

END HOUSING PROFITEERING

BUILD SOCIAL HOUSING

ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

- An end to poverty wages; raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, as a step to a living wage
- 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 health care, child care, education, affordable housing, clean energy and mass public transit
- Phase out the tar-sands and nuclear power, with retraining and good union jobs for displaced workers
- 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
- Defend the right of Québec sovereignty; for a socialist Québec in a voluntary socialist Canadian association
- Scrap USMCA 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**

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

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

socialistalternative.ca
contact@socialistalternative.ca
facebook.com/socialist.alternative.canada

National Conference: Bringing Socialists Together

Nicholas Caig



Though socialist activists might prefer to be campaigning all the time, winning a better tomorrow requires that organizations also take time to discuss and reflect. Over the weekend of April 19 to 21, Socialist Alternative Canada held its biennial conference in Vancouver. Members crossed the country to attend, from Vancouver Island to Prince Edward Island and many places in between.

Thirty-five attended in total, including visitors from our sister organizations in Québec and the US. As internationalists, we value their perspectives. The weekend was a marathon of political discussions, mixed with socializing. One day focused on Canada, looking at current trends and our perspectives for the future. The Quebecers' take on Canada as a whole, and the American's experience with operating a much larger organization, were invaluable in deepening the political analysis of everyone present.

Attendees sought to strengthen SA Canada by analysing its recent past, and the events of the present world as well. We discussed the trend of international political polarization and how our organization should orient itself in a world where young people's politics are increasingly distant from the liberal centre, moving to both the left and right. A world where, as one member put it, "A spectre is haunting YouTube – the spectre of communism!"

The enthusiasm of the weekend was demonstrated in the finance appeal raising \$3,270, literature sales of \$343 and pledges to spend 127 days helping re-elect Kshama Sawant to Seattle City Council.

Bringing 35 people together for two nights comes with some eminently practical concerns. All attending pitched in to equalize the cost of travel for everyone, as well as volunteering their money and time to ensure everyone was fed and housed. "From each according to ability, to each according to need" is a delicious meal plan. All returned home exhausted – yet sharpened for the year ahead.

Build Social Housing

Chris Fofonoff and Simon Schweitzer

Housing in Canadian cities continues to be unaffordable. While top-end house prices have dipped slightly in Vancouver and Toronto, rents continue to rise in most Canadian cities. A one-bedroom apartment in Toronto rents for \$2,260 a month and Vancouver at \$2,100. It doesn't have to be like this. A policy of strong rent controls would make a difference, but to provide homes for people, rather than for profit, housing needs to be taken out of the market. Housing is a human need and should be met by a public service just as firefighting, health and schooling are.

There are inspiring examples of cities that have a large supply of good quality, publicly-owned housing. Vienna has 60% of its housing stock in public hands. Many more European cities have 20 to 40% public housing. This is evidence of the reforms that can be won to eradicate unaffordable and insecure housing.

Imagine new construction sites without developer logos and "from \$695,000" advertisements. Governments – local, provincial and federal – could directly build affordable rental housing on the large amounts of land that are currently publicly held. Private developers, who build only for their profit margins, could be cut out entirely. Instead of expensive condos, cities could provide units that are attractive, well-built by union labour, and allotted on basis of need rather than by the auctioneering of the market.

If big landlords, like Vancouver's Sahotas, are abusing tenants and operating buildings unfit for human habitation, then their buildings should be seized by the government and operated democratically. And no compensation should be paid to the slumlords! Regular working people are exploited by the landlords, developers, and politicians



Vienna's Social Housing - Karl Marx House

who work for them. Working-class homeowners are fearful of even a small increase in mortgage rates that would push them into bankruptcy or homelessness.

Thousands of new public housing developments, from large cities to isolated Indigenous communities, and public ownership of the big landlords' holdings, would transform housing in Canada. Homelessness would be the shameful memory of a less civilized time. No one would lose sleep or delay starting their long-dreamt-of family because of the colossal rent or mortgage payments that cripple working-class people today. We would better know our neighbours and build real communities because we would all have a say in the way we live.

We have the resources and the people. Now we must build the political will and strength to stop erecting glittering towers on the sand, and instead construct a truly democratic city on the rock.

Alt-Right in Canada

Tim Heffernan

The shock and horror at the recent Islamophobic attack in New Zealand killing 50 people reverberated across Canada, recalling the attack on a Québec City mosque, where six Muslims were murdered.

Police-reported hate crime in Canada rose sharply in 2017, up 47% over 2016. Incidents, largely in Ontario and Québec, targeting the Muslim, Jewish, and Black populations, account for most of the increase.

At least 200 active right-wing extremist groups exist in Canada, nearly double that in 2015. While still small, neo-nazi groups are growing in size and confidence. They organize on social media but come onto the streets to spew their hate. Coded prejudice from conservative politicians, under the guise of

"anti-terrorism," fear of "illegal immigration" and protecting "secularism," creates a climate that these groups feed on.

Anti-racist protests, while important, are not enough to stem the growth of Islamophobia and racism. Pushing back requires a clear political strategy to isolate the far-right. This means linking opposition to racism with a bold program to end poverty, unemployment and housing insecurity. Reducing support for Ford, Kenney, Legault and the alt-right requires building a mass movement with a clear socialist alternative.

Alberta's Election: A Tale of Two Provinces

Leslie Kemp

The New Democratic Party's (NDP) victory in Alberta in 2015, after 44 years of Conservative rule, shocked many. Four years later, on April 16, Jason Kenney's United Conservative Party (UCP) won 55% of the votes and 63 seats. The NDP won 33% of the votes and all 24 other seats. Voters were divided; the NDP won almost all of the Edmonton region, while UCP dominated Calgary and rural Alberta.

Alberta is divided between the past, socially-conservative province and a younger, more diverse, educated and urban Alberta that favours progressive policies. In 2015, 86% of Albertans said the economy was too dependent on oil and gas. Over the last nine years, support has increased significantly for same-sex marriage to 74%, abortion choice to 85% and doctor-assisted suicide to 81%.

The NDP introduced Canada's first \$15 minimum wage. They created daycare programs, increased corporate taxes, and stopped planned health care



premiums and cuts to public services. They proposed to phase out coal, replacing it with 30% of electricity from renewable sources, by 2030.

However, they ended up prisoners of Alberta's oil and gas sector. They peddled the myth that building pipelines will increase demand for bitumen and its price, and so boost jobs.

For years, Alberta was Canada's boom province but now has higher unemployment than most of Canada, due to the low price of oil. Young men, used to good paying oil jobs, do not see a clear future in the new Alberta.

Kenney, a former Reform MP and a social conservative against abortion rights and same-sex marriage, represents old Alberta. He campaigned on oil industry jobs, yet plans to reduce the minimum wage for youth and alcohol servers, end labour rights for farmworkers, introduce private health care, kill the NDP's climate leadership plan and cut corporate taxes.

