

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

WINTER 2018 - NO. 8

SUGGESTED
DONATION
\$2



HOUSING EMERGENCY ACTION NEEDED



FIGHTING FOR \$15
& FAIRNESS
P. 7



SWANSON ELECTION
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WOMEN FIGHT BACK
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ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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 Indigenous 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



Vancouver Commemorates 100 years of Russian Revolution

Zak Shilling

The Russian Revolution is constantly dismissed and diminished by the world's ruling class as a coup. The truth is that the majority of people – workers and peasants – took control of society through democratic councils (or soviets) and ended the war, gave land to the peasants and ended the dictatorship of the rich. The revolution won gender equality, better working conditions, LGBT rights, an expansion of education, culture and science, and untold public services.

Nearly 50 people attended Socialist Alternative Vancouver's successful rally celebrating the Russian Revolution. Entering the room, they were greeted by the song of the world working class, *The Internationale*, and walls decorated with great revolutionary posters from the time. Jane, a Socialist Alternative member and Left Alternative activist at SFU, explained why the revolution is relevant today, after 100 years.

Jordan Quinn, from Socialist Alternative Seattle, pointed to the key role of the Bolsheviks in the successful revolution, the only time so far that the working class has successfully ended capitalism. Several hundred dollars were raised for Sotsialisticheskaya Alternativa, our sister organization in Russia.

The ruling class continue to fear the genuine ideas

and successes of the Russian Revolution. A new generation seeing the economic and ecological crises of capitalism will find inspiration in the October Revolution.



Socialist Alternative Canada is part of the Committee for a Workers' International

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Housing Emergency - Action Needed

Chris Fofonoff

My neighbourhood will boast 11,000 new apartment units in the next three decades. High-rises and townhouses are being built all over Greater Vancouver and in cities across the country. How can Canada have a "housing crisis?"

People are discovering that a simple supply-and-demand outlook is totally insufficient to explain the crisis of skyrocketing rents and impossible ownership. Developers build for profits, not needs. Low-rent apartments are being demolished and replaced by high-rent units or for-sale condos. Nearly 20,000 apartments sit empty in speculative uselessness as Vancouver's homeless population numbers thousands. The rent that new tenants paid for a one-bedroom apartment increased by an astounding 20% last year.

The lack of renters' rights with teeth mean that landlords can always wield the threat of eviction. Entire urban communities, such as Vancouver's Chinatown, are ravaged as long-time residents are forced out. Meanwhile others, such as victims of domestic abuse, become trapped, unable to find or afford a safe place to live.

The torrent of profit-seeking capital is also crashing into mid-sized and small towns. The rent for the apartment in Kamloops that I lived in less than a decade ago has doubled, and it's as shabby now as then. Grand Forks, BC, the town of 4,000 people where I grew up, has a homeless encampment.

The federal Liberals recently released their much-ballyhooed national housing strategy, meant to replace the one they killed off in the 1990s. Their definition of "affordable" is, for low-income people, anything but. They propose to tackle only the "chronically" homeless, about 20% of the total – and *only half of them* – to reduce total street homelessness by 10% by 2026. What ambition! Of the projected money, \$11.2 billion is for loans to developers and \$4.7 billion depends on matching funding by provinces and cities.

Jean Swanson's election campaign (see page 5) showed the strong support for action. Socialist Alternative campaigns for a rent-freeze, a mansion tax, and all 114,000 new units (the BC NDP promised during last year's election) to be built by union workers and publicly owned. Victories on these demands will lead to more and further-reaching wins here and elsewhere.

Compare our situation to post-World War I "Red Vienna," where working people won massive quantities of quality social housing – much of which still exists – paid for by luxury taxes and a progressive property tax. Vienna also built daycares, nursing homes, libraries, parks, and more in a country that had just been defeated in a world war. What's Canada's excuse?



Toronto Housing Crisis

Rowena Hart

In Toronto construction sites and signs for luxury condos are everywhere, while homeless people crowd doorways.

This gloomy state of housing in Toronto, and nationally, is because for decades all levels of government refused to invest. The federal Liberals abandoned funding public housing in the 1990s with the provincial Harris Conservatives doing the same, dumping responsibility on to the city.

Toronto's rental vacancy rate of 1.1% is the lowest in 16 years. 184,000 people are on the public housing waiting list, while most of the housing stock needs desperate repairs or faces closure. There were over 80 homeless deaths in 2017. It took temperatures of minus 29°C, with wind chill, for the city council to open the armouries to the homeless, which was done in the 1990s.

Policies favouring landlords, privatization and profiteering encourage condo-building instead of purpose-built rentals, co-ops or social housing. Toronto is a playground for wealthy developers and speculators looking to park their capital. In contrast, poor and working people struggle with many spending 70% of their income on housing rather than the recommended 30%.

Housing, vital for health and dignity, should be a human right, not a commodity. Winning the radical change to governments that ensure that everyone (regardless of circumstance) has a place to call home will need a serious campaign.

#MeToo: Women Fight Back

Leslie Kemp



A wave of outrage has swept women the world over as increasing numbers of sexual harassment allegations mount in the spheres of politics, business and culture/entertainment. The outrage has surged into a flood of solidarity which has found expression in #MeToo.

Women are determined to call out those who have violated their bodies, personal space and sense of dignity. Misogyny and sexual violence is not new. Violence against women is embedded in our society. The World Health Organization estimates that one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Globally, 38% of murders of women are committed by intimate partners.

What is new is that women are making their voices heard like never before in the fight to stop violence. The election of a misogynist US President sparked massive demonstrations all over the world the day after Trump's inauguration. This mass movement of women on the streets ignited passion and gave confidence to many women to stand up against violence and fight for new victories.

A new women's movement is emerging, but it needs to have a clear class analysis and demands that resonate with working class women. This movement must take on the issues of sexual harassment, gender-based violence, reproductive rights, childcare and the pay gap. Women also need to be central in the fight for higher wages and affordable housing. Unions need to actively take up this struggle.

The movement needs to expand from internet activism to the streets and workplaces using bold tactics and slogans. Women, particularly young women, have taken to the streets and gone on strike to protest reproductive rights in Poland and Ireland and to fight violence in India and Argentina. In the Egyptian Revolution, women led the fight that toppled a brutal dictator. In the Spanish state, young women

led powerful student movements and the organization Libres y Combativas is dedicated to revolutionary feminism and anticapitalism.

