

# THE CITY 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



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## Inspiring Socialists Worldwide

*Chris Fofonoff*

Sometimes Canadians can forget that Canada is a part of world politics – that Vancouver's unaffordability is reminiscent of Hong Kong's, for instance, or that our fight against the fossil-fuel barony also rages in Nigeria and Australia. Capitalism is a global system and our wider struggles take place on every continent. International solidarity is important and makes a difference.

Nearly 400 socialists from over 40 countries gathered in Barcelona in July for the annual week-long gathering of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), of which Socialist Alternative Canada is a member. The week is critical for gaining ideas, learning lessons, discussing issues and inspiration.

While there, we participated in a 300,000-strong march for Catalan independence from the Spanish state and made our case for a socialist Catalonia at our mass public meeting, with speakers from across Europe.

There were inspiring reports from around the world. Our sister organization in Ireland helped win the referendum for abortion rights by distributing abortion pills in defiance of the law, mass poster and our MP Ruth Coppinger campaigning in parliament. In Spain our fellow members were key in organizing a strike of six million people against rape and the courts' failure to punish rapists.

Even smaller sections of the CWI are participating in and sometimes leading important campaigns – from union activity in Tunisia, to farmers' rights in India, to affordable housing in the Netherlands. Across the world, socialists in the CWI are proving themselves the most pound-for-pound effective fighters for winning battles with the working class and advancing the struggle to win a socialist world.



300,000-strong march for Catalan independence

# The City We Need

Bill Hopwood

Most Canadians live in cities, half live in just seven cities. Cities are centres of extreme inequality. Vancouver's most expensive house is valued at \$78.8 million, while a few kilometres away is the Downtown Eastside, Canada's poorest census tract, with a median income of under \$18,000. Hamilton has a 21-year difference in life expectancy between its richest and poorest neighbourhoods.

The soaring cost of housing, to rent or to buy, is forcing people out of cities into suburbs. They then face long commutes to work, either on often inadequate public transit or on congested roads given the lack of transit.

Cities have always been centres of struggle for justice and change. There is a growing mood to fight for the cities we need rather than the cities we have now that are playgrounds for the rich and property developers.

Municipal politicians often point to their limited powers to excuse inaction. However, most councils use their important powers over the use of land and providing infrastructure to benefit property developers. When the city changes the use of land, for example, from industry or residential houses to multi-story condos, by the stroke of a pen land values can increase ten-fold or more. Most of this increase in value goes to the developers not the city. Similarly, when the city builds rapid transit lines property values soar and the developers take the money. No wonder developers are major investors in municipal politics and spend a lot of time and money courting politicians.

The City We Need would take a very different approach, ensuring that the gains in property values due to rezoning or infrastructure investment belong to the city. This money, along with progressive taxes on high-priced houses (a Mansion Tax), would fund the building of rental homes that are publicly-owned, good-quality and affordable to people on low incomes. If the city provided a significant portion of rental properties, this would drive down private rents.

The City We Need would invest in much-needed quality public transit. Toronto's mayor, backed by Doug Ford, is building a \$3.5 billion vanity project of a one-stop subway extension while ignoring the more pressing transit needs of the working class.

In Vancouver since 2000, \$7.5 billion has gone or is going to highway construction while only \$2.5 billion has been invested in rapid transit. Building highways only relieves congestion for a short time and subsidizes developers to build more sprawling suburbs.

Part of fighting for the City We Need is challenging establishment politicians in elections. The election of Socialist Alternative's Kshama Sawant in Seattle and her victories since have inspired others. Although Sawant is only one of nine councillors, her movement-building outside of city hall has pushed the other councillors to support many of her proposals including a \$15 minimum wage, controls on slum landlords, and building more public housing.

Vancouver's 2017 by-election showed strong support for radical change with Jean Swanson's insurgent campaign coming from nowhere to nearly win. Socialist Alternative is hard at work to help win the City We Need. A victory for Swanson, and her team, in this autumn's election could spark a political revolution to win the City We Need in Vancouver and beyond. However, a few councillors alone cannot make real change. Winning the City We Need involves both electoral and movement campaigns.



\$78.8 million Mansion



Swanson Calls for Mansion Tax

Jean Swanson is running for Vancouver City Council in the elections on October. 20

Along with her on COPE's team are:

- Council: Anne Roberts & Derrick O'Keefe
- Park Board: Gwen Giesbrecht & John Irwin
- School Board: Barb Parrott & Diana Day

For more info visit: [cope.bc.ca/](http://cope.bc.ca/)

Socialist Alternative's Seattle Councillor

Kshama Sawant Speaks in Vancouver

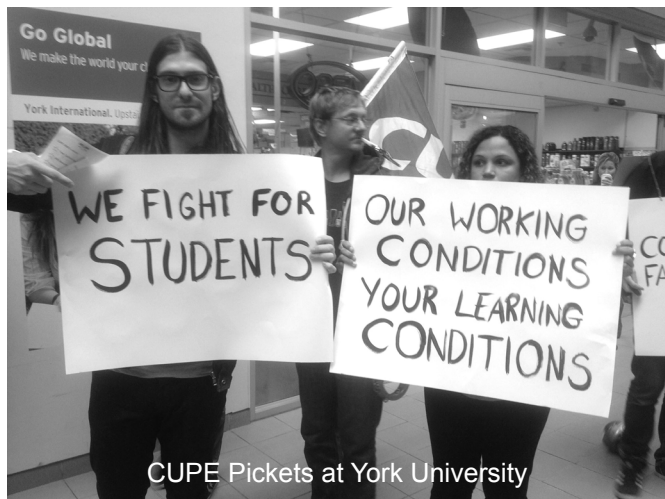
Saturday, October 13

Sawant will speaking in support of Jean and COPE

For more details visit: [socialistalternative.ca/](http://socialistalternative.ca/)

# Education is a Right, Not a Business

Leslie Kemp and Martin LeBrun



Post-secondary education is a public institution yet is run to extract profits out of students and workers. Public funding covers less than half of university and college operating costs, down from 77% 20 years ago and an average of 90% in the 1970s. Federal and provincial governments have made the political choice to slash public funding for post-secondary education forcing students and their families to pay higher tuition fees. In addition, an increasing number of educational staff are poorly paid, precarious workers.

In the past 25 years, average tuition fees in Canada have increased from \$1,872 to \$7,029. To justify these increases, governments and institutions claim that education is a privilege worth paying for. Wealthier students retain access to education while those with less funds are either denied further education or pay more in student loans. The result: a student debt mountain of \$28 billion owed to all levels of government! In 2017, the federal government made \$862.6 million from the interest on student loans.

