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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



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Vancouver's Housing Emergency Summit

Ryan Johnston



In Vancouver, the words “rent” and “high stress” are synonymous with each other. Working-class residents live precariously, paycheque to paycheque, bouncing between the threats of demoviction or renoviction, soaring rents and next to no availability.

It was under these conditions Vancouver held its first Housing Emergency Summit organized by COPE (the city's left-wing party), the Vancouver Tenants' Union (VTU), Socialist Alternative, the Vancouver Labour Council and others. On June 23, 170 activists, three Vancouver councillors (from COPE, Greens and OneCity) and others gathered to discuss, learn, and come to conclusions on the next steps in the fight for a better Vancouver.

VTU members demonstrated how to build power through collective activity. COPE's councillor Jean Swanson and Parks Board commissioner John Irwin rounded out the event with stirring speeches met with standing applause.

Socialist Alternative was prominent in organizing the event and on the day. Allie Pev, along with Karine Ng, chaired it brilliantly. Nancy Trigueros (COPE), Rocco Trigueros (VTU) and Bill Hopwood (co-organizer) spoke. Pete Marlowe sang his song, “The City We Need,” to great laughter and applause. The international view was provided by Socialist Alternative's co-thinkers, with Tim Brandes (Berlin) explaining renters' victory (see page 11) and Alycia Lewis (Seattle) talking of their struggle for rent control (Seattle has no controls) and taxing Amazon to build affordable housing.

The summit was more than speeches and presentations; there was ample time to discuss causes of and solutions to the crisis. Key ideas coming out of the discussions were taxing the wealthy and developers to fund affordable housing, and housing the homeless.

The Summit was an important step in generating momentum and building a movement. Real change comes through mass mobilization and pressure. Residents of Vancouver want to stop the city existing for the rich, instead to become the city the rest of us need.

Ford on Back Foot

Tim Heffernan

Doug Ford, whose mantra was “for the people,” is opposed by most Ontarians, with a July poll finding that 67% of them do not believe he cares about people like themselves. In June, Ford was loudly booed by sections of the 1.5 million crowd at the Toronto Raptors’ victory parade.

In the same poll, 57% agreed that his government is corrupt. This issue started with Ford’s attempt to appoint his long-time friend as Ontario Provincial Police commissioner. Then it was revealed that Ford had sought over \$50,000 in modifications for a personalized premier’s van, including a reclining leather sofa, mini-fridge, and 32-inch TV. Next was the debacle with Ford’s chief of staff, Dean French, who resigned when it became public that several appointments to lucrative government positions were French’s friends or family members.

But it goes beyond Ford’s personal unpopularity and corruption. On the crucial issue of cuts, some 69% of respondents agreed that “Ontario is a wealthy province and shouldn’t have to cut services to its most vulnerable residents.” In another poll a resounding 80% of Ontarians and over 50% of Conservative voters opposed health cuts.

There have been some successes in pushing back against this government. Ford has backtracked on the sex education curriculum, essentially implementing the Liberals’ 2015 plan. The parents of children with autism responded to plans to limit the maximum amount families could claim with intensive lobbying and protests. The government has now acknowledged its “mistake” and is talking of introducing a needs-based program.



The last provincial budget announced unexpected cuts including to public health and childcare programs. This passed the costs onto municipal councils after they had set their own budgets. This caused back and forth recriminations between the Ford government and leaders of Ontario municipalities. Toronto Council had to cover an unexpected deficit of \$175 million. This led to the bizarre situation of Toronto mayor, John Tory (himself a former Ontario Conservative leader), demanding the cuts be reversed while also going door-to-door to alert residents to the cuts.

People are angry but they haven’t found a way to channel that anger. Unlike with the Harris government of the 1990s, the power of organized workers has not really been mobilized to force a retreat on the myriad of cuts that have already been or are about to be implemented – class size, legal aid budget, health care, etc. Ford may be on the back foot but without a push from organized labour he is likely to stay upright in the ring.

Pharmacare Needed

Jim Sugiyama

Canada is the only country that does not include pharmacare in its “universal” healthcare system. Right-wing provincial governments, such as Ford’s in Ontario, slashed programs that provided low income people some access to needed medications.

Millions of Canadians rely on their employer or private insurance to pay prescription costs, but one in five have no such coverage. The grim choice between housing and food or health means they go without critical medicines. This causes ill-health and increased hospital costs when their conditions deteriorate. Canadians suffer the second highest costs for drugs in the so-called developed world. While National Pharmacare requires government spending, overall it would save Canadians between \$8 and \$11 billion annually.

