

The Agitator

A Bulletin for the Student Left

November 2007 ★ no.8

Military Spending Skyrockets

by Doug Nesbitt

Canadian military spending for 2007-08 has now exceeded that of any year during the Cold War, including peak spending during the Korean War (a full-scale war with nuclear weapons on both sides). This new spending frenzy is analyzed in a new report from Steve Staples and Bill Robinson at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Here are some of the key findings:

- In 2007-08 Canada's military spending will reach \$18.24 billion per year, an increase of 9% over 2006-07.

- Military spending in 2007-08 is 27 percent higher than before September 11, 2001, and after the next two years of planned increases, will be 37 percent higher than 2000-01.

- In 2007, Canada increased its ranking internationally from 16th to 13th as highest military spender in the world.

Within the 26-member NATO alliance, Canada has moved from 7th to 6th highest military spender, dollar for dollar.

- Canada's military spending is at its highest level since the Second World War. In adjusted dollars, military spending in 2007-08 surpasses Canada's Cold War peak in 1952-53 by 2.3%.

The report is a healthy antidote to the arguments that Canada's military is operating on a shoe-string budget. Anyone remotely knowledgeable of the Canadian

military knows that it is one of the best funded, trained and equipped. Comparing Canada's level of military spending and equipment to that of the US is a giant red herring, but this is always the comparison that is made to justify increased spending. The US accounts for 46 percent of the world's military spending. The US comparison is worthless, but with other countries of similar population and economies, Canada is nearly uncontested.

Peaceful purposes?

The recent surge in spending is for military purposes, but again, it is often justified because we "need" soldiers to build save Winnipeg from flooding, shovel Toronto out of a snowstorm or to rescue a cap-sized fishing crew off Newfoundland. All these emergency response capabilities are invaluable, but why does the military have to do this? Isn't it an enormous waste of money to train a military for warfare but use it to shovel snow? Why not train an army of unarmed medics, engineers, and general laborers dedicated to emergency responses? Arguing that we need to increase military spending so we have more snow-shovelers is as stupid as saying we needed to spend billions on the space program to get the microwave. If the money was invested directly into domestic civilian research, we wouldn't have had to go to the moon in order to

zap a pizza pop. It's a sick system that we live in where quality of life is dependent on wars and arms races.

War determines spending

The increases in military spending are solely for wars of occupation and arms races. The CCPA report provides an interesting graph tracking US and Canadian military spending since 1947. Canadian military spending rises and falls with American military spending. The only exception is the Vietnam War where Canadian military spending declined as American spending increased. Nevertheless, spending increases are paralleled in the early 1950s with the Korean War, the 1980s with the "Second Cold War" being pushed by Reagan (Canadian increases in spending are initiated by Trudeau's Liberals, not the Mulroney Tories) and then again there is parallel spending increases beginning in 1999 (bombing of Serbia) and accelerating after 9/11. And while it is Harper's Conservative Party that is overseeing military spending reach new heights, each wave of spending increases was initiated by the Liberals. The Liberals and Tories are Canada's war parties.

The militarization of Canada

Canada's military spending now surpasses that of Turkey by 50 percent, a state engaged in the US-sanctioned suppression of the Kurds and now invading northern Iraq. It doesn't stop there. The CCPA report notes that DND "is seeking an increase in spending to between \$26.9 and \$36.6 billion by 2025."

These military spending increases have firmly placed Canada in league with a who's who of imperialist states. This is not a "mistake" but a reflection of Canada's role in the world. This why the Canadian anti-war movement, that kept us out of Iraq, is so important.

Doug Nesbitt is a graduate student at Trent University and a member of the Trent International Socialists

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A GREEN REVOLUTION?

By Chad Brazier

As levels of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere continue to rise and the planet is wracked by more and more devastating extreme weather events, like Hurricane Katrina, it may come naturally to ask: Can we stop climate chaos? Millions of people around the globe believe that together we can, but that meaningful action has to be taken *now*.

The world is preparing for the largest planetary day of action yet to press our governments into recognizing the value of an inhabitable biosphere. This day is December 8.

