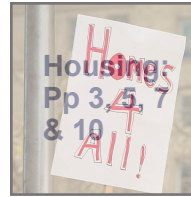


# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

suggested donation \$2



Summer 2018 - No. 9

Produced by volunteers & printed with union labour

# Build the Homes We Need



# 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



**Socialist Alternative Canada is part of the Committee for a Workers' International, active in over 45 countries.**

**For news from around the world:  
[www.socialistworld.net](http://www.socialistworld.net)**

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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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## Successful Socialist Weekend

Socialist Alternative Canada held a weekend of discussions and socializing, from March 30 to April 1 in Vancouver. It was an international event with attendance from five sections of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI). Socialist Alternative Canada is affiliated to the CWI, a world-wide body with members in over 45 countries. As well as members from across Canada, we had visitors from the US, Québec, Mexico and Britain. The visitor from Britain is a member of the International Committee of the CWI.

There were three main political discussions, filled with dynamic contributions with a wide range of perspectives. The Centre Cannot Hold: New Left Formations in the Era of Polarization looked at the falling support for the old right and former left parties, rightly blamed for decades of cuts and stagnant living standards. Politics is polarizing. The new right populists gain most support when the left is weak, such as in Austria. The new left, as demonstrated by Corbyn in Britain, Podemos in Spain or Mélechon in France, are driven by the working class seeking an end to austerity and poverty.

Canadian Perspectives considered that with Ford in Ontario and the CAQ in Québec, Canada may see the rise of right populists. Unfortunately, so far there is not a corresponding socialist movement like Sanders or Corbyn.

Nationalism and Class in the Era of Capitalist Crisis noted the rise of nationalism in reaction to capitalism's crisis. Marxists respond to nationalism in solidarity with the working class and youth of these movements and put forward class policies.

As well as great politics there was excellent food and many good conversations in the evenings. Demonstrating enthusiasm and the thirst for ideas, the financial appeal raised \$3,950 and over \$575 of literature was sold.



**In solidarity with the workers of Kazakhstan**

# Build the Homes We Need

Chris Fofonoff

Why can't everyone have a decent home? We live in one of the wealthiest societies in history. In most large cities in Canada, there is a construction boom. Yet, as the expensive towers rise, so does homelessness. Forty years ago, Canada was not as rich a country, but there was almost no-one using the sidewalk as a pillow.

At its heart, the reason is the concentration of economic power, political power, and land in so few hands. Construction is for the profit of developers and most municipal political parties are their fully-owned subsidiaries. The developers are getting their money's worth: home-building has been abdicated completely to them. After all, as your mother probably told you, "If you want something done right, give it to someone else who will cut every possible corner, ignore the needs of others, and squeeze everything they can out of it for themselves."

Instead of building affordable housing, governments prefer to simply change the definition of "affordable." The City of Vancouver recently redefined affordable rent for a one-bedroom apartment as \$1,750 a month. Since it is recommended that no more than 30% of a person's income should be spent on housing, this affordable rent requires a full-time wage of over \$30 an hour, in a city where the minimum wage is not yet half that.

The cheapest places in Vancouver are Single-Room Occupancy – a small room, often vermin-infested, with no cooking facilities and a shared toilet down the hall – average rent of \$687 a month, up 25.4% in a year.

The developers' answer is let us build more. Most politicians agree. Burnaby demonstrates the shallowness of this solution, as it has agreed plans to demolish rental units that house 6,000 people for condo development in Metrotown. The average price for a two-bedroom condo unit that will replace them is over \$700,000. Most of the construction workers won't be able to afford to live in the very places they build.

Our answer is that we must remove the market from providing homes. There is not a lack of homes. Vancouver city's population is 630,000 and has at least 25,000 empty units, and 2,300 homeless people. This is the logical result of an economic system which prioritizes the needs of capital over those of human beings. Those units need to be lived in.

Canada has the resources to safely and decently house everyone. Socialist Alternative is active in the City We Need campaign and the Vancouver Tenants' Union to win the Homes We Need.

# Parkdale Tenants' Victories

Robert Ian



Twice in two years, high-rise tenants in the working-class neighbourhood of Parkdale, Toronto, won against predatory landlords by conducting mass rent strikes. Nuspor Investments attempted to inflict a rent increase double the 1.8% rent control cap for 2018, claiming it had spent money improving the building. Fifty-five of the tenants at King Street West responded with a rent strike. Despite attempted intimidation with eviction notices, the strike held and after two months Nuspor withdrew its application for an "above guideline" rent hike.

In 2017, 300 tenants in 12 Parkdale high-rises owned by Metcap held a three-month long rent strike against rent increases that threatened to force numerous tenants to leave their units. They won a lower rent increase, repair work, and rent relief for low income tenants. The strike was a massive effort with door-to-door education of tenants about the strike and numerous meetings in high-rise lobbies.

Parkdale Organize, the tenants' community group, declared that, "In Parkdale rent strikes are not just possible but are successful. We can expand this work. We can bring in greater numbers of our neighbours. By organizing our neighbourhood, we will grow stronger, more creative and more effective at winning the fights that need to be won for ourselves, for our neighbours and for the future of our neighbourhood. This is Parkdale. This is just the beginning."

Formorewatch [This is Parkdale: parkdaleorganize.ca/2017/11/05/this-is-parkdale-documentary/](https://www.thisisparkdale.ca/2017/11/05/this-is-parkdale-documentary/)



# Indigenous (In)justice

Leslie Kemp and Allie Pev

CANADA



The non-guilty verdict in the death of Colten Boushie provoked an outpouring of anger and disbelief. The objectivity of the jury, which accepted Gerald Stanley's argument that his gun went off accidentally, was called into question. After all, the jury did not include any Indigenous people and potential Indigenous jurors were rejected by Stanley's lawyers.