With decades of higher wages and better public services than the Canadian average, Kenney's cuts to wages, services and corporate taxes will provoke inevitable clashes. His support of the oil barons, rather than job-creating renewable energy, will fuel tensions.

Albertans need to chart a new road that provides good jobs, a healthy environment and public services. The Capitalist road can't deliver this. The Socialist road will end oil dependency while providing good jobs and services for all.

Fighting for LGBTQ2 Rights: An Ongoing Struggle

Leslie Kemp

Under capitalism, legal rights are won through struggle: in the workplace and streets first and then in the legislatures and courts. However, rights that have been won are not secure: a change in government can mean we need to start all over.

This truth was revealed by the Alberta student walkouts on May 3. Alberta's new United Conservative Party intends to overturn the NDP law that protects students who are members of a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). Alberta students have proudly and loudly voiced their anger about this, with walkouts from 90 schools.

Protesters held signs saying "Hey, Kenney, leave us alone — The Gays," and "It's my choice, not yours. #KeepOurSafeSpacesSafe." Pride across Canada this year should stand in solidarity with Alberta students.

Canada pretends to be more progressive than it is. A new LGBTQ2 coin inscribed with the words "Equality-Egalite" was released on April 23 in recognition of 50 years of Canada's partial decriminalization of homosexuality. However, this move demonstrates a

government more concerned with symbols than action. In fact, the systematic persecution and prosecution of the LGBTQ2 community continued long after 1969.

It has taken decades of struggle for LGBTQ2 activists to win these battles. Same-sex marriage and other gains have been made through the determined struggle of activists, not through benevolent governments.

The Russian Revolution ushered in unprecedented rights for all and legalization of homosexuality. These, like many other democratic and human rights, were later reversed by Stalin. Under a genuine socialist society, equality will mean what it says.



Ontario Education Rebellion

Tim Heffernan



On April 4, up to 200,000 school students walked out of 700 schools in protest against the Ford government's plan to increase class sizes and against other attacks on education. The mood was energetic and enthusiastic. The students knew why they were protesting – to protect their education.

Two days later, it was the turn of the teachers' unions, also taking up the class size issues. Between 25,000 and 30,000 gathered in Toronto for a province-wide

protest. The unions organized buses to bring teachers, education workers, their families and supporters from as far as Thunder Bay to the provincial legislature.

Since the start of the Ford government, education has been under attack. It started with the issue of the sex education curriculum. It continued with an attack on funding to children's autism services. The latest in this barrage came in March with announcements about making it mandatory for high school students to take a minimum of four online courses and that class size averages would increase in grades 4 to 12. This would lead to some classes with 35 to 40 students. The Education Minister claims that bigger class sizes will teach students "resiliency." It really means worse education for students. For teachers the result would be worse conditions and a reduction of around 4,000 jobs over the next four years.

What next for resistance to Ford? In March, the Ontario Federation of Labour organized a conference, themed "Power of Many – Take Back Ontario." The purpose was to promote the organizing of "Rapid Response Networks," i.e. local organizing committees of labour and community activists that would deliver prompt solidarity actions in response to cuts and privatization across all public services by the Ford government. This could mark the start of a coordinated fightback involving students, workers and local communities. It will need to be developed further to achieve something similar to the regional one-day strikes that took place in Ontario in the 1990s against the Harris government. Labour has still hardly flexed its muscles and it's going to take strike action to change the policies of Ford and his business backers.

PEI Election: Greens Breakthrough

Corey Snoek

PEI's April election turfed out the Liberals after three consecutive terms. The economy is booming but ordinary people haven't benefited.

The housing crisis has pushed the apartment vacancy rate to virtually zero, the lowest of any Canadian city. Rents are rising rapidly and new developments overwhelmingly expensive. Housing prices have increased by a third between 2015 and 2018. Meanwhile wages remain stagnant.

The Liberals' campaign slogan, "PEI is working. Let's keep working," was totally out of touch. The Liberals dropped from sixteen seats to only six. The Conservatives continued the trend of the last five elections of losing popular support. But with twelve seats they have formed a minority government.

The Greens were the big winners, growing to eight seats and becoming the official opposition. Their campaign had plenty of enthusiasm with many

young activists joining them. While this may boost the Greens across Canada, they are unlikely to offer serious opposition to the Tories.

Apart from some action on Airbnbs, their housing platform is a gift to developers. Their proposed minimum wage increases were in line with the Liberals and their environmental policies are hardly radical – reinforcing the carbon tax, and loans and incentives for electric cars and solar panels.

None of the major parties offer solutions. Instead, ordinary people, rooted in trade unions and community organizations, should build a grassroots movement that would fight for real solutions including serious investments in public housing and renewable energy that would provide jobs and solve the rental crisis. This might seem far-fetched but expecting people to accept more of the same is ludicrous.

The Life of a Server: What Hazel Says

Pete Marlowe and Nathalie Yeung

Hazel says she was lucky. Of the two jobs available to Vancouver teenagers under Capitalism, restaurant work was the first she was offered, not retail. The money was better. There was less pressure to push the hard sell, and so she could be more honest, more herself. After six years in the industry, she still finds pleasure in the camaraderie with fellow workers and customers, and in the hustle and flow of daily work.

But Hazel says there's much that rankles her sense of justice and scars her self-esteem. Customers often treat servers as unworthy of respect. There's psychological mistreatment by managers, and an attitude among older workers of "suck it up: it'll make you stronger." Hazel says it will just give you a hardening shell to mask the weakening inside.

There's the emotional and financial instability that comes with inconsistent scheduling. And even when scheduled, workers are often forced to leave when business is slow. Then if a rush comes after that, the understaffing can create an intolerable stress for the workers who remain.

And Hazel says, though she benefits financially, she is philosophically opposed to tipping. It contributes to the fictional hierarchy among workers, pitting them against each other and undermining solidarity, while letting employers get away with paying poverty wages. Not to mention enabling sexual harassment, and forcing servers to accept it.

Then there are the rampant issues of unpaid work for opening and closing duties, unpaid meetings, lack of breaks or overtime pay, and not receiving the minimum of two hours pay if sent home early, among the many common contraventions of BC's Employment Standards Act.

Hazel says that workers are afraid to speak out for fear of losing their jobs. So she says their rights must be enforced and every restaurant unionized. The Act needs to be posted in every workplace, and business licenses granted only after demonstrating full awareness of its contents. She demands that BC's government immediately restore all rights stripped from workers in 2002.

But the day will come when hierarchies are eliminated, when all are trained in the various skills, and the workers themselves run each restaurant, no longer toiling under Capitalism, but thriving over Socialism. That's what Hazel says.

