

# TURN LEFT

NDP NPD



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Voice of the NDP Socialist Caucus

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## NDP Needs More Democracy

WILL NEW DEMOCRATS quench the thirst for real change in Ontario, or will NDP leaders offer more of the same old tired pro-capitalist policies? Will the party welcome vigorous debate and integrate dynamic social movements, or will those in control tighten the clamps on internal party democracy?

As hundreds of delegates and observers converge on Hamilton for the 22nd Biennial Convention of the Ontario NDP, November 19-21, 2004, these questions are sharply posed.

The Ontario NDP is rising in opinion polls, up to 23% according to one survey, and we won the Hamilton East by-election with an astounding 63% of the votes cast. In the June 28 federal election, over two million votes shifted to the left. The NDP more than doubled its tally to over 2.1 million, the Greens and the Bloc Quebecois made impressive vote gains, and the federal Liberals were humbled down to minority government status. In the mean-

time, broken promises have shredded Ontario Liberal government credibility.

Howard Hampton deserves praise for the Public Power campaign and his acknowledgment that Bob Rae was wrong on public auto insurance and other issues. We need more boldness and critical honesty of that kind. That is why the Socialist Caucus is presenting to Convention a set of resolutions that would sharply differentiate from the old NDP and the broken promises of the Liberals. A turn to the left, with clear socialist policies on health care, the environment, housing, social assistance and public ownership, is key to demonstrating that we are the real working class alternative to the other parties.

The NDP is poised to shed the disastrous mantle of the Bob Rae Social "Con-trick" regime. But only if the party makes a definitive break with this sad legacy as well as the related global neo-liberal agenda.

The Ontario NDP could clear the track by demanding the wholesale reversal of Tory and Liberal cuts to health, education, public transit, social housing and environmental protection. It could re-connect with working people by campaigning for the re-nationalization of Ontario Hydro and other privatized firms, by fighting for abolition of student debt and tuition fees, and by proposing a major hike in taxes on corporations, on huge inheritances, and on high incomes, in order to pay for a revival of vital public services and infrastructure.

But sticking to a patchwork of band-aid solutions to capitalist decay, and pursuing the path of less leadership accountability and shrinking membership input in party decision-making, are clearly not the way to go forward.

This edition of Turn Left is dedicated to democracy and socialism because, to survive, the NDP needs more of both.

## Amendments Threaten Inner Party Democracy

BY PETER CASSIDY

HAMILTON - There are a number of controversial constitutional amendments at the upcoming Ontario NDP Convention that have tremendous potential to reduce democracy in the party. These amendments include reducing provincial council meetings to a minimum of two per year, changing Provincial Secretary from an elected position to an appointed one, allowing for the Leader's designate to represent her or him at Party meetings, and provisions for a One Member One Vote (OMOV) election of the Leader.

With Provincial Council meetings being held four times a year, the Leader, the Legislative Caucus, the Executive, the Provincial Secretary, Provincial Office, party committees - the entire leadership of the party - knows they are expected to report frequently and regularly to the membership of the party, and to take instructions from the membership of the party. If the change to a minimum of two provincial council meetings a year is passed, along with changes in the role of Provincial Secretary and Leader, it would reduce the number of opportunities for the membership to have its say. This is part of a larger process, which has been underway for some time, to deny the membership

any real opportunity to discuss, debate or make decisions affecting this party.

Making the position of Provincial Secretary an appointed one means that she or he and Provincial Office (the operational staff of the party dealing with membership, revenue, organization, etc.) would be less accountable to the membership. It would allow them to make decisions and carry out work (membership, finance, organization) without structured or significant input from the membership. In addition, they will be able to act against the wishes of the membership if that seems necessary for "operational" reasons. This would particularly be the case if the membership has only two provincial council meetings per year to hear reports from, or give direction to, Provincial Office.

Another proposed amendment will allow the Leader to appoint a designate to represent her or him at executive meetings and meetings of the party officers. The links between the parliamentary wing of the party (Leader and Caucus) and the operational wing of the party (Provincial Secretary and Provincial Office) will be considerably weakened. In between the two wings of the party will be an elected executive that has little power to hold either the parliamentary or operational wings accountable. Adding this to an anticipated reduction of Provincial Council meetings to two a year, we can expect the membership of the party will not be able to hold both wings of the party accountable in any meaningful way either.

Accountability will be further reduced if there is a shift to a form of OMOV for Leader. A Leader that is not elected by delegates at a convention cannot be expected to be as responsive to delegates at provincial council or future convention.



Constitutional amendments to be presented at upcoming ONDP convention in Hamilton will jeopardize accountability.

This would be especially true if the Leader is not expected to attend Executive meetings or meetings of officers, and if there are only two provincial council meetings a year that the Leader is expected to attend in order to report to the membership and to hear ideas and direction from the membership.

Then there is the delicate matter of Revenue Sharing. While not strictly speaking a constitutional amendment, activists in the party should question the push to maintain the 90% revenue sharing formula. This may be seen as part of a structural change where the main role of ridings and affiliates is raising money for elections that are managed through a central campaign. Less and less would we see ridings and affiliates as sources of activity and decision-making.

All these constitutional reforms point to a limiting of democracy and participation within the Ontario NDP. Yet the Socialist Caucus, along with thousands of other members of the party, are prepared to fight back. We hope that you will join in the struggle to protect accountability and participation in Canada's only labour-based political party.

Peter Cassidy is a member of the NDP in Stoney Creek.

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# Nothing to Celebrate: The One Year Anniversary of Ontario's Liberal Government

The People of Ontario Shouldn't be Surprised by the Broken Promises of Dalton McGuinty

BY SIMON BLACK

TORONTO - The Liberal record of broken promises is well known. From health care to the cities' agenda, the McGuinty government has failed to make good on a wide-range of commitments to Ontarians. In the 2003 provincial election, the Liberals ran on a platform of reinvestment in Ontario's public services. McGuinty asked Ontarians to "choose change" and reject the policies and values that characterized the Common Sense Revolution and eight years of Tory rule in the province. While voters may have chosen change, the Liberals have been unwilling to dismantle the economic and social legacy of the Harris and Eves' Conservatives.

The McGuinty Liberals have earned a failing grade. If we look back at the 2003 campaign, a number of their promises appeared to signal a break from the neo-liberal agenda of cutbacks, privatization and deregulation. Indeed, many Ontarians supported them on the assumption that they would reverse the destructive policies of the previous Conservative governments. So what happened to the long list of election promises? The standard response of the government goes something like this: we inherited a large deficit of which we had no knowledge and we simply can't afford our promises any longer.

Whether they are in power or in opposition, federally or provincially, Liberals never seem to know the fiscal state of the government. Their apparent fiscal incompetence is not the result of poor accounting, it is in fact an essential tool for governing in the neo-liberal era. While Ontarians reject this agenda and all that it entails (from growing inequality to inadequate public services), the surprise deficit allows the Liberals to campaign from the Left and govern from the Right.

