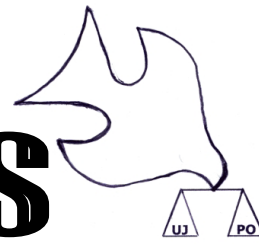


UJPO News

The United Jewish People's Order is a national, nonpartisan, socialist-oriented, secular organization.



Serving Canada's progressive Jews in individual organizations since 1926 and collectively as the UJPO since 1945!

Summer 2011 - Volume #32, Issue #3

2011 CSJO CONFERENCE HOSTED BY UJPO IN TORONTO A GREAT SUCCESS!

By LYN CENTER

This year, the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations, a North American organization devoted to perpetuating secular Jewish culture, held its annual conference in Toronto from May 27 to 30. About 100 attendees, 40 percent of whom were categorized as "youth", arrived from across North America at Humber College where we schmoozed, ate, slept, sang and enjoyed workshops on a wide variety of topics, an Oneg Shabbat (Friday night celebration), concerts and a talent show.

The UJPO played a huge role in organizing the weekend's events, checking people in and out, ferrying out-of-towners to and from the airport, providing content and leadership of about two thirds of the 25 workshops, and showcasing our very talented musicians and singers.

Our own Ester Reiter delivered the keynote address on the conference theme **Jewish Traditions Today – Continuity**



in Change; she was followed by Mark Neuman, a youth representative and member of Vancouver's Peretz Centre for Secular Jewish Culture. The keynote speeches were followed by discussions on growth of the CSJO and the use of social media to promote it. Many in the audience

seemed to be in a "worries bubble", concerned about the future and how to attract more people – except for one person who burst the bubble and cheered people up by mentioning how impressive this conference actually is. The point was also made that the reason why the CSJO has such a strong group of young people from all over North America, is that by coming together at the conferences, by spending such concentrated time together, they have formed lasting bonds with each other. This may be a lesson from which the UJPO can benefit.

Saturday night's program consisted of a performance of the **Camp Naivelt Singers** directed by Shifra Cooper and ranging in age from 5 to 75, followed by the musical ensemble "**No Fish**", also with roots in Camp Naivelt. The Sunday night talent show included a presentation of Celtic music by our Howard-Cooper family (Eli Howard and Helah Cooper) that highlighted their remarkable talents.

The two days were devoted to workshops led by experts on everything from quilt making and Jewish music to the challenges of offshore cheap labour and the presentation of the film "**The Other Zionists**", which features UJPO member Ronnee Jaeger. Topics covered a wide variety of areas: the arts, history, and current affairs. So good, in fact, were the topics and presenters that it was difficult to choose from the three or four that were run simultaneously.

I liked and learned from all the workshops I attended:

The Roots of Jewish Myths: An Examination of the Flood Story of Genesis, presented by Professor Doug Frayne, detailing the relationships between the various flood stories found in Babylonian, Sumerian and Akkadian versions; **Jewish Communities in China** presented by Eve Balistra, one of the youths, a short but very interesting presentation (did you know that Jews from Persia settled in Haifeng in the year 958?); **Making Secular Jewishness Relevant** by Gerry Kane, who focused on using new media and social networks to reach the broader community; **Llave de España: the Culture of Sephardic Jews**, where Batsheva Capek told in a theatrical and impressive way her experiences of teaching, in Toronto, a Morris Winchevsky School module; **Jewish Pioneer**



Colonies where Roz and Marcia Usiskin told their uncle Mike's story of immigrating to northern Saskatchewan and building a communal farm called Edenbridge; **Our Alternative Tour of Israel-Palestine** by Paul Weinberg and Cathy McPherson, who showed slides and spoke about the 2010 UJPO-sponsored tour of Israel and Palestine; and **Speaking Truth to Power: The Tradition of Jewish Free Thought** with Bennett Muraskin who combed the Torah and found several examples (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Book of Job, etc.) where Jews were encouraged to engage in free thought.

At the closing banquet, the CSJO presented the UJPO with a plaque in recognition of all our work on the conference, and presented Maxine Hermolin with a certificate recognizing specifically her hard work and devotion. We should also acknowledge the work of UJPO members and workshop presenters David Abramowitz, Ruth Howard, Julia Barnett, Barbara Blaser, Denise Handlarski, Richard Lee, Roz Usiskin, Paul Weinberg and Cathy McPherson, as well as the reception assistance of Hilarie Klapman and airport chauffeurs Barbara and Solly Blaser.

We regret that more UJPO members didn't attend the conference. There could be many reasons: location, timing (a week after Canada's long weekend, and, Camp Naivelt cottage-preparation activity), cost – but it's such a worthwhile event, so rich in information, with such wonderful people and such a sense of North American community, it's important for as many of us to experience it as possible. We must understand that ours is a particular – and very important – part of the history and continuity of Jewish secularism. ♦

= THE SECTIONS' CHRONICLES =

From Vancouver

By CARL ROSENBERG

Our home in Vancouver at the Peretz Centre for Secular Jewish Culture continues to be the site of many enjoyable activities. The monthly *Fraytig Tsu Nakht*, besides featuring singing, potlucks and schmoozing, always has engaging presentations on various topics. One I especially enjoyed was on February 18, when David Skulski spoke on "Meyerbeer and Halévy: two Jewish giants of opera."

Because of an unavoidable last-minute cancellation by the scheduled speaker at the March *Fraytig Tsu Nakht*, several Peretz regulars quickly put together a purimshpil (Purim play), under the direction of program committee chair Claire Osipov, complete with wine and costumes, and Yours Truly in the role of Mordecai.



Photo: Donna Becker

Also enjoyable are the presentations to the Sholem Aleichem Seniors group on Friday morning. One I especially liked was Gene Homel's talk on March 25 on "**Primo Levi: a question of identity**," on the life and work of the renowned Italian-Jewish writer and survivor. The Seniors' closing luncheon on June 24 featured beautiful entertainment by clarinetist Connie Gitlin and her husband Stephen Field on French horn, with piano accompaniment.

The Community Sundays feature potluck lunches and Adult Discussion Groups on diverse topics such as "**The journey from orthodox to secular Judaism**," led by Peretz Centre President Richard Rosenberg. Bernice Kastner led a discussion on "Is there a difference in the structure of the brain that allows a belief in God?" and Irving Ozier led a discussion on "**Science/Technology and Religion**."

