

# RE:ACTION

THE MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF THE VANCOUVER ISLAND PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP

SUMMER 2005 ISSUE

## Ethiopian Students At Risk

By Bruce Wallace

With thousands of Ethiopian students recently arrested and currently detained and at risk of torture, Ethiopians studying at Canadian universities seek the support of their Canadian colleagues in ending the crackdown.

From June 6 to 8 a student demonstration at the Addis Ababa University campus resulted in police opening fire on students and arresting over 1,500 students who many fear are at risk of torture. The students were protesting the announcement of the provisional results from the parliamentary elections of May 15 and supporting demands for an investigation into alleged voting irregularities, including reported killings, arrests and beatings of opposition candidates.

Amnesty International calls the use of force “excessive and indiscriminate” reporting that the mass arrests and shootings of demonstrators in Addis Ababa has left at least 26 dead and over 100 injured. Police also conducted mass arrests and detained thousands of students and other protesters who are now believed to be at risk of torture.

In Canada, university students from Ethiopia not only fear for the lives of fellow students back home but also fear speaking out here in Canada. The Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG) is an activist student group at the University of Victoria. When staff were told that student demonstrators were currently facing risk of torture in Ethiopia there was an urgency to respond in solidarity.

After talking to several Ethiopian students in universities in Vancouver and Victoria it became clear that none could openly question the Ethiopian government crackdown, for fear of their safety and the safety of their family and friends



back home.

One student told me “Like every Ethiopian, I was optimistic that the elections of May 15 would be free and fair and my country would be free from the rule of force. But now after the post election violence it is clear that Ethiopia is sliding backwards into lawlessness and autocracy.” Another student told me that “the whole notion of a democratic Ethiopia is obviously a fraud as it really is a police state. Democracy does not mean the elimination of the opposition and clearly opposition should not result in the penalty of death.”

I was informed by the students that they are unable to speak out or be identified if they ever want to return to Ethiopia, which one called “a dangerous state”. As Human Rights Watch reports, the bloodshed in Addis Ababa was not the first time that Ethiopian security forces have killed large numbers of protesters. In 2001, police killed more than 30 people and wounded an estimated 400 more in putting down a student demonstration at the same university. And in 2002, police opened machine-gun fire on protesters in Awassa, killing an estimated 38 people. Police have beaten and tortured large numbers of students over the last few years. Many students were kept

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in prison for weeks or months without ever being brought before a judge, a clear violation of international human rights and the constitution introduced by the ruling party.

Those of us not from Ethiopia have an obligation to speak out. VIPIRG is taking action in solidarity with the student demonstrators who have been detained. Student activism is a worldwide movement. Most will remember the role students played in pivotal events such as the fight for civil rights in the US, the opposition to the war in Vietnam, the demonstrations for democratic reform in Tiananmen Square and the pressure for fair trade over free trade through the protests of the WTO and anti-sweatshop campaigns. The student movement may be scattered across campuses around the world but it can also act in solidarity.

Recent BBC interviews with Ethiopian government officials reveal the government feels justified in shooting and killing student protesters. The government first blames the losing opposition parties for creating the crisis and then argues that their tough measures were necessary to maintaining law and order. These arguments are however irrelevant and do not provide indemnity for violating international human rights standards related to the use of force for crowd control.

Canadian citizens and our governments have a role in being able to use our voices to support those who live in fear. Canada has supported the creation of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and an Office of Ombudsman. Our federal government must now take an active role in ensuring that international principles of human rights are followed in handling demonstrations. There is an urgent need for international pressure to end the police violence; quickly release the detained students; and establish an independent and impartial commission of inquiry into the killings and make those findings public.

*Bruce Wallace is the Research Coordinator at the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG).*

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## VIPIRG Welcomes new Executive Director and Outreach Coordinator

Greg Awai is the new Executive Director of VIPIRG and he started his new position in March. Naomi Devine is the new Outreach Coordinator and she started in June.

### **About Greg:**

I have called Victoria my home for the past 7 years. I returned to University at UVic in the winter of 1998 with the intention of pursuing a degree in physics and math. However, I was soon enveloped in the vibrant political culture at UVic, and as a result changed my focus to the social and environmental realm. Since then I've worked on a wide variety of concerns including: refugee and immigrant rights, student issues, peace, poverty, sustainable forestry, and food systems. My main areas of interest are sustainable agriculture, food systems, and food security.

