

# In Brief...

• Eight Fredericton City police officers raided the apartment of well-known **Fredericton blogger Charles LeBlanc** on the morning of Thurs., Jan. 19th. LeBlanc was told that he was being charged with libel under Section 301 of the Criminal Code of Canada. The libel charge stems from a summer blog post about a Fredericton city police officer. The police confiscated all of LeBlanc's computer equipment including his monitor, external hard drive and modem. "The police told me I'd spend the next four months in jail if I mention the officer's name. I'll lose my apartment and end up homeless if I go to jail for four months," said LeBlanc. LeBlanc was handcuffed, arrested, fingerprinted, photographed and jailed for nearly six hours while the police went through his apartment. "They asked me if anyone helps me with my blog, and if anyone has my username and passwords. They even wanted to know who approached me to be a blogger. Does that mean anybody who associates with me will be arrested too?" said LeBlanc. Earlier that week, LeBlanc pleaded guilty to causing a disturbance last summer in front of the Fredericton City Police station. LeBlanc used a blowhorn to publicize his concerns about the unequal treatment of the poor by city police. While having doubts, he pleaded guilty. He received no legal advice before issuing his plea.

• Once considered progressive and ahead of the times by other jurisdictions in Canada, NB's **water protection measures** are going down the drain. CCNB Action is raising concerns over the weakening of provincial policies and regulations that were intended to provide legal protection to NB's rivers and streams in light of development of mines, shale gas fields and subdivisions in the province. Since 1999, more than 22 watersheds across the province have been classified by local watershed groups. However, Margaret-Ann Blaney, the Minister of Environment, has refused to issue the Watershed Designation Protection Orders needed to give the water classifications the force of law. Without ministerial orders, water quality standards cannot be established.

• Pay equity advocates are demanding that the government of NB prioritize the payment of **pay equity adjustments** for workers in home support, child care, group homes and transition houses. "The government establishes priorities in its budget. Changes to the income tax system benefited the wealthiest individuals and corporations of the province. Will the government continue to favour the wealthiest while saying that it cannot pay equitably people who often earn barely more than the minimum wage?" asks Johanne Perron with the NB Coaliton for Pay Equity. Post cards demanding pay equity adjustments in the four sectors are available by contacting coalitio@nb.sympatico.ca.



The Harper government recently announced a publicly-funded agreement between 3 Canadian mining giants and 3 Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The World University Service of Canada has partnered with Rio Tinto Alcan, Plan Canada with IAMGOLD and World Vision Canada with Barrick Gold. Critics of such partnerships charge that the NGOs are harming the interests of local communities that are resisting mining and that public funds are being used to provide public relations for mining companies accused of human rights abuses and environmental crimes around the world. Community representatives of indigenous communities in Papua New Guinea, Chile and Australia (seen here) frequently travel to Toronto to speak out against the practices of Barrick Gold where they live. Photo by Allan Lissner.

### Membership Options

- ☐ \$3/month
- ☐ \$10/month
- ☐ \$25/month
- ☐ \$10/year
- ☐ \$25/year
- ☐ \$50/year
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I would like to be a member, but I cannot be a sustainer at this time.

### Payment Options

- ☐ cash
- ☐ Please send me an application form to establish monthly pre-authorized payments from my bank account.
- ☐ cheque

Please mail application forms and cheques to the NB Media Co-op at 180 St. John Street, Fredericton, NB E3B 4A9. Thank you!

# Fredericton loses one of its finest activists



**Architect and activist, Jon Oliver, died on January 9th. Jon was active in defending civil liberties, advocating for the protection of natural spaces and creating more democratic media. He inspired many young people to get involved in working for social change.** Photo by Mike Erb.

By TRACY GLYNN

Jon Oliver died on Jan. 9th at the age of 74 surrounded by his family and friends in his home on Northumberland Street in Fredericton. Over 150 people filled the newly renovated train station in Fredericton for Jon's memorial on Jan. 13th. The eulogies started with Jon's two sons and were followed by a number of people from different ages and backgrounds whose

lives were positively affected by Jon's friendship, life lessons, care and compassion. The location of the memorial was fitting as Jon advocated for the renovation of the train station and other heritage buildings in the city.

When nominated for the YMCA Fredericton's Peace Medallion, Jon was described as an "endearing gadfly to city, provincial, and federal officials. Jon reminds politicians of their responsibilities to the common good. Jon has motivated countless individuals, including many young people, to become politically engaged and active whether it is through participating in party politics or community activist groups, defending civil liberties, advocating for the protection of Fredericton's natural spaces or building community in his neighbourhood."

A native of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan who made Fredericton, New Brunswick his home in 1969, Jon was an activist for public housing, nature, civil liberties and justice for decades. Jon was regularly found at meetings and events where the community's and world's most pressing concerns were being discussed.

Jon was a member of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and was a founding member of the West Platt Community Association. He advocated tirelessly for public policies that bridged gaps of inequality and systemic violence. He did pro bono architectural work for organizations he supported, including the Conservation Council of New Brunswick, the Fredericton Food Bank, and the John Howard Society of Fredericton.

Recognizing that media control was a growing problem in the 1960s, Jon co-founded the national independent magazine, The Mysterious East, which from 1969-1972 produced wise commentary of matters in the province, Canada and the world. According to Russ Hunt, professor of English at St. Thomas University and an original editor of The Mysterious East, "Jon's active participation in the editorial process of The Mysterious East regularly generated critical news stories and kept writers honest and true to the magazine's mission. Stories on housing in New Brunswick cities, for example, were informed by Jon's commitment to social justice."