Trudeau, after nearly four years in government and his popularity at a low ebb, has announced the Liberals would launch a Pharmacare program if re-elected. The NDP has long advocated for this, and has stronger policies than the Liberals. The Greens support Pharmacare. The Conservatives do not have a tangible plan.

At the same time, the government is doing its best to expedite passage of the “new” NAFTA, which will guarantee increased and prolonged patent protection to Big Pharma. This will increase the cost of pharmaceuticals and delay the availability of lower-cost generic drugs.

Canada’s corporate welfare of tax breaks and subsidies, including to polluting industries, costs taxpayers over \$29 billion each year. Clearly, Canada can afford Pharmacare – it simply means a shift of priorities away from genuflection to the billionaire class towards improving Canadians’ health.

Action Needed to End Violence Against Indigenous Women

Leslie Kemp



The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls demands “a world within which First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families can raise their children with the same safety, security, and human rights that non-Indigenous families do.”

On June 3, the Inquiry unleashed a scathing report of Canada’s failure to protect Indigenous women and girls. It charges that Canada has enabled “a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples...which especially targets women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.” A supplementary report on genocide describes cultural genocide as a process that “has taken place insidiously and over centuries” and is “empowered by colonial structures, evidenced notably by the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools and breaches of human and Indigenous rights.”

This has led directly to increased rates of violence,

death, and suicide in Indigenous populations. Indigenous women are five times more likely to die a violent death than non-Indigenous women.

More than 2,380 family members, survivors of violence, experts and Knowledge Keepers shared their stories in public hearings over two years. The 231 Calls for Justice are directed at all layers of Canadian society. The report calls for changes to policing, sentencing, and the provision of safe spaces for women; education about racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia; language

and cultural rights; and ensuring livable incomes and affordable housing. It recommends eliminating gender discrimination in the Indian Act.

The report calls for the Canadian constitution to fully comply with UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). Trudeau promised to adopt UNDRIP, but has failed to do so, as this would challenge Canada’s capitalist foundations, which are based on stolen Indigenous lands. Given the many failures to act on previous reports and promises, how likely is it that these demands will see the light of day?

Indigenous women and girls deserve to live free of violence. This requires dismantling colonialism and capitalism. Only in a socialist society, where human needs take priority over profits, can women and girls hope to live in safety.

Green Party Warning

Chris Fofonoff

Many Canadians are looking for something new in electoral politics. Following Green Party gains in PEI and BC, the prospect of a federal breakthrough has Green supporters feeling giddy. Some national polls put the Greens ahead of the NDP. They’re helped by the Liberals’ and NDP’s lovely words and less-than-lovely actions on the environment.

The Greens are supposedly new and post-ideological, with their website proudly proclaiming, “Not Left. Not Right. Forward Together.” They paint themselves as pleasant pragmatists, eager to work with others in good faith to get things done. What is the Greens’ record? Not surprisingly, they are pro-capitalism; all the major parties are. But the Greens are far more brazen than many realize. BC Green leader Andrew Weaver blocked card-check, which would have made it easier for workers to unionize, vowing “[it] is never going to happen.” The three Greens

on Vancouver’s city council have refused to form a progressive majority to bring in rent control and build social housing and have, at times, voted with the right-wing.

Even on the environment – supposedly the Green Party’s *raison d’être* – they are mystifyingly two-faced. In BC, where they have the balance of power, they quietly acquiesced to the Site C dam and fracking expansion. Federal leader Elizabeth May provoked confusion and dismay within her ranks when – less than a year after her arrest for opposing the Transmountain pipeline expansion – she suggested support for an increase in domestic oil production. At least two provincial Green leaders have appealed for her to reverse this but, so far, she’s refused.

The Green Party advertises its supposed lack of ideology as a strength. In fact, it is a screen to disguise their leaders’ willingness to be the friendly face of the system that’s destroying the environment. Given their halo of novelty and change, it is amazing how quickly they’re proving to be more of the same.

Socialist Alternative Youth!

Amaya K, Bogdan K, Allie P and Nicholas C spoke with Martin LeBrun

Vancouver youth agree that there are positives about living in Canada: healthcare, vast natural beauty and, if you have a regular paycheque, a glut of consumer products. But increasingly inaction on climate change, falling living standards, work stress and alienation are making young people anxious about their futures.

