

NON-STANDARD ISSUE

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Thoughts on the Pan-Canadian Peace Conference

CANDIL OP-ED

By Collette Lemieux – CANDIL board member

Over the weekend of November 5-7, 2004, I attended the Pan-Canadian Peace Conference in Toronto as the Calgary delegate. The workshops focused on providing

Afghanistan, the October national elections gave the illusion of sovereignty but they were won by the US backed candidate and the future of the Afghani people still remains in the hands of the occupiers. Sadly it is the citizens of these countries who pay either with their lives, their security or their freedom.

Delegates of the conference agreed that our goal is to ensure that each person in the world, but specifically in these areas of conflict, has at the very least basic human rights that are outlined in international human rights law. Bush and Blair would suggest this is what they are bringing to Afghanistan and Iraq but reality shows that they are bringing violence, destruction and chaos. As the peace movement grows we must provide alternatives to Bush, Blair and Sharon's policies. Many at the conference

said "End the occupation" or "Bring the troops home". This should be seen as the starting point for the peace movement but it is not enough on its own. Our solutions must be as complex and realistic as the situations themselves if the peace movement wants to broaden its support base and effect real change.

During the "Troops out Now" workshop, Mazen Ja'afar showed

footage from his trip to Iraq in July, 2004. The videos contained interviews with people who lost family members and people discussing what they wanted for Iraq. We didn't see all of the videos but Mazen conveyed some common themes. Iraqis he

information but primarily we talked about ideas and possible solutions to social justice problems. I personally attended three workshops: Afghanistan, Strategies for Confronting the Occupation; Troops Out Now: Iraq, Resistance and Prospects for Ending the Occupation; Justice for Palestine.

A common theme amongst the conference delegates was that the situations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine are interrelated. In each case, the country is being occupied by a foreign force who has taken away the sovereignty of the people for dubious reasons. The result has been violence due to the military occupation. The civilian population is most effected by the violence. For example, the October Lancet Report stated that over 100,000 Iraqis, mostly women and children, have died since the invasion. The occupying power in each country has repeatedly and brazenly broken international law. In Palestine, Israel has erected the Apartheid Wall that the International Court of Justice has deemed illegal. Each occupier talks about ending the occupation but these are usually measures which give the illusion of sovereignty while keeping the power in foreign hands. In

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WHAT WE BELIEVE

CANDIL promotes global human security through a culture of peace, active democracy and respect for international law. Our vision is global; our strategy is local.

PRINCIPLES

Necessity of International Law for Global Peace and Security

International law is essential for global peace and security, including the peace and security of Canadians. As citizens of Canada, we are expected to obey the law; we expect the same standard of behavior from our government. The government of Canada, and all Canadian political parties, must comply with the fundamental requirements, principles, and purposes of international law, and give international law decisive weight in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy.

Lessons from Iraq

Western policy toward Iraq has contributed to a humanitarian and human rights disaster in that country, and has violated international law, including the law of the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law. The errors and violations of our Iraq policy must be made explicit and used as lessons for constructive change in the direction of Canada's foreign policy, to avoid similarly destructive and costly errors in the future, both in Iraq and in other parts of the world.

Democracy and Responsible Citizenship

A critical, informed, active citizenry is a fundamental requirement of democracy. Citizens are ultimately responsible for the public policy of their government. Citizens of Canada are responsible for compliance of Canadian foreign policy with the law of the United Nations Charter, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law. Familiarity with the basic principles and purposes of international law is an indispensable part of education for responsible citizenship.