The 'Call to Action' ... is as follows: "We demand that world leaders take the urgent and resolute action that is needed to prevent the catastrophic destabilization of global climate, so that the entire world can move as rapidly as possible to a stronger emissions reductions treaty which is both equitable and effective in preventing dangerous climate change. We also demand that the long-industrialized countries that have emitted most greenhouse gases up to now take most of the responsibility for the adaptive measures that have to be taken, especially by low-emitting countries with limited economic resources."

Made In Canada Climate Change

Harper, as part of his usual blatant disregard of the opinions and desires of most people, has kicked the last legs out from under Kyoto. The government took the opportunity of last month's Throne Speech to announce that not only does it have no intention of meeting Canada's Kyoto targets, but that it would push ahead with Alberta's oil sands production, Canada's fastest-growing greenhouse gas contributor and an environmental disaster in its own right. The oil sands are consuming 25 percent of Alberta's water supply and 20 percent of Canada's natural gas supply. Numerous other environmental disasters are being created by this enormous project but Harper, naturally, has done nothing to stop this.

All of this has been given another green light by the Loyal Opposition - Liberal leader Stéphane Dion is himself something of an expert at avoiding meaningful action on climate change, a skill honed to perfection during his time as environment minister under Chrétien's Liberal government, which saw emissions rise by 26 percent from 1993-2005. While each day of inaction means continued profitability for the few, it also brings us closer to a world in which the viability of humanity's continued existence is in question.

The Solution is Struggle

According to George Monbiot, "one of the best-informed people on the planet about climate change" and author of the international bestseller *Heat: How to stop the planet from burning*, adapting to the low-carbon lifestyles doesn't have to hurt.

Cuts in Canadian greenhouse gas emissions of 94% are achievable without a drastic alteration in our living standards, he writes, and shows how we can transform our houses, transport and energy systems into models of sustainability. In this process Monbiot sees unlimited opportunity for job creation and social and technological innovation, while he ridicules the corporate interests who shriek of economic collapse. Indeed, business-as-usual will take care of that all by itself as shifting weather patterns and rising sea levels induced by human activity begin to seriously undermine the suitability of Earth as a place to live, let alone run an economy.

This December 8th, join the groundswell of world opinion for the International Demonstrations on Climate Change, a synchronized day of action in countries around the world, scheduled to coincide with the UN Climate Talks in Bali. Show the world's business and government elite that we care about the environment and that our concerns will not be ignored. Only through a mass movement will we be able to achieve these goals.

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Counter-recruitment

UVic students voted to overturn a ban on military recruitment in the Student Union Building. *The Agitator* provides in depth coverage.

Killer Coke

Coca-Cola exclusivity deals are put under the microscope by Sam Ponting.

Military spending

Doug Nesbitt examines how Canada's military spending is now higher than at any time during the Cold War.

1917

The Russian Revolution was an inspiration to millions. Chris Bambery explains why this was so.

Quebec strike will wait

The Quebec student strike will not happen this fall. Benoit Renaud asks what's next for Quebec students.

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"During times of universal deceit, felling the truth becomes a revolutionary act."

George Orwell



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No Student Strike in Québec This Fall

By Benoit Renaud

The first election promise Liberal leader Jean Charest made during the Québec election last March was to increase tuition fees \$500 over five years. The PQ campaigned for a continuation of the freeze (at about \$1700). The ADQ said nothing. Only the new left party, Québec solidaire, put forward a policy for eliminating tuition fees altogether. Then, as a minority government, the Liberals made it a priority to implement their promise. The PQ, under new leader Pauline Marois, effectively rallied to the proposal. So the whole National Assembly is now accepting tuition increases.

At the same time, all major student unions are against it. But they differ greatly as to what the alternative should be and on how to mobilize. The main student federations (FEUQ and FECQ) argue for keeping the freeze (introduced in 1994) and propose an income contingent repayment system to allow for increased student debt. They agree with the principle of fees for university, but want them stable and regulated. As for mobilizing, they have been campaigning towards a possible strike next spring.