There's real "existential dread" amongst young people over seemingly inescapable climate change, says Nicholas. "West coast forest fire 'smoke seasons' are becoming the new normal." There's a sense of fatalism, but also a sense of "We gotta do something!"

Today's youth are also Canada's first generation whose living standards are worse than those of their parents. "Given the difficulty of finding a well-paying job, everything is expensive: housing, education, etc.," says Bogdan. For Nicholas, "the idea of ever owning a home is very distant, even if you come from a relatively wealthy family." "Transit is expensive given the low minimum wage," says Amaya. "You have to work for half an hour just for the privilege of going to work." "It's impossible to work, study and have a social life that are in balance," says Allie.

Raised in Serbia, Bogdan is taken aback by the degree of mental health issues among Canadian youth. "Culturally, there seems to be no real attempt to deal with it. People are much more individualized, isolated." This isolation extends into workplaces. Amaya finds it strange that "Canadians don't like sharing the details of their wages and conditions, even though this can help workers put demands on their boss."

All agree that young people can make a difference. For Nicholas, "Collectively, young people have tremendous power. We need to become active as we



can to build a new society whose objective is satisfying needs rather than profits."

Bogdan agrees, "young people need to go to the root of today's problems. They aren't apathetic, but rather lack awareness of possibilities; we should look beyond social media chatter. Reading Canadian labour history, we can see that with proper mobilizing, people can fight and win. The post-war generation's activism did not achieve all of its goals but resulted in major changes as they looked beyond their current system. Cynicism kills action. We need an alternative. Since Occupy, it's encouraging to see people talking about class issues and US politicians like Bernie Sanders are part of a new debate about going beyond just taxing the rich."

Socialist Alternative Youth will be organizing on the streets and on campuses to move the debate forward on what kind of Canada and world is both possible and necessary: a socialist one.

Canada's Wall to Skilled Immigrants

Nadia Revelo

Foreign-trained immigrants in Canada face a huge wall to overcome before getting a job in their field of expertise. It is absurd that their location of training bars Canadian permanent residents from using their studies, work experience and skills. Some immigrants will never get past that wall and are forced to take less skilled jobs.

From abroad, Canada appears to welcome professionals who can contribute to the economy; thus, many professionals from countries in crisis are attracted by that promise of economic and social development.

Licensed professionals, such as in medicine, engineering and law, must go through an expensive and long process of accreditation of their existing qualifications. This includes training and multiple assessments and can take from three to seven years

and cost thousands of dollars.

Workers in non-licensed professions must spend years gaining "the trust" of the Canadian system to work in their area of expertise. This means volunteering and low-paid jobs, and often using their skills without the appropriate recognition and wages.

Canada, like other developed countries, imports skilled workers that it has not invested in. It then, despite skill shortages, wastes their talents. Therefore, a Pakistani vascular surgeon works as a receptionist while her country is running out of specialists and Canada's health system has a long waiting list for her specialized services. Or a Syrian engineer drives a taxi at night and serves coffee during the day.

Canada should invest in immigrants, recognize their qualifications and provide language and cultural training.

End Sexual Violence at Work

Leslie Kemp and Nancy Trigueros

Many women experience sexual harassment or violence at work, whether it is in a restaurant, an office, a hotel, a school, in construction or a myriad of other places. Workers are lifting the secrecy about sexual violence, even though their employers are trying to stifle discussion. They are targeted by both clients or customers and supervisors or managers.

Worldwide, the #MeToo movement has gained momentum, starting by calling out high profile men, such as American film producer Harvey Weinstein. It has since spread to workplaces with thousands of McDonalds and 20,000 Google employees around the world walking off the job. Recently, 30,000 people attended a #MeToo rally in Hong Kong against alleged sexual assaults by police on pro-democracy protesters.

Vancouver hotel workers organized in UNITE-HERE Local 40, alleging that they've been harassed by hotel guests, have filed a Human Rights complaint. Hotel Rosewood Georgia employee Casey Vanderveen is one of several women who have come forward. "I have been solicited for sex for tips, endured lewd comments, physically restrained and sexually assaulted," she said in an interview, fighting back tears.

Despite the worldwide movement to end sexual harassment and violence, universities and employers are still trying to silence women. A 2017 study identified several Canadian universities that have policies aimed at silencing sexual violence survivors. Claire Stapleton, a Google walkout organizer, left the organization after facing retaliation. "These past few



Google Workers on Strike

months have been unbearably stressful and confusing. But they've been eye-opening, too: the more I spoke up about what I was experiencing, the more I heard, and the more I understood how universal these issues are."

