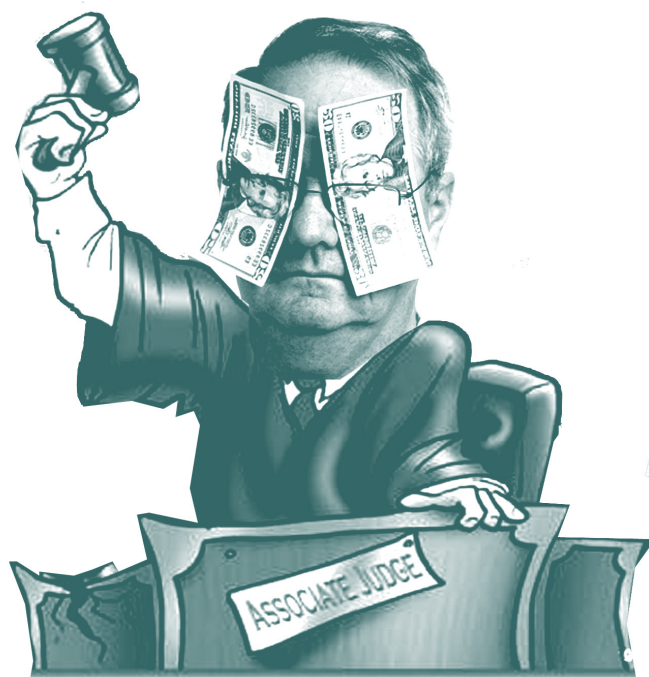




## One Law For The Rich



**A**t the end of October, Denis Vranich, a millionaire night club owner and property speculator was convicted of a sexual assault on a 22 year old his employee working at his club. The Hamilton Spectator reported that "Vranich grabbed the woman, pulled down her bodice, groped her breasts and penetrated her with his finger", in her Victim Impact Statement the employee reported "The thought of him makes me absolutely nauseous and brings on panic attacks".

The Spectator also reported that Vranich was convicted in 2001 of "procuring persons under the age of 18 and exercising control over them to engage in prostitution." The Crown sought house arrest, Vranich's punishment will be one-year house arrest in his luxury mansion.

Meanwhile Mohawk father and activist, Shawn Brant has already spent two months in pre-trial jail. The Crown is prosecuting him for his role in the struggle of the Tyendinaga Mohawks for the return of the Culbertson Tract. In his case the Crown has announced that they are seeking a minimum 12-year jail term.

Brant's so-called crimes amounted to blockades and reclamations of sites

in which no one was injured.

Brants mistake it would appear was to be neither a night club owner or a property developer. Being a Mohawk rather than a millionaire cannot have helped. And rather than engaging in an activity the Crown obviously finds only a minor problem like a sexual assault his crime is being "an articulate and militant spokesperson for his community and indigenous struggles in Canada more generally." That's justice in Ontario, a slap on the wrist for a millionaire sex offender as against 12 years in jail for an activist who struggles for justice for his community.

Words Andrew Fleming



### Afghan Occupation Analysis >>

Creating stability in the region has been a rallying call for those behind the war...



### What the MAGNA / CAW Deal Means >>

Bruce Allen to discuss the consequences and trends behind Hargrove's latest move...



### Ideas, Culture & Reviews >>

The Rebel Sell reviewed, a workers' heritage centre gets a visit in Hamilton...

our politics>>

## editorial>>

This paper is published by Common Cause a new Ontario wide anarchist federation founded this September. At the first Common Cause Ontario conference held in Toronto we agreed to a basic policy document, a constitution, and a basic publication plan both online in terms of a website ([www.linchpin.ca](http://www.linchpin.ca)) and a free printed newspaper which will be distributed in large numbers.

We also agreed to a structure for the specific conditions of Northern Ontario and to affiliate with Anarkismo.net, an international web publication project that unites over a dozen similar organizations from Chile to South Africa to Turkey.

Ahead of our conference we had declared that "Our intention is to begin the process of building an organization of thousands that will have a presence in every town, workplace and neighborhood across the province."