The other organizational pole in the

Québec student movement, ASSÉ, was campaigning for a general strike this fall, with a series of demands including the elimination of tuition. Their criteria for launching the strike was to have 25,000 students from at least seven campuses on the first day, all with the same set of demands, and either membership or close ties with ASSÉ. They won a few weak strike votes in universities, among humanities and arts students, for a total of about 10,000 students. But all the votes taken in cégeps, which traditionally constitute the bulk of a general strike movement, turned out negative.

Clearly, the mass of Québec students know that the immediate demand of abolishing tuition fees, although reasonable in theory and economically feasible, is not attainable in the current political context. Also, the attempt by ASSÉ to

completely control the movement, in spite of its status as a minority organization, made it less likely that they would rally large numbers. This doesn't mean that the Québec student movement will accept the tuition increase without a fight. But if ASSÉ wants to play a leading role in that fight, they will have to put forward demands and organizational proposals that can rally a much larger section of the movement. As for FEUQ and FECQ, they should abandon their regressive proposal of income contingent repayment and take a principled stance for free a publicly funded post-secondary education. Then there could be unity in the movement, which will be necessary to beat the current political odds.

Benoit Renaud is a member of Québec solidaire and a veteran of the 1986 and 1990 Québec student strikes

A Questionable Poll

On October 18, Environics, a polling company, announced the results of a poll of Afghans' opinions of the war.

"Majority of Afghans want troops to stay" was the headline splashed across front pages and internet news sites. Harper's Tories and pro-war pundits pounced on the poll, claiming it as evidence of widespread support for Canada's mission. But upon closer examination, the poll seems to raise more questions than it answers.

To give some examples, the poll claims that 75 per cent do not like the Taliban, but 74 per cent think they should be included in negotiations. Over 60 percent approved of Canada's role but only two per cent knew what Canada was doing. Contradictions like these exist throughout the survey. So, who conducted this poll and why?

Environics may have commissioned the poll, with support from the Globe and Mail, La Presse and the CBC, but the poll was actually conducted by a subsidiary of D3 Systems, Inc. a US firm that does polling for NATO and the RAND Corporation. It is the only polling firm to report consistently rosy opinions from Iraqis about the US occupation of Iraq. D3 produces the kind

of results needed to advance a pro-war agenda. This most recent poll is no exception.

How they conducted the poll is another question. Most people might imagine a pollster with a clipboard roaming the streets of Kandahar, politely asking the locals for a minute of their time. The reality on the ground is much different.

Heavily-armed security teams usually accompany high-profile interventions like these. If armed security personnel were present during the polling, it's not hard to guess what kind of response you'll elicit. Finally, why commission a poll like this?

Do we even need to ask? Support in Canada for the Afghan mission continues to decline. Harper's Tories and other pro-war politicians are desperate to defend it, and to stem the bleeding support. Suddenly, they seem interested in what Afghans want - as long as it's more war. Tellingly, not one single representative of the Afghan community is represented on the much-trumpeted Manley panel on the future of Canada's role in Afghanistan

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University of Manitoba

Support staff strike lasts 12 days

Nearly five hundred support staff - maintenance workers, skilled trades and food services - at the University of Manitoba struck for twelve days for a new contract.

The union, CAW Local 3007, began their strike on October 10 after negotiations broke down. The union was looking for fair wage increases, larger health-care spending expense accounts and better sick leave and return-to-work provisions. Wage demands were in line with other Winnipeg public sector workers. The union says it has won a good contract.

The University of Manitoba was faced with another strike, too.. The faculty union, UMFA, had a legal strike deadline of October 18, only eight days after

CAW 3007 setup picket lines. The administration and UMFA reached a deal on October 15, avoiding a strike that had the support of 76 percent of faculty in an earlier strike vote.

Student response

Two days into the CAW strike, the undergrad student union council passed a resolution in support of all labour unions on the campus. This was in stark contrast to student paper, *The Manitoban*, which ran an editorial declaring "Let's throw the unions back where they came from." In the very same issue, *The Manitoban* reported on how the Manitoba Labour Board found the university guilty of committing unfair labour practices by breaching the contract with UMFA in 2005.

