

HEARTS & MINDS

A Newsletter by Members of the Parkdale-High Park NDP

Issue 2

April-May 2009

Buy Canadian provisions urgently needed to protect jobs

Charlie Campbell, Research Director, United Steelworkers Canadian National Office



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See Hearts & Minds online at: <http://www.phpndp.ca>

The articles contained within represent the views of each author, not necessarily those of either the riding association executive or any other NDP body. All authors are members of the Parkdale-High Park Riding Association unless otherwise identified.

Ontario Liberals drop ball on environment, green jobs



Peter Tabuns, MPP

Ontario is facing huge environmental and economic challenges. Taking environmental action could help us rebuild our economy while reducing our contribution to global warming and air pollution.

The Liberal 2009 budget did little more than tip its hat to the climate crisis, and very little more for the other environmental problems we face.

The Emerging Technologies Fund was touted to be a major step forward to develop green technologies but you

don't have to get too far into the fine print to find that the fund is not dedicated specifically or primarily to green technologies but rather to a broad range of technology investments, most of which will have no positive impact whatsoever on the environment.

A major plank in the climate action announcement made by Dalton McGuinty a few years ago was investment in research and development to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The announcement in this budget does not make anyone confident that this promise will be kept.

Investment in roads continues to outpace investment in public transit, with the gap in this year's budget growing to half a billion dollars by 2010-2011. This won't help us move away from a car-dependent society and won't give us the critical mass needed to really move people in greener ways.

The \$27.5 billion investment in in-

frastructure provides *less* than 2 cents on the dollar for investments that protect water quality or the environment as a whole.

Another missed opportunity: there was no new commitment in money for retrofitting institutional buildings or residences to make them more energy-efficient. This is one of the most cost-effective and uncomplicated things that the provincial government could do to actually reduce energy consumption in the province. It is also probably one of the best and quickest ways to put people back to work.

What was interesting was that while there were no real roll-backs in evidence in the budget, with regard to addressing environmental issues, there was no forward motion of consequence either.

At a time when we face a climate and jobs crisis, the failure to take substantial action is shocking.

Note from the Editor

Welcome to the second issue of *Hearts & Minds*. We were gratified by your enthusiastic response to both the online and print editions of our first issue. Please get on our free e-mail list for *Hearts & Minds* if you aren't already, and encourage friends to as well.

In this issue we've taken a stab at analyzing why Canada is in the economic and environmental mess it's in and how we might get out. So we've focused on these issues: the structure of our economy and our economic decision-making processes; the urgent need to ensure climate change doesn't fall off the public agenda despite the recession; how and where the NDP has made major breakthroughs; and experiments in

other countries in the Americas where progressives have come to power.

Hearts & Minds is intended to promote debate and reflection, so we want to hear from you even (or especially) if you disagree. We're always on the lookout for articles, photos, cartoons or jokes. Please let us know what you think, and pick up your pen, or hunker down at your keyboard, if you'd like to speak up.

Best,

J.A. MacNeil

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Time for a European-style high-speed Windsor-Quebec rail line?



Randy Hope, Mayor of Chatham-Kent

Background

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent is an integral part of southwestern Ontario, one of Canada's premier economic engines, and part of the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. Yet, like other municipalities in southwestern Ontario,

Chatham-Kent faces significant challenges to economic growth. Our manufacturing sector is under siege as the North American automotive industry struggles to survive economic slowdown, decreased demand and increased international competition. Unemployment is relatively high, and yet our workforce is ready to work and has the skills and experience to meet the needs of new employers.

Our agricultural sector is varied and strong, providing solid performance and striving to develop more value-added agribusiness. In fact, southwestern Ontario accounts for the majority of farming in Ontario, but less than a third of agri-food manufacturing and processing. In this context, it is important to stimulate regional economic diversity, growth and greater trade with the U.S. and other countries along key transportation corridors.

Aging transport and border infrastructure is standing in the way of increased regional competitiveness

In concert with neighbouring municipalities, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent has consistently pressed for improved infrastructure links within the region, enhanced highways and rail infrastructure, new intermodal transport facilities, and better border security processes.

Key among the improvements needed is a dedicated high-speed rail system that would allow our business people to access Toronto and Montreal, Detroit and Chicago on a daily basis. Quick and easy access can be expected to boost regional investment, jobs, real estate values and tourism.

Overall, the investment of infrastructure funding in enhanced rail infrastructure, including freight and separate high-speed passenger rail through the Quebec City-Windsor corridor, would do much to stimulate the economy. Beginning with construction employment, the benefits would be strongly felt in Chatham-Kent. High-speed passenger service could open Chatham-Kent's rural and urban real estate market to many of the 16 million people who live and work in the corridor.

With a land mass of almost 2,500 square kilometres, Chatham-Kent is the twelfth-largest single-tier municipality in Canada and the largest in southwestern Ontario. It offers affordable land, charming safe communities, and tourism attractions that would enter the marketplace with

High Speed Rail in Ontario

- High-speed rail is defined as rail traffic above 200 km/h by the European Union and above 145 km/h by the United States Federal Railroad Administration
- In such a system, most train movement is electrically powered
- Many use a specifically dedicated rail corridor and continuous welded rail
- Urban density and mass transit have been key factors in the success of European and Japanese systems
- In Ontario, the concept has been studied 16 times since 1973
- The federal government and the Ontario and Quebec governments recently funded a \$3 million study of the idea

Time for a European-style high-speed Windsor-Quebec rail line?

the advent of fast transit. High-speed rail would also improve travel to larger centres, increasing the reach and viability of regional ventures. Citizens could live and work in Chatham-Kent, Windsor, London or Toronto as needed, making it easier to do business and spreading economic benefits throughout the area.

Affordable high speed passenger service would also open employment opportunities and the regional exchange of skills to regional markets throughout southern Ontario and Quebec. Chatham-Kent is home to both the St. Clair College Thames Campus and the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus. Supplementing the “smart communities” linkage created by the Internet and telecommunications, high speed rail would physically bring people together for education opportunities that are unfeasible to offer electronically, including a wide variety of training and education programs, conferences and seminars. Education and training are directly linked to new regional enterprises, and the easy exchange of knowledge and skills among our regions can benefit them all. Similarly, enterprises in culture and the arts are often as easily transportable as the performers themselves, and so high speed rail can stimulate the cultural economy.

Randy Hope, now mayor of Chatham-Kent, served as an NDP member of the Ontario Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services from 1990 to 1995. Prior to that he was a plant worker and served as president of CAW Local 1941 in Tilbury, Ontario and president of the area labour council. He was also area coordinator of the Coalition for Social Justice.

Chatham-Kent works in partnership with adjoining municipalities, regional institutions and business to maximize economic development opportunities. The municipality is a member of the Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA), which includes representatives from businesses, industry, chambers of commerce, prominent colleges and universities, municipalities, development agencies and other governmental organizations. SWEA has identified high speed rail as a priority in the promotion and development of the region's economic potential. The full report is called *A Southwest Ontario Vision for Economic Competitiveness and Cooperation: Gateway to Canada's North American Trade Corridor*, and it may be found on the Internet at <http://www.swea.ca>.

With high speed rail service, our emphasis on green next-generation energy, environmental industries and related technologies will be served by next-generation transport. Overall, opportunities, partnerships and creative competition of all kinds can be expected to increase with the advent of high-speed rail and associated transport, and Chatham-Kent would be more profitably integrated into southern Ontario's new, regionally-based economy.

Excerpt from *Baird downplays high-speed rail link*

Toronto Star
March 18, 2009

Transport Minister John Baird yesterday appeared to pour cold water on the idea of high-speed rail along the Windsor-Quebec City corridor, saying so far it has proved too expensive and would serve too few people.

“I suspect it's about density and cost,” said Baird, adding that a high-speed link between Quebec and Ontario that has been talked about for decades could cost up to \$30 billion, and serve 16 million people.

Editor's note

If you would like to express your support for federal investment in a high-speed rail corridor, phone or write to:

John Baird
Federal Minister of Transport
(613) 996-0984
BairdJ@parl.gc.ca

Please bcc your communications to editorheartsandminds@gmail.com, if possible.

Shovel-worthy or just “shovel-ready”?

Federal infrastructure and transportation spending



Dennis Bevington, MP

The ongoing downturn in the economy of Canada, North America and the world has been the overwhelming attention-holder in Parliament over the past three months. The Conservative budget—the product of right-wing free-marketers with a political “gun to their head”—

is less than mediocre when it comes to setting some direction for our country and the economy.

Central to the Harper Conservatives’ plan to deal with the economic crisis are its proposed investments in infrastructure and transportation. However, a flaw in Prime Minister Harper’s initiative is the absence of any form of strategic planning or forward thinking as to *which* new transportation priorities should be supported.

Under the Harper plan there is no commitment to improving the environmental directions for the future of how goods and people get around this country. Rather, the only thinking Prime Minister Harper has done is whether the projects can be started as quickly as possible—the so-called “Shovel-Ready” criteria.

Using “shovel-ready” as the primary determinant of infrastructure investment will lead Canadians nowhere particularly useful and will reinforce transportation systems that have no place in a world of declining supplies of fossil fuels, uncontrolled urban sprawl and global warming caused by CO₂ emissions.

Canada needs more than a two-year stimulus package, it needs vision and leadership to ensure that this recession

Dennis Bevington was elected Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic in 2006. Prior to that he was President of Stand Alone Energy Systems Ltd.—a solar energy firm—as well as serving as Special Advisor on Energy to the Premier of the Northwest Territories and as Mayor of Fort Smith (1988 to 1997), during which time he served on the Green Funds Council of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. He also served as a board member on the Northern River Basin Study.

ends with the tools for a new economy. This is the direction the Obama administration is taking in the United States. Unfortunately, Stephen Harper’s Conservative government, supported by Michael Ignatieff, is mired in the past. By pouring funds into technologies that are rapidly becoming obsolete, when the current economic crisis is over Canada will find itself at a disadvantage compared to those nations that are using the current situation to reinvigorate their economies with new technologies rather than propping up the past ones.

A case in point is the Windsor–Quebec City corridor, the most heavily traveled area in the country. Airports, highways and railroads are all competing for a piece of the infrastructure funding pie, with little or no sense of integration or strategic planning.

Another example of this lack of forward thinking is the latest plan to initiate rail service between Union Station in downtown Toronto and Lester B. Pearson International Airport. This initiative would use diesel locomotives and refurbished passenger rail cars. There are many flaws in this plan. For example, it will be run as a privately-owned service operating on a for-profit basis. As well, because of its reliance on old technology, there is no real reduction in green house gas emissions compared to just using automobiles. This lack of imaginative thinking clearly displays the lack of principled planning that should be integrated into any transportation change.

We need an articulated vision for the future of transportation services in the corridor, based upon environmental, economic and societal directions that are forward-looking rather than backward. We don’t need to invest right away in stimulus projects that will lead us in the wrong direction.

For Dennis Bevington’s speech on the budget, see: <http://www.dennisbevington.ca/statements.html>

Ontario plays catch up, instead of leading on toxics reduction

J.A. MacNeil

After Texas, Ontario is North America's biggest polluter. In response to pressure by the NDP, environmental groups and ordinary citizens to address this problem, the Ontario government has recently introduced the Toxics Reduction Act.

The NDP environmental critic, Peter Tabuns (MPP, Toronto—Danforth) welcomes the bill but notes, "It is a watering down of promises that were made by the government in the last election, when they said they would require reduction of toxic chemicals by companies. That is not what's on the table today."

As Tabuns has commented, "people want action. There's no question that in this province people are worried about cancer. There's no question they are worried about toxic contamination. Anyone who has . . . gone into the chemotherapy rooms at Princess Margaret Hospital and seen the young people and the old people knows that something has to be done. It's not all chemical contamination, but we know that it's part of what is going on in the province."

The bill's major failing is the lack of firm targets. Tabuns notes, "If you want someone to do something, you set out what you want them to do and the time by which you want it done—if in fact you want it to happen. There are not targets in the bill. I heard the

explanation in the press conference, and I have to say to you, as a person who sits in the House and looks at reports on this, that and the other thing that is done, if there is not a target, it is extraordinarily difficult for us as legislators and for the public as a whole to hold government to account. For me, having a target is an important part of any bill."

The environmental and economic consequences of the weakness of the bill are significant. As Tabuns noted in the legislature, Ontario is always slowly "playing catch-up while other jurisdictions, California and Massachusetts, have moved long before us. . . . That has . . . health consequences in cancer wards. It has economic consequences because the world is moving away from fossil fuels and toxic chemicals to green chemistry, and in both those fields, it's the jurisdictions that act early and act profoundly that develop a competitive edge, an economic advantage that will allow them to power their economies in the 21st century."

There are other problems that have not been addressed by this bill: failure to enforce hazardous waste laws and inadequate resources for the Ministry of the Environment to perform the crucial work of investigation and enforcement.

As Tabuns noted in the Legislative Assembly, "if the government isn't dealing with our historic problems,

how can we rely on them to deal with our current problems?"

Although the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) welcomed the introduction of the bill, it too has expressed a number of concerns about its weaknesses, especially the delaying of its implementation until after the next election. RNAO's Executive Director Doris Grinspun noted, "People's health is at stake today. People are demanding action from our government and we can't afford to waste any time on this critical health issue."

Both the NDP and the RNAO will be looking for amendments that will strengthen the bill, including the following:

- aggressive targets to reduce the release of toxic substances into the environment
- a provision that would guarantee the public's right to know about toxics in their environment
- requirements for manufacturers to use safer alternatives
- the establishment of an independent body that would assist companies in using greener alternatives, similar to one in the State of Massachusetts.

Tabuns and his colleagues in the NDP caucus will be pursuing amendments to the bill throughout April and May, in an attempt to improve it.

See also Canadian Environmental Law Association info on this topic: <http://www.cela.ca/collections/justice/toxics-use-reduction-ontario>

For info on other provincial environmental issues (e.g. overdue Hazardous Waste Plan, nuclear energy, the York Region gas-fired electricity plant, etc.) see Peter Tabun's website: <http://petertabuns.ca>

Will NDP's climate change bill be law in time for Copenhagen?

Terry Burrell

This December, the UN Conference on Climate Change will convene in Copenhagen. Progress will be assessed and government representatives will negotiate the international response to the central challenge of our time. The last conference of this kind was held December 2007 in Bali. You probably recall that the Canadian delegation led by John Baird tied the US in receiving the most “Fossil of the Day” awards (given by NGOs) for impeding progress and obstructing the negotiating process.

What will Canada have to show the world at Copenhagen?

Well, thanks to the opposition parties' April 1, 2009 passage of Bill C-311—“An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change”—on second reading, it might be more than the Harper government's dismal performance on the climate file. This private member's bill, presented by rookie NDP MP Bruce Hyer, renders legally binding a commitment to the kind of action the world scientific consensus now considers necessary and appropriate.

It could be law by the time Copenhagen rolls around. It needs to come back from the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Resources, pass third reading in the Commons, be passed by the Senate and receive Royal Assent. This is certainly possible between now and then, especially since substantially the same bill (then titled Bill C-377, introduced by Jack Layton) had passed third reading and obtained Senate approval prior to Harper's dissolution of the last Parliament.

Bill C-311 now moves on to committee. What does it purport to do?

It commits the Canadian government to achieving greenhouse gas reduction targets that are consistent with the informed international community's shared view of what is necessary to avoid dangerous climate change. It does so by requiring the government to produce an action plan dealing with both medium and long-term targets, by providing for a wide range of regulatory options to achieve the plan,

and by establishing a set of accountability mechanisms aimed at publicly holding the government's feet to the fire. The core of the Bill is the commitment to have Canada do its internationally fair share in avoiding dangerous climate change. Here is a summary of its provisions:

The Commitment: The international community has defined dangerous climate change as being a rise in the Earth's average surface temperature of 2°C or more above the average prevailing at the beginning of industrial period. Using the best science available (especially that emanating from the Nobel Prize-winning IPCC), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has derived greenhouse gas emission reduction targets consistent with avoiding that temperature rise. Bill C-311 commits the Government of Canada to those targets:

- long-term target: 80 percent below the 1990 level by the year 2050; and
- medium-term target: a level 25 percent below the 1990 level by the year 2025

Canadian Greenhouse Gas Emissions Target Plan: To meet the commitment C-311 requires the government to develop a Target Plan setting out targets for each of the five-year intervals from 2015 to 2045. The Target Plan must be prepared within six months of the Bill's receiving Royal Assent and reviewed at least once every five years, beginning in 2015. The Bill specifies a set of conditions aimed at ensuring that the Target Plan is realistic, coherent, based on the best science available and consistent with the UNFCCC's ultimate objectives and with “Parliament's strong commitment to the Kyoto protocol”.