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spoke to want the occupiers to leave, this includes both the military and corporate occupiers. This would empower the Iraqi people to have a say in how their country is reconstructed, which gives control over the future of their country. They also know that their country has been decimated by wars and sanctions and they understand that they need money to rebuild. They ask that not only do the occupiers leave but they give Iraqis reparations, which is due to them under international law because they were illegally invaded. Iraqis would have employment due to reconstruction jobs (currently unemployment rates are 50% - 70%). This would reduce hunger, poverty and improve infrastructure. They are also being bankrupted by the reparations they are paying for the invasion of Kuwait. This war was perpetrated by the dictator Saddam Hussein and not by the citizens of Iraq. Since Saddam Hussein was toppled Iraqis have paid \$1.8 billion US in reparations. They ask for forgiveness of this debt. And without having to pay reparations, their slate would be clean and they can begin to use oil revenues to pay for health care and education again. Without occupiers to oppress them, jobs to feed and clothe their families and the rebuilding of infrastructure, it makes sense that the situation in Iraq would quickly stabilize. These are not the only solutions but they provide a start based on what Iraqis want. Similar solutions can be proposed for Afghanistan and Palestine that go beyond ending the occupation and deal with the complexity of each situation. We should also support NGOs in each country that are helping to end the occupation, promoting sovereignty and supporting the democratic process.

In the end, it must be the people of Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine who lead themselves to their own sovereignty. The peace movement must be lead by what the people of these countries want. We can help them by pressuring our governments, protesting and raising awareness. As a global community, we can end the occupation and bring true sovereignty for the people of Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine. ♪

IRAQ

You Can't Bomb Beliefs

By Naomi Klein

**The Nation
October 18, 2004**

My first run-in with Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army came on March 31 in Baghdad. The US occupation chief, Paul

Bremer, had just sent armed men to shut down the young cleric's newspaper, Al Hawza, claiming that its articles comparing Bremer to Saddam Hussein incited violence against Americans. Sadr responded by calling for his supporters to protest outside the gates of the Green Zone, demanding Al Hawza's reopening.

When I heard about the demo, I wanted to go, but there was a problem: I had been visiting state factories all day, and I wasn't dressed appropriately for a crowd of devout Shiites. Then again, I reasoned, this was a demonstration in defense of journalistic freedom—could they really object to a journalist in loose pants? I put on a head scarf and headed over.

Demonstrators had printed up English-language banners that said, Let Journalists Work With No Terror and Let Journalists Do Their Work. That sounded good, I thought, and started doing my work. I was soon interrupted, however, by a black-clad member of the Mahdi Army: He wanted to talk to my translator about my fashion choices. A friend and I joked that we were going to make up our own protest sign that said, Let Journalists Wear Their Pants. But the situation quickly got serious: Another Mahdi soldier grabbed my translator and shoved him against a concrete blast wall, badly injuring his back. Meanwhile, an Iraqi friend called to say she was trapped inside the Green Zone and couldn't leave: She had forgotten to bring a head scarf and was afraid of running into a Mahdi patrol.

It was an instructive lesson about who Sadr actually is: not an anti-imperialist liberator, as some on the far left have cast him, but

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You can't bomb beliefs – continued from page 2

someone who wants the foreigners out so he can shackle and control large portions of Iraq's population himself. But neither is Sadr the one-dimensional villain painted by so many in the media, a portrayal that has allowed many liberals to stay silent as he is barred from participating in elections and to look the other way while US forces nightly firebomb the civilian population of Sadr City, where the fighting recently knocked out electricity in the midst of a Hepatitis E outbreak.

The situation requires a more principled position. For instance, Muqtada al-Sadr's calls for press freedom may not include the freedom of women journalists to cover him. Yet he still deserves to have his right to publish a political newspaper—not because he believes in freedom but because we supposedly do. Similarly, Sadr's calls for fair elections and an end to occupation demand our unequivocal support—not because we are blind to the threat he would pose if he were actually elected but because believing in self-determination means admitting that the outcome of democracy is not ours to control.

These kinds of nuanced distinctions are commonly made in Iraq: Many people I met in Baghdad strongly condemned the attacks on Sadr as evidence that Washington never intended to bring democracy to their country. They backed the cleric's calls for an end to occupation and for immediate open elections. But when asked if they would vote for him in those elections, most laughed at the prospect.

Yet here in North America, the idea that you can support Sadr's call for elections without endorsing him as Iraq's next prime minister has proved harder to grasp. For arguing this position, I have been accused of making "excuses for the theocrats and misogynists" by Nick Cohen in the London Observer, of having "naively fallen for the al-Mahdi militia" by Frank Smyth in Foreign Policy in Focus and of being a "socialist-feminist

offering swooning support to theocratic fascists" by Christopher Hitchens in Slate.