Anti-war

Thousands protest against war

On October 26, 27 and 28, thousands of people in North America protested against war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hundreds rallied in many Canadian cities and towns, including 3000 in Toronto, against the occupation of Afghanistan. In the United States, thousands attended protests in many different cities.

The global anti-war movement will likely be mobilizing for mid-March, 2008, the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Latest estimates put the Iraqi death toll at 1.2 million while coalition deaths are over 4100. In Afghanistan, tens of thousands have died but no occupying government has been

documenting the losses and no scientific survey like the ones carried out by researchers from Johns Hopkins.

Two conferences are also happening in the next several months. On December 1, an international anti-war conference is being held in London. The sixth Cairo Conference will be held next spring. The Cairo Conference allows the anti-imperialist forces of the West to build anti-war ties with political parties and genuine resistance groups in the Middle East. Increasingly, anti-war protests in the West and Middle East are coordinated. Like in Vietnam, resistance and solidarity can work together and end the war.

Trent University

One agreement reached, but another is rejected

Trent University's support staff represented by OPSEU Local 365 rejected a tentative agreement on October 23 by a vote of 130 to 111.

Bargaining is continuing but the union is mobilizing its strike committee. The union has requested a no-board, meaning the union will be a legal strike position by mid or late November.

Meanwhile, a tentative deal was reached between Trent and CUPE Local 3908 representing contract faculty. The deal was reached shortly after CUPE members voted 90 percent in support of strike action, and shortly after 150 Trent students rallied in support of the unions and marched through the administration's offices. The rally was supported by the undergraduate and graduate student unions who work with the campus labour unions in the InterUnion Coalition. The student newspaper, *The Arthur*, has also given accurate and supportive coverage of the issue.

Grads reject new policy

Trent graduate students represented by the GSA recently rejected a new "Non-Academic Misconduct Policy" being tested by the administration. The GSA membership voted to support the executive's decision to boycott participation on the NAMP's tribunal-like review committee, a body described as a "kangaroo court" by opponents. The NAMP proposes a tribunal of student, faculty and admin reps who would penalize students for non-academic misconduct on campus. A section of the policy allows for students to be exempted from the policy if they have no rep. Grad students are therefore exempt from the policy.

The policy is extremely vague in defining non-academic misconduct and it could easily be used to squash student dissent, and, potentially, target students on picket lines, such as teaching assistants. Many ask why the NAMP is necessary when the university is obviously subject to existing Canadian laws that can deal with harassment, violence and so on. Students were also not consulted in the NAMP's drafting. The undergrad union, TCSA, has criticized the policy but is still sending a rep.

About the Agitator

The Agitator is an initiative of the International Socialists on several university and college campuses. It was created to offer a forum for the student left, and act as a collective organizer to help build a stronger student movement against neo-liberalism, war and oppression. Anyone can contribute and readers are encouraged to get involved, and help distribute the paper. If you are interested in writing, editing or distributing *The Agitator*, please get in touch with us:

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We can be found at the following campuses: Carleton, UOttawa, Trent, UVic, Camosun College, Langara, UofT, Ryerson. Help build the network!

NO ONE IS ILLEGAL

No One Is Illegal: Fighting Racism and State Violence on the US-Mexico Border by Akers Chacon and Mike Davis. Haymarket Books, 2006.

Review by Mathew Nelson

In this book, Akers Chacon and Davis argue that the institutionalization of racial, national and ethnic discrimination within American immigration policy has been effectively used to fragment and divide working-class consciousness. State-sponsored racism is theorized within the broader historical context of the struggle between capital and labor. The underlying aim continues to be of course, to preserve the status quo by reinforcing existing power relationships and maintaining a monopoly of 'white labor' over the ethnically diverse working-class. Brute force and state-repression, in conjunction with institutionalized 'vigilante violence,' help ensure the reproduction of the class-based nature of the larger racial and social order. At the same time, racist assumptions in the realm of ideas provide legitimacy for a repressive imperialist state. Citizenship – with all its underlying racial implications – is intimately connected to any given society's means of distributing power, privileges and resources. The contradictions of both simultaneously importing and deporting immigrant workers become clear when one understands that moves to restrict citizenship are not meant to stop immigration, but to expand the ranks of non-citizen labor. Under guest-worker initiatives, US economic interests are able to secure the benefits of a huge 'reserve army' of cheap labor in the form of temporary 'non-citizen' workers, notably Mexicans, who provide a low-cost, non-unionized workforce. Threatened with deportation, 'illegal' aliens are unable to form unions or protest working conditions. In this respect, the interests of US capital are able to bypass the responsibilities for maintaining and reproducing socially necessary labor. Ironically, while the very functioning of American capitalism is dependent on

