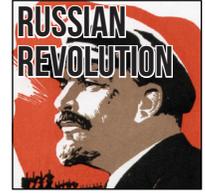


SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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Bill Hopwood

Children know that poverty and inequality are “unfair.” A powerful experience is distributing cookies as if they were the wealth of BC. In a class of 26 children, 52 cookies is the wealth of the class. Shared equally, each would have two. As the cookies are divided in line with BC’s actual wealth, 11 children have no cookies. In contrast, two have over half of all the cookies, one child has 8 and the richest child has 19 cookies.

The children’s first response is more cookies. However, even with 520 cookies, the second poorest group would only have one cookie and the poorest three children would still have none as they are in debt. At the same time, the richest

two children would have 270 cookies. This is what happens in the real world with most of the increase in wealth going to the richest 1% and the poor staying locked in poverty. It is not simply about how much wealth – it is how the wealth is distributed.

The children always vote for redistribution, favouring equal shares. If only politicians, of all political stripes, had the integrity of children.

Growing up in Vancouver in the 1960s and 70s, there were no food banks, no street homeless and few people pan-handling. Today, Vancouver and Canada are much richer, but due to much greater inequality, there is mass poverty.

Continued on page 2

Poverty - A Political Choice

Continued from from page 1

Poverty in the real world has harmful consequences, causing ill-health and premature death. It costs BC over \$8 billion a year paid by the health, criminal justice and education systems, local government and society in general. Supporting a homeless person costs nearly twice as much as paying rent for a reasonable apartment.

Tackling poverty would include raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, increasing welfare and disability rates to the poverty line, building 10,000 units of social housing a year, providing \$10 a day childcare and increasing taxes on the rich. This redistribution would cost around \$5 billion a year, but save money in the medium and long-term. Why doesn't the government act or the opposition campaign for this?

Most people in poverty in BC and Canada work, but low minimum wages legally enforce poverty. Most people earning less than \$15 an hour work full-time, in large companies and are over 21 and women.

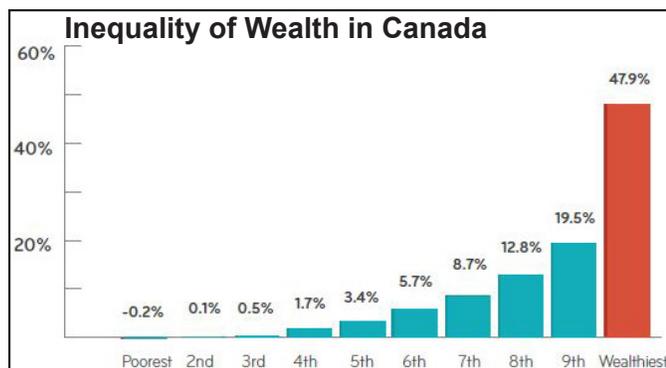
Norie fled to Canada from the Philippines and now, "All I want to do is to sleep. Then I wake up the following day and work, work, work again. Work until you drop dead, paying bills and rent in order to survive."

Young people face an insecure future of either unemployment, at 13%, or in low-paid precarious jobs. All face unaffordable rents.

The poorest people in BC are people on welfare that has been frozen at \$610 a month since 2007. It is impossible to live a healthy life on welfare.

Poverty helps the rich, as they are rich because many are poor. Low minimum wages and starvation welfare rates help to hold down wages, and so boost profits.

The BC government gave tax cuts to the richest 1% that averaged for each person over \$41,000 every year, which is more than the average wage in BC. The government feeds their rich friends while making the poor and workers suffer.



In BC, it is more unequal. The poorest 10% have -0.3% wealth, while the richest 10% have 54%

Fight For \$15 Continues

Chris Fofonoff



All is not doom and gloom south of the border. On November 29, three weeks after the election of Trump, unprecedented numbers of fighters in at least 320 US cities and towns rallied on the Fight for 15's fourth anniversary. On Election Day, voters in Washington State, Arizona, Colorado, and Maine voted to raise the minimum wage and South Dakota voters rejected a proposal to reduce it.

The fighting spirit is alive in Canada as well. Ontario's 15 and Fairness campaign gathered thousands on the lawn of the provincial legislature in October. Quebec's fight is gaining support from unions and Québec Solidaire who stated that "\$15 an hour is the minimum!"

In the west, the BC Federation of Labour has recently incorporated additional demands of workers into the Fight for 15 campaign, including improved workplace-safety laws and \$10-per-day childcare. This coincides with the BC Fed's transition to "election mode" ahead of the May 9th provincial vote. Socialist Alternative continues to campaign in Surrey with coffee and doughnut events, rallies and tabling. Meanwhile, Alberta's NDP government raised that province's wage floor to \$12.20 per hour on October 1, 2016, continuing its plan to reach \$15 by 2018.

The federal Liberals refuse to tackle poverty wages in Canada as Trudeau snubs calls to re-establish a \$15 minimum wage for the nearly one-million workers in federally regulated industries including transportation, finance and telecommunications.

The grassroots fight for \$15 is winning.

La lutte continue!



The Struggles of Youth Today

Jane Buckshon and Ryan Milligan

Living in Vancouver as a young adult necessitates a close relationship with high tuition fees, unaffordable living costs, and uncertain jobs prospects. Although we're in contrasting situations, we share a common struggle.

Jane: "Though tuition is a huge issue for most students, I'm lucky to have a scholarship. Despite this, it's difficult to balance demanding courses, volunteer commitments, and high grades. The latter two are necessary to get into graduate school, as one degree isn't enough to obtain relevant employment in my field. Since I live away from home, I worry about paying my living expenses – costs that are

much greater than tuition itself. I have money saved up from past restaurant jobs, but I'll soon have to juggle work and classes once again. Due to all these stressors, I cannot say that I fully enjoy the process of being a student. This sentiment, sadly, is widespread among students."

Ryan: "I've been out of high school for over a year and chose not to pursue post-secondary due to the extreme tuition costs, among other reasons. Though I'd like to study history, I feel it wouldn't be worth pursuing as it would be unlikely to lead to a career. My decision to work and save money has left me choosing between

unskilled manual labour or low-wage work. Not only do they both offer few hours, but I've already sustained a work-related injury from the former. I moved out of my parent's home last year but was forced to move back four months later as it was simply too expensive to live on my own."