This is not a movement focused on "breaking the glass ceiling" that argues for women to climb the corporate ladder. It is a women's movement that is rooted in the everyday experiences of most women. This women's movement recognizes that women can never achieve full equality under capitalism. Women must be as prepared to fight against the violence of capitalism as they are determined to fight violence in their homes and workplaces.

Indigenous Stolen Children

Allie Pev

Canadian governments continue to remove many Indigenous children from their homes. They have learned nothing from the disasters of residential schools and the "Sixties Scoop." 150,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed into residential schools. The Sixties Scoop removed 20,000 Indigenous children from their families, placing them with non-Indigenous families in Canada and abroad.

The facts are staggering: more children than ever are being taken from their families. In 2016, there were 4,300 children under the age of four in foster care across Canada. In BC, 60% of all the children and youth in care are Indigenous. Of the 11,000 children in care in Manitoba, 10,000 are Indigenous.

In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that the federal government discriminated against First Nations children by failing to provide the same level of child welfare services on reserve as they did elsewhere.



Jean Swanson Campaign

Peter Marlowe

Jean Swanson's city council by-election campaign rocked Vancouver. In just three months, it started from scratch to come a strong second.

A reluctant Jean was persuaded to run to highlight radical answers to the city's housing nightmare. These included a four-year rent freeze and a "mansion tax" on properties worth over \$5 million to fund homes for the city's 2,130 homeless and social housing. Outside Chip Wilson's mansion, the city's most expensive property at \$78.8 million, Swanson supporters presented a physically and financially enormous property tax bill.

Swanson promised to live on a workers' wage, not the councillors' \$85,000 and refused money from big business or developers. These policies attracted donations from over 700 people, and over 500 volunteers, mostly young, and all enthusiastic.

Swanson is a long-time community activist, fighting for housing and income to tackle Canada's

It took ten years to reach this decision in response to a claim from the Assembly of First Nations and First Nations children's advocate, Cindy Blackstock.

The underfunding of services and poverty are key factors in the shocking number of children taken from their families. Health Canada noted that "as a result of lack of services, families are left with the option of turning their child over to [the] child welfare system in an attempt to receive [a] basic level of care."

Urban Indigenous children face similar fates. Rather than providing sufficient financial support to families, children are taken into care where foster parents receive more financial support. In many cases, these funds would be better spent assisting families. The consequences are devastating: children are traumatized, families torn apart, and many foster kids do not complete high school, not to mention the tragic epidemic of suicides and opioid overdoses. The trauma of losing one's parents when going into foster care can be worse than the trauma of staying in a home where there is neglect.

Indigenous families deserve better. We cannot lose another generation. In November 2016, Grand Chief Ed John recommended that the BC government recognize Indigenous communities' right to self-government, enable Indigenous communities to exercise full jurisdiction over Indigenous child welfare and invest an additional \$8 million annually to increase the number of social workers, support workers, and others serving First Nations communities.

Socialist Alternative supports these recommendations and stands for an end to the racist underfunding of services to Indigenous children across Canada.

deep poverty. Her honesty and commitment attracted support for her independent candidacy with endorsements from COPE, Vancouver's traditional left party, former MP Libby Davies, environmentalist Naomi Klein and others.

Eight other candidates ran, including well-funded ones from the ruling Vision Vancouver, the right-wing Non-Partisan Association (NPA) and the Green Party. However, Swanson's policies and energetic campaign set the tone and the agenda, with the housing crisis dominating. The press ate it up. The other candidates did the old desperate leftward shuffle. Even Hector Bremner, of NPA, pretended he had a left leg to take a stand on.

Socialist Alternative energetically supported Swanson, organizing the campaign in Grandview Woodlands and working hard in the West End. It was fun to have a good candidate with policies we could fully support. We knocked on doors, set up sidewalk tables and signs, got petitions signed and spread radical ideas. Almost everyone in the working class and renter areas agreed with us. That's how it is nowadays, in these very late stages of capitalism.

Jean's campaign was inspired by Kshama Sawant in Seattle. Socialist Alternative, with Left Alternative, organized the main election rally *Bringing a Revolution to City Hall* with Swanson and Sawant. The speakers were regularly drowned out by thunderous applause and spontaneous standing ovations from over 150 people.

Election Day revealed a divided city. Jean won in the working class and high renter areas. However, we didn't convince enough left voters of the real deal and the rich areas' support for Hector Bremner won the day. Vancouver has shifted noticeably left. In autumn 2018 there is a full city council election.



Jean Swanson

Day in the Life

A BC Teacher



Few professions solicit such strongly-held public opinions, ranging from “teachers are selfless martyrs” to “teachers are lazy whiners.” What is a teacher’s life like?

Teaching can be a joy. The curriculum states what to teach but not how, so we can be creative. It is amazing seeing kids satisfy their boundless curiosity, learn enthusiastically, and gain understanding of the world around them, new sports, art styles and stories.

But creativity and engagement takes time and energy in preparation. Teachers work 10 to 30 hours a week outside of official working hours. Administration wants us to volunteer for sports, clubs, etc. Many of us are enthusiastic to do so, wanting fun, quality education. But the pressure is constant to give our time. And then there is the endless paperwork. Teaching is an eternal work-life juggling act, which can take over your life.

Think of the people in your life with the greatest anger, the largest hearts, the biggest personal drama, the sharpest minds, the most serious learning difficulties. Now imagine teaching all of them in one

classroom. This is a teacher’s job. Teaching a grade 6 class with reading levels ranging from grade 2 to grade 8 is not easy. Constant flexibility and resourcefulness is required to keep lessons on track while striving for a healthy, engaged classroom community.

All across Canada, teachers and education are under regular attack by bullshit provincial politicians who say that children are the future in one breath and then cut funding and working conditions in the next.

For instance, the BC Liberals illegally attacked public education, stealing up to \$300 million a year and doing irreparable harm to a generation of students. Class sizes ballooned and 25% of BC classrooms had at least four students with special needs but little additional support. While the 2016 Supreme Court of Canada ruled against the BC Liberals, education is still under-resourced in BC, and in other provinces.

Yet to some, we become “lazy whiners” when we strike as we have in many provinces. What is lazy about fighting for children’s rights to have decent resources and learning environments?

A Recent Immigrant's Experience

Leslie Kemp interviewed N.