All this manly defense of women's rights is certainly enough to make a girl swoon. Yet before Hitchens rides to the rescue, it's worth remembering how he rationalized his reputation-destroying support for the war: Even if US forces were really after the oil and military bases, he reasoned, the liberation of the Iraqi people would be such a joyous side-

"[Some claim] that this same anti-woman, anti-gay White House is Iraqi people's best hope against Sadr's brand of anti-woman, anti-gay religious fundamentalism."

effect that progressives everywhere should cheer the cruise missiles. With the prospect of liberation still a cruel joke in Iraq, Hitchens is now claiming that this same anti-woman, anti-gay White House is the Iraqi people's best hope against Sadr's brand of anti-woman, anti-gay religious

fundamentalism. Once again we are supposed to hold our noses and cheer the Bradleys—for the greater good, or the lesser evil.

There is no question that Iraqis face a mounting threat from religious fanaticism, but US forces won't protect Iraqi women and minorities from it any more than they have protected Iraqis from being tortured in Abu Ghraib or bombed in Falluja and Sadr City. Liberation will never be a trickle-down effect of this invasion because domination, not liberation, was always its goal. Even under the best scenario, the current choice in Iraq is not between Sadr's dangerous fundamentalism and a secular democratic government made up of trade unionists and feminists. It's between open elections—which risk handing power to fundamentalists but would also allow secular and moderate religious forces to organize—and rigged elections designed to leave the country in the hands of Iyad Allawi and the rest of his CIA/Mukhabarat-trained thugs, fully dependent on Washington for both money and might.

This is why Sadr is being hunted—not because he is a threat to women's rights but because

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NON-STANDARD ISSUE
Non-Standard Issue is a bi-monthly newsletter that expresses alternative views in hopes of broadening the minds of citizens and encouraging them to voice their opinions about democracy, peace, international law and responsible citizenship.

What you can do to become a more responsible citizen.

- 1. Educate yourself.**
Check out alternative news websites and join CANDIL or a similar group.
- 2. Contact your MP or MLA** on issues that you feel they should be addressing.
- 3. Make your voice heard!** Send your letters, commentaries, etc. to editors.

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality."

–Martin Luther King Jr.

**JANUARY
MOVIE NIGHT**

We are showing Coca Mama by Jan Thielen.

The US recently launched another billion dollar aid package to intensify its 'War on Drugs'. Filmed over a year in four countries, this documentary brings us coca growing peasants, anti-narcotic patrols, US law-makers and gains unique access to the Colombian rebels who stand accused of protecting the drug trade.

WHEN

Friday, January 30 at 7:00 p.m.

WHERE

Parkdale United Church, 2919 8 Ave N.W.

CANDIL Raffle fundraiser

Starting January 30 and running until March 19, CANDIL members will be selling raffle tickets to win a wonderful wine basket. Tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5. Please help support a great cause.

You can't bomb beliefs – continued from page 3

he is the single greatest threat to US military and economic control of Iraq. Even after Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani backed down from his opposition to the handover plans, fearing civil war, Sadr continued to oppose the US-drafted Constitution, continued to call for the withdrawal of foreign troops and continued to oppose US plans to appoint the interim government rather than hold elections. If Sadr's demands are met and the country's fate is truly left in the hands of the majority, US military bases in Iraq will be in serious jeopardy, as will all the privatization-friendly laws pushed through by Bremer.

Progressives should oppose the US attack on Sadr, because it is an attack not on one man but on the possibility of Iraq's democratic future.

There is another reason, as well, to defend Sadr's democratic rights: It's the best way to fight the rise of religious fundamentalism in Iraq.

Far from reducing the draw of extremism, the US attack on Sadr has greatly strengthened it. Sadr has deftly positioned himself not as the narrow voice of strict Shiites but as an Iraqi nationalist defending the entire country against foreign invaders. Thus, when he was attacked with the full force of the US military and dared to resist, he earned the respect of millions of Iraqis living under the humiliation and brutality of occupation.