However, not everyone was surprised. Brett Forester in his article published in *Ricochet*, *One more dead Indian: Canada has given Indigenous people nothing but injustice*, stated "Many are reasonably outraged. I am not. I feel angry and my emotions counsel rage.... It's an injustice, an egregious one at that.... I can say that this injustice doesn't outrage because it's just one more injustice in a long line of recent and distant injustices."

Given that the so-called "justice system" was created to protect the interests of the ruling elites, should it be any surprise that justice for Indigenous

peoples is hard to find in Canada? Courts are used to protect property rights; crimes involving property theft are arguably punished with greater vengeance than crimes against people. A 2014 story in *Megaphone*, Vancouver's street paper, described how often marginalized citizens face criminal penalties and protracted jail time due to technical violations such as failing to follow bail conditions or probation orders. In many cases, the original offence may be jaywalking, stealing out of need due to poverty or public disorder due to mental health issues. This results in the criminalization of people who are poor, have addictions or mental health diagnoses or who are Indigenous.

Indigenous peoples now comprise more than a quarter (26.4%) of the federal prison population while they make up just 4% of the Canadian population.

Every aspect of the legal system works against them from racially-motivated police checks and arrests to bail denial and detention to sentencing miscarriages.

Abuse by the police is widespread. Numerous allegations of abuse by the Québec police were made by Indigenous women in Val-d'Or but no charges were laid.

The Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is still ongoing, and it is not clear if the government will approve its request for an extended timeframe. Bernie Williams, who lost several members of her own family to murder asked, "Why has it taken over 4000 women and girls' names to secure (this Inquiry) and (we) still keep asking the same questions?"

As Brett Forester concludes, "Indigenous nations have never had justice from the Canadian government." Indigenous people are fighting hard to change this reality.

## Canada's Refugee Failings

### *Socialist Alternative talked with refugees*

Canada claims it is a hospitable to refugees, yet many fall between the cracks of Canada's system.

PP (Nigeria) apprehended by Canadian Border Service Agency: "They handcuffed my wrists behind my back. They were rough. I felt helpless. They took me and my two-year old son to jail – I felt like a criminal."

"My first tribunal judge was overtly racist, stating, 'Oh, another Nigerian.'" UJ (Nigeria) living in precarious status having been rejected at all stages of the refugee claim process.

NU's (Eritrea) nationality was challenged by Citizenship and Immigration Canada: "You know who you are, then you are told you are not. It is hurtful. They imply that you came to take advantage of the Canadian system. You escaped from the worst place,

then you go through the ordeal of immigration and relive your trauma."

ED (Malawi) arrived with full blown AIDS, having been deprived of treatment in her homeland: "They put me, feverish and sick, on a plane to London UK stating that I had no business being here (in Canada). UK Immigration forced Canada to fly me back, and I went directly from the plane to hospital."

PB (Nigeria) spent over one year detained in a maximum-security prison: "Everything is not the way it is painted, the way Canada portrays itself. A lot of shady things happen. Bias is common. Capitalism and colonialism have destroyed Africa, pushed us into seeking refuge. Here, we face another system of capitalism and colonialism."

# The Vancouver We Need

Pete Marlowe



From the ashes of Jean Swanson's narrow defeat in last fall's city council by-election, during which her radical platform pulled Vancouver politics leftward, a phoenix has risen, with a phalanx of "Team Jean" activists and others working toward "The City We Need."

The City We Need is a movement proposing and pushing for solutions to each of the crises tearing the city apart. A living document of demands has been prepared, launched with a rally at City Hall on May 3. The City We Need will campaign to win support for this platform with tabling, meetings and door-to-door canvassing. The focus is first on policies, rather than on personalities as other parties do. This will pressurize candidates, parties, and the Vancouver and District Labour Council to support the program.

The demands feature a four-year rent freeze; rent control tied to the unit, not the tenant; action to stop evictions; repair and take into public ownership Single Room Occupancy hotels; and a Mansion Tax that would provide the revenue to house all the homeless in the first year alone and, then help build 4,500 truly affordable units every year after.

The program also calls for a city-wide \$20 minimum wage, \$10 a day child care, rent control for small businesses, decriminalization along with clean and free drugs for addicts, and greater access to democracy.

For those wondering What Is To Be Done, we'd urge: sign the petition at [cityweneed.ca](http://cityweneed.ca), apply pressure at party and all-candidates meetings and join The City We Need.

For more on The City We Need: [cityweneed.ca](http://cityweneed.ca)

# Ontario: Crossroads Election

Tim Heffernan

Ontario's June 7 election has heated up with the Tories' choice of Doug Ford as leader. After 15 years in office the Liberals are deeply unpopular. In the last few months, facing an election, they have tried to shift left announcing a \$15 minimum wage, labour reforms and expanded social programs. However, they are still remembered for corruption scandals, the privatization of Ontario Hydro and attacks on teachers' bargaining rights.

The Ford-led Tories are an almost Trump-like party, promising tax cuts mainly for the rich; getting rid of "government inefficiencies," which means cutting much needed public services and jobs; and stopping the increase of the minimum wage to \$15. Ford said in 2016 he'd support Trump, he's criticized women's rights and sex education and is not bothered about climate change.

The Liberals have a long history of stealing NDP policies before an election. This time it was their sudden support for a \$15 minimum wage. Although past masters of campaigning from the left, it won't save them this time as their years of governing from the right are well remembered. They are trailing in the opinion polls and for once the NDP could benefit from strategic voting – Liberal supporters voting NDP to stop a Ford victory.

The NDP's program is more radical than in recent years, promising to return Ontario Hydro to public ownership and proposing comprehensive dental and pharmacare and affordable childcare. The NDP should learn from the example of Corbyn, who came from nowhere to almost win the British election. The key to this achievement was an pro-worker platform and an enthusiastic campaign.

To decisively undercut the Liberals and build for a majority government, the NDP has to be bold all the time, campaigning between elections on policies that challenge capitalism which the Liberals cannot steal.