Pink T-Shirts are not enough

Nancy Trigueros



Socialist Alternative's "Women Rising - for Socialist Feminism" Banner on January 19 Women's March

Trudeau's carefully constructed feminist image adorned magazines around the world. However, it is actions, not words and images, that reflect a true picture of women's equality in Canada.

Numbers are cold and revealing – the wage gap between women and men in Canada is the eighth largest among 36 OECD countries and has narrowed by less than 2% over the past 20 years. Trudeau's public displays have not translated into concrete policies to narrow this gap. According to a recent Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' report, a woman earns 82 cents for every dollar of a male counterpart. The stark differences are more evident for women who work for the private sector where women earn 73 cents for every dollar that men make. Visible minority women are at the very bottom of the economic exploitation pyramid.

Unequal pay exists in the public and private sectors and among highly educated women. The federal government could act as other countries have done. Starting in the public sector, there should be mechanisms to monitor and ensure equitable wages. Iceland has one of the narrowest gender gaps, but wages are still unequal. Pushed by women's protests, including strikes, in 2018 Iceland made unequal pay for equal work illegal.

Earning equal pay does not come naturally, and our government has no excuse to be complicit. Women need to organize, and history shows that when this happens, nothing will stop them from obtaining what is right and fair.



Unions Under Attack

Chris Fofonoff and Simon Schweitzer

Canadian union density, now 30%, peaked at 37% in 1982. Although Canadian unions have not suffered any major defeats, especially compared with workers in Britain, the US or Greece, workers' rights are being eroded by legislation.

According to the Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights, every provincial and federal government has passed anti-union legislation, totalling 226 pieces since 1982. The most recent case was the federal Liberals forcing postal workers back to work last December.

Back-to-work legislation or declaring an industry an essential service is now widely used in Canada. In the last 30 years there have been 94 uses by the federal and provincial governments. Recent cases include several rail disputes, Air Canada and Canada Post.

Examples of successful defiance include the postal workers being legislated back to work in 1978 with the union president, Jean-Claude Parrot, jailed. The union won. In 2005, the BC Teachers were found in contempt of court for defying the Labour Relations Board's order to return to work. The teachers stayed on strike and rapidly the government brought in a mediator whose settlement is seen as a partial win for the union. In 2014 container truck drivers at the Port of Vancouver went on strike. The BC government introduced back-to-work legislation, which the drivers defied and suddenly the Port and the province negotiated a deal.

Although in 2015 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Canadians have a right to strike, since then both Tory and Liberal federal governments have legislated strikers back to work. Canadian law gives only unionized workers the right to strike, and only in defined circumstances. So if the employer fires a shop steward or workers are trying to organize, a strike would be illegal.

BC's minority NDP government announced it will revoke some of the previous Liberal government's attacks on workers' rights, including action to restrict contract flipping, formerly widespread. However, they didn't improve the union certification process due to Green Party objections.

With further attacks likely from provincial Tory governments, Canadian unions need to return to the militancy that won past victories.

What Makes Me Angry

Jim Sugiyama



It is always a pleasure to visit Vancouver, my parents' city of birth. But whenever I visit, I get angry thinking about Dr Brian Day and his Cambie Clinic – the brazen capitalist – doctor's assault on publicly-funded healthcare. I get angry when I walk on East Hastings, and talk to people living on the streets, struggling to survive the twin scourges of poverty and addiction. I get angry when I walk past former Japantown where my ancestors, 20,000 strong, were forcibly removed from their homes in 1942, losing everything, many never to return. The intersections of health, racism, poverty, addiction and capitalism are obvious.

What makes me angry, as a physician, is how our profession actively and passively undermines the potential greatness of our socialized healthcare system. Scoundrels like Dr Day are an obvious example of the former, but the myriad ways in which equitable healthcare is being challenged by mainstream doctors, tend to slip under most people's radars. User fees, administration costs, charges for records, refusing to treat those marginalized by capitalism, are a few examples.

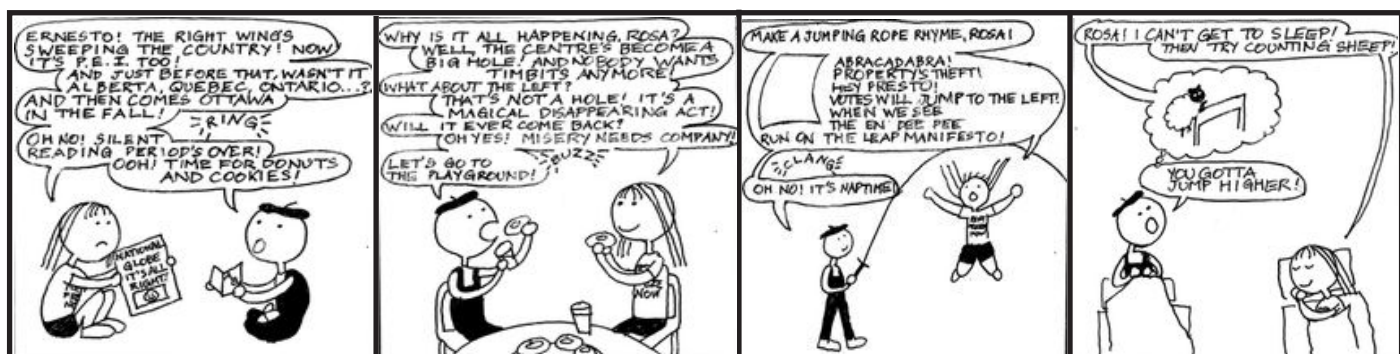
In Ontario, where the majority of Ontario Medical Association physicians support Doug Ford, there are unprecedented attacks and cuts on workers, public services and the poor, yet, doctors got their new four-year deal, with salary increases. Doctors are well-paid from the public purse while other health workers, equally important, are marginalized. The highest bill from a doctor to Ontario Health last year was over \$16 million.

After more than 30 years in the trade of healthcare, I fully realize that Cambie Clinics, corporate hospitals, elite medical schools, multinational Pharma, and doctors have little to do with the promotion and provision of health. Capitalism renders health a commodity, available to those with the fattest wallets, and brought to you by entitled physicians.

As long as physicians unquestioningly partake in health's commodification, we are a BIG part of the problem. And this makes me really angry.

Kindergarten Kommies

Pete Marlowe



Canada: Looking Ahead

from conference document on Canada agreed unanimously at Socialist Altern

SNC-Lavalin

SNC-Lavalin has dominated federal politics this year. While the media has concentrated on the claimed undermining of the attorney general's independence, it reveals the normal workings of government, constantly acting to support big business. In return, big business gives generously to its political friends.

SNC-Lavalin shows the realities of the Liberal government in contrast to Trudeau's election promises. In many cases, his actions have not measured up to the promises.