I've been involved with VIPIRG for several years, and was a member of the Coordinating Collective from 2002-2004. I believe strongly in all the work that VIPIRG has done in the past and will work to ensure that the agency continues to work with a variety of community partners to confront emerging issues.

In addition to working at VIPIRG, I'm involved with the organic movement here in BC, and am currently working as a Verification Officer, inspecting organic farms.

I'm always interested in what VIPIRG student and community members have to contribute to the organization. Please feel free to stop by the office (SUB b122 at UVic), send me an email ([director@vipirg.ca](mailto:director@vipirg.ca)) or pick up the phone (721-8629) to get in touch with me.

### **About Naomi:**

I've just begun my work as VIPIRG's new Outreach Coordinator and I have to say that I feel very privileged to work here. I am looking forward to collaborating with all of the working groups here at VIPIRG and promoting us in classroom presentations over the year. We have many exciting events planned for the fall so I have my work cut out for me!

Currently, I am a student here at UVic completing a degree in Environmental Studies and Political Science. On the volunteer front I am on the Board of Directors for the UVic Sustainability Project (UVSP) and the BC Sustainable Energy Association (BCSEA). I am also the Chair of the BCSEA's Victoria Chapter. My passion lies in environmental activism which leads me to social activism because I see these issues as interrelated. I am very interested in campus planning, sustainable energy, and wilderness preservation and advocating for these issues.

I also work as the administrator at the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance here at the university. On my days off (which are few!) you can find me reading, walking along Victoria's waterfront, strolling through Beacon Hill Park, or riding my bike on the Goose.

I am very interested in working with student and community members of VIPIRG on various issues and I echo Greg's sentiment. Feel free to come by and say hello (SUB B122), drop me a line via email ([outreach@vipirg.ca](mailto:outreach@vipirg.ca)), or give me a ring (472-5170).

# New Working Groups for Fall 2005!

## Fair Trade VIPIRG

While there has been an increase in fairly traded goods available in Victoria and at UVic, there is still a lot of room for increasing the both awareness and market share of these ethical products.

Ian Hussey, who is the co-founder of the Canadian Fair Trade Network ([www.fairtradenetwork.ca](http://www.fairtradenetwork.ca)) and is pursuing a Master of Arts in Sociology at UVic starting this September, is coordinating the beginning of a VIPIRG fair trade group, which will be part of a larger national network of student groups working on increasing the prominence of fair trade.

If you're interested, contact Ian at [fairtrade@vipirg.ca](mailto:fairtrade@vipirg.ca)

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**reading isn't enough.  
get off your ass and do something.**

**VIPIRG**

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## USA War Resisters need Canadian Support

By Theresa Wolfwood

Imagine a slight pretty young woman pointing a machine gun at terrified women and children, lying on their stomachs on the floor. A scene from a Hollywood movie about druggies and gangsters? NO!



This is the real world of Iraq. The young woman looks into the eyes of her captives and sees their fear and hatred. She begins to realize that these are the people she was told she came to help. When the Colorado National Guard recruiters came to her school, 8 years ago, they persuaded Kelly Dougherty (in photo) that she could serve her country in domestic disasters like floods and earthquakes. In a recent

speech in Victoria, Kelly, now 26 years old, says these recruiters are very persuasive and persistent – particularly in schools in low income and poor areas of the USA. The National Guard offers a chance for paid higher education to these kids who otherwise might not afford to go to university. Kelly served in Bosnia in the military police; she was a medic when she was in the USA. In 2003 she

## Indigenous Peoples' Solidarity group

One of VIPIRG's new committees for the fall will be an Indigenous Peoples Solidarity group, to create a space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, youth and community members to learn about, analyze and take action around Indigenous peoples' rights.

Student and community participation is crucial to ensuring important issues are raised and acted upon - the Solidarity group is just beginning to develop its focus, and your input will shape our course of action. An example of a possible issue to address this Fall is to raise awareness about Indigenous communities affected by and responding to devastating mining projects.