Institutions have ramped up international student recruitment, seeing a revenue opportunity. International students pay 4 to 6 times that of domestic students, contributing \$1.28 billion to Canadian institutions in 2015-16. Since 2010 foreign student enrolment is up 88.5% in Ontario universities.

Since the 1990s, the federal government's Innovation Agenda has required universities to produce research that primarily serves business, undermining academic independence and reducing public funding. Universities have turned to corporations to fund research, which serves corporate profits, not public needs. Not only are corporate names and logos all over campuses, but universities are modelling themselves after corporations seeking profit, growth and marketability.

Another cost-saving measure is the increased reliance on contract or sessional instructors who lack job security and are paid a pittance compared with full-time professors. According to a CBC report,

"the core of the teaching is being done by the most precarious of academic labourers. And without them, the business model of the university would collapse." Institutions also rely on other contracted services such as security, cleaning and food – all provided by low paid workers. The recent strikes at York and Carleton Universities demonstrate the pressure to do more with less compensation. Meanwhile, senior administrators make over \$500,000.

Tuition fees and interest on student loans needs to be abolished. Four provinces have already eliminated interest. Closing the \$16 billion a year in tax loopholes that benefit the wealthy, identified in a 2016 study, would fund free education.

Students and educators need to mobilize and fight to remake postsecondary education into a public good and demand that it is funded as such. Education is a right.

## Decolonizing Indigenous Education

Allie Pev and Leslie Kemp

Despite Trudeau's rhetoric about supporting Indigenous communities, children on reserves receive 20 to 37% less funding than students elsewhere in Canada, 32% of First Nations schools lack access to clean drinking water and only 39% of First Nations schools have a fully equipped library. In 2011, the Assembly of First Nations said 47% of First Nations need new schools. These deficiencies have an enormous impact on the future living standards of Indigenous people.

Education is a treaty right. The government of Canada is legally responsible for First Nations education.

Indigenous people have been anything but silent about these deficiencies, but their demands have fallen on deaf ears. Still they persisted. As 14-year-old Chelsea Edwards said, "Perhaps you have heard the story of how Rosa Parks helped start the civil rights movement. Well, we are the children who have been sitting at the back of the school bus our whole lives. And we don't want to stay there anymore."

Attawapiskat, in northern Ontario, is a case in point. Children were schooled in portables for 12 years after 20 years of being taught in a school located on a toxic diesel spill – three generations of students! To complete high school, children were forced to leave their families and travel to southern communities. Shannen Koostachin, from the Attawapiskat First Nation, was just 13 when she left home. After the government broke its promise of a new school, Shannen and other students travelled

# Jean Swanson for City Council

Interviewed for Socialist Alternative by Aiden Sisler

The day before she went to prison for peaceful protest against Trudeau's pipeline, Aiden Sisler of Socialist Alternative interviewed her. Jean spoke about why she is running for Council, what she will do when elected and about going to prison for peaceful protest against Trudeau's pipeline.

"I've worked for 40 years trying to get governments to end poverty and homelessness. I've had many frustrating interactions with City Council, which supports developers to gentrify and push up rents, resulting in increasing homelessness which is life-threatening.

"In last year's by-election we talked about The City We Need – rent freeze, ending homelessness, a mansion tax so the city has the money to end homelessness and then start getting lots of social housing to ensure that lower income renters have housing security. Housing and services should be shifted out of the market, that is failing so many. From nowhere I came second and



won the polls with low-income people and renters. Folks will vote for politicians who fearlessly say what we need and work with them to get those changes.

"The success of Sanders, Corbyn and Sawant [shows] that things are changing after years of austerity. We can make electoral gains by campaigning for social and environmental justice. Socialist Alternative's Seattle councillor, Kshama Sawant, is an awesome model. She's given us good advice including don't negotiate for what is possible, go for what is needed. I agree with her approach of working with movements to win the election and then using the council to work with movements to win.

"My priority will be improvements for the people most in need. So, end homelessness, then build social housing and a rent freeze for low- and moderate-income renters. People who are poor have a shorter life expectancy. A more equal society is life-saving. Winning these won't be easy, but by working with groups across the city we can put pressure on the province to deliver.

"I'd continue to be part of social and environmental justice movements. I'd use the council office to boost the power of these movements by providing voice, space, staff expertise, and support with education and action. I'd really push to make the city a place for everyone who lives here, especially lower income folks, regardless of what level of government is technically responsible.

"The law legalized slavery, Indigenous residential schools, the theft of Indigenous land and children working 16-hour days. Laws made it illegal to join a union, and for women and tenants to vote. Throughout history people have resisted repugnant laws. Trudeau's pipeline is dangerous to the land, the water, and Indigenous rights. Spending \$13.8 billion of tax money on this planet-threatening pipeline is repugnant.

"Stopping the pipeline unites many important issues. \$13.8 billion would employ Alberta tar sands workers to build solar and wind power, end homelessness and provide clean water on all Indigenous reserves. Thousands are opposing it just like people stopped slavery and got the vote for women. In a couple of decades, the laws that allow the pipeline bailout will be seen in the same way as the laws that allowed slavery."



to Ottawa to demand a new school, held rallies and reached out to students across Canada. This fight became the largest youth-driven rights movement in Canadian history. In 2014 the new Kattawapiskak elementary school was opened, four years after Shannen tragically died in a car accident.

Shannen's Dream inspired other students and communities to take up this struggle. But more than adequate schools are needed. Twenty years ago, the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia took control of their children's education, prioritizing language and culture to instill self-confidence in their students. The resulting increase in attendance and high school graduates inspired 14 Yukon First Nations to make similar changes. In 2016, 10 Manitoba First Nations communities created a new Indigenous school board, incorporating Indigenous pedagogy in the curriculum.

Along with adequate and sustainable funding, First Nations children deserve access to education that reconnects them to Indigenous knowledge, land and languages.

# Greyhound Abandons Western Canada

Leslie Kemp & Simon Schweitzer

In 2017, Saskatchewan premier Brad Wall, the demon barber of the prairies, decided to completely close the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) claiming only two routes were profitable. Created in 1946 to fill a need that capitalism couldn't meet, the STC enabled people to travel between the hundreds of small towns that dot the rural landscape of Saskatchewan and larger cities, reliably and affordably.

