

Health and Safety and Globalization:



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St. John's, Newfoundland & Labrador
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What is Globalization?



- ★ A Race to the Bottom?
- ★ Does it mean workers are forced to work harder to keep up?
- ★ Are we injured more as a result?
- ★ Are we exposed to more toxic substances?
- ★ Are our H&S regulations under threat?
- ★ Why?



How Do We Respond?

How do we fight back?



Is there such a thing as International Working Class Solidarity?

Japanese workers, May Day, 2007

*



First we have to answer:

- * Who are our enemies?
- * And who are our friends?

* ?



Friend or Foe?



Friend or Foe?



Friend or Foe?





Friend or Foe?



Friend or Foe?



Friend or Foe?



Friend or Foe?



**As workers, we're exposed
to the same harms,
regardless of what country
we work in.**



**And the fundamental
cause of these harms is
the same.
What is it?**

- ★ It's the boss
- ★ It's our economic system
- ★ And now, it's globalized



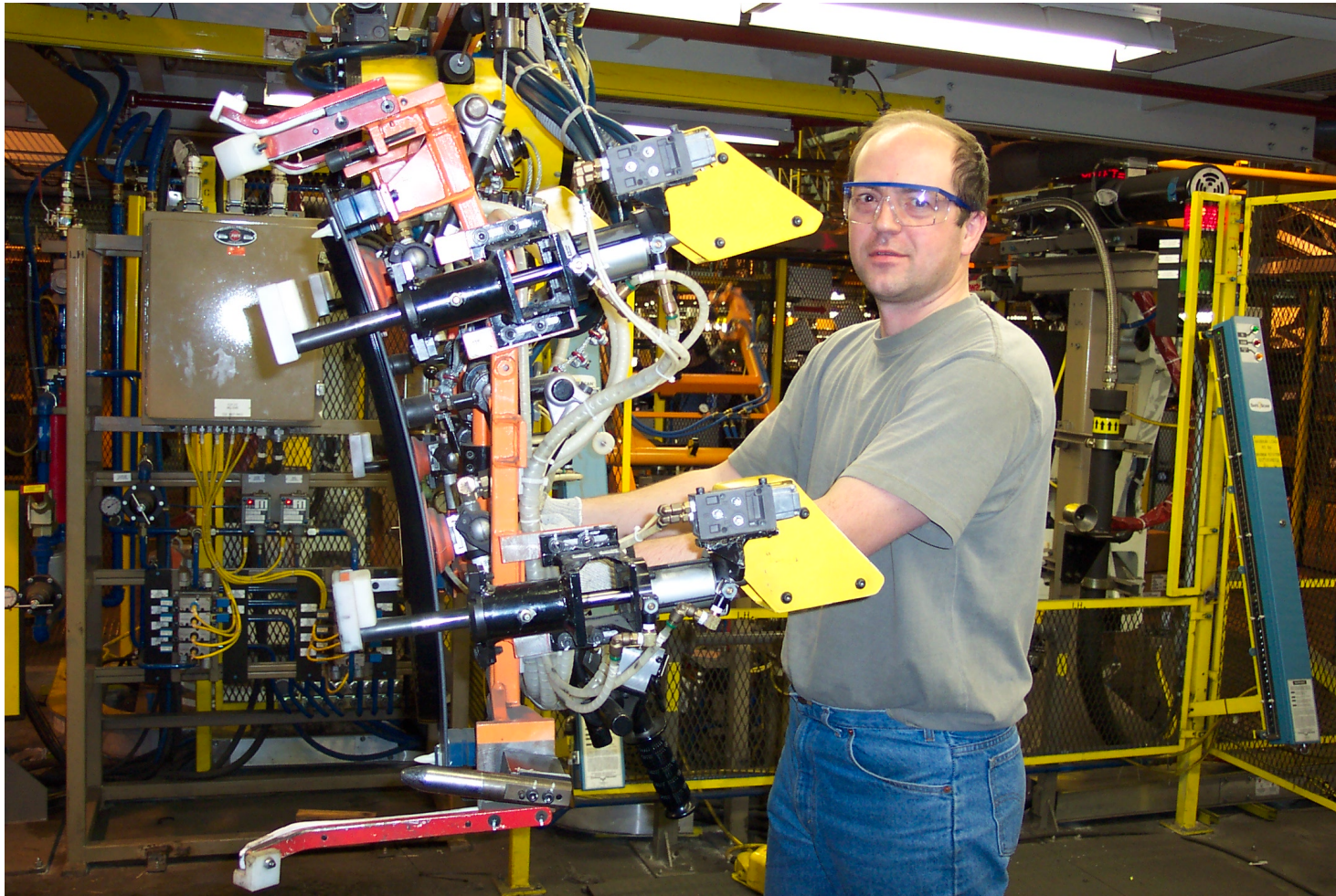
Our workplaces may look the same



GM Shanghai:



GM Oshawa looks pretty much the same



**Or our workplaces may
look very different**



But our OHS Hazards Are the Same

- ★ Back injuries, strains and sprain injuries
- ★ Falls from heights
- ★ Electrocutions
- ★ Cave-ins and explosions
- ★ Cancer and respiratory disease
- ★ Needlestick injuries
- ★ Risk of violence



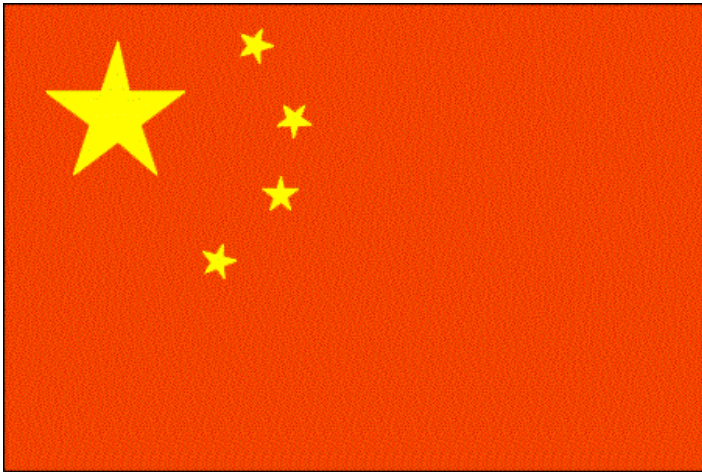
How do we learn about working conditions in other countries?

- ★ Read, watch TV and movies, use the internet
- ★ Go there and talk to unions and workers
- ★ Invite them to come here
- ★ Share experiences, struggles and knowledge



Two examples

- ★ Factory workers in China
- ★ Health care workers in South Africa



Pelonomi Hospital, South Africa



Health Care Unions

- * Denosa (Democratic Nursing Organization of South Africa)
- * Sadnu (South African Democratic Nurses Union)
- * Samwu (South African Municipal Workers' Union)
- * Meshawu (Municipal, Education, State, Health and Allied Workers Union)
- * Pawusa (Public and Allied Workers Union of South Africa)
- * Nehawu (National Education Health and Allied Workers)
- * Hospersa (Health and Other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa)
- * Nupsaw (National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers)



**What are some H&S
Issues in South Africa
among health care
workers?**



Same as here, and more so

- ★ Back injuries, strains and sprains
- ★ Patient violence
- ★ Stress
- ★ Short-staffing
- ★ Infectious diseases:
 - HIV/AIDS
 - TB



HIV/AIDS in South Africa, setting the stage for an epidemic

- ★ Separation under apartheid meant men worked in mines for most of the year with only one or two trips home per year
- ★ Family dislocation over decades



HIV/AIDS today in South Africa

- ★ About 20% of adult population affected
- ★ About 31% of pregnant women affected
- ★ Far more prevalent in black population, especially bread-winners
- ★ 1.2 Million orphans
- ★ About 5 Million people have HIV/AIDS



Enormous stigma about HIV/ AIDS



Unions leading the fight against HIV/AIDS



What can we Canadians do?

- ★ Talk about our successful campaigns to reduce needlestick injuries, ensure sharps are handled properly
- ★ Congratulations to CUPE for doing such a great job!