In front of Jon's inviting and colourful home on Northumberland Street is a community bulletin board and a bench where a seat and books are often left for passersby. One passerby who had just moved to Fredericton remarked that when he passed his home, "it made me feel safe" and he wondered, "what kind of wonderful person lived there." Jon made a practice of renting rooms to students at reasonable prices while advising and challenging them on their education. A lawyer in Moncton says that living with Jon's was just as valuable, if not more, than the four years he spent at St. Thomas University.

Jon's decades of activism for the marginalized peoples of our community would have made his hero Tommy Douglas proud. Jon's example reminds us of Douglas' famous quote: "courage my friends, it is never too late to build a better world."

## Two-tiered minimum wage

(continued from page 1) ...and sixties, wages began to stagnate in the mid-seventies. Capital started to take full advantage of mechanization and trade liberalization not only as a tool to increase productivity, but also as a weapon wielded against labour. The value of labour has subsequently been reduced and leveraged against itself around the world.

Unfettered capitalism has come into an age of complete domination where, because we have no apparent alternative, the interests of the ownership class are seen as the general interest. What I find most stunning is the data available on productivity gains and wage-versus-profit shares. While capital continues to become more productive, less and less revenue is allocated to workers while more and more goes to profit.

We're not getting poorer because the pie is shrinking; we're getting poorer because certain people are taking more of it for themselves. The shrinking minimum wage has encouraged this trend by contributing to the political climate that makes poverty-level wages appear rational and sustainable.

**CW:** In light of everything we have discussed, if you worked for minimum wage in a restaurant, what would you do to make your voice heard?

JE: This is a difficult matter to address. On the one hand, working people are at the mercy of the ownership class; any lost wages due to losing a job or having reduced hours can mean the difference between getting by or not. On the other, poverty-level wages are not sustainable and working people can leverage their shared experience against exploitation.

In the low-wage jobs that I have worked, I have tried to build solidarity between my working colleagues. That means griping to one another about things we dislike and things we would change. Ultimately, the goal is to build enough solidarity so that we can bargain collectively in order to gain an equal footing with the employer, who can otherwise leverage us against one another.

Only when working people begin to see themselves as a cohesive class with shared experiences and aspirations will the political culture of stagnating wages and dwindling prospects be laid to rest.

Jason Edwards holds a Masters in political science from the University of New Brunswick and contributes to the blogs, behindthenumbers.ca and maritimoperspective.ca.

**Help build democratic media in New Brunswick! Send your articles, story ideas and photos to [info@nbmediacoop.org](mailto:info@nbmediacoop.org).**

**visit [nbmediacoop.org](http://nbmediacoop.org)!**

# Community Calendar

**For details and updated event listings, visit [nbmediacoop.org](http://nbmediacoop.org) To list your event or to receive the community calendar by email once per week, email: [community@nbmediacoop.org](mailto:community@nbmediacoop.org).**

**Occupy Speaker Series.** Tuesdays and Saturdays in February in Fredericton. Tuesday talks will be held at 4pm at St. Thomas University's James Dunn Hall, Room 108. Saturday talks will be held at 11am downtown at Conserver House, 180 Saint John Street, just around the corner from the market. Feb. 11: Jean Sauvageau on The Harper Government and the Criminal Law Agenda; Feb. 14: Tony Myatt on The Provincial Budget; Feb. 18: Bill Parenteau on Budworms, Hydroelectricity and Hydrofracking; Public Engagement and Natural Resource Management in NB; Feb. 21: Shaun Narine on Inequality, Globalization and Canada; Feb. 25: Michael Boudreau on The Person of the Century: The Protester in Canada; Feb. 28: Tracy Glynn on It's Bigger than Bling-Bling and the Banks: Women's Stories of the Origins of Our Stuff and the Messages of Occupy.

**Firsthand Account of the Capture at Sea of the Canada Boat to Gaza.** David Heap will give his account of the Freedom Waves to Gaza which took place in November when Irish and Canadian boats tried to break the Israeli blockage of Gaza. Sackville: Feb. 16, 1pm, Bennett Building Room G03 Lecture Hall, Mt. Allison University. Fredericton: Feb. 16, 7:30pm, Carleton 136, UNB. Moncton: Feb. 17, 12pm, Taillon Building, Room 328, University de Moncton (French) and Aberdeen Centre, 2nd floor, 7:00pm (bilingual). Saint John: Feb. 18, 1pm, 1 Bayard Dr. Free admission. Contact: [info@frederictonpeace.org](mailto:info@frederictonpeace.org)

**Cinema Politica's** documentaries take us to places like Afghanistan, Palestine, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, indigenous territories and prisons where dehumanization and destruction wreaked by capitalism and colonialism warrants our examination, analysis and action. In Fredericton, films are screened on Fridays starting in early January until April 2012 at 7pm at Conserver House, 180 St. John Street. In Sackville, films are screened Mondays and Wednesdays this fall at Wu Centre, Dunn Building at Mt. Allison University. Cinema Politica chapters also exist in Sussex, Bathurst, Moncton, Taymouth and Saint John. Check out film schedules here: [www.cinemapolitica.org](http://www.cinemapolitica.org)