The Third Seyder, always meaningful with its readings from the Peretz Centre's secular hagaddah, its Holocaust memorial ceremony, delicious Passover meal, and the Vancouver Jewish Folk Choir's Pesach recital, this year had 185 people in attendance.

And speaking of the Choir: Sunday, June 19 featured its annual spring concert. This year there was an all-Yiddish program, with the feature work being the powerful cantata *Ikh bin a Yid* (I am a Jew), Itzik Fefer's poem arranged for choir by Vladimir Heifetz. The program also included songs by Mark Warshhsawsky and Max Helfman. The concert featured two new regular soloists, soprano Diana Díaz and tenor Tristan Pearson, and baritone soloist Peter Kendall, and guest soloists soprano Cynthia Ramsay and alto Andi Alexander for the solo sections of *Ikh bin a Yid* and other pieces, as well as a quartet arrangement of Warshawsky's *Dos Lid fun Broyt* (The song of bread).

The special guest artist was guitarist Dave Ivaz, who along with his wife Julie, who sang, Loren Etkin on drums and Rob Weaver on piano, presented a set, "**The Yiddish Invasion—songs of the 60s**," featuring songs by Jewish songwriters, both renowned ones such as Paul Simon and Leonard Cohen (the latter together with the choir), and others not quite so well known whom many might not have known were Jewish.

On March 27, we at *Outlook* had our Annual Fundraising Supper, with guest speaker Micheal Vonn, Policy Director of the BC Civil Liberties Association, speaking on "**Civil Liberties and Free Speech**." It was, as Sylvia Friedman wrote in her Jottings column in *Outlook*, "informative, lucid and enjoyable." The food was delicious and served by our wonderful Berson Family Ensemble. We finished with Stephen Aberle performing the satirical monologue "**At the Anarchists' Convention**."

The diverse programs held at the Peretz Centre constitute a vital part of both the Vancouver Jewish community and Vancouver's cultural scene in general. ♦

From Winnipeg

By DORA ROSENBAUM

In the past few years, Winnipeg has been honouring the 1919 General Strike. Now there is a new perspective, and instead of just holding a parade, [activists] have created a "**May Works**" celebration with a raft of different activities – cultural, speaking engagements, historic tours, etc. – held during the month of May. Our **North End Choir** was invited to sing the "International" in Yiddish, French and English at a banquet held at the Fort Gary Hotel. We were accompanied by a section of the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra!!! Also during May Works, Roz Usiskin spoke about the work of two women activists, Kitty Harris and Freda Coodin and the struggles they faced in the labour and radical movement.



A wind-up barbecue was held to mark the end of our activities until September/October. At that time we will endeavour to establish a discussion group to meet Sunday afternoons. Discussions will cover many topics – political and non-political – whatever the people who will attend would like to talk about. The idea of a discussion group came out of our annual schmooze-fest which was held in March.

We in Winnipeg are looking forward to a summer of some sun, but up till now (July) it's been rain, rain and more rain with terrible consequences to our farming communities. Winnipeg UJPO is looking forward to hosting the UJPO National Board AGM [October 14-16].

Regards to all, good health and keep up the good fight re: CJC/UJA – Dora ♦

From Toronto

By DOVID SHLOYME

We thought this would be a less hectic spring - boy were we wrong! By now you're aware of the issues that arose from our February 1 event "Never Again, For Anyone" which resulted in our last "Special Issue". Well a month later, on March 6, the Morris Winchevsky School (MWS) held a **Homentashn Baking and Costume Making Day** preparing for its March 26 **Purim Celebration** at a trial new venue for the MWS - 918 Bathurst Street. This was another joint event with the **West End Progressive Jews**; about 100 attended and had a very enjoyable celebration. The occasion also served to introduce MWS's new Education Director, Denise Handlarski. Not only is Denise following in her mother Frances's footsteps as Education Director, she had also previously been a skilled and highly respected teacher at the school.

On April 3, 10 and 17 MWS introduced its Spring

Module program with the **Joys of Jewish Foods** led by Barbara Blaser and **Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean** led by Professor Richard Lee. These modules are an augmentation to the MWS's core program. On April 3 and 17 the new location also served as the MWS Kinder Kapers venue. MWS recruitment for classes at this locale continues and results to date show increased registrations.

On Sunday, May 1 (**May Day**), the Toronto UJPO and MWS marked our **Secular Third Seyder** (Passover dinner). The theme was **Honouring Our Labour Roots** and the four readers were present or former union activists, all UJPO members. We were honoured again by the presence of musicians David Wall and Marilyn Lerner to perform/lead the songs. The special **hagode** (service) supplement also received many commendations. Though there were a few "no shows" we still had an attendance of 200 - about a 33% increase over recent years. Was it possibly a result of our February 1 event?

On the morning of May 15 MWS held its **Open House** at the above trial location, and that afternoon the **Toronto Jewish Folk Choir's 85th Spring Concert** took place in the Posluns' Auditorium in the Baycrest Centre (seniors') complex. It featured much of the choir's most popular repertoire and a repeat of Sid Rabinovitch's "**In Amerike**" (In America) based on Sholem Shtern's text of "**In Kanade**" (In Canada) accompanied by the remarkable klezmer group "**Beyond the Pale**". The audience gave the choir and *klezmerim* (musicians) a long and well-deserved standing ovation.

From May 27 to May 30 The Toronto UJPO and MWS hosted the **41st CSJO Conference** whose theme was "**Jewish Traditions Today - Continuity in Change**" at Toronto's Humber College. Lyn Center's report is on page 1.

On June 2 "**In Deadly Ernest**" (the final episode) the last of the five cycle "**Hemingway On Stage**" plays was previewed at the Winchevsky Centre featuring its writer/actor Brian Gordon Sinclair. Cosponsored by **UJPO-Toronto** and **Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association - Toronto**, it was the most moving of the three parts that have been presented at the Centre and was well received by the audience. Its world premier was on June 17, in Hemingway's favourite Ambos Mundos Hotel in Havana.

Having traveled by bus the previous day the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir performed in Montreal on June 18 at the Second Montreal International Yiddish Theatre Festival. It was clear from the reactions of festival organizers and much of the audience that they didn't expect such an accomplished and polished performing group. The full report follows this article.