immigrant labor, non-citizen workers are often viewed as a "drain" on the nation's public resources and social spending. In the broader labor movement, workers are pitted against workers, as class anger is directed not at the point of production, but at other competing ethnic groups within the labor market – 'surplus' populations that will work for less. This "divide and rule" strategy of the ruling class (and complicit reactionary unions such as the American Federation of Labor) consciously exploits the racial divisions of work crews based on low wages. At the same time, union movements could easily be crushed when different 'non-citizen' groups were isolated from the rise of mass militancy in periods of economic stagnation like the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Unfortunately, periods of decline are perceived to be the fault of the innate racial, biological or cultural deficiencies of foreign-born residents rather than the systemic failures of the capitalist system itself. The authors can be commended for a holistic approach to political economy that does not structurally abstract racism from the broader dynamics of capitalist accumulation. Strikingly absent from this historical-material approach, however is an adequate material theory of gender. The gendered division of labor is treated merely as a descriptive "add-on" to predominant categories of class and race. While throughout US-Mexican history, liberal ideology has reinforced an oppressive public-private distinction, in all phases of capitalist development, domestic labour must be understood to produce 'value' thereby contributing directly to the larger dynamics of capital accumulation. An approach indebted to the notion of "social reproduction," could have filled this void, by theorizing domestic labor in a non-dualistic manner within this predominant mode of production. Marxist-Feminism, in short, could provide a fruitful remedy to the authors' gender-blindness.

Mathew Nelson is a graduate student at Carleton University

Selling Punk

My So-Called Punk by Matt Diehl. St.Martin's Griffin, 2007

Review by Doug Nesbitt

Reading 250 pages of "rock" journalism is an arduous task as anyone who has struggled to read a single article in *Rolling Stone* knows. Nevertheless, rock journalist Matt Diehl's exploration of punk rock since the early 1990s is very helpful for anyone trying to understand the complex interactions between corporate-driven pop culture and DIY underground culture. Inevitably, this book raises the two eternal "punk" questions - "Is punk dead?" and "What constitutes selling-out?"

Rather than attempt to answer these questions, Diehl simply complicates them more by showing how many punk bands in the mid-90s were pressured by the necessities of life to sign with major labels because of the failures of independent labels to deal with the punk explosion of 1994-95, headed by Green Day and The Offspring. Now a pillar of punk, Epitaph Records almost collapsed in 1994 because of the enormous success of The Offspring. Epitaph was a shoe-string operation run by a handful of non-business-savvy punks, used to pressing 40,000 CDs per release over the span of a few years - not millions of copies over a span of a few months as was the case with The Offspring's aptly-titled *Smash*. As an anti-establishment art-form, punk tapped into mass sentiments and becomes a massive phenomena. This parallels the explosion of political movements - when a minority sentiment explodes into the mainstream. But punk seems content with marginality, which is why the art-form can't deal with success.

The book also explores the questions of sexuality and gender as it relates to punk. Diehl's discussions inadvertently provide the reader with a serious critique of identity politics in a world where everything is commodified. The reader is left asking, if identity is everything, then how does one defend identity when it is commodified and sold in corporate record stores and MTV? The problem is, of course, capitalism, which subordinates human creativity to the market, often robbing it of its essence in the process.

Diehl's account of the last 15 years of punk is interesting and wide-ranging, but short on in-depth analysis. Nevertheless, it is still a good conversation starter.