Safety at work and university is a basic right. Unions and student unions should organize against sexual harassment and violence. However, universities and corporations are likely to respond only when it hurts their pocketbook or reputations. The profit-driven culture gives licence to treat people as objects. We need a different kind of society: one where people come before profits.

Green Jobs Vital to Energy Transition

Corey Snoek and Bill Hopwood

Around the world there is growing discussion about both jobs and the environment. The fossil fuel industry and their political friends constantly play one off against the other. At the same time, some of the big Green lobby groups refuse to consider jobs and the fate of workers and communities that depend on fossil fuels.

The idea of a Green New Deal has gained wide support in the US and Canada. Increasingly, unions are looking at long-term, good-quality jobs and realize that fossil fuels will not provide these. Unions know that if nothing is done in a few short years, there will be an ecological disaster and many jobs will disappear.

In general, there are five to six times as many jobs in renewable energy, energy efficient buildings and public transit than if the same money is spent on the carbon industry. Yet the fossil fuel industry intends to burn all of the coal, gas and oil still underground. Big business is totally reliant on the profits from fossil fuels. Many of the biggest companies in the world are in coal, oil and cars. Most banks are heavily invested in these sectors. Capitalism is incapable of policing



itself, even as it brings on destruction.

The resources and technology exist to transition to renewable energy. The barrier is the private ownership of industry and finance. If the energy industry and manufacturing were publicly-owned, then workers, with their many skills, could develop the tools and equipment for a clean future. Instead of working to make profits for the bosses while poisoning the planet, they would be helping society and future generations build and live in a better world. The key question is: who controls the wealth of society?

In many countries, workers in the fossil fuel industry have a long history of organization and militancy. Workers in these industries and their unions should be demanding retraining and a transition to jobs in renewables, without loss of pay. The workers movement is crucial in the fight for a green planet.

What Makes Me Angry: Green Guilt

Leslie Kemp



So they tell me that if I go vegan and buy an electric car, I'm gonna save the planet? We face a climate disaster. There's just 11 years to prepare and avert the worse consequences, according to the United Nations.

Clearly, climate change is caused by human activity. But not by all humans! Capitalism's endless drive for profits wreaks havoc – raping and pillaging the land to find oil, coal and gas – contaminating earth, water and air. The signs are everywhere: melting ice, fires, floods and changing weather patterns.

Worse is threatened, with an average global temperature increase of 4°C by 2100. Heat and water shortages will make the tropics largely uninhabitable. Millions of people will flee rising sea levels. There will be billions of climate refugees.

It is ordinary people – workers and peasants – that will be most affected. Unlike the rich, we don't own million-dollar yachts to blithely sail away.

Yet, many environmentalists fail to see that capitalism is the cause of this crisis. They blame themselves or blame downwards (those who have "too many children"), failing to see that the very rich consume the most and control what is produced and how. They don't see that poverty and inequality are the flip side of climate change – both caused by the same menace.

Instead, they focus on lifestyle politics – recycling, cycling, installing solar roof panels and buying organic food – all of which continue to boost profits. While these are good things, they just don't answer this crisis. We can't buy our way out of this disaster individually. A few million people who can afford to make lifestyle changes will make little difference, while the capitalists and their captive governments continue to build pipelines, extract oil, frack gas and rape the earth of minerals.

Green guilt will not save humanity. Our only hope is to overthrow destructive capitalism and replace it with a society based on human need and the health of our planet. Let's build a socialist world before it's too late!

The Life of a Carpenter: What Sam Says

Nathalie Yeung and Pete Marlowe

Sam did his apprenticeship through the union, and fifteen years later, he still says carpentry is the perfect combination of the physical and mental. He loves the camaraderie on the job site, and how the workers refuse to fall in line with the hierarchies the boss tries to create. And he loves the fact that some things have improved. He used to hear sexist, racist, homophobic comments all the time, but it's just not like that anymore.

But many things have gotten worse. The BC Liberal government destroyed the apprenticeship system, and Sam says it's a terrible thing to put workers into situations they haven't been trained for. It happens all the time now, and it didn't use to.