While the group's specific mandate, name and structure will not be decided on until September, VIPIRG Coordinating Collective members have begun to get in touch with people involved in the Indigenous Governance program, Native Students' Union and Indigenous Studies at UVic.

To learn more and/or contribute to the group, please email: [solidarity@vipirg.ca](mailto:solidarity@vipirg.ca) or leave a message at VIPIRG: (250) 721-8629.

was sent to Iraq – again to be in the military police for 10 months.

When it was a quiet day at her post in Nasariya, near Baghdad, the commander would say, "I guess it's time to raid some houses". So off the armed police would go and storm into some family's home. Without Arabic translators, the police just gestured and yelled in English: Women and children onto the floor. Men were arrested and taken to detention. Kelly was told they would be spoken to in Arabic there, and would have a chance to explain themselves. She learned that did not happen; the detention prisons just keep filling up. She says that torture is not confined to one prison or one time; it is universal in USA military jails in Iraq.

The other job the military police did was guard transport vehicles that were stopped or broken down. These were all owned by the Halliburton Co. (VP Dick Cheney's outfit) and they carried medical supplies, fuel, equipment, and food from Basra. They often killed people and animals. Kelly recalled seeing a flattened goat herd, a child, run over with his goats on the road, wondering again why was she there? The police had to protect the trucks from Iraqis who gathered around to see if they could get something. After a few hours, the police were often ordered to blow up and

*continued on p. 4 see "War Resisters ..."*

## War Resisters ...

burn the loaded vehicles rather than let “the Iraqi looters” benefit.

Kelly came home sick of the war and left the military. She said she was opposed to the war before she went to Iraq, but thought that they would do some good for the people after the war. She believes now that this war of occupation is violent and perpetuates violence. She said the USA must withdraw its military. Leaving Iraq to the Iraqis would be less violent and is also the right thing to do. Kelly also knows the war is based on lies; it was always intended to serve corporate oil interests.

She says, “I believe that no true democracy or freedom can occur in Iraq as long as the US military is occupying the country.” She also states that the war is bleeding people and communities in the USA as public services are cut to support the war of that debt-ridden nation to the south. She is not alone in her beliefs; Kelly says most soldiers stationed in Iraq want to leave, knowing they have no right or purpose to be there.

USA does not treat its veterans well either, she says. Returned soldiers who are sick or suffering from radiation illness from the hundreds of tons of ‘depleted uranium’ used in Iraq are not helped and their sickness is often not recognized. After her discharge,

Kelly helped found the **Iraqi Veterans Against the War**, all of whose members are veterans who have served in the US military since 9/11 and oppose the US war in Iraq.

Since her discharge Kelly has joined the growing number of veterans who speak out against the war. She also speaks in high schools to counter the recruitment tactics of the military, telling her personal real-life stories of the war in Iraq. She and many activists mourn the victims of Bush administration policies: Iraqi casualties, U.S. soldiers in Iraq, people targeted by the “war on terrorism,” as well as those whom the economy has left unemployed, uninsured, and worse-off than four years before.

During her service in Iraq, Kelly Dougherty saw the United States “treat Iraqis like trespassers in their own country.” She accuses the Bush administration of “perverting people’s sense of patriotism for their own greedy means.”

While she was in Victoria and Vancouver, Kelly called on Canadians whom she respects for staying out of the war (not that we stopped selling arms or uranium to the USA to use in Iraq) and asked us to support USA war resisters. Her call is joined by that of Tom Hayden, a political activist for decades and 18-year member of the California

Assembly and Senate.

Hayden was recently in Canada, also, meeting with activists and politicians in Ottawa. He says, “Thousands of troops are refusing to fight Bush’s war in Iraq. These are young people who volunteered to defend their country thinking it was under attack, but now they realize this war is not about defending America -- it is about fulfilling the unbridled ambition of the Bush administration”.

He was accompanied to Canada by Celeste Zappala. A year ago, Celeste’s son, Sherwood Baker, was killed in action in Baghdad. Sherwood is one of more than 1,500 soldiers who have died fighting in the Bush administration’s illegal invasion of Iraq and defending its illegal occupation.

Hayden called on Canadians, “Together, Celeste and I are going to ask for Canadians’ help in ending this madness in Iraq. During America’s darkest moments, Canada has provided a sanctuary for young men and women who refuse to fight Washington’s wars. It is becoming clear that

Canada is once again needed to play that role.