One year later, western Canada is learning that capitalism still can't meet these needs as Greyhound Canada announced they will eliminate all routes west of Sudbury on October 31, except the profitable route between Vancouver and Seattle. This leaves people in rural and Indigenous communities, especially low-income residents, with few travel options. Some 300 cities and towns will no longer have any service. The shameful legacy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and the notorious highway of tears in northern BC demonstrates that women, particularly Indigenous women, are vulnerable to violence and even murder when they lack reliable public transportation.

Greyhound's decision will isolate and trap people in their communities, forcing people to drive for medical appointments, to visit loved ones in hospital and to receive welfare and other services. But not everyone has a car, a driver's license or is able to drive. Even travel between Edmonton, Calgary, Regina and Winnipeg will be difficult.

Even where train routes exist, many have no passenger service or services are expensive and unreliable, as freight has priority. Rail is the only all-season, land route to Churchill and the owner, US-based Omnitrax, has refused to repair the tracks for a year, isolating the communities along the route and devastating Churchill.

Greyhound wants to cherry-pick profitable routes or get subsidies. The Liberal government seems to favour a patchwork of operators cherry-picking single profitable routes and dumping the others. Socialist Alternative rejects both of these. Greyhound's licenses across all of Canada should be cancelled and replaced with a publicly-owned, integrated transport network which includes rail and bus. Rail lines should be twinned for safety and efficiency and passenger rail services expanded. Capitalism has failed to deliver the services Canadians need.

If Bill Morneau can nationalize a pipeline, Marc Garneau can nationalize a trans-Canada transportation system.

# Goderich Strike Victory

Tim Heffernan



Victorious Goderich Strikers

The London Free Press' headline was: "A huge toll – Goderich salt mine strike ends, but anger lingers."

Starting on April 27, 350 miners at the Goderich, Ontario salt mine went on strike against US-owned Compass Minerals for 12 weeks. The company had demanded a long list of concessions: reducing benefits, extending shift length, forced overtime, and weakening existing contracting-out limitations in the collective agreement.

As the town of 8,000 people and the surrounding area rallied to the support of the Unifor workers, with lawn signs popping up around the town, the strike became increasingly bitter. The company used scabs and gained a court injunction to prevent effective picketing.

The workers defied the injunction, erecting a blockade of wooden pallets on the roadway into the mine. A later court injunction forced them to remove the barricade. However, local area farmers used their tractors to continue to block the site.

While many workers hoped to win more, the terms of the three-year deal included some wage increases and maintenance of previous pension and benefits. The workers went back with their heads held high having defeated the company and the bosses' court rulings, by determined action and solidarity. As Gerry Lynch, Unifor local president said, "we marched scabs off the workplace and kept them off."

## Beware of Courts

In the Goderich strike the company successfully gained two injunctions to limit picketing. In BC, Kinder Morgan gained an injunction to stop people standing closer than five metres to its property.

Most injunctions favour owners and employers. Unions failed to get an injunction to stop the closure of STC. Recently unions in Manitoba sought an injunction to stop the government attacking their collective bargaining rights, protected under Canada's Charter of Rights. No surprise the court rejected the request.

# "Guests": Immigrant Children in Canadian Jail

Rocco Trigueros

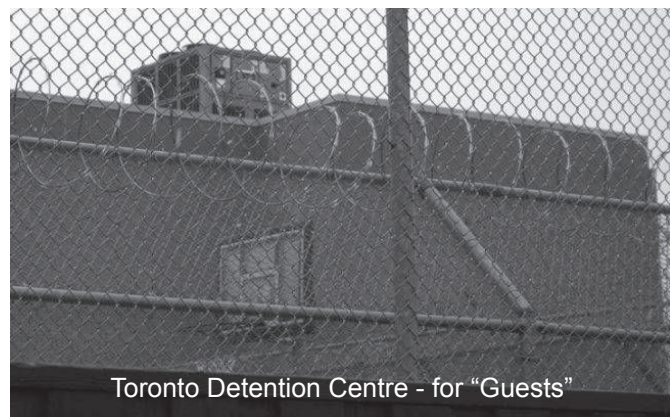
In the US and Canada, a family without legal status often is a target for persecution, jailing and deportation. The false claim that "illegals" are overusing public services is a useful tool for right-wing politicians to whip up support.

Trump demonstrated this with his cruel policy of separating 2,300 children from their families. Only a huge public outcry ended this. Doug Ford and others are also attacking refugees trying to gain support, falsely claiming that refugees are "illegal border crossers." Refugees have a legal right to enter Canada and to be treated properly.

Canada has a terrible history of separating children from families, especially Indigenous children, who endured the anguish of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and now imposed fostering. Canada does detain migrant children, last year 150 with their families and 11 on their own.

For example, an eight-year old, Canadian-born girl was taken from her school by Canadian Border Services to a detention centre where her mother was also being held. They were kept for a year, the girl missing school and becoming severely depressed.

However, Canada's government tries to be discreet, insisting that detaining minors is a last resort, and the children are not detainees, but simply "guests." Canada finds the way to politely apply the iron fist and, yet, get humanitarian applause.



Toronto Detention Centre - for "Guests"

# What Makes Me Angry

Larry Hyink



Canada baked and burned. All summer there were heat warnings from the Maritimes to the Pacific. People died from heat in Québec, while northern Ontario and much of BC was in flames. Canada was not alone either – the whole Northern Hemisphere roasted in an unprecedented heat wave that blanketed half the planet.

As this latest climate disaster played out, the Liberal government decided to waive the rules on its unimplemented "carbon tax" to allow polluters to pump more carbon into the atmosphere. This was done to protect profits . . . oops, I mean, um, jobs in the trade war with the US.

In a move typical of Liberals, the announcement was made by the "environment minister" and presented as part of Canada's program for fighting climate change. Unlike the Conservatives who ignore climate change and do nothing, the Liberals talk environment . . . and do nothing.