A Ford victory looks likely as we write. It will not show that most Ontarians are reactionaries – they feel left out, are fed up with the failures of the Liberals and are not inspired by the NDP. Just as Sanders could have defeated Trump, so campaigning on socialist policies with determined organizing is the best way to undercut Ford's support.

Labour and socialist activists now need to be working on defensive and offensive strategies to counter the anti-working-class policies that await us in the likely event of a Ford victory.



# Higher Education Workers in Struggle

Tim Heffernan

CANADA



Close on the heels of last year's successful five-week strike by Ontario college lecturers, 2018 has seen more labour turmoil in Higher Education (HE) in Ontario. This is, in part, workers resisting the shift of higher education to be run more for profit with high-paid administrators, than places of study and knowledge.

At Carleton University, Ottawa, 850 administrative, technical and library staff went on strike principally to defend their pensions against management's unilateral changes. The strike had a definite impact. According to the law faculty, "Carleton is not functioning on 'business as usual' terms. We are feeling the effects of the strike at every possible level." After four weeks, in early April the strike was settled with the union achieving most of its demands.

Meanwhile, at York University, 3,500 contract faculty, TAs and graduate assistants went on strike

on March 5 to increase job security and to reverse job cuts. In their 2015 strike the workers had won major concessions on pay and job security which management seem determined to roll back. As Aida Jordao, a sessional lecturer at York, explained, "precarious academic work is harming the quality of education. You have to put so much work into preparing the lectures and each class that you don't have as much time to give to the students." Five weeks into the strike the York administration forced a vote on their offer to the workers. Unsurprisingly, it was rejected by 85% of the membership. (At the time of writing) the struggle goes on!

In the last year, with the strikes of university food service workers, college lecturers, academic and administrative staff, it is clear that HE is increasingly becoming a battleground for organized labour.

## Victory on Wage Discrimination

Bill Hopwood

The long campaign of workers and unions in British Columbia has paid off with an end to the scandal of some workers not even getting the minimum wage. This included liquor servers, many farm workers, resident caretakers, live-in camp leaders and live-in home-support workers. This legalized poverty was racist and sexist.

Liquor workers' minimum wage was \$10.10 an hour, forcing them to rely on tips. In an overwhelmingly female workforce, to boost their income they have to humour customers, often wearing revealing clothing. This leaves them vulnerable to abuse, from sexist language to physical harassment. Liquor servers' minimum wage will be \$15.20 by 2021, the same as other workers.

Most farm workers are immigrants, often temporary workers, especially vulnerable to exploitation. The

farm workers' piece-rate system, established in 1981, did not keep pace with minimum wage increases. Socialist Alternative met workers who make less than a third of the minimum wage. The rates will increase by 11.5% on January 1, 2019. The government will investigate further how to raise living standards for the people who put the food on our tables.

Resident caretakers and live-in camp leaders are paid by the day or the month, and over the next two years their pay will increase 20%. The exemption for live-in home-support workers, which covers very few people, is abolished.

Unfortunately, Ontario's increased minimum wage did not eradicate the exemptions for students under 18, some farm workers and liquor servers. The struggle to end legal discrimination continues.

# Life as a Renter

Simon Schweitzer

In November 2017, Justin Trudeau proclaimed that “Housing Rights are Human Rights.” Four months later the house where my partner and I lived was sold and we were evicted. We had a two-bedroom apartment at the top of a century-old house, with century-old plumbing, paying \$1,000; a bargain when we moved in five years ago, now only a dream.

When the house was put up for sale, the realtor assured us it would “work out for everyone involved,” meanwhile our friends sent condolences and offered their help on moving day. A spell of anxious house hunting drove our expectations down and eventually we found a smaller one-bedroom apartment for \$1,475. Not bad, considering this is Vancouver and certainly more “affordable” than the City Council’s definition, set at \$1,750 for a one-bedroom. Lucky us, we can pay, for now. We aren’t being driven out of town or into homelessness like so many others in this masochistic city, at least not yet.

As long as housing is a commodity it can never be a human right. The reality for renters is that our homes matter more as someone else’s investment. When the price is right they will cash in, and a monied leech will leave us drowning in a market flooded with homes hardly anyone can afford. When realtors say “everyone involved” they don’t mean us renters. And our friends, usually fellow renters, can’t help as individuals. What we need is solidarity. Real-estate speculation is killing our city, and only working class struggle to end the profit system can save it.

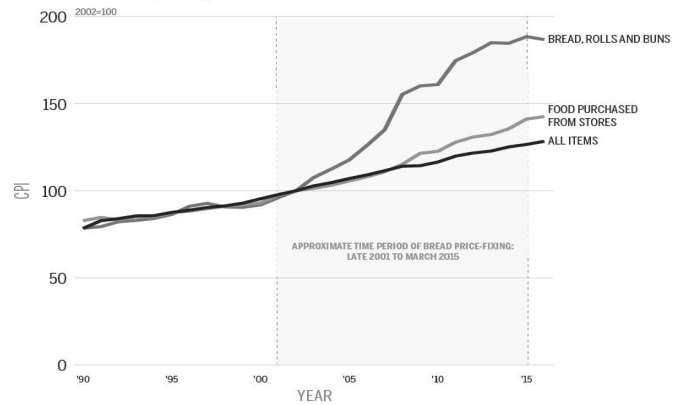


# What Makes Me Angry

Larry Hyink



Consumer price index: how bread, rolls and buns compare to other items, yearly, 1990-2016



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CANSIM TABLE 326-0021

By now everyone knows Loblaws, other food retailers and their suppliers engaged in a price fixing scheme for 14 years to jack-up bread prices, and profits.

