

dominion, n. 1. Control or the exercise of control. 2. A territory or sphere of influence; a realm. 3. A self-governing nation in the British Commonwealth.



The Dominion

news from the grassroots

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A federal court ruling lessened the heavy level of state surveillance that Adil Charkaoui will be subjected to. He has been under a **security certificate** since he was released from a federal maximum security prison in 2005. Charkaoui was held without charge for almost two years. He will still be required to wear a GPS tracking device and notify the Canadian Border Services Agency about his whereabouts if he leaves Montreal. Security certificates have been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada, yet they continue to be used on five men in Canada.

Canadian soldiers shot and killed two children in **Afghanistan**. More than 60 Afghan civilians were killed between January 20 and February 20.

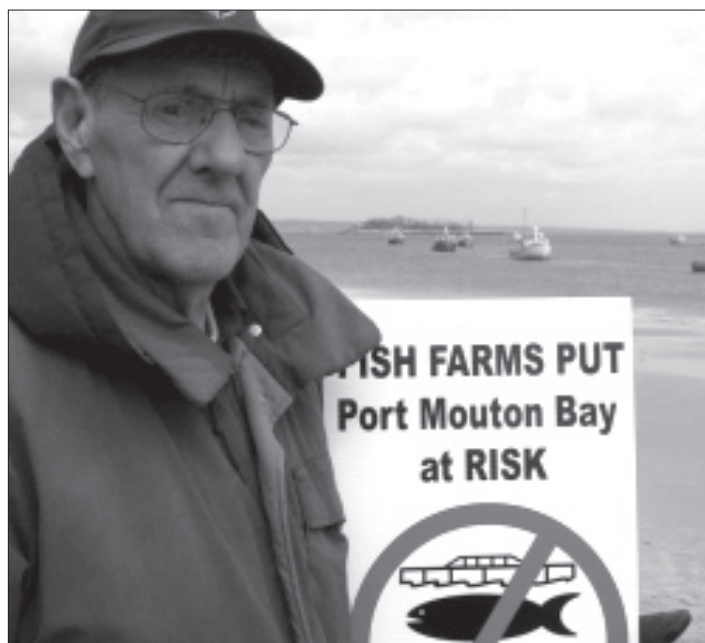
HMCS Winnipeg launched five test missiles at drones from near the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The ship will travel toward Korea for further weapons testing before beginning a six-month deployment with NATO in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, Canada's highest ranked soldier, announced that soldiers will be receiving a **new counterinsurgency manual** prepared for them by soldiers and academics. "The key point is that it's a blend of political, diplomatic, economic [and] societal activities that all lead to successful conclusion," he said.

The federal government released the revised security budget for the **2010 Olympics**. Costs have soared from the original estimate of \$175 million to over \$900 million. The contribution from BC rose \$165 million to \$252.5 million, and the feds will pay \$647.5 million plus any unforeseen costs.

The federal government's Olympic Secretariat identified **protesters** as the most likely disruption during the games.

The government of **Nova Scotia** announced it would contribute \$1.5 million to the 2010 Olympics. The payment will bring



Something's wrong when you have to fight like this just to keep your friggin' harbour," says Eugene Broome, a fisherman from Port Mouton Bay, Nova Scotia.

Friends of Port Mouton Bay

some perks, including hotel and ticket reservations, to government officials.

Canada's federal Information Commissioner denounced the Harper Conservatives' record on transparency. The results of the Information Commissioner's review "provide a grim picture of the federal government's **access to information** regime," said Information Commissioner Robert Marleau.

Liberal Leader **Michael Ignatieff** responded to a photo essay and article exposing the environmental and social problems caused by the **tar sands** in *National Geographic* by saying, "*National Geographic* is not going to teach me any lessons about the oilsands." "I don't think they're going to change. I don't think so because Mr. Harper is totally linked to the oil companies, if not completely owned by them," said Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe in response to the article.

Co-operative Financial Services, a mutually owned financial group in Manchester, UK, announced it will give over \$90,000 to the **Beaver Lake Cree** nation to help pay for a lawsuit against the government of Alberta to prevent new tar sands

developments on their territory. The Co-operative Financial Services recently updated their ethical policy, according to which they "will not finance any business whose core activity contributes to global climate change, via the extraction or production of fossil fuels (oil, coal and gas), with an extension to the distribution of those fuels that have a higher global warming impact (e.g. tar sands and certain biofuels)."

Royal Bank shareholders protested in what the Financial Post called "across-the-board insurgency against Bay Street" as the company held annual general meetings across Canada. The Royal Bank is a sponsor of the 2010 Olympic Games, and finances many projects in the extractive industries, including the Trans Canada Pipeline in Northern Alberta. "If RBC is serious about supporting clean water...why are they financing projects that are contaminating the lakes and rivers around my community?" asked Melina Laboucan-Massimo, from the Lubicon Cree Nation, during the company's AGM in Vancouver.

The US government disclosed that the **US economy** shrank by 6.2 per

cent in the last quarter of 2008, marking the largest economic contraction since 1982. *The New York Times* reported that “economists are using the word depression — a subjective term with no academic definition — to describe a condition of broad and extreme economic distress that remains stubbornly in place for much longer than a typical downturn.”

Nova Scotia’s education minister ordered an end to a racist school assignment at École Mont-Carmel in Ste-Marie-de-Kent. “The students had three spaces in a rocket ship and they had to decide which person they would save among the following: an Acadian francophone, a Chinese person, a black African, an English person and an aboriginal person,” reported the CBC.

Residents protested a proposed salmon farm near **Port Mouton Bay**, Nova Scotia. “The area that they want to take has been so valuable to us for years and years and years, for a safe haven, and it’s deep water and there’s lobster there,” Robert Swim, a lobster fisherman, told the CBC. According to the Friends of Port Mouton Bay, the proposed open net salmon farm would pollute the water and damage the local economy.

Amnesty International called for an international arms embargo against **Israel**.

Posters advertising **Israeli Apartheid Week** were banned from Ottawa University and Carleton University. Carleton University staff took the posters down, stating that they “could be

seen to incite others to infringe rights protected in the Ontario Human Rights code” and are “insensitive to the norms of civil discourse in a free and democratic society.” Hundreds of students at both campuses protested the Universities’ decision to ban the poster.

University workers in Ontario who are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) passed a resolution calling for an **academic boycott of Israel**. “It’s just unconscionable for us not to take some sort of action,” said Tyler Shipley, a spokesperson for CUPE local 3903 at York University.

An unconfirmed report in the *Jerusalem Post* stated that “Israel’s interests in Caracas will now be represented by the Canadian Embassy.” Venezuela expelled the **Israeli diplomatic corps** during the attacks on Gaza earlier this year.

Venezuelans voted in a referendum to abolish term limits for elected officials.

British police predicted this summer will be a “summer of rage,” as people affected by the recession join forces with activists to create street disorder. Among the targets for people’s outrage include banks, headquarters of multinational corporations, and other financial institutions. Protests marking the “summer of rage” are expected to kick off at the G-20 summit in London this April.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a study that found the risk of catastrophic **climate change** is getting worse.

Twenty-six scientists researching the effects of **genetically modified crops** submitted a statement to the US government claiming that they are being blocked from carrying out their research by biotechnology companies. “Technology/stewardship agreements required

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This poster advertising Israeli Apartheid Week was taken down by staff at Carleton University and Ottawa University.

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Life under Occupation in Ni'lin, Palestine

Peaceful actions against the Apartheid Wall* result in Israeli repression

by Rana Hamadeh

NI'LIN, PALESTINE—The residents of the small Palestinian village of Ni'lin have committed to fighting Israel's Apartheid Wall through regular, non-violent demonstrations. Protests began in the summer of 2008, when Israeli bulldozers began to clear the land in the village's olive groves in preparation for the continued construction of the West Bank barrier,* which runs through their land.

The Israeli army continues to retaliate against peaceful protesters with violence: rubber-coated steel bullets, tear gas grenades, sound bombs and, on occasion, live ammunition.

With a population of just 4,700, the shootings of two youth last summer have made the people of Ni'lin more determined than ever to continue to resist the occupation of their land.

The following photographs were taken on July 31, 2008, in Ni'lin, with the exception of one photo, taken in the Ramallah hospital.

**The construction of the West Bank barrier, otherwise known as the Israeli Security Fence, is a "central component in Israel's response to the horrific wave of terrorism emanating from the West Bank," according to the Israeli Ministry of Security. Those who liken the State of Israel's treatment of Palestinians to South Africa's treatment of non-whites during the apartheid era refer to the barrier as the Apartheid Wall, declaring that it restricts the movements of people based on race, and that its construction violates international law. If the barrier is constructed in Ni'lin, it will annex about 618 acres of agricultural land.*

Rana Hamadeh is a Palestinian-Canadian student living in Ottawa; she has thrice visited occupied Palestine.





10 Things to Ask Yourself in Warsaw and Other Stories
Barbara Romanik
Enfield & Wizenty, 2008

Barbara Romanik's short fiction rips along with streetwise verve, displaying an eclectic sense of style and some beguiling idiosyncrasies along the way. Several of the stories take place in the prairies (the author is described in her bio as a "Polish Canadian from Edmonton who now resides in Winnipeg"), but Romanik has an outsider's eye for the details. Consider the way the prose comes alive when she begins to describe the prairie cityscape, as in the following evocation of Edmonton's "slumburbia" in "Caught Up":

At its worst, downtown lets itself go east of 97th street. It turns into a crumbling concrete, broken glass and rotting plywood on buildings,

parking lots, and street alleys behind the restaurants, bars, and sexshops. There the pavement gives birth to resignation, a numbing stench of nuclear proportions, as moldy as cheese. Yet both Little Italy and Chinatown manage to rise to the top of it like cream. The wind and the snow, winter's avenging angels, have covered most of it up and masked the stale odour.

Those who have lived in a prairie city will recognize a trace of themselves in "the pavement gives birth to resignation" amid a paragraph that perfectly conjures forth the bleak atrophy of life in a deep freeze. Intermingling interview transcripts, newspaper

articles, advertisements, and other "found" documents, Romanik isn't afraid to mix genres: a kind of patchwork that suits her characters' conception of themselves as misfits. It also seems logical that this literary mash-up aesthetic would suit a longer form, meaning that if Romanik follows the most common career trajectory from a first short fiction collection, readers will be hearing about a novel at some point in the future.

— Robert Kotyk

Robert Kotyk is the Literature editor for The Dominion.



Cartesian Sonata and Other Novellas
William H. Gass
Dalkey Archive Press, 2009

William H. Gass is one of the senior practitioners of American literary postmodernism, and he comes by it honestly. Of the works collected in *Cartesian Sonata and Other Novellas* (first published in 1998 and newly available from Dalkey Archive Press), "Cartesian Sonata" appeared in 1964, making Gass one of the early experimental writers to join in the movement's mid-century flowering. Gass's reputation was achieved not by appropriating a set of pre-established conventions, as is the case with many "postmodern" writers (an increasingly empty descriptor) emerging even today, but through the gradual refinement of an aesthetic and years spent reading and writing on the vanguard. The book collection in Gass's St. Louis home reportedly contains upwards of 19,000.