On June 21 the UJPO Toronto presented **Proud and Progressive**, a Jewish Gay Pride event of readings, presentations and music by Queer Progressive Jews featuring Avi Zer-Aviv, Jaquie Buncel, Lukah Rosenberg-Lee, Lois Fine and Sadie Epstein-Fine. The attendees enjoyed the informative and varied program which also closed the season's activities at the Winchevsky Centre.

For the summer months, activities move to **Camp Naivelt**, but are too extensive to report here; so we suggest you learn about them on the web. In July there will be dedicated weeks for an **Arts Camp** and a **Music Camp** - check them out at: <http://winchevskycentre.org/calendar/2011July.html>. Among August's activities will be a **Drama Week**, a **Spanish Week**, and a **Yiddish Week**. Find out more at: <http://winchevskycentre.org/calendar/2011August.html>

There will also be the Saturday eve programs/concerts, Sunday themed brunches and much, much more.

And that will do it till the fall (where do we get the energy?). Have a happy, healthy and restful summer, and we'll all meet again on these pages for our Autumn Issue. Till then *zayt gezunt* (be healthy)! ♦

TORONTO CHOIR ENCHANTS MONTREAL FESTIVAL AUDIENCE!

By DAVID ABRAMOWITZ

Last year Ben Shek negotiated the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir's participation in Montreal's "**Second Festival of Yiddish Theatre**" at the Segal Centre. The organizers booked the concert on the condition that the Choir covered all its own costs. Funds were raised and the Choir was scheduled to perform at 5 p.m. on June 18. I had the honour of being the concert's M.C.

Our chartered bus left the Winchevsky Centre at 2 p.m. Friday the 17th and arrived at 9:15 p.m.! We checked into our hotel - Ruby Foo's (I remember when it was only a restaurant) and went for supper. It was too late to see Friday's festival programs. After a Saturday breakfast, we checked out, stored our luggage at the hotel, went to lunch and then, by bus, to rehearse.

Saturday's festival programming started at 2 p.m. with "Films of the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre Productions". We arrived before 3; the films were over and we rehearsed cues while lights and sound levels were adjusted. We sought the the

stage manager (SM) when a slight woman appeared stating she'd be the SM and get what we needed. It was Bryna Wasserman, artistic director of Montreal's Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre (now successor to Zalmen Mlotek at New York's 95 year-old *Yiddish Folksbine* [Yiddish peoples' stage]).

Our cue rehearsal ironed out many staging bugs. We overlapped into performer Mendy Cahan's time so he concluded late. After our rehearsal I watched most of Mendy Cahan's performance. During the last quarter hour of his act I noticed that more audience members were arriving for the choir; the staff then brought more chairs, and more chairs and more!

The venue, the Segal Centre's lobby performance space, sets up about 100 folding chairs. The weekend events were part of a \$90 "**Kumzits**" [come sit] program which included two dinners. The Choir's performance was a free concert in between the *Kumzits* programs*.

Our crowd numbered about 200 (with 20-30 standing). The Choir and I were inspired by the enthusiastic response and all went extremely well - even my flubs. Brian Kirby, (sitting at a "donations table" beside the main entrance/exit) was entirely boxed in with those extra chairs so no one could reach him to make a donation! After a standing ovation we were inundated by many audience members congratulating and enthusiastically thanking us, giving us all good "vibes".

At 7:30, after a meal under the Segal Centre lobby, we retrieved our hotel-stored luggage and left for Toronto. The return trip was shorter and we arrived at the Winchevsky Centre parking lot at 1:12 a.m. Sunday and went our separate ways.

The choir, under the spirited direction of Alexander Veprinsky, made a great impression and couldn't have hoped for



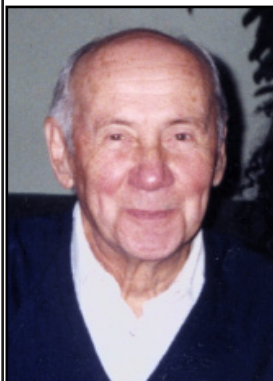
a greater success. We trust the choir will be invited to the next festival and, if so, be scheduled as a paid concert with expenses covered by the festival.

* To see the festival program guide, go to -

www.segalcentre.org/_media/uploads/pdf/Festival_Guide.pdf go to page 11 to see the whole schedule, page 13 to see the write-up on the choir, and *to page 17 to see the *Kumzits* schedule . ♦

BEN-ZION SHEK 1927 - 2011

By DAVID ABRAMOWITZ



Ben's parents, Bella and Sol, emigrated from Poland to mandate Palestine where Ben-Zion Shek was born in June, 1927. Because they were disenchanted with circumstances there at the time they returned to Poland. Yet, as things were also not promising in Poland, and because Bella and Sol had family here, they migrated to Toronto in 1934.

Seven-year-old Ben found a vibrant Yiddishist left-wing community that first summer at the Labour League's Camp Naivelt; the subsequent kinship lasted for 77 years in several branches of the organization.

During his high school years at Harbord Collegiate, Ben participated in a summer Yiddish teachers' training course at Camp Naivelt in 1943, after which, with several Harbord colleagues, he taught at the Morris Winchevsky School. He was my grade two teacher in 1944; I've known Ben for 67 years.

His parents, joined the United Jewish People's Order (UJPO), successor to the Labour League, and the Frayhayt Gezangs Fareyn (the Freedom Singing Society, now the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir).

Ben attended the University of Toronto, and, subsequently, became a high school teacher.

With his spirit of social responsibility and activism Ben participated in left-wing youth organizations and activities, becoming the leader of the first Canadian delegation to the Federation of World Youth Conference. He was the English page co-editor, and later editor, of the Canadian-Jewish Weekly (Voehenblat) and editor of "Champion" the newspaper of the National Federation of Labour Youth (NFLY).

Probably because of these and similar activities he was clandestinely persecuted by the Canadian security establishment resulting in his firing as a teacher. Not to be a victim-loser, Ben furthered his university studies acquiring his Phd. in French and subsequently, developed into a popular French professor at the U of T, thus triumphing over those who had persecuted him.

Romance didn't elude Ben either. He had very high standards I learned. But when Ben met Jean, he found his ideal. They did nothing to refrain from having a family; Jean's planned pregnancy resulted in a son, Elliot. To ensure their ideal family would be achieved they chose to adopt and were very proud of their new daughter Ghitta; now their family was complete.