An Ipsos-Reid poll found that 62% of

Ontarians don't mind if the Liberals run a deficit as long as they pay it off and balance the books by the end of their term. Never ones to have public sentiment factor into their public policy, the Liberals demand that we Ontarians tighten our belts until the fiscal house is in order. Working families, the environment, the poor, abused women, the homeless, kids in over-crowded schools and patients in under-funded hospitals all must wait. Although the Liberals must appeal to the majority of Ontarians once every four years, they must appeal to the interests of capital in the meantime.

If we are to issue the McGuinty government a report card, we must acknowledge that the poor are a class dismissed. The minute increases in welfare rates and ODSP were an insult to the poorest Ontarians. The increase in the minimum wage was equally offensive to the provinces working poor who disproportionately are women and people of colour. The Liberals have done nothing for the thousands awaiting affordable housing nor have they addressed the daily struggles of working families. Instead, they have slapped them with a health premium and de-listed other previously covered services such as eye examinations.

For the most part, the repressive labour laws of the Common Sense Revolution have been left intact. Whereas Harris sought open confrontation with labour, McGuinty's government, in typical Liberal style, extends one hand in friendship to the labour movement while the other conceals the knife of neo-liberalism, sharp and ready to cut pub-



The honeymoon is over: After a year of cutbacks, new user fees and broken promises over housing and the environment, McGuinty and the Liberals have fallen in the polls.

lic services and slash at trade union rights.

The finance minister's recent comments about the state of the economy and the government's agenda are telling. In a CBC Radio interview last week, Finance Minister Greg Sorbara stressed that the government had a "rigorous plan to control expenditures." He said the government must stay "focused to stay on the right track." Sorbara continued, stating that the "government is going to get out of some services" and "focus on partnerships with the private sector."

The direction of the McGuinty government is all too familiar: four more years of deregulation, privatization and cutbacks to social programs. In Ontario, the market is to be free, but the people are to be disciplined.

**Simon Black ran for the NDP in Mississauga-Erindale during the 2004 federal election**

## Psychiatric Survivors and the Struggle for Fairness

BY RUTH RUTH

*"We must all be committed to the values of acceptance, self determination, respect of individuality and strongly believe in the intrinsic worth and dignity of every human being."*

Toronto Mayor David Miller  
Psychiatric Survivor Pride Day Proclamation, 2004

HOW MANY PEOPLE in Ontario understand the basic concerns of psychiatric survivors? More importantly, how many politicians are aware of the issues they deal with on a daily basis? With the exception of the Mayor of Toronto, not many.

Who are psychiatric survivors? They are an emerging sub-culture of people who have survived, or are currently surviving, the psychiatric system and its draconian hierarchy that preys on people's emotional trauma. Many refer to the entire psychiatric system as the "Misery Business."

Although mistreatment in the system is thought of as something that existed only in the 19th century and earlier, it may surprise some to

learn that such abuses as electro shock are still legal in every province in Canada and every state in the U.S. Last year in Ontario, over 16,000 shocks were delivered to approximate-

ly 2,000 people. 79% of these people were women, and 40% of them were over the age of sixty. No scientific study supports the psychiatric claim that shock is medically safe, therapeutic or lifesaving. Many studies and personal testimony of numerous shock survivors have documented permanent memory loss and brain damage as common effects of this so-called "treatment."

The good news is that there are a growing number of organizations, community agencies and individuals that are committed to raising public awareness through education and support services in the fight against this kind of abuse. Their main mission is to struggle for the human rights and improve the quality of life of psychiatric survivors.

One of these groups is the Psychiatric Survivor Action Association of Ontario (PSAAO), a Toronto-based organization founded in 1997 that focuses on advocacy. Internationally, there is Mind Freedom Support Coalition International, a not-for-profit organization based in the United States which unites 100 grassroots groups from around the world.

It is important to note that there are alternatives to psychiatric mistreatment such as support and self-help groups, crisis centers, community cen-

ters, drop-ins, peer counseling, diet and exercise, meditation, close friends, affordable and supportive housing and jobs. The hundreds of millions of dollars saved from not supporting the psychiatric system could be invested in funding these alternatives.

There is a long road ahead, but there are signs of progress. When The American Psychiatric

**"Last year in Ontario, over 16,000 electro shocks were delivered to approximately 2,000 people. 79% of these people were women, and 40% of them were over the age of sixty."**

Association (APA) labeled homosexuality as a "mental illness," the gay and lesbian community fought back, successfully forcing the APA to finally drop the classification in 1974.

This is the kind of struggle we are building in the psychiatric survivor movement. And because mental health affects all people in every society, it is important for the Ontario New Democratic Party to join others like Mayor David Miller in acknowledging and supporting psychiatric survivors in their struggle for autonomy, human rights and equality.

**Ruth Ruth is the Director of The Friendly Spike Theatre Band**



# Occupy, Resist, Produce! A Review of *The Take*

BY SEAN CAIN

WITH THE POPULARITY of such documentaries as Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott's *The Corporation* and Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 911*, so-called "guerrilla filmmaking" is quickly becoming a new genre in itself.

The most recent illustration of this is *The Take*, a documentary written by No Logo author Naomi Klein and directed by her partner, former CBC Counterspin host Avi Lewis. The backdrop of the film is the spectacular failure of neo-liberal economics in Argentina. It is the same story that could be told of a multitude of poor countries from around the world: under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government, under the presidency of Carlos Menem, privatizes state assets, deregulates financial markets, cuts social spending, raises interest rates to unprecedented levels, and slashes wages.

Not surprisingly, the incomes of the wealthy and powerful increase almost exponentially, yet unemployment and poverty skyrocket for the poor and working class, leaving the society ridden with greater inequality and public squalor. This leads to a financial collapse in 2001, when even hundreds of thousands of well-to-do, middle-class Argentines lose their jobs and savings.

**"When the elderly female worker was asked about the big picture, she smiled and confidently declared, 'Maybe we can run the entire country this way.' She was definitely on to something here."**

The documentary takes viewers into the industrial wastelands of the country, where after the crisis, thousands of factories are abandoned and stripped of their assets by their owners. Yet out of desperation, some of the unemployed workers fight back, organizing to re-take control of their former industries and manage them on their own, without owners or bosses. As the workers' motto proudly states: Occupy, Resist, Produce!

Klein and Lewis introduce viewers to Freddie Espinosa and his family. Since losing his job at the Forja auto factory, they have lost virtually all of their savings. The documentary follows Freddie and his fellow co-workers as they attempt to salvage their factory and resume work. They are supported by and learn from other workers who successfully expropriated their industries and placed them under worker control, including the

Zanon Ceramics and the Brukman garment factories.

Unlike a Michael Moore documentary, Klein and Lewis have limited camera time. Instead, they simply let the cameras roll as the viewer sees how the Forja workers face one crisis after another. They are the stars of this film. With grim reality, they face off against the former owners of the factory, corporate-backed politicians, the corrupt Argentine judicial system, and of course, an appallingly violent police state. No one said building democracy was easy.