It's a fascinating glimpse into the foundation of these techniques, in abundance over the last several decades to the point

of cliché, at play for the first time. The title novella comes soaked in the kind of metafictional conceit instantly recognizable as one of the defining hallmarks of the postmodern sensibility: a story begins, and almost immediately the anxious writer's own personality insinuates itself within the narration, explaining, fretting, and ultimately deconstructing. But Gass's work is not without its straightforward rewards. For example, a passage in "The Master of Secret Revenges" enunciates with glittering precision the ethos that drove postwar writers of Gass's ilk toward the subversion of established fiction writing technique:

[R]evelations are rarely the result of the minds climbing a ladder, each clear and definitely placed rung surmounted foot after foothold like a fireman performing a rescue; they are achieved more in

the devious way cream rises to the top of its countless globules of fat are floating free and slipping upward . . . until gradually, nearly unnoticed, the globs form a mass which forces the blue milk beneath, whereupon the sweet cream crowns the carton, waiting to be skimmed.

Gass's is the kind of work born of an artist's total immersion within a form, to the point that, at some stage of development, the artistic enterprise begins seeking to change that form's rules entirely. The latter novellas are the most controlled execution of Gass's style and, as a result, feel the most accomplished. In general, the novella demonstrates a peculiar insularity, transient yet sustained, that sets it apart from the short story, perfectly suiting Gass's more mature sensibility.

— Robert Kotyk

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The Iggy We Know

Liberal leader backed Israeli assaults on Lebanon, Gaza

by Jon Elmer

VANCOUVER—Confronted by his first international crisis as the newly-anointed leader of the Liberal Party, Michael Ignatieff's handling of Israel's 22-day assault on Gaza marked a continuation of the current Liberal-Conservative consensus on Canadian foreign policy in the Middle East and Central Asia.

On December 27, 2008, without warning and at the height of the midday bustle in the overcrowded Gaza Strip, Israel unleashed the single most devastating aerial attack in its 41-year occupation of Gaza, killing 230 people and overwhelming hospitals with more than 750 wounded in a single day.

Many of those who died were killed in the first five minutes of the bombings, as Israel used a 'shock and awe'-style massacre intended to, in the words of Defence Minister Ehud Barak, "totally change the rules of the game."

Despite a death toll that had risen to 350 Palestinians along with two Israelis after 72 hours, Ignatieff began his message by expressing concern for the victims "on all sides," before "unequivocally" condemning Hamas and "affirming Israel's right to defend itself."

Three days after the attack was launched, Ignatieff broke his silence with a written statement. Despite a death toll that had risen to 350 Palestinians along with two Israelis after 72 hours, Ignatieff began his message by expressing concern for the victims "on all sides," before "unequivocally" condemning Hamas and "affirm[ing] Israel's right to defend itself."



Michael Ignatieff at a photo op with Barack Obama during his recent visit to Ottawa.

J.M. Carisse

For their part, the Conservatives were pointedly silent on Israel's assault as well; when they did speak, it was only to blame Hamas and its rocket fire from Gaza and back Israel's bombardment. "Canada maintains that the rocket attacks are the cause of this crisis," Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon said.

The statements by both parties once again staked Canada's position as unreserved support for Israel, well beyond norms in the diplomatic community, and out of all proportion to the scale of Israel's long-running devastation of Gaza.

Since 2000, Palestinian rocket fire has killed 16 people in Israel, according to Israeli government numbers; during that same time, more than 4,400 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in Gaza alone.

The Economist noted during the invasion that "Gazans have long felt they lived in an open prison; now they are trapped in a shooting gallery."

Following Israel's shelling of a United Nations shelter on January 6, calls for a ceasefire grew louder. The head of the UN agency that oversees Gaza's 1.1 million refugees, John Ging, appealed emphatically to the international community to intervene. "There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone

here is terrorized and traumatized," Ging said.

When Ignatieff spoke publicly for the first time, on January 8 at a town hall in Halifax, he was unwilling to concede that the bombardment should end. He offered only that perhaps "we are approaching the time when a ceasefire will be appropriate," according to a transcript published in the *Canadian Jewish News*.

Indeed, Ignatieff went so far as to cast doubt on the gruesome images of civilian carnage coming from Gaza, particularly children, which had shocked the world. "We have to understand that many of the images we see out of Gaza are structured and created and organized by Hamas," the former human rights professor said when asked about Israel's shelling of a United Nations elementary school-turned-shelter, which killed 42 people.

Ignatieff offered no evidence for his remarkable claim, which - though indistinguishable from Conservative Party official statements - was more than even Israel's spokespersons were willing to assert in the hours and days before the army finally admitted to shelling the school. "What happened in the UN school was not a mistake," foreign minister Tzipi Livni told *Der Spiegel*, one week after the attack.

Ignatieff also used the crisis to reiterate his support for Israel's punitive and devastating siege of Gaza which followed Hamas' decisive election victory in the winter of 2006. "Canada can't touch Hamas with a 10-foot pole," he said, casting Canada's significant diplomatic support for the extraordinarily cruel blockade into a cheap sound bite.

None of this is new territory for Ignatieff. When Israel attacked Lebanon in the summer of 2006, Ignatieff, then a leadership contender, notoriously broke a three-week silence only to characterize Israel's brutal massacre of 28 civilians in the village of Qana, most of whom were children, as "frankly, inevitable."

At the time of Ignatieff's statements on Israel's bombing of the civilian shelter, news reports indicated a toll of more than 50 dead. To that, Ignatieff observed: "This is the kind of dirty war you're in when you have to do this and I'm not losing sleep about that."

Ignatieff's message was clear: these terrible crimes are part and parcel of diplomatic support for Israel's dirty wars. Indeed, the Liberal party made no effort to distance themselves from Ignatieff's statements on Qana as "inevitable." The record clearly shows that Ignatieff - however vulgar his phrasing - had simply stated the effect of party policy.

In both invasions, Israel's principle diplomatic concern was avoiding an immediate ceasefire; in both cases, the Liberals and the Conservatives actively pursued Israel's objectives as the terrible civilian toll mounted - 1,200 dead in Lebanon and 1,400 in Gaza.

While the Liberal-Conservative consensus on foreign policy in the Middle East predates Ignatieff, the crises in Gaza and Lebanon show that the new Liberal leader intends to strengthen it.

Jon Elmer is an independent journalist and researcher who covers the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Intellectual Author

Michael Ignatieff's potent mix of imperialism and human rights

by Dru Oja Jay

HALIFAX—During his time as a professor of human rights at Harvard, Michael Ignatieff became something of a sensation in the US foreign policy establishment and elite circles. He wrote frequently for *The New York Times Magazine*, where his articles were featured on the cover no less than four times, with titles like “Could We Lose the War on Terror?” and “American Empire: The Burden.”

Ignatieff's articles for the *Times* take the view that US military operations constitute an “Empire Lite,” and “America's entire war on terror is an exercise in imperialism.”

His written work strikes the tone of an unflinching observer, describing power relations in their stark reality. “The relationship between the locals and the internationals is inherently colonial,” he writes of NGOs and troops in Afghanistan in “Nation Building Lite” in 2002.

“The unpleasant underside of nation-building is that the internationals' first priority is [...] increasing their budgets and giving themselves good jobs. The last priority is financing the Afghan government.”

Following his usual pattern, after identifying the problem, Ignatieff goes on to endorse this reality as the only apparent recourse for “failed states.”

“Imperialism used to be the white man's burden. This gave it a bad reputation. But imperialism doesn't stop being necessary just because it becomes politically incorrect,” Ignatieff writes in the same article.

“Nations sometimes fail, and when they do, only outside help — imperial power — can get them back on their feet.”

It is, he concludes, the “kind of imperialism you get in a human rights era.”

At that time, Ignatieff backed the US bombing and invasion of Iraq, and repeatedly made the case for it by invoking human rights as



Michael Ignatieff at a policy conference in 2007. “Imperialism doesn't stop being necessary just because it becomes politically incorrect,” Ignatieff wrote in 2002.

Canada 2020

a motivating factor.

In 2007, after he began his political career in Canada, and after close to a million people were killed in Iraq, he nominally recanted his views — again in the *Times Magazine*.

Concluding his *apologia*, Ignatieff recast his support for the invasion and occupation of Iraq as a pitch for his political leadership. “Democratic peoples,” he writes, “should always be looking for something more than prudence in a leader: daring, vision and — what goes with both — a willingness to risk failure.”

During the same period, Ignatieff was intimately involved in developing the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), a doctrine guiding the use of “humanitarian intervention” in “failed states.” According to one insider, Ignatieff was one of three who drafted the initial R2P report. In a 2008 promotional video, Ignatieff explains that R2P is “the idea that if a country is unwilling or unable to protect its own people, if it's responsible for ethnic cleansing or massacres, or if it's denying relief

aid to its own people, then another country should step in and help.”

While R2P is theoretically intended to prevent genocidal massacres, critics maintain that giving powerful countries the go-ahead to invade “failed states” will inevitably be abused.

In a long exposé published by *UpsideDownWorld.org*, Researcher Anthony Fenton makes the case that the overthrow of Haiti's democratically elected government was actually the first “test case” of R2P. Fenton points to a history of activities aimed at destabilizing Haiti's government — which had resisted the excesses of externally imposed “reforms” — undertaken by US and Canadian governments. During the campaign of destabilization, Fenton notes, R2P was frequently invoked in discussions about Haiti.

In memos sent by the Canadian Embassy in Port-au-Prince in the weeks leading up to the coup acquired by Fenton via an access to information request, Ambassador Kenneth Cook speculated that the international community “will have to consider

the options including whether a case can be made for [R2P].”

The government of Canada has refused to release uncensored memos from the time of the coup itself.

In February 2004, Canadian troops invaded Haiti while President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was physically removed from the country by US Special Forces. Most elected officials were forced into hiding. The violence that followed dwarfed even the most exaggerated human rights concerns cited to justify the coup.

A study by *The Lancet*, a top international medical journal, estimated 8,000 people were murdered and 35,000 were raped in the post-coup period. During the same time, Canada had been overseeing Haiti's police force, which was a principle source of post-coup violence.

Since the 2004 coup, Haiti has seldom been mentioned by R2P advocates. Fenton writes, “Dozens of papers, panels, symposiums, and conferences seem to have studiously avoided Haiti

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Crude Business in Colombia

Alberta's oil and gas sector gets behind the Free Trade push

by Dawn Paley

BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA—When Minister of International Trade Stockwell Day signed the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in Peru on November 21, it was a happy day for Canada's oil and gas sector, but the deal was celebrated by its signatories as a landmark for human rights and democracy in Colombia.

"Deepening both economic and political engagement between our countries is the best way Canadians can support the citizens of Colombia in their efforts to create a safer and more prosperous democracy," said Prime Minister Stephen Harper at the signing ceremony.

As Day's pen slid across paper in Peru, a massive mobilization of popular movements had taken over the central plaza in Colombia's capital. The protests in Bogotá — known as a Minga, and spearheaded by Indigenous peoples — were the culmination of over six weeks of demonstrations across the country.

Crystal clear among the demands of the tens of thousands mobilizing in Bogotá was the immediate end to all FTAs and an end to the economic system these deals represent.

"Free Trade Agreements are never for the benefit of the people," says Rafael Coicué, a Nasa Indigenous leader from Cauca, in southwest Colombia, who participated in the Minga. "These agreements are shaped by economic interests at the cost of life and sovereignty."