Before the scandal the Liberals looked set to win this year's election. Now the Tories are in the lead. Women and young people who voted strongly Liberal in 2015 are disillusioned. The Liberals could still turn things around if there is no recession before the election. One of their strengths is the weakness of the Tories and NDP.

The Conservatives are a weak opposition, hoping that the Liberals slip up and they can sneak a victory – SNC-Lavalin may be that slip. While generally, Scheer has not followed Ford or Trump into right populism, he has used dog whistle phrases to attack refugees and others. Some Western Tory MPs are using SNC-Lavalin to stoke hostility to Québec.

If Bernier's right populist People's Party (PP), takes support from the Tories, Scheer will shift rightward. A strong PP result would pull Canadian politics further right and give succour to the far-right, a threat that should not be ignored.

International

Inter-imperialist rivalries are growing, especially between the US and China, with threats of trade wars and worse, which is already hitting Canada. A new recession looms with sluggish investment and slowing growth and consumer spending. There is a worldwide mountain of debt, \$US250 trillion, and many speculative bubbles, including housing, waiting to burst and trigger another financial crisis.

Political polarization is weakening traditional parties and new parties grow. While there have been important left movements, the new right has generally fared better than the left in elections. The election of right populists provokes resistance from the working class and a growth of a radical left, as seen in the US under Trump. There is seething anger at inequality, discrimination and climate change with a growing tide of political action and demonstrations. Women are rising internationally. The global student strikes on climate change are inspiring.

Economy

Since 2010, Canadian GDP grew modestly, averaging a 2.3% per year increase. This is far below the average of 5.3% growth from 1962 to 1973. Capitalism is in the era of sluggish growth.



Federal corporate taxes have been cut from 36% in the 1980s to 15% now, but Canadian corporations have failed to invest, preferring to hoard around \$700 billion instead.

Growth slowed in the last year. Construction no longer drives the economy, with the housing and condo boom slowing. Manufacturing's decline continues, dropping from 30% of GDP in the early 1950s to 10% in 2017. GM's decision to close its Oshawa plant, with a loss of 2,900 direct jobs, is a sign of this trend.

Official unemployment is 5.8%, the lowest in 40 years. However, the reality is not so rosy. Self-employment, part-time work and precarious work have all grown significantly in the last 30 years.

In spite of high employment levels, wages are stagnant; in 2018 average wages went up 2%, less than inflation. Real median wages fell 0.3% from September 2015 to September 2018.

With inequality continuing to grow, the rich took most of the gains; Canada's 46 billionaires' wealth grew by \$19.5 billion last year.

Stress

Canadians' personal debt doubled in 20 years to \$1.78 for every dollar of income. Stagnant wages, and the high cost of housing and education, drive this. Many Canadians live paycheque to paycheque; 49% of Canadians are not ready for a financial emergency. This causes mounting stress with 45% of Canadians losing sleep worrying about money and 39% suffering negative health effects. Climate disasters add stress.

One in five Canadians will experience mental health problems or illness. People in the lowest income group are three to four times more likely than those in the highest income group to report poor mental health. Young people and women are also at higher risk.





Life is full of stress, insecurity and alienation. Neo-liberalism blames individuals for problems, denying any social failings. An individual response to stress, low income, etc., produces shame and ill-health. A collective response is anger at the system and struggle for change.

Struggle

While recently there have not been major struggles, there are increasing contradictions and growing tensions. Women and young people increasingly seek a different future from what is currently on offer.

While Canadian unions have not suffered any major defeats, strikes remain at historic low levels. Low unemployment means this is an ideal time to win better wages, yet real wages are not increasing. Workers have gained minimum wage increases with Alberta on \$15, Ontario \$14 and BC moving to \$15 by 2021. But as Ford's actions and Kenney's threats demonstrate, these legal gains can be overturned.

The organized working class remains a powerful force. Union leaders cannot remove the reality of the workplace where the class divisions are most clear.

Canada's public services are steadily undermined due to the tax cuts for the rich and corporations, which have reduced federal government revenue by \$40 billion a year compared to the last 50 year average. Therefore, the federal government has less money for child care, pharmacare, building social housing or tackling poverty.

Vancouver has growing housing struggles with the Tenants' Union and Jean Swanson's election to city council. Parkdale Tenants in Toronto have successfully resisted rent increases. PEI has a growing tenants' movement.

Indigenous peoples' resistance to ongoing colonialism and poverty includes a cultural renaissance, resisting environmental destruction and demanding proper funding of resources on reserves.

Canada, compared to many other countries, came through the 2008 recession relatively undamaged, without a banking collapse, widespread deep austerity or a mass loss of homes. The next recession, however, may be very different. Canada is in a weaker position to weather the storms than in 2008.

Union leaders and the NDP are giving no warnings of what lies ahead for the working class. This leadership has more illusions in capitalism than the capitalists. This complacency risks leaving workers completely unprepared. A recession will, over time, burn the widespread illusions of capitalist progress out of the outlook of millions.

While compared to other countries Canada seems quiet, the anger and tensions continue to grow. Like a tightly-wound spring, at some point the potential energy becomes a reality.

What We Think Canadian Politics A New Path Needed

From Alberta to PEI, there is a solid block of Conservative governments, most right populists.

Right populism feeds on despair and frustrations, especially in small towns suffering from industry closures, suburbs and among older, white people. It is rising in Canada and internationally. Right populists use anti-elite rhetoric, talk about jobs and defending Canadian values and culture (coded anti-Islamic phrases). They take advantage of the growing inequality and stagnant living standards. The Liberals provide no answers while the NDP has not responded boldly.

Right populists are making the running with no left response that confidently talks about jobs, that is anti-elite, and that speaks to ordinary people's lives and needs.

There is a huge political space to the left of the NDP. If the NDP shifted from dull safety to a daring left-wing program and went on the campaign trail it could pick up seats, collecting disillusioned Liberal votes. However, it appears more likely that it will drift to a possible complete wipe-out in Québec and decline across the country.

The NDP's lack of a radical stance and Liberal disillusionment is boosting the Greens, most recently in Nanaimo and PEI. Seen as new, radical and untainted with cynicism, they could make further gains in the federal election. However, based on BC's experiences, they would not really shift policies.

People are angry and looking for answers and the unions are still relatively strong. Young people are looking for real strategies to address the climate and housing crises. There is a desire for left politics, as seen in Swanson's Vancouver victory and a recent poll showing 66% support for a Canadian Green jobs program paid by taxing the rich and corporations.

The situation is favourable to a left movement. Even if one or two NDP MPs broke ranks and boldly campaigned for Green Jobs, taxing the rich, free education and a housing program it would change the situation.

At some stage the political vacuum on the left will be filled and a new left force will emerge. Socialist Alternative will work now and in the future to build both its strength and a powerful left voice in Canada.