Loblaws and Weston Bakeries, both owned by the Westons, the second richest family in Canada, confessed to the scheme in December and were granted immunity from prosecution by the Competition Bureau. Whether the confession was because the company’s management suddenly stumbled over a sophisticated and profitable scheme going on over a decade while they slumbered in the boardroom, or because they were tipped that a whistleblower was about to spill the beans is unclear. Whatever, in gratitude those ever-vigilant Competition Bureau watchdogs spared Loblaws and Weston even a wrist slap.

Loblaws, however, punished itself giving cheated customers a \$25 card usable at any Loblaws affiliate. Anyone who does family grocery shopping knows \$25 doesn’t go far. Only under capitalism could a company “punish” itself by giving working people the opportunity to spend more money at its stores.

The Weston’s benevolence doesn’t extend to workers however. They oppose increasing the minimum wage in Alberta and Ontario, estimating it would cost the company \$190 million a year. Small change out of the family’s fortune of \$13.55 billion!

As this story fades from corporate media, we should remember that corporate crooks and toothless regulators are fixtures of Canadian capitalism. This will happen again unless we, the cheated, demand a system where the necessities of life aren’t hostages to greed.

May 1968: over ten million workers occupied their workplaces across France and one of the most powerful governments of post-war Europe was on the verge of being overthrown! The month of revolution showed that a socialist transformation of society was within reach.

### Student Unrest

In early 1968 French left-wing parties were not looking for a revolution in France. The Communist Party (CP), with over half a million members, was only interested in reforms. Other smaller left-wing groups placed their revolutionary hopes in peasant-led anti-colonial movements and in the students of wealthy countries. All believed that French workers were not interested in socialism, given the post-war economic boom, and that reforms were all that was possible.

On May 10, all hell broke loose when police violently attacked university students after weeks of protests against a restrictive and underfunded education system. Student demonstrations and teacher strikes spread across France. In Paris, hundreds of students and young workers were taken to hospital. Parisians were stunned and horrified – 80% supported the students – cheering them on in the streets, caring for the injured.

A movement that started over the education system, rapidly began to question the whole structure of society. Students saw themselves leading a revolution – but they had only created a crack in the government's defenses – victory could only be assured if France's workers joined the fight.

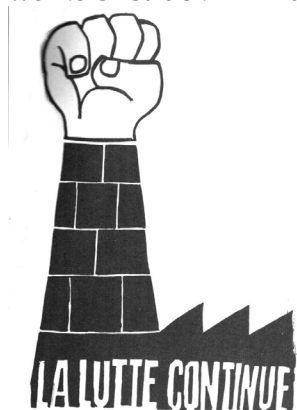
### The Workers Join In

The workers' movement did not appear out of nowhere. President de Gaulle ruled France through censorship, police violence and referendums. The post-war economic boom, in which combative workers had won workplace gains, was coming to an end, threatening to destroy these victories. A wave of strikes was hitting France.

Anger had reached a boiling point. Union leaders and left parties were forced to call a 24-hour general strike on May 13, hoping to let off pressure. A million workers struck in Paris. Students across France

occupied and started running the universities: discussing what kind of world to build, organizing committees to resist the riot police attacks.

The students' actions and the workers' demonstrations had broken a logjam and the movement spread. Workers in their millions went on strike. They



"The Struggle Continues"

occupied and ran their workplaces and strike committees of thousands met daily. Public services remained open, but only with the workers' permission.

### No Leadership

At no time did trade-union federation leaders call for an all-out general strike! CP leaders and their CGT union tried to control the movement, only calling strikes and occupations when they already existed, sowing division between students and workers, trying to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas.

The CP sabotaged this unparalleled opportunity to change the world due to its loyalty to the Soviet Union's privileged bureaucracy. The existence of a democratic socialist France, in contrast to the dictatorship in the Soviet Union, would have threatened the very survival of that bureaucracy. The long-term effect of this loyalty was a party that only wanted reforms.

The workers, however, had bolder desires. Action Committees in factories, offices, universities and neighbourhoods started to link up. In Nantes, police stood aside as workers took over the city. By cutting out middlemen, the new revolutionary authorities cut retail prices, showing in a small way the possibilities of a socialist society.

Everywhere people felt empowered and collectively ran their own lives. The middle classes were swept along by the power of the working class. Hospital workers took over their workplaces and debated how to best run healthcare in the interests of society. Artists discussed the role of art in a socialist society and sent their paintings to be hung in factories.

The government had lost control of society and feared



"We are th





# Month of Revolution

Le Brun



the Power”

a revolution. President de Gaulle fled to West Germany. Union leaders and government officials agreed major wage increases, but workers rejected the deal, wanting much more than a pay rise.

## French Revolution: 1968?

Lenin, the Russian revolutionary, explained that four factors are needed for a successful revolution. First, the ruling class is incapable of governing in the old way and is split over how to solve the crisis. In 1968, politicians

were indecisive, police questioned their orders, the army was at the edge of mutiny. It was a real opportunity for a non-violent revolution! Second, the middle class looks to workers, not the capitalist government for guidance. Third, the working class is looking and fighting for a new way to run society. Yet, a fourth and crucial condition was absent. The movement lacked a Marxist leadership with the necessary tactics and organisation to guarantee victory.

## Betrayal

The union, CP and other left leaders failed to lead, instead sought to limit the movement to winning better conditions and wages. CP leaders did not call for the creation of a National Coordinating Committee to link up the many Action Committees. The role of a revolutionary party is to inspire and unite workers in their millions and put forward a plan of bold action to complete the revolution that was taking place. Even with a general strike of ten million, state power does not fall into the hands of working people, it has to be consciously taken.

With the vacuum of leadership, de Gaulle regained the initiative. On May 30 he returned from exile and called a general election. The CP happily participated, turning its

back on striking workers and running a lack-lustre campaign, securing de Gaulle an election victory.

Millions remained on strike for weeks after the election was called. Some significant gains were won, but the bosses were back in power. Strikes and occupations were broken up violently, workers were killed, thousands arrested or fired, and many immigrant workers deported. Having tasted real power and freedom, demoralisation now set in.