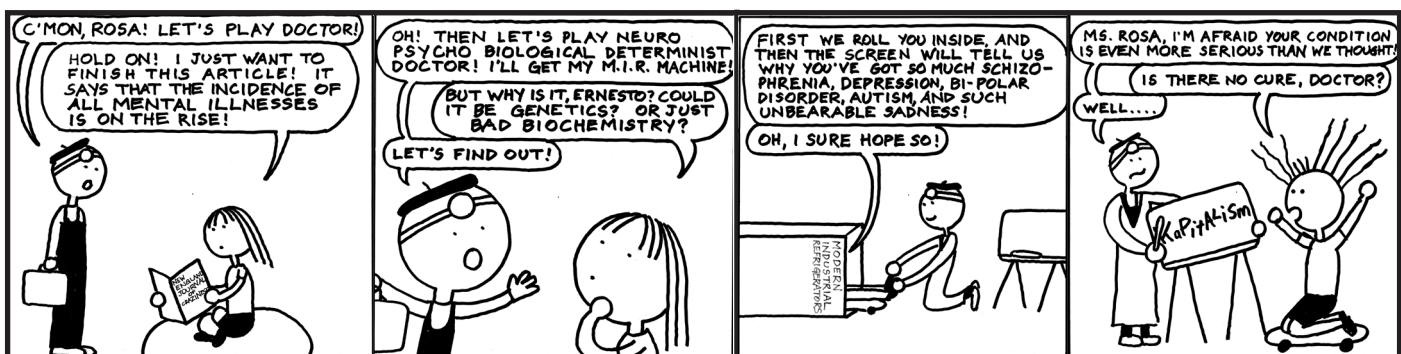
Carpentry is dangerous work, and Sam has put his life on the line many times for the company's profit. But you can't report injuries, or you'll be the next one laid off and blacklisted, to keep the company's insurance rates from going up.

Sam has volunteered for the BC NDP, and he's happy they're reversing some of what the Liberals ripped apart. But he demands that apprenticeships be restored to their former glory, that workers' injuries be treated under the public health system, with full confidentiality from employers, and that workers themselves create the safety regulations, not some suit in a Victoria office. And temp agencies must be banned once again, so that no construction job is just a minimum wage gig.

But Sam says carpentry has been around since long before capitalism, and will survive it. So he'll keep fighting for the working days to come, when tradeswomen and men are no longer alienated and undercut by profit, when socialism will be the condition for the free development of all skills, and when every working family's home can have an intersecting roof, with dormers, and a set of spiral stairs.

Kindergarten Kommies

Pete Marlowe



Carbon Tax - Wrong Debate

Corey Snook

The carbon tax is set to be one of the major debates of this year's election. The Liberals claim the tax of \$20 per tonne is their master stroke to fight climate change and meet Canada's 2015 Paris Agreement targets.

The Conservatives falsely claim the tax is an attack on ordinary people with higher prices for energy and fuel. In fact, the taxes raised will be passed back in other forms – overall revenue neutral. The choice in the election is between the Liberals' ineffective policy and no policy from the Tories.

The Liberals have wide support from most mainstream environmental organizations that support capitalism. In Canada and internationally, Greens think the carbon tax is a great idea. Workers, however, should be suspicious of the tax and its promised targets.

The Liberals have wide support from most mainstream environmental organizations that support capitalism. In Canada and internationally, Greens think the carbon tax is a great idea. Workers, however, should be suspicious of the tax and its promised targets.

The reality is that big business has either been given exemptions or passed on any costs to workers or consumers, often using the tax as an excuse to increase prices or cut jobs. At its core a carbon tax is really a tax on consumers, which hits poor people harder as they spend a greater portion of their income on fuel.

A carbon tax ignores that the vast majority of carbon released is from a hundred corporations. Society can't control these privately-owned companies that are only interested in profits. The market caused climate change and cannot solve it. We desperately need to take industry out of the hands of the capitalists and bring it into public hands to plan production and avert climate change.



Fight



From the South Pacific to the edge of the Arctic Circle, young people are mobilizing by word of mouth and social media. They have missed classes to protest the failures by governments to take serious action against global warming, saying to politicians, "We are missing our lessons, so we can teach you one."

The protests in early March were the biggest international climate change actions yet; at least one and half million people protested in 2,200 demos in 120 countries. Montreal saw 150,000 march.

Young people know about the unprecedented heat waves affecting much of Europe and India. They have seen the fires from the Arctic to the Amazon. They know that this July was the hottest month on record. They know the world's ice is melting.

At the same time, young people have seen through the rhetoric and ineffectual policies proposed by world politicians including our own Justin Trudeau. They know that half-measures like carbon taxes, cap and trade programs, tax incentives for major polluters, a ban on plastic straws and government-owned pipelines are wholly inadequate in fighting climate change. They aren't going to cut it when it's business as usual for the oil industry and other big emitters.