Regulations and Enforcement: Bill C-311 provides for a wide array of regulatory mechanisms that the government may use to mandate, stimulate and facilitate the Target Plan's implementation. These include: emission limits, performance standards, technological restrictions, the issuing of permits, and provisions for various kinds of trading as well as for compliance mechanisms such as monitoring, investigation and enforcement. Special attention is given to penalties including the provision that the contravention of a regulation made under the Act is an offense punishable pursuant to the criminal law.

Will NDP's climate change bill be law in time for Copenhagen?

Accountability: Bill C-311 demands consistency and provides for public accountability:

- the Cabinet is required to ensure that its international climate change negotiations are consistent with the target commitments and with the Target Plan;
- the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy is required to make, and publicly report, a detailed assessment of the Target Plan within six months of its publication;
- the Minister of the Environment is required to make a detailed annual public statement on the measures taken to ensure that the targets are met and the Target Plan is implemented. The Minister is also to report on the expected greenhouse gas reductions;
- the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy is required to provide a public report assessing the Minister's statement within four months of the statement's release, advising the Minister on a range of matters, including its assessment of the likelihood of the proposed measures' success;
- The Environment Commissioner is required, at least every two years, to analyze and publicly report on progress on meeting the targets and overall commitments.

This is a serious legislative initiative which fills a major void. Canada currently has no law committing it to implement the UNFCCC targets for 2025 and 2050; the existing Kyoto legislation goes no further than 2012. Bill C-311 offers the opportunity for a fresh start, arguably making it more difficult for Harper government to adopt the same

scofflaw approach it has used in ignoring the Kyoto law. A cloud may be forming on the horizon, however. Reading Hansard's record of the debate on the second reading shows that Liberal support was tepid. The Liberals were reportedly preparing to vote against Bill C-311 but were turned around by a concerted lobbying of Liberal MPs through a campaign encouraged by environmental NGOs.

It may well be that the Liberal Party is having second thoughts about the kind of rigorous commitment entailed in Bill C-311. After all, the Liberal Party held power and allowed Kyoto to languish while year after precious year passed without serious action.

Moreover, we have witnessed Mr. Ignatieff's recent court-ing of the Alberta public with his positive musings on the tar sands: "National Geographic is not going to teach me any lessons about the oilsands."

Stay tuned; major action may be required to ensure that Bill C-311 clears all the hurdles in time and is a law that can be pointed to with some pride at Copenhagen in December.

For Ignatieff's comments on the tarsands, see:

- <http://www.vancouversun.com/Business/Ignatieff+defends+oilsands+world+leader/1328975/story.html>
- <http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/fullcomment/archive/2009/01/20/colby-cosh-ignatieff-sees-geopolitical-clout-in-alberta-tar-sands.aspx>

Catch NDP MP Megan Leslie (Halifax) on Bill C-311

A personal note: I am one of the legions here in Parkdale- High Park—and I suspect elsewhere in Canada—who are still mourning the defeat in October's election of our outstanding MP, Peggy Nash. The loss of such a dynamic, intelligent and progressive woman from the House of Commons was a bitter pill indeed. I wonder whether I will ever completely ingest it. So, in my travels through Hansard in

the preparation of this article, I was delighted to become better acquainted with the work of two talented women, rookie NDP MPs from opposite sides of the country, both with roots in the environmental movement. I was already somewhat aware of Linda Duncan, whose stunning victory in Edmonton, and subsequent media coverage, was difficult to miss; suffice to say her efforts on Bill C-311 have increased my regard for her even more. However, I was

completely ignorant of Megan Leslie's presence. That's all changed now. I urge you to take the time to watch her speech in the Commons on Bill C-311, which can be found on the federal NDP website <http://www.ndp.ca/video/megan-leslie-climate-change-accountability-act-debate-in-house> — TB

C-311: An environmental law with teeth



Linda Duncan, MP

The minimum definition of a democracy is straightforward: the nation must agree to abide by the rule of law. This means those who make the rules are democratically elected. They enact laws to govern the affairs of the nation.

Why is this important to climate change? The Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, which the Liberals are proud of, was enacted by Parliament in 2007 and prescribes in law the requirement to comply with the Kyoto targets by 2012. To date the Canadian government has refused to enforce that law despite its purported support of and strong commitment to enforcement of environmental laws. That is a law on the books. So much for its commitment.

Bill C-311 imposes a positive legal obligation on the Government of Canada to take action to meet specified reduction targets in the mid and long term, targets which can be revised over time based on science. It removes the current unlimited discretion to delay action. The bill introduces both legal certainty and government accountability, something the government professes to stand by.

At the same time, it allows for flexibility in measures used by industry and government alike to meet the targets. It requires reports on compliance

by the minister and the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Why is this crucial?

Legislative or regulatory measures have been proven empirically to be the most effective mechanism to trigger new investment in environmental technologies.

Twenty years of reliance on voluntary measures and subsidies to fossil fuels have given us monumental increases in greenhouse gas emissions. Binding targets with prescribed compliance dates provide advance notice and clear price signals to the current and future cost of carbon. It prescribes directions for Canada's position in international and bilateral climate negotiations and dialogues, including the dialogue going on now with the United States.

Current polls tell us that the majority of Canadians still want action on the environment. Canadians know that our environmental and economic crises are best addressed in tandem. In fact, 57 percent of Canadians support federal action on climate change even if it means a higher deficit.

By supporting Bill C-311, Parliament can finally show leadership. It provides the clear signal to our trading partners that we are committed to genuine engagement in global and bilateral action. It sends a new, positive message to the world that we are finally taking action to deliver on our international obligations to address climate change and forge a greener economy.

Linda Duncan, a lawyer, is the only non-Conservative MP for Alberta, and was Vice-President of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund.

Who's got Iggy's ear?

J.A. MacNeil

According to one savvy observer keeping an eye on the House of Commons, the Liberal caucus's dithering on C-311 and Ignatieff's cold feet about it are the result of heavy lobbying by Anne McLellan, former Liberal MP for Edmonton West and Minister of Natural Resources in the Chretien cabinet.

With Trudeau's National Energy Program now a dim memory, the allegiance of today's Liberals to the oil companies is epitomized by McLellan's current corporate ties.

McLellan is on the board of directors of Nexen Inc., a Calgary-based energy company, 80 percent owned by Occidental Petroleum—yes, *that* Occidental Petroleum. Nexen has interests in the Athabaska Oil Sands, both through its 7 percent ownership of Syncrude and through its own Long Lake oil sands project. She's also a director of Cameco, the uranium mining, refining and energy generation company that operates the Bruce Power nuclear plants.

So the sweet nothings she has apparently been whispering in the ears of Ignatieff and his caucus are likely to be in a certain vein. It's safe to presume that the last thing the oil and nuclear companies want is for tight rules on CO₂ emissions to actually spur domestic growth of cheap renewable energy generation. Their goose would be cooked.

If Bill C-311 comes into force prior to the next election, were the Liberals to form the next government they would have a legal responsibility to ensure compliance with C-311's tough provisions. It appears that Ignatieff wants to be able to promise the oil lobby and its supporters during the next campaign that neither the oil sands project nor other petroleum extraction will be slowed, and then, after the election, if the Liberals win government, be free take as little action as he chooses on climate change.

Change — the new normal



Nathan Cullen, MP

The almost unimaginable combination of an economic meltdown, a movement's need to reinvent itself and a climate crisis has generated the political will to tackle the transformation of the world's economy.

The very notion of a “blue-green alliance”,

which was the initiative for the conference on Green Jobs/Good Jobs that I recently attended in Washington, would have been unthinkable a few short years ago. Before, unions and environmental groups couldn't agree on what to order for dinner, much less an economic roadmap to turn this economy into a leaner, more efficient and greener machine.

Looking Back to Go Forward

Henry Ford's ideas are now being dusted off to describe the world-changing scale of what needs to be contemplated now. The assembly line, the middle class and the industrial age transformed how we worked, lived and to what life we might aspire. This new alliance is attempting to bring the planet into the equation to create wealth and equity.

For years I have believed that when denial and fear in the US are finally transformed into vision and commitment, the enthusiasm, the true force of the green-collar revolution will be breathtaking. A tipping point has likely been reached by our southern cousins and when their economic machine is combined with their gumption and pride, Canada will be only green with envy if we continue to fail to act.

Nathan Cullen was first elected MP for Skeena-Bulkley Valley in 2004, and re-elected in 2006 and 2008. Before elected life he worked in community and economic development in Latin America and Africa. On returning to Canada he became a small business owner and community organizer in northwestern BC., focusing on strategic planning and resolving conflicts for businesses, government and non-profit agencies throughout the province. He lives in Smithers, B.C.

Canada's Gamble the Planet's Peril

We have seen successive Liberal and Conservative governments put off real action for another day, paying only lip service to the climate crisis. Our so-called Minister of the Environment claims we still must choose between jobs or the earth. Such false assumptions and cynical worldview have been proven wrong and we must now wed the economy and the environment in our planning.

What's Next

Timelines vary but three significant things will be coming out of Washington by the end of 2009 that will have significant impact on Canada.

1. Copenhagen: the US administration will arrive at the next round of the international climate talks looking to take on the leadership of the next stage. In Canada we have the NDP's Bill C-311, unless its passage into law gets delayed or killed by Liberals when it goes to Committee for third reading, or to the Senate.
2. Dollars: the policies and regulations that are being drawn up will drive public and private investment in the US towards clean technology, energy efficiency and so-called “green-collar jobs” across many sectors.
3. Inspiration: the effect of the Obama White House is already being felt around the world. The next generation of industrialists and investors are feeling more encouraged and supported than at any other time.

It has been some time since a Canadian MP could head south of the border and find inspiration. It has been said that we must not waste a crisis and the opportunity for Canada is real—but without leadership in Ottawa that understands and believes in this reality, we will surely be left behind.

Breathe life into social justice by greening the economy



Former MP Peggy Nash

Everyday the news is of more and more economic uncertainty. Weak or non-existent regulation of banking and financial activity, especially in the United States, has turned much of the world economy into an anything-goes casino. As a result the world economy has been plunged into deep recession with the loss of millions of jobs, shaky pension plans, eroding savings, and struggling businesses.

We are facing an economic crisis unlike anything that most of us have faced in our lifetime. Insecurity now seems to infiltrate the air we breathe. Governments are working to stabilize the financial system, but in the meantime — the real economy from manufacturing to resources to services to small business — seems increasingly fragile. There is a need for urgent action. We can't just continue with busi-

ness as usual—we have to build a fairer and more sustainable world economy for the future.

The Canadian government, working with other countries' governments, needs to work to pull the global economy out of recession and chart a new course for job creation, financial regulation and global governance. Now more than ever, we need to press for green jobs and a sustainable recovery.

We need a global rescue package that puts people first—to stimulate, regulate and fundamentally reform the global economy and to invest in sustainable green industries. Investors and executives who reap massive short-term personal profits from companies while undermining the actual businesses must not be allowed to continue this kind of plunder. Investments need to be oriented to the actual long-term stability and success of an enterprise so that millions of lives are not thrown into turmoil through speculative excess.

In rebuilding our economy we now have the chance to invest in greening our industries like never before. Massive investment in renewable energy can help chart this course. Canada can benefit not only by using renewables but by building renewables, in all their

many forms. Investment in retrofitting public and private buildings not only reduces energy consumption but creates jobs and helps kick-start our economy.

Environmental sustainability and economic development must also be tied to social justice. Clean air and water, energy efficiency, helping transform the economy—this is a social project that must leave no one behind. We need to engage those in our poorest neighbourhoods to use their brains and energy for the major retrofitting and retooling that will transform our economy.

Massive public infrastructure investments, after decades of procrastination, can turn wasteful decay into modern and healthy efficiency. Environmental investments will breathe new life into our society by transforming our economy. Our future focus needs to be on forging a new social agenda that lifts people out of poverty, improves public health, and strengthens our communities.

We are facing several daunting challenges. Getting the economy moving again will help mediate many other challenges, if we get it right. We have a once-in-a-generation chance to make a real difference.

Toronto Bike Month – May 25 – June 25

- Toronto's Bike Month 2009 will run from May 25 to June 25. Bike Month is a celebration of all thing bicycle-related in Toronto. For further info see: <http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/bikemonth/index.htm>
- Bike to Work day: Monday, May 25. Residents of Toronto are invited to join Mayor David Miller by riding their bike to work as part of the Toronto Group Commute starting from Bloor and High Park at 7 am.
- Bike Summit: Thursday, May 28 — One day policy conference, all day at the Novotel Toronto Centre (Esplanade and Yonge). Sponsored by Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation and the Clean Air Partnership. To register: <http://www.torontocat.ca/main/bikesummit2009/registration>
- Toronto is planning an easy-use bike rental scheme: <http://bikeunion.to/clipping/easy-use-bike-rental-scheme-planned-toronto>

How we won the North



Team North: Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay -Superior North), Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury), John Rafferty (Thunder Bay-Rainy River), Carol Hughes (Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing), Charlie Angus (Timmins -James Bay), Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt) and Leader Jack Layton

Charlie Angus, MP

“Northern Ontario has turned NDP orange with only a few pockets of Tory blue and Liberal red.”

This was the glorious lead sentence in one of Northern Ontario’s leading dailies in the aftermath of the NDP’s virtual clean sweep of the North in last fall’s election. The achievement was remarkable not only because we won in the riding that we targeted, but more so because of the way the hard work in our targets translated into wins that no one imagined in their wildest dreams – like knocking off veteran Liberal Diane Marleau in Sudbury.

As often happens in election post-mortems, Party insiders and strategists are asking the question “What the heck happened?” But in the case of Northern Ontario, they’re (thankfully) not asking that in the same way they do after hopes for a major breakthrough are dashed in a campaign’s final days.

In northern Ontario, we adopted a comprehensive plan that resulted in the big region-wide gain that all too often eludes us as a party.

The first piece of the puzzle, which is always a requisite starting point for

success, was having high-quality, committed candidates. With the exception of Glenn Thibeault in Sudbury, our winning team in the North were all candidates who had run previously, who were committed to pounding the pavement and pressing flesh between elections, and who were well-equipped to deal with the mental and physical rigours of a campaign. Glenn was the only candidate who hadn’t run previously, but what he lacked in that specific experience he more than made up for in his stature as a committed and respected community leader in Sudbury.

The second and most important piece was the adoption and follow-through on a comprehensive plan that was born in the immediate aftermath of the 2006 election. After only holding onto our two existing seats in that campaign, Tony Martin (MP, Sault Ste. Marie) and I decided that we wanted company in northern Ontario. We took stock of the incumbent Liberals’ weaknesses and our strengths, and decided to focus our efforts in on being the strongest, clearest and best-recognised voices standing up for the North. In the subsequent two-and-a-half years, we wanted to be way out in front of the pack in shining a light on every issue that affected the lives of everyday Northerners, and taking action to fix it. We wanted people to witness, and remember, that Liberal-held ridings were getting served better by the northern New Democrats than by their own MPs!

We showed up in Liberal-held communities. When mills shut down in Thunder Bay, Gilles Bisson (MPP, Timmins—James Bay) and I were there to call for Ottawa and Queens Park to account. When a Swiss multi-national

bought up two Canadian mining giants, we held public rallies in Sudbury to ensure that job-protection guarantees were part of the deal that the feds signed off on. When Parmalat tried to pull out of Timiskaming, we successfully organised local farmers to take over the operations. New Democrats were there fighting the good fight on the issues that matter most, while Liberal MPs were sitting on their hands. We showed up for work, while Liberals collected their paycheques.

This narrative was supported by strategic visits by the Leader and significant direct mail from the central party, as we pointed out their incumbents’ records of missing votes, not asking questions in Question Period, being silent on issues of major concern, and generally not working as hard as the people that they represented. All the resources we had at our disposal were focussed on the same effort, which paid off in spades during the campaign when we could point to our record of service and say, “Do you want to be represented by someone who works as hard as you do? Or are you satisfied with the same tired old Liberal who only shows up for their pay cheque?”

In short, we found a chink in the armour; we put time, effort and resources into exposing it; and we hammered away at it for two and a half years in the hope that when it was time to vote, Northerners would know that New Democrats were the ones fighting hardest for them and their families.

And it worked.