I think the Bush administration cares very little about these soldiers’ lives. Ill-prepared and under-equipped, soldiers in Iraq are left to scavenge through garbage for scraps of bullet-proof armour plating to protect their trucks from

attacks. When they have finished their tour, the military can arbitrarily extend it for a second and even third tour of duty. This places untold hardship on soldiers, their spouses and their families. As a result, 6,000 soldiers have deserted the U.S. military.”

He told Canadians that, “The Bush administration is forcing public schools to hand over their lists of students’ names and phone numbers to military recruiters. In some cases, high school students have been offered \$5,000 to quite literally sign their lives away to military recruiters. Perhaps because of the pressure, or a guilty conscience, 37 recruiters have deserted the military too.”

The desperate USA Empire is also scouring its vassal states for troops. Richard Hill writes in the May, 2005 issue of *New Internationalist* that the single largest ethnic group in the USA military are Mexicans and Mexican descendents. There are also Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Central Americans and Ecuadorians. Many join because they are promised green cards and a possibility of USA citizenship and other benefits. One-third of USA troops in Iraq are non-citizens.

A friend in Uganda wrote in a recent letter that many young graduates have just left for Iraq to fight along side the USA army for money and that someone (a Ugandan) with

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**“I believe that no true democracy or freedom can occur in Iraq as long as the US military is occupying the country.”**

**-Kelly Dougherty  
US War Resister**

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connections with some people in the UK and the US last month was convincing these jobless Ugandans that there are opportunities for them to earn a living by fighting in Iraq. He was interviewed on BBC and he said that Iraq is not as bad as it sounds and that the death figures for civilians and those in the forces are not as big as reported in the press! She concluded by saying: It is really sad that we are resorting to kill others to earn a living!

*Green Left Weekly*, June 1, 2005 of Australia reports that: Throughout May, 10,000 Ugandans will be recruited to work as “security personnel” in Iraq, and US military bases worldwide. The recruitment effort is spearheaded by World Wide Special Operations, who work with multinationals and governments to provide mercenaries where needed. Sources told the *Kampala Monitor* that the recruitment exercise had been approved by the US State Department, which has close ties to the Ugandan government. The local law firm doing the recruiting for WWSO has emphasised that the youths will not be in “combat” roles but “guard” duties, and some secretarial work. Local MP Aggrey Awori described the exercise as “tragic”, asking: “How do you provide only guard services in a country like Iraq? These people will shoot back when shot at.” Iraq has an unemployment rate of 75%.

USA war resisters want us to appeal to Prime Minister Paul Martin, urging him to allow U.S. soldiers to enter Canada if they request permission to do so. A large group of USA public figures including activists, academics, media people, and religious leaders, have signed a letter appealing to the people and politicians of Canada to offer sanctuary to USA resisters facing threats and prosecution, as we did during the Vietnam War. Hayden says they hope for a similar solidarity once again. See: [www.ceasefire.ca](http://www.ceasefire.ca) for details.

What many of us know in our minds was brought home to our hearts by the personal evidence of this remarkable young woman, Kelly Dougherty. Her story should be heard by every person, anywhere, who still thinks that war in Iraq is about democracy and anti-terrorism.

Canada benefits from the wars of the USA. A first step to ending this immorality would be to welcome war resisters to Canada and to support their work to end this terrible tyranny and destruction of a society, its people, its environment and its independence. The eyes of those women and children lying on the floor are also on us.

*Theresa Wolfwood is a member of VIPIRG's Coordinating Collective and Founder of the Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation*

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## Alternative Resource Centre Reviews | Books & Videos

### BOOKS ON WATER IN THE VIPIRG LIBRARY REVIEWED IN THIS SECTION:

**BLUE GOLD: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water.** Barlow, Maude and Tony Clarke. 2002. The New Press. USA

**The Water You Drink: Safe or Suspect?** Julie Stauffer. 2004. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC. [www.newsociety.com](http://www.newsociety.com)

**Inside The Bottle: An Expose of the Bottled Water Industry.** Tony Clarke. 2005. The Polaris Institute, Ottawa, ON. [www.polarisinstitute.org](http://www.polarisinstitute.org)