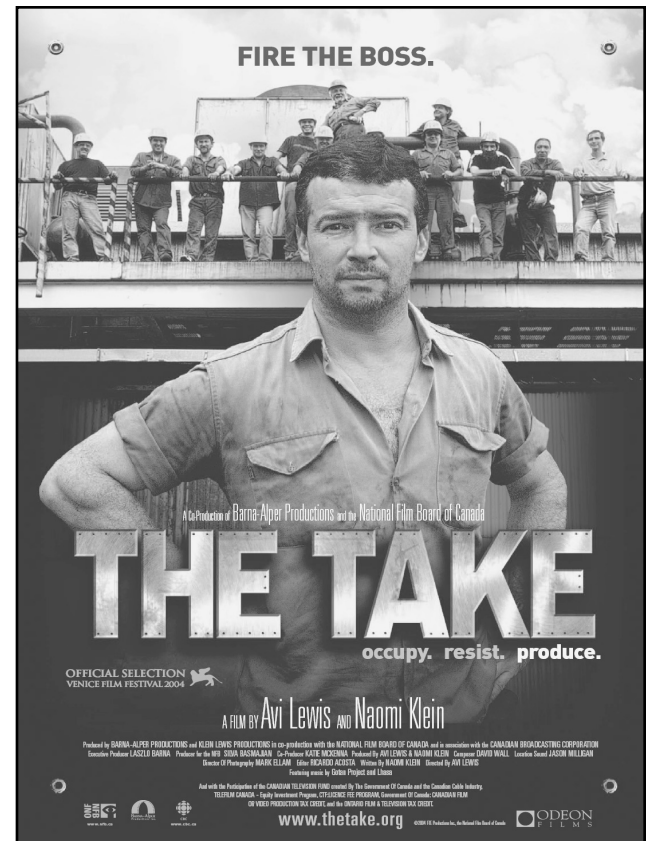
Klein and Lewis also cover the politics of Argentina, including a presidential election that took place during the actual filming. Seeking a political comeback, disgraced conservative Carlos Menem, blamed by most Argentines for the crisis, faces off against his main rival, Peronist Nestor Kirchner. The documentary includes a clip of a hilarious Menem TV campaign commercial, where he apologizes for his previous economic mismanagement and then, with a straight face, attempts to display himself as a kind of Christ-like figure seeking forgiveness from the voters of Argentina. And we thought Bush was a fraud.

As decades of labour research have shown, industries which are self-managed and controlled democratically by workers are, under static conditions, more efficient and cost-effective than companies which possess a traditional, top-down, bureaucratic form of administration. The renowned Mondragon cooperative in Spain is just one example. Of course, people are not supposed to know this. We are supposed to believe that workers are uninformed, careless and lack the capability to control their own businesses.

The irony about this is that the former owners, including Mr. Zanon of the ceramics factory, who a couple of years ago abandoned their factories, all of a sudden want them back now that many of them are operating so successfully.

Without giving anything away, the viewer discovers what comes of Freddie and his Forja factory co-workers. Another noteworthy scene is an interview with an elderly female worker at the Brukman garment factory, who admits that she was both surprised and relieved to realize how seemingly easy it was for workers to manage the factory and undertake such duties as accounting, purchasing, sales, and other financial planning, activities which were once thought to be only the responsibilities of educated and well-paid managers. When she was asked about the larger picture, she smiled and confidently declared, "Maybe we can run the entire country this way."

She was definitely on to something here.



Due to whatever reason such as time, budget or the desired focus of the film, Klein and Lewis did not look at this larger picture, namely that of a democratically-controlled economy, one which is publicly-owned and controlled by workers and consumers.

What does this say of the millions of other workers who still labour under the thumb of corporate management, and what happens if some of the democratic firms cannot survive in the global economy? Could they be forced to cut back production and fire workers in order to remain afloat? This might result in a kind of "people's capitalism" where worker-controlled firms have to compete with each other, just like corporations do.

This is where the issue of social ownership becomes vitally important, where factories, as well as entire economies, could be planned democratically to guarantee full employment, environmental sustainability and social justice. This is not a critique of the film or of the courageous actions of Freddie and thousands of other working people in Argentina. On the contrary, we in the industrialized world have much to learn from them.

As another worker in one of the self-managed firms proudly declares near the end of the film, "We are now where the rest of the world is going."

**Sean Cain lives in Oakville, Ontario and is an unrepentant supporter of workers' control**

## The Need for Affordable Housing

BY JUDY KOCH

THERE IS A GREAT need for affordable housing for homeless and under-housed people throughout the province. At this point, it's a question of life and death. In capitalist society, people who cannot afford to pay the rent end up being evicted, forced onto the streets, into shelters or squats. The profit motive is considered more important than the human need for decent housing. Yet as socialists, we know that housing should be a basic right.

Homeless people die on the streets of Canada every week. Those who are packed into shelters are likely to catch diseases like tuberculosis (TB), which is reappearing in Toronto. Shelters are not safe places. People using them often get robbed or beaten. It is difficult to sleep in a shelter because



**The result of a broken economic system: Homeless people battle the cold in Toronto.**

of the noise and crowded conditions. Those in squats usually end up being evicted by the police. Clearly, none of the above "solutions" are viable. As long as one person faces the possibility of being homeless the need for decent, affordable housing remains an urgent issue.

The New Democratic Party is Canada's labour party, and thus it should be a real political

alternative to the corporate-backed Liberal and Conservative parties. The NDP should speak for the needs of all working people, whether they are employed or unemployed. The only way the NDP will be able to form a government is by running on a program that includes an agenda for basic human needs, one which points the way forward to solving the problem of homelessness.

NDP candidates shouldn't campaign on the basis of personal accomplishments or policy generalizations, but should act in the interests of working people both during and between election campaigns. The NDP should join others to struggle for the creation of a massive public sector programme to construct social and cooperative housing. It should encourage and join demonstrations of homeless people, together with those of us who are lucky enough to have proper housing.

This is the NDP that we fight for. This is the NDP that the people of Canada deserve.

**Judy Koch is a videographer and political activist in Toronto-Danforth Riding**



# ONDP Socialist Caucus Resolutions

The following resolutions were approved at an Ontario NDP Socialist Caucus Conference held in Toronto on September 19, 2004. We hope you will speak out and support them.

## 1. Right to Strike

Whereas governments increasingly seek to erode, restrict or eliminate workers' right to strike, falsely arguing that unions and strikes pose a threat to public health and safety, while governments themselves trample human needs by de-regulating capital, privatizing public services, and facilitating growing corporate control over all facets of life;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Ontario NDP actively campaign for, and seek to legislate the unfettered right to strike for all working people, and that the party respect the integrity and competence of unions to safeguard public health and safety and provide for the delivery of genuinely essential services during a strike by their members.

## 2. For Democracy in Practice and Leadership Accountability

Whereas the Ontario NDP still suffers from the legacy of the party leaders violating NDP policies and principals adopted at conventions;

Therefore Be It Resolved that adopted policies and priorities are binding on party elected officials and staff for implementation, and that NDP leaders be subject to recall and replacement for violation of party principles, and for failure to implement democratically adopted policies and priorities.