“I came as a landed immigrant in September 2014. I had to flee the Philippines as I had threats on my life. I was active in social movements for 10 years as a community organizer, organizing various campaigns on labour, farmers, urban poor, women and children.

“It is super expensive here and wages are low so in order to survive, it’s necessary to work two or three jobs. This basically eliminates most social activities and sometimes I feel as if I’m on a treadmill: work, eat, sleep, day in and out.

“I was pretty confident and thought that getting a job in a non-profit organization would be easy because I had years of experience as an organizer. I sent a lot of resumes to various organizations. I took training in resume writing, interview skills, etc. None of this landed me a job in the non-profit sector due to

no Canadian experience. It’s a catch 22 situation.

“I felt negative and hopeless. I finally took on simple jobs like working in a deli, packing chocolates and housekeeping in one of the big hotels. Working as a housekeeper was tough on my body. My body ached, and it took a lot of energy. As a seasonal employee, I was not allowed to be part of the union. I lasted six months. If I were alone, I doubt that I would have any savings, nor would I be able to attend school to get a Canadian education. I would be stuck in the minimum wage job treadmill for years and would probably get disillusioned and try to go elsewhere.

“It’s not easy to be an immigrant. It requires a lot of patience and character. You need to start from the bottom. You have to forget whoever you were back in your country and leave your past behind.”

Timmies Heats Up Fighting for 15

Tim Heffernan

Ontario's minimum wage went to \$14 an hour on January 1, a stepping stone to \$15 next year, which will raise the wages of 1.8 million workers. This major victory for the organizing efforts of the 15 and Fairness campaign brings a 32% boost to the minimum wage from 2017's \$11.60.

However, the jubilation of all low paid workers was spoiled by the aggressive mean-spiritedness of some Tim Hortons' franchisees as they tried to claw back the increase, making employees pay more for their benefits and removing paid breaks. The action provoked a strong public backlash with protests, not just in Ontario, that have severely damaged "Timmies" reputation as a Canadian icon.

Beyond the minimum wage hike, the new law brought other benefits to low-paid, insecure workers: a minimum of 10 days of personal emergency leave and part-time, temporary and casual workers to be paid the same rate as full-time staff doing the same job. The new law makes it easier for union organization in some sectors.

Women, Indigenous people and recent immigrants are the main beneficiaries of the increase. Contrary to Tory and big business propaganda, most workers who will gain are over 24-years old or work for companies employing over 100 people.

Erendira Bravo juggled up to four jobs, none full-time. The endless days of working on-call and taking virtually any shift took a toll on her personal life and family. She questioned her self-worth, saying, "At one point I almost believed that I was not human."

What Makes Me Angry

Larry Hyink



In late November, an outfit called the McKinsey Global Institute reported that 800 million jobs would be lost to "robots" by 2030. In a world where people mattered more than profits of the bloated ultra-rich, this would be great. It would mean ordinary folks would have more time for what they loved instead of working at some soul-destroying job(s) to scrape a living.

Unfortunately, we live in the ever-deepening shithole of Capitalism and most of us who are going to be made "redundant" by some machine can only look forward to using our new found free time for dumpster diving for our next meal.

McKinsey Global urges governments to retrain displaced workers. That's nice. Anyone who hasn't been dead asleep for the last 20 years knows governments are too busy with important stuff like handouts to corporations and tax cuts for the rich to do much about the plight of working people.

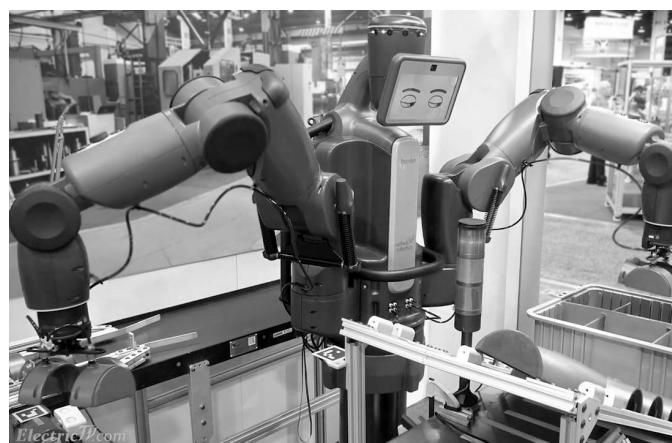
The fact that automation can eliminate the drudgery



A reinvigorated 15 and Fairness campaign and the unions need to use Tim Hortons' actions to win stronger labour laws and work to unionize precarious workers in multimillion dollar franchises. The employer actions are a warning to workers in BC and Alberta, as their minimum wage is increased.

The Ontario Liberals' cynical and recent embrace of the minimum wage issue is due to their electoral unpopularity and polls showing 70% support for a substantial increase. Yet June's provincial election could see gains for Ontario's Progressive Conservatives, who threaten to delay next January's increase. The labour movement must be prepared to mobilize to make sure this does not happen.

of labour and create goods and services in abundance is fantastic news if and only if the benefits are shared among the whole of humanity and not just the 1% ... a Socialist world where it's Capitalism that is made redundant.



Canada Today

Salman Zafar and Tim Heffernan

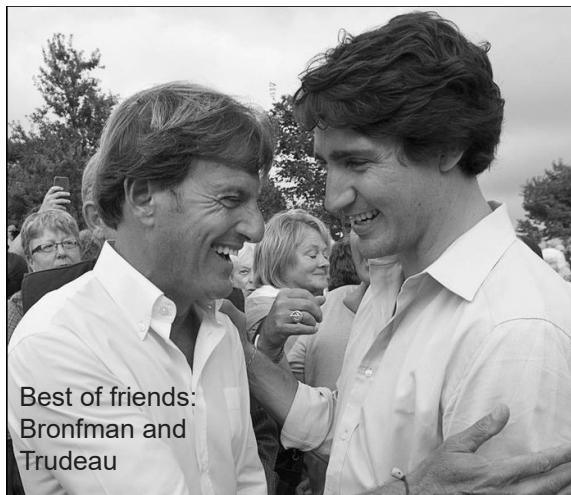
The Canadian economy continues to rely heavily on the housing bubble and consumer debt – both unreliable foundations. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) warned that Canada leads the advanced world in household borrowing. Growing concerns about the housing bubble led Moody's to downgrade its rating of the country's six big banks. Both the International Monetary Fund and the OECD have warned about Canada's over-priced housing.