Charlie Angus was first elected in 2004. A Grievous Angels band member, he has worked with Toronto’s homeless and First Nations communities, and as a journalist.

How well does Canada protect unemployed folks from poverty?



Yvon Godin, MP

In March, the magazine *Foreign Policy* published a list of the best places to lose your job. Scandinavia, Benelux, Switzerland, France and Japan won the top rankings. But where was Canada? Nowhere to be found.

The terms and conditions of the Employment Insurance programme in Canada were established a long time ago (the inception of Unemployment Insurance dates back to 1940) and have not been changed sufficiently through the years to keep pace with changes in the labour market. As a result, the programme no longer meets its specific objectives and many jobless people are unfairly denied benefits. The Canadian Labour Congress estimates that, in October 2008, only 43 percent of Canada's unemployed people qualified for benefits.

This is unfortunate since we know that improving access to Employment Insurance benefits and increasing the amount of benefits are effective ways of boosting the economy and benefit everyone in the long run. In addition to providing a social safety net, EI benefits provide the income base needed for the unemployed to continue to look for work to support themselves and their families and thereby enable people to avoid becoming long-term welfare recipients.

So what do those successful countries do that we do not?

Let's look at some interesting facts. Although countries' EI systems can be difficult to compare due to their different structures, and variations in local living costs complicate comparisons further, it is clear that the governments of many other countries do a better job protecting unemployed workers from poverty than the Canadian government does:

- In Scandinavia, you can receive benefits representing 80 to 90 percent of your prior earnings, whereas in Canada the maximum is 55 percent, which is quite low; 55 percent of Maximum Insurable Earnings of \$42,300 (Average Earnings) = \$447 per week maximum (taxable), but the

average benefit is just \$335. Try paying the mortgage and feeding the kids on that.

- In Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg, you can normally receive benefits for one year, and in some cases, even indefinitely. In Canada, 52 weeks is the maximum, but most laid-off workers don't qualify for any benefits at all, and those who do qualify only for considerably less than 52 weeks. For example, EI recipients in Ontario receive 8-10 fewer weeks of EI than EI recipients in some other regions, even if they've been working for the same number of years.

- In the European Union, there are at least ten countries in which there is no waiting period: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia. In Canada, there is a two-week waiting period, and any earnings received during that period are deducted dollar for dollar from the benefits that would otherwise be received when the waiting period is over. When the processing time for the claim is added, laid-off workers are often a full 6 weeks or more without income.

- German workers are allowed to keep up to €165 (approximately C\$262) a week in earnings while on EI, without their EI benefits being reduced, whereas Canadian workers are only allowed to keep earnings equivalent to 25 percent of their weekly EI benefit, up to a maximum of \$112 dollars; the rest of their earnings are clawed back, thereby making it almost pointless for workers receiving EI benefits to supplement their benefits with earnings from part-time work.

These facts suggest how much room there is for Canada to improve and that its EI rules are too strict. From the 1996 EI reform until 2008, the government collected an EI surplus of close to \$57 billion (including interest payments). This money, collected from workers and employers through employment insurance premiums, was used for other purposes, *without their consent, and has now disappeared*, letting down Canadians now during a recession.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs have disappeared in recent months and, with the economic downturn, more job losses

How well does Canada protect unemployed folks from poverty?

are expected. In January alone, 560,400 Canadians were receiving EI benefits, 104,000 more than in February last year.

The majority of working women are being shut out of access to Employment Insurance. Two out of three women who pay into the Employment Insurance Programme are not eligible for benefits if they leave or lose their jobs.

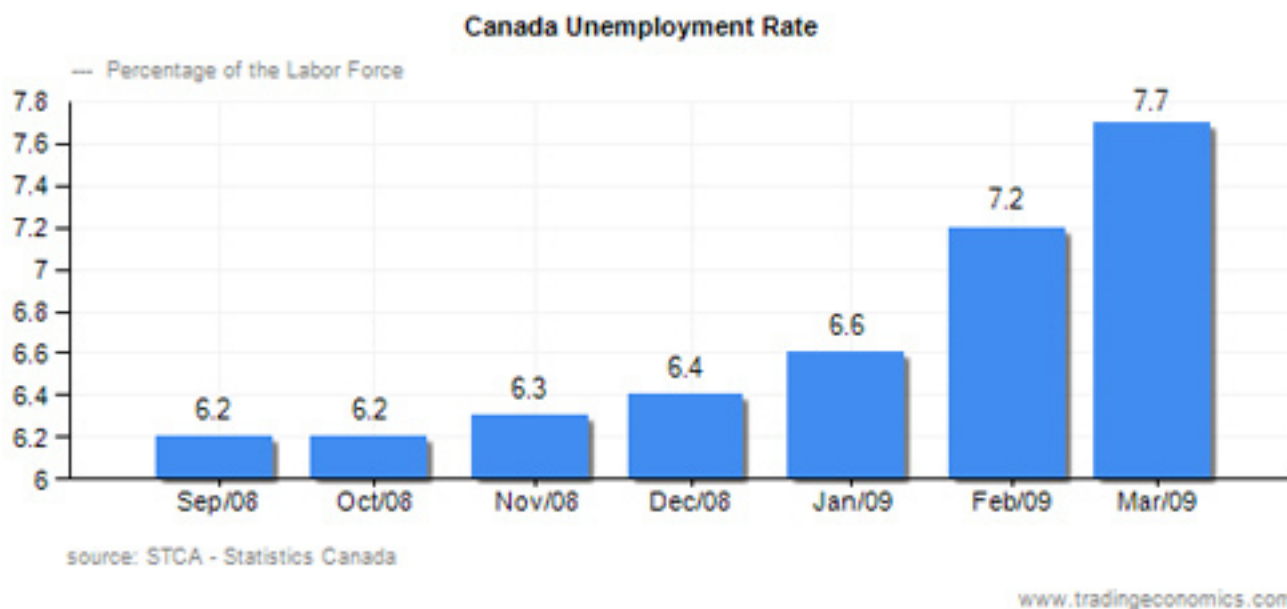
Considering the \$57 billion surplus, a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released in January found that, with an investment in EI of just \$3.4 billion, we could reach out to more unemployed Canadians, increase benefits to 60 percent of insured earnings, extend benefits to 50 weeks, regardless of region, and offer innovative temporary measures such as allowing workers to job share to prevent massive job losses. To put this figure in perspective, we should recall that in the 2009 budget, Stephen Harper announced \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts but just \$1.15 billion for the unemployed.

Yvon Godin, NDP federal caucus Whip, and EI critic, was first elected the Member of Parliament for Acadie—Bathurst in 1997 and re-elected in 2000, 2004, 2006 and 2008. A former miner, he was President of the United Steelworkers of America, Brunswick Mine Local 5385, and represented nearly 2,500 Steelworkers in negotiations of 37 collective agreements. He also represented workers on the Minimum Wage Board for seven years and in 1998-99, undertook a tour of Canada to assess the impact of changes to the EI program. In 2003, he was granted the title of Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Pléiade, Ordre de la Francophonie et du Dialogue des cultures for his contribution to la Francophonie in Canada.

It is urgent that the government address the alarming growth in the number of unemployed Canadians and the increasing number of Employment Insurance claimants. It must confirm its commitment to a social safety net to help regular Canadians through tough times and bring forward reforms to Employment Insurance rules to expand eligibility and improve benefits.

Canadians deserve better.

Editor's Note: As of the end of March, a total of 1,456,600 Canadians were unemployed, up 79,500 since February. According to Statistics Canada, a total of 610,200 of the unemployed were on EI in February, an increase of 44,300 (7.8 percent) over January, 21.9 percent higher compared to October 2008. In Toronto, the number of people on EI in March 2009 was 60.6 percent higher than in March 2008.



The above statistics do not include workers who work one hour or more per week, even if involuntarily part-time due to lack of hours. Nor do they include “discouraged workers”—those who have given up looking—or those who, having been laid off, are awaiting recall. If they are included, the real unemployment rate in March was 12.4 percent.

Buy Canadian provisions urgently needed to protect jobs

Charlie Campbell

A wave of closures and layoffs across the Canadian steel industry should give our federal and provincial governments all the incentive they need to attach meaningful “Buy Canadian” provisions to their infrastructure investments and other elements of economic stimulus.

The most shocking news came when U.S. Steel announced the temporary but indefinite closure of the former Stelco mills in Hamilton and Nanticoke, putting 1,500 men and women out of work.

That was just the latest in a long string of announcements. In fact, by some estimates, more than half the North American steel industry was shuttered in March as customer demand vanished from the order books.

The story is much the same almost everywhere around the globe, with the

single exception being China, which has been increasing its share of the global steel market to about 40 percent. Chinese steel imports to Canada and the United States surged in late 2008, and the Chinese government announced in March it would implement new measures to stimulate steel exports still further.

Some observers mistakenly linked the Stelco shutdown to the “Buy American” provisions of the economic stimulus package passed by the U.S. Congress. Company officials said there was no connection, pointing out that most of U.S. Steel’s production goes to the auto and appliance industries, not to the construction products that would be the direct beneficiary of the US stimulus money. In addition, very little of the infrastructure spending to be funded by the package will be actually spent before 2010.

Despite that, if the stimulus package

is effective, the effects will ripple out to boost economic activity throughout the economy, and across the border in Canada as well. The best results would be if *Buy Canadian* provisions were included in the infrastructure spending from Ottawa and Queen’s Park, and if the two countries could work out a reciprocity agreement reflecting the tightly integrated nature of the North American steel industry.

In a normal year, Canada produces about 16 million tonnes of steel, and consumes a roughly equal amount. Within that total, however, more than 5 million tonnes of Canadian production is exported to the United States, and a roughly equal amount of production is imported from the United States. In addition, about one-sixth of Canadian consumption is traditionally imported from elsewhere offshore – a figure that rose in late 2008 with a surge of steel imports (Cont’d on p. 17)

Recovery depends on government *not* being run like a business



Gord Perks, Councillor

For too long it’s been too easy to say that government should be run more like a business. We are all very lucky that it isn’t. The recovery we all want will come precisely because government isn’t run like business. Being on Toronto’s Budget Committee has given me a remarkable view of how and why

government contributes to economic success.

Our 2009 capital budget invests heavily in infrastructure. Locally, we will see the Dufferin Jog project as well as renewal projects on Roncesvalles and Jameson. Toronto’s new vehicle registration fee helps pay for these street improvements. The budget also provides for the start of Transit City and replacement of our ageing streetcars. That purchase comes with Canadian content rules that will create new manufacturing jobs in Ontario: real economic stimulus with the concurrent benefit of building useful public equipment.

The operating budget includes the Toronto Helps programmes. Rang-

ing from property tax relief for low-income seniors to supporting healthy school snack programmes in some lower-income areas to job hunting and skills programmes through the library system, these programmes will make small but crucial investments in supporting those of our neighbours who are most at risk during bad economic times.

A large part of our work this year was preparing for an increase in Toronto’s welfare caseload. Sadly, tens of thousands more Torontonians will need welfare this year. (See figures in Welfare rolls swell, p. 18) We expect they will need it more quickly than in previous downturns. Successive federal governments have (Cont’d on p. 17)

Buy Canadian provisions urgently needed to protect jobs

from China.

No steel mill makes the full range of steel products. They all specialize to some extent, and they are specializing more and more as time goes on. The steel industry and the steel markets in North America have long been tightly integrated, much like the auto industry, so the mills in Canada have always exported a large portion of their output to the United States, and have never been in a position to fill the full range of demand in Canada.

Chinese steel is often cheaper, even after the transportation costs. North American mills compete based on higher quality and more timely delivery.

There are a lot of reasons China's steel is cheaper, some legitimate and some not. They include lower wages, lower costs for environmental compliance, lower energy costs, and a dizzying array of subsidies from local and central governments. As well, despite

the rhetoric about China's embrace of the market economy, at the end of the day it is the government that determines prices, and it can set any price it wants. There have been successful cases brought against China proving "dumping" (selling below cost of production) and illegal subsidies for specific products, such as seamless carbon well casing, which have resulted in penalty duties, but each has to be proved product-by-product in a very detailed process.

Steel is a uniquely recyclable product, and about half of North American steel production each year is made from scrap steel. In addition, dramatic technological progress has meant that the Canadian steel industry's greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 16 percent since 1990—well beyond the Kyoto target—even though more steel was being produced.

Opinion surveys show broad public support for measures that would

ensure that government procurement spending results in Canadian jobs. For example, a recent Vector poll found that 71 percent of Canadians said government should buy Canadian-made public transit equipment "even if it is a bit more expensive" than imports, while 16 percent said government should buy Canadian no matter how much it costs. Only 12 percent said it should purchase the lowest priced equipment no matter where it comes from.

Despite all the evidence, the Harper Conservatives and the McGuinty Liberals both produced budgets this spring with infrastructure spending without the procurement requirements that would have ensured domestic jobs, not just in the steel industry but throughout the manufacturing and service sectors.

With unemployment rates skyrocketing, those could prove to be costly decisions for Canadians.

Recovery depends on government *not* being run like a business

made eligibility for employment insurance benefits more and more difficult. Many of us who might have muddled through on EI between jobs will wind up on social assistance after having run out of savings and sold off assets.

We also expect and have had to plan for increased demand at recreation centres and libraries as people have less to spend on private gyms and on entertainment. It has been no easy feat financing these needs. In fact, these and other programmes would be strained much beyond their capacity if Toronto hadn't opted to create the land transfer tax.

Taken together, these programmes aim to hold lives and communities

together. Efficiency for government is the most people served at the fewest tax dollars. This is an important way in which government is different from business, which focuses on maximizing profit, which we have learned (again) can lead to irrational and destructive speculation. We also focus on building common infrastructure and programmes that build resilience into our system.

Our city will face hardship because of the current business and financial problems. We will get through it with less pain because government is not run like a business.

Gord Perks: 416-392-7919
councillor_perks@toronto.ca
<http://www.gordperks.ca>

Do you have a bright idea to green our community?

For info on Toronto's Live Green Community Investment Program, see: www.toronto.ca/livegreen/inspired_grantsfunding_communityinvestment.html

For info on Toronto's Live Green Capital Projects Fund, see: www.toronto.ca/livegreen/inspired_grantsfunding_capitalfund.html

Welfare rolls swell as recession deepens

J.A. MacNeil

As the recession deepens, the number of Ontarians depending on welfare has increased. As of March, a total of 406,392 people depended on Ontario Works (welfare) to get by (see figures below). The most dramatic increases were noted in the categories of singles (up 19.6 percent), and couples (up 19 percent).

Total Number of Ontario Works Recipients							
	Singles	Couples		Sole-support parents		All family structures	
	Cases	Cases	Beneficiaries	Cases	Beneficiaries	Cases	Beneficiaries
Sept.	106,825	20,314	74,490	69,072	191,342	196,212	372,657
Oct.	107,011	20,463	74,806	67,946	188,381	195,421	370,198
Nov.	107,783	20,673	75,375	67,621	187,407	196,077	370,565
Dec.	112,761	21,483	78,119	67,878	187,994	202,121	378,874
Jan.	119,122	22,739	82,532	68,736	190,127	210,597	391,781
Feb.	122,320	23,250	84,110	68,793	190,218	214,363	396,647

Note: Ontario Works provides temporary financial assistance to people deemed able to work and actively engaged in seeking employment. Disabled people needing similar assistance sometimes receive support under Ontario Disability Support Programme.

A very significant chunk of the increase was in Toronto:

Toronto Welfare Rolls					
	Dec. 2008	Jan. 2009	Feb. 2009	March 2009	Variance over March 2008
Number of Cases	69,136	69,903	83,915	84,954	+15.0%
Number of Torontonians dependent on welfare*			140,957	143,904	+10.5%

* Each family grouping or single is considered one case. Children and spouses are included in the total numbers of beneficiaries.

Disturbingly, the increase in Toronto between December 2008 and March 2009 was 22.9 percent, more than double the average increase in welfare cases across the province during the same period—9.4 percent. This is posing significant costs for the City of Toronto, under the 80:20 provincial:municipal cost split despite the inadequacy of the welfare rates themselves..

We can expect these numbers to continue to rise significantly as people affected by layoffs, big and small, in late 2008 exhaust their EI benefits in 2009.