Provide education and training on OHS Rights

- ★ Right to participate
- ★ Right to know
- ★ Right to refuse unsafe work



Visit their workplaces, help with inspections



Provide Support and Encouragement



Establish Solidarity with the workers and with their unions



Let's turn to China

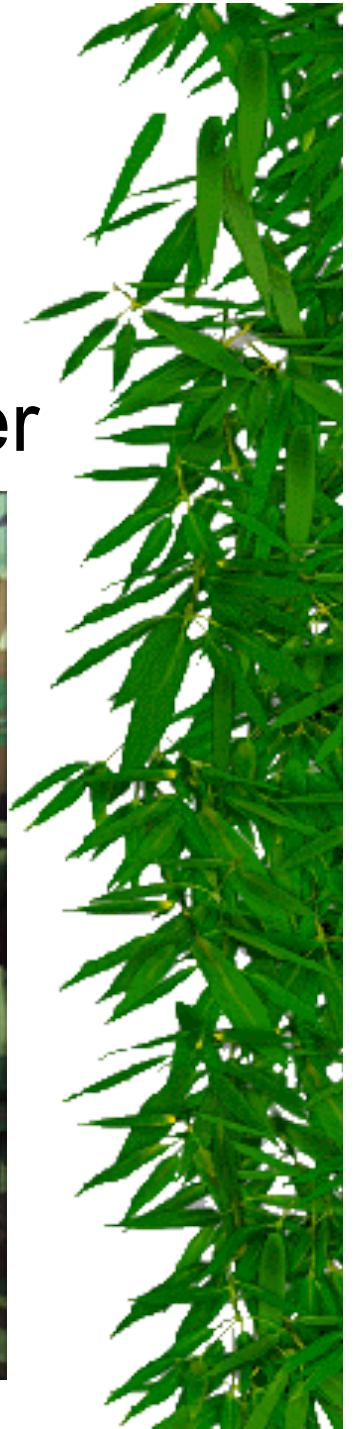
- ★ When you think about workers in China, what do you think of?