The economy expanded at an annualized rate of 1.7 percent in the third quarter of 2017. Not long ago this would have been considered pathetic, but nowadays is labelled "booming." The increase was driven by household spending growing 1%, which is due to an increase in child tax benefits and consumer borrowing. Canada continues to suck in imports, due to the weakness of Canadian manufacturing. Canada has had a trade deficit since 2009.

While unemployment has fallen, real wages stagnate for most people. As inequality continues to rise, a trend since the 1970s, the super-rich are doing fine. Oxfam reported that two families, David Thomson's and Galen Weston's, are as wealthy as 11 million Canadians.

The Paradise Papers revealed the actions of some of the super rich. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists stated that Canada was among "the biggest sources of business" for the offshore firms involved. Some 2,700 Canadians and 560 companies, many of them household names, are mentioned in the papers. Stephen Bronfman – super-rich, chief fundraiser for Justin Trudeau – was involved, although Trudeau thought that was fine. It is estimated that Revenue Canada lost over \$6 billion in annual tax income due to offshore activities.

Finance Minister Morneau kept his shares in the family business, Morneau Shepell, while bringing forward pension legislation that would impact his company. The company has government contracts, including from the government Morneau is a member



Best of friends:
Bronfman and
Trudeau



Singh: New NDP Leader

of. While he got away with his actions, his attitude that this was all okay, reveals the Liberals' sense of privilege. After all, they are the party of Bay Street.

The Liberals have been stronger on talk than action. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives stated that "the 'middle class' tax cut championed by Trudeau/Morneau does not actually benefit the middle class, nor is it particularly progressive." Also the "government has not undertaken a comprehensive examination of legal tax loopholes, despite their costing over \$100 billion per year in lost public revenue."

The world economy is unstable. Trump's attacks on NAFTA could end in disaster. Although NAFTA was bad news for workers when it was agreed, there would be major disruption if it ended abruptly. Canada has agreed to sign the Trans-Pacific Partnership, now without the US, an agreement that the Canadian Labour Congress stated would do more harm than good to Canadian workers and consumers. There are major concerns that the Chinese economy, a key driver of the world economy and significant export market for Canada, will have a crisis as its speculative bubbles collapse.

Trump's actions have increased the risk of Middle East turmoil. His belligerence to North Korea has raised fears about the use of nuclear weapons. It is likely that other forces in the US and internationally will prevent such a nightmare, but the threat is real.

Climate change continues to cause mounting havoc around the world with fires, floods, storms and droughts. Already Canada is a major contributor of CO₂, yet the Liberal government continues to push tar sands pipelines. A fine example of the Liberals walk differing from their talk.

Despite having new leaders, neither the Conservatives nor NDP have significantly reduced Liberal support, in spite of their blunders and failings. Scheer, the new Tory leader, is described as "Harper with a smile." However, it will take more than a smile to erase most Canadians' memory of Harper's grim years.

While the NDP's Jagmeet Singh is the first member of a visible minority to lead a major federal party, so

The Fentanyl Crisis

Jim Sugiyama & Larry Hyink



The fentanyl crisis shouldn't surprise anyone. It is the product of Big Pharma who *pushes* for profit not people's health in a crisis of social, emotional and physical pain ravaging our society.

Opiate addiction is an ancient problem. Opium and its derivatives have been used for centuries for physical and emotional pain. Unfortunately, opiates are addictive. Surges in addiction coincide with surges in pain such as war and social upheaval like industrialization. Many large corporations sold opiates at the company store. Synthetic opioids, not made from opium poppies, allow pharmaceutical companies to bring us their patented magic.

Nothing treats pain better than opiates. Short-acting opiates treat severe pain. Long-acting opiates, like OxyContin, were pitched by Big Pharma, as safe, low addiction risk treatment for chronic pain.

Big Pharma's advertising blitz to doctors coupled with alleged kickbacks in the case of one giant, Insys, produced an explosion of prescriptions, profits and addiction. In the globalized economy, where health and safety rules are considered red-tape and poverty wages keep many working people in permanent desperation, there's lots of pain to treat.

Higher addiction risk occurs if using opiates for psychological pain. The need for some peace drives addiction, especially without physician oversight.

When Ontario removed OxyContin from the list of drugs it paid for in 2012, the hardest hit were the opiate dependent without alternative treatment options.

Enter fentanyl. Street chemists extracted fentanyl from so-called addict-proof products in the late 1990s. It rapidly became the drug of choice following opioid bans in many jurisdictions. Fentanyl is 100 times stronger than morphine.

Thus, the fentanyl holocaust, killing tens of thousands worldwide. Thousands have died across Canada, although none at safe injection sites. The simple real solution is eliminating a profit driven system and decriminalizing the use of all drugs, as in Portugal's legal, medically-supervised access to pain treatment.

far he has had no impact on support. The NDP vote fell in four by-elections in December. Singh makes speeches about social and economic justice, but his policies are not inspiring a wave of support.

Most resistance continues outside of Parliament. Indigenous peoples are disappointed at the lack of action on the many Liberal promises. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Inquiry is mired in delay and controversy. There is a looming battle on the west coast over the Kinder Morgan pipeline to Vancouver.

The union movement remains largely quiet. The move to a \$15 minimum wage in Alberta, Ontario and BC will be a huge boost to low paid workers, but it was not won by widespread union organization and workplaces actions and the gains are under threat as Tim Hortons has demonstrated.

There have been some union victories, significantly of food service workers at Simon Fraser and York Universities. While recognizing the challenges of organizing these workers, a determined union movement could make huge gains among precarious and low-paid workers. Unfortunately, some unions are going the other way, continuing to sign two-tier contracts which mean new workers will have worse conditions than existing workers. This is a recipe for division in the workplace and union weakness in the future. The labour movement still has enormous latent power, but needs to revise its strategy to reverse its decline and the long stagnation in wages.

Canadians cannot find a suitable electoral outlet to express their anger. And anger there is. In reaction to the Paradise Papers, 90% of people expressed "overwhelming distaste" for tax havens. The most popular politician in Canada is not young, photogenic or even Canadian. It is Bernie Sanders. This trend is also demonstrated by the elections in Montreal and Vancouver. If the NDP wants to pose any real challenge to the Liberals in 2019 this is the road it should take – putting forward a program of changes that promises and delivers radical ideas.

Socialist Alternative is gaining support as workers and young people seek answers to the many failings of capitalism.