For the transcript of a Global TV discussion about welfare rates and poverty between MPP Cheri DiNovo, anti-poverty activist Sarah Blackstone, and the Minister of Children and Youth Services, see:

http://www.globaltv.com/globaltv/ontario/features/focus_ontario/transcripts/March_7_2009.pdf

The lowdown on the McBudget



Andrea Horwath, MPP

Dear Friends in Parkdale—High Park:

These are exciting times for Ontario New Democrats. I am thrilled by the opportunity you have given me to rejuvenate our party and lead us to greater success. Together, we must give Ontarians reason to hope again. During tough economic times, we must become the voice for all Ontarians who struggle to make ends meet.

Throughout the leadership race, I had the pleasure of traveling across our great province and meeting thousands of Ontarians. I was struck by their stories and by their concerns, and made a promise to be their voice at Queen's Park.

On March 26, the McGuinty government released a budget that hits Ontarians where it hurts the most: in their pocketbooks. The new Harmon-

ised Sales Tax (HST) will tax numerous basic essentials, including gas for the car, home heating and hydro, the daily coffee and muffin—and even the family pet's visit to the vet.

All Ontarians will feel this tax hike. And it comes at a time when we can least afford it.

In February alone, 35,000 more Ontarians lost their jobs. The McGuinty budget fell short on adequately addressing this problem. Although there was plenty of infrastructure spending, it lacked a strong *Buy Ontario* component, so there is no guarantee that that money will be spent here to sustain jobs here. New Democrats were looking for a strong *Buy Ontario* policy on government investments, particularly on infrastructure, transit and green energy. We were sadly disappointed.

The fight to protect and create jobs also extends into the struggle to deliver more affordable childcare. The Liberal budget did little to address childcare and we remain concerned that up to 22,000 affordable childcare spaces are on the chopping block. Already, tens of thousands of Ontario children and their parents languish on childcare waitlists. Providing additional spaces is not just a social imperative, but also an economic one to allow parents to

re-enter the workforce or upgrade their skills by going back to school.

A short critique of the budget would not be complete without an examination of environmental concerns. The budget came up short on money for new investment in energy retrofit programs. New Democrats will continue to advocate for greater energy conservation and retrofit programs that are affordable and accessible to everyone. Often, environmentally-friendly options come at a price that is out of reach for too many Ontarians. That's why I've championed an approach I call "affordable environmentalism" – enabling all Ontarians to make the right green choices for themselves, their families and the environment and be able to pay for them.

In closing, I want to encourage you to continue doing what you've been doing to turn Parkdale—High Park into a solid NDP seat that re-elected Cheri DiNovo with our largest plurality in the City of Toronto and will return my friend Peggy Nash to her seat in Parliament after the next federal election. I look forward to working with you to build upon our success in the riding and to achieving even more across Ontario.

Analysis of the Ontario and Federal budgets

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives:

http://www.policyalternatives.ca/~ASSETS/DOCUMENT/National_Office_Pubs/2009/Too_Little_Too_Late.pdf

Wellesley Institute:

<http://wellesleyinstitute.com/ontario-budget-2009-ontario-housing-policy-now-being-written-feds>

Ontario Federation of Labour:

http://ofl.ca/uploads/publications/focus/March_2009_Focus.pdf

25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction:

<http://25in5.ca/ontario-makes-progress-on-poverty-reduction-but-job-still-unfinished/>

What's really wrong with our economy

J.A. MacNeil

It's time for clarity about how our country got into this mess.

The public (and many in our own party) sometimes perceives plant closures, unemployment, financial crisis, scandalously high executive compensation, poverty, lack of affordable housing, lack of opportunity for skilled immigrants lured here by our government, etc. as the causes of temporary economic misery; they are, but they're also the symptoms of a much deeper problem. It's erroneous to assume that with a few incentives, a bit more regulation or a few new programmes to entice big corporations into staying here or coming here, somehow we can soldier on without fundamental changes in the basic economic model.

The harsh reality is that all of these problems, and the current economic and environmental crisis, are caused by the ever-increasing concentration of wealth and economic decision-making power in the hands of ever fewer people. We will continue to be hounded with the symptoms until this fundamental problem is addressed. Strategies based on merely "restoring consumer confidence" are doomed to fail.

Environmental degradation is an almost inevitable result of concentration of economic decision-making in the hands of a few. We won't heal the world if larger-scale economic decision-making continues to be motivated primarily by the prospect of short-term—or even long-term—personal gain and profit. Nor if individuals' daily economic decisions are motivated by fear of the future, or restricted by inadequate incomes, options and information.

It's become apparent that most large Canadian and US corporations are unwilling to make the decisions that would make our economy more efficient, greener, and with a higher quotient of well-paid, satisfying jobs.

Many innovative small businesses are run by daring, hard-working, visionary entrepreneurs with wonderful ideas and an unshakable personal commitment to making their business thrive. However, it's all too clear that's not the case with large corporations.

On the contrary, as the current mess reveals, the wealthy don't really know much more about running the economy than a lot of the rest of us. They are merely well-positioned to ensure they make a killing while they make the decisions the rest of us take the economic and environmental hit for. The auto industry is not an isolated example of decision-making contrary to the public interest. Many corporate executives and owners have been short-sighted in their planning and failed to reinvest company profits creatively and ethically. They cannot be counted on to get Canada out of the crisis it's in.

Although we all hope that at least some of the jobs being lost will be quickly replaced by expanding the manufacturing of the most obviously needed green products, for example public transit vehicles and windmills, the shift will take time. It's extremely unlikely that the large number of good jobs that have already been or will soon be lost in this recession will all be replaced by good jobs in the next 2-5 years in new green industries. This will definitely be the case if we leave it up to large, private, profit-oriented corporations to make it happen.

There are other problems created by the concentration of economic power and the kind of economy and society that has resulted:

- Rampant consumerism. The corporate sector has largely succeeded in convincing most Canadians that having an ever-changing tide of new things is essential to our human happiness and to prevent widespread unemployment. But do we really need 45 allegedly different kinds of shampoo, or a television in every bedroom, for example?
- Labour-saving technologies and processes are routinely turned against working people. So is their own ingenuity. The potential benefits have been appropriated by corporations. Working people have often either been laid off or seen their hours and pay cut. Cost reductions are seldom passed on to consumers; instead, prices are set as high as the market will bear.
- The prices of goods and services reflect not simply the real cost of their production—as they should—and a modest margin to reward risk-taking and creativity, but instead, again, are set as high as the market will bear. The soaring oil prices imposed on the rest of us last year is good ex-

What's really wrong with our economy

ample of this (see page 25).

- Commodification of cultural expression, and the shift to the culture of “spectacle”, with a resulting passivity and the truncation of most people’s creativity. A simple example: as a child from “modern” Ontario, I was amazed but delighted that in any gathering of my Cape Breton relatives and their neighbours, a good third could play at least one musical instrument competently, some several, and they sang dozens of songs deeply connected to their own experiences. That’s a much richer way to live than saving up for bleachers tickets at Air Canada Centre super-shows three times a year and watching reality TV shows and *Wheel of Fortune* the rest of the time.

- Declining real wages: The decline in real wages in Canada, already well underway since the mid-1970s, has been intensified by the FTAs and lower rates of unionization in the private sector.

This decline has been partially masked by three developments:

- increased access to cheap consumer goods produced in Third World countries
- increased assumption of credit card debt and use of credit lines
- the incorporation of mothers into the paid workforce.

In southern Ontario, credit card debt and credit lines have in turn been underwritten by the speculation-driven spiralling value of homes.

The incorporation of mothers into the workforce is a positive development, but instead of both parents of young children working a bearable 24 or 30 hours a week, and being able to enjoy their daily routines, longer vacations and perhaps a more secure economic situation together, both parents are now compelled to work full-time by inflated housing costs or fear of being seen as discardable by their employers. Parents of young children thus often find their pace of life frantic. Teenagers in conflict with the law have indicated to researchers that what they most want is more time with their parents, and I suspect that may be truer of a lot of other teenagers than they would like to admit.

So, although families have, until the latest credit crunch and lay-offs, still been buying clothing, household goods and radios, for example, like in the 1950s, it’s only because

many of those products are cheap imports, both parents are now working 35-40 hours a week or more, and families are going into debt. That’s the kind of “consumer confidence” we don’t need to restore.

- The fetish of “competitiveness”: Effective use of resources and time is a laudable goal. Matching the lowest international price for products of similar quality is not. We need to measure our current manufacturing industries’ success, and the potential success of new green industries that may need government support to get going, differently than corporate nabobs, Liberals and Conservatives do.

- The flooding of our domestic market with (initially) cheap imports, which began in the mid-1970s and intensified with the proliferation in the 1980s and 1990s of Walmart, Ikea, Winners and other big-box stores—which do most of their purchasing from low-wage Third World countries with low levels of unionization or outright suppression of labour rights—has all but wiped out certain segments of our manufacturing sector, including such essential ones as clothing, textiles and domestic appliances.

- Work is all too often unrewarding, disconnected from the real needs of one’s community, and, despite technological advances, still chews up too much time, leaving most of us with little time for our families, friends, communities, political engagement, creative pursuits, studies, travel within Canada and abroad—all the things that enrich our lives and our connection with others.

- Lack of social solidarity. Many Canadians consciously or unconsciously believe the propaganda that “unionized workers have it too good,” “welfare recipients are lazy and breed like rabbits,” “we can’t save the environment without destroying jobs,” “refugees must have been troublemakers in their own countries, or they wouldn’t be knocking on our door,” or the vaguer “it’s time for a reality check” (i.e. time for the majority of us to accept powerlessness and a lower standard of living as inevitable, and to turn our backs on our fellow human beings in need, here and abroad). This vision is convenient for corporations, the media and the two old-line parties: it deflects potential criticism of their own roles in the crisis.

We need a gamut of strategies that both reduce the misery of the current recession, and advance toward to the deeper transformations so urgently needed.

Let the good times roll (really, finally)

J.A. MacNeil

Canada is sometimes referred to as having a “mixed” economy, but in fact most production of goods and non-governmental services is controlled by profit-oriented corporations, too many of them large. We need to significantly expand the role of smaller and medium-size community-based businesses, cooperatives and municipal, provincial and federal crown corporations in manufacturing and services. Rather than profit-oriented economic activity being the norm, it should become the exception.

This is essential if we are ever to move out of a defensive position—begging for private companies to set up or to not move away. We should instead be evaluating them critically, insisting that they meet our social and economic criteria if they want to operate in our country or sell their goods here.

Essential steps

1. Reduce the flooding of our domestic market with cheap imports. Import-substitution models were dismissed as passé by neo-liberals, but a country ought to be able to produce the majority of the products that its citizens need, unless climatic or resource limitations make that impractical.

Years ago, the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice suggested that an appropriate target was to aim to meet 80 percent of our needs with products produced within Canada. We would thus create stable jobs here, reduce our trade dependency and stop reinforcing sweat-shop regimes in the South, but allow enough competition to keep our manufacturers on their toes.

That goal still seems to me a reasonable one. This likely means withdrawing from NAFTA and the FTA, or at the very least, making far-reaching changes to both agreements. So be it.

2. Establish *Buy Canadian* policies at all levels of government. We should also impose minimum Canadian content requirements for sectors of the economy that depend on public financing, such as hospitals, schools and universi-

ties. This too might fly in the face of the FTA and NAFTA. Again, so be it.

3. Identify opportunities for secondary manufacturing, especially those tied to our resource industries or to meeting our core human needs, and take steps to nurture new industries based on them. Under Liberals and Tories, Canada keeps missing the boat: Canada—one of the world’s forestry powers—imports its forestry equipment from Finland; likewise, our publicly-funded health care system uses imported surgical equipment and hospital supplies. (This issue will be the focus of a future *Hearts & Minds* article.)

4. Encourage voluntary reduction of the work week and make longer paid annual vacation leave mandatory. We haven’t made much progress since the 1960s. In fact, many people still employed now work longer hours than their parents did, often without pay, for example answering e-mails or reading reports at home.

We should demand the following:

- a 36-hour work week
- six weeks of paid annual leave, as in many European countries
- the right to voluntarily reduce one’s workweek or work year by up to 30 percent without loss of benefits, pension contributions or job security.

This could be accomplished by setting up programmes to encourage (or perhaps even oblige) employers to allow employees to voluntarily reduce their work time. Working parents, older workers, those wanting to pursue demanding part-time studies, those dealing with elderly parents, and many others would welcome the opportunity to reduce their work week to 32 or even 24 hours, providing doing so would not reduce their job security or access to EI or pensions.

5. Make permanent jobs once again the norm, and minimize the percentage of work done on temporary contracts.

6. Establish large and vigorous non-profit manufacturing and service sectors, by all of the following actions:

Let the good times roll (really, finally)

a. The creation of a robust sector of municipally-owned and operated businesses. For example, the City of Toronto could set up municipally-owned and operated companies to:

- produce energy-saving devices and appliances and energy-generation equipment to be sold, installed or distributed to businesses and residences through public utility companies.
- construct affordable, energy-efficient, durable, attractive housing to be sold to average and low-income families at cost plus 10 percent, on condition that the homes be re-sold back to the city if the buyer decides to move on, until we have created an adequate stock of affordable housing. Currently, developers and construction companies routinely each charge a profit margin of 30 percent or more above and beyond their own immediate and long-term costs. On average starter homes, the savings to purchasing families might be in the range of as much as 40 percent when profit-generation at various levels is eliminated from the final cost.
- retrofit Toronto homes and businesses to maximize energy efficiency, employing a stable staff of skilled tradespeople, labourers, engineers and architects, multilingual publicists, etc. to work with the communities throughout the GTA, and others. The prices charged for such services would correspond to costs (including those of warranties) plus a margin to establish a reserve fund for investment in research and development of better processes and products.

b. The establishment of provincial and federal crown corporations (or new wings of existing ones) charged with research, development and production of large-scale renewable energy generation equipment, hospital equipment and public transit and freight vehicles.

c. The establishment and promotion of cooperatives to produce the office, home and school furniture, playground equipment, bicycles, clothing, household goods, food, etc., as well as the services—restaurants, healthy fast-food kiosques, movie theatres, elder care, bike repair, publicity, home repairs—that Canadians, and perhaps maybe even the international community, need or

want.

Expansion of the cooperative sector could be facilitated by:

- A new government ministry mandated to help individuals with similar or complementary skills who want to set up a cooperative to a) connect with each other, b) learn the full range of skills they need to set up and operate a cooperative, and c) obtain the necessary start-up capital, or
- Generous funding to the credit union and cooperative movement to do the same work.
- Provision of “patient capital” (see below) seed money and loan guarantees for start-up.

Coops would also benefit from the measures suggested below for strengthening the small business sector and credit unions.costs.

7. Strengthen the small business sector. Some in the NDP have occasionally made the mistake of unconsciously viewing the owners of small and medium-size businesses as just less savvy versions of the Conrad Blacks of the world. That’s inappropriate and costs us the support of a segment of the population that has more in common with average working people than with Conrad Black.

Instead, we should encourage a vibrant small business sector as a complement to an enhanced, robust coop and non-profit productive sector. Small businesses could be strengthened by the relevant levels of government taking the following steps:

- cap the percentage banks charge small businesses for credit card or debit transactions, as well as interest rates on loans and credit cards
- provide census data for market studies to small businesses either free or very cheaply
- insist that 100 percent of the work for government contracts for “knowledge services”, such as translation, editing, publicity, etc. be performed by Canadian-based individuals or small businesses employing Canadian citizens or residents, rather than by companies outsourcing work to low-wage countries

Let the good times roll (really, finally)

- prohibit transnational companies from setting up coffee shops and restaurants in government buildings or at cultural centres built with government financing
- share information about upcoming procurement contracts and other commercial opportunities with small and medium-size businesses so that they can respond to the opportunities and coordinate their activities if appropriate.
- impose a 30 percent higher minimum wage on multinational companies that compete directly with small businesses (for example McDonalds, Starbucks)
- insist that shopping centres allocate a minimum of 30 percent of their space, in prime locations, to small locally-based businesses, rather than large chains or franchises
- impose minimum Canadian content requirements on transnational corporations already operating in Canada.

The above steps would also benefit the coop sector.

8. Insist that a minimum of 50 percent of all space in new privately-initiated housing developments be affordable to average-income families, suitable in size for families, and of high quality, and that it be constructed primarily with Canadian materials.

9. Move towards a “patient capital” financial framework, so that these new companies and cooperatives could survive the first few years as they build up their businesses, aim at doing a bit better than breaking even within 8-12 years, while producing high-quality, durable and needed products and services, and maintaining a stable, decently-paid workforce. Some level of government—be it municipal, provincial or federal—will likely have to be directly involved, either by providing direct seed money and loan guarantees, or by bringing together various capital pools (such as pension funds) with the community organizations and cooperatives who have a great idea and need that capital to get off the ground.