## 3. Proportional Representation Within the NDP

Whereas elections within the party often reveal the existence of different political tendencies and currents, but all too often elections produce 'winner take all' results, excluding or marginalizing minority currents and points of view, thus minimizing vital and ongoing debate in the leading bodies of the party, and alienating activists from the party;

And whereas the ONDP position for proportional representation in the Legislature would appear to be consistent if the party practiced proportional representation within the party;

Therefore Be It Resolved that party democracy be strengthened by making constitutional provision for proportional representation within the councils and executive bodies of the Ontario party for distinct, self-declared, policy-based tendencies, slates and caucuses within the party. This means that a majority of seats on party councils and executives would be reserved for members of competing slates of candidates apportioned on the basis of the percentage of votes received by each slate at the election venue.

## 4. Oppose 'One Member One Vote' Polling

Whereas voting mechanisms like One Member One Vote for leadership selection and/or policy determination would further atomize the membership, and replace collective debate, discussion and movement building with an exercise in top-down, manipulative, electronic polling;

Therefore Be It Resolved that this party rejects One Member One Vote as a decision-making mechanism.

## 5. For More Policy Discussion at Conventions

Whereas substantially greater democracy and political pluralism are an urgent necessity within the NDP;

Therefore Be It Resolved that this party mandate and provide more accessible, more democratic, membership-delegate driven party conventions, with low/minimal registration fees, and at least 80% of convention time dedicated to debate and voting on resolutions from grassroots organizations.

## 6. Social Ownership and Economic Democracy

Whereas large corporations and financial institutions are undemocratic and hierarchical, seeking profits and power over and above the interests of citizens and the environment;

And whereas social ownership is a necessary precondition for democratic control of the economy, full employment and an equitable distribution of income and power;

And whereas workers' control would contribute greatly to economic justice, greater efficiencies, and most importantly, improve the quality of life of working people and our allies;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Ontario NDP is committed to actively campaign for and implement social ownership, including but not limited to the following industries: banking, communications, education, energy, health care, insurance, manufacturing, mass media, medical drugs, natural resources, transportation;

Therefore Be It Further Resolved that these industries be democratically controlled and managed by their workers, by instituting direct election of plant managers and enterprise directors, with the right of recall by their electors, and integrate significant and meaningful consumer participation in the decision-making process.

## 7. Fair and Democratic Trade

Whereas the so-called "free trade" agreements of the FTA, NAFTA, MAI, GATS, the FTAA and the institution of the WTO are undemocratic and driven by the corporations and banks to maximize private profits and make the worldwide movement of money easier;

Whereas this corporate agenda is a serious threat to social programmes, the environment, human and labour rights, and the goals of democratic socialism;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Ontario New Democratic Party is committed to actively campaign for abrogation and withdrawal of Canada from NAFTA, the FTAA, FTA, GATS, MAI and the WTO.

Therefore Be It Further Resolved that the NDP is committed to developing and promoting a democratic and participatory system of trade that supports and protects the rights, freedoms and interests of working people, unions, women, Aboriginal peoples, farmers and peasants, seniors, and the poor, dispossessed and marginalized peoples.

## 8. Building the Party as a Mass Movement of the Working Class and Allies

Whereas the NDP must restore and expand its links to the working class, including the unemployed, the under-employed, and the non-waged workers, and to the social protest movements that battle the depredations of globalized capitalism;

And whereas NDP links to labour unions, including

its receipt of their financial contributions, proudly distinguish the NDP from the parties of big business as the democratic political expression of the workers' movement in this country;

And whereas we can learn much from the legacy of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), predecessor to the NDP, which was founded as a "Federation" of local clubs, farmers' unions, cooperatives, labour and socialist parties, workers' unions, intellectual societies, and other grassroots working class organizations, united initially on the basis of the Regina Manifesto in 1932-33.

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Ontario NDP actively campaign to increase union affiliation to the party and invite progressive social movements and groups of activist individuals to form clubs and to affiliate to the party. The party actively promotes the idea of an expanded movement of affiliates which would enjoy direct in-put to conventions and councils of the NDP, and which would constitute an expanded working class and activist base on which to build the party as an instrument for democratic socialist transformation of society.

## 9. Solidarity with Cuba

Whereas the United States government continues to enforce its war-like economic embargo of Cuba, causing increased suffering to the population;

Whereas Cuba's socialized economy, extensive social equity achievements, and quality social services ensure that human needs are put first, in stark contrast to rapacious global capitalism;

And whereas the loss of the Cuban socialist project would constitute an historic setback for working people everywhere;

Therefore Be It Resolved That the Ontario NDP express its solidarity with Cuba, encourage party members to visit the island, demand an end to the U.S. embargo, and demand an end to U.S. -backed efforts to destabilize and sabotage Cuba's socialist gains and national sovereignty.

## 10. No Public Funding for Private or Religious Schools

Whereas tax credits for the parents of private school students represents a serious threat to public education;

Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Commission condemned as discriminatory the current practice of funding only Roman Catholic schools;

And whereas the termination of public funding for all religious schools by the governments of Newfoundland and Quebec, with the cooperation of the federal government, has negated the constitutional rationale for funding Catholic schools;

Therefore Be It Resolved That the NDP actively campaign for an end to public funding of any kind for any religion-based and private schools in Canada, while maintaining that, where appropriate, religious instruction in any faith be permitted after school hours.

## 11. Alternative Fuel Cars

Whereas there is almost no industrial incentive in Ontario for the production of cars powered by alternative (non-gasoline) fuel, or hybrid engine cars which incorporate the use of alternative fuel, which would be more energy efficient and environmentally compatible;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Ontario NDP

actively campaign for and pledge to legislate a requirement that 50% of all automobiles sold in Ontario be powered by alternative (non-gasoline) fuel and/or be hybrid engine cars powered in part by alternative fuel.

## 12. Health Care

Whereas the Liberal government has initiated a health premium and de-listed some of the OHIP services.

Therefore be it resolved that Ontario NDP will campaign to eliminate Health Care premiums immediately, and expand Health Care to include free and universal Dental Care, Physiotherapy, Drug plan, Optometrist, Psychotherapy provided by social workers, and psychologists, Alternative Therapies and Medicines, Preventive Medicines, Home Care, and Senior Care.

## 13. Elimination of Tuition

Whereas the cost of post-secondary tuition has skyrocketed in Ontario in recent years;

And whereas many students are now graduating from post-secondary institutions with student-debt of over \$50,000 each;

Be it resolved that the ONDP actively campaign to immediately freeze tuition in Ontario, and through annual reductions, eliminate tuition completely during its first term of office.

## 14. Public and Democratic Hydro

Whereas the old Ontario Hydro was bureaucratic, undemocratic, debt-ridden, and lacked the accountability necessary to provide environmentally friendly energy to the people of Ontario (including solar, wind and geothermal energy);

Whereas the Ontario Conservative Party's partial privatization of Ontario Hydro has led to radically higher rates, poorer service, power shortages, and even greater environmental harm, and the Ontario Liberal government is pursuing the same agenda;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Ontario NDP will actively campaign to put what was formerly known as Ontario Hydro, including its energy production and distribution facilities, under social ownership with minimal compensation for private owners (in the form of long-term, low interest bonds), and commit to legislate to that purpose.