“Taking inflation into account, the minimum wage peaked in 1976 at just over \$11 an hour. The following year - 1977 - average hourly earnings peaked at close to \$24.”

Source: Stats Can, May 2018

Note: Due to the increases in the last year the minimum wage is back to 1976 levels

When Winnipeg's Working Class Ruled

Aiden Sisler



By 11am on May 15, 1919, over 30,000 defiant workers brought Winnipeg to a halt with a General Strike. Strikes began on May 1 after employers refused the moderate demands from the metal and building trades. In two weeks, support mushroomed to the majority of the working class. Women and men, union and non-union, diverse occupations, races, and ethnicities struck in unison. All production ceased, and factories and railways closed. There was no mail, streetcars, newspapers, telegrams, telephones; even the firefighters joined in.

The General Strike lasted six weeks until the capitalist class enforced deadly repression on "Bloody Saturday." This key event starkly demonstrated state brutality to protect capitalist interests.

The catastrophic world war and economic hardship, alongside inspiration of the Russian Revolution, fired radical socialism and militant unions. Canadian companies had grown rich on wartime contracts, but the working class only experienced terrible work and living conditions. Returning soldiers faced unemployment. The working class was hungry for change.

The striking metal and building workers sought support from the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council (WTLC). Delegates of 94 unions voted by 11,000 to less than 600 for a general strike. It began on May 15 at 7am with 500 female telephone operators walking out. News of the strike spread, with solidarity strikes in over 20 cities from coast to coast.

The WTLC formed the Central Strike Committee to organize essential services and distribute food. The committee requested the police, who had voted to strike, to stay on duty. The working class ran the city better than the bosses.

The city's richest bankers, manufacturers, lawyers, and politicians, gathering as the Citizens' Committee

of 1000, acted to defend the ruling class. Their aim was to crush the strike, stamp out the revolt and maintain their dominance. They attacked the strikers as "Bolsheviks" and "alien scum," and claimed the strike was a bloody foreign revolutionary conspiracy and criminal action.

The federal government, increasingly alarmed, met only the Citizens' Committee and acted ruthlessly to stop the working-class upheaval. Federal employees were forced back to work or faced sacking. The Immigration Act was amended to allow the deportation of any immigrant. The definition of sedition was broadened to include strike organizing. This repression coincided with the arrest on June 17 of ten strike leaders, including

Helen Armstrong of the Women's Labour League, all charged with sedition. The intimidation failed; the strike continued.

On Saturday, June 21, thousands of strikers and supporters gathered in downtown Winnipeg to protest the arrests. Mayor Gray read the Riot Act, unleashing the RCMP to attack the gathering, shooting indiscriminately, killing two and injuring dozens.

The Citizens' Committee demanded and got the regular police fired. In their place, the Council deputized 1,800 "special police." Armed with baseball bats freely supplied by the Eaton family, wealthy owners of the department stores, they beat and terrorized the protestors. The military patrolled with machine guns mounted on their vehicles. Strike leaders ended the strike on June 26, fearful of further violence.

The strike unified all sections of the working class. It was defeated by brutal repression and the lack of support from largely rural Canada and the craft unions in Eastern Canada.

Winnipeg continued to be a strong union and left-wing city with the strike fuelling the rise of left political parties. Although imprisoned, many of the leaders went on to win elections to Manitoba's and Canada's parliaments.

Winnipeg's General Strike demonstrated working-class power and remains an inspiration. The working class has the power to stop industry and commerce and the ability to run society better than the capitalists.

We work to win workers' rights and a dignified quality of life for all. Taking organized united action is the core of working-class power to defeat capital and the ruling class. When that power is linked to a fighting socialist party, capable of inspiring people, the future looks bright. We have a world to win

Brexit Chaos

from the Socialist Party (CWI in England and Wales)

Brexit totally absorbs British politics, with chaos in the House of Commons, and both Labour and Tory parties deeply divided, probably irreparably.

Britain joined the European Economic Community (forerunner to European Union (EU)) in 1972. There was a left-wing and right-wing opposition to the EU. Those on the right, mainly older and better-off, dream of returning to the British empire days and believe that Britain outside the EU would be great again. Left-wing opposition points to the EU as an organization that supports corporations and is anti-working class, with rules enforcing privatization and against public ownership.

The Tory party's anti-EU wing caused the leadership headaches for decades. Prime Minister John Major had called three anti-EU cabinet members "bastards." David Cameron, in a concession to his right-wing, committed to an EU referendum if he won the 2015 general election.

Labour's defeat in that election led to a leadership contest with Corbyn, campaigning against austerity, winning a landslide against all the establishment's expectations. However, only 6% of Labour MPs supported him, as most are in the mould of Tony Blair.

Cameron, confident of winning the EU vote and hoping to silence his anti-EU critics and cut across Farage's nationalist UKIP, called the referendum for June 2016. All the establishment campaigned for a Remain vote. In many working-class communities, especially in areas that had suffered massive industry closures and deep cuts to public services after decades of austerity, there was seething anger at the government.

Unfortunately, trying to keep his MPs happy, Corbyn did not campaign in the referendum for working-class people and on his long standing opposition to the EU and austerity. This allowed right-wing bigots like Johnson and Farage to lead the EU opposition.

The No vote won 52% support, at root a working-class revolt against the existing order. Support to stay in the EU was strongest among young people (largely for positive anti-racist and internationalist reasons), in Scotland and the big cities. David Cameron resigned as Prime Minister and Theresa May took over, promising Brexit. Believing the media attacks on Corbyn, she called an election in June 2017 hoping to strengthen her hand. Instead, Corbyn's policies won wide support, especially from young people. The Tories were reduced to a minority government reliant on the right-wing Northern Irish DUP.

For months now every government proposal on Brexit has been defeated, including the biggest ever Parliamentary loss, a majority of 230 votes against the



government. Vote after vote on differing proposals and nothing is agreed. Yet May is still Prime Minister. Eight Labour and three Tory MPs have left those parties to form Change UK. There is a huge chasm in the Tory party with cabinet members voting against their own government. The Tory's loss of 1,300 seats in the May 2 council elections adds to the pressures for May to go. EU Elections on May 23 will add to the crisis. Labour is also deeply split, with most MPs supporting a second referendum and Remain. Brexit could cause a fundamental re-alignment of British politics.

Government is paralysed. The British ruling class despairs as events have spiralled out of control and capitalist politics are in crisis. The fog of Brexit hangs over everything. Beneath it lies the bitter anger of the majority of the working class and sections of the middle class.

Britain was supposed to leave the EU on March 29; now there is a second extension to October 31. However, nothing has been resolved. Behind the impasse lies the conflicting interests of the EU and British nation states and the different capitalist classes.

Between now and October all sorts of possibilities exist including further paralysis of government, a breakdown of negotiations and an accidental no-deal exit, a cabinet rebellion and the removal of May, a general election, a Corbyn-led government or another hung parliament.

