic, cereals like rice and wheat, lentils and pulses, spices such as turmeric and hing, mustard and fenugreek.

However, the Navratra fast is a feast of lesser known foods and vegetables. At our “Seed School” in Northern India, we have used the Navratra fast to promote the conservation of what we call “forgotten foods”. The fast replaces cereals with “pseudo-cereals” such as amaranth, buckwheat and millets or the flour made from water chestnuts. The fast thus connects us to the cosmic energy of creation, it helps conserve biodiversity in our farms, and above all it provides us with fasting foods rich in micronutrients and trace elements. The

fast thus provides nutritional balance.

Fasting brings nutritional balance by moving us beyond the monocultural diet of everyday. In the tridosa theory of Ayurveda, health is a result of balance between vata—derived from ether and air; pitta—derived from fire; and kapha—derived from earth and water. When fasting is prescribed for different days of the week, with a special diet related to the fast, it contributes to health and well-being. Thus, Tuesday is dedicated to god Hanuman, born from wind, and associated with vata. During the Tuesday fast, no salt is eaten and cereal is eaten only once a day. These are precisely the measures for keeping vata in balance.

Many fasts are linked to harvest festivals. They connect us to Gaia’s cycles

“The discipline of eating is not just a biological discipline; it is also a mental discipline.”

and rhythms and to earth community and the social community. The Pongal festival in South India includes the cooking of Pongal and sharing it in a feast. Pongal means “boiled over”, to symbolize abundance.

The dish Pongal is made of sesame seeds, jaggery (sugar syrup), chickpeas, groundnut, dried coconut, and rice.

The Chhat “puja” to the sun is also a harvest festival popular in Bihar in which a twenty-four hour fast ends with community eating. Krishna’s birthday, Janmashtmi is celebrated with a fast till midnight and is broken with a feast of diverse dishes, especially sweetmeats made from milk and curd because Krishna as a cow herder loved milk and curd.

Fasting and feasting are two aspects of a balance between discipline and celebration, between the experience of limits and the gratitude for a shared abundance. The fasting takes us inwards to create our inner discipline. The feasting takes us outwards to share the gift of food in community.

One billion people hungry and two billion people obese is a perversion and distortion of fasting and feasting in a global food system destined only for profit maximization against all laws of ethics and ecology, of nutrition and health, of balance and harmony, of justice and human rights.

Vandana Shiva is author of Earth Democracy.

- Adapted from Resurgence

LET US START

continued from page 16

again, principally in England, then spreading to Europe and elsewhere England had influence.

Unions rose from the ranks of the craftsmen (tradesmen). Craft unions began as vehicles offering protection to those similarly-skilled workers. For example, all stonemasons banded together, establishing a craft guild, or union by another name. They established a criteria for their craft and insisted that anyone calling themselves master craftsmen meet these criteria. They also established a system of tenure or apprenticeship whereby the young and so inclined entered the trade and became qualified.

The second event was the socialist call to arms: the “communist manifesto” in 1848 by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, two exiled free thinkers from Germany living in England. While socialism as a system was not unknown in 1848, the manifesto became the bible. “Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains,” became the rally cry.

These two events had nothing to do with one another for some long time. In fact, unions were somewhat elitist, private clubs almost, guarding their domain against all comers. In the late 1800s, when Marx set up something called the International Workingmen’s Association, headquartered in London, England, trade unions generally ignored its existence. Socialism, however, did not ignore the existence of trade unions.

International Workingmen’s Association

The International Workingmen’s Association (IWA), sometimes called the First International, was an international socialist organization which aimed at uniting a variety of different left-wing political groups and trade union organizations that were based on the working class and class struggle. It was founded in 1864 in a workmen’s meeting held in Saint Martin’s Hall, London. Its first congress was held in 1866 in Geneva. At its peak, the IWA had 5 million members, according to the police reports, although the official journal reported 8 million members.

Upcoming events

March 28-29	Audit committee meets
March 30-31	National executive board meets
March 30-31	PPWC labour school
March 31	Resolutions committee meets
April 1-3	47th annual PPWC convention
April 15-17	WCB claims and appeals seminar
May 4-6	PPWC safety conference
May 7-8	Joint safety conference



PRESIDENT

Jim King

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Greg Hall

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

Gerald de Jong

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Bonnie Horswill

ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER

Stuart Blundell

FOREST RESOURCE OFFICER

Arnold Bercov

OCCUP. HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER

Wayne Warawa

INTERIM LEAFLET EDITOR

Sean Reel

PRODUCTION

Louise Soukeroff

OFFICE

201 - 1184 W. 6th Ave.
Vancouver, BC V6H 1A4

WEB www.ppwc.ca

PHONE (604) 731-1909

TOLL FREE 1-888-992-7792

FAX (604) 731-6448

E-MAIL louise@ppwc.ca

Signed articles appearing in the Leaflet express the views and opinions of the authors. They are not necessarily the policy of the PPWC or views shared by the Editor or PPWC officers. In submitting copy or photos, contributors should note if they wish material returned. The Leaflet attempts to give coverage to all locals, and pertinent material will be held for the future if the space is unavailable in the current issue.



Affiliated to the
Confederation of
Canadian Unions

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
CALM
OF LABOUR MEDIA

Let us start from the beginning

BY JIM WHITE

THE EDITORS HAVE decided to continue with the history column. The birth of the PPWC is different from all other unions in BC, and the story is worth reading. Thanks again to Jim White for giving us such an entertaining book.

The following is an attempt at something on paper concerning the organization we belong to, the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada.

Through installments over time, hopefully, I will be able to compile a record of the formation of this union and its early years.

The information is gleaned from our national *Leaflet* and, in no small part, listening to conversations over the many years. Ultimately, it is my opinion of how events unfolded. While many stood up at the scale, only a few made the bell ring.

This is, essentially, a BC story but, like a lot of the BCites, it begins elsewhere.

The drive to unionize the pulp and paper mills of Canada was forged by two

American unions: in pulp, the International Pulp Sulphite Workers Union (the International); and in paper, the United Papermakers International Union (the UPIU). Each held jurisdiction rights in their respective areas, granted and guarded by the AFL-CIO. They were, one may say, the only game in town.

By the late 1950s, virtually all pulp and paper mills in North America were certified by one and, often, both of these unions. Many pulp mills were also paper mills, thus the dual certification.

These unions, of course, were American through and through. Their overview of Canada was in keeping with the American business overview. Branch plant mentality ruled the day.

A bit of digression is necessary to better understand the events of the late '50s.

The first digression is a jump back 200 years to the beginnings of the industrial revolution, especially in England and, to a lesser degree, in Europe. The inventions, discoveries and events evolving led quickly to a broad-base capitalistic system. Having no fetters or bounds, the power was completely in the hands of the bosses. Abuse, of course, was rampant. Governments of the day were mostly unwilling and generally powerless to act, often in the hands of the abusers themselves.

In the face of this, two other events occurred about 150 years ago,

continued on page 15

BY THE LATE 1950s, VIRTUALLY ALL PULP AND PAPER MILLS IN NORTH AMERICA WERE CERTIFIED BY ONE AND, OFTEN, BOTH OF THESE UNIONS. MANY PULP MILLS WERE ALSO PAPER MILLS, THUS THE DUAL CERTIFICATION. THESE UNIONS, OF COURSE, WERE AMERICAN THROUGH AND THROUGH. THEIR OVERVIEW OF CANADA WAS IN KEEPING WITH THE AMERICAN BUSINESS OVERVIEW. BRANCH PLANT MENTALITY RULED THE DAY.