Ben and Jean had joined Ben's parents in the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir and later became amongst its significant supporters and leaders as its older generations succumbed to natural forces.

Long after retirement Ben continued to mentor many U of T students. The U of T, Jewish music and French were three of Ben's other loves.

It would take up too much space to list his numerous awards and honours. As a retired Professor Emeritus of French, possibly his most proud achievement and honour was the recognition of his dedicated pedagogical skills and contribution to Canadian society when he became a member of the Royal Society of Canada. He authored two books on Québécois literature as well as being former Associate Editor of the "University of Toronto Quarterly". Till now he was also an Associate Editor for Outlook Magazine to which he contributed and also reviewed Jewish films. He was interviewed on radio and television - some items are still available in archival collections that you might find on the web. He hosted radio and TV interviews.

He and Jean visited Cuba more than 30 times together and, on several occasions, then and subsequently, Ben taught courses on French-Canadian literature there. He acquired a difficult to obtain electron microscope for the children's optical hospital in Havana whose director he and Jean hosted on her visits to Canada.

He's lectured internationally on the role of the French-Canadian novel in Quebec and in Canadian society; he wrote articles and papers on French-Canadian (and French-Canadian Jewish) writers and English and Jewish writers from Quebec.

For a couple of decades Ben was a highly regarded secretary of UJPO-Canada who often had difficulty reading his written notes to transcribe them into minutes. At the time of his death he was a member of UJPO's National Board.

Above all, he was a truly great "*Mentsh*" - a humanist "par excellence", unwilling to compromise his principles for anything, which sometimes made him seem like a curmudgeon. His signing of numerous petitions for progressive causes in which he ardently believed, his attendance at peace marches and demonstrations of many types, even when in poor health, whether they were anti-war or for Middle-East peace, epitomizes how he was dedicated to and sought to uphold his secular, humanist, and progressive principles and to contribute to make this a better, more just world for all.

And to those who were fortunate to be closer to him, whether a life-long friend and ally or a more recent colleague, he was the truest friend one could have, checking to see how you were if he had learned you were under-the-weather, visiting those with more serious ailments, and encouraging a speedy recovery - something none of us were able to do for him given his many increasingly complex health challenges in recent months and weeks.

To Elliot, Ghitta and Wendy we send our condolences on your and our mutual profound loss. Though we will miss him immeasurably, he still will exist in our memories and conduct, and, in honouring his name and reputation, his influence will live on in those whom he affected, and I hope, will thus be passed on to future generations.

And, as nature continues to take its course, it's not farewell, dear friend, but "au revoir".

VELVET GLOVE COMES OFF

Harper government's labour relations agenda

By JIM STANFORD, *rabble.ca*

22/06/11 — Even though labour relations is largely a provincial responsibility in Canada, we were worried about what would happen in this field under a Harper majority. And it didn't take long to find out.

In the disputes at both Air Canada and Canada Post, the government waded into the fray in a pre-emptive and utterly one-sided manner. With both the timing of its intervention, and the details of its proposed legislation, the government in both cases was clearly acting to assist the respective employers to take away long-standing features of the existing contracts, and facilitate the downward ratcheting of compensation.

At Air Canada, the CAW (which represents 3800 customer service and reservations agents) and the company had been bargaining toward a new contract for several months. But by the time the two parties reached the deadline of midnight June 13, they were at loggerheads. The main sticking point was the company's demand for dramatic changes in pensions, including major cuts in pension benefits for existing workers, and the complete abolition of the defined benefit pension system for future hires.

Just a few hours after the strike began, the Harper majority government indicated that it would intervene to end the strike and arbitrate an outcome. This was an unprecedented intrusion into free collective bargaining.

Air Canada, of course, is a private corporation. These were free, legal negotiations between two private parties, and the work stoppage was fully legal.

The government's claim that the work stoppage at Air Canada would jeopardize Canada's economic recovery was laughable. I doubt you could find two economists in the whole country who believe that this strike was truly threatening the recovery (such as it is!).

For a government that supposedly believes in the virtues of private business and the free market, this intrusion was surprising. Worse yet, the government's intervention clearly supported the company's position, by setting in motion a loaded arbitration process that would clearly have assisted the company in reducing pension benefits.

The two sides continued bargaining, despite the complication posed by the government's intrusion. By June 21 a tentative agreement had been reached that largely preserved pension benefits for the existing workforce. The matter of pensions for future hires will be sent to a mediation and arbitration process that will be more neutral than the one contemplated by the government legislation.

Harper government officials claim that their actions led to a quick settlement of the strike. In reality, the government's intervention made this bargaining more difficult, and probably contributed to the strike. And the intervention will likely contribute to work stoppages at other bargaining tables in the future, because of its impact on the normal processes of collective bargaining.

Even before the CAW reached the June 13 strike deadline, it was clear the company was backing away from trying to reach a deal. Now we know why. The company was in contact with government officials, and had a strong indication of what the government had in store.

They knew that the government's intervention would tip the bargaining field in their favour. In this way, the government actually contributed to the strike, by hardening the company's position. Now that companies know the government will take their side in this way, the dynamics of future collective bargaining will be altered, and the risk of future conflicts exacerbated.

In essence, the government was willing to do Air Canada's dirty work for them. It has taken an even more Machiavellian approach to the dispute at Canada Post, where the union was careful to avoid a full work stoppage. But when management locked out the workers, then the government jumped in again -- proposing wage increases that were even lower than the company was already offering!

Every single worker in Canada, whatever sector they work in, is threatened by the government's unprecedented actions. Public sector or private sector. Essential service or not.

The government has thrown away any guise of neutrality. It has abandoned the principle of leaving free collective bargaining up to the private parties. It invokes phony arguments about the economic recovery, to justify virtually anything it wants to do.

We must also remember that the government could play a more constructive role in resolving the underlying problems that have contributed to the conflicts at Air Canada, Canada Post, and many other bargaining tables.

We need to expand the Canada Pension Plan, which is the most universal, portable, efficient, and secure pension system in the land. We need stable, long-run funding rules for defined-benefit pensions, and an insurance system to backstop pension plans when companies get into trouble.

These are things that government could do to strengthen workers' pensions, and improve the chances that hard-working Canadians can retire with dignity and security. Instead, this government just jumped right into the middle of collective bargaining, clearly on the side of corporations, to help take pensions away from workers.