There have been decades of conferences, but virtually no action. An OECD report in 2002, *Policies to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Industry*, concluded that "there is still a long way to go in implementing effective policy instruments to address emissions from industry. For example, where taxes have been implemented there have been many exemptions or reduced tax rates, so that it is very difficult to assess how effective these have been. Also, voluntary agreements have not always achieved the promised reductions." *Nature* magazine reported in 2017 that none of the major industrialized nations were implementing the policies they had agreed in Paris 2016 or meeting their pledged emission reduction targets. The amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere continues to increase.

The coordinated school strikes, "Fridays for

Canada, Siberia, Scandinavia, The vast majority in high-latitude agriculture will be



New Zealand, Western Antarctica, Patagonia. Some of the only southern hemisphere densely populated

Climate Change - Fight for Jobs

Tim Heffernan and Will Munro



Futures," have certainly caught the attention of the world's political leaders and business tycoons. Big oil is worried. The General Secretary of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Mohammed Barkindo, warns that the youth rebellion is "perhaps the greatest threat to our industry going forward. There is a growing mass mobilization of world opinion against oil. Civil society is being misled to believe oil is the cause of climate change." Unfortunately for Big Oil, it's not just "opinion" that is being mobilized; it is being accompanied by serious action.

The Global Climate Strike this September builds on the youth strikes. Its rallying cry is "millions of us will walk out of our workplaces and homes to join young climate strikers on the streets and demand an end to the age of fossil fuels. Our house is on fire — let's act like it. We demand climate justice for everyone."

Justice is a crucial part of any actions that will win wide support and actually tackle climate change. The common slogan of "system change not climate change" points in the right direction. A recent study has shown that just 100 companies worldwide are responsible for 71% of global emissions. It is not individual workers and consumers who cause climate change but the system. The movement needs clarity about what is the system that needs changing, what is the alternative and how do we get there?

To put it simply, capitalism is the problem. It is an economic and political system with the primary purpose of increasing profits. It does this by exploiting people and the planet. It is not enough to rely on sticks

(taxation and regulations) or carrots (subsidies and incentives) to trim its nails. Environmental destruction is in its DNA.

Alongside concerns about the climate, many workers are fearful about their jobs and income. There is growing discussion of a Green New Deal, which points



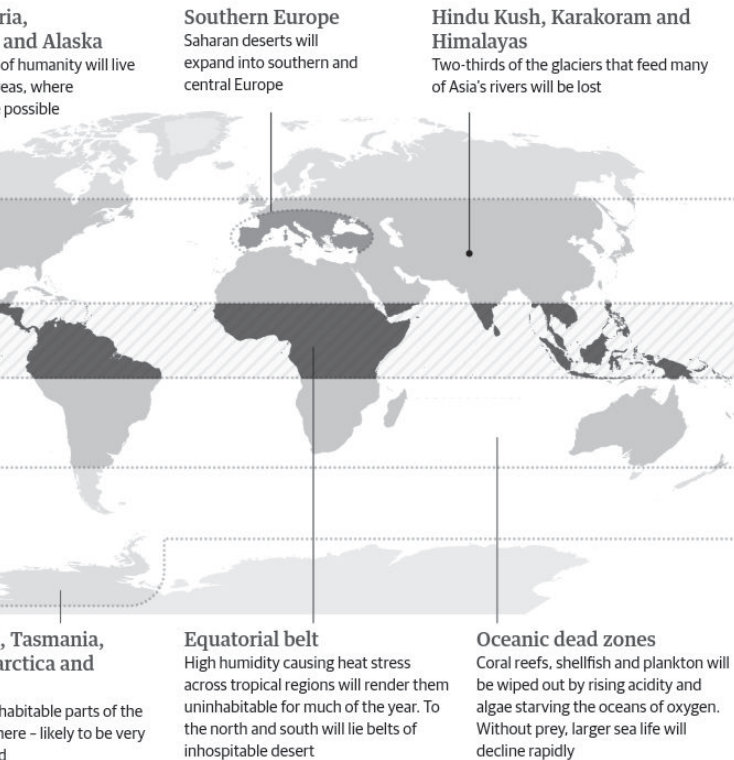
to the need for radical changes and climate justice. However, many workers are suspicious of politicians who promise the earth, so to speak, without a serious plan of how to get there. It is true there are no jobs on a dead planet. Also, destroying jobs now for no future is no answer. The fossil fuel industry provides one-fifth of the jobs that the same money would provide if put into building new wind or solar power installations, improved public transit and building refits.