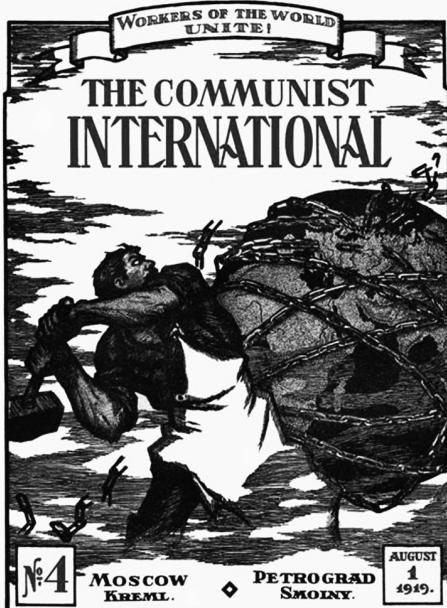
10 Days that Shook the World

Aiden Lum Sisler

The Russian Revolution sent out international shock waves. It inspired the working class, weary of poverty and the war's slaughter. The ruling classes were terrified, trying everything to crush the revolution at home and afar.

World War I ended with a mutiny of German sailors, starting on November 1, that spread to the army and the working class. The monarchy was overthrown, the war ended on November 11, and the soldiers, sailors and workers set up democratic councils across Germany. Tragically the Social Democrats crushed the revolution.

There were mass movements, mutinies and general strikes around the world. Empires ended and monarchies overthrown. For a time workers took power in several countries, including Finland, Hungary and part of Ireland, sometimes organizing councils or soviets.



The Russian Revolution inspired the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. For six weeks, 30,000 women and men closed almost all the factories, shops and public sector. The Central Strike Committee of elected delegates ensured the supply of food and essential services. The ruling class could not stand the real democracy of workers' control, so on Bloody Sunday, June 21, federal troops occupied streets and forced the strikers back to work. Although defeated, the mood spread across Canada with more strikes and union growth.

The revolution gave hope to millions who joined the new Communist parties. By 1921 the new Communist International had a mass membership in many countries.

Later Stalin abandoned revolutionary internationalism and workers' democracy. However, the ideas of the Russian Revolution continue to inspire new generations seeking to end capitalism's economic, social and ecological crises.

Revolution Betrayed

Bill Hopwood

The Russian Revolution unleashed high hopes and dramatic reforms. However, later the democratic workers' state became a brutal dictatorship.

The war-ravaged country faced the united world capitalists determined to crush it, sending invading troops, including nearly 5,000 Canadians, to support the reactionary White Armies. The revolutionary Red Army's high morale, fighting for *Peace, Bread, and Land*, won the civil war in 1923.

After nearly 10 years of war, the economy was in ruins; steel production in 1923 was less than 10% of 1913. The Soviet government with the advantages of a planned economy, elimination of capitalist profit-taking and a motivated working class rebuilt and surpassed the pre-1913 economy.

The capitalist economy regulates production by the crude mechanism of the market, with booms, slumps and unemployment. A healthy planned economy requires active democratic involvement – as Trotsky said, "a planned economy needs democracy as a body needs oxygen."

Lenin warned against a bureaucracy, but the shortage of educated workers resulted in many former Tsarist officials, many not committed to the workers' state, doing the planning. Long working hours led to workers not attending the soviets. A privileged bureaucracy formed around Stalin. This resulted in economic zigzags, distortions and waste, but due to the planned economy's strength the Soviet Union grew faster than any major capitalist economy.

The Bolsheviks had always seen the Russian Revolution in an international context and looked to successful revolutions, particularly in more economically developed countries, to share skills and technology. However, revolutions elsewhere were defeated, leaving the Soviet Union isolated.

Stalin reversed many of the revolution's social gains. Stalin's bureaucracy abandoned internationalism for "Socialism in One Country," recognizing that revolutions internationally would revive workers' democracy in the Soviet Union, threatening their privileges. He imposed policies on Communist parties around the world resulting in defeated revolutions in China, Germany, Spain and elsewhere.

Stalin faced resistance. Trotsky led the defence of workers' democracy and internationalism. In the mid-1930s Stalin launched a "one-sided civil war" purging almost all the surviving leaders of the revolution, with show trials ending in murder. Even the leaders of the Red Army were executed. Millions of party activists were imprisoned and exiled.

The roots of Stalinism were not in Bolshevism. In fact, Stalin murdered the Bolsheviks. Stalinism grew in the economic and technological backwardness of the Soviet Union and its isolation.

Catalonia's Revolutionary Road

Leslie Kemp & Will Munro



INTERNATIONAL

Catalonia's referendum on October 1 unleashed an explosion that has not ended. The Spanish state brutally tried to repress the vote with tactics from Franco's dictatorship. Police smashed polling stations, fired rubber bullets and assaulted people with batons, injuring over 800. Despite this repression, over two million people defiantly voted, with 92% support for independence.

Two days later, millions went to the streets in the biggest general strike in decades. This was the decisive opening to a genuinely revolutionary crisis in Catalonia.

The first instinct of the People's Party (PP), heirs of Franco, was further repression. They carried out a coup, using Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 to suspend the Catalan government and jailed political leaders. Over 20 are in prison, exile or on bail facing possible charges of sedition, with a 30-year prison sentence.

The coup led to further mass demonstrations and general strikes, intensifying opposition to the Spanish state and aggravating the national question. It also deepened the political crisis in Spain, provoking similar movements in the Basque country and Galicia.

At this stage, the national question is posed much more sharply in Catalonia than in Québec, a big factor being the repressive actions of the state. Imagine a Canadian government acting like the Spanish state with a coup against the Québec National Assembly. The Canadian state can be ruthless; the memory of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's imposition of the War Measures Act in 1970 still looms large in Québec.

Spanish Prime Minister Rajoy and his reactionary monarchist bloc called new elections for December 21 as an attempt to back up its repressive offensive. The CWI section in the Spanish state called for those on the left to defend democratic rights and mobilize to defeat the PP, Ciudadanos (right wing Spanish nationalist party) and PSOE (former social democrats called PSC in Catalonia). They called for no votes for the defenders of article 155, for those who suppressed Catalan self-

government and imprisoned the pro-independence leaders and Catalan government ministers.