10. Promote the growth of credit unions. Credit unions charge less to borrowers and pay more to savers. It’s a tragedy that the majority of Canadians still do most of their banking with profit-oriented banks who are making exor-

bitant profits by serving as intermediaries between savers and borrowers. One needed change at the federal level is to allow credit unions to operate nationally; currently they are restricted to the province in which they start. In Ontario, the province should lift the \$100,000 ceiling on the size of a deposit that can be insured, something other provinces have already done.

Other reforms, such as capping interest rates on credit cards, must also be undertaken to get money back in the hands of average Canadians, rather than banks.

11. Strengthen the CPP and make it—not RRSPs or private pension plans—the central tool for ensuring adequate incomes for retirees. Modest increases in employer and employee contributions are required, since it is a reality that most people will no longer die a few years after retirement, as was the case when CPP was set up. Strengthening CPP would not only contribute to the future security of current workers, it would also result in the creation of a publicly-controllable pool of capital that could be used to invest in the transition to a greener, more democratic economy, and would not disappear into thin air, as so many Canadians’ savings recently have.

What would be gained?

The implementation of all of the above changes would result in:

- Stable employment meeting basic human needs
- A healthier environment
- A more efficient and innovative economy
- Improved quality of work life
- Affordable products and services
- More time and energy for other life activities
- A more humane, egalitarian and hopeful society within Canada
- A more dignified and ethical relationship with the international community.

Yes, indeed, let the good times roll.

Time for a new National Energy Program?

J.A. MacNeil

One contributor to the current economic crisis that hasn't received the attention it merits is the record profit-taking by oil companies operating in Canada from 2002 to mid-2008.

As the price of oil soared, average Canadians gritted their teeth and bore it, both at the pump (if they had cars or business vehicles to run), and in rising prices for heating fuels, food and countless goods manufactured both here and abroad.

Take food. Even when oil was \$12 a barrel and most food consumed in Canada was grown here, energy costs already accounted for about a third of the price charged to consumers. When oil hit \$140 a barrel, many Canadian families found themselves coming home from the grocery store with less and paying more for it. The hit is exacerbated by the fact that so much of our food now gets trucked or flown in from California, Florida or Mexico. But energy is driving up the costs of local food as well.

Manufacturing operations need oil to move their products to consumers, heat their workplaces, fire industrial processes, and in some cases, as a raw material for the products themselves – like the mixed-fibre textiles used in the manufacture of clothing and athletic shoes.

Green Party members may have been rubbing their hands with glee at the increased price of oil, but they shouldn't have. A carbon tax or cap and trade system to discourage wasteful over-consumption is one thing. It's quite another to allow transnational oil corporations to gouge ordinary Canadian consumers and generate huge profits for their already wealthy own-

ers by extracting what little remains of *our* non-renewable resources, as quickly as they decide to, often heavily subsidized by *our* taxes through tax write-offs (more on that later).

As well, the rapid rise in the price of oil left many small businesses—a major source of jobs—struggling to survive and short of the cash they might have been able to invest in energy-saving processes and equipment—or in improving their productive machinery and processes, or their employees' wages and benefits, for that matter.

If the oil companies were still making a tidy profit at \$38 a barrel earlier in 2009, they were obviously making an absolute fortune at \$140 a barrel last summer. That money was sucked out of manufacturing and other sectors of the economy, and out of average Canadians' wallets.

Had the bottom not fallen out of the North American economy due to the senseless excesses of the bank and investment firms, the price of oil might

be well over \$200 a barrel by now. And no doubt it will quickly spiral up again, to \$200 or more, if and when the economy begins to recover.

Aside from driving manufacturers' costs up and leaving households with less money—after their increased transportation, home heating and food costs—to spend on other manufactured goods, the record profit-taking of oil and gas companies hurt manufacturing in other ways. It not only attracted foreign investors to Canada's petroleum sector, thereby directly driving up the exchange value of the Canadian dollar, it also made our dollar attractive for currency speculators, thereby driving its value up to artificially high levels.

The high dollar hit Canadian manufacturers with a double whammy: those trying to sell Canadian products on the global market found that their prices seemed high to buyers, even if they had shaved their profit margins, simply because the Canadian dollar

Profits of Canada's Top 10 Oil and Gas Companies						
Net Income* (millions of dollars)						
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
1	Imperial Oil Limited	2,052	2,600	3,044	3,188	3,878
2	EnCana corp.	3,513	3,426	5,652	3,959	N/A
3	Petro-Canada	1,757	1,791	1,740	2,733	N/A
4	Suncor Energy Ltd.	1,100	1,245	2,971	2,832	2,137
5	Husky Energy Inc.	1,006	2,003	2,726	3,214	3,754
6	Shell Canada Ltd.	1,286	2,014	1,738	1,738	N/A
7	Enbridge Inc.	652	563	622	707	1,327
8	Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.	1,405	1,050	2,524	2,608	4,985
9	TransCanada Corp.	1,032	1,209	1,079	1,223	1,440
10	Ultramar Ltd.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Net income after all expenses, taxes and royalties, from all operations.

Ranking according to revenues prior to expenses, taxes and royalties.

Sources: Financial Post 500 list, Financial Post Advisor (courtesy of Nathan Cullen, MP)

Time for a new National Energy Program?

was artificially high; meanwhile, potential purchasers of their products in Canada were finding that imported manufactured goods now seemed cheaper than ever compared to Canadian ones.

Aside from this, the petroleum industry, with its soaring profits, became a favoured destiny for investment from banks and other pools of capital, which likely made it difficult for manufacturers and small businesses, with their more modest profit margins, to obtain the loans and capital they needed. (I'm leaving aside the question of interlocking bank and oil company ownership, but it's one worth examining too.)

Making our petroleum last, making the transition to an energy-efficient economy

Canada is still blessed with reserves of oil that, if managed extremely wisely and used very sparingly, may give Canadians the time we need to figure out the nuts and bolts of making the transition to an economy less dependent on fossil fuels -- to invent, test, and manufacture the equipment and processes needed to provide enough green energy to maintain an innovative and productive economy while ensuring a reasonable standard of living.

As suggested, this transition itself will require a fair amount of fossil fuel use.

Anyone who doubts that should ask themselves the following questions: How will we get those windmills to where they will be operated, on the ground or off-shore, if not by rail or ship, both of which require energy, usually coal or oil? (Much as we love our bikes, they're simply not up to the task.) How will we produce solar pan-

els, without a source of intense heat to make the glass in which photovoltaic cells must be encased to protect them from rain and snow? Without at least some oil, how can we improve the roads and infrastructure in our intermediate cities and towns so that we can get on with decentralizing manufacturing and reorganizing ourselves into sustainable smaller cities and towns (i.e. small enough population centres that we can get to work either cycling or taking one public transit vehicle) ringed by enough good agricultural land to feed the populations in those centres?

The need for oil in the foreseeable future means elected governments must make decisions *now* that protect average Canadians' long-term interests, rather than letting both foreign and nominally Canadian-based oil companies continue extracting our oil and gas as fast as possible to sell it to energy-gluttons to the south of us—where there are now more cars than people—or to Mexico, India and China, which are all too likely to merely flood our market with cheap consumer goods produced with the aid of our energy resources, rather than implementing strategies for their own sustainable development.

Another reason to develop a stronger manufacturing sector and not allow the energy-extraction sector to dominate the economy is that there simply aren't that many jobs in energy extraction. For example, the exploitation of Colombia's Cusiana oil field—at one time one of the largest untapped oil fields in the world—has never resulted in more than about 500 jobs, despite its size and the fact that it has made a bundle for British Petroleum (BP). Oil exploration and extraction

are both capital-intensive not labour-intensive industries. Like mining, the real job creation occurs when the resource is being processed and turned into goods, not when it's being pulled out of the ground.

So, we create fewer jobs, dollar for dollar, by pouring our money into the energy sector — which is what we're doing when we tolerate oil profiteering — than we could if we controlled the profiteering or nationalized oil and had a more balanced economy.

The price of oil is already on the way up again, despite the profundity of the current recession. According to an April 9, 2009 *Toronto Star* article, "Benchmark crude for May delivery rose nearly six per cent, or US\$2.86 to settle at \$52.24 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. . . . In London, Brent (crude) prices jumped \$2.47 to settle at \$54.06 a barrel on the ICE Futures exchange." The writing is on the wall.

The International Energy Association is already warning that an oil shortage may be on the way, triggering new record prices by 2010 and resulting in another global recession in 2013.

The decisions about the pace and manner of extraction of Canada's energy resources cannot be left in the hands of oil profiteers, who have already shown us that they will charge whatever the market will bear, regardless of their impact on the manufacturing sector, other industries, average Canadians, or national economies.

That we cannot leave these decisions up to profiteering oil companies is particularly true when the oil industry operates at near-capacity, as it did throughout the first half of 2008, and as it is likely to do once more, when

Time for a new National Energy Program?

and if the rest of the world economy recovers. When the global oil system operates at near full capacity, oil prices become extremely responsive to both current real supply disruptions and future potential ones, real or merely perceived. For example, during the 1970s, after the oil shock, shortfalls of production as small as 5 percent caused oil prices to quadruple. In California a few years back, the same thing happened when natural gas production dropped by less than 5 percent.

I hate to say it, and I can already hear the howls of protest from Tory politicians and maybe even NDP members in the West, but maybe it's time for—ahem—another National Energy Program. But this time, one that doesn't make the West feel like the Easterners got cheap oil, while Westerners only got expensive shoes.

We need an energy plan *and* a national economic strategy that will accomplish three key tasks:

1) prevent oil companies from gouging consumers and other industries, like manufacturing—which are, admittedly, currently concentrated in the East—even *after* the those consumers and industries have made their homes, transportation systems and operations as energy efficient as possible.

2) ensure balanced investment and development in all sectors of the economy, including renewable energy, throughout Canada and

3) help diversify the Albertan and Saskatchewan economies, so that those provinces gets the share of manufacturing jobs that corresponds to the size of their populations and become less dependent on big oil and natural gas companies to drive their economies. The same goes for Nova Scotia, which will be sorely tempted to revert to high-paced coal extraction as the demand for coal spirals in China and India, and eventually, when the oil runs out, Canada.

Useful reading

Kairos Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives documents:

Kairos Policy Briefing Paper No. 14: Federal Subsidies to Fossil Fuel Producers, April 2008

Subsidies to the oil industry --- Obama wants to end them, so why can't Canada?:

http://www.kairoscanada.org/en/get-involved/news-list/news/archive/2009/03/article/subsidies-to-the-oil-industry-obama-wants-to-end-them-so-why-cant-canada/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=322&cHash=e7cf99c8d3

Government disappoints on resource extraction regulation:

http://www.kairoscanada.org/en/rights-and-trade/rights-overview/news-list/news/archive/2009/04/article/government-disappoints-on-resource-extraction-regulation/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=60&cHash=eff77a8730

How our tax dollars subsidize oil profits

It is essential that we stop the current pattern of subsidizing the oil companies for extracting our resources. The following subsidies have to go, tout suite:

- **Accelerated Capital Cost Allowance:** For tar sands operators, under which they are allowed to defer taxes on 100 percent of the capital costs of new projects until they are paid off, which will be worth on average \$300 million a year to the petroleum companies over the period 2007 to 2011. Although the phase-out of the ACCA was announced in March 2007, it will not actually end until 2015, thus encouraging companies to speed up tar sands development before the subsidy is discontinued. Production of synthetic crude from tar sands releases three times as much CO₂ as conventional petroleum production, so this is disastrous. Use of the oil in our tar sands should be postponed until we have developed less damaging ways of extracting it, and until we absolutely need it for domestic use.

- **The Export Development Corporation:** Financing and loan guarantees to Canadian fossil fuel producers, subcontractors and equipment suppliers. In 2007, the EDC supported \$13.2 billion dollars worth of transactions in the oil and gas sector, the largest of any industry. In contrast, it supported only \$12 million for alternative fuels and a paltry \$7 million for renewable energy.

Auto sector crisis – why it should matter to all of us

J.A. MacNeil

Even those of us who don't own or need a car are kidding ourselves if we think we will remain unscathed if a large chunk of the Canadian auto industry is destroyed during this crisis.

The Ontario Manufacturing Council estimates that should the Big Three—General Motors, Ford and Chrysler—disappear from Canada, so too would as many as 582,000 jobs—a terrible blow to Canadian workers and the national economy, especially at a moment when it is clear that many of those laid off would be unemployed for years. Although Ford is reportedly in better shape than GM and Chrysler, most Canadian parts suppliers need to be selling to all of the Big Three to remain viable, so if GM and Chrysler go down, the job losses will extend far beyond their plants.

Canadian autoworkers generate \$2.2 billion in provincial and federal income tax revenue yearly, much of it in Ontario. Every job in a major auto plant supports 7.5 jobs in the national economy. If even just half of the jobs and tax revenues lost were to be in Ontario, the impact on our government's ability to finance the health care, education, elder care, child care and other public services that all Ontarians need would be grave.

The long-term costs are incalculable. The government would be faced with a marked increase in the number of families on welfare rolls—some as soon as their EI runs out, others, after they've exhausted both their EI and the proceeds from the sale of their homes at bargain-basement prices. Even if those laid off eventually do find employment, however inadequate, down the road they would inevitably enter retirement with reduced pensions and savings, and likely as renters, rather than as home-owners with decent pensions and savings. Many would therefore eventually likely need government-subsidized housing and help from food banks or relatives to get by.

Given recent media coverage, a casual observer could be forgiven for thinking that the Canadian auto sector is a perpetual loser. This is far from the truth.

As a recent study by the CAW (<http://www.caw.ca/en/7310.htm>) notes, the Canadian automotive manufacturing in-

dustry (vehicle assembly and parts manufacturing) generated positive net after-tax income every year between 1972 and 2007. It is estimated that GM Canada's cumulative profits, expressed in 2008 constant dollar terms, exceeded \$30 billion, and Chrysler's were \$5 billion.

That said, the executives running the auto sector must be taken to task for their refusal to accept the longstanding and repeated urging of auto unions to shift to the production of smaller, more energy-efficient vehicles, such as hybrids. The government officials—who should have obliged the companies years ago to revamp their corporate plans to meet the demand for energy-efficient and hybrid vehicles in order to ensure stable jobs and minimize the industry's impact on the environment—share the blame.

Tories targeting unions and retirees

At the outset of the crisis, the media critique of the industry was framed as “wasn't this crisis inevitable, given the high labour costs?” As the crisis deepened, and CAW President Ken Lewenza repeatedly reminded the media and the public that labour costs account for only 7 percent of the final cost of a vehicle—less than the dealer's margin—and that the Big Three's Canadian plants' labour costs are actually lower than their US plants' costs, the Harper government and the media then turned their sights on the “legacy costs”—the right of retirees to decent pensions and health-care benefits.

However, as CAW points out:

It is those retired autoworkers whose work produced the profits which GM, Chrysler, and other auto manufacturers have enjoyed almost every single year for the past 35 years. Their work was performed on the basis of a compensation contract which included promises of pension and health benefits to be paid after the workers retired. Unfortunately, regulatory failures (including both inadequate pension funding rules, and the lack of any system in Canada – unlike the U.S. – to facilitate the pre-funding of post-retirement health benefits) have meant that those promises, made when the companies involved were strongly profitable, are now in jeopardy.

It is painfully ironic that the retirees who worked during

Auto sector crisis – why it should matter to all of us

the auto industry's "golden age" should now be targeted for major reductions in income and benefits. The companies enjoyed very large profits during those years (a significant portion of which were repatriated to the non-Canadian owners of the vehicle assemblers, all of which are foreign-owned). Governments collected very large tax revenues – both from the automakers, and from their employees. And indeed, the continuing provision of pension and health benefits to retired autoworkers reduces the annual cost of taxpayer-funded public pension and health programs very considerably.

...

One factor complicating the measurement of Canadian profitability in an industry dominated by cross-border trade and investment flows is the problem of "transfer pricing" – whereby multinational companies may alter the geographic location of their reported profits (through arbitrary internal price and accounting calculations) in order to maximize tax advantages. This could affect reported Canadian profits in the auto parts and especially the auto assembly sector, and hence we should interpret these data with some caution. On the assumption that multinational firms generally use transfer pricing techniques to reduce their reported Canadian profits (shifting those profits to lower-tax jurisdictions outside of the country), then the statistics reported . . . (especially the company-specific data dealing with GM and Chrysler) may understate true Canadian profitability.