The Canada-Colombia FTA was negotiated in secret, and the texts of the talks were only made public at the time of the signing ceremony. And, having signed the FTA with Colombia, the Harper government evened the score with the Bush Administration in the US: both governments have now signed the agreement, but neither one has yet ratified the deal.

According to Foreign Affairs Canada, bilateral trade with



Collage based on stickers seen in Bogotá.

Moira Peters

Colombia in 2007 totaled \$1.14 billion, making it the fourth most important destination for Canadian trade in Latin America.

Along with select exporters, Canada's extractive industries are among the sectors that will cash in on the FTA with Colombia. In fact, a briefing put together by Alberta's Department of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations calculates that exports from Alberta to Colombia averaged \$48 million per year from 2002–2006. Almost half of Alberta's exports to Colombia in 2006 consisted of wheat and other crops, oil and gas equipment, and transportation equipment.

More than 20 oil and gas companies from Alberta are currently active in Colombia, including Nexen, Enbridge and Petrominerales.

Enbridge owns 24.7 per cent of Oleoducto Central SA (OCENSA), the company that controls the largest pipeline system in Colombia. The outstanding portion of OCENSA is owned by Ecopetrol (Colombia's national oil company), TOTAL, BP and Triton Pipeline Colombia. Enbridge has been involved in the project since 1994, and today is

responsible for operations along Colombia's largest pipeline.

The company runs a Corporate Social Responsibility campaign, but according to its own power-point presentation, they are "prepared for some NGO questioning" relating to their operations in Colombia.

Seventeen military bases and more than 1,400 soldiers, airmen and marines are stationed near the 820-kilometre-long pipeline. Enbridge claims that the constitution of Colombia requires them to have military personnel guarding their operations. Colombia's military has recently come under international scrutiny because of the "false positives" scandal, in which civilians killed by the army were dressed up to resemble guerrillas.

In 1998, the OCENSA pipeline was bombed by the National Liberation Army (ELN), a guerrilla group active in Colombia's northeast. Seventy-one people were killed and many hundreds were wounded in the blast.

Amnesty International condemned the blasts as a "flagrant violation of international humanitarian law," and later revealed OCENSA was transferring arms to the XIV Brigade of the Colombian army, as well

as employing a private security company whose operations aggravated the human-rights situation for civilians living in the area near the pipeline.

"The relation with Israeli private security companies is potentially of concern given that in the past such companies have provided mercenaries, of Israeli and British and German nationality, to train paramilitary organizations operating under the control of the XIV Brigade," said Amnesty International.

Paramilitary activity along the OCENSA pipeline led to an eventual payout of victims by BP, which was then operating the pipeline. BP now carries out oil production and exploration in Colombia, and maintains a smaller stake in the OCENSA pipeline.

Nexen, for its part, has a non-operational stake in oil production in Colombia. "It is not a focus area for us and we have about eight to 10 people in the country," wrote Carla Yuill, Nexen's Manager of Corporate Communications, in an email to Edmonton's *Vue Weekly*. Nexen currently produces about 5,000 net barrels a day in Colombia.

John Wright is the president and CEO of Petrobank, which has operations spanning BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and Petrominerales, which produces oil in the Llanos area of Colombia, a region encompassing the departments of Arauca, Casanare, Vichada and Meta. The company is also exploring in Putumayo and Neiva, where operations net about 20,000 barrels daily and employ upwards of 130 people, plus a large number of contractors.

Wright has been working in Colombia since 1992, and he has yet to encounter the problems others have experienced in Colombia. "You find you'll have exactly the same security issues you'd have in parts of Miami, or certainly in places like Caracas, or probably in a place like Lagos," he says.

The day before Wright talked to *Vue*, 10 people were kidnapped by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Meta, one of the departments where Petrominerales is active.

Nonetheless, according to Wright, "It's very calm where we are... Colombia is one of the most transparent places on earth to do business; it's as clean as Alberta when it comes to the oil industry," he says.

He has strongly advocated for the passage of the FTA, and he testified before the Standing Committee on International Trade's hearings about the deal.

"We're huge supporters of [the Canada-Colombia FTA]. I think Canada has an enormous role to play; we can show the world how you can do things with rational regulations, rational oversight and transparent business practices, and Colombia fits into that mould," Wright told *The Dominion*.

Bilateral trade with Colombia in 2007 totaled \$1.14 billion, making it the fourth most important destination for Canadian trade in Latin America.

Not everyone agrees with Wright's perspective. Gustavo Triana, the second vice-president of the Colombian United Workers Federation (CUT) and a former Secretary of the Energy & Mining Sector, says that, with relation to the oil and gas sector in Colombia, "What the Free Trade Agreements do is ... stipulate that the services and engineering that is today done by [Colombian] nationals will be instead done by foreigners, by bringing in firms and technicians that displace ours, and removing national control mechanisms."

Resistance to the passage of an FTA between Canada and Colombia goes beyond popular movements and trade unionists in Colombia. After months of

hearings on the agreement, the Standing Committee on International Trade issued its report to the government, in which it recommended an FTA with Colombia not be signed.

"The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada maintain close ties with Colombia without signing a free trade agreement until there is confirmation that the improvements noted are maintained, including continued improvement as regards displacement, labour law and accountability for crime, and until the Colombian government shows a more constructive attitude to human rights groups in the country," reads the report.

Among the strongest voices of opposition to FTAs in North America are those of labour, especially the AFL-CIO in the US and the Canadian Labour Congress.

Colombia is the world's most dangerous place to be a trade unionist. Since 1996, Colombia's National Trade Union School (ENS) has recorded the assassinations of 2,690 trade unionists. According to Triana, these numbers include 135 workers in the oil and gas sector.

ENS numbers show that in 2008, 46 trade union members were assassinated, 157 were threatened, 15 were arbitrarily detained, 13 taken hostage and four were disappeared.

"The union movement is pretty strong in Colombia and I don't see [unionists] being persecuted in any way. The US side of it, of course, it's all just a big political sham, it's the AFL-CIO who are against the Colombia Free Trade Agreement," counters Wright.

"None of the Canadian companies linked to the oil sector ... have unions, and the reason is simple — they rely on third parties for labour, subcontracting; they don't hire [employees] directly and in that way get around union organizing," says Triana.

In addition to being a dangerous place for trade unionists, Colombia is home to a growing population of over four million internally displaced people, and plays host to irregular armed

groups ranging from the FARC and ELN to paramilitary groups. Colombia is the hemisphere's largest recipient of "aid" money from United States though Plan Colombia, most of which goes towards military spending.

The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, modelled on the Russell Tribunals that took place after the Vietnam war, spent three years studying the role of multinational corporations in Colombia over the last three years. A Nobel Laureate and a number of European supreme court justices issued the verdict of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal last summer. Though no Canadian oil companies were named in the verdict, other extractive companies were denounced for their participation in human-rights violations.

"Colombia seems to be, in one sense, like a true institutional political laboratory where the interests of national and international economic actors are fully defended through the state's abandonment of its functions and its constitutional duty to protect the dignity and life of the population, to which instead the state applies the Colombian version of the doctrine of national security," reads the verdict.

"It is not true that terror is an enemy of development of capital in Colombia, in fact, the opposite is true: there is terror so that transnational corporate and Canadian capital can develop their interests, because terror creates cheap access to the means of exploitation and production," says Manuel Rozental, a Colombian surgeon who has lived in Canada.

It is expected that the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement will be tabled in Parliament before the spring. Whether or not Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff will direct the Liberals to vote against the deal — previous leader Stephane Dion promised during the election campaign that he would not support the FTA — is not known.

A version of this article was previously published in Edmonton's Vue Weekly.

Dawn Paley is a contributing editor with The Dominion.

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Blows to Barrick

Back-to-back setbacks scuff gold miner's shine

by Sakura Saunders

"There is no business today of any scope, of any size, in a civilized society that can make false claims without being exposed to penalties."

—Peter Munk, Chairman and Founder, Barrick Gold

Norway's Ministry of Finance announced on January 30 that it would exclude mining giant Barrick Gold from the country's pension fund for ethical reasons. One week later, another blow to Barrick, this time in Australia, occurred when a judge ruled in favor of Wiradjuri Traditional Owner Neville "Chappy" Williams, granting an injunction restraining the proposed expansion of Barrick Gold's mine in Lake Cowal, New South Wales. More significant than the \$200 million divestment or the delay in Lake Cowal mine's expansion, is the insight into Barrick's behavior that these rulings expose.

While the Norwegian Council of Ethics full recommendation mentions conflicts involving Barrick in Chile, Tanzania, and the Philippines, the panel acknowledged that, "due to limited resources," it restricted its investigation of Barrick to the Porgera mine in Papua New Guinea. The Porgera

"It's got to be bad news for Canada when a foreign government says it's going to sell its shares in a Canadian company they figure is unethical."

mine has been a prime target for criticism because Barrick dumps its mine waste directly into the river system, a practice banned in almost every country in the world.

Barrick boasts in its Porgera Mine Responsibility Report that its "environmental specialists routinely monitor the land, air and water," claiming that environmental performance data tables are available on its website.

Norway's Council on Ethics found — after multiple requests — that Barrick "does not

publish any figures relating to the discharges from the Porgera mine and provides little information in general on the environmental aspects of the operation."

Thus, relying on data from 1999, instead of discrediting Barrick's claims that it "follows a government-approved environmental management and monitoring program," the Council criticized the standards of that program and noted that there is only one compliance point — 165 km downstream from the mine.

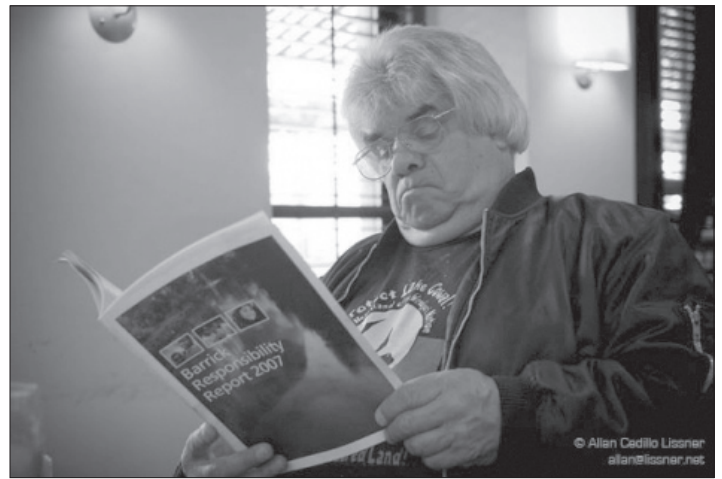
The Council also found Barrick's claim that "there are no irreversible significant and adverse chemical impacts on this river system" was not credible, noting that "all surveys [that the Council] has had access to show an unambiguous trend of elevated heavy metal concentrations in the sediments."

Barrick asserts that "health risk assessments and medical assessments of downriver populations have been conducted and interim reports are posted from time to time. [Barrick does] not believe that there is evidence of health risks to the downstream populations."

Not only was the Council unable to find any scientific reports on human health since Barrick started to manage the

mine, but through its own investigations of the mine site, the Council found that those living near the site were in direct contact with mine waste: through footpaths, gardens, alluvial mining, and water collection facilities.