Climate action requires international planning and cooperation. This is blocked by competing private corporations, and their client governments, each seeking their own maximum profits. Core to the transition with justice is the public ownership of the energy industry with real workers' democracy.

It may seem a tall order to stop climate change, requiring a sustained struggle of a lifetime. But the alternative is a nightmare. On current trends the earth will be at least 4°C warmer (probably more) by 2100. This will mean most of the tropics will be uninhabitable, the sea level will be two metres higher and most of the glaciers that feed the world's major rivers will have melted. This means unimaginable suffering, dislocation and billions of refugees.

We cannot properly fight climate change without also fighting poverty and fighting for better jobs. We will need our world's entire labour force working together towards a common goal to survive this. We need engineers, scientists and skilled workers to refine and develop green energy sources. We need botanists and biologists to coordinate the massive replanting of forests. We need teachers and tradespeople to help with the reskilling and fair transitioning of our economy so workers feeding their families by mining coal, or working on oil rigs, are not left behind. We need workers of all stripes, who want to do real meaningful work, to use their labour collectively. We need to build political parties that are not afraid to challenge the capitalists by campaigning for public ownership under democratic control.

In contrast to the looming climate disaster, imagine a society with good jobs and a healthy environment. A future of our own creation, one that belongs to us and the generations to come.



from *The Guardian*

China: from Tiananmen 1989 to Hong Kong 2019

from chinaworker.info



The months of mass protests in Hong Kong are the Chinese dictatorship's biggest challenge since the revolutionary movements focused on Tiananmen Square in 1989. The defeat of 1989 opened the door to rapid capitalist expansion that now is paving the way to revolutionary movements in China.

The 1989 Revolution

By 1989 China was increasing trade with the capitalist world, privatizing agriculture, reducing workers' benefits and allowing capitalist businesses to operate in China. A section of students and academics hoped to see elements of democracy introduced.

By the late 1980s, the USSR's Stalinist economy was ossified due to the bureaucracy's misrule. Gorbachev attempted a revival, not through workers' democracy to plan the economy, but with elements of capitalism and elections. This failed, with resulting economic collapse, mass poverty and very weak democracy.

Gorbachev's planned visit to China and the death of Hu Yaobang, seen as a reformer, didn't cause the revolution, but lit the spark. In April, students occupied Tiananmen Square demanding democratic rights.

Soon there were protests in 110 cities and workers were establishing independent unions and striking. The growing movement terrified the regime. However, there were splits amongst the elite and the army. Many soldiers and demonstrators believed the army would not shoot Chinese people.

In June, the regime decided on repression, using "all necessary methods," including 200,000 troops. Some troops refused to fire and the regime mobilized troops from outside the city. Workers erected blockades across Beijing, slowing the armies' advance. However, the overwhelming force prevailed and the movement was crushed in cold blood – destroying illusions in the Chinese regime. There were mass arrests, victimizations and executions, particularly of working-class activists.

Supporters of the Chinese regime, echoed by pro-capitalist politicians and historians, claim that this was a pro-capitalist movement. The constant singing of the workers' song of solidarity, the *Internationale*, shows the reality.

If the movement in the many cities had linked together with demands for real democracy and an end to privileges, this could have won wide support in society and split the armed forces. However, there was no revolutionary force in China in 1989 campaigning for these ideas.

Move to Capitalism

Once the workers and students were crushed, the regime felt confident to accelerate moves to capitalism. The 1949 Revolution established a planned economy, unified the country, educated the population and built key infrastructure. This provided a solid basis for the regime to introduce controlled capitalism while maintaining tight political control. The peculiarities of the economy have allowed decades of growth and the development of production.

The economy, cities and the working class have all grown rapidly. In 1989 only 18% of the population was urban; it is now 59%. The sons and daughters of party bureaucrats have become a super-rich capitalist class with a well-off middle class below them.

However, there are mounting contradictions including massive industrial over-capacity, mountains of debt, widespread corruption, a chasm of inequality, environmental degradation and the trade war with the US. As long as economic growth was strong the regime maintained some social support. Recently this has eroded with protests and strikes on wages, working conditions, environmental damage, poisoned food, etc, every day. The regime is sitting on a powder keg.

Hong Kong

The months of protests in Hong Kong, with demos of hundreds of thousands and several of over a million (out of a population of seven million), were sparked by democratic demands. Behind that is the mass anger fuelled by huge inequality and widespread poverty. Hong Kong is a microcosm of mainland China.