It should be of concern to all of us that the Conservatives and many of their Liberal allies are clearly eager to use this crisis to weaken the Canadian labour movement, or crush it outright, by blaming one of its leading lights—the

CAW—and retired autoworkers for the current auto industry crisis.

None of us—not even a bicycle-riding librarian living two blocks from a Toronto subway station, who may not perceive him or herself as affected by the fate of the auto sector—can afford to allow unions to be blamed for any part of this crisis, nor for the crisis to be “solved” on the backs of retirees. It would set a dreadful precedent were the Tories to succeed in imposing what amounts to a retroactive clawback of pay for work done by the retirees during their employment years, by conditioning any assistance to save the current jobs at GM and Chrysler on such a clawback.

Nor can we allow the Tories and Liberals to get away with having defended overweening corporate power for decades. We're in the environmental and economic mess we're in precisely because they did just that.

It's crucial that we in the NDP communicate to both our members and the public that the 2008-2009 Canadian auto sector crisis is caused in large part by the credit freeze in the US following the global financial crisis, which in turn was caused by inadequate regulation of the US financial sector.

We must also make it clear that Parliament, auto unions and the communities in which the auto industry operates must also have a say in the direction of the industry, because it's simply too big a part of the Canadian economy to leave all of the decision-making affecting its future up to a handful of executives, especially in light of their irresponsible decisions.

Useful reading

Jim Stanford, Economist, Canadian Auto Workers union:

How much do Autoworkers REALLY Make? Surprise: It's NOT \$75 Per Hour, <http://www.caw.ca/en/7367.htm>

Finger-pointing and the Political Economy of Industrial Policy: Auto Industry Fact & Fiction: <http://www.caw.ca/en/5440.htm>

Brian Masse, MP (Windsor West), Masse condemns Industry Committee auto report as an ineffective sideshow:

<http://brianmasse.ndp.ca/node/1004>

Charlotte Yates, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Professor, McMaster University, Labour Studies Programme & Department of Political Science: <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/labourstudies/facultyandstaff/charlotteyatespubs.php>

Proportional Representation: Building for a breakthrough

Sufiya Mary Reid

The recent uproar over the potential Liberal/NDP coalition to govern the country has aroused fresh interest in Proportional Representation. The Fair Vote Ontario Forum held on February 21 was oversubscribed. People were turned away. Below, I try to give an impression of some themes in a lively day of discussion.

In federal and provincial elections we currently use the First Past The Post (FPTP) voting system. In elections, voters choose one candidate. Whoever gets the most votes wins. When there are more than two candidates, someone may win with considerably less than half the votes. A political party may win a far larger number of seats than their share of the votes would justify. Under the various models of Proportional Representation (PR), each party would get a share of the seats proportional to their share of the votes.

People are beginning to notice that federally, we are trying to run five-party politics with an election system designed for two parties. In last October's federal election, voter turnout was extremely low. We are likely to continue to have minority governments. A PR electoral system would orient parties towards cooperation and coalitions. Over most of the democratic world PR works well.

Fair Vote Canada was founded in 2001. It has succeeded in attracting support from across the political spectrum. Executive Director Larry Gordon explained that Fair Vote has seen lots of action, including various provincial referenda, but no breakthrough yet. At the end of February, Quebec Superior Court Judge Luc rejected a Charter

challenge concerning the lack of electoral fairness, saying that there was no evidence that the lack of proportional representation was, in and of itself, evidence of discrimination, and that the issue was a political matter, not a legal one. (<http://www.cyberpresse.ca/actualites/quebec-canada/politique-quebecoise/200903/04/01-833052-loi-electorale-quatre-citoyens-deboutes.php>). The decision is likely to be appealed to the Supreme Court. On May 12, the second British Columbia referendum on the Single Transferable Vote (STV) will be held.

Some time at the Forum was spent discussing the Ontario Citizens' Assembly, and the 1997 Ontario referendum on Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMP) recommended by the Assembly. Members of the Assembly had been assured at the outset that there would be a well-funded public education campaign on whatever they recommended. That did not happen. The brochure produced by the Assembly was deemed partisan, and publication was curtailed. Political candidates were warned not to take sides. In general the media either ignored the issue or were hostile to any change. The Citizens' Assembly had a rich discussion, but that richness did not reach the public.

There are various channels for advancing PR, including court challenges, parliament, commissions, citizens' assemblies, and referenda. All should be pursued as the occasion allows.

No constitutional change is needed to implement PR. With an appropriate floor for representation in Parliament, for example five percent of the vote in order to get seats, the number of parties will not become large. It was asked whether we need a referendum, when

other momentous changes, such as free trade, are implemented without.

Currently a two percent swing in the electorate's voting decisions can produce a huge swing in seats. These swing voters, including the apathetic and least informed ones, determine our election results. The behaviour of our politicians, which many find objectionable, is shaped by our electoral system. They do what they must to get re-elected. Parties that have indicated support for PR in the past have lost interest once they gain power. They will only regain interest if enough people demand PR.

The big issue is fairness. Any form of PR is far preferable to our current FPTP system. It was argued that we don't necessarily need the best system, but we do need a saleable system that the public will accept. We were advised in campaigns to avoid discussions of MMP versus STV, or details of implementation. Such discussions are divisive and provide fodder for opponents.

Nevertheless, in a group well informed on electoral issues, discussion of different models of PR did arise. Stuart Parker, of the Green Party, said STV was saleable in British Columbia, because it fitted with people's culture and previous electoral experience. In their first referendum campaign, they presented STV as an attack on party elites. People responded positively and 58 percent supported STV, just short of the 60 percent demanded. In contrast, in Ontario, opponents were able to seize on the MMP party lists as providing support for party elites.

Henry Milner, author of *Making Every Vote Count*, proposed that a regional MMP system would be most saleable both federally and in Ontario.

Proportional Representation: Building for a breakthrough

Regions would contain about ten of our current ridings. He said this would overcome the problem of fear of losing regional representation. In rural Ontario, under the proposed province-wide system, people suspected that MPPs drawn from the party lists would all come from hated Toronto.

Bruce Cox, from Greenpeace, said Canadians' will is hijacked by FPTP. A large majority favour taking action on climate change, regardless of the economic downturn. Yet the Harper government does nothing at home and frustrates international action. We need passionate campaigns with emotional arguments, he suggested.

Andrew Coyne, National Editor of Maclean's, said fairness is too abstract,

and suggested it must be made personal, so people feel "PR would represent fairness for me." He proposed a coalition of victims: Liberals in the west, Conservatives in Toronto, those in safe ridings whose votes make no difference, those who have to vote strategically for someone they don't want to keep out someone they want even less. He suggested that disgruntled small-conservatives might be an untapped source of support.

Fair Vote needs to keep working incrementally on various fronts. We do not know when a breakthrough will come. We need prominent people of diverse political outlooks willing to speak about PR. Increasing membership and fundraising are also critical.

Winning the British Columbia referendum in May is very important. A successful provincial implementation of PR there will pave the way for PR in other provinces and federally. We were encouraged to go west and campaign, or failing that to make financial donations.

On Saturday, June 13, in Ottawa, Fair Vote Canada will have a conference on Future Directions. To register, see: <http://www.FairVote.ca> or contact: 416 410 4034

For the Fair Vote's official report of the February 22 meeting, see: http://www.fairvote.ca/files/FVOForumReportFINAL_feb09.pdf

MAD Pride Is Coming To Town! Calling All Organizers, Schemers and Planners!

The City of Toronto has proclaimed July 13-19, 2009 as MAD Pride Week. MAD Pride organizers have booked Metro Hall Rotunda at 55 John Street from Tuesday, July 14th to Friday, July 18th to showcase our great and MAD community.

We have a parade permit so we can count on our traditional BED Push Parade on Saturday, July 18th from CAMH to PARC.

We need a team of organizers, schemers, and planners to help make these events happen. We invite you to help plan MAD Pride! Join us Friday afternoons from 3 to 5 pm at Parkdale Community Legal Services (PCLS), 1266 Queen St. W. starting on March 6th and continuing until June. All organizers who participate regularly will receive an honorarium in July.

If you wish to participate but at a distance, let us know and we'll keep you informed.

Bonus opportunity!: Organizers who wish to express their MAD Pride within a theatrical context

are invited to attend Friday night rehearsals from 6:30 to 9:30 pm at May Robinson Auditorum, 20 West Lodge Ave (one block East of Lansdowne, one block north of Queen. The theatre pieces developed at these rehearsals will be shown at MAD Pride Week. For more information call Peggy Gail at 416 531 2411 ext 247 or Ruth Ruth at 416 516 4740 or friendlyspike@primus.ca

MAD PRIDE! Get it! Celebrate it!

For further information on the origins of Mad Pride—a movement that celebrates psychiatric survivors' human rights and spectacular culture—and updates on its upcoming Canadian events, see: <http://www.mindfreedom.org/campaign/madpride/events/2009-events/canada/madpride-week-2009/view>

Note: *The June issue of Hearts & Minds will have a feature article by David Reville—psychiatric survivor, teacher of Mad People's History at Ryerson University, and an NDP MPP from 1985 to 1990.*

Take Action Now

Top 10 reasons why Canada should cancel Harper's Free Trade deal with Colombia

J.A. MacNeil (based on information from Kairos and the CLC)

1. Since 1986, 2703 trade unionists have been murdered, 9 in the first 4 months of 2009. Colombia is still the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists. More labour leaders are killed there every year than in the rest of the world combined.
2. Colombian labour law does not come even close to meeting the ILO's minimum standards.
3. Crimes against trade unionists and other civilians go unpunished.
4. The supposedly "demobilized" paramilitary death squads are still operating, and even sent a nasty message to the Canadian embassy in Bogotá recently.
5. The Colombian government itself has major ties to the paramilitary: More than 60 Congress members from President Uribe's coalition—20 percent of the Congress—are being investigated for crimes like collaboration with paramilitaries, getting rich from drug trafficking and collusion in election fraud. Thirty of them have been indicted.
6. The Army and government have both been implicated in crimes against humanity—kidnappings, executions and massacres of innocent civilians.
7. Colombians' own trade unions have said "No" to the trade deal, as have indigenous groups and the opposition party Polo Democrático, because it will annex the country's economy to the multinational corporations.
8. Promoting international trade and investment now will send the wrong signal to the Colombian government, taking the pressure off them to improve human rights.
9. Canada's own parliamentary trade committee has recommended a human rights assessment before any trade agreement is signed. This has not been done.
10. Signing a deal now will undermine efforts by other world leaders to pressure for an end to violations of Colombia workers' rights. In the final presidential debate before the 2008 elections, Barack Obama noted, "The history of Colombia right now is that labor leaders have been targeted for assassination on a fairly consistent basis and there have not been prosecutions. . . . We have to stand for human rights, and we have to make sure that violence isn't being perpetrated against workers who are just trying to organize for their rights."

Take action—This is a winnable issue:

- 1) Send a message to your MP: click here: Put the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Deal on Hold, and follow the instructions: URL: <http://canadianlabour.ca/en/canadian-labour-congress-action-centre/put-canada-colombia-free-trade-deal-hold>
- 2) Adopt a Liberal. The NDP and Bloc Quebecoise have already voted against the deal, but the Liberals are divided. So, drop a line to couple of them. Some worth targeting: Scott Brison, Bob Rae, Marlene Jennings, Mario Silva, Justin Trudeau, John Cannis, and Michael Ignatieff.
- 3) Forward this information on to your friends and relatives and urge them to take action too.

For further information, see:

Kairos: http://www.kairoscanada.org/en/rights-and-trade/news-list/news/archive/2009/04/article/tell-your-mp-vote-no-to-the-canada-colombia-fta-action-alert/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=112&cHash=634a1d40b4

CLC: <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/sites/clc/files/shared/tenreasonsEnfinal.pdf>

Colombia Journal, run by Garry Leech, who teaches international politics at Cape Breton University in Nova Scotia: <http://www.colombiajournal.org/>

Salvadorean left comes in from the cold

Juan Carranza

As the progressive tide began sweeping across Latin America a decade ago, many expected tiny El Salvador to be among the first countries to follow in the progressive footsteps of Venezuela and Brazil. Surely, with its crushing poverty, paltry levels of social spending, epidemic crime levels, and strong leftist opposition, it made sense that the small Central American nation would make a left turn towards a more democratic and inclusive system of government. However, it would take an additional decade of painful and failed neo-liberal policies before the “Tom Thumb of the Americas” was able to elect its first left-wing president since its 1921 independence from Spain.

On March 15, 2009, when the polls closed after a tense day of voting, during which public transit was scarce and non-stop incidents of attempted voter fraud were reported, with 70 percent of the ballots counted and the FMLN ahead by 3 percent, the people of El Salvador refused to allow this election to be stolen and poured onto the streets with their FMLN flags. At around 9:30 pm, FMLN presidential candidate Mauricio Funes declared victory on national television. Two hours later, ARENA presidential candidate Rodrigo Avila conceded defeat, bringing an end to over 150 years of military-oligarchy rule.

Polls leading up to the election had generally given Funes a double-digit lead over Avila. But in Salvadorean elections, polls don't necessarily predict the outcome. Despite steady political gains made by the FMLN over the last 16 years in every election at all levels (municipal, legislative assembly, and presidential), from 22 percent of

the vote in 1994 to just over half in 2009, Salvadoreans still doubted the possibility of an FMLN victory. The question was not whether the FMLN had won the votes. The question was whether ARENA, the party of the right, would permit an FMLN victory. A review of the presidential elections of 1972 and 1977 and of ARENA is helpful in understanding this dynamic.

In the presidential elections of both 1972 and 1977, the opposition joined forces in a coalition called the Union Nacional Opositora (UNO)—composed of the Christian Democrats (liberal centrists), MNR (social democrats), and the UDN (communists)—to run against the military candidates of the governing PCN, the right-wing party of the land-owning oligarchy. After UNO's successful electoral campaigns—marked by massive rallies and large voter turnout—the elections were practically stolen by the PCN, a right-wing party closely tied to the elite and the military. What followed was a period of unrest and widespread state repression that ultimately sparked the civil war that left 75,000 dead and was eventually brought to an end by the

1992 peace accords.

Following the peace accords, ARENA became, and continues to be, the new party of the old oligarchy. The party's roots can be traced to Roberto D'Aubuisson, the military commander who founded the death squads and was identified as the mastermind behind the assassination of Archbishop Romero in 1980. ARENA has governed El Salvador since 1989 and holds a powerful grip over the mainstream media, private business, and most of the country's institutions, including the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the Tax Department, and the Supreme Court.

ARENA's all-pervasiveness has obliged the FMLN to learn how to untangle and respond to shenanigans in which government institutions actively function as part of the ARENA party apparatus. Examples of such shenanigans include the arbitrary appointment of extra (right-wing) members to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and the refusal to clean up electoral rolls that contained over 100,000 deceased electors, as noted by the OAS in a 2007 report. As well, there were many other

El Salvador Country Profile

- 7 million people in 20,000 km²
- 90 percent of 2.9 million Salvadoreans living abroad are in the U.S;
260,000 of those have Temporary Protected Status (TPS);
400,000 of them are undocumented
- \$4 Billion USD entered El Salvador in remittances in 2008
(equivalent to 17 percent of the country's GDP)
- 80 percent of El Salvador's exports go to the U.S.
- Roughly 59,145 Salvadoreans live in Canada (2006 Census Data)
- The minimum wage in the service/commerce sector: \$US 174.30/month
- The minimum wage in the textile/manufacturing industry:
\$US 150.00/ month
- Minimum wage for farm workers: \$US 0.34/hr

Salvadorean left comes in from the cold

systemic violations of the few election campaign rules, such as the active participation of foreign entities in the campaign (including the right-wing Fuerza Solidaria¹ from Venezuela), the lack of spending limits, non-observance of election campaign periods, the importing of foreigners to vote for ARENA with fraudulent ID cards, the use of government funds in ARENA's campaign, and outright persecution of FMLN supporters.

The resulting electoral climate was persistently one of tension and fear, in which ARENA bombarded the population with its message that a vote for the FMLN was a vote for Stalinist-style communism and the loss of individual freedoms, and would turn El Salvador into an enemy of the U.S. thus jeopardizing the country's economic lifeline: remittances sent by Salvadoreans living and working in the U.S. With the help of individual Republican congressmen in the States, this strategy had worked for the right wing up to 2009.