Working Conditions in China

- ★ Some are terrible, rescued child worker



China's Mining Disasters



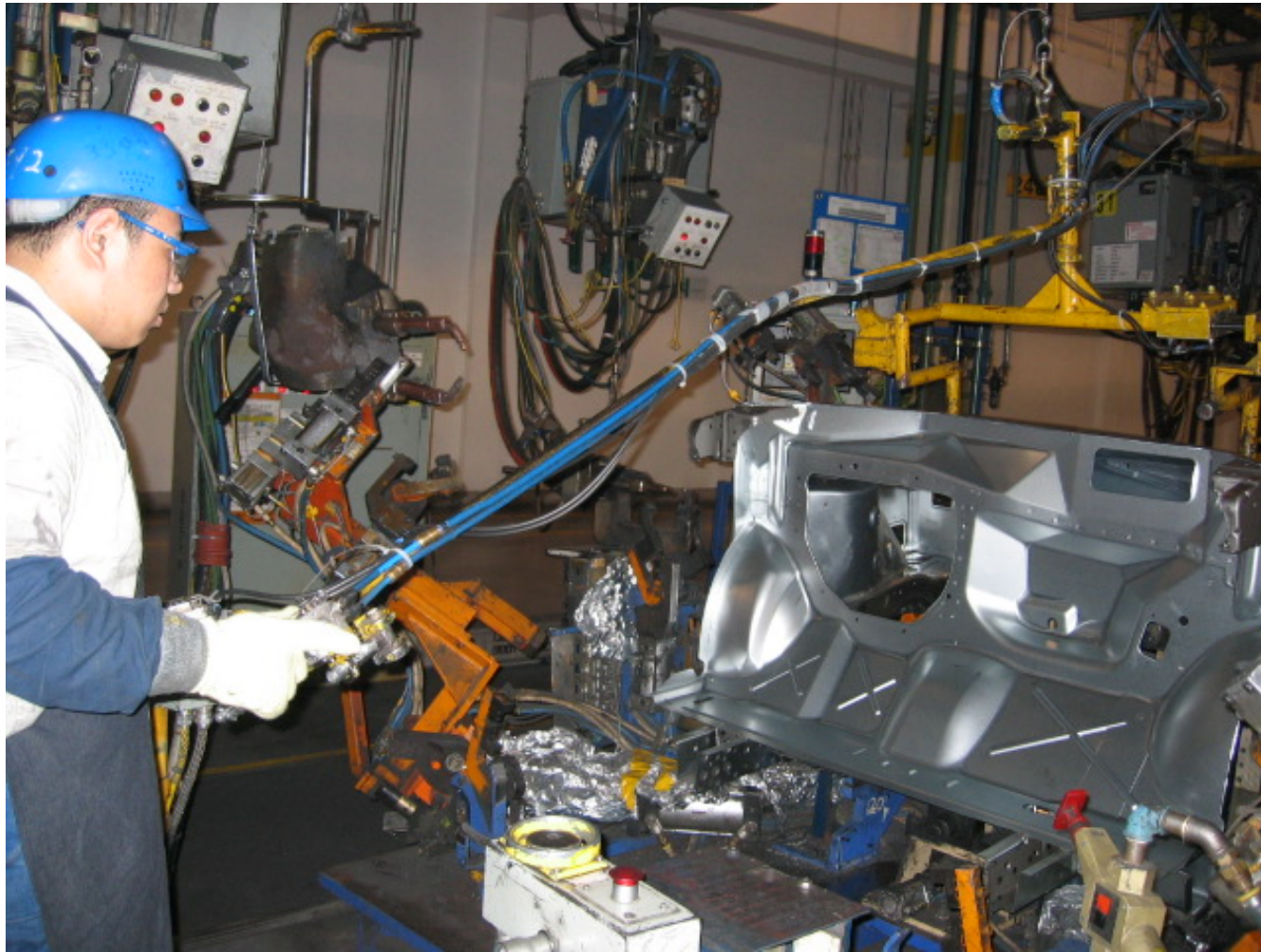
Horrific for Families



**And some workplaces
are excellent,
comparable to Canada**



GM: Excellent health and safety



China is a Big Country

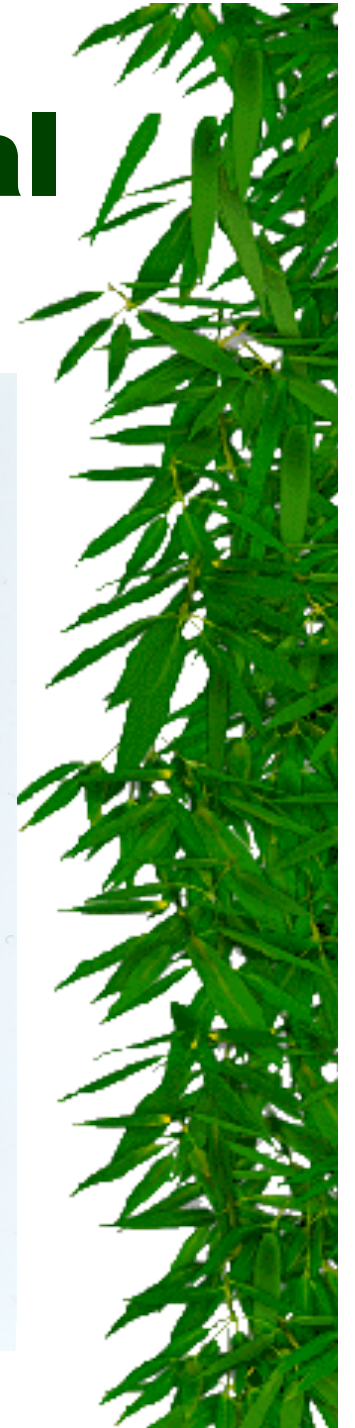
- ★ With many different types of workplaces and many different health and safety challenges



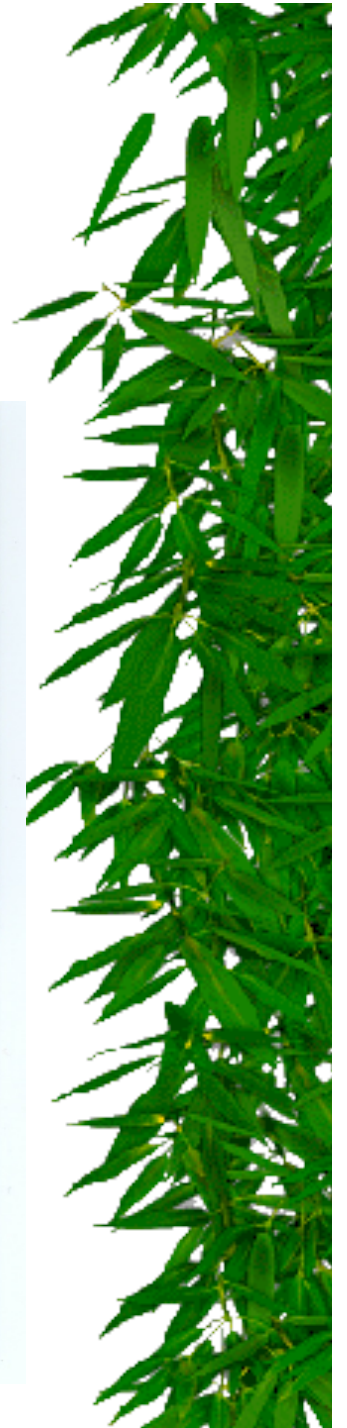
Hebei Provincial Federation of Labour in Canada



Visit to Hebei Provincial Union in China



Visiting Chinese workplaces, modern postal facility



Visits to famous places, eg. Dr. Norman Bethune tomb



Dr. Norman Bethune

Canadian Hero in China



Discussing mutual OHS problems



Common issues with common solutions



Common history of struggle



1926 General Strike in Shanghai



Unions' role and function in Canada

- ★ Workers had to fight to establish unions
- ★ There were many strikes, many successes and many setbacks
- ★ Today there are still lots of struggles to be fought and won
- ★ In a capitalist society, employers have the power
- ★ But unions help to redress this imbalance of power in favour of workers