Therefore Be It Further Resolved that the new public Ontario Hydro would be controlled democratically and managed by its workers, with direct election of plant managers and directors (subject to recall), and integrate significant and meaningful participation in decision-making by consumers and local communities.

## 15. Raise the Minimum Wage

Whereas the current minimum wage is far too low to support a single person, let alone a family;

And whereas the current minimum wage unfairly punishes the young, and food/beverage servers;

Be it resolved that an ONDP government will actively campaign for, and seek to legislate, the elimination of distinctions in the minimum wage law based on age or occupation.

Be it further resolved that the ONDP actively campaign for, and seek to legislate an increase in the minimum wage to a living wage (currently equivalent to approximately \$12.50/hour in Ontario) over a four year period, and include a permanent, annual cost of living adjustment to keep pace with inflation.

## 16. Restore Food Safety; Rebuild the Public Service

Whereas the large multinational agri-food companies have received considerable provincial and federal government financial supports to expand their markets and have benefited from deregulation;

And whereas small and medium sized food producers and processors are part of their communities yet are unable to remain competitive;

And whereas over the past several years, the Tory government has massively downsized and dismantled regulatory systems designed to protect the environment and food safety;

And whereas Ontario residents are increasingly fearful for the safety of their families as a result of the deterioration in the safety of the food supply and the environment;

Be it resolved that the Ontario NDP actively campaign and seek to implement:

- government support of small and medium sized enterprises to assist them in meeting food safety and environmental standards;

- a rural strategy to encourage the growth of small and medium sized local production and processing enterprises, to protect farm land, and to rebuild public transportation, water and sewage systems;

- the government to rebuild a professional public service and reverse the contracting out and privatization of public protection programs.

## 17. Housing

Whereas homelessness is unacceptable, and,

Whereas many people are living in marginal housing and on the verge of becoming homeless and,

Whereas homelessness has increased in the last ten years and,

Whereas homeless people are dying on the streets and,

Whereas developers are not interested in creating affordable housing,

Therefore be it resolved that the ONDP in government will take initiatives, with the cooperation of the municipalities, and the federal government to create social affordable and accessible cooperative housing,

And further be it resolved that the ONDP must have both long term and short-term policies for creating affordable and accessible cooperative housing for all people,

And be it further resolved that until the above goals are implemented, there shall be rent controls to make housing affordable in Ontario.

## 18. Welfare

Whereas the Mike Harris Conservative government, as part of its war on the poor, reduced welfare rates by 21.6% in 1995 and the Ontario Liberal government has decided to restore only 3% of the 21.6% cut;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the ONDP stands for the immediate restoration of rates of social assistance at least to the level existing before the Harris government cuts, plus inflation, and will increase social assistance rates to a level which allows recipients a decent quality of life.

## 19. Building Communities

Whereas there is alienation, isolation, and mistrust

of politicians in the community at large,

Whereas there is disengagement of youth and disadvantaged people from the political process,

Therefore Be it Resolved that NDP Riding Associations shall be encouraged to be active on an on-going basis, and to be involved in progressive social change movements, and specifically to create public forums, cultural and social programs for youths and for disenfranchised people.

## 20. Protection of Civil Liberties and Individual Freedom

Whereas the September 11, 2001 incidents serve as a pretext to attack the civil liberties of people;

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Ontario NDP advocate a ban on racial profiling and advocate protection for victims of racial profiling and their legal representatives.

## 21. Providing Qualitative Education in the Public Sector

Whereas the existing system of Education fosters competition, discrimination, harmful divisions, failure, a rising dropout rate, and bullying amongst students;

Therefore Be it Resolved that the Ontario NDP promote an inclusive, cooperative, humanistic, and creative learning environment for all students;

Be It Further Resolved that the Ontario NDP advocates that educators receive adequate training and support to facilitate a curriculum to achieve the above goal.

## 22. Computer Software

Whereas the Ontario NDP has a responsibility to show leadership in the labor and social justice movements, and

Whereas the open source and free software movement have produce alternatives to brand name software manufactures, and these are generally superior to for-profit manufacturers' offerings, and

Whereas the open source and free software movement are powerful allies in the fight for social justice and against the corporate agenda,

Therefore Be it Resolved that, to the degree possible, the Ontario NDP move with all deliberate speed to eliminate brand name and Proprietary software from its computer system,

And Be it Further Resolved that, to the degree possible, all new software acquisition or development by the ONDP be open source or free software.

## 23. Employment Equity

Whereas the Tory government repealed the employment equity law passed by the Rae government,

Be it resolved that the employment equity law for natives, people of colour, disabled people, women, gays, lesbians, and transsexuals be reintroduced.

## 24. Resolution Book

Whereas the requirement that a resolution for discussion at convention "does not conflict with any existing resolutions in the current Policy Book" tends to retard progress,

Therefore be it resolved that resolutions that conflict with existing resolutions in the current Policy Book should be accepted for debate, and if passed, over-ride the existing policy.



## Letter to NDP Leader Jack Layton Regarding the Issue of the Party's Foreign Policy on the Middle East

Dear Jack:

ON AUGUST 10, 2004, I wrote to you on behalf of over 20 New Democrats who had serious concerns regarding the shift in NDP's Foreign Policy on the Middle East. We copied the e-mail to Secretary Chris Watson, President Adam Giambrone, Vice President Hassan Yussuff and Foreign Affairs critic Alexa McDonough.

We failed to receive even an acknowledgement, let alone a response from either you or the other Party functionaries. We wrote again on August 20, 2004. Answering our message of August 20, you urged patience and promised that you will respond in detail soon. Nothing came forth. We sent you another reminder on September 1, and yet one more on September 16.

To this date, we have had no reply to our concerns, as if both the issues raised and the undersigned, have ceased to exist. We are therefore forced to share this message with the members of the Federal NDP Council, Federal Caucus, and many more rank and file members of the Party in the hope that they may persuade the Party hierarchy, where we have failed. That is, to take the undersigned members seriously, with respect and dignity, and address in a meaningful way the legitimate concerns and issues raised by us.

In a post 9/11 environment where the rights of racial minorities have already been compromised, the NDP should be the last place discrimination is practiced; one that excludes us from the decision making process. Regrettably, the conduct of the Party leadership seems to demonstrate precisely that. We, the undersigned, are members of the NDP of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African background, who strongly believe in the inalienable right of Palestinians to have a viable, independent, and sovereign state, free of intimidation and occupation by Israel.

**“We, the undersigned, are members of the NDP of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African background, who strongly believe in the inalienable right of Palestinians to have a viable, independent, and sovereign state, free of intimidation and occupation by Israel.”**

We have stood by the Party through its good and bad times and have contributed to its strength, both in terms of time, commitment, as well as money, without asking for much in return. However, we do expect some respect and dignity, and the hope that the party will stick to its roots as a social democratic organization, committed to universal social justice and the ability to distinguish between the victim and victimizer.