I was under no illusions about how this majority government would wield its power. But even I am shocked.

Jim Stanford is an economist with CAW.

This article was first posted on The Progressive Economics Forum.

<http://rabble.ca/columnists/2011/06/velvet-glove-comes-harper-governments-labour-relations-agenda> ♦



CANADA CLANDESTINELY PRIVATIZES OUR WATER! Council of Canadians board member tells Parliamentary committee NAFTA payout has privatized Canada's water

COUNCIL OF CANADIANS

Trade lawyer and Council of Canadians Board Member Steven Shrybman appeared before Parliament's international trade committee on March 8 to explain the Council's concerns with a recent \$130-million NAFTA settlement with AbitibiBowater. He told committee members the settlement has effectively privatized Canada's water by allowing foreign investors to assert a proprietary claim to water permits, and even to water itself in its natural state.

In 2008, AbitibiBowater, a Canadian firm registered in the United States, closed its pulp and paper mill in Grand Falls-Windsor in Newfoundland and Labrador, leaving hundreds of people without jobs and without severance pay owed to them. The Newfoundland government passed legislation to re-appropriate timber and water use permits loaned to the firm on condition they be used for production in-province.

The company cried foul, but rather than come to an agreement with the province on severance pay and environmental remediation, AbitibiBowater used its U.S. registration status to file a NAFTA investment dispute against the province claiming it was owed \$300 million for the assets, as well as the timber and water rights that were expropriated. It later increased that amount to \$500 million.

The federal government could have fought and won the NAFTA challenge. Instead, the Harper government settled with the firm for \$130 million – the most ever paid out by Canada to an investor under NAFTA's Chapter 11 investor-to-state dispute process. The settlement included an undisclosed amount for water and timber rights the firm cannot legally own under the Canadian Constitution, effectively creating a precedent for recognizing water as private property.

"It would be difficult to overstate the consequences of such a profound transformation of the right Canadian governments have always had to own and control public natural resources," said Mr. Shrybman in his presentation to committee, which is studying the AbitibiBowater NAFTA settlement.

"Moreover, by recognizing water as private property, the government has gone much further than any international arbitral tribunal has dared to go in recognizing a commercial claim to natural water resources." ♦

LIBYA: THE LATEST PRODUCT IN CANADA'S UGLY WAR ASSEMBLY LINE

by MURRAY DOBBIN *rabble.ca*



20/06/11 — NATO members, including Canada, are continuing their massive bombing campaign against Libya in a war that may just break the record for the casual breaking of international law, and for lying about the motives for the war.

There is no mandate to engage in "regime change," yet everyone, including the Harper government, openly admits that that is, in fact, what they are doing. Canada has stated that only the removal of Gaddafi will satisfy NATO. Not the United Nations -- which gave a mandate to protect civilians from the Libyan government's attacks -- but NATO, that alliance whose mandate is supposed to be the mutual self defence of nations of the north Atlantic.

No one refers to this war against Libya as a criminal conspiracy but the term would be perfectly appropriate. And I suppose we should not be surprised that an organization that constantly violates its own mandate can hardly be expected to wince at violating someone else's they have taken over. NATO, with almost no comment from anywhere, has become a military intervention agency aimed at protecting Western industrial nations

-- not from military threat but from an economic one: the threat of higher oil prices and the gradual loss of its dominant access to Middle East oil and gas.

There seems to be so little public interest in this war that its perpetrators lie like six year olds next to a cookie jar because so far they have largely gotten away with it. As the war was quickly transformed from protecting civilians to getting "the evil G," all the western governments thought they had to do was show photos of Colonel Gaddafi looking demented or telling stories about his eccentric behaviour in order to pacify their populations.

Canadians actually oppose the extension of the war by a substantial margin (over 2:1 in an informal Globe and Mail poll) but so long as the media goes along with the lies (The CBC as recent as June 1 reported: "Canada is helping to enforce a no-fly zone as part of a multinational operation.") and opposition parties rubber-stamp the mayhem, the Harper war machine (some 650 troops and over a dozen fighter bombers) can continue its assaults politically unscathed.

There are so many things about this war that are farcical, dishonest, amateurish, and just plain morally wrong that Canada and the other warmongers have given up serious efforts at justifying it. They have just recognized a rag tag National Transition Council as the "legitimate representative" of the Libyan people despite that fact that it can demonstrate no unity of any kind except its own lust for power. It has no plans for democracy and no stated vision for the country post-Gadhafi. Behind the scenes the NATO geniuses running the show admit they have absolutely no idea what the country would look like if this disparate gang of unelected and unrepresentative opportunists ever got to exercise power.

The constant talk of "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity" seems equally opportunistic and just a bit too predictable -- NATO cover fire for its blatant violation of international law and the UN mandate and its own killing of civilians (inevitable in an air war). The charges of rape being used systematically as a weapon of war so far have no credible evidence that the UN can agree on and it reminds me of the gruesome tearing-babies-from-incubators story that was created by p.r. firm Hill and Knowlton to sell the first Iraq war to the U.S. public.

There are big risks here for NATO and the U.S. (Canada is just an embarrassment, lap-dogging for the U.S. in a manner even more blatant than in Afghanistan). The U.S. knows it and was so terrified of the reaction on the Arab street to yet another war against a Muslim country that it had to pretend to be acting in a support role. Much of the EU knows it, too, which is why several have been reluctant partners in a war against a country that exports most of its oil to them. The coalition of the not-that-willing is getting more tenuous even as the "mission" gets extended.

So what is it that makes eliminating Gaddafi worth the risk of years of chaos in Libya -- and worth enduring the repeated accusations of hypocrisy as Syria and Bahrain went (and go) completely unpunished for what is actual murderous assaults on (unarmed) civilians?

It's not just oil but that seems to have been the tipping point as AsiaTimes.com columnist Pepe Escobar wrote back in March. According to Escobar, Gaddafi declared on March 15 "We do not trust [Western oil] firms, they have conspired against us... Our oil contracts are going to Russian, Chinese and Indian firms." The bombing, led by Britain and France, began a few days later.