**BLUE GOLD: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water.**

“Although world water supplies are dwindling and transnational corporations are working hard to reap substantial profits from that scarce resource, it is not too late to turn the situation around”

This quote sums up the authors' overview of the diminishing global supply of a resource most of us take for granted. But as new frontiers for capitalist expansion shrink and disappear, politically and geographically, the corporate world has turned in recent decades to the

privatization of the commons and making commodities out of life's necessities. Water is being consumed at double the rate of our population increase – mainly for industrial use. So people, and particularly people in the Majority World, are losing this vital life force. Children go to dead thirsty; they die of dehydration or of water-borne disease because the water they do get is contaminated.

We seem to be working on many fronts in recent times – militarism, radioactivity, food, seeds, human rights, homelessness and the increase in wealth of a few as more and more become poorer. Social movements are growing too, and we have had many successes in the struggle to keep our commons – from Bolivia to Kamloops – people have prevented the privatization and sale of water resources. The authors state that the inequality of access to water can only be rectified by the elimination of economic and political inequality. When we work for one we work for the other. This is an issue that concerns all living creature and we need to be responsible stewards for those who can not speak for themselves, while we create justice for all.

Along with the serious background information in **Blue Gold**, the authors also give many actions and strategy along with success stories. An excellent overview and call for action. Have a drink of water, now, but from the tap, not a plastic Dasani or Aquafina bottle.

***The Water You Drink: Safe or Suspect?*** is a comprehensive manual on the use and conservation of our most precious resource. Stauffer starts by explaining that although much of our planet is covered with water, most is salt water and large scale desalinization of the oceans is not feasible. Only 3% of our water is fresh and of that, less than 1% is available for drinking water. Water does not disappear; it is a constantly recycling resource. We may drink and pee the same molecules many times in our lives. Much of our accessible water is becoming polluted by the chemical industry, human sewage and salt. What brings that home to me was the World Social Forum, Mumbai, where in a crowded and leaky women's toilet, I found a poster: YOUR PEE IS SAFER THAN THE WATER 2 BILLION PEOPLE DRINK.

The answer, according to the author, is to first understand the limitations of water availability and then face the fact that we, North Americans, use and waste more water than any other society. The author takes us through the contamination of water, systems of extraction and distribution and how water can be made safe. She provides information and instruction for those of use who get our water from a municipal system as well as for the many Canadians who get their own water from wells and surface water.

There are individual solutions for water safety but most important thing we can do is become active in community water care – keep it public, accountable and safe. The book devotes a whole chapter to the important subject of reducing consumption. Water is a political issue and we need to be political about it. Private systems and privatization of distribution and sources of water are elitist and dangerous. The rich can ignore universal clean water as a social necessity if they are allowed to encourage the privatization of distribution and consumption of our precious resource – because they can, or think they can, always pay for purity and plenty.

The book also covers the increasing use of bottled water for drinking. She says that bottling factories are visited every 12-18 months by The Canadian Food Inspection Agency. It may be no better than your tap (in fact, it may be your tap water) and using it avoids many important concerns – the quality and care of public water, contamination in your washing, and the expense – water can cost the same as gasoline! And think about the pollution caused by the production and pollution of billions of plastic bottles. That leads us straight into the new book by Tony Clarke.

***Inside The Bottle: An Expose of the Bottled Water Industry*** tells us that bottled water is relatively new to Canada – the big corporations, like Nestle, introduced it from Europe. Then the cola companies, seeing their sales of sugary soft drinks stagnate as a result of health concerns, got into this profit able market. They had the

great advantage, Clarke says, of already owning the facilities and having almost free access to municipal water (just like us, they can take it from the tap!) In Canada, 20% of drinking water is now bottled; its consumption exceeds coffee, tea, milk and apple juice. It's more than fad now. Massive marketing with sophisticated and deceptive appeals to health and fashion consciousness keeps pushing up sales. Aging baby boomers and schools are a major focus of this advertising. Clarke says, "It is also one of the most unregulated industries that deal with people's basic health needs."

Clarke details a complete breakdown of the privileges, marketing strategies, prices and profit potential of bottled water. The book is worth the reasonable price of just for his clear and illuminating charts and tables alone.

