In Brief...

Eight Fredericton City police officers raided the apartment of well-known activist, lawyer, Charles LeBlanc on the morning of Thurs. Jan. 13th. 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 if anyone helps me with my blog, and if anyone has my username and passwords. They even wanted to know who appeared me to be a blogger. Does that mean anyone 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 blowtorch to publicize his concerns about the unequal treatment of poor 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 anti-competitive measures are going down the drain. CONB Action is raising concerns over the weakening of provincial policies and regulations that were intended to provide local 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 wastewater systems across the province have been classified by local wastewater owners as Class A. In response, the Minister of Environment, has refused to issue the Wastewater Discharge Permits that would 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 provide the pay equity adjustments for workers in home support, child care, group homes, and other services that establishes priorities in its budget. Changes to the income tax system benefited the wealthiest individuals and corporations. The government has not shown any signs of comparing the government's pay, to favour the wealthiest while saying that it cannot pay equal Pay Equity. That those who can earn more than the “minimum wage”? asks Johanne Perron with the NB Coalition for Pay Equity. If no, if the government’s cards paying equity adjustments in the four sectors are available by contacting the coalition@nb.sympatico.ca.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmedia.co. To list your event or to receive inclusion in the calendar, please email: calendar@nbmedia.co.

Ocuppy Speaker Series. Tuesdays and Saturdays in February and March, Dr. William Haines will be speaking at the Student Union Building at St. Thomas University’s James Dunn Hall, Room 108. On Tuesdays, the talks will be at 1:00 PM, while on Saturdays they will be at 7:00 PM. The event is hosted by the Conserver House, 180 St John Street, just around the corner from the market. Feb. 11: Jean Sauvageau on The American Social Contract and How we Got Here: The Long Story of the American Dream. Feb. 14: Tony Myatt on The Provincial Budget; Feb. 18: Bill Philpot on Join the Movement, and Stop the Hydro FROM FRACKING: Public Engagement and Natural Resource Reforms Feb. 21. The Cahn Institute; Globalization and Canada; Feb. 25: Michael Bourdeau on The Person of the Century: The Protester in Canada; Feb. 28: Tracy Glynn on It’s Bigger than BlingBling and the Banks: Women’s Stories of the Origins of Our Stuff and the Values They’re Made Of.

Firsthand Account of the Capture at Sea of the Canada Boat to Gaza. David Horse will give us his account of the rescue of the activists Libya Dawn earlier this December when Irish and Canadian boats tried to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza. Nashville Feb. 16, 1 pm, Bennett Building Room G03 Lecture Hall, Mt. Allison University, Fredericton, NB. Call: 506-864-5575. Feb. 17, 11am, 7:30pm (FREE): The Non-Exiles. MLT, Moncton: Feb. 17, 12pm, Tailion Building Room, 328, University de Moncton (French) and Aberdeen Centre, Rear, 7:00pm (INGLISH): Saint John: Feb. 18, 1pm, Bayard Dr. Free admission. Contact: David Horse

Cinema Politica's documentaries take us to places like Afghanistan, Palestine, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, the Andes, and many others. These places are often victims of civil wars and conflict and destruction wreaked by capitalism and colonialism. This is true not only of the Third World, as in Fredericton, films are screened on Fridays starting in early January. Feb. 3- 4 Apr.2012 at 7pm at University Hall, 180 St John Street. Series of films are screened Mondays and Wednesdays this fall at We Coop, 271 Dunham St, at Mt. Allison University. Previous Cinema Politica chapters also exist in Sussex, Bathurst, Moncton, Truro and Saint John. Check out film schedules here: www.cinemapolitica.org

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Fredericton loses one of its finest activists

Two-tiered minimum wage

(continued from page 1) ...and sixties, wages began to stagnate in the mid-seventies. Young people started to take advantage of mechanization and trade liberalization not only as a tool to increase productivity, but also as a weapon against widening labour. The value of labour has subsequently been undermined and paid the rate of living the workers. Unfettered capitalism has come into an age of complete domination where, because we have no alternative, the workers are dependent on the employers to give their share of the economic interest. What I find most stunning is the data available on productivity gains and the value of wages. While productivity has continued 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 taking minimum wage has encouraged this trend by contributing to the political climate that makes poverty-level wages appear rational and sustainable.

OCW: 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; and the 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 grip- ping 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 lost to us.

Jason Edwards holds a Masters in political science from the University of British Columbia and is the author of the blog, behindthenumbers.ca and maritimeperspectiva.ca.

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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 Group, the University of Victoria, the University of Alcan, Plan Canada with IAMGOLD and Vision Canada with Barrick Gold. Critics of such partnerships charge that the NGOs are harming the interests of local communities that are facing mining and that public funds are being used to "green-wash" the private mining interests and keep 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.

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