In addition, the Council noted that local residents themselves have "no access to information regarding the content of hazardous substances in the tailings, air emissions and air quality, or the quality of the drinking water."



Neville "Chappy" Williams reads Barrick's Social Responsibility Report after flying from Australia to condemn Barrick at their Annual General Meeting in Toronto, Canada. Williams, a traditional land owner and Wiradjuri elder, is the spokesperson for a group that holds the only continuing Native Title claim to that area.

Allan Cedillo Lissner

"Barrick's operation of the Porgera mine entails an unacceptable risk of extensive and irreversible damage to the natural environment... reinforced by the lack of openness and transparency in the company's environmental reporting," reads the Council's final report.

"It's unbelievably embarrassing," admits Canada's Green Party deputy leader Adriane Carr. "It's got to be bad news for Canada when a foreign government says it's going to sell its shares in a Canadian company they figure is unethical."

All the more embarrassing is that Barrick's chairman Peter Munk recently received the Order of Canada, Canada's highest civilian honor.

Within a few weeks of Norway's announcement, the Porgera MP Phillip Kikala made calls to impose a state of emergency in Porgera, motivated by situation reports presented to him by Barrick (PNG) Limited. The National Executive Council has now made a call-out for a combined defense force and police operation in Porgera including five mobile forces and one platoon at a cost of 12 million PNG Kina.

According to ABC Australia,

"Armed men have been holding up trucks carrying supplies for the mine and businesses in Porgera." But Jethro Tulin of Porgera Alliance, a coalition of landowners and human rights defenders, believes the real lawlessness is reflected in the environmental and human rights abuses committed by Barrick. In a press statement he demands the PNG government and Barrick "immediately start to address the catastrophic problem pro-actively rather than over-reacting with high level security installations and branding it as a law-and-order problem... Ordinary people are already victims of what has gone wrong."

A week following Norway's divestment, Barrick had another setback when the proposed expansion of their Lake Cowal mine was turned down in New South Wales' Land and Environment Court.

Barrick spokesman Bill Shallvey said that the company would appeal the decision, adding that the company had taken the appropriate avenues to seek approval to modify the gold mine.

History reveals a different story.

This is the third injunction

that Wiradjuri Elder Neville “Chappy” Williams has won against Barrick Gold. Before Barrick constructed the mine, Williams won an injunction on the grounds that the Wiradjuri relics were being damaged without any “Consent to Destroy.”

The latest injunction is a small victory in relation to the larger struggle for Native Title recognition in the Lake Cowal Area.

Williams, who applied for this and previous injunctions, is also the spokesperson for the Mooka/Kalara United Families claim group, which represents over

with five unauthorized Wiradjuri,” Williams explained to a roomful of shareholders at Barrick’s Annual General Meeting last year.

“Barrick claims a good record in negotiating with Wiradjuri, but this is not true and the main negotiator, Percy Knight, was on a suspended sentence for fraud when he signed the deal. Now, the entire Wiradjuri nation is supposedly bound to this agreement but no one else can see it, even though we have tried to get a copy under Freedom of Information.”

The group that Barrick had negotiated with, the “Wiradjuri Condobolin Native Title Claim

relationship.”

Neville has made several attempts to get a copy of the ancillary deed and other documents like a full inventory of artefacts collected at Lake Cowal, but Barrick claims that the deed is “Commercial-in-Confidence.”

The “Wiradjuri People” have since discontinued their title claim to Lake Cowal, leaving Chappy’s group as the sole native title claimant to the Lake Cowal area.

“They couldn’t prove their connection to the land, so they just took the money and ran,” explained Williams when asked about why the “Wiradjuri People” discontinued their land claim.

“They claim to be Wiradjuri elders, but they signed a consent to destroy Aboriginal objects. How could they do that? They are really just sellouts who have signed away our ancient cultural heritage.”

Under duress, the Mooka and Kalara United Families group will present an anthropological report in March and make a case for their Native Title claim. The Federal court will give further directions on the Title Claim case in May.

If successful, there is still a worry that the traditional owners will be unable to stop Barrick’s mine on their land, which was

once used for ceremonies and known as the “Sacred Heartland of the Wiradjuri Nation.”

According to Australia’s Native Title Act, when conflicts arise over land use, traditional owners have no right to a veto, they can only negotiate on how to say yes.

“If the traditional owners refuse to say yes, the matter goes to arbitration and the government can override it in ‘the national interest.’” The Native Title Act has been condemned by the United Nations multiple times as a racist law.

Even given these difficult circumstances, the group remains hopeful. “We have to fight for every inch that we get; we’ve been in the court for 10 years and are very pleased with the result of this court case,” Williams admitted of the Mooka/Kalara group’s long struggle to save the Lake Cowal area. “But we will fight to the bitter end to protect and preserve our cultural heritage.”

Sakura Saunders is an editor for protestbarrick.net, an all-volunteer news site that networks organizations and community groups organized against Barrick Gold around the world.

“According to Australia’s Native Title Act, when conflicts arise over land use, traditional owners have no right to a veto, they can only negotiate on how to say yes.”

3,000 Wiradjuri people.

Since 2002, they have been fighting the New South Wales government over the native title to the Lake Cowal area, where Barrick is mining an ancient ephemeral lake and Wiradjuri sacred site.

“Barrick negotiated in secret

Group” (later renamed “The Wiradjuri People”) received an undisclosed amount of financial compensation for giving their consent to mine the area. This gives all new meaning to Percy Knight’s statement that “the Wiradjuri people and Barrick enjoy “a mutually beneficial

The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

– the Olympic Charter

What lies behind the Olympics?

A Dominion special issue on the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics



Lola May (CC2.0)

More Than Just a Beef

South Koreans push back against FTAs with Canada, US

by Stefan Christoff

MONTREAL—Since the collapse of the last round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003, Canada and the US have rapidly signed several bilateral trade accords.

South Korea, a major Asian economic power and the fourth largest in the region, has recently signed a major bilateral accord with the US and is currently negotiating a similar deal with Canada.

Social movements in Korea have vigorously opposed the country's succession into the WTO since the mid-1990s and have actively mobilized in opposition to the more recent bilateral trade initiatives.

Opposition from Korean peasant movements to 'free trade' policies gained international attention in the September 2003 Cancun meetings when Korean farmer Lee Kyung Hae took his own life in protest while holding a sign reading "WTO kills farmers."

Hundreds of thousands participated in street protests in Seoul this past summer to oppose recent changes to US-Korean trade policy that was to allow US beef to re-enter Korean markets. Sale of US beef had been banned in Korea since the discovery of Mad Cow Disease in some US cattle. Recent protests in Korea against US beef imports mark the largest anti-government protests in decades.

Opposition to US trade policy in Korea extends past US beef, to the recently negotiated US-Korea bilateral trade deal - after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the largest regional trade agreement signed by the US.

In December, scuffles broke out at the National Assembly in Korea as opposition politicians attempted to enter a locked-door session of the parliamentary committee on trade discussing the US bilateral deal, which remains



A protest in Korea during the sixth round of US-Korea free trade agreement negotiations. fightingftas.org

extremely controversial in Korea.

In parallel with the US-Korea deal, officials from the Conservative government in Canada have been pushing to sign a similar bilateral deal. Labour unions in both countries have opposed the deal, including the Canadian Autoworkers Union (CAW). The CAW stated, "We refuse to enter into a competition with Korean workers for future prosperity. Working people in all countries have the right to job security, fair trade, and economic and social development."

In an attempt to understand the drive from US and Canadian officials to secure bilateral trade deals with Korea, Stefan Christoff spoke with Christine Ahn of Korean Americans for Fair Trade on the bilateral trade accords and grassroots opposition in Korea.

The Dominion: Concerning the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement and also the Canada-Korea FTA, can you outline how this agreement will impact environmental and labour standards in South Korea, Canada and the US?

Christine Ahn: Impacts on working people stemming from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in Canada, Mexico and the US make it clear that extending similar trade policies to Korea will only create further damage [for] all countries involved.

Essentially, economic and trade policy being pushed on Korea through the WTO and the IMF-imposed structural adjustment following the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s have moved Korea from a relatively self-reliant, industrial and agrarian economy to an economy increasingly dependent on exports and international market trends. This economic transformation, led by structural adjustment, broke the backbone of the trade union movement. Today in Korea over 50 per cent of the workforce are now irregular workers.

Trade unions in Korea had succeeded in creating a situation in which workers' rights were beginning to improve in Korea in the early 1990s, whereas for decades under authoritarian

regimes workers were seriously oppressed; now again under neo-liberal economic policies, workers' rights are being seriously undermined.

Past experiences of workers throughout North America under NAFTA and the plight of Korean workers under neo-liberal policies make it extremely clear that the Korea-US trade agreement, the second largest US trade deal after NAFTA, must be opposed.

Can you outline how the US-Korea trade accord would impact different elements of Korean society, for example on the national healthcare system and also on the peasants which have a long history of political mobilization in Korea?

Pharmaceutical provisions that are included under this US-Korea Free Trade Agreement are terrible. Korea does not have the best universal health care system but there is a public system intact. Under the US trade agreement the current list of medications that are available to people through public

healthcare would be challenged.

US pharmaceutical companies have been trying to push for a new pharmaceutical list, which would stack the list with US-patented pharmaceuticals which are so much more expensive than generic pharmaceuticals, putting a major strain on Korea's healthcare system and ensuring profits for US pharmaceutical companies through Korea's national healthcare system.

Exporting the US model for healthcare is a disastrous idea. In the US, there are over 45 million people who do not have healthcare, which is certainly a scenario not to encourage in other countries.

Clearly workers' rights will be detrimentally impacted by this agreement both in North America and in Korea. Under such agreements corporations can simply pick up their operations and move them to other countries that have weaker environmental and labour standards, lower production costs, while [the same companies] have the ability to send their produced goods around the world without paying any tariffs.

Only 10 years ago, Korea once was a largely agrarian economy with around 10 million farmers and now there are only around 3.5 million farmers. A mass migration has taken place, people moving from the countryside into the cities, contributing to growing unemployment rates, as fierce competition has also driven down the wages in the country. Also, there is a massive depression of Korea's rural economy due to the flight to urban centres. This mass internal migration has severely impacted the economy of Korea's non-urban centres.

Under NAFTA, the US ensured that agribusiness was subsidized with hundreds of millions to 'compete' with the small-scale South Korean farmers. It is positive that rice is not included in this agreement because in Korea rice farmers make up the largest number of peasants in the country, who would be seriously impacted by imports of cheap rice from the US. Under WTO regulations, however, Korea will eventually have to erase the tariffs

on imported rice anyway, so even rice farmers will be hit by cheap imports.

The Korea-US bilateral trade agreement is worsening the situation for people in Korea and in the US. The agreement will eliminate tariffs that protect local industries while granting further rights to corporations to privatize further many social and public industries.

Can you talk about some of the main issues that people highlighted on the ground in Korea as concerns this agreement?

A major issue is beef, which isn't currently included in the agreement, however [it] has been used as a leveraging tool by the US.

US negotiators are pushing Korea to remove the 2003 ban on US beef imports, imposed after Mad Cow Disease was discovered in the US, seriously impacting US beef imports to Korea. During this process there were major education campaigns within Korea and also in Japan, educating the public concerning the potential harm stemming from US beef.