By the time of the founding conference we were still a long way from this eventual goal but dozens of people in ten Ontario cities have become involved with developing Locals in Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury, Windsor and Kitchener-Waterloo as well as other members around Ontario.

### Local Distributor Contact Details>>

*If you're in Ontario and want to get involved in Common Cause please contact us at [ontarioac@gmail.com](mailto:ontarioac@gmail.com)*

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LINCHPIN.CA

# As We See It

Anarchism will be created by the class struggle between the vast majority of society and the tiny minority that currently rule as described in our **basic policy**.

A successful social revolution will require that anarchist ideas become the leading ideas within the working class. This will not happen spontaneously, it is up to anarchist militants to participate in the existing social struggles as an organized force.

A major focus of our activity is work at those crucial points where working class people are organizing together for control over their lives, the decisions affecting them and against oppression. These areas stretch from workplace activity in the unions, to neighborhood activism, an ecology movement that remembers class and in community resistance to forms of oppressions targeting particular identities.

We also see it as vital to work in struggles that happen outside the unions and the workplace. These include struggles against particular oppressions, colonialism, imperialism and indeed the struggles of the working class for a decent place and environment in which to live. Our general approach to these, like our approach to the unions, is to involve ourselves with mass movements and work within these movements, in order to promote anarchist methods of organization involving direct democracy and direct action.

We actively oppose all manifestations of oppression such as racism, sexism, [religious] sectarianism and homophobia and we struggle against them. We see the success of a revolution and the successful elimination of these oppressions being determined by the building of such struggles in the pre-revolutionary period. The methods of struggle that we promote are a preparation for the running of society along anarchist and communist lines after the revolution.

We oppose imperialism and colonialism but put forward anarchism as an alternative goal to nationalism. We defend grassroots anti-imperialist movements while arguing for an anarchist rather than nationalist strategy.



Common Cause Members On The March Photo Andrew F.

We recognize a need for anarchist organizations who agree with these principles to federate on an regional, national and international basis. However, we believe the degree of federation possible and the amount of effort put into it must be determined by success at building organizations capable of making such work a reality, rather than a matter of slogans.

To achieve balance between humanity and the natural world, we must create a society which is based on the satisfaction of true needs such as food, shelter, water, and community. Modern environmental destruction is a result of capitalism's strive to commodify the natural world, for the wealth of a small minority.

We recognize that social transformation is the first step towards ecological balance, not lifestyle changes or technological innovations. We recognize that the destruction of capitalism is the only avenue towards rescuing the planet's biosphere, and by extension, ourselves.

# Afghanistan: Climates of Fear

Afghanistan has been a primary focus of the so called War on Terror since the events of September 11th and as a result, the already fractured society has been pushed even deeper into chaos, destruction and violence

writes Kim C

Canada has played a minor role in the occupation since the beginning but under Harper's Conservatives Canada's participation has intensified. The war shows no sign of slowing down and neither does Harper. Paranoid fear being used to justify a clamp down on our rights, civilian casualties numbering in the 1000's, and more and more Canadians coming home dead, it seems that any likelihood of a positive outcome has long gone.

Creating stability in the region has been a rallying call for those behind the war, but the notion of a violent occupation being a vehicle for peace and prosperity has yielded the results one might expect from such a backwards concept. The toll of the war on both the infrastructure and population of Afghanistan is staggering.

All though there is no way to know the exact numbers, it is estimated that civilian casualties in Afghanistan are in the neighborhood of 5000 deaths. Aside from those who have lost their lives there are countless more wounded and suffering both from coalition attacks and the ensuing violence of having access to food, medicine and other services cut off due to the destruction.

The so called stability that is being granted to the Afghans by their foreign liberators is a complete misuse of the word. Not only has

**“Security certificates target non-citizens and allow the government to imprison them indefinitely with no trial.”**

Opium production (which had been virtually eradicated in 2000) made a comeback, currently making up 52% of the countries GDP, but many fundamentalist warlords and profiteers of the drug trade have taken high ranking positions among the NATO backed government and police forces.