## The Legacy of May '68

Internationally, 1968 was a year of revolutionary movements. France contributed greatly, capturing the imagination and inspiring millions of workers and students to action.

Yet, May 1968 was a squandered opportunity for a peaceful socialist transformation. French workers had far more experience, technology and culture than workers in 1917 revolutionary Russia. The general strike of ten million workers had done most of the job of transferring power from one class to another. Lacking was a revolutionary party that would provide the tactics so that the existing movement could complete the transformation of society. Starting over with a general election threw this opportunity away.

Faced with a capitalist system of dizzying inequality and environmental destruction, people are once again looking to create a system that involves them in decision-making, puts technology at the service of the many, fights inequality and prioritizes environmental sustainability.

A small group of revolutionary fighters cannot substitute themselves for the mass activity of the working class. There are no short cuts to building powerful mass working class parties whose effective tactics and program build workers' confidence. Revolutionary leadership is crucial in this process. The composition of the working class has changed, but new layers of workers are entering the fight for decent living standards. Workers' role in society as the producers of goods and services – society's wealth – has not changed. The centrality of the working class is vital to a successful socialist revolution. Once established in one nation, a workers' government will act as a beacon to workers everywhere.

As strikes again rock France, the spirit of May '68 still haunts the French ruling class. Learning the lessons will help ensure victory next time.

“Back to Normal” A poster commenting on the sellout by the CP bureaucracy.



# Housing: the Market is the Problem Not the Solution

Will Munro and Leslie Kemp

Under capitalism, a house is not a home - it is a commodity. The drive for profit created the financial crisis of 2008 and is the reason for Canada's housing crisis. A house should be a place to live in safety and comfort with security of tenure. Instead, under capitalism, wealthy investors buy houses to shelter their excess capital, driving up rents and housing prices.

While the crisis of the market intensifies, elected officials turn to that selfsame market to fix the problems it has created. Trudeau's Liberals recently unveiled a national housing strategy aimed at creating more "affordable" housing. However, the new policies' reliance on the private sector means they will not address the root causes of the housing crisis.

Relying on market solutions mostly shuffles taxpayer money into the hands of private companies. The Little Mountain Housing Project in Vancouver is a case in point: the longest standing social housing project in Vancouver was sold in 2013 to the Holburn group, a large Malaysian corporation, which also owns Vancouver's Trump Tower, for \$300 million. Against strong opposition, 700 people were evicted as the 224-unit, thriving community was demolished. In the face of Vancouver's desperate need for social housing, just 4% of new units (58 on top of those replaced) were for social housing while 1,300 high end condos were planned. Ten years later, just one building has been built, providing 53 units of social housing.

The bulk of the Liberals' plan is \$11.2 billion in low-interest loans for "affordable" development. However, their definition of affordable requires only 30% of units to be "below market," defined as 80% or less of median market rent. You will need a good income to live in these "affordable" homes. Private companies will benefit from the housing strategy's definition



Demolishing Little Mountain Homes

of "affordable," along with receiving low cost start-up capital and then gain from appreciating land values. Worse still, developers may cut costs to maximize profits. Look to the Grenfell tower fire in London, England to see where this leads.

The Liberals also plan a \$4 billion a year Canada Housing Benefit, an average subsidy of \$2,500. However, rent subsidies push up rents and give taxpayers' money to the landlords' profits. These billions in public monies should be invested in building public social housing, rather than lining the developers' pockets.

The housing crisis is not a "glitch" in the capitalist system; it is a feature. Appealing to the market to fix the housing crisis is like using blood-letting to treat haemophilia.

Trudeau says that "housing is a human right" though he refuses to make this a legal right. The liberals' policies are not an affirmation of human rights; they are a flagrant disregard for them.

## Students Support Housing

*Socialist Alternative interviewed*  
Naia Lee and Ishmam Bhuiyan

When 16-year old Naia Lee, a Churchill Secondary student in Vancouver, came upon the Facebook page, "Marpole Students Against Modular Housing," she created a "Marpole Students for Modular Housing" page. This was on November 6, 2017 and Lee said, "things snowballed from there."

The students organized a rally on December 5 in support of the modular housing project designed to house homeless people. Attended by Churchill and Ideal Mini School students, parents, teachers and neighbours, they wanted their voices of compassion and inclusivity to be heard in response to the backlash

by residents who opposed the 78-unit project. Students and neighbours created gift packages to welcome the residents.

The grand opening was held on February 10, 2018.

Ishmam Bhuiyan, a founder of the student group said "it is empowering to see the impact we could have as students." In standing up against fear and a campaign of misinformation, Bhuiyan said their goal was to foster dialogue and empathy in the community.



# Women Rising Around the World

The global rising of women is engulfing the US, Argentina, Poland, Ireland, Spain and more. The articles below demonstrate socialists' involvement in these movements.

After decades of neo-liberal attacks, women are taking collective action against the root causes of their oppression. Capitalism, the state and church are all barriers to women's full participation in society. Young women are at the forefront, unwilling to put up with the business, church and state misogyny that is woven into the fabric of society. Women are increasingly intent on ripping up this fabric and weaving a future when all may flourish.



## Ireland: Right to Choose

*Carah Mongoose (Socialist Party Ireland)*

In Ireland, the focal point of women's struggles is the movement to repeal the eighth amendment, the constitutional ban on abortion. This is linked to a wider campaign to separate the Catholic Church and the Irish state, as the church still controls the majority of our schools and hospitals. The eighth amendment was added in 1983 and since then no woman of child bearing age has ever had a vote on the issue! After years of pressure, on May 25 a referendum is being held, where a new generation will get a chance to vote.

In 2015, marriage equality was won by a popular vote. This was a turning point in the radicalisation of young people, no longer willing to put up with a deeply sexist and church-controlled state.