As a pre-condition to negotiations surrounding the US-Korea Free Trade Agreement, negotiators on the Korean side are being pressured to weaken laws concerning the imports of US beef. Essentially the US has been using the beef issue within the negotiations as an exchange to allow Korean industries to export greater amounts of electronics, conductor chips and automobiles into the US.

In the US and Canada, autoworker unions are highlighting the major imbalance between the number of automobiles being exported by Korea into the US and the limited number of automobiles that US manufacturers are exporting to Korea; a trade imbalance.

Autoworker unions in the US and Canada are saying that these bilateral accords should only be signed if a certain amount of automobile exports to Korea are secured. Actually, on the Korean side there is concern about importing larger numbers of US-

manufactured automobiles because generally the engines are less environmentally friendly. So these bilateral agreements are flawed on both sides as they are fundamentally market-driven, agreements

Past experiences of workers under NAFTA and the plight of Korean workers make it extremely clear that the Korea-US trade agreement must be opposed.

that doesn't prioritize other critical points such as the environment, health or labour standards.

People in Korea are very concerned that the US is using this agreement as a wedge to dismantle health, environment and labour laws, and also the national healthcare system. These are real

concerns in Korea as opposition to this agreement and are being most strongly pushed by peasants and farmers who have direct, first-hand experience of the impacts of neo-liberal economic policies in Korea.

Korean peasants have really galvanized a strong opposition to neo-liberal economic and trade policies within peasant movements in the country, but also throughout the Third World. This opposition was strongly felt in Cancun, Mexico, during the WTO negotiations and again in Hong Kong.

Essentially these bilateral accords are viewed by Korean peasants as [leading to] a loss of their dignity and autonomy.

Stefan Christoff is a journalist and community organizer. This interview was originally produced for the Fighting FTAs project, an international project that provides a global picture on free trade agreements (FTAs), and insight into struggles being waged by social movements fighting back.

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Paper Mill Seizure Boosts Populist Premier

“Canada’s Hugo Chavez” to be challenged under NAFTA

by Chris Arsenault

VANCOUVER – Danny Williams, the Progressive Conservative Premier of sparsely populated Newfoundland and Labrador, recently expropriated the assets of a paper mill, AbitibiBowater, which had announced hundreds of layoffs in December. The mill had just received generous perks from the provincial government.

“In 100 years of operating in Canada we have never seen anything like this,” said Seth Kursman, Vice-President of communications and government relations for Abitibi.

“We are working on filing [legal documents] as we speak,” Kursman told this reporter. The mill is scheduled to close on March 28, 2009, and the government will assume control of its assets on March 31.

“For 100 years, Abitibi and its predecessors have enjoyed the privilege of Newfoundland and Labrador’s natural resources,” said Williams when he announced the expropriation on December 17. “It simply makes sense that if Abitibi are not going to continue the operation of a pulp and paper mill and renege on their commitment to our province they will no longer have access to our natural resources.”

The threat of legal action because of the expropriation, in Canadian courts or before a tribunal convened as part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), doesn’t worry Gary Healey, a tradesman who has worked at Abitibi’s mill in Grand Falls, Newfoundland, for most of his adult life.

“Abitibi had a covenant with the government from 1905 to make paper at Grand Falls. If they no longer want to make paper here, that covenant has been broken,” said Healey, who also serves as a spokesperson for the Canadian Energy and Paperworkers Union.

The 1905 agreement between the province of Newfoundland

and the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company Limited – the firm which preceded Abitibi in controlling the paper mill and connected hydroelectric power generators – said the paper company could “use and enjoy” the province’s land and water resources “for its milling and logging business.”

The assets, including forested land, the pulp mill itself and the valuable hydroelectric generating stations, are worth at least \$200 million, according to articles in the business press. “We aren’t talking about small-time dollars here,” said Kursman.

Abitibi may be compensated for power-related infrastructure, according to the provincial government. No figures have been released and a spokesper-

son for Newfoundland’s Department of Natural Resources refused to comment on the dispute.

With an international recession hindering the market for paper products, Abitibi exported power from the mill’s hydroelectric station for a tidy profit. “They [Abitibi] invested money on their hydro assets, but they allowed their paper-making assets to deteriorate,” said Healey.

“They were never a power company. The charter that they operated under was under the premise that they’d make paper,” Healey emphasized.

An industry town built around the paper mill, Grand Falls

will no doubt experience devastating economic impacts from the closure. The provincial government has not announced plans to re-open the mill as a public company or in partnership with another forestry firm.

“If Abitibi wanted to run the mill, we could have found a restructuring deal,” said Healey, who believes the company wanted to exploit cheap hydropower to sell back to consumers.

While business commentators condemn the expropriation as a reckless threat to future investments, Williams and his take-no-prisoners attitude are wildly popular with average Newfoundlanders.

The historically marginalized province is currently experiencing an offshore oil boom and Williams, a multi-millionaire cable TV magnate prior to entering politics, is credited with a knack for negotiating favourable deals with oil companies. This is where the “Danny Chavez” nickname originated.

“Williams has done well playing hardball with companies,” said Steven Shrybman, an influential trade lawyer with Ottawa-based firm Sack Goldblatt Mitchell LLP.

“Canadians don’t want to be just hewers of wood and drawers of water. The province gave water and timber rights to the company on the condition that they invest and produce paper,” Shrybman told this reporter, adding that Abitibi’s legal case is “anything but a slam-dunk if Canada vigorously defends its interests.”

Other legal scholars dispute Shrybman’s claim, arguing that the company will have the upper hand if the issue goes before a trade tribunal.

Abitibi plans to sue the federal government under NAFTA, Chapter 11, a controversial clause designed to mediate disputes between states and investors. Critics allege



A broken 1905 covenant means AbitibiBowater will no longer “use and enjoy” Newfoundland’s land and water resources “for its milling and logging business.”

Heather Meek

continued on page 16

Justice Served Cold

Four Atlantica arrestees declare police and prison mistreatment

by David Parker

HALIFAX—It was a cold winter's day nearing Christmas, and not much was stirring on the streets of Halifax. In front of the Provincial Court on Spring Garden Road, a group of people huddled together, entering the court for a long-awaited trial date. On December 22, 2008, four Haligonians took the stand and testified in front of a judge to a courtroom packed with supporters.

The defendants had been charged a year and a half earlier after hundreds took to the streets of downtown Halifax on June 15, 2007, to oppose a regional integration proposal known as Atlantica. Charges included carrying weapons, wearing masks with intent, unlawful assembly, and resisting arrest.

The Atlantica demonstrations numbered 400 protesters and included a militant tactic known as a black bloc that intended to shut down the conference.

Demonstrators were targeted by police and reported extreme police brutality, including being choked until unconscious, shocked with taser guns, and beaten by batons.

George Dalli was one of the defendants on trial. "I saw police hitting other people, pepper spraying, tasers were drawn: it was an intense and intimidating situation before the arrest. I told the officers, 'I'm not resisting arrest, not trying to be violent.' I was rolled onto my stomach, hands behind my back. I was choked, fingers were jabbed into my neck, I said, 'Don't do this to me, I'm losing consciousness, don't do this to me,' and I continued saying this until I lost consciousness."

The 21 individuals arrested that day spent the next three days in jail, the first 48 hours in lockdown.

Leading up to June 2007, the Maritime provinces of Canada and the American New England states saw growing popular resistance to the Atlantica project (also



Asaf Rashid, one of the four Atlantica protest defendants, stands in front of the Nova Scotia Provincial Court.

David Parker

known as the Atlantic Gateway) from multiple sectors of the left, including labour unions, workers, environmentalists, NGOs such as the Council of Canadians, anti-capitalists, anarchists, anti-poverty organizations, families, and concerned citizens.

This was the first time anyone had served time or faced charges for an action against the Atlantica proposal. It marked a breaking point. For those braving the cold to gather in court in December 2008, the story was far from over.

Atlantica is a proposed free trade agreement that would bring goods from Asia into larger markets in the US, lowering environmental and labour standards and increasing the transportation and energy industries. The region comprised of the Atlantic provinces, the Gaspé Peninsula of Québec, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and upstate New York has been identified as Atlantica by the largest corporations operating in the area, such as Irving Oil and Emera Inc. Irving Oil controls regional oil and gas, and has many holdings in New Brunswick. Emera Inc. owns energy infrastructure in North East USA and the Atlantic provinces and is the

parent corporation of Nova Scotia Power.

The proponents of Atlantica hope to create a free trade zone that would harmonize regulations between Canada and the US. Environmental standards, minimum wage and trade unions are all considered barriers to increased trade according to some proponents of Atlantica.

Asaf Rashid, a protester arrested at the Atlantica demonstrations, fears that one result of Atlantica might be lowered environmental standards for the creation of proposed Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) terminals. One terminal in Saint John, New Brunswick is close to completion, and three more are proposed on the Passamaquoddy coast of Maine.

Other proposed projects include a second nuclear reactor in New Brunswick, and pipelines transmitting natural gas from New Brunswick to Maine and New York State, moving straight through properties, agricultural areas and wildlife habitats.

"Atlantica will lead to further environmental degradation by lowering environmental standards and increasing energy consump-

tion, production and export in the region," says Aaron Doncaster, also arrested at the demonstrations in 2007. "We as citizens are subsidizing this destructive activity. Atlantica needs to be shut down."

Out of the 21 demonstrators arrested, most were let off with "diversion," where in exchange for some restitution the defendants do not retain a criminal record. However, four among them still must abide by restrictive conditions while they await their verdict.

"Right now, they can only associate with each other to prepare for the trial, and all of them are not allowed to participate in any protest," says Vaughn Barnett, the legal defense for the defendants. "That's what they've been putting up with for 1.5 years. [It's a] serious infringement of their freedom of expression. They had to agree to those conditions, they were coerced into it during their mistreatment during custody. They suffered brutal treatment by police, plus denial of their rights while in jail.

"[The] defendants shouldn't be punished by police and authorities. That's something that a judge

continued next page



Mallard Duckling

This baby Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is among the most commonly found duck species in all of North America, and can be found almost anywhere in the world. This cute quack is happiest in the wetlands, because much vegetation, worms, insects, and snails live there, and these are some of her favorite things to eat. Generally tolerant of people, every so often this young Mallard takes advantage of human food sources, and gleans grain from their crops to supplement her diet.

—Maya Rolbin-Ghanie

Have your say! Join the Baby Animal working group at www.mediacoop.ca.

Bonnie Dudley

“Atlantica,” continued from page 15

should decide after a fair trial.”

In court, Barnett presented his constitutional challenge, a defence strategy that has been front and centre in all of his defendants’ cases from the Atlantica demonstration. His challenge argues that it would be unfair to make the defendants go to the trial proper, based on the way they were mistreated, which he considers extra-judicial punishment by police and jail authorities.

All four defendants had the opportunity, through Barnett’s examination, to detail the extent of their mistreatment by police and jail authorities from the time of their arrest until their release from

prison three days later.

Dalli recounted the three days in jail. For the first 24 hours he had only one power bar and one bottle of water given to him, the same as all the others. Despite jail policy being fully described in a handbook that prisoners are supposed to see, including how to successfully make a complaint to the jail authorities, none of the arrestees knew where the handbook was, nor that it existed, until the court date in December.

“We’re not going to find it or ask for it if we don’t know it exists,” said Dalli.