The election, with over 80% turnout, was a massive defeat for the Spanish nationalists who supported article 155. In an even bigger blow, the PP, the most corrupt party in Europe, was decapitated, receiving only 4.2% of the vote and losing 7 seats. It cannot form a parliamentary block for the first time in its history. The three pro-Catalan independence parties won 70 out of 135 parliamentary seats, outpolling the three anti-independence parties 47.5% to 43.5%. Despite the repression and several pro-independence candidates running their campaigns in exile or from prison, the parties in support of independence maintained their majority.

The declaration of independence in Catalonia has sparked a debate in the Québec independence movement. In December, Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois of Québec solidaire commented on "the profoundly revolutionary nature of the independence process" and that independence needs a powerful social mobilization. "Catalonia is a good reminder that independence cannot be achieved only from above."

Revolutionary Marxists support the right to national self-determination but from a totally different class standpoint than Puigdemont's pro-capitalist and austerity policies. In Catalonia, we defend a Republic of the people, which ends social injustices and opens the way for socialist transformation, breaking the power of the political and economic oligarchy, which has ruled for decades. This program would win over a section of Spanish workers living in Catalonia, who are not inspired simply by nationalism. Similarly, Socialist Alternative Canada supports the right of Quebec sovereignty and for a socialist Quebec to be part of a voluntary socialist association of Canada.

The struggle in Catalonia continues, the revolutionary potential has not been crushed.

For more about Catalonia, Spain and Izquierda Revolucionaria: izquierdarevolucionaria.net

The US: Between Upheaval and Elections

Socialist Alternative US reports

2017 began with mass protests against Trump, particularly the millions-strong women's marches on January 21. The year ended with the #MeToo upheaval, continuing the waves of protest that have swept the US since Trump's election victory.

However, since August, there has been a certain lull in mass protests. In this context, the Republicans passed massive tax cuts for big business and the super-rich with little mobilized opposition. Yet, the tax plan was supported by only 29% of people, according to Quinnipiac.

Many people on the left have put their hopes in elections. This could further limit the scope for protests in the US in 2018, although several issues, including the investigation into Trump's election campaign ties to Russia, could reignite protests rapidly.

The midterm elections next November will be the most energized in recent US history. The Democrats' victories in local elections in November 2017, and December's stunning defeat of Trump supporter, Roy Moore, for an empty Senate seat in Alabama have raised hopes of a significant swing to the Democrats in 2018.

The dominant wing of the Democrats, the political representatives of big business, plan to run in the midterms as the #notTrump and #MeToo party,

while seeking to avoid any substantive promises to the working class and young people. Given Trump's downward spiral this may be enough, but it is a very dangerous game, as it lost the Democrats the presidential election. Millions want them to stand up and fight – for impeachment, to defend immigrants, for Medicare for All – but again and again they refuse.

Over the past few years, both establishment parties have been roiled by division, reflecting the enormous social crisis in US society, acute political polarization, and the profound desire for change.

Sanders is still the most popular politician in the US. Socialist ideas and organizations, including the Democratic Socialists of America and Socialist Alternative are gaining support. However, the main energy of the left is trying to transform the Democratic Party into a "people's party." But the historic decline of US capitalism will demonstrate the limits of this approach in the years ahead. There are mounting tensions inside the Democratic Party between the corporate leaders of the party and the working class voting base. Bitter experience is preparing the ground for a break from the Democratic Party straitjacket and towards a new mass party of working people.

For more about the US and Socialist Alternative: socialistalternative.org

Québec Liberals Pander to Xenophobia

Martin LeBrun

Secularism has been prominent in Québec politics since the 1960s Quiet Revolution, when Quebecers shook off the grip of the Catholic Church. Yet, recently both the Québec Liberals and the Parti Québécois (PQ) have tried to stoke ethnic and religious prejudice, attempting to pass so-called religious neutrality laws – banning wearing some religious attire in public places. Ironically, a crucifix hangs in the National Assembly.

Facing elections in 2018 and critiques from both pro-business nationalist parties (PQ and CAQ), Liberal Premier Couillard passed the first public veil ban in North America in October. The PQ and CAQ criticised the law for not going far enough. Only Québec solidaire took a principled opposition. Bill 62 requires anyone to uncover their face when giving or receiving public services, including transit, education,

health care and libraries. No sanctions are mentioned but when asked about penalties, Québec Justice Minister Vallée replied, "If you don't get on [a bus], you won't get kicked off."

As with previously proposed neutrality laws, Quebecers protested, indicating that the law specifically targets Muslim women who wear face coverings, exposing them to harassment and discrimination. In December, Justice Barin suspended the law until religious accommodation guidelines are established, or a constitutional challenge is heard.

Who benefited from the Liberals' crusade? Far-right anti-immigrant groups, already emboldened by Trump's election, feel legitimized by the Liberals' normalization of xenophobia. But more generally, their crusade serves to divide working people and distract them from those who stash millions in tax havens, plunder and destroy our natural resources, and profit from the privatization of public services.

Socialists believe in equality for all and firmly condemn all forms of intolerance. It isn't through religious intolerance that we win equality for all, but by cutting across xenophobia with fighting campaigns for social, economic, environmental and political justice. The problem is a profit-driven system, not immigrants!



Historic Socialist Vote in Minneapolis

Socialist Alternative US reports

Socialist candidates are having a growing impact on elections: add Ginger Jentzen to the list of Sanders, Corbyn, and Swanson (see page 5).

Socialist Alternative's campaign in Minneapolis struck a powerful chord and won more first-choice votes than any other campaign. Although the final vote went to the Democratic Party favourite, Ginger won every precinct except in wealthy downtown Minneapolis, dominated by luxury apartments and condos. When the final round of the ranked-choice voting was done, we had lost by a thousand votes.

In working-class neighbourhoods, thousands were inspired by our bold demands and call for a political revolution in city hall. In neighbourhoods around the university, our campaign tripled student turn-out and won by over 50%.

"Vote Ginger Jentzen" campaign signs were everywhere in working-class areas, with "Not for Sale" written across them, indicating that the campaign accepted no corporate or developer money, and was entirely funded by ordinary working people. We raised over \$175,000 with a median donation of \$25.

The political establishment, corporate media, big business and for-profit developers opposed Ginger, pouring corporate money into the race and flooding the ward with attack mailers. The billionaire-owned *Star Tribune* urged voters: "Anybody but Ginger."

The other candidates ultimately delivered the second and third choice votes that the Democrat



Steve Fletcher needed to win. Scandalously, the Green candidate attacked Ginger the most openly and fiercely.