Our stories offer a small glimpse into the hardships of today's youth. It's unacceptable that the current system burdens us with crippling debt, obscene housing costs, and job precarity. We need a new system that acknowledges our rights, including free education for all. Empowered youth will fight for these necessary changes.

Fracked Gas - Bad News

Aiden Sisler

The BC Liberals continue their rush for resource extraction, throwing Indigenous peoples, citizens and the environment under the bus. They are desperate for a start to liquefied natural gas (LNG) production, as it was the centrepiece of the 2013 election and the next one is only months away.

Trudeau has given the go-ahead to two LNG projects: Petronas's proposed plant near Prince Rupert and the Woodfibre plant near Squamish, ignoring all the environmental damage. The Petronas plant will be "amongst the largest single point sources of greenhouse gas emission in the country," according to Environment and Climate Change Canada.

It will use methane gas extracted by fracking, which poisons huge volumes of water with hundreds of chemicals, many harmful to the health of humans and animals. Fracking triggers earthquakes, with over 230 in BC's fracking region between August 2013 and October 2014.

This project will cost \$36 billion yet provide only 330 direct long-term jobs. The plant at the mouth of the Skeena River could devastate BC's second largest salmon run, which has an estimated annual value of \$110 million, provides many jobs and is vital to the Indigenous people of this region. Lax Kw'alaams First Nation rejected a \$1.14-billion benefits package from Petronas and continue to oppose the project.

BC Premier, Christy Clark has offered huge subsidies and privileges to Petronas. Now she has



directed BC Hydro to offer discount electricity rates for LNG plants, leaving Hydro customers to foot the bill. This subsidy is worth at least \$34 million a year for the proposed Woodfibre plant.

Alongside the battles against Kinder Morgan's pipeline and Site C dam, the fight to stop Petronas will increase, led by the Indigenous Skeena coalition of land defenders.

Ontario: Hydro Privatization Disaster

Jim Kattner and Corigan Ferris-Baker



Ontario Liberal Premier, Kathleen Wynne, has expressed shock that hydro rates in the province have climbed 70% from 2006 to 2014. Rural Ontario, with all added charges, has among the highest electricity charges in North America. She expressed incomprehension at how this could happen, attributing it to her “not paying close enough attention,” yet did not admit any responsibility.

Both the Liberals and the previous Tory government combined to push up Ontario’s electricity costs. In 1998, the Tories split publicly-owned Ontario Hydro into five companies in preparation for privatization.

The Wynne government has started selling off Hydro One, responsible for electricity transmission and distribution, aiming to privatize 60%. With two sales since 2015, 27% of the utility is now sold off.

While privatization will boost the province’s finances short-term, it is long-term bad news as Ontario will no longer receive as much revenue from Hydro One, worth \$750 million in 2014 alone. Customers will face higher bills as the private shareholders will demand a healthy profit – paid on the backs of workers in the industry and the public consumers.

Already there are examples of callous price gouging. Kingston CKWS News reported the O’Donnell’s troubles. After having a new meter installed their bills became inconsistent and they had power cuts and surges. One bill was for \$700 although they only use electricity for light, TV and a well pump. Hydro One refused to work out a payment plan and now, with further charges, the O’Donnells owe \$8,000 and are using a gas generator.

To soften the blow of soaring hydro bills the Liberals have removed the 8% sales tax, a subsidy from the public purse of \$1 billion a year.

The Tories, now in opposition, blame green energy for sky-high prices. The problem is not a shift from coal to renewables. Long-term, guaranteed over-priced contracts were signed with private suppliers for renewable energy at the same time as electricity

demand was declining. Jon Kieran, who helped develop Ontario’s solar industry, stated that paying developers to build large wind and solar projects has become “green corporate welfare.” The lesson from this fiasco is that the private sector should have no role in electricity production.

Popular pressure forced the Conservative government of 1906 to form a public utility, Ontario Hydro. Now, this is under attack. There is the basis for a powerful campaign, with 73% opposed to privatization. However, it will take more than opinion polls to keep electricity in public hands; victory needs a strong movement of hydro workers and users.

BC Liberals Out!

Martin LeBrun



There are many reasons to kick out Christy Clark’s BC Liberals this May. However, they have a remarkable ability to win elections. In 2013, a hard-hat wearing Clark talked non-stop of jobs. Yet, the main job growth is in Metro Vancouver in construction and low-paid services. Most areas of BC are losing jobs.

The Liberals’ tax cuts to the rich worth \$3.4 billion every year, means cutting public services. They illegally attacked teachers’ contracts to increase class sizes and cut special needs support. Post-secondary institutions and students receive less support.

BC’s poverty is amongst the worst in Canada with a low minimum wage and no increase in welfare in a decade. Children and seniors care are in crisis.

Clark won in 2013 on fracked gas promises, yet construction hasn’t started. The Liberals are an environmental disaster, pushing Site C dam and LNG, a massive road building program while under-funding transit, and supporting the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

The NDP’s uninspiring 2013 platform let the Liberals turn a 20% deficit in the polls to victory. Now the NDP has a bolder platform: adequately funding public education, \$15 minimum wage, \$10/day childcare paid by taxing the rich, and opposition to Kinder Morgan. They might even stop Site C.

However, the NDP has yet to propose reversing all the Liberal tax cuts to the rich, which would provide the needed funds to deliver good public services. To win, the NDP has to step up its campaign and inspire people with a good jobs economy.

Indigenous People Fight for the Environment

Leslie Kemp



Across Canada, Indigenous groups are emboldened by the historic victory of the Tsilhqot'in of BC in 2014. After a long and expensive court case, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the Tsilhqot'in Nation held title to approximately 1,900 square kilometres of their traditional territory. This marked the first time that an Aboriginal group in Canada had won a title claim.

Several others are also choosing the legal arena to fight their battles against pipelines, fracking, seismic blasting, dams and LNG. But their strategies are not limited to the courts. They include blockades, occupations, joint campaigns and hunger strikes.

In August, 2015, the Lax Kw'alaams set up a camp on Lax U'u'la [Lelu Island] to protect their land against Petronas's proposed LNG plant. Hereditary Chief Yahaan said, "Our Traditional ways of life and the resources which have sustained our people are not to be pawns in the Christy Clark Government's LNG dreams."