If Corbyn does not act, the working class will face further attacks and right-wing propaganda will gain support. However, there is the potential for Corbyn and the unions to turn things around with bold policies to end austerity and protect jobs. If they mobilize for a general election and a workers' Brexit this could win widespread support, blowing away the fog of confusion.

For more information on Britain and the Socialist Party: socialistparty.org.uk

Strikes & Socialism Rising in the US

Keely Mullen (Socialist Alternative US)

The US is in a state of political and social ferment. Trump's presidency has rocked American society, leading to a deepening chaos of the political system. Both major political parties, the Democrats and Republicans, are navigating a war within their parties. For the Democrats, this is expressed through the rise of a left-wing in the party exemplified by figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), the political newcomer who proudly calls herself a socialist. This has forced establishment Democrats like Nancy Pelosi to proclaim, "Socialism is not the view of the Democratic Party." This is just a window into the deep contradictions that exist within the Democratic Party, a party that is tied by a thousand threads to the super rich.

These divisions can be seen clearly in the debate around AOC's "Green New Deal," which calls for a rapid transition to 100% renewable energy alongside a massive green jobs program. The Democratic Party leadership has openly mocked this proposal. They said the same thing about Medicare for All in 2016, something that now has become a central demand of almost every Democratic Party contender for the 2020 Presidential elections. This shows the influence mass pressure can have on even the most corporate-controlled politicians.

Socialist Alternative has consistently made the point that in order for figures like AOC and Bernie Sanders to build a fighting force to win their ideas, they will need to leave the Democratic Party and build a new party for working people.

The election and re-election of Socialist Alternative's Seattle City Councillor, Kshama Sawant, demonstrates that it is possible to run as an independent socialist and win! She has won real victories fighting alongside working people. Sawant is now fighting for re-election in Seattle on a bold socialist program that is driven by the donations and participation of ordinary people.

Alongside these political developments, the US has seen a resurgence of the labor movement. In 2018, the number of workers involved in strikes was highest since 1986. After 11 days on strike, 31,000 Stop & Shop grocery workers across New England pushed back on the company attacks. This was the largest private sector strike in the US in the last three years.

This upsurge was kicked off by the historic teachers' strikes that spread across the country, defeating both Republicans and Democrats who had cut education. The teachers' historic wins have given confidence to other workers to fight back. These strikes are not isolated



from the broader political polarization. On the picket lines during the teachers' strike in Oakland, California Socialist Alternative members report that the most active teachers were excited by Bernie Sanders' 2020 Presidential campaign. This has been confirmed, with teachers being the number one donors to his campaign.

Socialist ideas are gaining popularity across the United States and Socialist Alternative is playing an important role in this process. Through our position on the Seattle City Council and within various trade unions and social movements, we are able to provide clarifying and bold socialist leadership.

For information on the US and Socialist Alternative:
www.socialistalternative.org

Build a Movement to

Martin

In March, Québec's CAQ Premier, François Legault, passed an austerity budget, giving more handouts to



the rich. At the same time the government attacked religious minorities in the name of state religious neutrality. Legault's Bill 21 (PL21) bans public sector workers (police, judges, teachers) from wearing religious clothing or symbols. If passed, it will legalise workplace discrimination, ratcheting up the exclusion of minorities, especially Muslim women. Anticipating resistance, PL21 invokes the notwithstanding clause to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The response from Québec's traditional parties has been pathetic and unprincipled. The Liberals whinge about PL21's wording and timeline but aren't opposing

Upheavals in Algeria and Sudan

For reports: socialistalternative.ca

Venezuela at a Crossroad

Bill Hopwood

The attempted right-wing coup on April 29, in Venezuela, seems to have failed, for now.

The world's capitalist powers are united in trying to overthrow Maduro. Within minutes of Guaidó declaring himself President on January 23, Canada recognized his claim, suggesting it was pre-arranged. Trudeau has joined reactionaries like Trump and Brazil's Bolsonaro in moves to change Venezuela's government. Trump has "ruled nothing out" and hinted at military intervention.

Economic and social disaster is engulfing Venezuela with production collapsed and hyper-inflation. There are shortages of food, medical supplies and other necessities. Many of the gains in healthcare, education and other areas have been wiped out.

What a contrast to hopes of twenty years ago when Hugo Chavez became President, launching the Bolivarian Revolution (named after Bolivar, leader of the independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century).

Chavez's government introduced many reforms in a country that, although rich in oil reserves, had extreme levels of poverty. This was too much for big business and the right-wing who organized a coup in 2002. Lopez, the power behind Guaidó, was involved. Chavez was captured and Carmona, head of the big business federation, was declared President. Rapidly the huge protests forced Chavez's release and his restoration as President. The right-wing continued



its opposition, with a strike of managers in the nationalized oil industry. This too failed.

These attacks pushed Chavez left and he talked of socialism. Reforms increased with Chavez improving education and sharply reducing illiteracy, opening many free health clinics, reducing poverty and distributing some land to the poor.

However, Venezuela was not socialist. Most of the economy remained privately owned and the economy was not nationally and democratically planned. Even in the public sector, workers did not have democratic control. Instead there grew a bureaucracy, "the boli-bourgeoise," who leach off the state. Chavez's Venezuela was in a halfway house. The reforms were enough to provoke widespread opposition from the rich and imperialism, but not enough to meet the needs of the poor and working class.

The gains were paid for by the high value of oil. However, when the price halved in 2014 economic problems mounted. Chavez died in 2013 and Maduro was elected President.

The economic woes are due to a combination of economic sabotage by the private sector in Venezuela, sanctions by other countries and the incompetence of boli-bourgeoise bureaucrats. None of these are socialist woes.

Socialist Alternative supported the past reforms but consistently warned that if there was not a nationalized and democratically planned economy, then the reforms would be attacked and rolled back.

So far (early May), Maduro is still President. Many Venezuelans know that a Guaidó regime would slash workers' rights and living standards. Many of the army tops have lucrative business interests and know their lives would be at risk. China and Russia still support Maduro.

There is a real danger of Venezuela disintegrating or, if the army splits, a civil war. If the US intervenes militarily, the grim situation will be a catastrophe.

Socialists in Venezuela are striving to unite dissident Chávistas and workers to fight against the threatened right-wing counter-revolution and for a real socialist alternative based on genuine workers' democracy.

Stop Legault's Bill 21

LeBrun

it in principle, while the Parti Québécois is busy trying to out-bigot the CAQ, saying PL21 isn't tough enough in separating Church and State.

The leaders of Québec Solidaire (QS), the left-wing opposition party, initially supported the ban. Alternative Socialiste (CWI in Québec), helped organize a grassroots debate and campaign inside QS to change its position. Success! 91% of delegates at QS's National Conference voted to oppose any ban on religious symbols, in line with QS's platform, "The State should be secular, not individuals."