The roots of Ginger's success was winning a \$15 minimum wage in the summer of 2017. This was won with a broad coalition of unions, progressive organizations and activists under the leadership of Ginger and Socialist Alternative and despite the resistance of the city's Democrat establishment.

Ginger's call for rent controls strongly resonated. Working people enthusiastically supported our call to tax big developers and the rich to fund affordable housing, education and mass transit. Socialism is rising.

Montréal's Election Upset

Martin LeBrun & Chantal Ide

Valérie Plante, Montréal's first female mayor, came from behind to unseat the incumbent, Denis Coderre, at the end of his first term, a first in 40 years. La Presse de Montréal said her "spectacular victory ... enlivens Québec solidaire's electoral hopes and energizes the NDP in Ottawa."

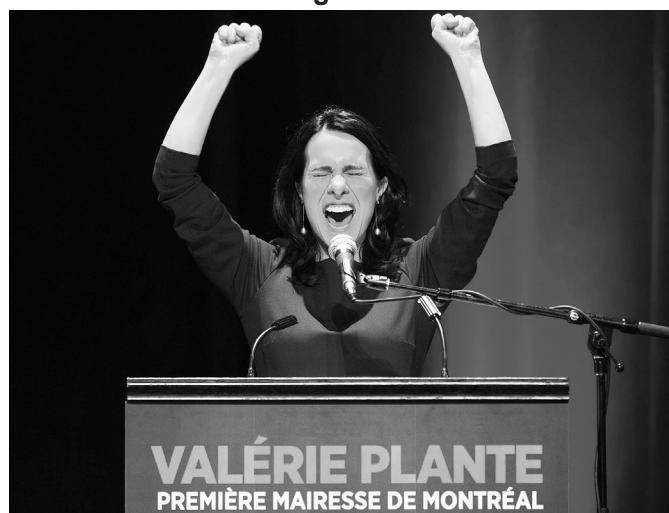
Her party, Project Montréal (PM), now has a majority on city council. PM grew from a thousand members in 2015 to some 6,000 now. It is a left party with union, community and housing activist members. However, it is not clearly pro-worker or socialist, taking 18 months to endorse a \$15 minimum wage.

Plante emphasized making public transit more affordable for the poor and expanding the Metro. She plans to force developers to build 20% of condos large enough to house families. She proposed building 12,000 new units of social and affordable housing, but didn't say how they would be financed, not proposing to tax the rich.

Despite the relatively mild proposals, PM attracted many NDP and Québec solidaire activists. Plante's victory is a left-wing breakthrough, but a socialist

one would have more impact. Faced with crumbling infrastructure and a \$358 million Coderre budget shortfall, Plante has announced a 1.2% above inflation tax increase for rich and poor alike.

For more about Québec and Alternative Socialiste: alternativesocialiste.org



Canada's White Slave Children

Salman Zafar

For almost 100 years, over 100,000 children, some as young as four years old, were sent from Britain to Canada. While some were orphans or street children, most came from families that had fallen on hard times due to the death of a parent, in a society with no social safety net. If later a family tried to reclaim their child they'd be told it was already in Canada. The child exporters were British charities including Barnardos and the Salvation Army.

Ironically called "Home Children," once in Canada, few ever saw Britain or their families again. Separated from siblings and family, without choices, the children were given away. The boys became farm workers and girls helped in the house and in the fields. While some children were genuinely accepted into their new families, most of them were robbed of their childhood, and suffered overwork, teasing at school if they went, abuse, loneliness and worse. Children ran away, died young, disappeared or committed suicide.

Exporting children was modelled as a perfect solution for children to escape a life of grim poverty in industrial Britain for a better life in Canada. However, the tragic reality was the children were abandoned alone in a strange world, often to a life no better than back home.

The British ruling class, constantly worrying about the "surplus population," too many poor people, and the fear of revolution, were happy to ship poor children away. The Canadian ruling class, desperate for low-wage submissive workers, saw disposed children as an ideal answer. Now instead they use adult immigrants from poor countries.

The export of children to Canada only ended in 1948. The British government apologized in 2010, the Canadian government never has.



Our Life with The Rocket

Book review by Leslie Kemp

Roch Carrier said of Quebecers: "We came to hockey slowly." He asks: "and on this long road did anyone see the Rocket coming?"

Carrier's book parallels the coming of age of modern Québec with Quebecers' love affair with hockey, particularly their love of the Rocket, Maurice Richard, one of the greatest hockey players. Richard was a true hero:

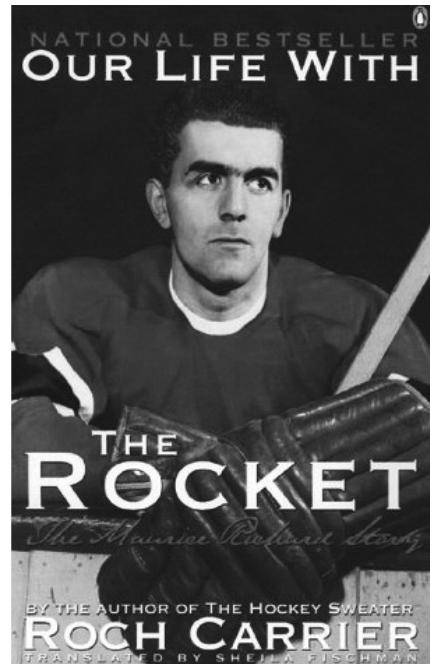
Quebecers looked to him for inspiration and courage to stand up to the blatant discrimination they faced from their English Canadian bosses, the corrupt Duplessis government and the rigid conservatism of the Catholic Church.

Describing Richard as Québec's Homer, Carrier says "The poems that his skates improvise on the ice express the passions, the hard times, the dreams and the strength of the French-Canadian people. Like the blind poet of ancient times he gives the people lessons in bravery, in courage."

Throughout, Carrier traces dramas in Québec's history, particularly those that affect the working class whom he calls the "little people:" the early 1920s when Montreal's jobless rate was 26 percent and the great depression when "a tidal wave of misery" devastates Montreal. In contrast, in hockey "the rules are clear, and simpler than the rules of misery. On the ice, no one is automatically condemned to lose."