The mayor of Clyde River, Nunavut is leading a campaign to stop seismic blasting off the coast of Baffin Island. Inuit leaders in Labrador planned a hunger strike in opposition to the hydro-electric project in Muskrat Falls which threatens Inuit communities with methylmercury contamination.

Bigger fights are yet to come. Many First Nations are firmly opposed to the Kinder Morgan pipeline. "It saddens me because we hoped things might be different with Trudeau but today's decision is a big step backwards," said Charlene Aleck, of the Tseil-Waututh Nation. The Tseil-Waututh have vowed to do everything they can to stop the pipeline.

Standing Rock has inspired Indigenous peoples in Canada and there will be Standing Rocks here. There will be many others who will join the struggles.

New Workers Party in Montréal?

Martin LeBrun

The Quebec Federation of Labour's Metropolitan Montréal Regional Council (CRMM-FTQ) passed a resolution in November calling for the creation of a new pro-worker municipal political party. The *nouveau Rassemblement des citoyens de Montréal* (RCM) would contest the November 2017 municipal elections, presenting Montrealers with alternative candidates for mayor and councillors in Montréal and its boroughs.

Couillard's provincial Liberal government has empowered municipalities to unilaterally dictate working conditions for municipal workers, without real negotiations. This attack on the right of association, collective negotiations and the right to strike warrants the creation of a municipal party that will defend workers' interests.

The CRMM-FTQ is calling on unions and activist organizations to collaborate to create such a party. Montréal unions and activists did this before, founding the original RCM in 1974. The RCM held power from 1986 to 1994, on a platform of democratization, decentralization and pro-worker policies before sliding to the right and dissolving in 2001.

The recent election of left-candidate Valérie Plante to the leadership of the progressive, reform-oriented *Projet Montréal* municipal party, promising transit improvements and social housing development, could attract progressive workers and take some wind out of the sails of the CRMM-FTQ resolution. However, importantly the CRMM-FTQ resolution has raised the need for workers to organize independent pro-worker political parties. Such parties can fight for public transit, social housing and a cleaner environment as well as better working conditions in an age where existing parties provide, at best, piecemeal reforms or, more usually, welfare for the rich and cutbacks to workers and the poor.



Couillard and colleagues wield chainsaws



Two-Tiered Contracts: Bad News

Tim Heffernan

Two-tiered contracts are bad news for unions as workers doing the same job in the same workplace have different wages and conditions. Typically new starters, usually younger workers, have lower wages, less job security, longer probationary periods, different pensions and benefits.

The two main forms of pensions are Defined Benefit (DB) or Defined Contribution (DC). While seeming technical, the differences are fundamental.

A DB pension allows for some certainty. Those who pay in over their working lives know what they will receive at retirement. They can plan. By contrast, a DC plan is a crap shoot. Contributors know what they have to pay in. But what they get out at retirement depends on the behaviour of the stock and money markets. – Thomas Walkom, Toronto Star

The Big Three automakers have been trying to get rid of DB plans for years. Companies profit when the pension funds are in surplus, but in bad times, they have to make up any deficit. Despite the Big Three rolling in profits of \$17.5 billion in 2015, they now refuse to cover future pension deficits. The recent contracts between Unifor and the companies mean new hires will get lower pay rates and their pension is completely uncertain.

Unifor President Jerry Dias said, “It’s a great deal,” arguing that the pension’s sacrifice was counterbalanced by the General Motors’s commitment to future investment in Ontario. Clearly many workers were not convinced as only 64.7% at GM and 58% at Ford voted to accept. Unifor activists will work to build on this vote and extend support for a militant, no-concessions bargaining approach.

Beware of a Basic Income

Carol-Anne Hudson

Everywhere people are talking about a basic income. Prince Edward Island agreed a pilot project and Ontario is discussing running pilots.

Many people concerned about the deep poverty in Canada, including physicians, social justice advocates and union leaders, support the idea. However, will a basic income solve poverty and low wages that affect the lives of millions of Canadians?

The PEI legislature unanimously agreed the pilot project, with the Conservative opposition saying that a basic income fits with their values. Ontario is considering \$1,320 a month for the pilot, below the poverty line. Many conservative advocates see this as a way to cut public spending, by consolidating all social benefits into a single payment.

There are many forms of basic income, with a guaranteed annual income (GAI) commonly proposed in Canada. This system ensures everyone receives a basic government income but reduces payments as people receive other incomes. The National Child Benefit scheme works this way.

GAI is revenue-neutral, replacing current social programs dollar-for-dollar. It would not tackle inequality; as other services and supports are cut, all the burdens of meeting needs are put onto the recipients.

One of the attractions for business – and a major drawback for workers – is that GAI would subsidize bad employers paying low wages.

Many people seeking to end poverty see GAI as easier to win than raising welfare rates and the minimum wage. However, this may be because some conservatives support it – not to tackle poverty, but to cut public spending and taxes on the rich.

A basic income could eradicate poverty if all adults received a tax-free income set above the poverty line, along with progressive taxes on higher incomes, a strong minimum wage, a living pension and good public services.

However, this would need a different government from what we have now – a socialist government.

Democracy Threatened in Ireland *Ruaidhri Burke*

After a long struggle, the government withdrew water charges, a regressive tax, in July 2016. The water charges movement, with a million people refusing to pay, delivered a blow to the establishment and gave workers the confidence to fight for better pay and conditions.

Following this humiliating retreat, the Irish government is after revenge. Nineteen people who were part of a peaceful protest that blocked the Deputy Prime Minister’s car in Jobstown, Dublin, are charged with *false imprisonment*, similar to kidnapping and

Trudeau Continues Harper's Health Cuts

Jim Sugiyama

The Trudeau government is continuing the health cuts introduced by the Harper government. The Tories legislated a reduction in the rate of increase in transfer payments to the provinces from 6% to 3% per year. This is bad news for Canada's much-revered public health care system.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information stated that federal investment was not keeping pace with population growth, an aging population and inflation. Public funding for doctors, community care and hospital care has remained stable as a portion of GDP. Private spending on drugs, home care and physiotherapy has soared. The federal government plan will decrease its contribution to provincial health care from the present 23% to 20% in 2017.