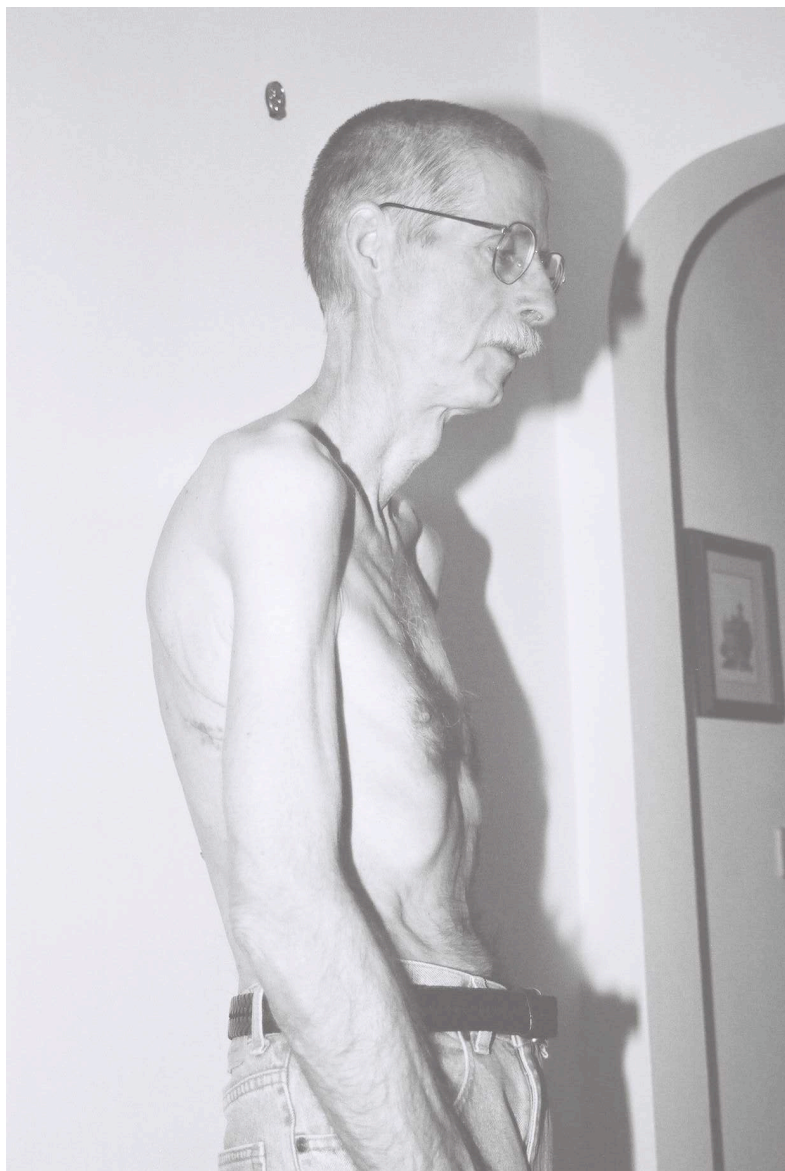
**OHS reps are chosen
by the workers in the
workplaces they
represent**



Occupational Health and Safety Laws

- ★ There are both safety provisions





**And health
provisions
to protect
workers
from
diseases**



Workers' struggles have produced better laws

- ★ In 1974-5 in Ontario, miners struck Elliott Lake uranium mines over health and safety issues
- ★ This led to a Royal Commission to study the problem in 1976
- ★ Recommended Occupational Health and Safety Act, became law in 1979



Better regulations, too

- ★ In 1986-7, hundreds members of our union at Toronto area aerospace plants, McDonnell Douglas and DeHavilland refused to work for weeks over the right to know about workplace hazards (chemicals)
- ★ Cleaned up their workplace and set the stage for new law



WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System)

- ★ Tri-partite committee (labour, employers and government) drafted the WHMIS system
- ★ WHMIS became law in 1988 across Canada:
 - labelling of chemical containers
 - Material Safety Data Sheets (detailed information)
 - worker education and training



We get better health and safety laws where unions are stronger

- ★ United States with only 15%
- ★ Canada with about 30%
- ★ Sweden with about 90%



Health and safety laws are better in Sweden and worse in the United States, compared with Canada