The heavy-handed attempts to silence Sadr have also served to confirm the worst fears of many Shiites—that they are being betrayed by the Americans once again, the same Americans who supported Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war, which took the lives of more than 100,000 Iraqis; the same Americans who told them to rise up in 1991, only to leave them to be slaughtered. Now, under siege once again, many are seeking refuge in the certainties of fundamentalism, not to mention in the emergency social services provided by the mosques. Some are even concluding that they need a tyrant of their own, a fierce fundamentalist to do

battle with the other strongmen trying to control Iraq.

This shift in attitude is evident in all the polling. A Coalition Provisional Authority poll in May, after the first US siege on Najaf, found that opinion of Sadr had improved among 81 percent of Iraqi respondents. An Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies poll ranked Sadr—a marginal figure only six months before—as Iraq's second most influential political player after Sistani.

Most alarming, the attacks appear to be boosting support not only for Sadr personally but for theocracy generally. In February, the month before Paul Bremer closed down Sadr's newspaper, an Oxford Research International survey found that a majority of Iraqis wanted a secular

government: Only 21 percent of respondents said their favored political system was "an Islamic state" and only 14 percent ranked "religious politicians" as their preferred political actors. Fast-forward to August, with Najaf under siege by US forces: The International Republican Institute reported that a staggering 70 percent of

“[B]elieving in self-determination means admitting that the outcome of democracy is not ours to control.”

Iraqis want Islam and Shariah as the basis of the state. The poll didn't differentiate between Sadr's unyielding interpretation of Shariah and more moderate versions represented by other religious parties. Yet it's clear that some of the people who told me back in March that they supported Sadr but would never vote for him are beginning to change their minds.

In response to my last column, "Bring Najaf to New York," The Nation received a letter from Maj. Glen Butler, a US Marine helicopter pilot stationed in Najaf. Major Butler defends the siege on the holy city by saying that he and his fellow Marines were trying to prevent the "evil" of "radical Muslims" from spreading—"Our desire is to keep Najaf in Najaf." Well, it's not working. Helicopter gunships are good at killing people. Beliefs, when under fire, tend to spread. ☹

AFGHANISTAN

The Winners are Warlords, Not Women

By Natasha Walter

The Guardian
October 12, 2004

spectacle of women queueing, their blue burkas billowing, at the polling stations. George Bush also hit upon this as proof of the success of the American presence in Afghanistan. He stated that the first person to vote in the election was a 19-year-old woman, and commented that she was "voting in this election because the United States of America believes that freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world".

Bush has frequently used his policy in Afghanistan as evidence of his commitment to women's rights, and as an attempt to woo women voters. Recently, Laura Bush spoke at an election rally at which women in the audience held placards saying, "W stands for women". She told her husband's supporters: "After years of being treated as virtual prisoners in their own homes by the Taliban, the women of Afghanistan are going back to work. And wasn't it wonderful to watch the Olympics and see that beautiful Afghan sprinter race in long pants and a T-shirt, exercising her new freedom."

It was wonderful, but it wasn't the whole story. If we listen to what Afghan women themselves are saying we glimpse a darker reality than politicians here or in the US would like to show us. Undoubtedly, the removal of the Taliban did improve the lot of many Afghan women, and I say that even though I opposed the war at the time. Many girls have gone to school, many women have gone to work. The sole female presidential candidate in the election, Massouda Jalal, can speak openly about building a society in which women have equality; and 40% of those who registered to vote in the election were women.

The US and Britain used the oppression of Afghan women to justify their intervention. That's not how it's seen on the ground

In the elections held in Afghanistan last weekend, many reporters concentrated on the extraordinary

But the Americans and the British did not go into Afghanistan to defend women's rights, however eagerly our politicians sell that picture back to us. When I visited Afghanistan a couple of years ago, I was struck by the depth of anger against the old mujahideen commanders, and how passionately people, especially women, longed for them to face justice.

Instead, their power has been entrenched by the Americans' reliance on them as allies against the Taliban and al-Qaida. That horrifies not only western observers with access to Amnesty International reports, but also ordinary women who experienced, and still experience, their crimes. Sahar Saba, a spokeswoman for the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, a secular organisation still unable to work openly, told me last week: "People who should be on trial for their crimes are still in key positions in the government, so in such a situation speaking about democracy and women's rights is futile."