Over the years, the Party has more or less stayed on course and despite some lapses, has stayed true to the spirit of equity and justice. However, lately, we have noticed a subtle yet significant shift in the Party's stand on Palestine. This surprising shift has caused us serious concern and is the impetus for this letter to you. We were alarmed at the Party's silence on the building of Israel's Apartheid Wall and the NDP's inability to condemn this serious violation of UN Resolutions 242 and 343, as well as International Law.

Initially, we thought this omission was due to the election campaign and a lack of resources. However, subsequent events have forced us to believe otherwise. The International Court of Justice in The Hague came out with a clear and unambiguous 14-1 decision asking Israel to tear down the wall being built on Palestinian territory. Once more the NDP maintained a suspicious

silence. Not a word was said by either Alexa McDonough or you on Israel thumbing its nose at the world community.

Then came the vote in the UN General Assembly where the entire world community; the European Union; the Association of African States; the East Asian ASEAN States; China; Russia; Latin America and traditional rivals, India and Pakistan; in fact the whole world spoke with a resounding voice asking Israel to tear down the wall.

Paul Martin's Liberal government, in their first act at the UN, broke ranks with its European Allies and did not support this resolution, rejecting the ICJ Ruling. They joined a handful of other states and abstained. The NDP, instead of condemning this cowardly action of the Liberal Government, maintained a troubling silence, abandoning its traditional support for the rule of law and Canada's Palestinian community, as if they didn't exist or matter. The fact that some of us were directly affected by Israel's actions, was of little concern, it seemed, to the new NDP Caucus.

The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, was the news that the NDP Caucus had sent two MPs as guests of the Canada Israel Committee to visit Israel as part of a Parliamentary delegation, without any consultation with any of the undersigned, despite the fact that some of us are associated with the Party's International Affairs Committee. Had our MPs gone as an independent fact-finding mission to both Israel and Palestine, we could have understood their motives despite knowing the vocal pro-Israel position of the two MPs visiting Israel. However, this pro-Israel visit was not restricted to members of Parliament. We discovered that the President of the Party, a Toronto City Councillor, was also part of the delegation, giving it official legitimacy. Notwithstanding the President's individual and private effort to connect with Palestinians in the occupied territories, we feel by traveling with the CIC CJC sponsored group, he gives legitimacy to Israel's occupation.

We cannot imagine the NDP meeting with General Motors management without first consulting with the CAW. Why then would it accept an invitation to Israel without consulting or informing us; people directly affected by Israel's occupation of Palestine. We would like to protest this deliberate exclusion of the undersigned. We have been deeply hurt and angered by this sudden lurch towards Israel and the new language coming from both you and the caucus that puts the victim and victimizer on the same plane.

We may not have reacted with such alarm, had we not come across a document released recently by the Canadian Jewish Congress. This CJC document states as its objective, the need to influence the Left in Canada and to make it abandon support of the Palestinians while bringing it closer to Israel's positions. We are now worried that the recent tilt in the NDP towards Israel and the abandoning of its anti-occupation constituency, has come about as a result of lobbying and undue influence by the CJC and its partners within the NDP. We have no problem with the Caucus or the Executive meeting with the CJC or any other group, but we feel we have earned the right to know what transpires between the NDP and the CJC, as this seems to be affecting the historical position of the NDP with respect to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

A shift that is troubling and problematic not just to Canadians of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African ancestry, but all equity-seeking citizens. It has led to a numbing of the NDP leadership to Israel's human rights violations and atrocities committed against the Palestinian people. Some of us believe that if we have to lead a marginalized existence in a pro-Israel political party, we might be better off elsewhere on the political spectrum. This may not be a wise step, but it is a reflection of the

frustration some of us have with what we see as a deliberate exclusion pattern where we are not seen as worthy enough of full membership of this party that we all serve.

As members of the NDP who have some degree of presence within the Middle Eastern, South Asian, African, and other visible minority communities, we feel we have a right to know who in the NDP is liaising with the CJC. We also need an assurance that the Foreign Policy of the NDP will be formulated democratically by the membership of the Party and not controlled by external lobbyists. We ask that the Party explicitly state its position on the ICJ ruling and the Liberal government's abstention from the vote at the UN. At the same time the Party Leadership must explain to the party membership its silence over these critical and historically NDP issues.

We also need an assurance that we will not be shut out of the NDP Councils and Conventions by bureaucratic hurdles; that we will have access to and presence in the Resolutions Committee, and that those who chair the debates on such matters will not misuse their privileges to silence us. We speak from past experience when we have been shut out by rulings from the chair.

We all look forward to meeting with you, Alexa McDonough, Chris Watson, and Adam Giambrone, so that these concerns can be addressed and we can move forward and prepare for the next elections. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Arif Raza

Signed on behalf of

1. Hakim Abbasi, Ottawa
2. Prof. Omar Aktouf, Montreal
3. Jihad Aliweiwi, Toronto
4. Tarek Fatah, Toronto
5. Ikraam Freed, Etobicoke
6. Prof. Hassan Gardezi, Peterborough
7. Dr. Qais Ghanem, Ottawa
8. John Leah Hopkins, Vancouver
9. Sungee John, Windsor
10. Rizwana Jafri, Toronto
11. El-Farouk Khaki, Toronto
12. Mehdi Kouhestani, Toronto
13. Hanadi Loubani, Toronto
14. Jay Nair, Mississauga
15. Ali Naqvi, Oakville
16. Sami Odeh, Montreal
17. Munir Pervaiz, Mississauga
18. Frank Saptel, Toronto
19. Kripa Sehkar, Regina
20. Sarah Shartel, Toronto
21. Abbas Syed, Scarborough
22. Itrath Syed, Vancouver
23. Nargis Tapal, Toronto
24. Prof. Parvez Wakil, Saskatoon
25. Farkhanda Wakil, Saskatoon

**NOTE: This letter and a response from federal NDP Leader Jack Layton is now online at [www.canpalnet-ottawa.org/letteropen.html](http://www.canpalnet-ottawa.org/letteropen.html)**

### PUBLIC EVENT

Saturday, Nov 20th  
ONDP Convention Lunch Break  
in the Socialist Caucus Room

**“The Fight Against Poverty and Homelessness in Liberal Ontario”**

with guest speaker  
**OCAP Activist  
John Clarke**



## Coalition for Union Democracy Launched at Toronto Conference

On October 16, about 40 labour and anti-poverty activists gathered in Toronto to create a new alliance that will fight for genuine union democracy and mobilize support for strikes and progressive struggles.

BY SEAN CAIN

TORONTO - When it comes to fighting back against attacks on the rights of unionized workers, many labour bureaucrats just aren't up to the task. That was the message emerging from a conference held at OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) in Toronto in mid-October, where participants set out to create a new organization - the Workers' Solidarity and Union Democracy Coalition - whose ambitious goal is "to build a rank and file rebellion against the labour bureaucracy."