Counter-recruitment at UVic

On October 25, the University of Victoria Students' Society held a general meeting attended by about five hundred students. The issue was whether or not to ban military recruiters from the Student Union Building. On September 15, the UVSS board of directors had voted 7-6 to ban the military from the SUB, following the precedent set by a UVSS motion in early 2007 against the militarization of Canadian society. A backlash, led by the student newspaper, *The Martlet*, soon spread to the corporate media and the military. Under pressure, the UVSS board put the vote to the members who defeated it.

This has been the most high profile counter-recruitment campaign in Canada to date. A handful of other student unions in Canada have passed counter-recruitment motions but given the current climate over Afghanistan, and the increasing jingoism over the war - yellow ribbons, the "Highway of Heroes" and so on - the UVic battle took centre stage.

The UVic anti-war group, Students Against War, were the organizational force behind the campaign. *The Agitator* was fortunate enough to get in touch with Tim Fournier, one of the group's organizers. Fournier's reflections on the campaign are critical but invaluable for other students who understand the importance of counter-recruitment.

What Went Wrong

Initially, SAW thought they had won the battle with the September UVSS board of directors vote. According to Fournier, "Part of the reason we didn't publicize the original [September] victory was that we knew it was unlikely to pass an AGM [general meeting] and we (naively) hoped that it might pass unnoticed." Therefore, Students Against War "were unprepared for the barrage of reactionary forces."

The student newspaper, *The Martlet*, launched the counter-

attack with a headline "No Right To Choose". This, according to Fournier, prevented SAW from framing the debate. "Because we had not made a press release for that devastating edition of the paper, we lost the ability to set the terms of the debate and were fighting (and losing) an argument that wasn't ours."

The opposition framed their debate around "freedom of choice" and the legitimacy of the military, which was difficult in Victoria, a sizable military city. The former argument parallels those made by right-wing forces in other student union controversies. Student unions that have denied their funding and resources to anti-choice groups have been accused of limiting "free speech." What these arguments do is avoid the concrete issues by hiding behind abstracted rights. A brief look at the actual situation, and one would know that student unions are not the arbiters of free speech or choice on campus. At UVic, the "freedom of choice" argument is meaningless. If the military was banned from the SUB, they would have been free to set up shop anywhere else on the campus. It was not even remotely an attack on freedom of choice.

United Front

Fournier also points to the importance of building a broad-based campaign, something that didn't happen. "SAW for the most part fought this struggle alone. This was not because the campus lacks other progressive forces, but because we did not reach out to them for support. The issue of militarism transcends peace activism and can be easily and successfully linked to environmental, aboriginal, women's, racial, and poverty issues. A long-term perspective would have drawn these connections. Bringing other activist groups into your organizational fold shows a diversity of support for your campaign, and makes character attacks more difficult."



A depth of support would also, naturally, build and strengthen the campaign.

Lessons Learned

Despite the setback, there were successes. SAW held a rally on the day of the vote that was very well received. It was kept under wraps until two days before to prevent a counter-rally. A debate was also held on the Afghan war. It helped expose disagreements in the pro-recruitment camp. Media coverage was also enormous. Fournier also observed how former and current members of the armed forces were supportive of the ban, though they were "off the record."

SAW has also benefited. "It was no doubt a trying

and strenuous couple months, but it built great bonds between members of our group, attracted new members, and was a rewarding experience."

SAW should be thanked by anti-war students across the country for taking the lead on counter-recruitment. The importance of building a broad-based, well-planned and well-executed are highlighted by the experience. There is clearly a sentiment against the war and against the military on campus but Fournier warns: "EXPECT RESISTANCE."

American and British students have won huge victories against recruiters, and there is no reason why we can't do the same.

Killer Coke

Sam Ponting explores
Coca-Cola's contracts
with our universities

As the corporatization of campuses continue to threaten student interests and the social and academic integrity of our public institutions, students are standing up and rejecting partnerships with companies that degrade human rights and the environment to further capitalist interests.

Over the last decade, many North American universities have signed contracts with Coca-Cola, giving it the right to form campus-wide beverage monopolies. The University of Ottawa recently emerged from a ten year exclusivity contract with Coca-Cola that was kept secret from the students and public until a Freedom of Information request was filed by UOttawa student Philippe Marchand. The terms within the contract displayed the university's commitment to furthering Coke's corporate profits at the expense of students. Although the contract has ended, it is unclear as to what kind of relationship the UOttawa wishes to pursue with the company in the future.