As is well known, the warlords - men such as Rashid Dostum and Atta Mohammed - have many of the same attitudes to women as the Taliban. Between Hope and Fear,

a report just published by Human Rights Watch, provides a chilling reminder of what that means. These men are targeting women who take part in any political or development work. Even in Kabul, by far the safest and most open part of the country, one woman working at a women's organisation said, "Even entering the door of this office, that itself is a grave risk."

A woman from Kabul who went to a northern province

to investigate why a women's centre had been forced to close down by local strongmen, received death threats and was forced to leave the country. Many of the women who spoke to Human Rights Watch are those who tried to participate in public life, but who have now dropped out in fear and despair.

One of the most depressing of many depressing tales in the report is the story of a women's organisation that was forced to close a project in the Panjshir region because a group of mullahs objected to it. The staff tried to go on despite threats by armed men, but in the end they gave up. "Nothing worked. We felt we had lost."



by Stephanie McMillan - www.minimumsecurity.net

The winners are warlords, not women— continued from page 5

Even the figure of 40% of voters being female has been questioned by observers, who have noted multiple registration in some areas, while in others fewer than 10% of registered voters were women. Female reporters - able to talk to ordinary women, who are often prevented from talking to male outsiders - talked to many women who obtained cards but were prevented by the men in their families from going to vote.

It is a mistake to put too much store on the election in the lives of the women in Afghanistan. Its outcome is not in much doubt, but even after the election Afghan women will have to go on living in a society in which, beyond Kabul, power is still parcelled out between those brutal regional commanders.

Those female voices that do get heard are still calling for more funding for development and disarmament initiatives in Afghanistan, and the expansion of the UN-backed peacekeeping force in order to create a less threatening situation on the ground. But although our politicians like to use the tale of the women of Afghanistan as a selling point, their real energy and interest has moved on.

In a strange twist of logic, Tony Blair said at Labour's conference that the resistance in Iraq was led by "the same people who stopped Afghan girls going to school ... They are in Iraq for the very reason we should be." The idea that the occupation forces in Iraq are fighting the Taliban is nonsensical. It is bizarre that the example of the needs of Afghan girls should be used not as a spur for redoubled humanitarian efforts in that country, but as a spur for the occupation of another country. Politicians in the west are keen to use the rhetoric of women's rights as a justification for their policies, and they are refusing to listen to women who say those policies are failing them. ♪

PALESTINE

<p>Death, Delusion and Democracy</p>
<p>By Robert Fisk</p>
<p>The Independent November 16, 2004</p>

So the death of Yasser Arafat is a great new opportunity for the Palestinians, is it? The man who personified the Palestinian struggle - "Mr Palestine" - is dead. So things can only get better for the Palestinians. Death means democracy. Death means statehood. That the final demise of the

corrupt old guerrilla leader should be a sign of optimism demonstrates just how catastrophic the conflict in the Middle East has now become. It's a bit like Fallujah. The more we destroy it, the crueler we are, the brighter the chances of Iraqi democracy. The more successful we are, the worse things are going to get. That's what George Bush said on Friday: that violence will increase as Iraqi elections grow closer - a total mind warp since the more violent Iraq becomes, the less the chances of any election ever being held.

Note how Bush could not even bring himself to mention Arafat's name. It's the same old agenda. The Palestinians have to have a democracy. They have to prove themselves; they - not the Israelis - have to show that they are a worthy "negotiating partner". And any new leader - the colorless Ahmad Qureia or the equally colorless and undemocratic Abu Mazen - must "control his own people". That was what Arafat failed to do even though he thought his job was to represent his own people, which is what democracy is supposed to be all about.

It's worth noting how this narrative has been written. The Israelis, with their continued occupation, their continued illegal construction of colonies for Jews and Jews only on

That the final demise of the corrupt old guerrilla leader should be a sign of optimism demonstrates just how catastrophic the conflict in the Middle East has now become.

