



Ontario acts and gets ready for IMF, World Bank and G20 meetings

by IMC Print (from a letter by David McNally on www.opac.ca)
Offering dramatic proof that militant resistance is possible in the post-September 11 climate of warmongering, 2500 activists descended on the financial district of Toronto, Canada on October 16 (O16) to take part in an ongoing campaign against the provincial

conservative government. The demonstrators defied and frustrated police, blocking streets and traffic for three hours, after which they learned that the conservative party leader, Mike Harris, had resigned citing the classic "personal reasons."

Organized by the Ontario Common Front, a network of 70 groups initiated by the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), the demo did exactly what police had vowed it would not: enter the financial district and disrupt business as usual.

The idea of economic disruption was first proposed by OCAP last spring as a way to target banks and corporations that support and directly benefit from the conservative provincial government. But in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, many argued that such protests were no longer an option. After much discussion and debate, Common Front members came to the opposite conclusion: that after September 11 it was vital to reclaim the streets for militant movements for social justice. But on the morning of the demo, hundreds of police surrounded the meeting area, searching bags, arresting people for possessing things like bandages and gas masks, and creating an atmosphere of intimidation.

Undeterred, protesters poured into the streets and completely outwitted police. Using the strategy of a "snake march" – an unpredictable zigzag pattern designed to catch police off guard – the marchers worked their way through the city's downtown business district. When met by rows of heavily armed riot police, the march simply shifted direction, taking side streets, then cutting



back onto main streets. Time and time again, police were out-manuevered.

After three hours of loud, celebratory disruption, the demonstration made its way to the US Consulate to hear a series of brief anti-war speeches. This fit with the post-September 11 decision of the Common Front to make "Stop the war on the poor at home and abroad" one of the day's slogans.

The Common Front demonstration in Toronto has served notice that, contrary to many predictions, the post-September 11 climate does not represent the end of militant movements of resistance. Having taken to the streets despite massive police intimidation, having shown the immense resources of creative street tactics involving thousands of people, our movement is emboldened and re-energized.

Hopefully the same spirit will be back to "welcome" the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the G20 who will be meeting in Ottawa, Canada between November 16 and 20. The meetings were announced on October 17, only one month in advance. Better get ready quick!

Israeli conscientious objector sent to prison

by Sergiey Sandler of *New Profile*
Yair Halper, 18, has been sentenced to 28 days of imprisonment after refusing to enlist in the Israeli army. It is likely that he will refuse to wear military uniform in prison and will be held in the isolation ward of the prison.

Following is a statement Yair made before going to prison:

Shalom,

My name is Yair Halper and I am a conscientious objector to military service. On Wednesday the 17 October 2001, I will be incarcerated for my beliefs.

I consider myself a pacifist, and I am using that word only for the lack of a better one. I am only 18, still a child (at least in my eyes). I keep asking myself what the hell do I know about pacifism? My beliefs were never really tested. But still, 'pacifist' is the closest word I could find to describe and define what I am.

As a pacifist I object to any army universally, no matter where it is, who operates it or what purposes it serves. Furthermore, I object to service in the Israel Defence Forces in particular for political reasons. I will never carry a weapon and I refuse to wear a uniform or any symbol that represents, or that will in any way label me, as part of the army.

I see the Israeli army as a

mechanism that hosts everything I oppose in its ranks. Every soldier contributes in his/her way to the perpetuation of not only the complete disregard for Palestinian human rights, but also the continuing fortification and confirmation of Military Israel.

The army brainwashes its soldiers to receive a brutal and inhumane mentality and makes the single soldier lose his/her individuality. I will not join a system that does not value human rights and that continues to rape, control and occupy the Palestinian territories.

As naive and cliched as it sounds, I know of only one way to live my life and that is by being true to myself, holding fast to my beliefs and principles and living by what they dictate to me.

Yes, I am willing and will be proud to sit in jail for what I see right.

As Dostoevsky said:

"The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons"

I would appreciate any support, be it by letters, phone calls or any way you see fit.

Peace!

Yair Halper.

(Information on how you can help may be found at the Israel link on www.indymedia.org)

An Unspeakable Response to September 11th: Truth, Justice, and Equality

by IMC Print

On October 1st, Canadian professor Sunera Thobani received a standing ovation for her feminist critique of the US war on Afghanistan; before the outspoken professor had made it out the door the corporate media and other reactionaries had already begun their own war of defamation against her.