The cuts will mean increased charges for prescriptions and ambulance, user fees levied by doctors, and waiting times for surgeries. There will be direct cuts in services, and an increase in the privatization of home care services, physiotherapy and private clinics such as the Cambie in Vancouver. All will mean poorer health outcomes.

The Liberals have proposed a one-off \$3 billion infusion for home care, but this a bandage applied to an exsanguinating and suppurative wound. When the money runs out in four years, there will be worse cuts.

The lack of federal leadership on critical issues such as national strategies for pharmacare (which could save \$11 billion annually), child care, affordable housing, and poverty reduction (all, critical, upstream health determinants) is an abandonment of its responsibilities under the Canada Health Act.

The Liberals claim that provincial spending should be more accountable, pointing to the scandal of billions of dollars of public funds wasted by Ontario on private contracts for e-Health (computerized records) and ORNGE (air ambulance). Funding cuts, however, will not correct these failings.

Cutting the Federal Health Transfer is a continuation of Tory austerity that will increase the growing health gap in Canada.

e (Socialist Party Ireland)

carrying a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

If they are convicted, this will have far-reaching consequences for the democratic right to protest and effectively picket.

The Jobstown trials are an attack on the entire water charges movement, especially those who helped lead the struggle. One of those charged is Paul Murphy, an MP and Socialist Party member. If sentenced to 6 months in prison he faces expulsion from Parliament.

Please send messages of support and for more info: sites.google.com/view/jobstownnotguilty/home



What Makes Me Angry

Larry Hyink

Recently, Finance Minister, Bill Morneau, announced to a luncheon of Ontario Liberals that precarious employment, or "job churn" as he picturesquely rephrased it, was here to stay and we should "get used to it." He tried to make it sound like some natural process, not a conscious program to increase corporate profits by turning full-time jobs into multiple part-time "gigs" with low wages, no benefits, and zero future.

What to do? Bill says "retraining programs" — for what he didn't say, *but don't expect a career.*

Careers in today's capitalist world are for people like Bill, who, after attending some of the best private schools in the world, snagged a job at his father's consulting firm where he shot from the humble position of boss's son to CEO in just over 10 years.

This guy tells the rest of us to "get used to it." The *reason* we working people have to "get used to it," is that the "gig economy" may be a giant crap trap for most of us, but it makes a lot of extra profits for guys like Bill.

Working people should think about socialism where economic decisions would be made for the good of everyone, rather than just entitled guys at the top like Bill Morneau. As a bonus, under socialism, Bill would have to get a real job, and when you've made a career out of being a parasite — that might *really* take some getting used to.



Bill Morneau

Where are Trudeau's Sunny Ways? *Tim Heffernan*

Justin Trudeau took power in October 2015 adopting the mantra of sunny ways. After more than a year, how has he done? If he was a figure skater his performance might score high on style, but considerably lower on content/substance. Or as a young friend put it, "The smile is a change from before but what has he done that is different?"

On many fronts, Trudeau and the Liberals are continuing Harper's policies including federal cuts to health spending and going ahead with the Harper negotiated, \$15 billion export of weapons to Saudi Arabia, even though it has one of the worst records for women's rights in the world (remember "Because it is 2015") and is bombing Yemen to smithereens.

Continuing from Harper *CETA*

The Liberals pushed hard to force the European Union to agree the Canada-Europe Trade Agreement (CETA), negotiated in secret by Harper's team. It was little Wallonia (a region of Belgium) that opposed the proposed investor-state dispute settlement rule which allows companies to seek damages if local regulations interfere with their economic expectations. CETA would ban government policies to buy local, add billions to the cost of pharmaceuticals for public health and increase pressures to privatize water, transit and energy. CETA is not a done deal, as there is powerful opposition across Europe.

Climate change continues

The Liberals have talked about tackling global warming and a national carbon price. Yet in practice, which is what matters, Trudeau's government has approved more environmentally damaging and climate change causing projects than Harper. These include expanding two pipelines from the tar sands: Kinder Morgan to Vancouver and Enbridge to Lake Superior, US. They approved two LNG plants in BC: Woodfibre near Squamish and Petronas near Prince Rupert. The Liberals also agreed the Site C dam in the Peace River Valley.

All this while global warming increases. 2016 was the hottest year on record. The arctic is unstable with record low ice levels and warm temperatures, 30°C above average during December! The permafrost

is melting, risking widespread release of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Both the ice melt and methane release will accelerate global warming.

In response, the Liberals justify these projects claiming that, "the environment and the economy go hand in hand." Yet most of these projects provide very few jobs and risk destroying thousands of jobs in farming, fishing and tourism.

First Nations

Trudeau promised "a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition, rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership." While they have announced increased funding for on-reserve education and some infrastructure, their environmental actions have enraged First Nations with widespread opposition to all the projects.



Workers

Trudeau claimed to be worker friendly, writing an open letter to public servants saying that, "I have a fundamentally different view than Stephen Harper of our public service. Where he sees an adversary, I see a partner." Yet in recent negotiations with the main federal employees' union, PSAC, Ottawa simply repeated the proposals of Harper's team.

The Liberals refuse to introduce a federal \$15 minimum wage that would benefit nearly a million workers and set a benchmark for the provinces. The previous Liberal government abolished the federal minimum wage.

They promised "a fair and balanced approach to organized labour." Yet they blocked legislation that would ban the use of replacement workers (scabs) during a dispute. Such laws exist in BC and Quebec.

Canada Post

The Liberals promised that they would "save home delivery" and review the Harper attacks on Canada Post. They did not remove the Harper appointed CEO, Chopra. They did not support the postal union in last year's negotiations. The review panel that Trudeau appointed backed all of Chopra's attacks on Canada



Post, including a likely move to two-tier pensions and partial privatization.

The Liberal-dominated House of Commons committee only recommended restoration of home delivery to 350,000 out of the 830,000 households that lost that service since 2014.

Both the review panel and parliamentary committee opposed the idea of re-establishing post office banking (abandoned in 1968) which works well in many countries. The Liberals' banking friends on Bay Street do not want competition, particularly in rural areas.

Economy and living standards

The Liberals promised, "real help to Canada's middle class and all those working hard to join it." So far, what has happened?

"2016 has been an economic bust. [Between] November, 2015 to November, 2016, we lost 30,000 full-time jobs; the proportion of part-time jobs jumped from 18.7% to 19.7%; and the unemployment rate would have risen if the number of Canadians seeking work had not fallen," stated economist Andrew Jackson.