Meanwhile, the FMLN underwent a profound transition from a disciplined guerrilla force to a mass political party in less than twenty years. The FMLN, born during the civil war, had been a military force made up of primarily of students, trade unionists and agricultural workers, convinced that government repression, persecution and corruption could not be ended by electoral means. When it became a legal political party after the 1992 peace accords, the FMLN had to learn to trust the same electoral system that had defrauded it and its progressive forerunners for generations.

One of the hard lessons learned was

that ex-guerrilla commanders did not always make the best presidential candidates, as they were easy targets of ARENA's colossal fear campaigns.

So in 2007, the FMLN nominated Mauricio Funes, a widely-respected civilian journalist, as presidential candidate for the 2009 elections. The fact that Funes had never been a member of the guerrilla incarnation of the FMLN—and in fact joined the FMLN as a legal party only in 2007, shortly before being chosen their presidential candidate—enabled it to reach out to



wider segments of the population previously polarized by the civil war. Funes spoke of hope and change with a conciliatory message that allowed the FMLN to reach out to the segments of the population tired of the divisive discourse, and to build on the impressive electoral gains the party had made since 1994.

Additionally, the FMLN, grass roots organizations, and individuals took it

upon themselves to defend the vote against fraud. Despite a long, successful campaign with impressive massive rallies in soccer stadiums and other public places, door-to-door campaigning, high polling numbers, and E-day organization to pull the vote, they knew that the battle would be won only if they managed to prevent and deal with electoral fraud. The “defend the vote” campaign enabled and relied on individuals across the country to report to an FMLN hotline any irregularities such as voting by foreigners, multiple voting by individuals, etc. This was extremely successful, and was reported throughout alternative media during the entire voting process.

Incidents of voter fraud were also reported by local and international observers, and as a result of the comprehensive vigilance and documentation of such occurrences, many more were prevented. The people were able to defend the vote and won the election.

It is notable that, despite the comparatively close results, ARENA did not request a recount, a fact many attribute to its knowledge of the documentation gathered concerning pro-ARENA shenanigans at the polls.

ARENA emerged from the March 2009 elections with 32 MPs; the PCN has 11; the Christian Democratic Party has 2; and the CD (formerly the FDR—a left-wing party that broke away from the FMLN) has 1, according to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

Mauricio Funes's priorities for El Salvador

While not all the details of Funes's

¹ This organization's main objective is stopping the progressive tide sweeping across Latin America. Activities include print and television ads linking the FMLN with Hugo Chavez and saying El Salvador would become the enemy of the US (CISPES report on El Salvador Elections 2009) and false accusations that the FMLN was training militias in the countryside.

Salvadorean left comes in from the cold

governance plans have been unveiled, he has reiterated a commitment to strengthening agriculture—neglected for decades—and promoting economic diversification. The FMLN also promised in its platform to tackle unemployment and poverty, organized crime, and state impunity, while cleaning up public finances and conducting fiscal reform. Funes is expected to follow a model similar to that of Brazil's Lula, of growing the economy and generating tax revenues to tackle en-

demic poverty, health care needs and education.

As to Funes's foreign policy, he will be walking a fine line. He has indicated that he will not pursue alliances with any countries in the region that might jeopardize the relationship with the U.S., but at the same time, he has also made a commitment to re-establish economic and diplomatic relations with Cuba.

The FMLN victory was anticipated in pre-election polls, but it will be more

difficult to predict the FMLN administration's degree of success in light of the historic, near-hysterical resistance by El Salvador's far right to any move towards a more just society.

There may be some hope, however. In his victory speech, Mauricio Funes extended an olive branch to the right and expressed his hope that his government could count on cooperation from other political forces. This olive branch was accepted, at least in principle, by the extreme-right daily *El Diario de Hoy* in its editorial the next day.

Many in the country agree that Salvadorean politics needs to move away from the extremes. To that end, the Funes victory is a move for the better.

Juan Carranza, the first Central American to be called to the Law Society of Upper Canada, is past president of Salvaide and practices law in Toronto.

FMLN electoral strength		
	March 1994 (first elections after peace accords)	March 2009
Number of municipal governments won	15 of 262	93 of 262
Legislative Assembly members	21 of 84	35 of 84
Popular vote	287,000 (21.4 percent)	1,354,000 (51.3 percent)

See interview with President-Elect Mauricio Funes, Spanish with English subtitles: <http://tr.youtube.com/watch?v=XVz-l7yd6o&feature=Playlist&p=8B8E3C34319CE5F7&index=1>

Party News:

Jesse Calvert
Erika Manata
Suealan Lambert
Tom Balint
Evan Coole
Susan Gapka
Kelly Foote
Rick Mann
Martine Stonehouse
Colin Philips

New ONDP LGBT Executive

Co-Chair: jesse.calvert@gmail.com
Co-Chair: e_manata@hotmail.com
Secretary
Outreach Co-Ordinator
Treasurer
Representative to Provincial Executive: susangapka@yahoo.ca
Representative to Provincial Executive: chiao_kelly@yahoo.com
Delegate to Provincial Council: itsallgoodart@yahoo.ca
Delegate to Provincial Council: martinestonehouse@yahoo.ca
Alternate Delegate

Venezuela: Making democracy democratic

John Richmond

Having just arrived in Venezuela a day before the World Social Forum, an international gathering of grassroots social movements, I proceeded to take a barometer of public opinion by what, in my experience, are the two most reliable methods known to amateur social scientists: the taxi ride and a visit to a road-side bar.

The driver of the cab I took was a former employee of a German engineering firm. The company had left Venezuela after losing most of its government contracts to a new cooperative of Venezuelan engineers. The cabbie, who had been head of marketing for the company, was offered a job in Germany but declined. “This is my country and I will never leave,” he said. Then, pointing to several women crossing the street, he added, “and they are one of the main reasons.” The world over, taxi drivers are brutally honest.

When asked what he thought of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and the “Bolivarian Revolution”, as it is officially called, the cab driver laughed, saying “Every foreigner asks me that question. I don’t know. So far things are pretty good. I guess I would vote for him again. I did last time.”

At the bar I encountered a similar point of view from a self-styled “business man” who spoke about as much English as I speak Spanish (moderate). On hearing that I was visiting from Canada, my new “friend” insisted on buying me a beer while we watched

the baseball game on the bar’s TV.

“Do you like baseball?” asked a man at the bar. “How about Venezuela?” asked the waiter. I started to explain my preference for soccer when the businessman jumped in to give his view of Hugo Chávez. “He just says whatever comes into his head. He’s not diplomatic. But people like the way he speaks – he’s honest and hard-working. He’s not like a politician, and Venezuelans hate politicians.”

I had just sat down when a police officer riding a motorcycle and sporting a shotgun pulled up outside the bar. No one said a word. The police



officer looked the place over and pronounced everyone in it “a scumbag; I can’t believe Chávez lets people like you out on the street.” He then roared off and the bar went back to normal. My new friend shrugged and told me, “The police are corrupt here and they support the opposition. They hate us. But Chávez tells us not to allow ourselves to be provoked. Violence only benefits the opposition in the end.” The only political activists to be killed in Venezuela in the last 10 years have been left-wing activists – usually murdered by shadowy death squads.

The pre-Chavez era

Venezuela’s old, two-party system, with one party—that of former president Andrés Pérez—that was nominally social democrat but in practice quite corrupt and neo-liberal in orientation, and another more openly conservative party, began to collapse back in the 1980s when the low price of oil on international markets necessitated dramatic changes to the Venezuelan economy. The two main parties and the wealthy sector of the population whose interests they represented saw to it that the rich would not have to

make any real sacrifices even while average living standards plummeted.

Venezuela had a welfare state—of sorts—funded by oil revenues. However, with the onset of the fierce globalization of the 1990s, the poor were left to fend for themselves while the elite became progressively more corrupt and

detached from reality.

Thanks to its heavy dependency on oil, Venezuela had almost entirely lost its agricultural capacity and very few formal, decently-paid jobs existed outside the oil and banking sectors. Many people earned their living in the “informal” economy, selling food or toys on the street, for example, or survived on income from family and friends. With the skeletal welfare state all but over and the rich funneling billions of dollars a day to off-shore bank accounts in Miami and Switzerland, the political situation became more and more precarious.

Venezuela: Making democracy democratic

Into the breach – Chávez

When the December 1998 elections rolled around, into the breach stepped the paratroop commander Hugo Chávez Frías—a practicing Catholic and fierce nationalist—and his Bolivarian Movement, named after Simon Bolivar, the liberator of not only Venezuela, but also Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Panama, from Spanish colonial rule.

Chávez was not an unknown entity – he had previously tried to overthrow the government in 1992. But Chávez was not taken seriously by the establishment. The elites cynically ran a wealthy, right-wing beauty queen. It is sometimes suggested no one else wanted the job, given the mess the country was in. Although race and class are rarely mentioned in Venezuela, it was obvious to everyone what was going on: a white, wealthy, “beautiful” woman was being put up against a mixed-race, dark-skinned male, part native, part black, from a poor background.

To the surprise of no one except the establishment, Chávez won. To quote former Russian Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov, “Every country has elites. The point is to change them every once in a while.” And Chávez proceeded to change—slowly—the elites.

Chávez promised—and he has tried to deliver—three things: to clean up corruption; to take full control of the state oil company PDVSA, which was about to be completely sold off despite widespread opposition; and to introduce a new constitution with a strong emphasis on participatory democracy. Chávez himself has submitted to more than seven elections or recall referenda, all of which he won fairly and

squarely, according to international observers, including Jimmy Carter.

The April 2002 coup

In 2002, three years after Chávez first came to power, the old guard was falling apart. As during the collapse of the former Soviet Union, people abandoned the main political parties, trade unions and other organizations in droves.

The domestic Venezuelan private media—about 70 percent of media in Venezuela is owned by private corporations—waged a 24-hour, 7 day a week campaign against Chávez, attacking Chávez himself rather than his policies. Private television, radio and print media took to calling Chávez a “monkey”—in reference to his skin colour—and constantly suggesting he was “gay” or a “child molester.” It got so bad that even the US government suggested the private media stop the name-calling.

With the help of the US, in April 2002 a sector of the military, the Chamber of Commerce, the Catholic Church, the wealthy elites, most of the corporate media, and the opposition parties staged a coup. Chamber of Commerce President Pedro Carmona was declared the new President of the nation, and the Constitution, Parliament and all civil and political rights were suspended. The new dictatorship was recognized almost immediately by the US, the UK and Spain. A 24-hour curfew was declared, members of the Chávez government were arrested without charge and pro-government protestors were shot in the streets. About 30 people were killed.

As the days passed, Venezuelans, attached to their radical democracy,

took to the streets in the millions despite the violence. The new government fled and Chávez, who was being held in a military base off the coast, was brought back to the Presidential office. A government supporter said, “You made history, Mr. President.” Chávez, characteristically quick off the mark, replied, “No. The people made history.”

Rapid changes in post-coup period

Following the coup, Chávez and his followers were quiet for a few months while the opposition tried other tricks (such as shutting down the oil industry) to unseat the government. Many ordinary Chávez supporters were upset. They wanted the coup organizers and plotters punished—severely. But Chávez was very careful to follow the rule of law. While some of those implicated in the attempted coup were dismissed from the public service and the military (and ultimately, those responsible for killing protestors were charged, years later), very little in the larger picture changed for a while.

Then Chávez started to move. And the changes came fast and furious. Not a day went by without Chávez and his government announcing a new policy or trying a new programme. Chávez’s hallmark is his flexibility—one of the main reasons he is constantly underestimated by his adversaries. Chávez took in advisors from around the world. He kept the ideas that worked and discarded those that didn’t. The same applied to his staff and advisors. Chávez is a relentless task-master with very high expectations.

In the face of rapid change, the political opposition all but withdrew. The opposition boycotted the 2006 elec-

Venezuela: Making democracy democratic

tions, on the advice of the US, in order to give themselves a pretext to call Chávez a “dictator”, but the end result was to leave the National Assembly in the hands of the left-wing parties. Many international observers called the opposition “infantile” and “immature”.

Persistent problems, consolidation of support

These days Venezuela is, in many important ways, a very different place than prior to Chávez. When it comes to belief in democracy and support for the system, Venezuela, with 73 percent, ranks first in Latin America, according to the independent Chile-based polling firm IberoAmerica. Even those who disagree with Chávez, such as Douglas Bravo of the Third Way Movement, feel they have much greater control over their system.

Problems persist. Corruption continues among people who don't believe in the Revolution but wear red shirts, claim to be “Chavistas” and are given light treatment by a judiciary that seems to go easy on government supporters. And violent crime has clearly increased. Chávez insists the solution to crime is long-term social and educational investment and refuses to take a hard line against criminals.

At the end of the day, despite the above-mentioned limitations, the success of the Venezuelan model has become a beacon of hope in the developing world. Chávez has both allies who are trying to follow his example in El

Salvador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Ecuador, and those who pursue similar aims through other means in the face of complex internal politics, such as President Lula in Brazil.

Canadian media coverage of Venezuelan process

Unfortunately, even after 10 years of Chávez's grand experiment, most Canadians know almost nothing about the now world-famous Venezuela. How has the “Bolivarian Process” evolved? What does the situation look like on the ground in Venezuela?

Our media mostly report the same old, half-true sensationalist stories. For example, the *Toronto Star*, CBC, CTV and others recently reported that Chávez was anti-Semitic and had inspired an attack on a synagogue in Caracas. The truth is that the synagogue was robbed by common criminals linked to the synagogue's private security firm; the robbers were arrested and are currently awaiting trial.

The only “fact” most Canadians seem to know about Venezuela, aside from the fact that Chávez is a “dictator” (the only democratically-elected dictator in the world!) is that Chávez spends the country's oil wealth on poor people—thus allegedly “buying” his popularity. However, the Venezuelan reality is much more complex.

Experiment in grassroots democratic control

The largest and most unreported

part of Chávez's “21st Century Socialism” is a plan to implement broad-based popular democratic control over every aspect of life. Chávez has tried, with limited success, to do an end-run around government bureaucracies, politicians both right and left and private business by encouraging people to make use of the Constitution and government-funded “Misiones”¹, and to create “neighbourhood councils”, “neighbourhood banks” (credit unions) and cooperatives.

Many people have taken the “popular power” project to heart—especially people who tend to want nothing to do with formal, representative politics. But the process has been slow and problematic. With no real guidebook, manual or previous examples except small-scale ones, such as the Mondragon Cooperatives in Spain, Venezuelans have had to learn by trial and error.

Haiman Al-Troudi, the author of a handbook on “social enterprises”, was made “People's Power Minister of Social Participation” and a special international research institute to study participatory democracy was set up, the Francisco de Miranda Centre. The Centre hosts such world-class experts as Canadian economist Mike Leibowitz from SFU, and welcomes virtually anyone who has new ideas on how to make “participatory” democracy work effectively and efficiently. Chilean-Cuban sociologist Marta Harnecker and Venezuelan Nico Lopez have just published a free, on-line, detailed guide on the principles and practice of partici-

¹ Misiones: A series of government-funded, community-based programmes, staffed primarily by volunteers, to address social needs. The idea is to have a rapid response to social problems; one Mission, for example, teaches children in poor neighbourhoods to play an instrument, while another one helps homeless people with drug problems. The Misiones were originally operating outside normal government channels and were overseen by people appointed by Chávez, but they are slowly being integrated into the government ministries. This has been and continues to be a source of some conflict.

Venezuela: Making democracy democratic

patory democracy.

Current challenges amid deepening transformations

Not surprisingly, one of the first problems to arise, according to Gregory Wilpert—an American who moved to Venezuela many years ago and manages the excellent website *Venezuelanalysis.com*—has been interpersonal conflict, including the normal kinds of problems people have getting along in any family, workplace or community. A number of institutions and organizations are looking at how to train people in the basic skills of participation.

The stated goal of the Venezuelan “Revolution” is to move away from an environmentally unsustainable, competitive, consumer-based society to one of “socialist cooperation”. The creation of a “cooperative” economy is a large part of this process. The government has tried to encourage the creation of small and medium-sized cooperative businesses by controlling imports, exports and currency transfers for purchases of non-Venezuelan goods and services.

To a country unaccustomed to being “entrepreneurial”, the change in culture has been slow and difficult. And while many of the co-ops creat-

ed in the first round of “endogenous” economic development (starting in 2003) during Chávez’s mandate have either folded or never really got off the ground, the new generation of co-ops are doing well.