Activists from a variety of unions and organizations were present at the Coalition's founding conference. Taking part were members of Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Canadian Autoworkers' Union (CAW), the United Steelworkers of America, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees - Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees Union (UNITE - HERE), the Ontario Nurses Association, the United Food and Commercial Workers' Union (UFCW) and the Service Employees' International Union (SEIU).

Also participating were supporters of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), the Metropolitan Hotel Workers' Committee, the Toronto Substitute Teachers' Action Caucus, the New Democratic Party's Socialist Caucus, Global Community - a multi-ethnic community-based organization, the Northeastern Federation of Anarchist-Communists, Socialist Action and Socialist Alternative.\*

A major discussion point of the new Coalition was its Basis of Unity Statement. Presented by Jason Baines, it argued for workers to resist recent sell-out deals approved by union officials. "A very disturbing pattern of union concessions to the bosses' agenda is taking hold of the labour movement across Canada. Even unions with a 'progressive' reputation have recently reached contract settlements that erode or utterly abandon job security, wage protection, health benefits and severance pay..." says the document, "... that is why we need Workers' Solidarity more than ever." Among the chief goals of the Coalition are these: to resist labour cutbacks, support struggles for union democracy, and turn the unions into fighting organizations against corporate power.

The new Coalition's Action Plan was co-written and presented by OCAP organizer John Clarke. It states clearly that the Coalition rejects

the tired model of the so-called "loyal opposition," and boldly declares that it will "encourage independent action by the rank and file to challenge inadequate or treacherous leaderships." The Action Plan also includes efforts to mobilize support for local union struggles, build a common front with other workers' action caucuses, such as the B.C. Workers' Fight Back Caucus, and prepare a coordinated intervention at upcoming conventions of the Canadian Labour Congress (June 2005 at Montreal) and the Ontario Federation of Labour (November 2005 at Toronto).

Following minor amendments, participants unanimously adopted both the Basis of Unity Statement and the Action Plan.

A prominent segment of the conference agenda was a panel of labour activists who discussed the challenges faced by union members today from both employers and union bureaucrats. Most startling was the workers' struggle taking place at the Metropolitan Hotel in Toronto. Hotel Workers' Committee member Carlos Barbosa discussed the appalling treatment of workers at the hands of hotel managers, including labour rights abuses, harassment of injured workers, racism, multiple breaches of their collective agreement, and even violence.

A former employee of the hotel, Pedro Vanegas, discussed his own battles. He was harassed for simply speaking his native Spanish on the job and he reported once seeing a worker being slapped by a manager in front of other employees. Vanegas was later injured on the job, but since his recovery the employer has ignored a judicial order to accommodate and return him to work.

Just as shocking is the lack of support and action from the leadership of their union, HERE Local 75. In response, a Workers' Committee was launched by rank and file employees to take action against unfair treatment by their employer, as well as demanding that their union leadership begin to represent them in an effective manner. (The website of the Workers' Committee is located at [www.metropolitanhotelsworkers.org](http://www.metropolitanhotelsworkers.org).)

Wendy Forrest, past president of OPSEU Local 512 and current member of the Ontario Nurses' Association, discussed the lack of class-consciousness in unions today. She is currently running for President of her local, campaigning on a platform "to rebuild militancy." Other important elements of her program include full time union officials being paid the wage of the average worker and instituting the right of members to recall and replace leaders.

A York University Educator and member of CUPE 3903 and its solidarity picketing flying squad,



Jason Baines (seated at far left) and OCAP activist John Clarke (seated at back) listen to comments from the floor

Jeff Shantz, mentioned the importance of building networks and coalitions in the community with anti-poverty, anti-racist and anti-war groups. Kelly O'Sullivan, president of CUPE Local 4308 / 3896, discussed empowering working people to take on their respective union leaders. Unless militants stick to principles and organize collectively, "the labour bureaucracy," warned O'Sullivan, "will chew you up and spit you out."

Finally, Barry Weisleder, past president of the Toronto Substitute Teachers, spoke about his members' battles with the leadership of the OSSTF, a union which substitute teachers, organized by OPSEU, were legislated into joining by the Ontario Conservative regime in 1997. Starting in 2002, OSSTF officials (who favour dissolving the bargaining units of part-time employees into the larger and more privileged full-time teacher units) initiated a purge of local militants, seized the funds and took total control of the substitute teachers' unit, then proceeded to gut its collective agreement and replace its democratic local constitution. "Two decades of gains were destroyed in less than a year," stated Weisleder. Angry members formed an Action Caucus, which today leads the struggle to restore job security, union democracy and local autonomy. It publishes monthly bulletins, and now provides an informative web site, located at [www.angelfire.com/un/torontosubstitutes](http://www.angelfire.com/un/torontosubstitutes).

The discussion at the conference was lively and the participants were teeming with innovative ideas. The Coalition is now setting out to mobilize for action, create occupational and issue-oriented working groups, launch a new logo and web site, build networks and conduct monthly meetings.

Some of the most important movements of the last 200 years started with fairly small groups of people. The Workers' Solidarity and Union Democracy Coalition hopes to take the ideas and energies from the conference and create a mass movement of working people dedicated to militant activism, union democracy and the making of a better world.

\* Organizations listed for identification purposes only.

### NDP Socialist Caucus Meetings (all held in Socialist Caucus Room)

SC and left-wing delegates will meet to discuss issues, floor strategy, resolution priorities, procedures and forge a strong coalition to fight for socialism and democracy inside the NDP.

Friday	Adjournment
Saturday	Lunch
Saturday	Adjournment
Sunday	Adjournment

We welcome your participation!

### Join the NDP Socialist Caucus



The NDP Socialist Caucus is committed to turning the NDP sharply to the Left and establish a Workers' Government in the interests of the vast majority of people. We stand for the creation of a democratically-controlled economy and a cooperative commonwealth.

The SC fights for the equality and dignity of women, First Nations, lesbians, gays and bisexuals, people of colour, refugees, immigrants, youth and elders. We believe that the struggle for peace and environmental sustainability is central to the creation for a better world. We invite you to join with us in this most human endeavor.

**PLEASE DONATE TO THE SC.** Any help you could provide would be very much appreciated.

**Make cheques payable to NDP SOCIALIST CAUCUS.** 526 Roxton Rd. Toronto, ON. M6G 3R4. Visit our website at [www.ndpsocialists.ca](http://www.ndpsocialists.ca). Contact [seancain@hotmail.com](mailto:seancain@hotmail.com).



# The Necessity of the Socialist Caucus

The following are excerpts from a speech given by Socialist Caucus Federal Coordinating Committee member Barry Weisleder at the Ontario SC Conference held on September 19th

SINCE 1998, THE Socialist Caucus has campaigned for a Workers' Agenda, for socialist solutions to the problems faced by humanity. The SC has campaigned openly to move the New Democratic Party sharply to the left. The NDP remains the only mass, labour-based political party in North America. The many publications and campaigns of the Socialist Caucus, especially the Bev Meslo bid for federal leadership in 2002-2003, have had a positive impact on the NDP.

