

Quebec and Cuba solidarity activists again protest US anti-Cuban blockade

Tom Whitney

The U.S. and Cuban governments on July 1 2015 may have renewed diplomatic relations after a hiatus for half a century, but the refurbished relationship between the two governments is still seriously flawed. There's little to suggest the U.S. government will soon abandon its basic approach of humiliating and messing with the sovereign Cuban people in order to end Cuba's social revolution.

This was on the minds of Canadian and U.S. Cuba-solidarity activists on June 27 as they gathered together in Coaticook, Quebec, a few miles north of the U.S. border station at Ferrisburgh, Vermont. For the 16th year they were engaging in a protest against the U.S. anti-Cuban economic blockade. They were collaborating, as before, with the 2015 Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan to Cuba.

On the same day, on the other side of the continent, Vancouver defenders of Cuban sovereignty were delivering humanitarian aid material to activists in Washington State. They too were working with Pastors for Peace.

Members of the Quebec - Cuba Friendship Caravan, based in Montreal, had brought humanitarian donations from Montreal to the border, mostly medical supplies. They gave aid material to counterparts from Maine, there on behalf of that state's Let Cuba Live organization that has participated in every Pastors for Peace Friendship caravan since 1992, when the caravans began.

Organized by Rev. Lucius Walker, the late Pastors for Peace founder and leader, the solidarity activists were purposefully defying U.S. blockade regulations, in particular the requirement that humanitarian donations be authorized beforehand. Walker spoke of the U.S. government's foreign policy.

Pastors for Peace buses and trucks would soon be traveling across the United States to El Paso, Texas. On the way, donated goods will be put aboard and there will be solidarity meetings. A handful of veteran drivers will take the material from McAllen, Texas, to El Paso, Mexico, for shipment later on to Cuba.

solidarity gathering in sight of the U.S. border station. Francesco Di Feo of the

Cuba Live held a well-attended solidarity and fund-raising event at the Southern Workers Center in Portland on June 28. While those in attendance enjoyed a meal prepared by Maria Sanchez and others, organizers presented the film "Maestra," Terrienne Murphy's depiction of Cuba's 1961 literacy campaign.

Speaker at the meeting discussed prospects for normalization of relations between the two countries. He reminded listeners that the blockade policy is based on the U.S. policy, enunciated in 1960, of making the Cuban people suffer so that they might overthrow Cuba's revolutionary government. Commentators at the session agreed that normal relations between the two countries were impossible as long as the blockade continued. They also called for repeal of the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1965 and the return to Cuba of property in Guantanamo where the famous U.S. naval base and prison are located.

Lucius Walker's visit to Monument Square in Portland in 2001 was recalled. The Pastors for Peace leader on that occasion told several hundred aroused Mainers that to end the blockade they must overcome obstacles and confront "the powers." Two weeks later he was at Maine's border with Quebec in support of a partially successful attempt to send supplies to Cuba over the objections of border officials who that day were enforcing U.S. rules.

On June 30 two Let Cuba Live members transported aid material from Quebec and Maine on a Pastors for Peace bus waiting in Schenectady, N.Y. The Maine contribution included construction materials and tools, medical and school supplies, and sports equipment.