Workers' living standards are stuck with average weekly earnings rising in 2016 by 1.1%, while inflation is 1.6%. Growth for 2016 is only 1.2%. Outside of the construction sector, business investment has been dismal and exports are flat "meaning that growth essentially came from the continuing housing boom and consumer spending based on rising debt."

While there may be a small increase in federal stimulus, this will be cancelled out by the provincial cuts. Jackson notes, "the contribution of government spending to growth will increase a little bit in 2017 [but] not enough to put much of a dent in unemployment and underemployment and stagnant wage growth."

Low paid workers can expect their precarious lifestyles to continue.

What is Different? – Infrastructure and Privatization

The Liberals' promise to boost the economy and improve society through much needed public investment in infrastructure was central to their victory. Nowhere did the Liberals say this would be a



Brampton Hospital - \$200 million over budget



Selling off Canada's airports?

privatization bonanza.

The \$81 billion investment in infrastructure over the next 10 years, through a new Canadian Infrastructure Bank, involves two privatization schemes.

Capital will be raised by *recycling assets*, selling off all or some of the 8 public airports and 18 public ports. Handing them over to private companies will increase costs to users, mean poorer services and no community involvement.

Much of the construction will be Public Private Partnerships (P3s), where the public sector carries most of the pain of costs and risks, and the private sector gets the gain. P3 projects are notorious for cost over-runs and cutting corners on quality. Ontario's Auditor-General stated that Brampton's P3 hospital cost \$200 million more than if done in the public sector.

Behind the infrastructure investment is a huge gift to profits, going even further than Harper on privatization.

Opposition

The votes of young and Indigenous people were crucial to the Liberals' victory. Increasingly both feel tricked. The leader of BC's First Nations, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, said that that the Site C approval is "an absolute betrayal." Young people have been vocal and angry at recent stop Kinder Morgan demos. The Canadian Labour Congress Young Workers' Summit saw a clear expression of anger at Trudeau.

The Liberals' public support has dropped to around 45%, still enough for a comfortable majority. A big help is the opposition in parliament is a mess. The Tories are in the midst of a leadership election battle, with some candidates moving to right wing social policies. Mulcair is set to lead the NDP for more than another year after the membership voted him out.

However, the battles of Indigenous peoples, youth and workers on jobs, pay, pipelines and more will test the Liberals. These are the key struggles and will shape Canadian politics.

Why the Revolution Matters Today



In 1917, the Russian people, especially the working class, took control of society and history. The October Revolution delivered *Peace, Bread and Land* by ending the slaughter of the Russian soldiers, cutting the working day to eight hours and distributing the feudal estates to the peasants. The new government introduced sweeping democratic gains for women, LGBT people and the national minorities oppressed in the dictatorship of the Tsarist empire. In spite of invasions by most capitalist countries, including Canada, the revolution also led to a flowering of art, science and culture and action to protect the environment.

This will not be the dominant story in the news and other media over the hundredth anniversary. Rather there will be an avalanche of distortions. The ruling class does not want people to know that in 1917 the majority of people took control of the country they lived in for the first time in history.

Most of the time, decisions about society, politics and economics are taken by a tiny minority: the ruling class and their representatives. Occasionally, pressure from the majority of society forces changes, but still the elite seek to rule as they have done before.

Revolutions happen when the majority of the population have exhausted other forms of struggle to change their world for the better. There is an element of celebration in a revolution as people sense their freedom and power. There is also serious struggle and enormous sacrifices.

Revolutions and counter-revolutions dominated the first part of the twentieth century. After World War II there were still mass struggles and revolutionary explosions, although in the advanced capitalist countries the long post-war boom gave rise to a period of relative stability. With the collapse of Stalinism, the capitalist class imagined that the future would always be capitalist and so claimed the *end of history*. This triumphant mood and the domination of neo-liberalism boosted the capitalists and have been the major trends of the last 30 years. During this time, the workers' organizations and political understanding were pushed back.

However, the world is changing again. The capitalist class is not confident about the future; they look ahead with fear and worry. They know there is a rising tide of anger in society – anger at massive inequality, widespread poverty, lousy jobs, environmental destruction, ongoing discrimination and all the other ills of capitalism.

Almost everywhere, the capitalist political parties and institutions are in crisis. Society is more and more polarized. Revolutions and counter-revolutions will be back on the agenda. Socialism is gaining ground as people seek an answer to the failings of the present world.

Faced with the challenges to their rule, the capitalist class and their paid academics and commentators will pour forth lies about the Russian Revolution. They will seek to bury its inspiring history and record, hoping to discourage activists and young people from learning about the revolution and its relevance for today.

Later the revolution was betrayed by Stalinism, with many of the gains lost and democracy crushed. Eventually the economic system collapsed due to failures of the bureaucracy. However, Stalinism was not the inevitable outcome of the Russian Revolution. It took a one-sided civil war to crush the revolutionary democracy, with a river of blood between the Russian Revolution and the Stalinist reaction. The most prominent victims of Stalin's purges were those who defended workers' democracy and international solidarity – people who came to be called Trotskyists.

Throughout 2017, Socialist Alternative will publish in our magazine and on our website articles about the Revolution, its achievements, the impact it had in Canada and around the world, and its relevance for today.

Revolutions this century will not be a re-run of Russia 1917. However, there are important lessons including the decisive role that a revolutionary party, the Bolsheviks, and its leadership had in ensuring that reaction did not crush the revolution as happened so many other times. The twenty-first century will see opportunities for new revolutions that break the chains of capitalism.

Russia in February 1917 was a mass of tensions and contradictions. The slaughter of war seemed endless, the countryside remained gripped by feudal backwardness, the workers in the cities were hungry and angry and millions of national minorities were locked in the oppression of the empire.

The soldiers were often sent to the front without rifles, bullets or even boots. As well as the battles, they suffered from disease, hunger and incompetent officers.

Russia was overwhelmingly rural, mostly serfs tied to the land. As there were few machines, most power for farming was muscles. Sometimes animals, but often humans, pulled the ploughs and harvested the crops. It was a backbreaking existence. With millions of men in the army, women and old men did most of the farming.