The CAQ majority government is set to pass PL21 in June, hoping that resistance will fade over the summer before it starts enforcing the law in autumn. Only a militant mass campaign of civil disobedience in workplaces and streets can stop PL21. An injury to one is an injury to all. It will take a movement including unions, communities and QS to bring down the CAQ and the capitalist system on which it rests.

For more information on Quebec and Alternative Socialiste: alternativesocialiste.org/

50 Years of Resistance, White Paper to Wet'suwet'en

Allie Pev

Fifty years ago, Pierre Trudeau's government unleashed a storm of opposition from Indigenous peoples which continues to this day. This bold, resolute and fierce resistance was in response to the government's release of the White Paper, the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*. Its introduction stated:

"Indian relations with other Canadians began with special treatment by government and society, and special treatment has been the rule since Europeans first settled in Canada. Special treatment has made of the Indians a community disadvantaged and apart. ...Obviously, the course of history must be changed."

This policy was controversial because it proposed to absorb "Indians" into the mainstream, removing Indian status, reducing First Nations' people to another ethnic group, rather than recognizing them as the First Peoples of this land. The proposal sought to turn the collective land base of First Nations into "fee simple" (private and individual) ownership of land: to be divided, sold and developed as dictated by the market. It also would have absolved the Federal government of its fiduciary duty (i.e., legal obligation to act in the best interests of First Nations' people) by devolving its responsibilities to provincial governments. First Nations were angered at the prospect of the treaties they signed with the crown, in good faith, being swept aside by this policy which also proposed to eliminate the Indian Act.

The White Paper was withdrawn in 1970 after Indigenous groups across Canada mobilized and brought forward their own agenda. The Red Paper, coming from the Indian Association of Alberta, demanded that no changes be made to Aboriginal status without their consent and rejected the fee simple ownership system. In the years following the White Paper, Indigenous peoples continued to fight.

Thousands of Indigenous peoples travelled on "The



Constitution Express" to Ottawa in November 1980 and another delegation headed directly to England the following year to demand that Aboriginal and treaty rights be recognized and affirmed in the Canadian Constitution. The struggle has not let up, as the agenda of the White Paper is still present.

The Idle No More grassroots movement, started in 2012 by three First Nations women and one ally in Saskatchewan in response to Harper's Bill C-45, has energized large numbers of young Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This bill, similar to the White Paper, was an attempt to make the leasing of reserve land easier and was intent on ignoring any nation-to-nation agreement between First Nations and government.

First Nations continue to resist colonialism: from the Indigenous-led fight against the Trans Canada pipeline to Inuit opposition to the Muskrat Falls Hydro project in Labrador and the Wet'suwet'en's struggle to protect their traditional territories from the exploitation of big business. Socialist Alternative supports these struggles, the right to self-determination for Indigenous peoples, and an environmentally sustainable and brighter future for all.

Canada's Unjust Society

Review of *The Unjust Society*

by Harold Cardinal

Leslie Kemp



It is no exaggeration to say this book changed the course of Canadian history. Written hastily in anger following the federal government's release of the white paper in June 1969, it lays bare the history of betrayal of Indian rights and Treaty obligations by the federal government calling the white paper's version of events "more than a gross distortion of fact. Simply stated, it is a deliberate, white-faced lie."

Pierre Trudeau proclaimed a vision of Canada as a "Just Society," but Cardinal makes it clear that it is anything but for Canada's Indigenous peoples. He

exposes the government's hypocrisy: "a magic wand in the shape of a government white paper is all that is needed to restore equality all round. The reality of hunger is difficult to ignore, however many white papers are waved at it."

The white paper, he said is "no different than the arbitrary dictations from Ottawa to the Indians that have been repeated down through our history. Superficially, the government white paper is wrapped in nice middle-class platitudes that reveal, upon examination, no content, no meaning. In spite of all the government attempts to convince Indians to accept the white paper, their efforts will fail, because Indians understand that the path outlined by the Department of Indian Affairs . . . leads directly to cultural genocide. We will not walk this path."

The white paper's major contribution was spurring Indigenous activism which continues to this day.

Fracking Threat in New Brunswick

Corey Snook



New Brunswick's newly-elected conservative government is pushing to restart fracking. To begin with, Premier Blaine Higgs wants to lift the province's moratorium on fracking in select areas. If he succeeds, there will be immense pressure to open up the entire province.

Behind this push are gas companies hoping to see fracking in New Brunswick and also Nova Scotia and Québec where gas reserves lay untapped with similar bans in place.

Fracking would be devastating as it involves injecting highly pressurized water, sand and toxic chemicals into rock deep underground to release trapped gas. Ground water is inevitably contaminated and left undrinkable, communities devastated. To make matters worse, already 51% of the population of NB rely on non-municipal water such as from rivers and wells, the highest number of any province.

But the return of fracking is not assured. In 2013 and 2014 protests successfully pushed the Liberal government to abandon fracking and introduce the moratorium. The new minority Tory government is



Mik'maq Anti-Fracking Protest

weak and Higgs is deeply unpopular, with 68% of voters supporting other parties.

It should not be a debate of a few jobs in a dirty industry versus the health of peoples' communities. Workers in the industry should demand that the government provides retraining and jobs in the renewable sector. Reviving a mass movement against fracking is needed in New Brunswick and across the Maritimes.

Strike For Climate Justice (Continued from back page)

The student activists are right to demand an urgent response to climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a United Nations scientific body, we have until 2030 to reduce our carbon emissions by half in order to avoid an "extinction level" catastrophe, yet 2018 marked the highest year in history for human-caused emissions.

The slogan "people over profits" is one of the most popular at the strikes. This is the heart of the matter: capitalist economies are entirely unequipped to handle this crisis. This is the great contradiction of our age. The capitalist ruling class would rather see their profits increase than prevent our species' extinction. The 1% will largely be insulated from the consequences of their actions; it is the global working class who will bear the brunt of a potential ecological collapse.

However, these strikes demonstrate that all is not lost. What these radicalized youth understand is the power of collective action. While it can feel as though the 1% have a stranglehold on the economy and the wheels of government, it is fundamentally we, the workers, who move the world through our labour.

The rolling youth strikes mark a turning point in the fight against climate change, but they are not enough on their own. It is critical that workers, inspired by the youth, take action. Support is growing for the Earth Strike on September 27. Workers have the power to take decisive action against extinction.