**NAZARETH ACTIVIST HONORED BY
GLOBAL WOMEN'S GROUP**

**Palestinian Named
One of World's 100 Most Influential Women**

By JACK KHOURY, *haaretz.com*

In honor of International Women's Day, the international organization **Women Deliver** compiled a list of 100 people worldwide - some famous, some not - who have improved women's lives. The list included one person from Israel: **Nabila Espanioly**, an Arab Israeli who founded and runs the Al-Tufula Pedagogical Center and Multipurpose Women's Center in Nazareth.



Espanioly, 56 and unmarried, is a social worker and clinical psychologist. She is also active in the Hadash political party and in various Jewish-Arab peace groups. In the past, her political and social activism frequently got her fired, she said - including from a job at the National Insurance Institute many years ago.

In 1989, she launched Al-Tufula, and the center has since run numerous projects to empower Arab women. It is also active in women's health issues.

While her lifestyle choices made her unusual for an Arab woman of her generation, today, she said, "there are more and more women of independence and wide-ranging activity, and that contributes a great deal to Palestinian Arab society in Israel."

(Ed note: Espanioly has spoken to UJPO Solidarity - Peace Tours. Her co-honourees include US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, ABC journalist Christiane Amanpour, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation co-Chair Melinda Gates.)

<http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/nazareth-activist-honored-by-global-women-s-group-1.348466?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.225%2C2.26%2C> ◆

**ISRAELI ACTOR AND PEACE ACTIVIST,
JULIANO MER KHAMIS, KILLED**

By DAVID ABRAMOWITZ

Israeli actor and peace activist, Juliano Mer Khamis, was shot dead on April 4, 2011, by masked men, metres from the Freedom Theatre which he founded in Jenin along with Zakariya Zubeidi in 2006. Zakariya Zubeidi, the former military leader of the Al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades in Jenin had attended his mother's theatre in the 1980's. In his youth Juliano joined an elite fighting unit of the IDF but was imprisoned when he refused an order to forcibly remove an elderly Palestinian man from a car.

Born to a Jewish mother - Arna Mer - and an Arab Christian father - Saliba Khamis - (at one time the secretary of the Israeli Communist Party) Juliano directed the film *Arna's Children*, which celebrated his mother's work, and which he continued after her death in 1994. *Arna's Children* won the 2004 FIPRESCI Award for Best First Documentary in the 2004 Toronto Hot Docs Festival.

He appeared in several Israeli films after his movie

Much has been made of the surging BRIC countries -- Brazil, Russia, India and China -- but the notion that these competitors with NATO economies might get their hands on Libyan oil may have been too much for the already vulnerable Europeans and their reluctant supporters in Washington.

The only certain outcome if Gaddafi falls will be that the country's oil, now nationalized, will end up in the hands of Western oil companies.

But it is not just the oil. Belying Gaddafi's image as nothing more than an eccentric or even insane, he has been responsible more than any other African leader for creating independent institutions that challenge those of the West -- including the IMF. For years, Africa was forced to pay exorbitant fees -- \$500 million a year -- to use European communications satellites for telephone, TV and radio service. The African countries could not raise the money for their own satellite until Gaddafi put up \$300 million of the \$400 million needed. African countries now pay a small fraction of what they used to pay. EU companies lost their privilege of plundering Africa.

No living Africa leader can take as much credit for giving direction to the African Union than Gaddafi and he gets no thanks from Western countries and their institutions. The U.S. has illegally frozen \$30 billion belonging to the Libyan State Bank, assets that were, according to African writer Jean-Paul Pougala [5] "... earmarked as the Libyan contribution to three key projects which would add the finishing touches to the African federation -- the African Investment Bank in Syrte, Libya, the establishment in 2011 of the African Monetary Fund to be based in Yaounde with a US\$42 billion capital fund, and the Abuja-based African Central Bank in Nigeria."

The African Monetary Fund is expected to completely eliminate the pernicious influence of the IMF and its enforced privatization agenda. Failed efforts by the West at scuttling African unity by setting up regional alliances are back on the table in anticipation of Gaddafi's fall.

Once again the simple rule of follow the money -- and the power -- applies if you want to discover the real reasons behind NATO and U.S. adventures. Gaddafi has been a thorn in the side of the West for a long time -- a much bigger thorn as a force for unity in Africa than he ever was when he supported terrorism.

I happened to watch the NDP members of Parliament voting in favour of the extension of the Libyan war on television as it was happening -- a depressing sight when you know that Jack Layton and his advisers are fully aware that this conflict has nothing to do with humanitarianism and everything to do with imperialism. The NDP tried to camouflage its loss of principle by making soft amendments that Harper had no problem with because they did nothing to alter the reality of our unjustifiable intervention in that country. How it now intends to oppose the purchase of \$30 billion worth of fighter bombers, designed for exactly this kind of adventure, is anyone's guess.

The 70 per cent of Canadians who say they opposed the three-and-a-half month extension can be thankful to the Green Party's Elizabeth May, who refused unanimous consent to the motion. She was the only principled MP in the House on that day.

Murray Dobbin is a guest senior contributing editor for rabble.ca, and has been a journalist, broadcaster, author and social activist for 40 years.

<http://rabble.ca/print/columnists/2011/06/libya-latest-product-canada%E2%80%99s-ugly-war-assembly-line> ◆

debut in 1984's production of the John Le Carré novel *The Little Drummer Girl*. Well-known as an actor for his film and theater roles, both in Israel and abroad, he became renowned as a director as well as a political activist.

Zubeidi was appointed co-theater director in an attempt to subdue the ongoing threats voiced against both the institution and Mer-Khamis. The theater itself was twice set on fire in the past, and the threats persisted despite Zubeidi's appointment. Some of the criticism was based on the fact that the theater provided co-ed activities prohibited in the Islamic moral code.



In her tribute in *Ha'aretz*, respected journalist Amira Haas stated, "Juliano was lucky. He was born Palestinian and Jewish, Jewish and Palestinian. This angry man was beset by conflicting yet complementary identities. He was the long shadow of an imagined binational community from the 1950s. Like a Peter Pan who refuses to grow up, Juliano embodied the potential of a shared life (*ta'ayush* in Arabic) while striving for equality. The son of a Jewish mother and a Palestinian father, he was born to two cultures, and chose to live in both. He saw no need to explain..."