Every community in Venezuela is now expected to produce a “socialist development plan”. The plans are to be “driven primarily by local residents” with the advice and technical support of staff from the relevant Ministries and “Misiones”. Government directives are clear that local plans are not to be controlled by “political parties”—such as Chávez’s Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV), the Communist Party or opposition parties—nor by “government bureaucrats or local politicians”, but in practice this has been very difficult to implement. As well, the plans are supposed to solve serious local problems such as violent crime and gun culture, garbage disposal and job creation. Yet it is not clear that the resources exist at the local level to realistically address these challenges.

Clearly the Venezuelan model is a work in progress and, unfortunately, has many enemies both inside and outside Venezuela. However, even opposition politicians in Venezuela admit that the project has proceeded so far and is so popular—Chávez’s approval rating as of March 29, 2009, was

around 70 percent—that it would be virtually impossible to undo all of it. The United Socialist Party of Venezuela—Chávez’s party—currently has 5.8 million members, in a country of only 28.2 million.

Potential dangers

Two possible dangers loom on the horizon: one, that Venezuelans will fall for a right-wing proposal to distributed oil proceeds as cash to each and every Venezuelan through a government “credit card” and may, with that, revert to being passive consumers, and the old elites would again assume control of the country; or two, that a system which claims to be all about participatory democracy will really just end up being about Hugo Chávez, and that without him the whole experiment will collapse.

However, Venezuelans have learned much during 10 years of Hugo Chávez. As one Venezuelan woman said to me on a bus, “Not everyone in the world can live like you North Americans. In a more just world we will all have to be a little more equal and be more careful with this beautiful planet.”

Well said. I suspect Canada has a few lessons to learn from Venezuela.

Useful reading

- *Venezuelanalysis.com* is an English-language website that provides a daily, supportive but critical overview of the “Bolivarian Revolution”.
- *Changing Venezuela by Taking Power* (Gregory Wilpert, Verso Press) is an exhaustive study of what the “Revolution” claims to be and what it really is.
- The Canadian mainstream media is full of negative (and mostly inaccurate) coverage of Venezuela. For relatively accurate information about Venezuela, albeit with a right-wing bias, see *The Economist*.
- *Nine Police Found Guilty of April 2002 Venezuelan Coup Deaths*, April 6, 2009: <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news/4354>

Uruguay: Frente Amplio's unity amid diversity — Lessons for the NDP

Editor's intro: In October of 2004, Uruguayans elected the *Frente Amplio's* candidate, Tabaré Vázquez, as president and gave the Frente majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. They took office in March 2005. The Frente Amplio is a party formed from a broad coalition of previously fractured left-wing political forces and has close ties to the PIT-CNT national trade union central, various student organizations and the cooperative housing movement. It came to office after the 20 years of rule by right-wing parties (1984-2004) elected on the heels of the brutal military dictatorship that seized power in 1973. During the dictatorship, 300 Uruguayans disappeared, 15,000 were jailed—thousands

Giulio Manfrini

To comprehend the meaning of the *Frente Amplio's* Unity Amid Diversity (Unidad en la diversidad) approach to politics, one must understand both the expression's meaning and the spirit it implies.

The most important element in the process leading to the *Frente Amplio's* 2004 electoral victory was ensuring that every individual member of the *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front)—from manual labourers to middle-class professionals—had an intellectual understanding of the processes in which they were participating, the objectives and political goals, and was aware of what the struggle was about and why they were participating in it. This process of constant political discourse and reflection was and remains essential.

The *Frente Amplio* also made an effort to avoid the elitist, electoralist approach to politics that is common in so many parties (including many parties of the left), characterized by the following: a) the leader or other elected representatives are presumed to know exactly what has to be done, and local grassroots members are presumed to not know very much; b) in order to achieve his or her goals, the leader surrounds himself or herself with people—backroom operators—who will obediently carry out what he/she wants, and mobilize the grassroots members to compliantly follow suit. An electoralist type of political culture does not lead to a strong, democratic and vibrant party but rather to parties that don't grow in number or strength, and instead suffer from a perpetual identity crisis as the interests of their leaders are given higher priority than the interests of the collectivity of their bases of support. The *Frente Amplio's* 2004 victory was the result of having avoided this approach to politics.

of them brutally tortured—and approximately 400,000 went into exile in response to both the repression and the harsh economic conditions that resulted from the imposition of neo-liberal policies. Giulio Manfrini has recently returned from a visit to Uruguay, his country of birth. His analysis of the processes that have enabled progressive forces to come to power for the first time in the country's modern history and about their implications for the NDP is salient for New Democrats hoping to bring an end to neo-liberal rule here. So is his warning about ethnic communities' response to the NDP's oft-used phrase "ordinary people".

This also implied giving more weight to mobilizing the grassroots members to engage in the collective week-to-week work of political analysis and public education and organization, rather than to work just prior to or during elections.

The construction of the *Frente Amplio*, initially partially a coalition of parties and partially a movement, was also guided by the principle that rivals are not necessarily enemies, and the belief that if there is a common path for people with similar ideas, we should walk that path, leading and engaging everyone to see how far we and they can get.

We can learn much from the *Frente Amplio* experience that may be useful to the NDP at the historical crossroad at which we find ourselves today.

We in the NDP may wish to take into consideration the following when examining our future:

- the economic and political crisis of neo-liberal capitalism, due to the failure of their premises and policies
- the renewal and transformation of the NDP, at both the provincial and federal levels
- the election of another progressive movement to government in the tormented country of El Salvador, and
- the lessons learned by the *Frente Amplio*, which is preparing itself for the first election after having been in government.

Note, in both El Salvador and Uruguay, the progressive forces took over the government, not political power. Uruguayans make a clear distinction between the two concepts. Being in government does not necessarily mean having political power in the country a party governs. For

Uruguay: Frente Amplio's unity amid diversity — Lessons for the NDP

example, the government bureaucracy that a party inherits is one example of a powerful unelected sector that will often refuse to carry out the will of the elected government.

Also important: one needs to understand and recognize that the middle class is not a homogeneous block, but a number of fluid layers of people that switch alliances and positions according to their own perceptions of their status, either moving toward the working class or throwing their lot in with the oligarchy.

So, another lesson from Uruguay's *Frente Amplio* is that we need to approach as potential partners not only working people—our natural allies—but also middle-class sectors of professionals, owners of small and medium-size businesses, entrepreneurs and, in Canada in particular, the ethnic communities. The ethnic communities are a strong and substantial force, but see themselves as middle-class, despite being often intensely exploited economically and frequently prevented from exercising the professions they have been trained for in their countries of origin.

We should keep promoting and internalizing within the NDP an awareness of the need for change in the party's structural organization and collective engagement. We have improved considerably in this respect, but it is imperative to establish a strategic approach toward outreach and to the inclusion and engagement of the political base of the party—our members, voters, sympathizers and representatives of grassroots organizations that are potential allies.

We should adopt strategies that will lead to a growing, active and vibrant party at both the provincial and federal levels. The party should be active between elections, and should engage in a broad range of activities that include

meetings, training, fundraising and developing successful locally-based leaders that will be ready when elections are called.

The recent renewal of the ONDP is a case in point. The party elected a new leader, but also elected new leaders in the Metro Caucus and Ethnic Liaison Committee (ELC), both important and critical tools for the growth of the party in the Toronto area. This may also have to happen in other urban areas where the concentration of ethnic communities is a reality.



At the federal level, the recent meeting and training that brought together diverse leaders from Toronto and surrounding communities, as well as the fundraising supper scheduled for April 19th, 2009 for the collective benefit of all ridings involved, will ultimately lead to future growth. The goal

is to have a more cohesive approach to a collective vision at the riding level, where friendships and political ideas are developed in a practical manner, with the dedication of all participants, from the grassroots to the leadership of the NDP.

In addition, certain changes are vitally needed. We need to be more sensitive in the use of phrases that may be counterproductive with ethnic communities, such as “ordinary Canadian”. For people whose native tongue is not English, the phrase sounds negative and may be mistakenly interpreted as referring to a less-valued person. Phrases like “all progressive Canadians” or “all socially-minded Canadians” might be good alternatives.

The experience of *Frente Amplio* illustrates three important principles responsible for its success, both prior to and after its formal founding on February 5th, 1971.

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1. The *Frente Amplio's* constant, fervent and over-whelming passion in the search of the collective intellectual and moral development of its leaders, activists and grass-roots members. We say intellectual development, because the *Frente Amplio's* leadership understood that intellectual political thinking is not synonymous with academic political thinking and training.

Regardless of the kinds of activities or political struggles the members engaged in (be it organizing, fundraising, communications, or student or labour movement activities), the party collectively oriented its actions to responding to social and economic problems in line with its vision of the society that the party's members all wanted to achieve and the manner in which they wanted to achieve it.

The recent Federal GTA Team/Riding meeting on March 28th at 101 Richmond Street (ONDP headquarters) is a small example of how such processes can be carried out. The intellectual development occurred outside the formal training (educational) segments. It was encouraged in three different manners: a game — and a very effective one; a verbal historical summary of the NDP's achievements and principles; and the screening of a short video—the Mouseland presentation of Tommy Douglas's political speech

about how voters behave (then and today).

2. The understanding that we should persistently seek to advance the common objectives and ideas of the journey we are embarking on, with the aim of emphasising the 80 percent of issues and values that we have in common with the majority of the people and not the 20 percent of issues that we may perceive differently or not be in total agreement with them about.

If we apply this concept, we will develop a strategy to accumulate strength based on the involvement of a many diverse groups, social and cultural organisations, trade unions, students and individuals, all together engaging actively in political work, thereby positioning the NDP as the progressive party that will lead the movement for change and social justice, one that will reach out and engage most people.

Many times, in our meetings and discussions, I often hear recurring concerns expressed: concern about the Green Party, regarded by many as a potential hindrance; concern about engaging people who often do not even vote, especially lower-income people, in the political process; concern about students, especially those perceived as radicals,

Voting in National Elections before and after formation of Frente Amplio coalition								
Right-wing political parties:	Before Formation of Frente Amplio Coalition/Movement				After Formation of Frente Amplio Coalition/Movement			
	1962		1966		1971		2004	
	Partido Colorado	521,231	44.51%	607,633	49.33%	681,624	39.80%	231,036
Partido Nacional	545,029	46.54%	496,910	40.34%	668,822	39.05%	764,739	34.30%
Progressive parties:	1962		1966		1971		2004	
Partido Frente Izquierda de Liberación	40,886	3.49%	69,750	5.66%				
Partido Demócrata Cristiano	35,703	3.05%	37,219	3.02%				
Partido Socialista			11,559	0.94%				
Partido Unión Popular	27,041	2.31%	2,655	0.22%				
Frente Amplio Coalition (1971 and after)					304,275	17.77%	1,124,761	50.45%

Source: Electoral Court Uruguay <http://www.corteelectoral.gub.uy>

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just to pick a few issues.

The above groups are simply potential rivals or perhaps potentially problematic forces to whom we can and must reach out and pull into our cause. I am not talking about actions to be taken by the party leadership; I am talking about the actions that our grassroots members need to engage in.

3. The realization that the journey progresses one step at a time. Although the process seems an overwhelming task and taking our message to the people—meeting and talking to one family at a time—sometimes seems unfeasible, the *Frente Amplio* experience shows us the contrary. The *Frente Amplio* did exactly that and it grew steadily as a result.

Political engagement in workplaces, union halls, offices, colleges and universities, at meetings in the homes of voters that support the NDP, etc., on a daily basis, is essential.

This approach was the one that, along with the concentrated effort to promote unity and the incorporation of all progressive-minded people from all walks of life, led the *Frente Amplio* movement in 1962 to form the first alliances—FIDEL (Frente Izquierda de Liberación) and Union Popular (Socialist Party and others). This led to the his-

torical alliances in 1971 of these progressive parties, other left-wing parties and the P.D.C. (Partido Demócrata Cristiano), a social democratic party.

In terms of votes (see table above), the left increased its share of the vote from a combined total of 103,630 (8.85 percent) in 1962 to a total of 304,275 (17.77 percent) in 1971, even though the *Frente Amplio* members were by then dealing with the slide into what would become 15 years of dictatorship during which one in every five citizens was killed, tortured, jailed or forced into exile.

On March 1st, 2005, the *Frente Amplio* assumed the government of Uruguay, with 1,124,761 votes—the support of 50.45 percent of the population.

The NDP already has a broader base in terms of votes and support than the *Frente Amplio* had in its early years. Intellectual discussion and the revision of our policies concerning the positioning of the party and the policies to be promoted are required. We firmly believe that, yes, we can create a Canada that is better for the majority of its citizens.

Let's start the process as a party by focusing on six larger pillars: public medicare; electoral reform; child care and child poverty; education; the environment; the economy and job creation.

In our next issue ...

- Psychiatric survival and recovery: David Reville
- Urban agriculture: pipe dream or wave of the future?
- Green industries at home and abroad
- Harmonized Sales Tax: Cheri DiNovo
- Torture: Terry Burrell
- Scandinavian industrial policy: success stories
- Tale of two transit consultations: Gord Perks
- How well is the Canadian financial sector regulated?
- Africa and Latin America challenge corporate resource grab
- Community colleges resist unionization of part-time and sessional faculty
- Small business survival in Parkdale—High Park
- The case for publicly-owned companies
- Book Reviews

Hearts & Minds Index

J.A. MacNeil

- Number of unemployed people in Canada as of end of March 2009: **1,456,600**
- Number of full-time jobs lost in Canada in March: **79,500**
- Net number of jobs lost since October 2008: **357,000**
- TD Bank estimate of number of jobs that will be lost in 2009: **520,000**
- Percentage of unemployed Canadians who qualify for EI: **43**
- Number of non-disabled Ontarians on welfare rolls in March 2009: **406,392**
- Retirement package of GM CEO Rick Wagoner: **\$20.2 million**
- Total salary earned by Wagoner during his time as GM CEO (2000-09): **\$60 million**
- Total GM losses during Wagoner's tenure: **\$85 billion**
- Number of Colombian trade unionists killed in 2009, January to April 4: **9**
- Number of Colombian trade unionists killed since 1986: **2703**
- Number of years it takes a Styrofoam cup to decompose: **50**
- Number of species of birds living in High Park: **285 or more**
- Tons of CO₂ emissions per average Canadian per year: **219**
- Number of tropical trees needed to absorb the average Canadian's CO₂ emissions: **110**
- Number of kilowatts of energy per month used by the average Canadian: **750**
- Number of kilowatts of energy per month used by the average Brit: **270**
- Estimated number of Torontonians who died premature deaths in 2004 due to air pollution: **1700**
- Estimated number of Torontonians hospitalized each year due to air pollution: **6000**
- Percentage of trips into Toronto made by single-passenger vehicles: **67**
- Percentage of trips made by public transit: **20**
- Percentage of Torontonians who use public transit to get to work or school: **20**
- Percentage of Curitiba (Brazil) residents using public transit to get to work or school: **75**
- Percentage of Amsterdam residents who use bicycles to commute: **40**
- Number of litres of water wasted per day by a small faucet leak: **75**
- Number of litres of water saved by turning a faucet off while brushing your teeth: **5**
- Percentage by which Canada's recycling leader, Nova Scotia, cut its garbage: **50**
- Number of organic farmers in Canada: **3600**
- Fraction of Canada's organic farmers living in Saskatchewan: **1/3**
- Gallons of oil saved by using a ton of recycled paper, instead of non-recycled: **380**
- Number of trees saved by using a ton of recycled paper, instead of non-recycled: **17**
- Gallons of water saved by using a ton of recycled paper, instead of non-recycled: **7000**
- Number of hours a TV set can be powered by the energy saved from using a recycled aluminum can, instead of a non-recycled one: **3**
- Tons of disposable diapers the average Canadian newborn uses in their first year of life: **1**
- Number of years it takes disposable diapers to decompose: **500**
- Number of species of animals and plants that become extinct per day: **50-100**
- Number of square miles of rainforest destroyed each year: **63,000**
- Percentage of the world's rainforests that are located in Brazil: **25**
- Percentage of the world's rainforests already lost: **50**
- Tons of CO₂ emissions produced by one individual's return air trip to Vancouver: **1.47**
- Number of tropical trees that would have to be planted to offset the CO₂ emissions generated by one person's return air trip to Vancouver: **7-8**
- Tons of CO₂ emissions produced by one individual's return air trip to Cuba: **1.02**
- Tons of CO₂ emissions produced by one individual's return air trip to Paris: **2.65**