The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan summed it up well last July in a statement: “the US doesn't know that a reactionary force can be defeated by a different force which first of all should believe in democracy. [...] because of these fundamentalist-fostering policies of the US government, things have not been changed to positive in our land. We are living under the



Mobilisations Against War On A Toronto Street. Photo Edward Wong.

shadow of drug-mafia and worse enemies of democracy and women's rights [...]

“Some Afghan people say, today Taliban are in power in Afghanistan but those Taliban who have pant and tie but the same mentality!”

The threat that this war poses is not limited to those forced to deal with it first hand, either. A study by 16 intelligence agencies reported that the world is now more susceptible to terrorism as a result of the occupations. However the definition of such terrorism should not be limited to suicide bombers and the like, terror and repression at the hands of the Canadian state, both at home and abroad, is also increasing alongside the war.

Along with the newly revamped military, Canada has also turned up the climate of fear and hate which is currently consuming the US. Harper and Bush continue to collaborate with

one another to strip down the rights of anyone they feel is a threat. There are currently 6 examples of such people being either held in prisons or house arrest in Canada without charge. This is legitimized through the use of security certificates, which target non-citizens and allow the government to imprison them indefinitely with no trial and without showing the accused any of the evidence, effectively eliminating any chance to defend themselves.

Those who are posed with the same allegations in Afghanistan have an even worse situation to face. Earlier this year Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor stated that the Red Cross oversaw the transfer of prisoners from Canadian to Afghan authorities, which was later directly contradicted when the Red Cross denied any involvement in the process.

Allegations that prisons in Afghanistan are rife with torture and abuse is unfortunately nothing new, and little is being done about it. This treatment in itself should raise some eyebrows concerning our role as the “civilized peace makers”.

BRUCE ALLEN on  
CAW&MAGNA>>  
UAW SPLIT>>  
UNION DECLINE>>  
THE FUTURE>>

# Sweetheart Deals & Solidarity Unionism



Bruce Allen Addressing a CAW Meeting. Photo: CAW Media on Flickr

Following the announcement of a no-strike contract between the Canadian Auto Workers and Magna International a number of CAW local leaders criticized Buzz Hargrove for pushing the deal. Bruce Allen, vice-president of Local 199 at GM in St. Catharines, described the deal as "a betrayal of the reason why we established ourselves as an independent union." Bruce founded the CAW Left Caucus and was involved in publishing the anarchist paper Strike in the 1980's. Linchpin contacted Bruce and in the following interview he outlines in detail the problems with the deal and the direction of the CAW and the Labour movement in general.

**LINCHPIN>>** I guess the first question is how you view the recent sweet heart deal between Magna and the CAW?

**BRUCE ALLEN>>** I view it as the culmination of trends that have been developing in the CAW over the past ten years. I outlined those trends in some detail in an article that was published last year called "Inside the CAW Jacket". That article was prompted by the spectacle, a year or so ago, of Buzz Hargrove giving a CAW jacket to Paul Martin at the CAW council. This was at a time when Buzz Hargrove was embracing the Liberals and making an absolute rupture with the traditional alliance between the CAW, organized labour and the New Democratic Party.

Really the point simply put is that this is just taking a trend that was already there to another level, consolidating it in the form of an agreement with a traditionally very anti-union transnational corporation, MAGNA, and completely embracing the very things that the CAW was founded to oppose back in the mid-1980's.

You may recall the premise and essential reason for the CAW breaking from the United Auto Workers in the mid 1980's was a rejection of the UAW's pro-corporation orientation. In so far as they accepted team concepts, embraced profit sharing as

opposed to wage increases, and all forms of management labour co-operation, basically they embraced an agenda of making the corporation more competitive and successful regardless of whether that was in the interests of their members.

The CAW broke from that, it was the right thing to do at the time – it was a break to the left of the UAW. What this agreement with MAGNA does is it takes things full circle and it casts us in a role where essentially there is no difference between what we stand for and what the UAW stands for. Arguably this deal is even worse than what the UAW contracts typically involve right now.