Coca-Cola's human rights violations in Colombia and environmental record in India have led students in the US and Canada to campaign for Coke-free campuses, often with success. As this movement gains momentum, we see the collective power of students, and the great need for student involvement in decision-making on campus.

Money for students?

It is true that post-secondary funding from the provincial and federal governments has fallen since the early 1990s, pressuring universities to find alternative sources of funding. In defense of its Coca-Cola contract, the University of Ottawa has stated that it must seek alternative funding to reduce student tuition burdens. However, upon further analysis, the university's contract has resulted in limited financial relief for students.

The University of Ottawa's contract with Coca-Cola began in September 1997. The company was given the right to be the sole supplier and advertiser of cold beverages on the campus, with the exception of milk products. Coke was given the right to be the 'official sponsor' of

UOttawa's sports teams. The university could not license its trademark to other cold beverage suppliers, nor could other suppliers endorse their products in connection with the university. Coca-Cola was also given the privilege of free advertising space in campus newspapers *La Rotonde*, *The Fulcrum*, and *Tabaret Magazine*. The University, in return, expected to receive \$4.94 million in revenue over the contract's ten years. However, the contract's value has been significantly reduced through lower commission returns as a result of the university's inability to meet forecasted sales. The university is also required to pay Coke's vending machine electricity costs, which has been estimated at \$190,000. When taking into account all expenses related to the contract, including legal expenses, the contract value for the University of Ottawa is estimated to have fallen to \$2.11 million over ten years. This equates to \$211,000 per year, or \$6.20 per student per year.

However, the increase in prices due to the absence of competition on campus would surely exceed the \$6.20 per student per year delivered by the contract. Yet, finances aside, students deserve the option to purchase beverages from companies that have not been affiliated with the murder of union workers, or the destruction of farmers' water supplies.

Coca-Cola's record

In Colombia, where union-related murder rate is the highest in the world, eight union leaders from various Coca-Cola bottling plants have been murdered. Hundreds more have been tortured, kidnapped, or illegally detained. In order to suppress union activity, management officials have collaborated with right-wing paramilitary forces and death squads that have clear ties with the US-funded Colombian military that is fighting the FARC rebels. All mentioned parties have engaged in gross human rights violations against the Colombian people, and Coca-Cola has used Colombia's civil war as a pretext to the abuses it commits.

In India, Coca-Cola has violated the

right to clean water accessibility. The San Francisco-based Indian Resource Centre has charged Coca-Cola with dumping waste water into agricultural fields in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. According to the Polaris Institute, the company has also been charged with illegally seizing communal lands of small farmers, while dumping sludge and hazardous waste into surrounding communities. According to a study by the Centre for Science and the Environment (India), dangerously high levels of pesticides have been found in the company's carbonated drinks in India.

Campaigning against Killer Coke

University communities are aware of Coke's human rights and environmental record, and students have been active against Coca-Cola partnerships. Smith College of Massachusetts has banned the selling of Coke products on its campus. In 2005, New York University issued a ban on the selling of Coca-Cola products on its fifteen campuses. The University of Illinois has done the same. In the last two years, student unions at McMaster, Guelph and McGill universities have voted not to renew their contracts with Coca-Cola. As of February 2007, 33 post-secondary institutions in North America have brought forward motions to cancel contracts with Coca-Cola.

Students across North America are rejecting Coca-Cola's monopolies and expressing their disgust with its human rights abuses. From boycotts to bans, the fight against social and environmental injustice and the corporatization of campuses is accelerating. Yet at the University of Ottawa, Coke products, which include names from Dasani to MinuteMaid, remain present on campus. We must demand that our university institutions include students in decision-making regarding its partnerships, and that social justice and responsibility be the driving force behind these decisions.

Sam Ponting is a University of Ottawa student. The Agitator would like to thank Philippe Marchand for his invaluable help in providing the UOttawa-Coca-Cola contract documents and his own research.