During the 1980s and 1990s the NDP moved steadily to the right. The party leadership took the NDP to the brink of oblivion - then stopped, looked over the brink, and stepped back. In addition to the Socialist Caucus, the New Politics Initiative and others sounded the alarm.

Unfortunately, the NPI abandoned the fight for a socialist alternative to neo-liberalism. But the party brass got the message and they embraced the soft-left populist option represented by Jack Layton. NDP membership doubled as the party appeared to shift slightly to the left, or at least it stopped its rapid slide to the right. The party recovered some of its historic electoral support at the federal level, in Ontario, and elsewhere.

Clearly, the NDP is back again - back from the brink. But its political stance, its priorities, its policies and its programme remain fraught with contradictions and outright negative features. Despite giving the appearance of openness to social movements, the party remains totally preoccupied with electoral campaigns. And the latter leave much to be desired.

In the June 28 federal election, the NDP did not campaign against capitalist globalization. There was no mention of socialist solutions, let alone any reference to socialism as an alternative to capitalist exploitation and the destruction of humanity and the environment. No talk of public ownership, much less workers' and community control. We must be clear: Proportional Representation in Parliament would not redress the democratic deficit of liberal capitalist society; far from it.

Despite the preoccupation with elections and government, the party failed to campaign for the most basic goal - an NDP government. Instead, it proposed "a central role for the NDP in Parliament." This implied support for a Liberal minority government. It made it a bit easier for the great political chameleon, Paul Martin, to campaign to his left and usurp some NDP political turf.

Jack Layton ran an energetic effort. However, it was far from socialist, and he back pedalled on a number of issues. He retreated after initially taking a clear, democratic stance in opposition to Jean Chretien's anti-Quebec Clarity Act. Layton looked silly trying to dodge the issue in the Leaders' TV Debate. BQ Leader Gilles Duceppe nailed him on that one. Then Jack abandoned the NDP plank

calling for an inheritance tax, without explaining where replacement revenue would be found.

While vigorously opposing Star Wars 2, along with half the Liberal caucus, at no time did Layton demand an immediate end to the US and allied occupation of Iraq, much less did Layton demand that Canada get its military forces out of Afghanistan, out of the Persian Gulf, or out of NATO-occupied Yugoslavia.

Layton's stated commitment to a balanced budget is also in tune with the position of the capitalist parties. It is a mark of the unwillingness of NDP leaders to challenge fundamentally the neo-liberal agenda of cutbacks, de-regulation and privatization. There was no mention of saving jobs and defending the public interest at Air Canada, or at Stelco, and only a tepid proposal that the government retain shares in Petro-Canada to leverage them into a new clean energy public initiative.

The federal Liberal minority government is putting \$18 billion in new cash transfers over the next six years. That sounds like a lot of money. But only if you forget the tens of billions of dollars Finance Minister Martin cut and held back in health and other transfer funds in 1995 through 2002.

But there's more to this matter. While the feds gave a totally just concession to Quebec, a cash transfer without conditions, reflecting the reality that Quebec is a nation and not just a province, the overall cash amount is still inadequate to redress decades of cuts. At the same time, the absence of controls on the other provinces is unjustifiable. So is the abandonment of any effort to roll back user fees, the insulting tokenism shown towards acute home care and acute mental health home care, and the cynical substitute of a 'progress report' in 2006 instead of any real pharma-care plan.

**"From a global standpoint, what we are witnessing is a vast expansion of the terrain of crisis and instability in the world, with US imperialism as the main destabilizing factor."**

I cannot resist pointing out that even if there was a national drug formulary, with the feds acting as the bulk buyer and distributor, drugs would still be the fastest rising component of health expenditures and the giant drug companies (like Glaxo-SmithKline, Pfizer, Merck, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Bayer, Eli Lilly and Procter & Gamble) would continue to reap billions in rip-off profits. Working people need a government that will engage in the production of necessary pharmaceuticals, not just a glorified middle-man and servant to the transnationals. We need to nationalize the Pharmaceutical industry, fund research, and give seniors, the poor and all workers the relief we deserve. Cuba can do it. Why not Canada?

There are many in the media, in higher education, and even in the NDP who will tell you that if you talk about capitalism, much less about socialism, that you are being unrealistic, even utopian. I think we need to question this kind of "conventional wisdom."

Although capitalism continues to reign unchallenged it is no longer the robust system of earlier centuries. Economic stagnation is exerting its grip on the center of the world system and most of the periphery. In these circumstances, the United States, self-appointed world leader, has emerged as an extremely aggressive imperialist power attempting to establish a new Pax Americana. The US is now bent on expanding its empire in the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and even parts of Europe, while increasing its counterinsurgency operations in Latin America - all under the cover of a limitless "war on terrorism." Anyone who thinks that the world situation is stable is therefore in for a lot of surprises.



**A strong socialist movement is vital to fighting capitalism's march towards war and economic crisis**

The extent of the trouble the US economy is in now can be seen in the fact that the US has become reliant on a mountain of debt and the inflow of foreign capital. The deficit in US transactions with the rest of the world keeps on rising rapidly (US \$542 billion in 2003, up from US \$481 billion in 2002). The US has become the world's foremost debtor nation, increasingly dependent on external borrowing while burdened internally by growing amounts of private and public debt.

From a global standpoint, what we are witnessing is a vast expansion of the terrain of crisis and instability in the world, with US imperialism as the main destabilizing factor. Liberal rhetoric aside, the Canadian state remains a junior partner of US imperialism, well integrated into the US war machine, to say nothing of the US economy.

At the same time, the recent referendum defeat for imperialism in Venezuela, and the growing resistance to occupation in Iraq, points to the possibility of a new worldwide anti-imperialist revolt.

We can't predict the future, but closer to home it appears the federal minority government will last up to two years. Will the NDP get too close to the Liberals, and suffer the consequences David Lewis suffered for getting too close to Pierre Trudeau's minority government in the 1970s? The answer depends in part on what the Labour movement and NDP members say and do. It depends also in part on us, on what the Socialist Caucus does.

On June 28 over 2 million votes moved to the left. Only 61% of those eligible to vote did vote. It's fair to say that more than 2 million Canadians want to see change; a significant fraction of that number want radical change. The restored prominence of the BQ ensures that the Quebec national question is on the agenda again. Aboriginal issues, feminist issues, labour issues, war and peace issues are all coming increasingly to the forefront as the crisis of capitalism demands new answers. Good jobs are disappearing. Fees continue to climb, while services are eroded. Labour leaders give concessions to owners who plea poverty. The question is: Who will stand up for the majority, for working people, for those who create all the goods and services for society, for our labour which is the source of profit?

We need to better organize ourselves, not just for convention debates, but inside the social movements and in the streets, to convince working people of our answers, and to win them to our banner. The time for us to get active is now.

This Socialist Caucus Conference will give us a jump start on the tasks we face in the coming months. To push the NDP to the left. To build a stronger socialist movement inside the NDP and with our allies outside the NDP.

**Elect Socialist Caucus candidates for ONDP Executive**

**Help build a more democratic and participatory NDP**



**TURN LEFT is published by the NDP Socialist Caucus.**  
Editor: Sean Cain