So in more ideological terms its a complete subordination to the agenda of capital, it's a complete acceptance of capitalism. There isn't the slightest hint of anti-capitalist politics in the CAW anymore, where ten to fifteen years ago the CAW was decisively to the left of the NDP and was willing to engage in far more extra-parliamentary political action. It was essentially socialist in its political orientation – there is absolutely nothing socialist in its politics now. This deal is the culmination of all that and taking it to another level.

What's really significant about this deal and important in terms of understanding where we were and where we are now, is that really this is the

*(Continued on page 5)*

LINCHPIN.CA

**PODCAST>>** This interview on the MAGNA deal is available at Linchpin.ca as a MP3.

**OFF THE CUFF>>** Our blog carries links to culled mainstream media articles on the CAW/MAGNA deal, as well as some commentary on Hargrove's leadership.



(Continued from page 4)

product of an organization which at the national level is completely un-democratic, completely top down in its orientation. Hargrove does what he wants and expects everyone to fall in line after the fact. He is completely un-accountable for what he does and he uses a combination of coercion through the bureaucratic apparatus and co option to maintain order to preserve the control of the existing hierarchy of the CAW.

Consequently as he moves more and more to the right and becomes more accommodating to the corporations he brings the organization with him in its orientation. The lack of democracy obstructs any attempt to put a break on that.

**LINCHPIN>>** Can you envision any knock on effects for the general labour movement as a result of this deal?

**BRUCE ALLEN>>** This deal has far reaching effects for all other unions because it will have an impact on collective bargaining throughout the entire manufacturing sector in this country. It will encourage employers in all industries, particularly in the private sector and manufacturing, to put pressure on all unions, not just the CAW, to negotiate similar agreements and be conducive to ending up in a situation where this becomes the norm between capital and organised labour in this country.

**LINCHPIN>>** What sort of forces if any are there as a left opposition in the CAW? Where's that at? Do you see possibility for worker's action on the shop floor in resistance to this trend in the CAW?

**BRUCE ALLEN>>** There is no organised left opposition. Several years ago there was a small CAW left caucus which I was the driving force behind, basically it would never have formed if it hadn't have been for me. It took some good positions, did some good work but it never managed to grow to the point where it became a formidable force. You had a lot of fear, a lot of people within it were not willing to seriously take on the leadership and consequently that had a corrosive effect and ultimately it shriveled and died.

Today there is no organized left opposition. But there is a growing number of people who are expressing dissatisfaction given the concessions that have been made

in places like Oshawa with the Shelf Agreement and more so now with this MAGNA agreement. But they are not organised into a force. There are diverse, basically informal networks around certain individuals. The most notable being Sam Gindin, who used to be the research director in the union and the best known critic of Hargrove's politics, or at least the most high profile critic.

Another problem is that of the most notable in opposition a lot of them are retired members, there is very little at least in terms of opposition involving the secondary leadership, at the level of the local union. They are generally biting their tongues, they are reluctant to defy the national union.

The national union in the way it operates is openly hostile to any local union leadership that goes against the direction set by the national union. There are pressures that are applied and there is also a relationship of dependencies. In all level of negotiations there are national reps involved and they play a pivotal role. There is always the risk that it will be disadvantageous if you alienate yourself from the national rep who take orders from the top leadership.

They can put the gears to you and really hurt you at a local level. Again its a matter of a lack of democracy within the organization, the real concentration of power is at the top and it emanates from the top down. That's very obstructive and very conducive to suppressing the emergence of any local opposition.

**LINCHPIN>>** I am often under the impression that these sort of deals are struck in the union movement as a result of a general weakness, that they are attempts to stabilise declining memberships. Are there any other strategies that can be used to reverse that trend?

**BRUCE ALLEN>>** A deal like this is certainly a product of weakness, and a product of a declining membership base in manufacturing and especially auto and auto parts sector. There the CAW has experienced massive membership losses due to corporate down-sizing and plant closures and that has definitely created some sense of desperation. Desperation is conducive to obviously making an accommodation with employers in any way they can in order to maintain the dues base and you can see this agreement in this context. It definitely plays in to it and a major driving force is the CAW's national office desire to maintain the dues base in order to

**“Start the process of networking and building that is conducive to fostering solidarity unionism, its the base of the movement, the labour movement grows and survives at the base.”**

sustain the organization.