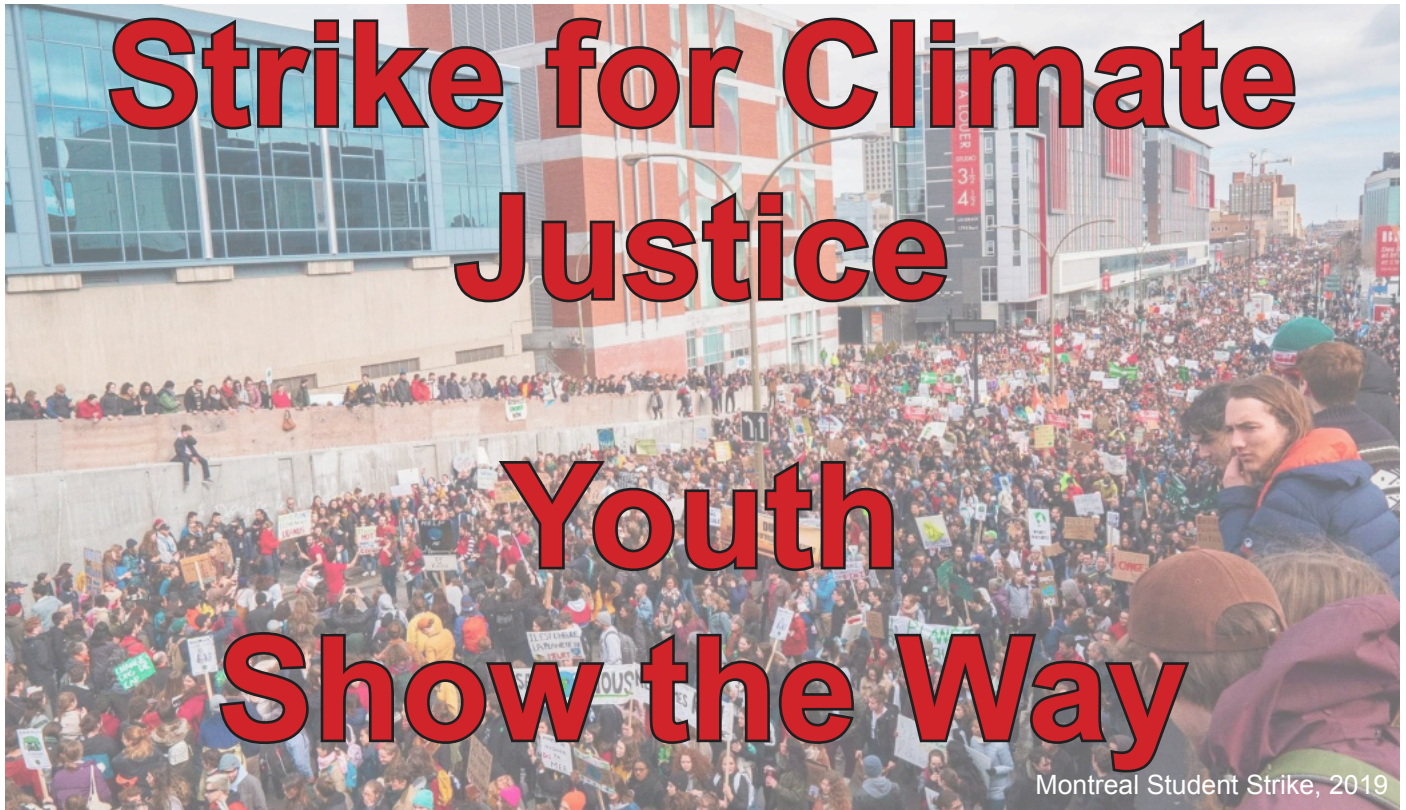
The technology and knowledge to overcome climate change already exist. The barrier is the economic and political system that put profits of the few before the

needs of humanity. The excuse of big business and their politicians is that we have to choose between jobs and the environment. Yet capitalism, for many, does not provide jobs and many of the jobs that exist are low-paid and insecure.

One million dollars invested in the oil and gas sector provides, on average, two jobs, while that same million invested in clean energy or energy efficiency provides fifteen. The \$4.5 billion spent buying the Kinder Morgan pipeline could have provided 60,000 jobs. Rather than continuing to invest in damaging fossil fuels, Canada needs a national green jobs program, which would overhaul the energy sector and provide thousands of new, union jobs. Imagine if the NDP boldly campaigned for a full and fair transition with guaranteed work for all.

The active involvement of workers and unions is indispensable to link the climate movement to the broader struggles of the working class and all those oppressed by capitalism. It will take a massive transformation from business-as-usual to address the impending ecological disaster. To fully deliver good union jobs and have a fair transition to a fossil fuel free economy we need international planning and cooperation. Both are impossible under capitalism.

Right now, youth are leading the way, because it is they, our children, who will suffer the most if climate change is not stopped. We must follow their inspirational example. We can secure a future for our children in which they not only have a planet to live on, but one that is *worth* living on.



Will Munro

Among the world's youth there is an ever-growing feeling that they have inherited a doomed planet. The March 15 youth strike for climate justice was one of the biggest so far with 2,200 demos in over 120 countries. Well over one and a half million people were on the streets. In Montreal 150,000 protested with smaller demos all across Canada.

It is not surprising that these students' frustration and anxiety is finally boiling over; for decades governments of all political stripes have been sitting on their hands in the face of global ecological collapse.

Contrary to Trudeau's international image, Canada is not a leader on the environment. It is the world's fourth largest exporter of crude oil and natural gas, and seventh largest exporter of coal. Trudeau hopes to continue Harper's plans to boost exports, particularly of crude oil, bitumen and natural gas. The oil and gas sector already contributes 25% of Canada's total CO2 emissions, the largest part coming from the tar sands.

There is clear evidence in Canada that climate change is growing: forest fires, melting ice in the Arctic and glaciers, floods and severe weather. The Liberals' response was to buy a pipeline.

Canada, on average, is experiencing warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world according to a recent report commissioned by Environment and Climate Change Canada. Since 1948, in Northern

Canada, the annual average temperature has increased by 2.3°C. A 2019 UN report expects that Arctic winter temperatures will increase by 3°C to 5°C by 2050 compared to 1986-2005 levels. This would lead to widespread melting of permafrost, releasing more carbon dioxide and methane, both greenhouse gases, as well as significant sea-level rise due to melting glaciers and sea ice. In February 2018, the temperature at the north of Greenland reached 6°C, meanwhile it snowed in Rome. Sea-ice cover in the Arctic is thinning and contracting fast. This has weakened the jet stream winds, resulting in cold winter air flowing out of the Arctic, causing a deep freeze across much of North America as the polar vortex moved south.

It is likely that 80% of the glaciers in the Rockies will melt away over the next 50 years. These ice fields feed most of the major rivers of western Canada. The communities and farms along these rivers rely on these glaciers for year-round water.

Canada's Environment Commissioner, Julie Gelfand, called government inaction "disturbing," pointing to \$1.6 billion per year of "inefficient" federal fossil fuel subsidies, and warning that Canada will not meet its 2030 greenhouse gas reduction targets.