



Pavel Becker

Council of Canadians National Chairperson Maude Barlow travelled to Berlin in April to debate German Chancellor Angela Merkel on austerity and the impacts of trade agreements.

On the Road with **Maude Barlow**

Dear friends,

It's been another jam-packed fall and winter. The highlights on my schedule have been the tours across Canada, meeting with wonderful activists and caring Canadians and, of course, celebrating our organization's 30th anniversary with all of you.

December in Newfoundland marked the end of a deeply moving 15-city tour with CUPE President Paul Moist to promote public health care. At every stop, Canadians told us heart-wrenching stories of what medicare means to them and how cuts to health care are affecting patients and front-line workers alike. During the tour, CUPE and Council of Canadians supporters knocked on over 42,000 doors and we sent out almost 200,000 leaflets promoting a renewed health accord.

The second and third legs of our Energy East pipeline "Our Risk – Their Reward" tours were another incredible highlight for me. For two weeks in the fall, we visited communities in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, holding feisty town halls; meeting with elected officials, union representatives and First Nations leaders; and speaking with countless journalists. The process was repeated in April on the Prairies tour and we were met with enthusiasm and hope. We are creating a wall of grassroots resistance to this pipeline all along its route and I feel very sure it will never be built.

I have also visited many school campuses here and in the United States to talk about the global water crisis and the fight for water justice. I am always touched and moved by the enthusiasm, commitment and optimism that young people

bring to these complex issues. They give me hope for the future.

In April I was in Berlin where I debated Chancellor Angela Merkel on austerity and spoke at a large public forum in advance of the June G7 meeting there. I am also to keynote a large conference in Burlington, Vermont in June, of the International Association for Great Lakes Research. I can hardly wait to share my research on how the Great Lakes are being used as a conduit for the dirtiest energy on Earth, and how we must declare the Great Lakes to be a commons and a public trust to be protected forever.

All our attention is now turning to the upcoming fall federal election. I have written two reports on the Harper agenda. *Blue Betrayal: The Harper government's assault on Canada's freshwater* tells a deeply disturbing story about the systematic way in which this government has gone about not only dismantling regulatory protection of our water, but also cementing that deregulation through corporate-friendly trade and investment deals.

The second report, *Broken Covenant: How Stephen Harper set out to silence dissent and curtail democratic participation in Canada*, gives a detailed account of the systematic way in which this government has broken not only the ties with civil society by defunding NGOs and auditing the charitable status of "enemies," but also by cutting the departmental staff and agencies that kept these ties alive. It is a very disturbing story and one we must get out to Canadians.

As I write this, we are preparing for a large cross-Canada tour with many allies to

expose the Harper agenda and promote an alternative positive vision for our country.

We can change this country and we are reminding people that one of the best ways to effect change is to Go Vote!

We also launched a constitutional challenge along with the Canadian Federation of Students against the so-called "Fair Elections Act," as it not only makes it harder for students, First Nations and those who move for employment to vote, but also will make it harder for the public to find out about the kind of electoral fraud that took place in the last federal election.

We are involved in many coalitions and networks dedicated to exposing the harm that has been done to human rights, environmental protection, working people, the poor, First Nations, veterans, scientists, women and many others by this government. While the Council of Canadians is – and remains – non-partisan, we retain the right to criticize governments of any political stripe that bring harm to our institutions and values in the way this government has done.

We look forward to working with all of you to bring about a new day for our country. Thank you for all you have done over the past 30 years to make the Council of Canadians a strong, vibrant voice for people committed to building a better Canada.

With hope and resolve,

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.