- ★ In Sweden, health and safety committees have the power to make decisions, not just recommendations
- ★ In Sweden, workers are in a majority on health and safety committees



Rights in the USA

- ★ In the United States, there is no right to refuse unsafe work nor are health and safety committees required, except in a few cases



In every country, the most important thing is

- ★ Unions must be on the side of the workers at all times
- ★ It is our role to defend workers collectively and individually
- ★ In the workplace
- ★ In the community
- ★ In the country
- ★ And internationally



Without Us

- ★ Occupational health and safety suffer
- ★ Workers are killed and maimed
- ★ Workers die slow and painful deaths from occupational disease
- ★ And these tragedies are repeated around the world



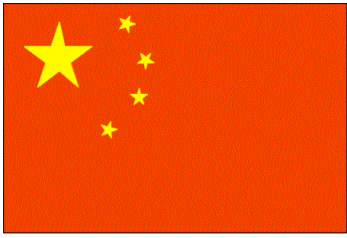
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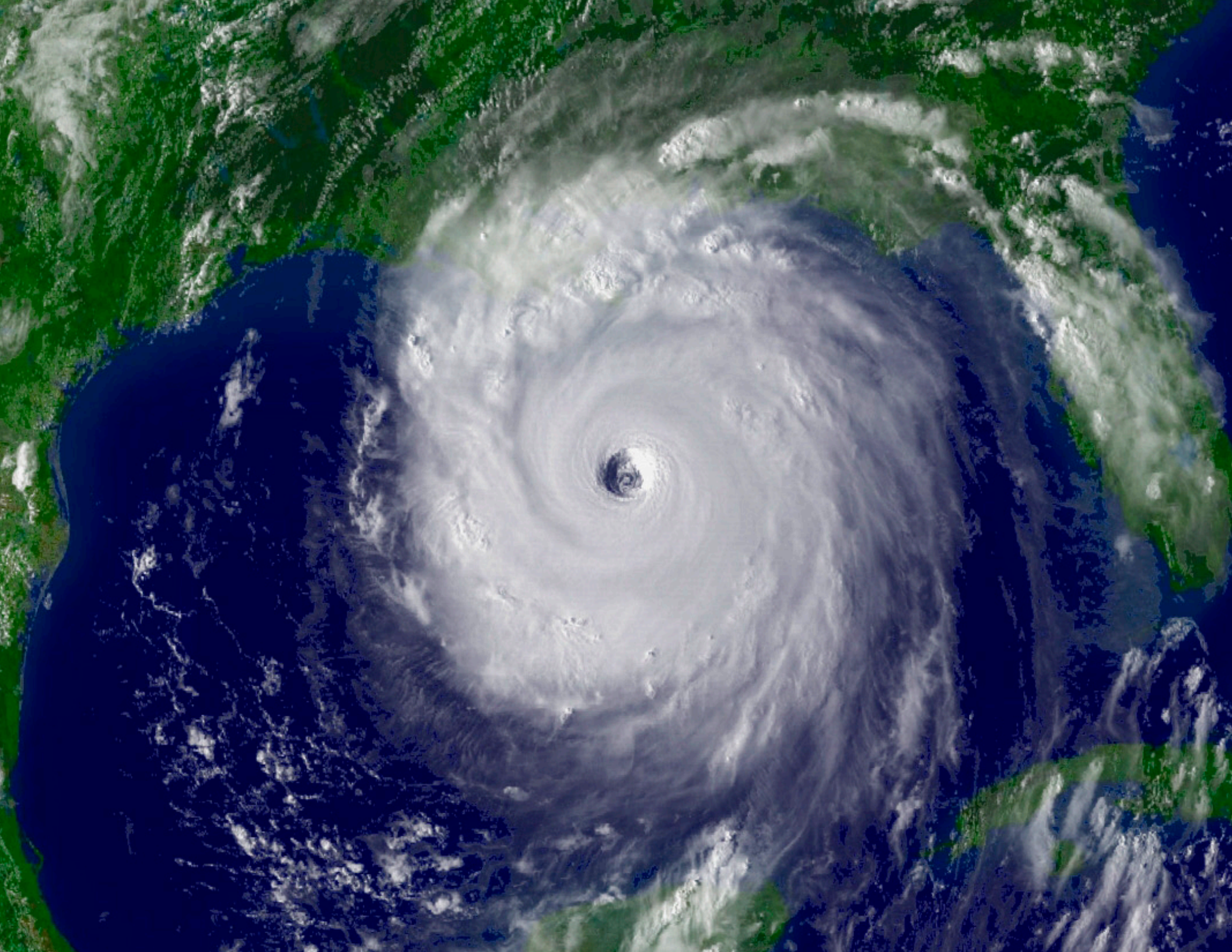
International Solidarity

- ★ The Chinese and South African Trade Unions have some real challenges facing them in the years ahead
- ★ We wish the Chinese and South African labour movements all the best as they cope with h&s hazards caused by globalization
- ★ The working class needs a defence mechanism – the trade union movement, regardless of the social, economic or political system.