In December, the defence presented evidence of mistreat-

ment by police and prison authorities. On the next trial date in August 2009, the Crown will respond with its own evidence. Barnett assumes the Crown will be calling police and jail officials. At that point the judge will decide whether Barnett’s constitutional challenge will succeed.

If it succeeds, the charges will be dropped on the basis that it would be unfair to make the defendants go to the trial proper. If not, it might succeed partially, which could mean certain charges are dropped or sentences are reduced.

The Judge might decide to continue with the trial and

consider the constitutional breaches at the sentencing stage.

Rashid is unsure of what the future of the case holds. According to him, the Crown was unprepared for the constitutional challenge. However, the Judge did decide to postpone the proceedings until August, and did not drop the restrictive conditions of the defendants. “It’s hard to say where the Judge is leaning right now. He’s not making it obvious.”

David Parker is an independent journalist and Spoken Word Coordinator at CKDU 88.1 fm in Halifax.

“Paper Mill,” continued from page 14

that corporations use Chapter 11 to target legislation that favours human health, workers’ rights and the environment over private profit.

The federal government, rather than Newfoundland’s provincial government, will have to fight the court battle because only national governments can sign foreign trade deals. Ironically, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a political enemy of fellow conservative Williams,

will be forced either to defend the expropriation, or to pay Abitibi hundreds of millions of dollars from federal coffers.

Along with preparing lawsuits, Abitibi is “lobbying the highest levels of government on both sides of the [Canada-US] border,” according to Kursman. Political manoeuvring from the world’s eighth largest integrated paper company has included meetings with US Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez,

Canada’s Minister of International Trade Stockwell Day, US Ambassador to Canada David Wilkins and other senior officials in the Prime Minister’s office.

While Kursman says his company will do “everything possible to protect shareholders,” lumber-worker Healy thinks the corporation should accept its fate.

“Just because a big company didn’t have things go their way, doesn’t mean [the seizure is] wrong,” he said. “The Premier had

to take some action to protect these assets; these assets belong to the people.”

The original version of this article was published by Inter Press Service.

Chris Arsenault is currently writing a history of sabotage in the Alberta oil patch. His first book, Blowback: A Canadian History of Agent Orange and the War at Home, will be released in March.

Changes to Vancouver Charter may Infringe on Right to Protest

Bylaw fines to rise from \$50 to \$10,000 in lead-up to 2010

by Rebecca Tebrake

VANCOUVER – Vancouver City Council and citizens clashed on January 22 over changes to the Vancouver Charter. The proposed changes grant the city more power to remove illegal signage and bump up bylaw penalties to \$10,000. Citizens and civic rights groups fear these changes will quash freedom of expression in the lead up to, and during, the Olympic Games.

The council chamber was unusually full. Concerned residents held up anti-Olympics banners they feared could be deemed illegal if the changes to the Charter are adopted.

Vancouverites at the meeting called to mind the 1997 protests of the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference, where UBC law student Craig Jones was arrested for refusing to put down his sign that read “Free Speech.”

Council approved 16 amendments that strengthen the city’s regulatory power on signage, advertising and street use. The changes hinge on provincial government approval.

“I am sure you all know that there are groups in Vancouver that plan to protest in 2010,” said Chris Shaw, spokesperson for 2010 Watch. “We want to be assured that we will have our civil liberties respected and that there will be nothing done to infringe on those civil liberties or our ability to bring



A protester holds a placard at Vancouver City Hall, challenging the notion of an “illegal” sign.

Miné Salkin

our case before the public.”

Jesse Lobdell from the B.C. Civil Liberties Association followed Shaw, reading a letter written to Council by the executive director of B.C. Civil Liberties Association, David Eby.

The letter asks city council to ensure the proposed changes are in alignment with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section two of the Charter guarantees Canadians “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression,” “freedom of peaceful assembly,” and “freedom of association.”

The amendments will allow the city to regulate street performances, remove signs from private property with limited notice, remove graffiti without notice and raise maximum fines for a bylaw offense from \$50 to \$10,000.

Vague wording in the amendment, such as “illegal

signage,” was a source of concern for some citizens at the meeting.

Shaw warned that an interpretation of these amendments could deem protesting, street theatre, or wearing an anti-Olympics button an illegal activity. He asked for an immediate addition to the list of Charter changes.

“Add clause 17 that states none of the above applies to protests, demonstrations, political picketing or political theatre,” said Shaw. “Then we will all know where we stand.”

“Our specific objective around [signage] is concerning the commercialization of public space. There is no intent over the issues we’ve identified to control or prevent freedom of speech,” said Paul Henderson, Director of Olympic and Paralympic operations for the city.

Henderson also said the

wording of the Charter would be clarified by the province. Once approved, the specific bylaws will be drafted by city staff and presented to Council.

“Those specific bylaws will be very detailed,” said Henderson. “In developing those bylaws we will consider all the issues brought forward by the public and the issues brought forward by council.”

The city also promised to consult the public when the bylaws are drafted. Shaw is skeptical; he said he almost missed the opportunity to voice his concerns at the council meeting because the city failed to adequately publicize the discussion. He fears the same could happen when it comes time to debate the new bylaws.

At the same meeting, city council voted to authorize the Director of Finance to explore new ways to finance the imperiled Olympic Village, including the establishment of a revolving bank facility and issuing debentures.

“We want to be assured that we will have our civil liberties respected ...”

Formerly a resident of Burlington, Ontario, Rebecca TeBrake now lives in Vancouver where she is studying journalism at the University of British Columbia.

“Intellectual Author,” from page 7

when discussing R2P [since the coup].”

One exception to the silence about R2P in Haiti stands out.

“Stabilization efforts in Afghanistan, Haiti and Iraq are testing grounds,” writes policy analyst and R2P advocate Stephen Baranyi, “for fourth generation peace operations and approaches in fragile states.”

“One problem is that the strategic interests of major

Western powers – and not R2P criteria like massive human rights violations – drove decisions to intervene in these cases.”

The credibility of R2P is “damaged,” writes Baranyi, by “*de facto* collaboration with paramilitary leaders” and a lack of “open debate.”

In calling for an “open debate,” Baranyi is alone.

Ignatieff has been applauded by some for his candor in

examining the results of the Iraq invasion he once backed. In the case of Haiti, however, there is been none of the introspection or public self-questioning that have proven to be such an effective component of Ignatieff’s rhetorical arsenal.

As Liberal leader, Ignatieff continues to advocate for R2P. He now mentions Burma, Zimbabwe and Sudan as possible candidates for R2P interventions. The “test

case” of Haiti is no longer cited.

Former Prime Minister Paul Martin remarked on Ignatieff, with unwitting insight: “Michael has inherited both a very deep understanding of Canada’s role in the world and of, in fact, the kinds of upheavals that the world is capable of thrusting upon unsuspecting populations.”

Dru Oja Jay is an editor with The Dominion.

Missing Diplomats' Mine Visit still a Mystery

Fowler and Guay were in the eye of the resource-war storm when abducted in Niger

by Yves Engler

MONTRÉAL—In mid-December, Robert Fowler, a career Canadian diplomat who is currently the United Nations' Secretary General's Special Envoy to Niger, and his aide Louis Guay, an official at Foreign Affairs, were abducted in Niger.

They were kidnapped hours after visiting a mine operated by Montréal-based mining company SEMAFO (Société d'exploitation minière-Afrique de l'Ouest).

"Louis [Guay] called me and said he was going down there on a UN mission and that he heard the mine was a Canadian success and he wanted to report this back to Canada," Benoit La Salle, the president and CEO of SEMAFO, told the National Post.

There are few other confirmed details regarding the kidnapping. Agence France Presse reported that the UN and the governments of Canada and Niger have all become extremely secretive about the kidnapping. The UN initially denied that Fowler was on an official trip, but later a spokesperson contradicted the initial statement, admitting that in fact he was on official business.

This difficult and sensitive event raises oft unaddressed questions about relations between Ottawa and Canadian resource corporations operating abroad.

Why was a UN envoy, sent to deal with a conflict largely over natural resources, visiting a Canadian-operated mine?

Guay, who organized the last-minute trip to the mine, was involved with the privatization of a massive gold deposit now operated by Goldcorp and Barrick Gold in the Dominican Republic.

The mine Fowler and Guay visited on December 14th is run by a company with ties to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

SEMAFO is an outgrowth of La Salle's work for Plan Canada, a subsidiary of Plan International,

"one of the world's largest development organizations, working in more than 65 countries worldwide on critical issues affecting millions of children."

Plan Canada is funded by CIDA. In July, La Salle told an interviewer that SEMAFO "was created in 1995 during my first visit to Burkina Faso as part of a mission with the NGO-Plan. I am the president of the administration council of Plan Canada and a director of Plan International. So, after the Plan organized visit to Burkina Faso provided me an opportunity to get close with national authorities, I decided to create SEMAFO to participate in the development of Burkina Faso's mining industry."

In another interview, La Salle said "[in my position at Plan] I was able to meet [African] presidents, prime ministers and functionaries" with whom he now does business.

It appears that La Salle has put his political contacts to good use. An April 2007 Montreal Gazette business article headlined "Local Miner a Major Force in Niger," reported on the close relations between SEMAFO and Hama Amadou, then Prime Minister of Niger.

"We work very closely with [then Prime Minister Hama Amadou]... We're part of his budget every year. He knows us," La Salle told the Gazette.

La Salle then described how the prime minister helped his company break a strike at the mine. "We went to court, we had the strike declared illegal and that allowed us to let go of some of the employees and rehire some of them based upon a new work contract. It allowed us to let go of some undesirable employees because they had been on strike a few times," he said.

Prime Minister Amadou was later arrested on corruption charges stemming from an unrelated incident, and is awaiting trial.

SEMAFO is not the only



Canadian diplomats Robert Fowler and Louis Guay, as well as their driver, were kidnapped in Niger in December. Their vehicle was later found abandoned.

Roland CC2.0

Canadian resource company that has in Niger.

Calgary-based TG World Energy "hired Mr. [Jean] Chrétien last year [2004] to help it get out of a pickle in the impoverished African nation of Niger," reported The Globe and Mail.

TG's rights to explore 18

million acres of Niger's wilderness for oil and gas were revoked by the government, which believed that TG hadn't invested enough in prospecting.

Niger then awarded the concession to a subsidiary of the China National Petroleum

continued on page 24

Home, Moldy Home

Victoria paper investigates West Coast Indigenous housing crisis

TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF SNUNEYMUXW FIRST NATION (NANAIMO, BC)—Coming quickly on the heels of a seven-part exposé of an Indigenous housing crisis in Victoria-based newspaper *Times Colonist*, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) Minister Chuck Strahl promised \$50 million for Indigenous housing on British Columbia reserves. It is part of the \$400 million over the next two years already committed to on-reserve housing.

Strahl noted, “Some communities can’t access enough capital to build and renovate homes while others lack the capacity to manage the housing stock effectively.” He added, “We are far from finished with this task.”

Assembly of First Nations BC Chief Sean Atleo responded to the announcement cautiously: “What this means is we’re moving from talk.”

He alluded to the informative “Native Housing Crisis” series from February 8–14 as having spurred the action.

The West Coast of BC is a very rainy, moist climate. This presents challenges for healthful housing. Poorly constructed houses, overcrowding, and lack of proper sanitation provide prime conditions for the growth of molds that pose health risks to the occupants.