The Russian empire was ruled by a dictatorial feudal aristocracy headed by the Tsar. There were very limited human rights and only a superficial facade of democracy, with a weak and rigged parliament. Most Russians were illiterate. The empire still used the Julian calendar, replaced in most of Europe hundreds of years earlier.

Thrown into this overwhelming backward society there were large modern factories in some of the big cities. The contrast between the feudal countryside and the newest of industrial technology and production was immense. The working class in Russia, although a minority, was growing rapidly with militant traditions.

In 1905 the workers of Russia led an attempted revolution that included peasant uprisings, and mutinies in the army and navy. Although the revolution was bloodily repressed, with over 10,000 killed, the workers had gained valuable experience. They organized workers' councils to coordinate the strikes. These grew to have mass support, 80,000 members in Moscow, and controlled much of daily life in the cities, deciding what would be done, ensuring food was supplied, hospitals had power, etc. In Russian, the word for council is *Soviet*.

On International Working Women's Day 1917 (February 23 by the old calendar) the women workers of Petrograd went on strike. The next day, rather than return to work, more women and men joined, with 200,000 on the streets. The three main slogans were *End the War, Bread and Down with the Autocracy*.

The troops in Petrograd refused to attack the strikers. Many mutinied, joining the demonstrators, challenging the police, who still supported the regime, and in some cases distributing rifles to the demonstrators.

The Cossacks, an elite force often used for repression, were mobilized onto the streets on horseback. However, while not mutinying, they allowed the revolution to continue.

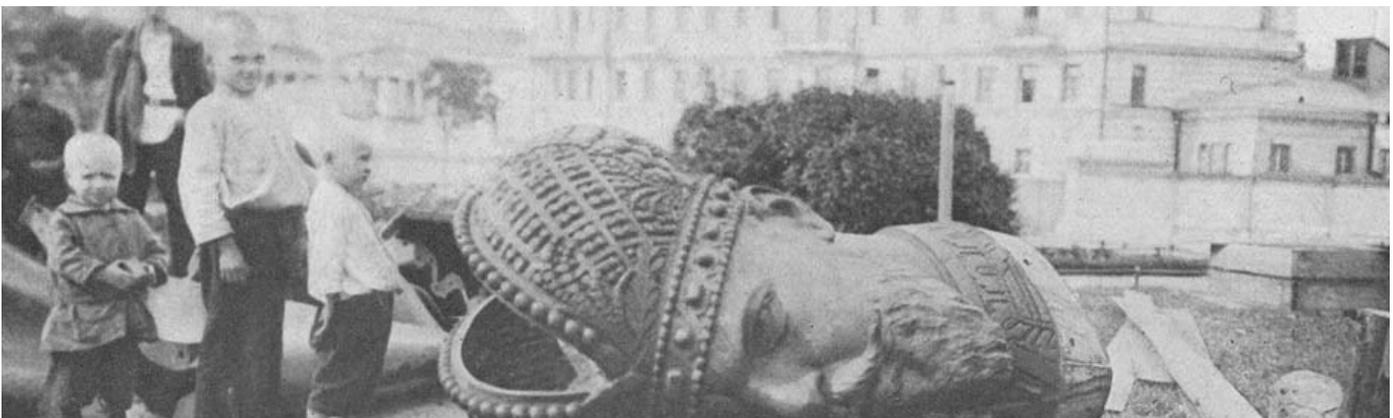
One of them gave the workers a good wink. This wink was not without meaning.... In spite of renewed efforts from the officers, the Cossacks, without openly breaking discipline, failed to force the crowd to disperse.... Officers lined the Cossacks across the street as a barrier to the demonstrators. But even this did not help: standing stock-still in perfect discipline, the Cossacks did not hinder the workers from "diving" under their horses. The revolution does not choose its paths: it made its first steps toward victory under the belly of a Cossack's horse. A remarkable incident!

– Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*

The ruling class's last line of defence of their power was crumbling, as the "armed bodies of men" (Engels) became thinking human beings. Control slipped from the hands of the old order. A week after the strikes began, the Tsar abdicated.

Although the revolution was mostly limited to Petrograd, it rapidly spread across all of Russia. The early days of the revolution were liberating and exciting.

Two forces now held power. The Provisional Government: unelected and made up of self-appointed politicians from the old parliament, mostly liberals, conservatives and moderate socialists. The elected Petrograd Soviet represented the workers and soldiers.



Resisting Trump

Patrick Ayers

Donald Trump's presidency already faces a crisis of legitimacy. He lost the popular vote by 3 million. The CIA asserts Russia interfered in the election. There is open talk of a possible constitutional crisis due to Trump's resistance to separate himself from his businesses.

Trump has dismissed all of this and taken to Twitter to mock the "haters." He is gearing up for vicious attacks on immigrants, Muslims, women, and workers' rights. Whether or not he succeeds depends on the strength of opposition. Unfortunately, the Democrats responded to the new administration by asking Americans to give Trump a chance – a completely unacceptable response. In contrast, tens of thousands of people across the US have greeted the new administration by taking to the streets, showing the potential for a mass grassroots resistance. Inauguration Day, January 21, will see massive protests.

No mandate for hate

A strong mass movement can defeat Trump. The election numbers do not show a strong mandate for his agenda. Trump won less than 25% of all eligible voters, as millions stayed home contributing to a lower turnout than 2012. Election day exit polls showed 61% of all voters disapproved of Trump, unprecedented for a new president.

His victory has emboldened racists, but many people voted for Trump simply because it was a rotten choice between Trump and Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton. Some hope he will at least deliver on the economy, but already, Trump is abandoning his populist anti-establishment message and filling his cabinet with corporate CEOs.

Socialist Alternative is campaigning to build a united grassroots resistance, mobilizing millions of people to stop Trump's agenda before the next election. Our branches around the country organized many of the day-after-election protests from New York to Oakland that saw 40,000 people march.



Democrats in crisis

The Democrats' electoral loss can't be solely pinned on Clinton for being a bad candidate. In reality, the election shows that the threat of right-wing populism can't be defeated with establishment politics.

Many people in the US feel Bernie Sanders, who emerged from 2016 as the most popular politician in the US, could have won the election. This reflects the growing understanding that bold pro-working class politics are needed to mobilize the anger in the US for progressive change.