Arab land, their air strikes and helicopter executions and live-fire shooting at stone-throwing children, are not part of this equation. They are just innocently waiting to find a new "negotiating partner" now that Arafat is in his grave. Ariel Sharon, held "personally responsible" for the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre by the Kahan commission report, remains, in George Bush's words, "a

man of peace". No one asks whether he can control his own army. Or whether he can control his own settlers. He wants to close down the colonies in Gaza - even though his spokesman has told us that this will put Palestinian statehood into "formaldehyde".

So let's just take a look back at those tragic years of the Oslo accord. In 1993, we are supposed to believe, the Palestinians were offered statehood and a capital in

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Death, delusion and democracy – continued from page 6

Jerusalem if they accepted the right of Israel to exist. Oslo said nothing of the kind. It did set down a complex system of Israeli withdrawals from occupied Palestinian land and a timetable that the Israelis were supposed to meet. We all knew that any failure to do so would humiliate Arafat - and make him less able to “control” his own people.

And what happened? It’s important, at this supposedly “optimistic” moment, to reflect on the facts of the previous “peace process” in which Europe as well as the United States spent so much time, energy and - in the EU’s case - money. Under the Oslo agreement, the occupied West Bank would be divided into three zones. Zone A would come under exclusive Palestinian control, Zone B under Israeli military occupation in participation with the Palestinian Authority, and Zone C under total Israeli occupation. In the West Bank, Zone A comprised only 1.1 per cent of the land whereas in Gaza - overpopulated, rebellious, insurrectionary - almost all the territory was to come under Arafat’s control. He, after all, was to be the policeman of Gaza. Zone C in the West Bank comprised 60 per cent of the land, which allowed Israel to continue the rapid expansion of settlements on Arab land. But a detailed investigation shows that not a single one of these withdrawal agreements was honored by the Israelis. And in the meantime, the number of settlers illegally living on Palestinians’ land rose after Oslo from 80,000 to 150,000 - even though the Israelis, as well as the Palestinians, were forbidden from taking “unilateral steps” under the terms of the agreement. The Palestinians saw this, not without reason, as proof of bad faith.

Since facts are sometimes elusive in the Middle East, let’s remind ourselves of what happened after Oslo. The Oslo II (Taba) agreement, concluded by Yitzhak Rabin in September 1995 - the month before he was assassinated - promised three Israeli withdrawals: from Zone A (under Palestinian control), Zone B (under Israeli military occupation in co-operation with the Palestinians) and Zone C (exclusive Israeli occupation). These were to be completed by October 1997. Final-status agreement covering Jerusalem, refugees, water and settlements were to have been completed by October 1999, by which time the occupation was supposed to have ended. In January 1997, however, a handful of Jewish settlers were granted 20 per cent of Hebron, despite Israel’s obligation under Oslo to leave all West Bank towns. By October 1998, a year late, Israel had not carried out the Taba accords.

The Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, negotiated a new agreement at Wye River, dividing the second

redeployment promised at Taba into two phases - but he only honored the first of them. Netanyahu had promised to reduce the percentage of West Bank land under exclusively Israeli occupation from 72 per cent to 59 per cent, transferring 41 per cent of the West Bank to Zones A and B. But at Sharm el-Sheikh in 1999, the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Barak, reneged on the agreement Netanyahu had made at Wye River, fragmenting the latter’s two phases into three, the first of which would transfer 7 per cent from Zone C to Zone B. All implementation of the agreements stopped there.

When Arafat finally went to Camp David to meet Barak, he was allegedly offered 95 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza but turned it down and went to war with the second intifada. A study of the maps, however, shows that - with the exclusion of Jerusalem and its extended boundaries, with the exclusion of existing major Jewish colonies and with the inclusion of an Israeli cordon sanitaire, Arafat was offered nearer to 64 per cent of the 22 per cent of mandate Palestine that was left to him. Then a new explosion of Palestinian suicide bombings, usually aimed at Israeli civilians, destroyed Israel’s patience with Arafat. Sharon, who had provoked the second intifada by strolling on to the Temple Mount with a thousand policeman, decided that Arafat was a Bin Laden-style “terrorist” and all further contact ended.