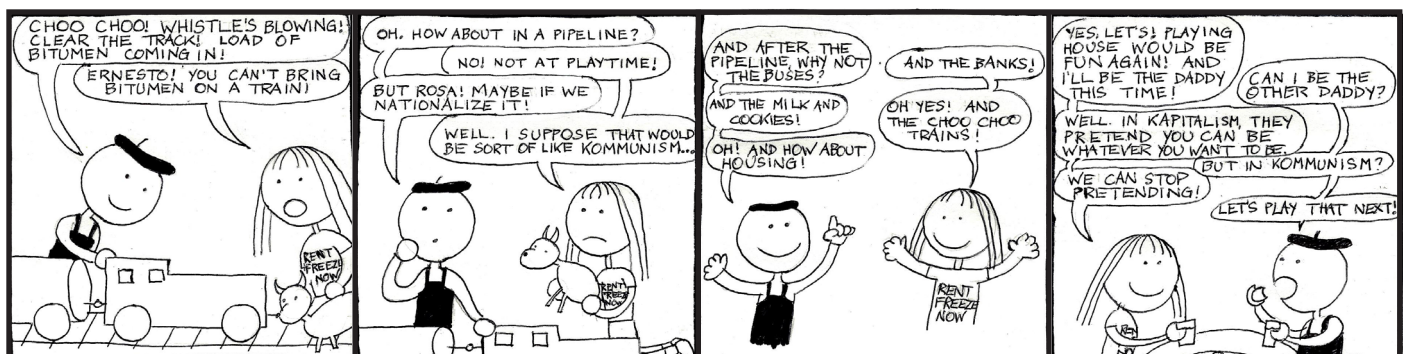
Meanwhile, after picking up the tab for firefighting, lost visitors' spending, health expenditure and other heat-related costs, Canadian taxpayers can look forward to paying \$13.8 billion to buy and finish the Kinder Morgan pipeline boondoggle so that we can heat things up even more.

According to our government, nothing can be done about climate change unless corporate profits are protected. Your house can burn, grandma can die of heat and you can subsidize making things worse with your tax dollars so that the richest 1% can get richer until we all fry. Does this picture seem as insane to you as it does to me?

Time for something new.  
Time for Socialism.

# Kindergarten Kommies

Pete Marlowe



The sands of Canadian politics are shifting. A right-wing populist, Doug Ford, is the Premier of Ontario and this autumn he may be joined by one in Québec. Trudeau has bought a pipeline. There are threats of a trade war with the US, and a possible global trade war between China and the US that would engulf Canada. The years when Canada seemed an island of stability in a world of turmoil may be coming to an end.

### Ford Wins in Ontario

After Trump was elected US President, many in Canada had a smug feeling of superiority. However, Socialist Alternative warned in our 2017 Canadian Perspectives that “there are signs that a right populism that focused on jobs, etc, could get support. A recent Edelman poll found rapidly growing distrust of politicians, business and the media; most Canadians (55%) say the system is not working for them; 80% think the ‘elites’ are out of touch with regular people.”

While Doug Ford is not the same as Trump, for instance he doesn't play up racism as he has significant support among recent immigrants, he has similarities, claiming to be looking out for ordinary people, while his policies help the rich.

Ford won due to the unpopularity of the Liberals after 15 years in government. They had partially privatized Ontario Hydro, causing soaring electricity bills, and a history of corruption scandals. Even the Liberal's late shift to the left announcing a \$15 minimum wage and some other improvements to workers' rights was not enough to save them.

Ford won the leadership of the Conservative Party by a slim margin. Most Ontarians did not want Ford as Premier, however their votes were split between the NDP, with 34% of the vote, and the Liberals on 19%. Ford won only 40% of the votes. The result is not a significant shift to the right, rather it shows that people are angry, fed up and volatile. The result was a sweeping rejection of the Liberals, reduced to seven seats.

The NDP could have won; a couple of weeks before election day they were leading in the polls. While their platform was the most radical in years, the campaign lacked the energy and enthusiasm needed to win over former Liberal voters.

Ford is delivering on his election promises and more. He has scrapped the increase in mental health funding and cut an announced welfare increase. He's torn up the, admittedly weak, Liberal climate change program. His cutting of the number of seats on Toronto Council shows contempt for local democracy. He has cancelled the agreed sex education program and is lining up for a wider attack on education. He threatened teachers, “We will not tolerate anybody using our children as pawns for grandstanding and political games. And, make no mistake, if we find somebody failing to do their job, we will act.”

There is worse to come. Ford plans to cut spending on public services by \$22 billion, which will mean the loss of vital services and jobs. At the same time he plans to cut taxes for corporations and the rich. Ford has stated he will cancel the minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour due January 1, 2019. So much for looking after ordinary people.



The key issue facing Ontario's NDP, unions, and social and environment movements is organizing mass resistance given most voters in Ontario do not support Ford.

### Economic Clouds

The world economy has grown slowly since the deep recession of 2008. The Canadian economy has done better than most, growing by 3% in 2017 and is expected to see a further 2.2% in 2018. In the past, a growing economy would help the party in government. However, as inequality continues to increase, with most of the benefits of an expanding economy going to the rich, real median wages have hardly increased. The real average hourly wage was \$24 in 1977 and \$27.70 in 2016. No wonder most people feel the “elites are out of touch.”

Dark clouds are looming for Canada's economy. Domestically the economy is over-dependent on debt and the housing bubble. The high cost of housing fuels debt. In Canada, household debt is at a record \$2.13 trillion, roughly doubled since 2006. Canada has one of the world's fastest increasing ratio of private debt to the size of the economy, having grown by 20% in the last five years. As interest rates are rising, even a small increase in the cost of debt could have a drastic impact on household spending and on people keeping their homes.

Trump imposed tariffs on imports of Canadian timber, steel and aluminum and in return Canada has imposed tariffs of \$16.6 billion on US imports. More worrying are the threats around NAFTA and of tariffs on Canadian-produced autos, which could lead to at least 100,000 job losses. There is a mounting trade war between the US and China which could drag the entire world into recession.



## Trudeau Hypocrisy

Trudeau used Trump's attacks on trade to win a unanimous vote of support in the House of Commons and he is also using the row with Saudi Arabia to win cross-party support. A socialist NDP would defend workers jobs from big business and defend human rights. However, this should not include a vote of confidence in Trudeau given his hypocrisy – after all he agreed to sell \$15 billion worth of weapons to Saudis, who are devastating Yemen.



Trudeau's stand on the environment and Indigenous relations contributed to his victory. His actions since have revealed his true politics. Incredibly his government bought the Kinder Morgan pipeline for \$4.5 billion, which will cost a further \$9.3 billion to construct it. Trudeau claims the pipeline is in the national interest. How can trampling on Indigenous rights and the environment be in the national interest? Kinder Morgan estimated the pipeline will provide only 90 permanent jobs while threatening thousands of jobs in Vancouver from an inevitable oil spill.

The Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women remains mired in controversy. The late Arthur Manuel pointed to the hypocrisy of Trudeau's government in announcing that they will sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but then declaring it was "unworkable". As Manuel wrote of Trudeau, "he can cry a tear, almost at will, for our pitiful state, but he is as ruthless as the others in keeping us there with his . . . policies that seize our lands and leave us in poverty and despair."