What we Canadians do affects the world

- ★ Climate change: we over consume energy; we over produce greenhouse gases
- ★ Our world is getting warmer, our storms more severe, species are becoming extinct, and our clean water is running out





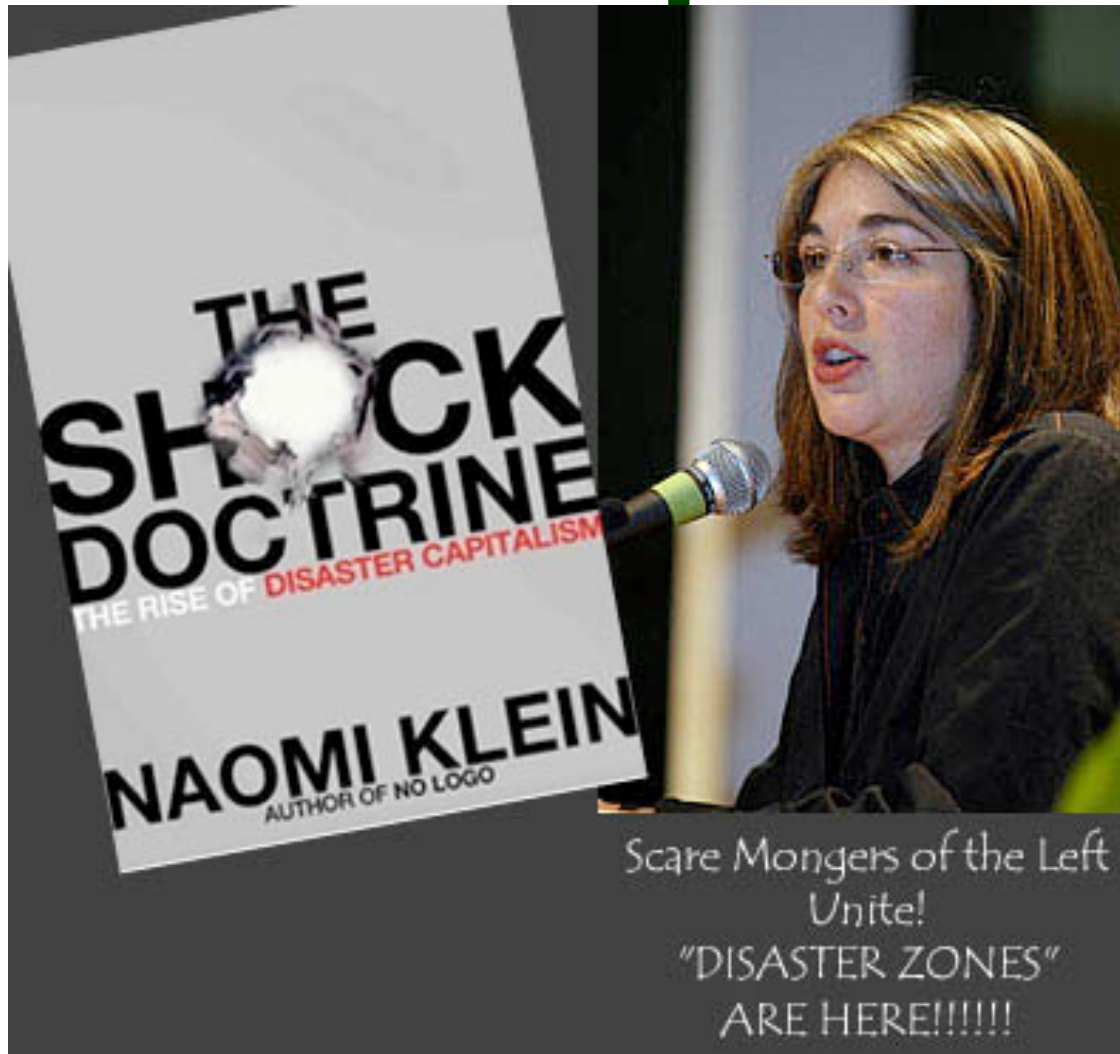


Flooded the schools

- ★ 3 feet of water destroyed this school library
- ★ Lead to?