This book is also a great resource for data on corporate water operations in North America and, most important, for stopping the corporate capture of a public resource. If we ignore the right of all people to safe and adequate water, properly managed as part of the public commons, we will soon face privatization of this public domain which surely will lead to increased pollution, limited access and higher prices. Water is a public and political issue for us all. It is the ultimate commons.

The excellent, well-referenced background on community resistance and specific actions in ***Inside The Bottle*** send a compelling call to action for us all. So read the book and start organizing!

All reviews by: Theresa Wolfwood, 2005

## **VIDEOS AND DVDs IN THE VIPIRG LIBRARY DISCUSSED IN THIS SECTION:**

**THE FUTURE OF FOOD.** Deborah Koons Garcia. Lily Films, California, USA. 2004. 90 minutes. [www.thefutureoffood.com](http://www.thefutureoffood.com) Available on DVD.

### **GENETIC MATRIX: THE SCHMIESER CASE AND THE FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE OF LIFE.**

Produced by The Council of Canadians & Dead Crow Productions. Written, Directed, Filmed and Edited by Ian Mauro. Winnipeg, Canada. 2004 DVD and VHS. 40 minutes. Contact: [ianmauro@utoronto.ca](mailto:ianmauro@utoronto.ca)

**VIEQUES, PARADISE LOST?** Video, 2003, 14 mins. Puerto Rico. Contact: [viequeshealth@aol.com](mailto:viequeshealth@aol.com)

## **THE FUTURE OF FOOD (USA 2004)**

If you are looking for a good, well made film on the takeover of our food system by chemical companies, this is the best one I've seen so far. It is very professional, with

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**“Water is a political issue and we need to be political about it.”**

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excellent, easily understandable explanations of the process of genetic modification, good photography and sound. The film is a well presented historical background on how corporations got to control our food. For a group or classroom presentation **The Future of Food** provides an excellent starting point for activism and discussion.

It is pretty scary stuff, as both our soil and our farm community are eroded by industrialization. The conclusion that the future lies in PHARMING is easy to reach. But the film presents scientists and farmers who have the wisdom and courage to stand up against the government-corporation alliance that wants to control our food (and our medications) from seed and soil to the supermarket and our bodies. This is a US film, but Canadians Louise and Percy Schmeiser (see the next review) have a big role in the film discussing their case against Monsanto and the contamination of their farmer-developed canola seeds. In Mexico where “your landscape is maize”, farmers express their fears about the loss of diversity in maize as US-produced GM-corn, cheaper because it is government-subsidized, pollinates the many old and special varieties of corn which are vital to farmers in Mexico and the future of corn production.

There is not much information in the film about the rest of the world, its problems with the globalization of food production or people’s resistance to agri-biz. It is heartening to know that in spite of the power of a few mega-corporations, 75% of the world’s farmers still use their own saved seeds. Globally the resistance to: the patenting and control of seeds and other life forms, the genetic modification of our food, and the integration of production and distribution that really threatens us and our environment, is growing and in the majority of the world is led by peasant and farmer organizations. It is clear there is not a shortage of food in the world; there is a shortage of justice and regulation.

The film does end with encouraging news from the USA about the growth of resistance to corporate food, the rapid expansion of organic farming and the many new sources of information which can help activists. The Future of Food helped pass a law in a county in California banning GM crops. In Canada, we have our own cause – we must organize to stop the development of GM wheat which, with our government’s cooperation, Syngenta is now testing in Manitoba.

*Continued on p. 8*

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## VIPIRG ACTION GROUP: NO ONE IS ILLEGAL (NOII)

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### *Did You Know?*

THAT hundreds of political and economic refugees, who have lived in Canada for years are at constant risk of sudden deportation to often life-threatening countries? Did you know that their Canadian children might be put into foster care and never see their parents again?

THAT in our own country we are holding 5 people in prison, indefinitely and without charge, while their own lawyers have no access to the reason for their detention and no process by which to defend them?

THAT many judges have no choice but to determine an outcome with only one side of the argument despite their public declaration against this type of injustice?

THAT hundreds of immigrants, including children and babies, are detained in Canada each year in unhealthy and substandard detention centres & without access to translators or legal support?