## Union Leadership Needed

Employers continue to attack workers' wages and conditions such as at York University, the Goderich mine and Toronto's Exhibition Place. While union membership has declined since the 1980s, the unions still have enormous potential power with over 30% of workers covered by a union agreement. However the potential has to be used to defend workers. The determination of the Goderich miners is an example to all (see page 6).

An area where unions could show real leadership is in tackling the widespread sexual discrimination of the continuing wage gap (for fulltime workers, women

earn 74 cents compared to men's \$1) and harassment at work that particularly hurts women in low paid jobs.

## Bold Policies to Stop the Right

Liberals have a small lead over the Conservatives in opinion polls, partly helped by weak showing from the NDP and Tories. Ford is not the only right-wing populist on the scene. The CAQ in Québec is using similar rhetoric to gain support from the pro-austerity Liberals and PQ (see page 12). Maxime Bernier, who only just lost leadership of the federal Tory party to Scheer, with over 49% of votes in final round, has split away. He denounced his former party as "intellectually and morally corrupt" and is aiming to build a new right-populist party based on further privatization, tax cuts for the rich and anti-immigrants.

The rise of more right-wing politics in Ontario and Québec is a challenge to the NDP. Internationally it is clear that the best answer to the new right is not cautious middle-of-the-road policies. Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn have shown how to answer the right. So far the NDP, as demonstrated in the Ontario election, has not moved to inspiring campaigns based on bold policies such as free education, a massive house building program and taxing the rich. This failure allows the right to appear to care about mounting inequality, unaffordable living costs and an out-of-touch elite.

The election campaign in Vancouver of Jean Swanson and others (see pages 3 and 5) based on bold policies, is an opportunity to begin to build an alternative to capitalism's failure. A victory in Vancouver will help to show that socialist policies are popular. A crucial issue is will the NDP will learn from Swanson, Corbyn and Sanders?

Socialist Alternative will continue to work for a Canadian society that provides good jobs, affordable housing and a healthy environment.



1968 saw mass struggles with revolutionary potential but also setbacks due to the failures of workers' leaders. This issue highlights Northern Ireland, where a growing radical struggle was derailed into sectarian reaction; Czechoslovakia, where a workers' movement for democratic socialism was crushed by the Stalinist dictatorship; and Mexico where the government massacred

hundreds of peaceful protesters.

While these movements were defeated, they left important seeds of struggle that have since blossomed, with the recent victory for Morena in Mexico and the rising struggle for women's rights in Northern Ireland. To defeat capitalism and win socialism we need to learn from past struggles.

## Northern Ireland 1968: Revolution turns to Reaction

Ciaran Muholland, Socialist Party Ireland reviews *Common History, Common Struggle* by Peter Hadden

Internationally, Northern Ireland is known as a deeply divided society. Thousands of books have sought to explain its conflict – it is said to be the most analysed and written about place on earth. Much of this analysis is worthless, explains nothing and leads nowhere. To paraphrase Karl Marx, the point is to change society not to simply analyse it. *Common History, Common Struggle* is produced to help change society.

This book, completed but not fully edited by leading Irish Marxist Peter Hadden before his untimely death in 2010, explains the origins of the "Troubles" (the widely-adopted term for the period of violence which opened in 1968). The book starts with the foundations of the Northern Ireland state in 1921, proceeds to the late 1970s and the introduction brings this analysis up to today.

The evidence is marshalled and presented convincingly that the 1960s was a time of rising united struggle that could have seen the end of the divide between Catholics and Protestants and the partition of Ireland, and usher in a socialist transformation of society. History could have taken a different turn, avoiding the terrible events of the last fifty years. The mistake of the 1960s was that the labour and trade union leaders stood aside and allowed sectarian forces to seize the initiative.

The working class in Northern Ireland has a history of shared struggle. Again and again, working class people have stood side by side in protests and on picket lines. In the 1950s and 1960s traditional barriers began to break down. Trade union militancy increased, and strikes became more common. Left parties were growing rapidly. The leadership of the trade unions and the Northern Ireland Labour Party should have stood at the head of the mass movement that spilled onto the streets from 1968 demanding civil rights for all. They did not, and instead the civil rights movement was increasingly seen as a movement for Catholic rights. When protestors were met with police batons young people fought back. The Unionist government could not hold the line and in August 1969 British troops appeared on the streets.



A united radical mood was split along sectarian lines with tragic consequences for many. This tragedy is encapsulated by Micky Devine who joined Derry Young Socialists in 1968, but "a few years later, as sectarian reaction took a grip in the North, disillusioned with the labour movement, he joined the Official IRA . . . died on hunger strike along with nine other republican prisoners in 1981."

Fierce violence continued for 25 years, and over 3,500 died in the blood-letting. The essential unity of working class people was not broken however as workers stood against the worst excesses of the paramilitaries. The repeated demonstrations of the late 1980s and 1990s were a key factor in forcing the paramilitaries to call their ceasefires.

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 is not a long-term solution. There is not real peace (low level violence continues) and there has been no "peace dividend" (the prosperity promised if the violence ceased).

Peter wrote this book because he believed in a future built on the common struggle of Protestant and Catholic workers and young people for a socialist alternative to sectarianism and poverty. He hoped that *Common History, Common Struggle* would assist all those in Ireland and the world who are struggling for a better future.

**For information about Northern Ireland and the Socialist Party: [socialistparty.org/](http://socialistparty.org/)**

# and Counter-Revolution

## Prague Spring: Stalinism Crushes Democracy

Simon Schweitzer

The revolutionary upsurges of 1968 engulfed both capitalist and Stalinist countries. Czechoslovakia had twenty years of a publicly-owned, planned economy. Unfortunately, it was based on the Stalinist dictatorship of the Soviet Union. While the planned economy allowed rapid recovery from the devastation of World War II, the top-down bureaucracy resulted in uneven development between industrial and agricultural sectors and the Czech and Slovak areas, as well as a lack of consumer goods. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) and the state were indistinguishable. The repressive regime faced mounting pressure from workers and student protests that were moving into the streets.

In January 1968 Alexander Dubček became leader of the KSC with a mandate to reform the economy. By April, attempting to placate the growing unrest from below while preserving the bureaucracy's powers, he produced the Action Program, a plan to allow free press, free speech, freedom of movement and association, and re-orient economic planning. While the Program would loosen constraints on producers, it risked competition and duplication among them. Crucially, there was no move to introduce workers' democracy into the economy, which is essential for healthy planning, but a threat to the bureaucracy.