"His rage was the kind that only a Jew like him, who was born on the left and craved equality until the end, can allow himself to express as a way of life. Palestinians must conquer the anger, mellow it; they must tame it, repress it, sublimate it. That's the only way to stay both alive and sane (without getting arrested, wounded or killed) under the conditions of physical and non-physical violence dictated by Israel..."

"This violence has so many different angles that it can drive you mad. Juliano was lucky to be an artist, and madness was one of his paintbrushes. Through the theater he founded in Jenin, Juliano allowed himself to criticize repressive aspects of Palestinian society. One would guess he did so as a left-winger, as an actor committed to the artist's oath of truthfulness, and as a Palestinian. Let's hope that the killer will



be found, and then we'll know if a Palestinian artist was killed because of his courage to live in a way that disrupts the order, or if a Jewish artist was killed because he gave himself permission to overtly criticize a society that is not his, according to some, or if a left-winger was killed because he was disrupting the norm. Or perhaps all three together. Even if he was killed for some other reason, Juliano was still an artist and a Palestinian, a left-winger and a Jew."

Participants of UJPO's 2009 Israel/Palestine Solidarity and Peace Tour were fortunate to have met with Juliano Mer-Khamis and learned of his work first hand. UJPO Canada joins with the international community of peace activists who mourn the murder of this remarkable man. The inspiration he has fostered in a young community of artists and their audience shall carry his legacy forward. ♦

EX-DEFENSE CHIEFS IN PEACE PLAN: WITHDRAW FROM GOLAN, EAST JERUSALEM

The plan urges Israel to agree to Palestinian statehood in Gaza and in nearly all the West Bank, including East Jerusalem

By MAZAL MUALEM, *haaretz.com*

06/04/11 — Former security chiefs, academics and businessmen have drafted a peace plan they hope to use as a platform to pressure Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to renew deadlocked talks with the Palestinians.

The plan will be officially launched today at a press conference, but copies have already been sent to Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres.

The plan urges Israel to agree to Palestinian statehood in Gaza and in nearly all the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

It also calls for a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Golan Heights, in exchange for guarantees of regional security and economic projects, a spokesman for the group said.

The group said the plan was based on the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which Israel has avoided adopting because of its call to repatriate refugees and fully withdraw from land captured in the Six-Day War.

About 40 prominent Israelis backed the project, among them dovish former political leaders as well as former heads of the Mossad, Shin Bet security service and Israel Defense Forces, who say they will unveil their ideas today.

The plan has been devised "in light of the dramatic events in the Middle East" and was meant to urge Israel to "immediately renew peace talks," the group said in a statement.

The group includes ex-army chief Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, former Mossad head Danny Yatom and Shin Bet directors Yaakov Perry and Ami Ayalon, as well as ex-general and Labor Party chief Amram Mitzna, a prime ministerial candidate in the 2002 election. Also members are businessman Idan Ofer, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's daughter Adina Bar Shalom, and Prof. Aliza Shenhar of the University of Haifa.

The writers used their business and security experience, as well as earlier negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, and the Arab Peace Initiative. The authors stressed yesterday they were setting realistic, implementable goals.

The plan proposes possible financial compensation for Palestinian refugees and dividing control over Jerusalem, with largely Palestinian neighborhoods being put under their control while Jewish areas would be governed by Israel.

Palestinian refugees could be offered compensation and a small number may be permitted to return to former homes in Israel, the spokesman added.

The Palestinians want a state covering all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with Arab East Jerusalem as their capital and a settlement of the refugee issue. They have declined comment on the initiative, saying they want to see its text first.

Netanyahu has agreed to a two-state solution in principle, but U.S.-brokered negotiations collapsed in September in a dispute over continued Jewish settlement-building in the occupied West Bank.

Efforts to revive these talks have so far failed and the Palestinians are focusing on building international support for a

unilateral declaration of independence via the United Nations in September.

Israeli leaders fear that such a move could leave them isolated on the diplomatic stage. Some of Netanyahu's ministers have urged him to seize the initiative and present a new plan to break the deadlock.

"We think we are in the right, but many other countries in the world don't seem to see our point of view, which is devastating," said one minister, who declined to be named.

"We need to make a move and show our hand," he said, adding he was not sure if Netanyahu would do this.

In 2003, a group of politicians and diplomats similarly unveiled the Geneva Initiative to counter the political and diplomatic deadlock at the time. The initiative, jointly authored by senior Israeli figures such as Mitzna and Yossi Beilin, as well as senior Palestinian diplomats like Yassed Abed Rabo, was based on the 1967 borders and provoked a political firestorm and considerable international interest.

It is seen today as one of the key factors in pushing Ariel Sharon to disengage from the Gaza Strip, after he realized that the diplomatic vacuum was causing political damage.

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/ex-defense-chiefs-in-peace-plan-withdraw-from-golan-e-j-lem-1.354314> ◆

WEEKLY DEMONSTRATIONS IN EAST JERUSALEM AND THE WEST BANK

By SAM BLATT

The following is a continuation of the article begun in our previous special Middle East issue of UJPO News.

Bil'in

Bil'in is a Palestinian village about 20 km. north of Ramallah. It is also about 5 km east of the Israeli town of Modi'in, which sits directly straddling the green line. To the east of Modi'in is a settlement populated by orthodox settlers, called Modi'in Ilit. The olive groves of Bil'in therefore border the boundaries defined in the east for Modi'in Ilit. As Modi'in Ilit expanded eastwards, developers built apartment blocks on land belonging to Bil'in, without even obtaining permits.

When the separation wall was built, it further cut the farmers of Bil'in from their lands. Six years ago Israelis and Palestinians gathered on the Bil'in side of the fence to demonstrate against the injustice being targeted at the village, and this demonstration has been ongoing since then every Friday at about 11:00 a.m. It is well known that the Israeli High Court (Superior Court) twice ordered the wall moved further westwards from the village, which would allow access to at least a part of the village agricultural land, but the army has not complied. (Lawyer Mark Arnold of Toronto was acting on their behalf in the Canadian court system.) The demonstration attracts many internationals, politicians from Europe and sometimes Israeli politicians. Over the years there have been many injuries from rubber bullets, tear gas, and the ever-ready violence of the army. There have been a number of deaths from direct hits of the tear gas canisters and from the toxicity of the tear gas itself. Bil'in has served as a model for organizing against, and publicizing around the world, the land grab and violence by settlers and their support by the government and army.