You only need to look to the United States in that respect, the UAW at the end of the 1970's had 1.5 million members, today its about a third of that. You can't maintain the organisation, the bureaucratic structure and all the rest if you have a shriveling dues base.

Speaking from a local level, I'm in a local union that has as its biggest unit General Motors. At the beginning of the 1980's we had nearly 10,000 General Motors workers in St Catherines, that number today is 2,500 and by the end of next year probably down to 2,000. We have a union hall, long term I don't know how we are going to maintain it, the income from union dues is not there to sustain it. There is another union local in St Catherines that organised the Dana plant, their union hall was sold off and pretty much the only Dana workers that will be left will be retirees.

The same dynamic is evident where I am. There are far more retired members of our local union now than active members because the corporation is encouraging people to take buy outs, like retirement packages, and people are running for the door. They have a take the money and run attitude, without any consideration for what the future holds. What they don't understand and what I tell people all the time, is that you can grab the money and run and retire – but if the union keeps getting weaker and weaker, who is going to protect your pensions and benefits after you retire? I tell them that and the look on their faces is as if I told them their mother has died. But it is brutally true.

These dynamics and trends are a major reason why a deal like this is struck. There is a quiet desperation about it. But touching on your other question – is this the way to build the union? In the short term, sure it could get you additional members. But the other way to look at it, from more a class perspective, is if the union is going to be weak and defective, unable to win things for you, make substantial gains for you and improve the quality of life; your standard of living; day to day reality on the shop floor,

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

people are not going to want to join a union. What's the point of joining a union if it doesn't do anything for you? all a union is, is something that takes money off your pay check?

**LINCHPIN>>** Following up and this is the question, what actions can we take as a class to reverse that?

**BRUCE ALLEN>>** Frankly my opinion is this, the existing union structures have reached a point of no return. I've long believed that the existing union structures like the Canadian Labour Congress and the CAW have passed the point of no return. The labour movement is going to have to be built from the ground up.

I'm not advocating building outside of the existing structures yet as you have to be inside them to be relevant, to interact with workers. But we have to build on the things that made the union strong in the first place. Stand by the principles that got us what we got. You do not join a union to go backwards, you join a union to make gains and improve your life and be prepared to do whatever is necessary to realise those gains.

From my vantage point that means do what ever you can to build strong local unions and labour councils. I really believe in the concept and always have that Lynd outline of solidarity unionism. He wrote a book about it, about networking and building in the existing unions, at a local level and at local labour councils. In a horizontal rather than a vertical way, networking.

**LINCHPIN>>** For people that may want to touch base on that form of solidarity unionism, is there any examples in Ontario to suggest that form developing?

**BRUCE ALLEN>>** There are no real examples I can think of. The challenge before us is to build them, to get involved in our local unions and labour councils. To start the process of networking and building that is conducive to fostering solidarity unionism, its the base of the movement and the labour movement grows and survives at the base. Don't waste your time trying to change the CLC, the Ontario Federation of Labour or the CAW from the top because for the same reason they are so top down and controlled from above – you can't break that.

You've got to build around it, it's like going down a road and encountering an obstacle – you don't run head first into it, you go around it. You build local networks around strikes and issues. I'm heavily involved in activities around injured workers, my specialty in terms of the union is fighting worker compensations and there are all kinds of possibilities to realise through that work.

I take a class struggle approach to workers' compensation. You can maintain and continue a really adversarial orientation to employers. I maintain a totally adversarial orientation with GM through fighting for injured workers. You have to find niches and possibilities where ever you are in order to move in that direction. That is what I am doing to the extent that I can do it.