The Socialist Party launched ROSA (for Reproductive rights, against Oppression, Sexism & Austerity) several years ago and it has been leading the movement for women's rights. ROSA successfully defied the law with the abortion pill train and buses. While pushing for a yes vote, we demand that abortion is free and accessible for all pregnant people. Young people, in particular, feel like the church control of our bodies and our lives needs to be in the past. It is time now for freedom and equality.

For more on ROSA: [rosa.ie/](http://rosa.ie/)



## Québec: Toutes Unies

*Chantal Ide (Alternative Socialiste Québec)*

Alternative Socialiste launched our feminist campaign, *Toutes unies* (All united), in 2017. Our first public event was a conference on how the fight for a \$15 minimum wage, was an important issue to women. This event also launched the creation of the first neighbourhood committee to advocate for \$15. Over the next months, we participated in many events under our *Toutes unies* banner including anti-racist demos, pro-choice actions and the Women's March.

Our logo and slogan are gaining wider recognition. Bourgeois media even used them in reports of a demo against the sexist and racist law 62 (that would ban headscarves in public services).

The slogan is a positive basis for our actions: we encourage women to unite and join the struggle. We link our actions to current events and we take part in activities where our demands can be linked to women's issues. *Toutes unies* is having a positive impact.



## Spain: Strike on Women's Day

*from Izquierda Revolucionaria, CWI Spain*

The feminist strike on March 8 was unprecedented. Never has there been such a deep and massive mobilisation against the oppression of working class women, against inequality and violence against women.

Madrid saw over one million people on the street. From morning to evening, there were hundreds of marches in cities and towns across Spain. The mobilisation surpassed all expectations. Working class women made March 8 an historic day.

The Sindicato de Estudiantes (Students Union), Libres y Combativas (socialist feminist platform) and Izquierda Revolucionaria (CWI in the Spanish state) played a key role in this "youthquake" against capitalism. Our call for a 24-hour student strike was massively supported with 90% of secondary school students and 80% of university students joining.

Izquierda Revolucionaria and Libres y Combativas continue the struggle for our present and our future. We are building a feminist movement which cannot be assimilated by the ruling class. A working class, revolutionary, anti-capitalist feminism.

# Mexico Faces a Clear Choice

Nancy and Rocco Trigueros

INTERNATIONAL



Obrador Morena Rally

Mexico's presidential elections, on July 1, are an opportunity to challenge 35 years of government only for the rich. Andrés Manuel López Obrador's two previous presidential challenges were defeated by rigged elections. This time may be different as he is leading the opinion polls by up to 20 points.

The centre-right PRI and equally conservative PAN have ruled Mexico for decades. Both followed the dictates of international capitalism. They privatized hundreds of state-owned services to a select group of millionaires and politicians. The constitution was changed to allow the unrestricted exploitation of the working class, cutting their social benefits; privatizing the oil and energy sector; restricting the right to peaceful protest; and allowing the army to regularly be on the streets. The latest blow is the attack on teachers and public education.

The 1980s are described as a "lost decade," as income per person fell, due to cuts, privatization and austerity imposed under the International Monetary Fund's directions. NAFTA reinforced these trends with decades of stagnant real wages and worse poverty now than when signed in 1994. Five million

with many killed on orders from politicians. On top of all this, there are US president Trump's many threats.

Obrador and the party he leads, the National Regeneration Movement (Morena), will face widespread lies from the media and attempts at ballot-rigging to stop their victory. If they win, they have promised to reverse many of the attacks of the past decades. All the other main candidates accuse Obrador of "representing the past." Obrador is not a socialist, he advocates for a "human capitalism." However, if elected the economic policies that have benefited so few could end up on the floor, like the remains of a pompous pinata, crushed by the huge number of Mexicans looking for change.

However, he will face massive resistance from the Mexican ruling class, the drug cartels and the US. The fate of the Greek Syriza government is a warning to Mexico. To succeed, Obrador will need to part from the interests of capital and implement more than partial reforms. A powerful mobilization of workers, the oppressed and social movements is the best defense against reaction.

## Repression Increasing in China and Hong Kong

from [chinaworker.info](http://chinaworker.info)

China's leader Xi Jinping has made himself ruler for life. This is a dramatic change, as after the experience of Mao Zedong, the Chinese elite limited a president to only two terms of office and established various controls on the president.

Xi has removed all opposition by purges under the mantle of "anti-corruption." This is alongside increased state repression and an unprecedented media campaign and personality cult.

China's rulers are terrified of the anger below of the widespread strikes and protests. The elite have enormous wealth and privileges to protect; there are now over 800 billionaires in China.

In Hong Kong, elected politicians have been arbitrarily removed from the Legislative Council and other candidates have been barred from running. Democracy activists have been imprisoned and booksellers kidnapped. The Chinese rulers cannot tolerate even the limited democratic rights of Hong Kong.

Socialist Action (CWI in Hong Kong) is actively campaigning to defend democracy and appeals for international solidarity.

**For more on Hong Kong and China:**  
[chinaworker.info/en/](http://chinaworker.info/en/)

# US: 1968 and Its Legacy Today

Patrick Ayers

1968 was a year of social convulsions in the US. Struggles raged against the imperialist Vietnam War, for black, women and gay rights, on picket lines, and for socialist liberation.

The year was a turning point in Vietnam. With US troops at the highest level ever, the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) escalated resistance with 80,000 troops in the Tet Offensive. Although the US was not defeated, it unleashed destruction on towns and civilians. The city of Huế was left in rubble with over 5,000 civilians dead.

The offensive highlighted the strength of Vietnam's national liberation struggle and the vulnerability and weakness of US imperialism – in spite of its military might. Images of the dramatic fighting were broadcast on television, a relatively new medium at the time, feeding anti-war sentiment.

The Democratic Party, under Kennedy, led the US into the Vietnam War. Faced with the mounting opposition to the war, President Johnson opted not to run for re-election. Mass protests erupted outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago later that summer.