The regime pleaded for caution under KSC control, but people's frustrations after decades of repression spilled out. The new freedom was challenged by the June 27 publication of *The 2000 Words* manifesto which was mildly optimistic about the proposed reforms and encouraged the populace to support the KSC's progressive wing. However, it was anxious about possible intervention by "foreign forces" (of the Soviet Union) and criticized the party for having alienated the working class. "Enjoying great popular confidence immediately after the war, the communist party by degrees bartered this confidence away for office, until it had all the offices and nothing else." The KSC and the USSR denounced the manifesto and its author,

Ludvík Vaculík, was expelled from the party.

Moscow feared that the KSC would lose control, as in Hungary in 1956, with the energized workers pushing for more substantial changes. It decried even the limited democracy as "counter-revolutionary." On August 21, Soviet Union tanks invaded Prague. There was sporadic resistance, with the slogan "Wake up Lenin. Brezhnev has gone mad." The invading troops were often demoralized, weeping in the streets, protesting that they'd been duped and didn't even know they were in Czechoslovakia. However, tragically, there was no organization to mobilize resistance and appeal to the invading troops on the basis of genuine socialism. Dubček was expelled from the party and censorship was restored.

Contrary to the claims of the Soviet Union's dictatorship there was no serious support for the idea of restoring capitalism during the Prague Spring. Workers and students wanted real democratic socialism. As Trotsky had outlined, against Stalin, what was needed was a political revolution to remove the bureaucracy and have workers' democracy based on Lenin's ideas that officials should have no privileges and be subject to recall. The opposition to Stalinism shows that workers are willing to struggle to build democratic socialism and to assert their democratic control of the economy.

## Massacre in Mexico, 1968

Nancy Trigueros

The disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa in 2014 is a terrible crime. An earlier crime also had a lasting effect on Mexico: The Tlatelolco massacre of 1968.

President Ordaz's government suppressed strikes and farmers' movements. Students resisted this repression and government violence at universities, forming the National Strike Council, uniting 70 universities and schools.

Ordaz, determined to host the Olympics in a country without protests, brutally attacked before they opened. On October 2, in La Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco, Mexico City a mass peaceful rally of students, teachers, workers and families gathered. They were ambushed by helicopters, rooftop snipers and soldiers in the crowd. 300 to 400 people were murdered and more than 1,300 people arrested.

Tlatelolco was brutal repression, but it did not stop the demands for justice. Morena's recent victory provides an opportunity to heal the open wounds of murder in Ayotzinapa and Tlatelolco. It may be justice delayed, but justice after all.



# Mexico : Morena, a People's Victory

Nancy Trigueros

INTERNATIONAL



privatization in Mexico and what will big business do if he tries? Domestic food production and rural society has been devastated by subsidized imports from the US under NAFTA; how will a Morena government deal with this? The experience of the Syriza government in Greece, elected to end austerity but crushed into submission by big business, is a warning.

While effervescence is in the air, there is no doubt that the coming of AMLO's government is creating a resistance movement from the capitalist elite who are loud, organized and effective. AMLO's first moves need to signal his base that a real change has come. People are already demanding change, and they want real change now. December, for many, seems so far.

**For information about Mexico and Izquierda Revolucionaria: [izquierdarevolucionariamx.net/](http://izquierdarevolucionariamx.net/)**

Effervescence is in the air. Morena, led by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), won the election with astounding numbers: 30 million votes, 53%, 305 deputy members out of 500, a majority in the senate, majorities in the deputy chambers in 16 of the 32 provinces, five out of nine governors with one in dispute, and victories in 700 new municipalities.

AMLO officially becomes president on December 1; however the expectations are high, and people are not waiting. There is huge impatience of workers, peasants, students, activists and the many victims of the failures of Mexico's previous right-wing governments that produced the country's highest economic debt and the most violent quarter in history.

AMLO knows this – already he has requested a substantial reduction of the salaries of all deputy members of the congress, senators, high ranking officials and his own. He has declared the “war against drugs” a complete failure and instead he will address rampant violence at its root causes: poverty, corruption and impunity. He is planning actions in the US border areas, which are the most violent, to reduce poverty. The incoming Secretary of Labour has announced a 15.6% annual increase in the minimum salary.

The new government faces huge challenges, with deep corruption, a ruthless ruling class and Trump across the border. AMLO has talked about humane capitalism, but there are few signs that the Mexican and international ruling class are interested in being humane. Will AMLO reverse the widespread

## Québec Election:

Martin LeBrun

The Parti Québécois (PQ) is facing a historic defeat in October's elections. Founded in 1968 as a left-leaning sovereigntist party, the PQ has drawn support from most unionized workers. Today it is far from its 1990s glory days of majority government, 45% of the vote and a nearly winning a sovereigntist referendum. Its move to the right including austerity budgets, stoking prejudice against non-Christians and electing anti-union CEO Pierre Karl Péladeau as leader in 2015-16 has reduced support to a historic low of 18%.

Quebecers are fed up with years of austerity from the PQ and current Liberal government. The right-wing populist Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) is exploiting the strong desire for change – 54% strongly agree that Québec is ready for change. Like Ford in Ontario, CAQ leader François Legault's posturing as an anti-establishment candidate is finding fertile ground, with a recent poll showing that he is the most trusted party leader. The CAQ is not a sovereigntist party, rather it defends Québec capitalists within Canada. A CAQ majority, which looks most likely, will further stoke prejudice and increase attacks on refugees, workers and public services. Yet, a CAQ victory will not mean that most Quebecers are reactionaries – they merely want a change from the austerity agendas of the PQ and

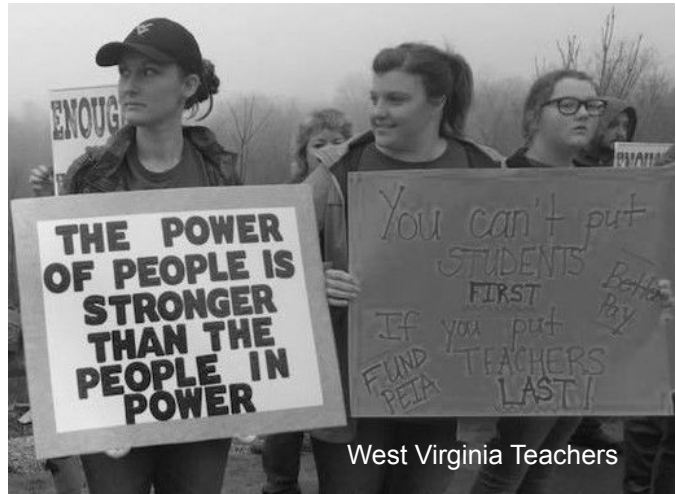
# Where is the US Headed?