**Words** Mick Sweetman, Andrew Fleming and James Redmond



## ideas>>

Anarchism as Order

### True Democracy

When reports of social breakdown are reported on the news, we always hear that it is 'anarchy'. What can it mean when we say we are anarchists? Chaos and terror? Anarchy means no rulers, just like mon-archy means one ruler explains Wes

In places like Somalia and Afghanistan the problem is not an absence of rulers, but too many rulers. The violence and chaos is the product of warlords, each a petty authoritarian trying to grab more power. Anarchists, those who believe in society without rulers, cannot possibly support chaos, because chaos and disorder breed authoritarianism.

The influential Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta pointed out a long time ago that: 'apart from brute force' the origin and justification for authority lies in social disorganization. When a community has needs and its members do not know how to organize

spontaneously to provide them an authority satisfies those needs by utilizing the services of all and directing them as well as imposing itself and throwing its weight around, the less organized we have been, the more prone are we to be imposed on by a few individuals, organization, far from creating authority, is the only cure for it and the only means whereby each one of us will get used to taking an active and conscious part in the collective work, and cease being passive instruments in the hands of leaders.

The question is not order versus disorder, but the type of order we want, and how we can organize to secure it. For this it makes sense to go

back to another term that rulers have cynically manipulated to their advantage democracy, rule by the people. If the people rule then there is no room for a ruling class. While it is certainly preferable to have some degree of choice over who rules, having some input into who rules is not the same as having control over our own lives. Real democracy means directly democratic assemblies in our communities and in our workplaces, which then federate, as coordination is an absolute necessity. It is not enough to have pieces of paper that say that the people rule. True democracy is something that we have to live on a day to day basis.

To have such a real, lived freedom, one where we control our lives together with our fellow citizens, if we are to have a society without rulers, then we cannot possibly stop at opposing the political ruling class. What we live is more important than what it says on a piece of paper, and the reality is that economic warlords control our lives at work and in our communities. We oppose governments, but at least they have to pretend to be responsible to us. People like Stephan Harper talk about getting big government off of our backs, not to give us more control over our lives, our work, or our communities, but to put gigantic business on our backs, which does not even

pretend to be democratic.

Their opposition to the power of the state is the opposition of the warlord, who wants to the power to dominate and exploit. This is also why they always want more police and prisons, and fewer rights for us, when they talk about a smaller state. They are usually pretty good at hiding what they really want, but it peeks out at times, like when Conrad Black said, "I'm not prepared to re-enact the French Revolution's renunciation of the rights of the nobility". That is the truth of who they are, and how they see the rest of us.

This is why we are anarchist communists. Capitalism only means the liberty of the powerful to oppress the rest of us. Socialism has always been about opposing the tyranny of the boss class, but it defeats the purpose if we put the power in the hands of the state. The choice between an economic ruling class (ie the bosses) or the political ruling class (ie politicians) is a false one. We say neither, we want freedom. And we can only secure this by organizing, by building our capacity to self govern, through federated, directly democratic assemblies, in our own autonomous organizations.

**culture>>**

**Poking Holes In History**

After visiting the Hamilton Workers' Art and Heritage Centre, **Alex D** finds that writing History is as much a site of class struggle as the shop floor.



Remembering the resistance and victories of working class people that

have come before us reminds us that a better world is possible and helps us imagine how together we might bring about this better world.

Even in defeat, our struggles are never truly defeated as long as the memory of resistance is preserved. From it we can draw lessons that will shape our strategies and tactics in future struggles against exploitation, poverty and oppression. This is why those who get richer everyday off our work wish to erase the memory of our struggles. And so our history textbooks and museums tell us that history is made by our rulers, the supposedly great Prime Ministers, big industrialists and other rich white men.