Reporters Judith Lavoie and Lindsay Kines of the *Times Colonist* compellingly wrote that a glaring number of homes on reserves are ill-suited for habitation. In “Native Housing Crisis,” they did convey a crisis; however, the series was scant on background information and presented a ‘mainstream’ perspective, stating that reserves are Crown land. It did not delve deeply into the fact that most of BC is unceded First Nations territory.

The series identified a shortage of on-reserve land for housing as a problem. The federal government has a fiduciary responsibility for First Nations



Sub-standard construction means that in addition to crowded conditions, mildew is a major problem in on-reserve housing. *oy gen CC2.0*

as well as a responsibility for Indigenous housing. Does the crisis compel the federal government to act?

“Native Housing Crisis” dispelled the myth that Indigenous peoples receive free housing. It noted that they receive a “grant” of between \$20,000 and \$40,000 per house.

On February 9, *Times Colonist* ran “Ugly reality of many reserves: Dirt and neglect” as a headline. Despite the “ugly reality” of “mess and uncleanness on some reserves,” the series pointed out how this overshadows serious issues, such as lack of incentives to maintain clean homes.

Lillian Jones of Snaw-Naw-As First Nation said, “There are run-down homes, and there are great homes. Unfortunately,

run-down homes are more common. Dirty – now, that is a standard. Whose standard are we talking about and why is that an issue?”

“The bigger picture,” she said, “Is that First Nation people weren’t born the way most are today. Today’s is a condition that is a result of gradual genocide. And, there are so many lies out there that First Nation people have their houses paid for, everything is paid for. Well, I’d love to invite the media out to say, hey, this is what is being paid for!”

“Native Housing Crisis” identified the reserve system to be at the core of the housing problem. It pointed to other contributing factors, such as the disrupted lifeways of Indigenous peoples; that assimilationist pressures are in place; and that the State fosters dependence in Indigenous peoples.

One solution the series pointed to is instilling a pride of ownership. However, the push to ownership might be contentious. KAIROS – a Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiative – finds the federal government promoting a municipalization of First Nation communities “designed to release the federal government from its fiduciary responsibility to maintain reserve infrastructure and housing.”

Health complications such as allergies, asthma, respiratory illnesses and tuberculosis were cited as results of poor housing. BC’s Indigenous health physician adviser, Dr. Evans, found substandard housing to be a major reason Indigenous peoples’ health is poor compared to other Canadians. “Poor housing means poor health,” said Dr. Evans.

Access to funding is necessary. Repairs are necessary. Better-built housing is necessary. Tang Lee, an architecture professor in the faculty of environmental design at the University of Calgary, commented that government bodies are not responding adequately to recommendations made to improve shoddy, over-

crowded housing and acknowledge its direct impact on the health of residents.

There was also bright news emerging from the Indigenous housing crisis. Kines reported how government money and a unique partnership between an Indigenous community, government, and contractor led to the construction of 30 new low-rent, mildew-resistant houses at in Nanoose Bay. Snaw-Naw-As First Nation fronted \$3 million for the project that rents for less than \$400 a month. Jones praised her community and the integrity of the builder.

Also identified was the need for good housing inspectors. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) currently does not provide a list of recommended local housing inspectors for First Nations, nor does the department train community members to do housing inspections.

Jones said, “I guess that the government continues to be the way it’s being because they hope that First Nations people will clean up their mess, and there will be no government accountability called to question.”

In the final part of the series, solutions were proposed to the First Nations’ housing crisis. John Duncan, parliamentary secretary to the minister for INAC, talked about an investment “to assist the transition of market-based housing.” This sounds like acculturation. He announced a Conservative Party pledge of 25,000 new housing units over 10 years. Yet, Grand Chief Stewart Philips, president of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, stated the on-reserve housing shortage is now 20,000 units and growing at 4,500 units per year.

Doing the math, this solution does not augur the end of the Indigenous housing crisis anytime soon.

Kim Petersen is the Original Peoples editor at The Dominion.

THE DOMINION NEWSPAPER COOPERATIVE

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS: A PLAY*

The time: 4pm, February 8, 2009. The place: Ecology Action Centre, on a frozen back street in the North End of Halifax, Nova Scotia. It is a crisp and bright afternoon. 16 people gather, some sit around a large conference table, others along a side wall. Another dozen or so tune in

ACT I: This Is How We Do It...

MOIRA: This is the Dominion's very first AGM. Thanks to EAC for providing the space. I would also like to acknowledge that we are meeting on traditional Mi'qmaq Territory.

HILLARY: We are broadcasting live all over the world! Some people will join the meeting online.

MOIRA: Van is our videographer.

ACT II: Democratic Media

DAWN: The reader member candidates are Harjap Grewal and Ben Powless. Writer member candidates are Tracy Glynn and Tim McSorley. Managing editor member candidates are Dawn Paley, Dru Oja Jay and Hillary Lindsay. The structure of the board is three managing editors, one reader and one writer.

YUILL: How did you decide on that structure?

DRU: The reason for the structure is that we don't want a rugby team to be able to come to the AGM and hijack control of the operation...

MOIRA: Ted will count and destroy the ballots.

ACT III: News In The Black! ...and other Motions

HILLARY: As you can see (*shows a slide*), unlike the corporate media, we're not in the red. Although we're still operating on a shoestring, you can do a lot with that.

MOIRA: Can somebody move to pass?

DAWN: I moves.

ANGELA: I second.

EVERYONE (*in more-or-less unison*): Aye.

HILLARY: We'd like to change "writer member" to "contributor member" to be more inclusive, and acknowledge other kinds of contributors, such as illustrators. I should mention that we also got an email concerning this; a member wrote that sustainers should also be considered "contributor members" in order to be more inclusive.

(*Debate.*)

HILLARY: On to the next thing. The Dominion got a financial review instead of an audit due to budget restrictions. Does anyone know the real difference?

YUILL: The only difference is the level of rigour. An audit selects certain portions for analysis, and is legally binding.

ANGELA: I think the member's suggestion of looking for pro bono work whether it's for a review or an audit should

online. Juice, coffee, dates, nuts, cookies and other treats decorate a file cabinet. Stacks of forms and cards line the centre of the conference table. Open laptops litter one end. A slide presentation is projected onto a screen in the front of the room. Feet are sock-clad.

be followed.

HAZEL (*online*): Not all companies even have audits.

AMANDA (*online*): I think that money should go to the writerly base, not an audit.

ERICA: Granting bodies often require audits of companies.

MOIRA: Does anyone move to pass?

ACT III: Media Idol

DRU: Harjap Grewal is elected reader member rep. Tracy Glynn is the new writer member rep!

ACT IV: Open Forum

YUILL: What are the criteria for Co-op content?

DRU: Local content, for one. Locals will eventually develop further criteria.

ERICA: I'm curious: how is it all set up? Separate board for the Media Co-op?

DRU: Sprout and branch media locals. When a Local just starts, it'll be a sprout, effectively governed by the main Media Co-op, but after things stabilize, with higher numbers, they will have a higher degree of autonomy. Stories with wider national relevance can get published in *The Dominion*.

YUILL: A self-feeding monster.

DAWN: We've also talked about having more positive coverage. Speaking of which, Maya also had a proposal for the board.

MAYA: (*embarrassed*) Yeah, I haven't drafted a proposal yet, and this was originally Dru's idea, but I was thinking that *The Dominion* could feature a baby animal in each issue.**

TIM (*online*): Can the baby animal be on the cover?

ASAF: Should it be a goal to search for positive stuff? I don't want fluff.

DRU: We want to look at substantial victories. We tend to lose those stories. Analyzing those stories would be useful.

DAWN: As locals get more developed, as people are reflecting more on their own struggles and victories, that'll be easier.

HILLARY: Asaf, David, and Ange are all here working on the local level now.

CURTAIN

* Based on — ok, copied directly from — notes taken by Maya Rolbin-Ghanie, meeting secretary.

** She wasn't kidding.

Media Co-op Takes Halifax By Storm!

Halifax Local to be first of its kind, receives warm reception by Haligonians



Vancouverite and Dominion Editor Dawn Paley kept warm in the crisp Maritime climate with her enormous jacket and journalistic zeal.



A career fair, which included recruiters for Lockheed Martin, was met with protest... and Media Co-op journalists.

photos by Dawn Paley and Maya Rolbin-Ghanie

"If we lived in a real democracy, what would news media look like?"

That's the question Dominion editors and Media Co-op organizers asked residents of Halifax during a February Media Co-op blitz in the eastern city.

"News would be more balanced and not be only from the perspective of power."

"Media wouldn't be funded by advertising."

"It would feature a wide range of voices coming from different perspectives."

Halifax is the first city in Canada with its very own Local of the Media Co-op. The website (www.halifax.mediacoop.ca) is a venue for Haligonians to blog, discuss, write articles, and post events, video and audio about what's happening in and around the city. The site will also feature investigative articles about local issues that are identified by community members as important and in need of coverage.

"Following the folding of The Daily News last year and deep cuts to the *Chronicle Herald* in 2009, it is clear that the media is in crisis in Halifax," says Hillary Lindsay, a Dominion Editor and organizer for the Media Co-op in Nova Scotia. The situation is the similar across the country.

"The Halifax Media Co-op will seek to amplify the voices of those most affected by municipal policies and events rather than those with the most power and influence," says Dominion Editor Dru Oja Jay.

The month of February was spent talking to residents of Halifax and making the case for a media cooperative in libraries, community centres and workplaces in neighbourhoods across the city. "Our aim is to build a working alternative to mainstream media that's reader funded and member controlled," says Lindsay.

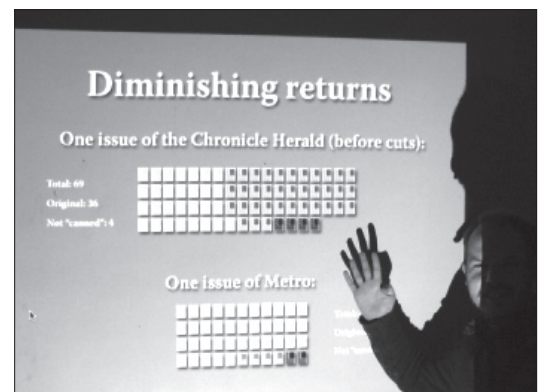
Vancouver-based journalist Dawn Paley was also in Halifax in February. She hopes to help launch a Vancouver Local of the Media Co-op by next fall.



Videographer Van Ferrier documented the building of the first Media Co-op Local.



Hillary Lindsay, Moira Peters and Maya Rolbin-Ghanie discuss the complexities of pamphlet construction.



Dru Oja Jay presents the current media situation in Halifax. This slide illustrates the lack of investigative coverage in Halifax's newspapers.

“In Review,” continued from page 3

for the purchase of genetically modified seed explicitly prohibit research. These agreements inhibit public scientists from pursuing their mandated role on behalf of the public good unless the research is approved by industry,” reads part of the statement.

Indigenous leaders from the US, Niger and Australia joined together in Washington, DC to call for an **end to uranium mining** and nuclear power programs. “Uranium mining, necessary to extract the metal ore needed to produce nuclear weapons and fuel for nuclear reactors, has, for decades, targeted both low-income and majority Indigenous communities around the globe,” reads a press release put out by the delegation.