At the moment, this anger has largely been channeled into false hopes that the Democrats can be claimed for working people. One of Sanders' allies in the House of Representatives, Keith Ellison, has mounted a strong campaign for chair of the Democratic National Committee. Even if Ellison wins, the politics that working people need will be blocked by the party establishment at every level.

What is needed is a new party that draws together millions of people as a force not only for winning elections, but also as a tool for building the resistance needed to stop Trump before the next election.

Socialist Alternative's Seattle councillor, Kshama Sawant, has given a glimpse of what is possible if progressives abandon the Democratic Party for a strategy of mass movements, independent politics, and unapologetically demanding what working people need, and not what the establishment finds acceptable.

To find out more about Socialist Alternative US: socialistalternative.org

Socialist Alternative Canada is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) - an organization with members in 45 countries around the world.

We are involved in struggles for better wages and basic union rights; to protect the environment; for women's rights; and against war, racism and oppression.

Read news and reports from around the world: socialistworld.net



Spanish Students Defeat Conservative Government

Statement by *Sindicato de Estudiantes (Students Union)*, Spain



Just days after the last student general strike called by the *Sindicato de Estudiantes* against the new method of examinations, called *Revalidas Franquistas*, we were proved correct in what we always said: struggle works. The Ministry of Education announced that the *Revalidas* have been abandoned.

These reactionary matriculation exams were weighted to exclude working class students progressing to university. The defeat of the *Revalidas Franquistas* will prevent hundreds of thousands of youth from being thrown out of the classroom.

The new agreement assures that, as previously, the completion of the *Bachillerato* [end of high school grades] will be accepted for university entrance.

This victory is the fruit of struggle conducted by millions of students over the last few years and is due in particular to the historic mass strikes of October 24 and November 25 called by the *Sindicato de Estudiantes*. These strikes emptied the classrooms and filled the streets in protest. In Madrid and Barcelona, 60,000

and 50,000 marched respectively, with more than 70 marches in cities and towns both big and small across Spain.

The victory was also achieved by the battle fought by parents and teachers alongside us. The only reason the government gave in on this issue of strategic importance was the mobilizations and struggles on the streets.

This is the first victory. Now the battle continues with the aim of finishing off the LOMCE (education attacks) and ensuring that not one iota of this counter-reform remains. We demand the return of 7,000 million euros stolen from the state education budget; the re-employment of 32,000 teachers; the repeal of the LOMCE and the 3+2 exams; and no more state funds to support religious and private education.

Furthermore, if they decide to follow the road that they have taken in the last few years, they should be wary. We will again take to the streets.

March 8: International Working Women's Day *Carmia Schoeman*



Clara Zetkin & Rosa Luxemburg

The first Working Women's Day was in 1909 in the US to commemorate the decisive 1908 strike by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Clara Zetkin, a German Marxist, campaigned for an international

day of action and the 1910 Socialist International Congress agreed on March 8. It was a day of coordinated international action by working class women to challenge the capitalist system founded on oppression.

Striking in a coordinated effort under IWWD's banner against food shortages, the Tsarist regime and war, 90,000 working women initiated the 1917 Russian Revolution in Petrograd.

In a cruel twist of irony, women today are encouraged to celebrate the *success* of the 4% of female CEOs leading Fortune 500 companies. The co-opting of the socialist working women's struggle by the exploitative elite is exemplified in its rebranding as International Women's Day.

Concerns of working class women, including the increasing cost of childcare, decreasing

job security, the continuing pay differential, racism and attacks on bodily autonomy have been reduced to insincere talking points rather than a focus of united action. When young women mobilized behind Sanders' movement for a *political revolution*, they received sexist insults from elitist feminists supporting Clinton.

Worldwide, women's struggles are rising. Over 100,000 marched in Argentina against rape. Millions in India protested against rape and murder. Strikes and demonstrations forced the Polish government to retreat from its attack on reproductive rights. In Ireland, ROSA (Reproductive rights, against Oppression, Sexism and Austerity) is fighting for the right to abortion. Working women need to reclaim International Working Women's Day for the struggle for their liberation.

Slaughter at Vimy Ridge

Salman Zafar

The battle of Vimy Ridge holds historical significance in Canada, presented as the battle that formed a nation and one of Canada's proudest moments. However, it doesn't take long to figure out the truth beneath it all – Vimy Ridge is a reminder of innocent blood being spilled.

World War I was fought between capitalist powers for land, resources, markets and power. However it was the working class who paid with their lives and wounds. Eleven million died in the bloody slaughter of war and a further seven million civilians died. The soldiers' experiences of horrifying butchery and misery at Vimy Ridge are ignored, while the Canadian ruling class used the slaughter to assert themselves on the world stage.

The militarized patriotism for Vimy Ridge contains a multitude of dangers, celebrating the capitalist war machine and the leaders who sent the soldiers to die in battle. The myth of Vimy Ridge started a mere two months after the battle, to help justify the military conscription that was imposed on Canadians.

What exactly did Vimy Ridge accomplish? The casualties, 3,598 dead and 7,004 wounded soldiers, had no impact on the war's outcome. The war ended when German troops refused to fight any more.

Canada still kneels before the war machine, as evidenced by the sale of \$15 billion of weapons to the Saudi Arabian regime who is killing innocent civilians in Yemen. The Canadian ruling class do not work to eradicate war, rather they seek to merely delay war.



Trudeau Treachery continued from back green image and risks losing MPs in BC. Attacks by the RCMP, like the police at Standing Rock, would be a publicity nightmare. However, the Liberals are committed to the fossil fuel economy. The alternative pipeline, Energy East, has even greater political risks for the Liberals as it goes through central Ontario and Montréal.

A program of good secure jobs would seriously undermine support for the pipeline. Investing in

Unsettling Canada

Book Review by Leslie Kemp

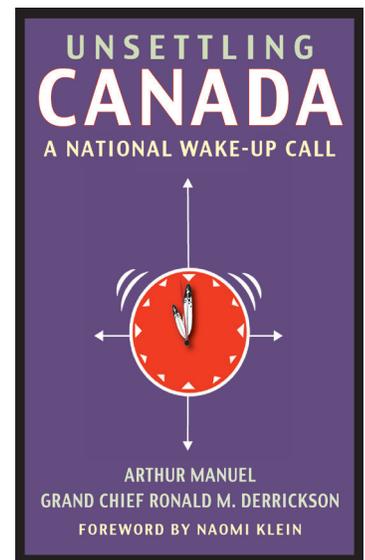
To Canadians unfamiliar with the legacy of colonialism, reading this book will be unsettling. Yet, it should be read by everyone interested in the relentless pursuit of the Canadian government to destroy Indigenous peoples by robbing them of their land and extinguishing their rights.