"My speech was made to rally the women's movement in Canada to oppose the war," Thobani said in a written response to her critics. "While a few journalists and columnists have attempted balanced coverage of my speech, too many sectors of the media have resorted to vicious personal attacks. Like others, I must express a concern that this passes for intelligent commentary in the mainstream media." The full text of her response is being made available in a special issue of the Independent Media Center's print publication.

The vilification of Dr. Thobani went so far that a citizen even filed suit against her for "inciting hatred", and an influential American business owner has called for an alumni boycott of donations to the University of British Columbia, her employer.

Dr. Thobani herself has received so much hate mail and so many personal threats that she has a security guard keep watch at the door to the classes she teaches at UBC.

What follows is a response and analysis by the Canadian advocacy group "Justice for Girls".

An Unspeakable Response to September 11th: Truth, Justice, and Equality

As two who rose amongst 500 women in Ottawa this week – advocates, anti-violence workers, and academics – and cheered in response to Dr. Sunera Thobani's courageous speech we felt a sense of relief: finally a perspective that encouraged compassion, justice and equality in response to the September 11th attacks. We applauded her for breaking a deafening silence about the tragic legacy of US foreign policy in the Third World and Middle East. After all, how are we as a Canadian public to make an informed decision about our response to September 11th when vital historical facts are suppressed?

Dr. Thobani's address was indeed consistent with the theme of the conference: resistance to violence against women and girls. Every woman, who rose in support of Dr. Thobani's words, understood and feared that women and girls in Afghanistan will not escape the extreme violence of US military action. As feminists we collectively recognize that women and girls of Color in both the Third World and the Middle East have suffered a long and devastating history of US economic sanctions and military action. We think of the girls who have starved in ab-

ject poverty because of crushing US economic sanctions on Iraq. We think of the girls who suffer the hideous long term health effects (cancers, birth defects, internal bleeding) of depleted uranium used in US weaponry in

the Gulf. We wonder how many women and girls were raped during the US invasion of Iraq. We know rape is and will always be a weapon of war.

Just as the US did not liberate women and girls in Afghanistan when they supported the rise of the Taliban to fight Soviet Forces in the 1980's, they will not liberate women and girls by bombing them now. Let's face it, the US has little interest in the liberation of women

and girls in Afghanistan but instead seeks to maintain control of the Middle East in order to protect their access to oil. Premier Gordon Campbell's claim that Dr. Thobani's speech was motivated by hate was an astonishing (and perhaps strategic) inversion of reality. It is plain to any fool that her speech, and indeed all of her work to date, is about opposing hatred and violence fostered by systems of inequality including global economic and military domination by the Western world. Dr. Thobani's

Now I have to admit that my use of the words 'horrific violence' and 'soaked in blood' is very deliberate and carefully considered. I do not use these words lightly. To successive United States administrations the deaths resulting from its policies have been just so many statistics, just so much 'collateral damage.' Rendering invisible the humanity of the peoples targeted for attack is a strategy well used to hide the impact of colonialist and imperialist interventions.

—Sunera Thobani

speech encouraged us to learn from history and called for a more just world order that does not rely on greed, domination, vengeance and war. Sadly, these ideas have become increasingly radical in a suffocating climate of US militarism and war mongering.

It is no coincidence that various media and politicians have saved their most vicious attacks for Dr. Thobani, a woman of Color. Several have suggested, sometimes blatantly and other times more subtly, that Dr. Thobani is an "outsider" in Canada. For instance, references to her country of origin and suggestions that she should go back, are common racist tactics designed to discredit and silence her. No one acknowledged her substantial credentials to speak on these issues or her outstanding contribution to Canadian society as a leading feminist in this country. Instead her words were described as "cheap sloganeering", "manipulative", "ranting", and so on. Women and girls who speak out are very familiar with these sorts of insults when we name unpopular or difficult truths.

Dr. Thobani's speech was a gift to us all. She named the shameful truth of US foreign policy and challenged us to strive for peace, justice, and equality around the world. For the sake of women and girls world wide, we can only hope that one day soon these notions will not be viewed as extreme.

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www.indymedia.org

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