Naomi Klein calls this “disaster capitalism”



And what about Canada's export of asbestos?

- ★ The Asbestos (Chrysotile) Institute promotes chrysotile asbestos as “safe”
- ★ Where is our asbestos used in developing countries?



Everybody needs clean water, right?

- ★ But these pipes deteriorate and break, releasing asbestos
- ★ And usually we export only raw asbestos so someone had to mix the asbestos and the cement, usually by hand



And asbestos is used in roofs of houses and huts where it crumbles directly onto the people who live there



Where is this asbestos roof?



Asbestos bags leak



Brazilian worker breaking open asbestos bags



Asbestos use in Peru: half is from Canada



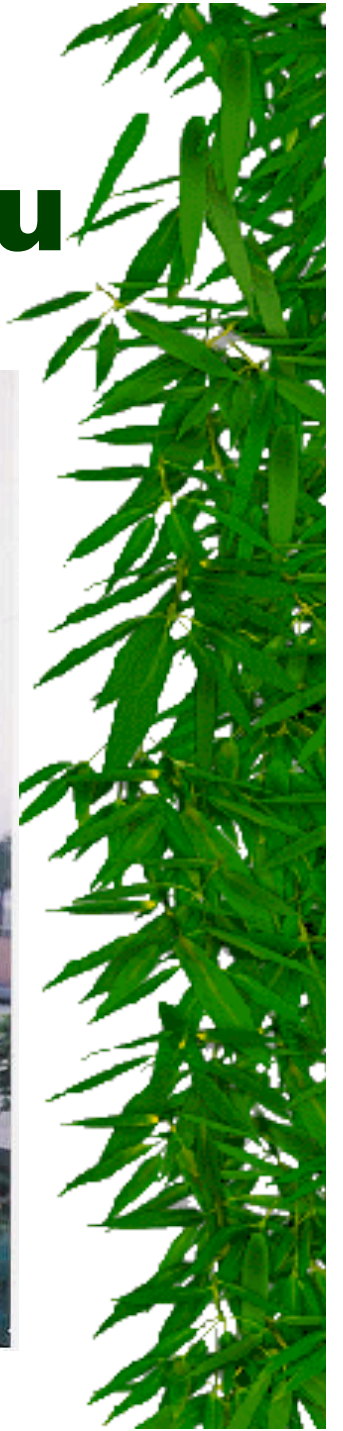
Canadian asbestos in Peru



Working with Asbestos in Peru



Funeral: Asbestos Deaths in Peru



Asbestos Use in India

- ★ How little protection there is in developing countries for either workers or for the general population.



Ahmedabad, Gujarat India

- ★ Manager of an asbestos factory: “Our factory is so safe that our workers do not need to wear masks.”
- ★ The factory has received an ISO 9002 rating from a British company.
- ★ Broken asbestos pieces are used to fill up areas as driveways where vehicles enter the distribution area.





There is a water spray on the blade of the circular saw but the worker's hair is white with asbestos.



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These next pictures are from Pakistan

- ★ From a presentation by Laurie Kazan-Allen from the UK with photos from Noor Jehan of Pakistan





Assistant Professor Noor Jehan standing with a worker beside an asbestos dump at the Asbestos, Talc and Clay Crushing unit in Mohmand Agency, Pakistan.



Asbestos sheet cutting unit in Mardan City (NWFP) located on the main road in a residential area.



Inside this building is a flour mill; while outside is an asbestos crushing machine and an asbestos dump. The man in the picture has worked for 8 years on this machine and was not convinced of any hazard related to asbestos inhalation or its mixing with flour produced inside the building.



How can we export death to the third world?

- ★ Chrysotile asbestos – it looks so innocent, but it's so deadly



Support the international asbestos ban!

- * Congratulations to CUPE!



Useful Web Pages

- * Labour Start :
* www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=China
- * Global Labor Strategies: <http://laborstrategies.blogspot.com/>
- * COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions): www.cosatu.org.za
- * China Labor News in Translation: www.clntranslations.org
- * All-China Federation of Trade Unions: <http://www.acftu.org.cn/>
- * ILO Office for China and Mongolia: www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/beijing/
- * ILO for South Africa:
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/afpro/mdtharare/country/southafrica.htm>
- * China Labour Bulletin: www.china-labour.org.hk
- * International Ban Asbestos Secretariat: <http://ibasecretariat.org/>



Thanks very much!