This is not to excuse the PLO or Arafat himself. His arrogance and corruption, and his little dictatorship - initially encouraged by the Israelis and Americans who lent Arafat their CIA boys to “train” the Palestinian security services - ensured that no democracy could thrive in “Palestine”. And I suspect that while he personally disapproved of suicide bombings, Arafat cynically realized that they had their uses; they proved that Sharon could not provide Israel with the security he promised at his election, at least until he built the new wall - which is stealing further Palestinian land. But that was only one side of the story - and last week Bush and Blair went back to the old game of seeing only the other side. The Palestinians - the victims of 39 years of occupation - must prove themselves worthy of peace with their occupiers. The death of their leader is therefore billed as a glorious occasion that provides hope. All this is part of the self-delusion of Bush and Blair. The reality is that the outlook in the Middle East is bleaker than ever.

Oh yes, and - since we’d be asking this question today if Sharon had gone to meet his maker in an equally mysterious way - just what did Arafat die of? ☹

Since facts are
sometimes elusive in
the Middle East, let’s
remind ourselves of
what happened
after Oslo.

UPDATE ON BMD

Last year Non-Standard did an issue on ballistic missile defence. Here is an update on the situation.

Slim Majority Oppose Missile Defence: Poll

By CBC News Online staff

The Guardian
November 5, 2004

OTTAWA - A new survey suggests 52 per cent of Canadians don't want Prime Minister Paul Martin to sign on to the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defence System.

Washington is already moving ahead on the plan. It has placed 10 of the land-based missiles in western states, poised

to shoot down incoming threats to the United States. On this side of the border, Martin has repeatedly said Canada must do its part in defending North America as long as there's a guarantee it won't lead to putting weapons in space.

A poll released Thursday suggests a decision to join the American system poses a major political risk for Martin's minority government, however. The poll, conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada and called "Portraits of Canada," questioned more than 3,000 people between mid-September and mid-October.

It showed more than half of Canadians don't want any part of the plan, though 46 per cent support this country's involvement. Opposition to the plan was strongest among people polled in Quebec. In the province where Martin's Liberals lost more than a dozen seats in the June 28 election, 65 per cent of those surveyed said they oppose Canada joining the missile defence system. Support for the system is strongest in Newfoundland and Labrador (66 per cent) and in Alberta (54 per cent).

More passion among those opposed

Donna Dasko is the vice-president of the polling firm Environics, which conducted the survey in English Canada. She said the key finding was that people who oppose missile defence feel much more strongly about the issue than those who support it. "The passion is on the side of not participating. That's where the voices are going to be strongest in saying, 'This country shouldn't be doing this.'"

Members of the Liberal caucus are also deeply divided over whether Canada should join in the missile defence system.

Defence Minister Bill Graham said he has long thought the government needs to do a better job of explaining what's at stake. "This is an issue of some complexity, but very important to our U.S. relations," he said.

The poll also found that most Canadians want good relations with the United States, but are increasingly wary of getting too close to their southern neighbour. That concern was fuelled by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq 19 months ago, as well as the divisive presidential election campaign that returned George W. Bush to the White House this week.

The survey is considered accurate to within 1.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. ♪

CANDIL UPDATE

Julie Hrdlicka and Noel Ainsley visited more schools in the city. They've had a good response and one school had a bake sale and is selling pencils to raise money for the Adopt a Town project. They also made postcards to send with Noel, who is currently on his trip to Jordan where he'll meet up with a Life For Relief contact who will take the cards to Iraq. CANDIL has recently formulated a working position paper on Iraq, which is available on the website, where we take a more in-depth look at possible solutions to the conflict and occupation.

We're also working on a dinner event for March 19, 2005. Keep an eye on our website for more information.

Collette Lemieux, a CANDIL board member, went to the Pan-Canadian Peace Conference in Toronto on November 6 and 7th.

Candil co-hosted a benefit premier of The Take at the Uptown theatre on Nov 10th. Director Avi Lewis was in attendance, the evening was a sell out and a great success.



CANDIL members at opening of "The Take" with Avi Lewis

In the spring we hope to send at least one representative to New York for the UN's Non- Proliferation Conference. ♪