Manuel grew up in Neskonlith, in BC's Interior Plateau, as a child of a national Aboriginal leader, George Manuel. He traces episodes in his own journey as a leader including time spent at St. Mary's residential school in Mission, BC and at Calgary's Spy Hill Gaol because he couldn't pay a \$25 fine for jumping a freight train. "It is another sad commentary on our place in the world that what struck me most about Spy Hill was how superior the food was to what they served us at residential school," he said.

As a youth leader in 1973, Manuel played a key role in the 24-hour occupation of the Department of Indian Affairs building in Ottawa. He describes the grassroots movement which won Constitutional recognition for Aboriginal rights:

The main reason it was effective in having our rights recognized in the Constitution was that it focused on mass mobilization of the people rather than on leaders pleading their case in committee rooms or behind closed doors with government officials.... What moved the government and the people of Canada was the passion and power of our people unified at the grassroots level, demanding justice for themselves and their children.

This lesson applies equally to the struggles for Indigenous rights today.



renewable energy, insulating buildings and public transit would provide far more jobs than the 40 jobs in Alberta and 50 in BC the built pipeline will provide. This could be funded by the public ownership of Kinder Morgan and re-directing the \$9 billion cost of the useless Site C dam.

The road to victory is by making the costs so high that the Liberals cannot go ahead. Everyone who lives and works in Vancouver has a stake in stopping Kinder Morgan.

ABOUT



Vancouver Ramps Up Activity

In August, nine members travelled to eastern Washington for Socialist Alternative US's fantastic weekend camp.

We have been buzzing with activities especially continuing the Fight for 15 in Surrey. We are battling to stop the Site C dam disaster, hosting a day of petitioning that ended in a potluck on the beach and later a Feast for the Peace evening. We've been on the demos against Kinder Morgan. Activities at Simon Fraser University have continued all autumn.

We held a solidarity picket with the struggle for reproductive rights in Ireland – and with women around the world.

We also have regular discussions and public meetings, two attended by over 50 people. Eleni Mitsou from Greece spoke on *A World in Turmoil* with \$600 raised to help our fellow socialists of Xekinima in Greece. Nestora Salgado spoke on *The Fight of Indigenous Communities for Self-Defense in Mexico*. One week after Trump's election, we held a packed meeting on why he won and what it means.

We have new members and plans for a busy start to 2017, protesting against Trump, fighting for 15, campaigning against poverty and building Socialist Alternative.

To find out more about Socialist Alternative and join us anywhere in Canada, please get in touch.



What We Stand For

- An end to poverty wages; raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour
- A 35 hour working week without loss of pay
- A living income for those unable to work
- Reverse the cuts and privatization of public services
- Fully funded, high quality, free public education from early childhood to university
- Massive public investment in clean energy, mass transit, health care, education, affordable housing
- Phase out the tar-sands and nuclear power
- Higher taxes on the rich and corporations
- Democratic unions run by and for the members, with elected union officials paid the same wages as those they represent
- End discrimination – full equality for all
- Equal rights for immigrants and refugees
- The right to self-determination and self-government for all Aboriginal peoples, and respect for historical treaties and resource rights
- Scrap NAFTA and other exploitative trade deals
- Democratic public ownership of key sectors of the economy
- A socialist transformation of society to allow for the democratic planning of the economy based on the interests and needs of the overwhelming majority

Full list at socialistalternative.ca

If you agree with the ideas in this magazine, join Socialist Alternative!

After a year of successful sales of our magazine, we are pleased to expand to 16 pages. Contact us if you would like to receive copies of our magazine.

We invite you to check out our website, which has longer versions of many of the articles here, and much more.

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Prime Minister Trudeau's smiling mask was ripped away by approving Kinder Morgan's \$7.5 billion pipeline from the tar sands to the port of Vancouver. The government also agreed to expand Enbridge's pipeline from Alberta to Lake Superior, US. These decisions make a mockery of the promise at the Paris Climate Change conference to aim for only a 1.5°C temperature increase.

Canada pledged to reduce emissions, but on present trends will miss its 2030 target by 91 megatonnes. The two pipelines will increase Canada's pollution by a further 27 megatonnes of CO₂ every year. It does not matter where the CO₂ is released, the earth's atmosphere and climate change do not notice national boundaries. The world is dangerously close to accelerating climate change.

The pipeline's route crosses 700 rivers through lands prone to landslides in a region at risk of earthquakes. Leaks and spills will happen; the current Kinder Morgan system has had four major spills in the Vancouver region since 2005.

Vancouver, home to over 2 million people, will see more than 400 Aframax tankers (245 metres long) a year travelling through the narrow port entrance past parks, beaches and people's homes. A spill in the harbour could threaten tens of thousands of jobs. This contrasts with the 50

permanent jobs from the project in BC. The City of Vancouver estimates the economic costs of a spill could be \$1.2 billion. The clean-up costs could be billions more, but Kinder Morgan will only pay up to \$1.3 billion, leaving taxpayers to pay the rest.

There is no safe response when a tanker carrying 750,000 barrels of bitumen has an accident. This is three times what the Exxon Valdez poured into the ocean and onto the beaches of Alaska. Twenty-seven years later oil remains in the area. A spill in or around Vancouver would be a disaster.

The decision to approve the pipeline has outraged First Nations, with over a hundred First Nations opposed. The Tsleil-Waututh Nation, on whose traditional lands the pipeline would terminate, promises resistance.

There is a massive campaign to stop Kinder Morgan. Major city councils in Metro Vancouver are firmly opposed to the pipeline. The Mayor of Burnaby, where the pipeline would end, has pledged to stand in front of the bulldozers.

First Nations and cities are challenging the proposal in court. However, the most effective resistance is demonstrations, blockades, civil disobedience and economic disruption. 20,000 people have pledged to take direct action. BC will have its own Standing Rock.

The Liberals' high-risk strategy destroys their

Continued on page 14