The book recounts ongoing fights between the federal government and Duplessis, who ruled Québec from 1936 to 1939 and 1944 to 1959. Duplessis pretended to fight for Québec but was beholden to big business and industry, and trampled on workers and unions. "The government? ... Can it get rid of poverty? No. Can it give food to starving families? No.... The government lets the little people die while it offers favours to the big ones."

While Quebecers may not have seen the Rocket coming, they welcomed him and embraced a new world not dominated by the corruption of church and state.



Site C : NDP's Failure

Aiden Lum Sisler

The BC Liberals pushed Site C dam, leaving the NDP a poisoned chalice. No choice was straightforward, but building the dam breaks NDP election promises on climate change and First Nation reconciliation, and wastes money.

Large dams increase climate change. Site C infringes Indigenous rights. Incredibly Premier Horgan stated, "There has been over 150 years of disappointment in BC. I am not the first person to stand before you and disappoint Indigenous people."

Although the BC Utilities Commission made no recommendations, their findings were such that Eliesen, former Chair of BC Hydro stated, "no sensible, rational person could take any other decision than to terminate Site C."

They found that the dam is likely to surpass the present \$10.7 billion estimate (from \$6.6 billion in 2007), be behind schedule, and that BC Hydro's forecast justifying the dam was optimistic, with current demand flat. If demand increases, there are cheaper and less environmentally damaging options including additional turbines in the Revelstoke dam, claiming power from the Columbia dams or using the many renewable energy sources.

Grassy Narrows

Jim Sugiyama

For over fifty years, the Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong First Nations, in western Ontario, have been steadily poisoned by mercury. Between 1962 and 1970, the Reed Paper Company dumped over 10 tons of mercury waste into the Wabigoon River and buried barrels of waste around the plant. The mercury inexorably poisons the downstream First Nations who depend on traditional fishing. The mercury destroyed tourist fishing income.

There is no cure for mercury poisoning as it causes the destruction of nerve cells, progressive vision and hearing loss, numbness, imbalance, speech and cognitive decline and premature death. Mercury is toxic in all its forms, concentrating up the food chain



The NDP feared that money markets would downgrade BC's credit rating, boosting borrowing costs. But even that narrow economic argument is weak. The money spent so far plus remediation would come to \$4 billion. Completion will be \$7 billion more which will rocket hydro bills and possibly bankrupt BC Hydro, all for un-needed power.

Several unions and NDP insiders lobbied for the dam, arguing it provides jobs yet most Site C workers are members of the non-union Christian Labour Association of Canada. Remediating the site with unionized workers would provide many union jobs. The \$7 billion saved by cancelling the dam could be used for public services, renewable energy and energy efficiency, all providing good jobs.

Resistance continues. The NDP was split on the decision. Site C can still be stopped.

and is particularly toxic to the fetus.

For years, the government claimed all was safe. Only Grassy Narrows' tireless resistance, led by Judy Dasilva and Chief Simon Fobister, has kept the issue alive. Grassy Narrows' youth organize the Annual River Run, outside the Ontario legislature, and produced an acclaimed video *Home to Me*. Finally, their efforts appear to be bearing fruit with the Ontario government pledging a \$85 million clean-up.

Wider Canadian society needs to ensure that these promises are fulfilled. Grassy Narrows reveals much of Canadian reality with years of government denial, racism to Indigenous people, corporate crimes, and public monies being used to rectify these crimes.

Continued from back

paid by the public sector and individuals. If the \$7.4 billion was used to build homes, insulate buildings and provide renewable energy, it would provide far more good long-term jobs.

The pipeline poses a huge threat to thousands of jobs in and around Vancouver and will cause major damage to BC's and the world's environment. A tanker leak into the harbour would shut down Vancouver for weeks; the City of Vancouver estimates the cost would be over \$1.2 billion.

If all else fails, given the high stakes and the risk of major job and income losses for workers, it is

an entirely reasonable response to hold a one-day standstill to force a reversal of federal government policy.

A serious campaign of explanation and mobilization in workplaces, communities, schools and universities by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, the BC Federation of Labour, the NDP and municipalities would ensure that the Vancouver region closes for one day to stop it being shut down for weeks by an oil spill. Such a mass movement would cost Trudeau's rich friends millions of dollars and is the best way to force Trudeau to retreat.



Militant Action to Stop Kinder Morgan

Bill Hopwood

Stopping Kinder Morgan's proposed pipeline to Vancouver, with its devastating ecologic and economic impacts, is urgent. The \$7.4 billion pipeline will intensify disastrous climate change around the world.

Kinder Morgan (KM) has started construction although it has only a handful of the 1,200 necessary permits. It is pushing ahead, partly to keep its shareholders happy – it is US\$38 billion in debt. Its supreme arrogance is because Prime Minister Trudeau is fully committed to the project against the democratic opposition of BC's provincial government, and most First Nations and municipalities.

The National Energy Board (NEB) actions explain KM's confidence. Since August, Kinder Morgan illegally placed plastic mats on streambeds to stop salmon spawning. Finally, after an outcry, the NEB ordered it to stop, but not all the mats have been removed. KM has not been fined or punished. In December, the NEB ruled that KM can proceed with construction without complying with the City of Burnaby's bylaws. Trudeau claimed that "only communities can grant permission," yet his government is trampling over communities. His government is urging the NEB to intervene in the provincial and municipal permitting process to speed things up.

There are outstanding court cases, but while the

resistance cannot rely on the outcome, the time before the judgement can be used to build stronger actions. There are camps and blockades along the pipeline's route, which municipal and provincial governments should fully support by providing supplies, etc. Politicians should join the blockades, willing to be arrested. However, the Trudeau government will probably remove these blockades.

In the election, the BC NDP promised to "use every tool in our toolbox to stop the project." However, what is their action so far?

In October, the RCMP arrested peaceful protesters at the Burnaby terminal. The agreement governing the RCMP states it will implement "provincial policing objectives, priorities and goals as determined by the Provincial Minister." Why have Burnaby council and the province failed to instruct the RCMP that their "policing objective" is no arrests for non-violent civil disobedience against KM?

Trudeau beats the propaganda drum for Kinder Morgan across the country. Yet, the NDP government is not waging a Canada-wide campaign to counter the pipeline lies. The pipeline will not return oil prices to over \$100 a barrel, as prices are set on the world market. The pipeline will only provide 90 full-time direct jobs, but there will be many jobs dealing with increased climate change – fighting fires, building dikes, and repairing damages, a cost

Continued on page 15