### **These things are not supposed to happen in Canada.**

**No One Is Illegal-VIPIRG** advocates, educates, and raises funds to address immigration and refugee issues in Canada. We act in solidarity with groups across the country who provide hands-on support to people unfairly impacted by Canada’s immigration and security legislation.

Some of our efforts include:

- lobbying for fair trials and status for all
- letter writing
- fundraising events (such as spoken word, film nights, panel discussions)
- non violent direct action (i.e. street theatre and popular education)
- networking with individuals and groups across Canada

**Your participation is integral to ensure that Canada treats all of us fairly and humanely, regardless of our individual status.**

Want to know more or take action? To get involved with No One Is Illegal, please contact us by:

Email: [NOII@vipirg.ca](mailto:NOII@vipirg.ca)

Phone: 472-5170

Or drop by the VIPIRG office in the SUB - Room B122



## GENETIC MATRIX (CANADA 2004)

This film provides a good background to the issues of genetic engineering and the patenting and corporate control of seeds and foods revealed when Percy and Louise Schmeiser of Bruno, Saskatchewan decided not to capitulate to Monsanto's threats and fought the giant chemical company in the courts. Canadian and international experts explain the many aspects of this complex case.

We see the Schmeisers through their ordeal ending in the Supreme Court of Canada where although Schmeisers won some concessions, Monsanto was given the right to continue its bullying of farmers and its contamination of food crops in Canada. The right of citizens to say NO to genetically modified food products is being whittled away.

Monsanto has recently given \$10 M to The University of Manitoba - where this filmmaker works. Its partner in research is the provincial government. Corporate control of education is another serious concern raised in this video.

At issue is the right of farmers to save and use their own seed, one billion farmers still do, but in Canada that right is being eroded with the complicity of our governments resulting in what Percy Schmeiser calls, "The greatest theft and fraud I have ever seen in my lifetime." The Schmeisers say that the fight must continue at the level of parliaments and political action. Citizens must exercise their responsibility for the good of all, our environment and future generations.

Louise Schmeiser sums up the fundamental issue succinctly when she asks, "Who owns life?"

## VIEQUES, PARADISE LOST? (PUERTO RICO 2003)

Since 1943 until recently – thanks to a well-organized citizen campaign -the USA navy used Vieques, an island off Puerto Rico which had 10,000 residents, for bombing manoeuvres. It has had a devastating affect on the health of the people and the environment. Heavy metals like mercury, lead, arsenic, napalm (used in Vietnam) and other poisons have been dumped on the island.

The film examines the health effects on the island's residents who have cancer rates of +269%, heart disease of +73%, diabetes of +58% higher than average. The people of Vieques were exposed to these chemicals without their knowledge or consent. Although the navy has recently stopped its bombing practises, it has not made

## Join VIPIRG!

VIPIRG welcomes membership from the community.

Membership perks include:

Membership newsletters, invitations to events, a vote in our annual Coordinating Collective elections and Annual General Meeting, use of the extensive alternative resource library

Name:

Mailing address:

Phone:

Email:

Enclosed please find my annual membership fee of \$10

Plus an additional donation of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

For a total contribution of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payments by cheque can be made out to: VIPIRG

Mailing Address: VIPIRG  
PO Box 3035 STN CSC  
Victoria, BC V8W 3P3

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## Join a VIPIRG Action Group:

Urban Agriculture: [agriculture@vipirg.ca](mailto:agriculture@vipirg.ca)

No One is Illegal: [noii@vipirg.ca](mailto:noii@vipirg.ca)

Fair Trade VIPIRG: [fairtrade@vipirg.ca](mailto:fairtrade@vipirg.ca)

Indigenous Peoples' Solidarity:

[solidarity@vipirg.ca](mailto:solidarity@vipirg.ca)

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any effort to accept the responsibility of cleaning up its toxic mess and de-contaminating this bit of paradise.

We have a bit of paradise near here, Nanoose Bay, where the USA navy tests weapon systems and dumped metal pollution on our seabed. So far citizen resistance has not closed it down.

Reviews by Theresa Wolfwood. [www.bbcbf.ca](http://www.bbcbf.ca)

## The Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG)

VIPIRG is a non-profit organization dedicated to research, education, advocacy, and action in the public interest.

RE:ACTION was produced by Naomi Devine with contributions from:

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