Lod and Ramle

Lod and Ramle are cities within Israel proper, with sizeable Arab populations. Unlike Haifa, these cities were never models of co-existence between Jews and Arabs. As might be expected, many Arabs live in poorer neighbourhoods, and many (including some poorer Jewish families) have constructed houses without permits. Of course, for a Palestinian to receive a building permit, or a permit to allow expansion, is an ordeal and usually unlikely, giving rise to "illegal buildings" in many Arab areas (including East Jerusalem.)

There are currently 4000 houses! in Lod that have received demolition orders; several houses have already been demolished. There is a demonstration every Tuesday evening at 6:00 p.m. in front of the Abu Eid family tent. It is at this hour to allow workers to arrive at the site from their work. When this demonstration ends, participants continue on to Ramle for a similar demonstration. Over a thousand people, Jews and Arabs, participated in the demonstration of March 29th. For the moment demolitions have been halted.

This article will be continued in later issues of UJPO News ◆

ARMY SETTLERS DESTROY PALESTINIAN OLIVE TREES IN AL-JABA'A

palestinesolidarityproject.org

AL-JABA'A: 23/02/11 — On the morning of Tuesday, February 22, 2011, Israeli Forces, along with the Israeli Civil Administration and several settlers, used two bulldozers and chainsaws to destroy Palestinian olive trees in Al-Jaba'a, a small village to the north of Beit Ommar. All of the trees on 200 dunums of land were cut down. Additionally, several irrigation walls on these lands were bulldozed.

The trees belong to several Palestinian farmers, including Mousa Hamdan Abu Loha, Azat Abu Latifa, Ibrahim Mahmoud Abu Loha, Ahmad Sobhia, and Mohammad Abed Al-Latif.

The land where the trees were destroyed were located alongside the Israeli settlement of Bat Ayn. Settlers from Bat Ayn were seen felling trees with chainsaws while soldiers operated the bulldozers. Settlers then piled the pieces of cut up trees into cars.

Al-Jaba'a is a small village of around 900 people that is situated west of Bethlehem and north of Beit Ommar. Al-Jaba'a lies on the Green Line, the dividing line between Israel and the West Bank. The village is surrounded by settlements, with Gush Etzion to the east, Betar Ilit to the north, and Bat Ayn to the south. Israeli settlers, particularly from Bat Ayn, periodically harass the villagers of Al-Jaba'a with impunity. Additionally, the main road connecting Al-Jaba'a to the nearby village of Surif is blocked by the Israeli Authorities. ◆



= **INTERNATIONAL** =

WHY WE PAY ATTENTION TO LATIN AMERICA

By CARL DOW, *truenorthperspective.com*

'Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad'

13/05/11 — So wrote the Greek tragic dramatist, Euripides, about 2,400 years ago. Today, whom the American military/industrial complex would destroy, they first declare mad. For those who may not know, General and President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned Americans against the home-grown military/industrial complex during his last speech as president.

This group, which has taken control of Washington, is deluded by a sense of American manifest destiny, a notion that had lived and, many had thought, died in the 19th century. During the past few decades it has been renewed with a vengeance. To them it is America's God given right to rule the world. And if they won't be ruled then we'll bomb them to hell and gone.

One of their targets is Latin America. Many tens of millions of dollars are being audaciously spent to undermine and control the countries there on behalf of corporations that have a long record of ruthless plunder. For more than a half-century they have frothed at the mouth over Cuba; more recently it's been Venezuela and its president Hugo Chávez.

The corporate media rises and strikes at such as Chávez to convince all who

would uncritically believe that Chávez is a ruthless dictator when the opposite is true. Chávez believes in the democratic process and does everything within his power to exercise this belief.

Given a ripe opportunity, the mad men in Washington would launch a military attack on Venezuela. So far they've been limited to funding political sabotage. So far mostly unsuccessful but recently they managed to set up Chávez to act against his own interest and the interests of what he calls the Bolivarian Revolution.

Chávez was too trusting of a false hand of friendship. It was a bitter pill that prompted him to say, "It was damned if I do, and damned if I don't."

Be sure to read "The handing over of Pérez Becerra and the strategy of the Venezuelan Revolution" at <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6168> ◆



CORRUPT CARACAS METRO POLICE DISBANDED

by *Venezuelanalysis.com*

MÉRIDA: The Metropolitan Police of Caracas (MP) was disbanded in early July *Venezuelanalysis* reported. All current and former staff were guaranteed their rights and benefits as workers, ending another phase in government efforts to consolidate all 134 Venezuelan police forces into one national police force with standardized practices and equipment.

All members of MP Caracas (officers, workers, and administrators) who wished to continue working in public service were guaranteed employment at the Ministry for Justice and Internal Affairs, with active duty officers to be incorporated into the National Bolivarian Police, or PNB. By the end of March 45.8% had already moved on to other assignments or had since retired.

Known for its excessive use of force against the general population, it was widely accused of corruption and misuse of the public's trust. Three former officers are currently serving 30-year sentences for their roles in the violent death of pro-government demonstrators during the April 2002 military coup against President Chávez.



In a 2009 interview published by *The Guardian*, the then commissioner of MP Caracas explained the reason Venezuela's police forces urgently needed change was because they had very little training in human rights. Some guys think, "I'm the law, I have the power, I can do what I want." And because people don't denounce the killings, the culture of impunity grows, he said. ◆

VENEZUELA FACT FINDING AND SOLIDARITY TOUR

There is **only one space left** for UJPO's educational, solidarity and fact finding tour this fall!

Contact Ronnee and Sam at ronneej40@bell.net or visit <http://www.ujpo.org/VenezuelaFact-FindingandSolidarityTour> for more details and to download registration form.

United Jewish People's Order

The United Jewish People's Order develops and perpetuates a progressive secular approach to social and cultural matters, our Jewish heritage, the Yiddish language and holiday and festival celebrations; we sponsor secular Jewish education, musical and cultural groups, concerts, lectures, public forums, and take part in social action and related community activities.

585 Cranbrooke Ave,
Toronto, ON, M6A 2X9
Phone: 416-789-5502
Fax: 416-789-5981

Email: ujpocan@aol.com

-or-

bblaser@winchevskycentre.org

Website: www.ujpo.org

Affiliations:

Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations (CSJO); Canadian Peace Alliance (CPA); International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ)

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Edited By UJPO National Board Members  
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