The US was defeated, primarily due to the Vietnamese people's resistance, but also because of the mass movement in the US which gained enormous support from 1968.

Tragically, 1968 was the year that Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, while supporting a strike of black sanitation workers. In the last years of his life, MLK articulated a more radical vision for the movement, including launching the Poor People's campaign.

As Eljeer Hawkins wrote for Socialist Alternative, "The Poor People's Campaign is rooted in a critique of US capitalism, including opposition to consumerism, imperialism, militarism, racism, and structural poverty. King spoke of putting people's needs first before profit margins, raising the question of political and economic power."

MLK moved beyond the civil rights movement's fight for equal legal rights to criticize the Vietnam War calling the US government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." He pointed to economic inequality and talked of socialism, "There must be a better distribution of wealth, and maybe America must move toward a democratic socialism."



The more militant ideas of Black Power grew in support. The Black Panthers, founded the year before, grew into an influential force.

The women's movement gathered strength, famously protesting the Miss USA pageant in 1968. Gay rights were growing, culminating in the Stonewall riots in 1969.

These movements left a powerful legacy that socialists draw on today, particularly the importance of mass protest and fighting oppression. At the same time, a key lesson from these struggles is the need to go beyond reforms and to replace the system of capitalism itself. Fifty years later, we are still resisting imperialist wars, racism and sexism.

In the 1960s, socialist ideas did not develop into a mass force in the US because of factors that no longer exist. US capitalism emerged strengthened from World War II while Stalinism was used as a scarecrow for radical ideas. The long and robust postwar economic expansion allowed rising living standards for a significant portion of the US people.

Today, the American Dream is dead. US capitalism faces a deep structural crisis and the power of US imperialism is in decline. Young people face a future of debt, escalating housing costs, and poverty-wage jobs. Struggle in 2018 is not yet at the level of 1968, but a new 1968 is on the horizon with the massive women's march, the high school students against gun violence and the spreading teachers' strikes.

Socialist change will be a key part of the struggle this time around. Already, socialist ideas are more popular in the US than any time since the 1960s.

**For about the US and Socialist Alternative: [socialistalternative.org](http://socialistalternative.org)**

# Ginger: A Workers' Hero

Simon Schweitzer and Leslie Kemp

When Albert Ginger Goodwin was hunted down and killed on July 27, 1918, the miners of Cumberland on Vancouver Island walked off the job. A huge procession, two kilometres long, followed his coffin to the cemetery. In Vancouver, a one-day general strike was called with 5,500 workers walking off the job including longshoremen and shipbuilders.



His legacy is documented in *Goodwin's Way*, a 2016 documentary film and in the 2015 graphic novel, *Ginger Goodwin: A Workers Friend*. Goodwin started work in the Cumberland coal mines in 1910 where he joined the United Mine Workers of America. Fired for his role in the strike of 1912-1914, which was finally broken by the outbreak of the first World War, Goodwin found work at the Trail smelter. As punishment for leading a strike in 1917, demanding an eight-hour work day, his medical exemption from the draft, due to tuberculosis, was revoked. Refusing to take part in an imperialist war, he and others went into hiding in the mountains around Cumberland. There he was found, shot and killed by Dan Campbell, a Special Constable.

The film traces an arc of the town and people of Cumberland, from a coal-mining company town, through the years of struggle when shopkeepers extended credit to striking miners, surviving the last mine closing in 1966, to the recent defeat of the proposed Raven coal mine in 2016. Interviews with residents and politicians of the Comox Valley show Goodwin's continuing resonance. Remembered as a committed socialist and prominent labour organizer, Ginger is seen today as a symbol for workers' struggles. While only 31 when he died, he demonstrated the power of struggle in winning better lives for workers.

# 1918 Vancouver General Strike

Aiden Lum Sisler

The murder of Ginger Goodwin sparked Canada's first general strike. Goodwin had called for an organized political protest and show of force if an objecting worker was conscripted to the war. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) called the strike in Vancouver on the day of Goodwin's funeral by a vote of 117:1. Streetcar drivers, building trades, longshore and other workers all joined the one-day shutdown.

The strike, part of a rising tide of workers' militancy, occurred while World War I was still raging. There was widespread opposition to conscription, introduced in 1917; the BC Federation of Labour conference voted 56-8 against it. While the bosses profited from the war, workers faced high inflation and wages that did not keep up. Meanwhile, the Russian Revolution inspired many. A socialist member of the BC legislature, Hawthornthwaite stated, "The hope of the world today is the Bolsheviks."

Business elites were horrified by the strike. They mobilized returning soldiers, some under the influence of alcohol, to attack the Labour Temple at 411 Dunsmuir. The soldiers smashed up the building and twice attempted to throw the VTLC secretary, Midgley, out the window but were stopped by Frances Foxcroft, a woman telephone operator. Activists were assaulted and forced to kiss the Union Jack.

In response to the strike and the growth of socialist ideas, Borden's federal government enacted Order 2384 which banned many working class organizations. The government also introduced widespread censorship, banning left-wing newspapers and books. In October 1918, strikes in most industries were prohibited. So much for waging a war for democracy!

Repression did not stop the growth of the unions and socialist ideas. The spirit of Vancouver in 1918 flamed into the mass Winnipeg general strike of 1919.

Funeral procession for Albert 'Ginger' Goodwin



# Muskrat Falls: Flawed Dam

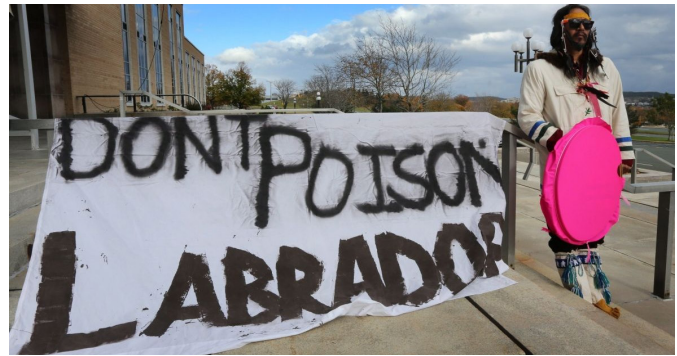
Jim Sugiyama

The Muskrat Falls dam project on the lower Churchill River in Labrador is deeply flawed. There are major environmental concerns, it faces Indigenous resistance and is way over budget.