But our struggles have poked holes in this lie. An important example is the trade-union run Workers Arts and Heritage Centre (WAHC) in Hamilton. Located in the historic North End working class neighbourhood, the WAHC is the only national organization dedicated to preserving workers' history and culture. The building itself has a rich working class history, from 1858 to 1995 it served as a federal customs house, a home, a school and textile factory. Inside, the main attraction is the gallery space where historical and contemporary exhibits developed by the WAHC are displayed. Current exhibits include: Punching the Clock: Working in Canadian Factories from the 1840s to the 1980s and Made in Hamilton Industrial Trail which takes you through the history of working class life in Hamilton in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The WAHC also organizes traveling exhibits across the country. A number of ex-

hibits are currently on the road including "...and still I rise!" A History of African-Canadian Workers in Ontario, 1900 to Present. Virtual displays are also available and can be accessed at [www.virtualmuseum.ca](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca) (enter WAHC in the search engine). The exhibit Highway Workplace: The Canadian Trucker's Story is currently available online. Other activities and services offered include educational group tours at \$3.00 per person; inter-active educational programs for students in elementary and high school; a research service that helps union locals write down their history; and space rental for events and meetings.

A visit to the WAHC reminds us that it has always been us, the working class, who have built and nourished our communities and made them decent places to live. And we are also reminded of the awesome power that we have when we organize together to resist those who exploit and oppress us.

**INFORMATION**

**DIRECTIONS>>** WAHC is located at 51 Stuart Street, Hamilton, Ontario. Public visiting hours are from 10am to 4pm Tuesday to Saturday. Staff can be reached at 905.522.3003 or by email at [wahc@wahc-museum.ca](mailto:wahc@wahc-museum.ca)

**Book review >>**

**Counter Culture and the Left**

The Rebel Sell authors set themselves the task of attacking an idea of counter culture they see at the heart of social movements, so is that why the cover has a summit protester in gun sight wonders **James Redmond**

**Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't Be Jammed (Harper Collins, 2004)**



Potter and Heath are right that counter cultural rebellion can sometimes suck energy away from making "concrete improvements in people's lives," providing excuses for not engaging mass society but their counter cultural imagination is limited to MTV, Adbusters, a host of mainstream Hollywood movies, the authors' own dashed ex-punk background, Kurt Cobain 's suicide notes and anything mall rat in between.

Despite their stated central preoccupation they ignore well articulated differences between "sub cultures" and "counter cultures." You see sub cultures hang under the mainstream's belly, dependent on it and lacking a real critique. Counter cultures at least try to foster alternative values and ways of being to replace a dominant culture - so one contains at least some revolutionary purpose, the other doesn't. This failure to distinguish gives the authors an easy job of ripping into a series of piss poor straw men.

There is no discussion of the very

real and needed role of counter cultural forms in political movements. How could they have overlooked the IWW's folk song tradition, the working man's clubs of the UK and Ireland or the foot ball leagues and community groups of pre-Nazi German social democracy - were these too just "pseudo rebellions" to be ignored?

Alongside historic blind sight, they completely skip the well trod over subjective reasons for engagement in counter cultures. Still note how an awful lot of school yard bullying stopped once they and their nerdy friends went punk. Counter cultures can be a very ordinary thing, a form of self defence or de-marcation of space. Think of struggles around silly work uniform rules or piss ant fussy supervisors having their authority eroded by a shop floor black humor.

Really the book does contain some great pop culture writing, but the attempt to weave it into a general theory of counter culture falls a little flat even if their reason for writing it comes from a decent impulse:

movements that define themselves by being on the margins of society, will stay there.

Much of the weight of their book is just a re-hash of Thomas Frank's quip that "ever since the 1960's hip has been the native tongue of advertising." The authors claim to "shatter central myths" turns out to be just restating the obvious with much weaker conclusions. They themselves do not want to "eliminate the game, but level the playing field" and so call for traditional social democratic measures to over come market failures. They even suggest bans on cosmetic surgery, ignoring how thwarted society really is by contemporary forms of alienation in their call for a rewind to the '50's.

Face it anything that opens with the claim that Adbusters selling Blackspot sneakers was a "turning point for western civilization" is bound to piss you off along the way. With sky scrapers of argumentation erected on foundations of sand, the Rebel Sell smacks of a pair of grad student academic *enfant terribles* - the perfect stuff for drunken conversations, mindlessly frustrating yet deeply challenging to your own steadfast opinion.