Community leaders from **Ecuador** traveled to Toronto to announce a lawsuit against a Canadian mining company and the Toronto Stock Exchange.

Long-time Indigenous rights activist **Robert Robideau** died at age 61. Robideau was active with the American Indian Movement and participated in the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973.

US Secretary of War Robert Gates announced that the ban on photographing the flag-draped coffins of **US soldiers** will be lifted by the Pentagon. The ban has been in place since the First Gulf War in 1991.

A study by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting found that coverage of human rights in **Colombia and Venezuela** in US media over the last decade has served the interests of US foreign policy by being harsh on abuses in Venezuela and lax on Colombia’s appalling human rights record.

Two prisoners were freed from a **Greek jail** in a daring helicopter rescue. It was the second time the pair had been freed from jail by helicopter in three years.



Anti-Olympics protesters marched in Vancouver on February 12 to mark the one-year countdown to the Olympic Games. *no2010.com*

UFO trackers in Manitoba reported a spike in **UFO sightings** in Canada. One thousand four unidentified flying objects were reported in 2008, the highest number in the 20 years since statistics have been kept.

Attendees of the Academy Awards wiped with 100 per cent recycled **toilet paper**, and Greenpeace rated toilet paper brands on environmental soundness. Millions of trees are cut each year to produce the thick, fluffy toilet paper preferred by American consumers. Recycled TP tends to be rougher and thinner because of shorter wood fibers. Kimberly Clark (Cottonelle and Scott) gets between 14 and 22 per cent of its pulp from the Canadian boreal forest.

Over 1,000 members of the RCMP, West Vancouver police and the military carried out Exercise Silver, a training exercise in and around Vancouver in preparation for the **2010 Olympics**. The Integrated Security Unit, in charge of policing during the Games, insisted there would be no US soldiers “on the ground” during the Games, but confirmed they would be in the air and waters along the BC coast. “I think you would agree with me that they are a moving target,” said Bud Mercer, the head of the ISU, referring to anticipated protesters. The RCMP continued to approach and in some cases harass opponents of the Olympics.

One hundred fifty residents of **Vancouver** and surrounding areas marched with torches to protest

the one-year countdown to the 2010 Olympics.

Neighborhood groups in **Vancouver’s Downtown East Side** organized the second annual Poverty Olympics. More than 350 people took part, as participants and spectators, in events such as Housing Hurdles, Sweeping Poverty Aside (curling) and Wrestling for Community. The next Poverty Olympics will be timed to coincide with the 2010 Olympic Games.

Vancouver’s Olympic Organizing Committee came under fire for booking 21,000 of the available 23,000 available hotel rooms in the city for use during the Games.

Nine gang-related shootings in **Vancouver** left an estimated six people dead.

A homeless person died under an overpass in **Abbotsford**, British Columbia.

In **Victoria, BC**, a young woman who was also homeless died when she was hit by a bus. An eye witness claimed she was pushed by a drunk male.

Manitoba’s top doctor revealed that staff at the Health Sciences Centre in **Winnipeg** ignored multiple requests to treat Brian Sinclair, a homeless man in a wheelchair who died in the emergency department after waiting 34 hours to see a doctor.

The father of a fourteen year old

First Nations woman tasered by Ontario Police while she was jailed filed a lawsuit against the OPP. The girl was scratching at the paint in her jail cell, and “was not intoxicated, hysterical, excited nor in any way did her behaviour present a danger,” when officers tasered her, according to the suit. Twenty-five people have died after being tasered in Canada. The RCMP admitted that **tasers** can be lethal, and announced they will change the way the weapon is used.

Dozens of people protested police violence in **Oakland**, briefly shutting down the 12th Street Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Station where 22-year-old Oscar Grant was killed by a cop on New Year’s Day. Nine people were arrested, and riot police outnumbered protesters. The cop who killed Grant claimed that he got confused between his taser and his gun.

Twenty-seven Indigenous people from the Awa nation were killed in a massacre in southern **Colombia**. The massacre was carried out by an armed group believed to be the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). During the first 43 days of 2009, 58 Indigenous People were assassinated in Colombia.

Armed men visited the home of Gustavo Ulcué, a Nasa man active with the Communications Network in the North of **Cauca**, Colombia. The men threatened Ulcué’s brother at gunpoint and pillaged his house, making off with his laptop. Ulcué is responsible for the website of the Association of Indigenous Councils of Colombia, Colombia’s most popular alternative media source.

The International Federation of Journalists reported that 108 **journalists** were killed in 2008, down from 175 in 2007.

Residents put the pressure on the city of **Toronto** to open more spaces in the city’s parks for urban food gardens.

The Conservatives considered

new legislation that will require **internet service providers** to grant police access to exchanges that happen on their servers. Services that could be accessed by police include Facebook, text messages and online voice calls.

Xstrata announced they will cut 686 jobs at their nickel operations in **Sudbury**, Ontario.

Hundreds of people rallied in support of the 300 laid-off workers from the Kings County poultry processing plants in **Kentville**, Nova Scotia. One hundred eighty seven of the workers had not received their severance or vacation pay.

People working in Canada as **temporary foreign workers** felt the economic downturn faster than other sectors in Canada. “The sky has started to fall on all construction workers in Alberta, but it’s fallen first and fastest on the temporary foreign workers. There’s no doubt,” said Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

After receiving US\$13.4 billion in cash from the US and negotiating a \$3 billion loan from the government of Canada, **General Motors** announced they will be cutting 10,000 jobs worldwide.

The government of **Norway** withdrew a \$200 million pension fund investment in Barrick Gold after an ethical review. “The company’s assertions that its operations do not cause long-term and irreversible environmental damage carry little credibility,” declared the panel responsible for the ethical review.

Australia’s New South Wales (NSW) Land and Environment Court handed down a decision in favour of Wiradjuri Traditional Owner Neville Chappy Williams, with an injunction which prevented the expansion of Barrick Gold’s mine in Lake Cowal.

Pressure against Salvadorans who oppose Pacific Rim’s El Dorado mine in Cabañas, **El Salvador**, continued to mount. A high

profile activist was robbed of documents and cameras in what some perceive to be a threat to discontinue his opposition to the mine.

An International Trade Union Confederation report on core labour condemned the **Guatemala government** for its failure to investigate the murders of trade unionists. The report charged the government with failing to implement ILO Conventions, and showed that, due to legal deficiencies and fierce intimidation from many employers, trade union membership makes up only about three per cent of the country’s work force.

Supporters of Jean Bertrand Aristide were prevented from registering as candidates in upcoming elections in **Haiti**. Elections for the 12 open seats in the senate are scheduled for April 19.

Dockworkers in **South Africa** refused to unload Israeli shipments coming into port near Durban in solidarity with Palestinians. “If it’s an Israeli product, we’re going to boycott it, plain and simple,” said Randall Howard, General Secretary of the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union.

Kyrgyzstan announced plans to close a US military base in Manas, just outside the capital city of Bishkek. “[The base] is highly important to US forces’ plans to double troop numbers in Afghanistan and key to seeking alternative supply routes that bypass Pakistan, where there is significant security risk,” said Al Jazeera’s Nazanine Moshiri. The US government is allegedly considering a base in Uzbekistan as a backup plan.

Bomb blasts coordinated by the Taliban in Kabul, **Afghanistan**, killed 20 people. President Obama planned to send more US troops to Afghanistan in the short term.

Maori protesters tussled with **New Zealand** Prime Minister John Key during “National Day.” The activists claim the Kiwi government has not honoured the Treaty

of Waitangi, which was signed in 1840.

International Trade Minister Stockwell Day tabled the **Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement**. It will sit before parliament for 21 days before the enacting legislation is drafted.

Protests against the dismissal of the mayor of **Madagascar’s** capital city were repressed by the national government, leaving at least 28 people dead. Over 100 members of the opposition, who support Andry Rajoelina, the former mayor of Antananarivo, have been killed so far in 2009. The defense minister of Madagascar resigned because of the killings.

US President **Barack Obama** stated that salaries for executives at firms being bailed out by the government must not exceed \$500,000.

A study revealed that the US government spent \$52 billion on **nuclear weapons** in 2008. That amount is \$12.5 billion more than the US spent on foreign aid and diplomacy during the same time period.

The Los Alamos **nuclear weapons lab** admitted that 67 computers and a blackberry have gone missing from the facility and its employees.



Torontonians pressured council to allow residents to grow food in city parks. Suzanne Long CC2.0

Environment Canada charged tar sands giant **Synchrude** under the Migratory Birds Convention Act for the deaths of more than 500 ducks in the company’s tailings pond.

Another study found high rates of cancer among residents of **Fort Chipewyan**, a community of 1,200 downstream from the tar sands.

The Dogwood Initiative, an environmental group, received a letter threatening legal action from the Royal Canadian Mint over their **black loonie campaign**. The group has made 20,000 decals that stick on to the loonie, making the loon appear to be swimming in oil, and linking to the website notankers.ca.

Cyclists shifted gears electronically at the **Tour of California**, bringing the bicycle into the electronic age. Critics bemoaned the loss of “simplicity, independence and autonomy” for the human-powered machine; skeptics worried about battery failure during the race.

Canada’s “unorthodox” **cyclist** Svein Tuft competed in the Tour of California. Tuft is a high school drop out, and spent years in the wilderness on a thrift-shop bike, resisting professional cycling because of its doping rap.

Netflix’s CEO asked President Obama to increase his personal **taxes**.

Identical twins escaped being hanged on drugs charges in **Malaysia**, due to confusion over which one was guilty. “I can’t be sending the wrong person to the gallows,” said High Court judge Zaharah Ibrahim. “Even the DNA evidence could not prove anything...”

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Corp. The Calgary company sued Niger’s government and went to arbitration with the Chinese firm through the World Bank Group’s International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

“[TG] also asked Mr. Chrétien to intervene,” reported the Globe. During a trip to Beijing, Chrétien spoke with officials from China National Petroleum and then flew to Niamey, Niger’s capital, and arranged a meeting between TG and Niger’s president.

Chrétien’s lobbying led to a new agreement between TG World, Niger and the Chinese, which saw the Canadian company’s stock price increase from eight cents to more than \$1 per share within a year.

None of this sort of Canadian “diplomacy” is unusual, and is in

fact standard across Africa.

Within 13 months after leaving office, Chrétien had made business-related visits to Gambia, Nigeria, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Describing political lobbying on behalf of Canadian mining corporations in the Congo, journalist Maurice Carney told Democracy Now! that every Prime Minister since Pierre Trudeau (Clark, Mulroney, Chrétien, Martin) “has left office and profited from the natural resources of the Congo while the Congolese people suffer.”

Many agree that there is something distasteful about former public officials exchanging their political contacts and prestige for a buck. But the lobbying work of former politicians is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to public officials’ support for Canadian business in Africa.

Canadian embassies and trade missions are largely focused on advancing Canada’s corporate interests.

A 2004 KAIROS Canada report entitled Africa’s Blessing, Africa’s Curse notes: “Canadian diplomatic missions in Africa spend much of their time making sure that mining companies and host governments are brought together and the companies are much praised by Canadian officials.”

Although the abduction of two UN officials made headlines, the unaddressed questions about relations between Ottawa and Canadian haven’t been adequately explored.

Based in Montreal, Yves Engler is the author of the forthcoming The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy.

Heather Meek