1917

Ninety years ago, the Russian Revolution sent shockwaves around the world. Amidst a barbaric world war unlike any seen before it, millions upon millions of people looked to the events in Russia as the hope for humanity. Chris Bambery explains why the Revolution was such an inspiration. Next month we will look at how the revolution was strangled and lost.

The 1917 Russian revolution ushered in a radical new society. Workers' control of production, land to the people who worked it, an immediate peace with no annexation and the right to self-determination for colonised people.

These were the steps taken within a few hours of the workers, soldiers and sailors taking control of the Russian capital Petrograd, now St Petersburg, on 7 November 1917 (under the calendar used in Russia at the time this date fell in October which is why it is known as the October Revolution).

Those measures were a huge step forward even from the rights we enjoy today. The new Soviet constitution enshrined full and equal voting rights for women. Canada did this a year later, Britain in 1928 and in Switzerland women had to wait until 1971.

Sex between men was made legal as was abortion, while divorce was available on the request of either partner. In Canada, divorce only became available for most people in 1968, and homosexuality legalized in 1969. Abortion was only really legalized until 1988.

Church and state were separated - the new state gave no favour to any one religion - yet freedom of worship was guaranteed. That meant, following the principle of self-determination, Muslim schools were free to operate in much of south eastern Soviet Russia.

Today we enjoy very limited forms of political democracy. We can elect MPs every four years or so but have no control over what the government does - like taking us to war.

Corporations can lay off thousands of workers, interest rates rise and fall,

house prices soar beyond the pockets of the majority - and all at the whim of a tiny group of people in boardrooms and corporate headquarters.

The idea that workers might have any control over what they make or the services they provide is not even up for serious discussion.

Soviet democracy, by contrast, was based on factory, peasant and neighbourhood councils where mass assemblies elected representatives who could be removed if they did not properly represent those who had elected them. Russian workers had first thrown up soviets to organise the mass strike that boiled over into revolution in 1905. In February 1917 when Russia again erupted into revolution workers spontaneously re-introduced soviets.

The February revolution - sparked by women protesting over food prices - removed the Tsar who ruled Russia. For the next eight months combinations of liberal and centre left parties tried to govern Russia claiming to emulate Western parliamentary democracy.

At first the soviets were dominated by supporters of these ideas - after all parliamentary democracy seemed to promise a huge advance. But these parties did nothing to solve the single biggest political issue - Russia's participation in the First World War.

The rank and file of the Petrograd working class demanded radical solutions. In factory after factory throughout the summer of 1917 the Bolsheviks were voted in as majorities in the soviets, including soldiers' soviets where officers had originally dominated.

Membership of the Bolshevik party

increased dramatically in 1917 - from 10,000 in February to 250,000 in October.

The greatest lie peddled about the October Revolution is that Lenin and the Bolsheviks crept out one night and grabbed power behind the backs of the Russian masses.

We should ask whether a working class which had been at the centre of two revolutions and was the most radical and innovative in Europe would allow anyone to take power behind their backs.

In fact 1917 saw a process of radicalisation from February to October as workers initially hoped those parties promising constitutional democracy would bring peace, give land to the peasants and solve the economic chaos. One by one each of those parties failed that test.

Already in July 1917 the working class of Petrograd had risen in revolt - an outburst that the Bolsheviks argued against because workers and peasants elsewhere had not yet reached that conclusion.

In August a military coup tried to destroy the revolution. The official government dithered. Workers, often led by Bolsheviks, took the initiative to defeat it.

By October the government that claimed to rule Russia had little or no support. The old elite despised them and wanted revenge. The Russian masses wanted bread, land and peace. This the Bolsheviks promised, adding the way in which this could be achieved: "all power to the soviets".

The Bolshevik party acted under pressure from the masses and at the same time tried to win support for its strategy. It was a constant two way process.

That meant the party ditched some long held policies, for instance land nationalisation - instead giving land to the peasants. The party also had huge, often public debates, over issues including the necessity of making a revolution or over the peace treaty signed with Germany.

Far from a creating a dictatorship, the October Revolution was based on mass participation in the decisions of the new society - on a scale we can only imagine today.

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