**RECOMMENDED**

**CHECK EM OUT>>** Adam Curtis' documentary **The Century of the Self** which looks at the harnessing of new lifestyles created in the 1960's to brands that sell dreams over products and Thomas Frank's book **The Conquest of Cool**, the original political economy of hip.

The paper is one arm of Common Cause publishing, the other is our website. There you will find dozens of additional articles and photographs from Common Cause members as well as announcements of events and events our members are involved in.

Read more at the Common Cause web site.

[www.linchpin.ca](http://www.linchpin.ca)

### Afghan Occupation Demos

Andrew reports on the demonstration in Hamilton and Edward contributes over a dozen photos from Toronto...

### Book Review of Mike Davis' Planet of The Slums

Davis' latest highlights the mega-cities of the global south, massive slums and squatter settlements that have shattered modernity's optimism with an unprecedented Dickensian squalor....

### Another Shift Bites the Dust

Hot on the heels of a new contract with the UAW (which saw it's members strike for the first time in almost 30 years) Chrysler has announced plans to cut 12,000 jobs including a shift at the Brampton assembly plant...

### Unschooling Oppression

The role of schooling and education is placed under a critical lens in a series of reports from a recent conference...

### Chomsky Does Toronto

A household name of radical politics gives a lecture in Toronto on alternative fuels, criticizing corn based ethanol bio-fuel..

The above is just a selection of sample articles that were on the site as we went to print.

## first nations>>

# When Property Doesn't Apply

**N**ormally the settlement of claims to property are something the court system takes very seriously. The very foundation of capitalism after all is that some person can claim ownership of a piece of land, and through that ownership charge others rent to use it explains **Andrew Fleming**

Or that ownership of machinery can be used to take most of the value of what the workers using the machines produce to sell for profit. Obviously such a system depends on the courts and the threat of violence to prevent those actually doing the work or living on the land telling the 'owner' to get lost.

The major exception is when those with the legal claims are from the First Nations, in particular when the claim is one of collective ownership by a community to the land. Then rather than usual pattern of careful investigation and prompt decisions we see the most absurd 'sales' treated as valid, legal documents all but torn up and legal processes drawn out for decades without conclusion. Meanwhile the courts are used to suppress the protests of those who appear to have the best legal claim to ownership.

In 1995 Tyendinaga Mohawks submitted an official land claim which included the gravel quarry worked by Thurlow Aggregates. It took till 2003 for the claim to be acknowledged as legitimate by the Canadian government. Yet this did not halt the quarrying, the Ontario government continued to renew the license to Thurlow and thousands of truckloads of gravel continued to leave.

Another occupation began February 2006 when members of Six Nations reclaimed the Douglas Creek Estates bordering Caledonia. Their claim is based on the fact that the so called agreement where they were said to have surrendered this land was obviously invalid. Yet far from waiting on the sidelines until the courts resolved this the police in April moved in to evict them.

So why don't the Canadian



First Nations Activists Block Rail. Photo Jeremy Ashley.

courts jump to the defense of indigenous property rights in the manner they would if workers occupied a factory or tenants refused to pay rent to a landlord?

**"A speedy and fair resolution of the land disputes would be a major problem for these corporations and the courts and government know this.."**

Fundamentally they face the problem that courts all over the Americas face. Capitalism in the Americas was built out of a massive theft where the existence of the indigenous populations who were living on the land was not even recognized. Indigenous nations that tried to defend their usage were murdered. Many were enslaved in the mines and the estates of the new owners. Across the America's any legal system that recognized the de facto claim to the land by those who had been living on it would undermine the base of North American capitalism.

Historic conditions in Canada meant that here more than elsewhere the colonial power was forced to concede some recognition that there were people already living on the land. Legal treaties recognizing this are thus more common and of quite recent origin. Yet at the same time a significant wing of capitalism in Canada makes it profits from the massive extraction of resources from the land covered by such treaties.

A speedy and fair resolution of the land disputes would be a major problem for these corporations and the courts and government know this. This is why last August Canada was one of only four countries to vote against a UN declaration on indigenous rights.