Patrick Ayers, *Socialist Alternative US*

Trump's second year began with mass protests by women against sexism, and by young people against gun violence. The historic strike wave of teachers erupted in West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona, winning impressive gains against Republican state governments.

Trump's support remains steady, in spite of scandals and court cases, with economic growth a key factor. While this is uneven and mainly benefiting the rich, it gives the impression that Trump is succeeding. The growth is largely based on mounting debt, government handouts and short-term tax cuts. So, rather than Trump's goal of 5% expansion, the reality is increasing risk of inflation and a slowdown in the US and worldwide. More worrying is the developing trade war, which Trump is encouraging, against some of the US's largest trading partners including China and Canada. With increasing inter-imperialist tensions, such a development could escalate quickly with devastating consequences for workers.

The weak opposition from the Democratic Party's corporate leadership helps Trump. Their failure to mobilize effective resistance has allowed Trump to implement massive tax cuts for the rich and attack immigrant rights. The Democrats are doing nothing to stop the appointment of right-wing Brett Kavanaugh



West Virginia Teachers

to an empty seat on the Supreme Court. Before the vacancy, the court made a historic ruling against public sector unions. A further shift to the right opens the door to an attack on abortion rights.

The midterm Congressional elections in November will further heighten the political temperature. The Democrats are poised to win the House of Representatives, but as a corporate-dominated party with many past failures, another disappointing result cannot be excluded.

There could also be important workplace struggles. This autumn, the teachers' strikes may re-ignite in Los Angeles. A dispute over the largest private sector union contract between the Teamsters and UPS is escalating with local union leaders encouraging 260,000 members to reject the recommendation of the national leadership.

Support for socialist ideas continues to grow due to the crisis of capitalism and the failure of the establishment parties. Self-described socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's stunning victory in a New York Democratic primary triggered wide discussions about socialist ideas, with 57% of Democratic Party voters preferring socialism to capitalism.

However, Ocasio-Cortez's victory has reinforced illusions that the left could win the leadership of the Democratic Party. With US capitalism in decline, it is likely that bitter battles will grow between the corporate leadership of the Democrats and working-class voters. But big business will never let go of their party.

There are huge opportunities for advancing struggles alongside important dangers in the situation, highlighted by the growing confidence of a minority of far-right Trump supporters. The far bigger shift among the working class is to the left. The rising tide of anger, protest and strikes will further pose the need for socialist change. These opportunities must be seized with both hands.

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

## Crisis in the Parti Québécois

the Liberals. Legault's attacks on workers and public services will clash with strong Québec unions and generally militant society.

At the same time, the federal Bloc Québécois is in deep crisis with seven of its ten MPs resigning from the party. Is the sovereignty movement dying in Québec? No. Although down from the past, a third of Quebecers continue to support either a politically sovereign Québec with economic links to Canada or complete independence. There is a crisis for establishment sovereigntist parties that are unwilling to link a sovereign/independent Québec with policies that would benefit working-class people. The desire for self-determination can erupt again in Québec society.

Québec solidaire (QS) has the potential to fill the PQ vacuum. It is campaigning against austerity and prejudice in an independent Québec as well as for full dental coverage, 50% off transit fares, and free post-secondary education. Presently at 12%, it needs to do more to reach workers and youth to become a mass workers' party. Our co-thinkers in Alternative Socialiste are working with QS to build this alternative for working-class Quebecers.

For information about Québec and Alternative Socialiste: [alternativesocialiste.org/](http://alternativesocialiste.org/)

## Women Workers Take on Bell Telephone



Review of *Cracked* by Joan M. Roberts

Chris Fofonoff

Women worldwide are fighting against sexist oppression, from opposing harassment at work in Canada and the US to the abortion-rights victory in Ireland.

Canada's feminist heroes include the Bell telephone operators of Ontario and Québec, who had to fight for respect and decent wages in the late 1970s against both their employer and their company-friendly union.

Told decades later by a worker at the heart of the struggle, *Cracked* is an energizing picture of women workers throwing off the roles assigned to them by society in general and their industry in particular. The book opens with an excellent summary of the history of telephone, as well as how the dial of exploitation was constantly turned up on operators.

The women in Toronto suffer insult upon injury from Bell, with the Bell-linked Communications Union of Canada (CUC) failing its workers. "There was a lot of pent-up anger from the disrespect shown to Bell staff; for example, the card system of asking permission to go to the bathroom." The intense grassroots campaign to successfully affiliate with the Communications Workers of Canada (CWC) is depicted in inspiring fashion, from the CWC's flyers showing the higher pay and better conditions of their BC and Saskatchewan members to the CUC's counter-campaign which included cynical attempts to paint the CWC as male-dominated raiders trying to disrupt the cozy family relationship of Ma Bell and her happy daughters.

Immediately after joining the CWC, the women went on to wage a successful strike against Bell – fought for three icy months starting on Christmas Day, 1979. These women refused to bow down, and the feminist and labour movements in Canada and elsewhere can only benefit from knowing their courageous story.



## BC 1983: Solidarity For ... 4 Months

Pete Marlowe



1983 in British Columbia was crucial in the counter-revolution to end the post-war reforms and bring in austerity and neo-liberalism, cutting public services, attacking unions and giving the rich handouts. On July 7, Bill Bennett's Socred government introduced 26 bills attacking labour, social justice movements and the poor. Bills 2 and 3, stripping rights from public sector unions, pushed the BC Federation of Labour (BC Fed) to unite the province's labour resistance in Operation Solidarity.

The Solidarity Coalition of human rights activists, feminists and community organizations complemented the unions' campaign. The enthusiastic resistance to the widespread attack produced mass demonstrations and wildcat strikes across BC with 40,000 rallying at Empire Stadium, 60,000 outside the Socreds' convention and 80,000 marching in Vancouver. 40,000 provincial workers struck joined by thousands of teachers. Ferry and local government workers planned to walk out on November 14. The Solidarity Coalition called for a General Strike. Leaders of the BC Fed grew increasingly anxious about the growing movement.

On Sunday, November 13, Jack Munro, head of the Woodworkers Union, flew to Kelowna to meet the premier. For three hours all of BC waited. At 10:30 pm, Bennett and Munro announced their Kelowna Accord. The strikes ended immediately, in exchange for the withdrawal of Bill 2 and exemptions to Bill 3. The other 24 bills, the ones the unions' allies had fought so tenaciously, went ahead.