NALCOR, Newfoundland and Labrador's crown corporation, is behind the scheme that had a projected cost of \$6 billion in 2014. In 2018, incomplete and behind schedule, the projected cost has doubled. The mega-corporation, SNC Lavalin, in charge of building the project has not been forthcoming about escalating costs. The BC government should have heeded this warning instead of going ahead with Site C dam.

The project's impact on local populations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, has been negative. Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Mud Lake have increased housing costs, crime, substance abuse and wait times for health care, along with the loss of a sense of traditional community. This has a strong impact on women, children, elders and the disabled.

There are major concerns about mercury contamination from the flooding of land. The Inuit of Labrador's (Nunatsiavut) *Make Muskrat Right*



campaign commissioned a study which showed that methyl mercury levels downstream could rise by 380%, if the land above the dam was only partially cleared of vegetation and soil but the increase could be reduced to 13% if the reservoir was fully cleared. NALCOR has only agreed to clear the trees.

The relation between Nunatsiavut and the government has been rancorous, amidst numerous protests. Newfoundlanders are unhappy at paying 100 times what Hydro Québec pays for energy from the Upper Churchill project under a 1969 agreement.

There is a public inquiry and a Court challenge, but as the dam is under construction will these restore the land rights, livelihoods and health of the Nunatsiavut?

## Student Environment Leadership

SA interviewed Tegan Breker and Nima Wadsworth, two high-school students

SA: What made you decide that Earth Day organizing was something you wanted to do?

NW: In our class, we collectively decided it was something that was important to all of us, in light of recent things happening in our government.

TB: Kinder Morgan, that's being built right on our land. It's a bottomless pit, killing the environment and animals.

SA: What have you learned from being involved?

NW: We've learned to rely on each other, learned to

trust each other.

TB: Everyone in our classroom has been excited. We spoke at the March for Science, and everyone said that was really inspiring.

SA: What do you want people to take away from the Earth Day event?

TB: Knowledge [of climate change] is power.

NW: We want people to exercise their democratic rights, even if they might be too young to vote right now. And say to Trudeau, "Listen buddy, you're not pushing this pipeline through."



Continued from back

and other disasters. The jobs it would create are firefighters, emergency responders, dyke builders, etc.

Trudeau claims that BC is obstructing the "national interest." The pipeline threatens more jobs than it provides. It will damage the environment of Canada and the world. It infringes Indigenous rights. Since when is the national interest a few oil companies and overseas refineries?

This battle is heading to the courts and a constitutional crisis. The growing unease in Québec, ever sensitive to federal over-reach, further undermines the claimed "national interest." Québec's Premier warned the federal government to be "very careful," viewing its desire to overrule BC's concerns as "not a good sign for federalism."

Trudeau's image on the environment and First Nations is ruined. But as Canada's economy depends

on extracting and exporting raw materials, he has to show global capitalism that Canada is open for exploitation.

Kinder Morgan may be playing a double game. It could cancel the project and use NAFTA to sue to recover its losses.

Now is the time to step up resistance. As an oil spill in Vancouver harbour would threaten thousands of jobs and close the port for weeks, Socialist Alternative supports a one-day shutdown of Vancouver to stop Kinder Morgan.

Canada's fossil fuel industry receives \$3 billion of annual subsidies and governments are willing to use billions more to support this dodgy project. If this money was used to replace fossil fuels with clean energy and upgrade buildings there would be far more good jobs, while respecting Indigenous rights and protecting the environment.



## Bill Hopwood

The battle over Kinder Morgan's pipeline to Vancouver is getting nasty. Kinder Morgan suspended all "non-essential spending" on the pipeline due to the "extraordinary political risks." It set a deadline of May 31 for the federal government to provide guaranteed "clarity on the path forward," or it may cancel the project.

What are these risks? BC's government has a legal case seeking to block any increase in diluted bitumen shipments through BC waters, due to safety concerns.

More significant are several First Nations' court cases objecting to the lack of consultation in the flawed approval process. The Supreme Court of Canada stated that "the Crown is obliged to consult with the group asserting Aboriginal title and, if appropriate, accommodate the Aboriginal right." The pipeline would pass through the traditional territories of First Nations, many staunchly opposed and planning to block construction.

There is widespread public resistance. In one month 200 people, including two Members of Parliament, were arrested for contempt of court during peaceful protests. Many more will do the same.

The Alberta and Canadian governments, in response to Kinder Morgan, are discussing using

billions of taxpayers' dollars to support the project. Alberta's Premier Notley is considering "purchasing the pipeline outright." So taxpayers would carry the risks. Alberta's government threatens to restrict gasoline supplies to BC. There are suggestions that the Federal government could withhold transfer payments to BC.

The main target of the pressure is the BC government. However, even if it backed down the "risks" would remain; the court cases cannot be resolved by May 31 and people's resistance will continue. Some politicians have called for army intervention. Others have suggested using the War Measures Act. Is Trudeau willing to unleash the violence seen at Standing Rock?

Trudeau and Notley claim that the pipeline will provide jobs. Yet, Kinder Morgan says, after construction, there will be only 90 full-time jobs. It would export jobs, with the bitumen refined elsewhere. The pipeline would not bring back \$100 per barrel of oil or lots of jobs in Alberta. The inevitable leak or spill will destroy thousands of jobs in BC.

The tar sands are Canada's biggest source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, yet Trudeau claims that the pipeline will help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It will boost climate change, costing billions of dollars due to fires, floods

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