The betrayal left a deep rift between BC's labour and social movements and the working class suffered major cuts to public services, as the province was remade in the image and interests of capital. The moderate leaders of the BC Fed claimed the agreement had protected union members, yet BC has seen the sharpest drop in union membership of any province since the early 1980s. Retreat by union leaders only encourages further attacks.

Solidarity has to be Forever, not just for four months.

# Buried Poison

Will Munro



There is enough arsenic buried at Yellowknife to kill all of humanity several times over. Buried around the Canadian Forces training base in Gagetown, NB, are 3,900 barrels of Agent Orange. The water in Grassy Narrows, Indigenous land near Kenora, is poisoned with mercury from the Reed Paper Mill. These three cases are all byproducts of capitalism.

The Yellowknife Giant Mine opened in the late 1940s, releasing up to 7,400 kilograms of arsenic dust into the air every day. Although arsenic was known to be highly poisonous, the dangers were ignored until 1951 when a child from the Dene First Nation died eating contaminated snow. The child's family was given \$750 in compensation. After 1958, the arsenic was extracted and buried in underground tunnels – 237,000 tonnes of it. Gold mining continued, with several owners, until 2004 when the last owner went broke leaving the Canadian government with a \$1 billion clean-up charge. The arsenic will be frozen underground. However, as this needs constant cooling, like an ice rink, it is not a permanent solution. It is possible to bring it above ground and process it into a less toxic form, but the current Liberal government has decided

that would cost too much.

The soil and lakes around the former mine are still poisoned from the arsenic releases of 60 years ago. Much of the nearby land is barren, lakes are unsafe to swim in, drink water from or eat the fish. People still suffer from arsenic poisoning.

The Agent Orange in Gagetown arrived in Canada under suspicious circumstances (retired sergeant Al White claimed they were buried in a “disturbing, clandestine manner that has troubled [him] ever since”). During the Vietnam War, the US sprayed roughly 17% of South Vietnam forests with the powerful defoliant, containing dioxins. This destroyed vast swathes of Vietnamese jungle and caused over one million people to suffer health impacts, including death, cancer and birth defects, which continue to this day. At least 40,000 US soldiers suffered from Agent Orange. Over 3,000 Canadian soldiers, or their widows, are claiming for compensation for the illnesses caused by spraying the chemical near the base in the 1960s.

In the 1960s and 1970s over 9,000 kilograms of mercury were dumped into the English-Wabigoon River. Mercury is highly toxic and doesn't go away; it stays in your spinal fluid; it stays in the fish you eat, and their spawn; it stays in mothers, and is transmitted to children through the placenta. 90% of the population of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong First Nations show signs of mercury poisoning.

Capitalism treats the planet as a huge garbage dump. These three cases are just a few of countless instances in which poison is produced and then buried away somewhere. Capitalism views the damage caused, particularly to workers and marginalized groups, as simply the outcome of the profit equation.

Capitalism is poison; socialism is the antidote.

## Continued from back page

The BC prosecutor demanded jail sentences to deter protestors, especially seniors, from defying a court injunction, defiance he called “sinister.” Jean Swanson, one of those jailed, stated that the pipeline “is actually dangerous – dangerous to the planet because fossil fuel [will be] burned . . . dangerous to the land and the water because of inevitable spills. The pipeline tramples on Indigenous rights. Why are the Crown and the courts so scared of us ‘sinister seniors’ that they have to throw us in jail? Because they know that if we take a stand against injustice, we can win. This pipeline is the last gasp of the dying fossil fuel industry.”

The main impact of the pipeline will be damage to the local environment and wildlife and boost global climate change. Spending \$13.8 billion to provide jobs for firefighters and emergency responders is crazy. The money for the pipeline could provide clean water to all reserves in Canada (cost around

\$3.2 billion) and end homelessness (cost around \$4.5 billion) with another \$6 billion for renewable energy projects. The money, if invested, could provide around 18,000 full-time good jobs for the next 20 years. Far more than the 90 permanent jobs promised by the pipeline, and be better for the environment and Indigenous people.

A bitumen spill in Vancouver harbour would close the port for weeks, threaten tens of thousands of jobs and cause losses of over \$1 billion. In light of this, Socialist Alternative urges 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, and elected politicians to ensure a one-day shutdown of the Vancouver region to stop the pipeline and its devastation to jobs and the environment. A mass movement that hits profits is the best way to stop the pipeline.



## Good Jobs Not Climate Change Block Trudeau's Pipeline

*Bill Hopwood*

Another summer of searing fires around the world and Trudeau plans to turn up the global heat. He bought Kinder Morgan's pipeline for \$4.5 billion, with estimated construction costs now at \$9.3 billion. The Canadian government plans to spend \$13.8 billion to increase global warming. Imagine how many good jobs this money would provide if invested in renewable energy, public transit, building social housing and upgrading the insulation of homes and buildings.

The resistance to the planned pipeline from the Alberta tar sands to the port of Vancouver successfully forced Kinder Morgan to retreat. Now, with the federal government's deep pockets of taxpayers' money to build the pipeline, the struggle to stop this polluting and climate-change-causing pipeline is more intense and the tactics of resistance need to consider the changed situation.

Trudeau's government has calculated the political costs of building the pipeline and is determined to go ahead to demonstrate to global capitalism that Canada is open for exploitation. Postcards and letters to Trudeau will not stop the pipeline. There are several court cases, especially from First Nations over the lack of required consultation, making their way to the Supreme Court of Canada. However, we cannot

rely on the courts as the Supreme Court has already rejected several objections.

There are several Indigenous-led camps along the route of the pipeline with more planned. However, the government will likely use the courts and RCMP to remove them. The former head of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, stated that, "We're going to have some very unpleasant circumstances . . . some people are going to die in protesting construction of this pipeline." His words echo others who talk about using the War Measures Act and troops to build this pipeline. Trudeau is heading for a confrontation with First Nations similar to Standing Rock in the US. So much for his promises to respect the environment and Indigenous rights.

We cannot rely on the opposition of BC's NDP government or cities like Burnaby. Burnaby Council, allied with the NDP, says it opposes the pipeline yet it successfully gained a court order and used the city's police to evict one of the camps seeking to protect the land. British Columbia's NDP government pledged to "use every tool in our toolbox to stop the project." Yet the BC Supreme Court has started jailing peaceful protestors.

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