In a normal democracy, Chief Executive Carrie Lam would have resigned and concessions made to defuse the situation. However, Hong Kong is not democratic, it is a puppet of China. Behind Lam is Xi and the Chinese regime. They cannot afford any concessions as this would encourage actions in mainland China. The regime hopes that eventually the protestors will become exhausted, which may happen, as the movement has no strategy to spread the struggle to mainland China to replace the capitalist dictatorship with socialist democracy. China may crush the movement, risking an international crisis, but this will not end the resistance in Hong Kong and China.

Hong Kong's movement indicates that the spirit of 1989 remains. Now, the Chinese regime faces a much more powerful working class and much less social support. Revolution looms!

For more information on Hong Kong, China and Taiwan: <https://chinaworker.info>

Bold Campaigns Win Housing Victories

Simon Schweitzer

Cities across the world are gripped by soaring rents and gentrification. This trend is driven by the exodus of industry from urban centres, and the flooding of billions of dollars of speculative money, injected by central banks after 2008. Real estate capital now dominates cities' economic and political landscapes, with developers and their friends demanding zoning and rental policies to increase property values.

This crisis needs organized resistance by tenants and workers. Renters in New York and Berlin have won significant victories, which were built on bold inspiring demands – rent freeze and publicly-owned

housing. This contrasts with moderate politicians, who only ask for what the system says it can afford. Their approach limits the horizon for change and does not mobilize people. Winning part of very little is tiny. Mass campaigns that put pressure on politicians are more successful than trying to cut deals with them and developers.

While these campaigns have not yet won all their demands, their concrete victories strengthen confidence to fight for more. These victories are part of the battle to stop homes from being commodities, and make housing a right.

Renters' Victory in Berlin

Christoph Glaninger, Berlin

Berlin's renters made international headlines, winning a rent freeze and demanding the public ownership of big landlords.

The background is a decade of soaring rents and rapid gentrification. Since 2009 the average rents in Berlin increased by 36%, and in some districts and for new flats much more. In Neukölln, rents increased 146% between 2007 and 2018. The main profiteers are big housing companies owning thousands of city flats, many that were formerly publicly-owned.

This devastating situation fuelled the explosive movement of renters fighting back. Across Berlin there are hundreds of "renters initiatives." On April 6, over 40,000 people marched for a rent freeze. On that day a referendum was launched to expropriate all private housing companies that own more than 3,000 units. It gained 77,000 signatures in three months.

The public pressure forced Berlin's middle-left coalition to introduce a five-year rent freeze covering 1.6 million flats. Now stronger rent control is being considered.

The movement continues to demand the nationalization of big housing companies, with more signatures being collected later this year. Discussing the "nationalization of big business" provides an opportunity to explain that the private ownership of the economy cannot provide for the majority.

The movement in Berlin is an impressive example of how a grassroots movement with radical demands can force city governments to act on issues and that a determined struggle for radical demands is able to win significant reforms. To win the public ownership of rental housing, the movement will need to sink deeper roots amongst renters and workers in housing companies, while putting pressure on the trade unions to actively support the struggle.

New York Renters Win

*Patrick Ayers, Brooklyn
Socialist Alternative*



Working-class renters won a big victory in New York, in June, when the state legislature passed a package of reforms that will benefit 2.5 million people. These closed pro-corporate loopholes in state rent laws that had allowed hundreds of thousands of apartments to be deregulated.

The rent laws were also made permanent and the door has been opened for rent control measures to be introduced in more communities across the state.

It was pressure from working people and the left that made this happen. Success followed years of campaigning and a bold demand for "universal rent control." A key turning point was the election of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez last year. Then in November, a huge turnout of voters defeated Republican control of the state senate and elected a handful of left Democrats including Democratic Socialists of America member, Julia Salazar from Brooklyn.

Even with Democratic Party control of the House, Senate and Governor, victory was not guaranteed because of the corporate character of the Democratic Party and the influence of Governor Cuomo, a loyal long-time servant of Wall Street. A decisive factor was the largest statewide mobilization of housing activists in years. Thousands canvassed and rallied. As the deadline approached, hundreds of activists marched through the state house and 61 people were arrested for occupying legislators' offices.

The landlord lobby has used New York City – which had some form of rent control since 1947 – as an example where "rent control doesn't work." In reality, it's capitalism's for-profit housing system that doesn't work!

Socialist Campaigns in the US: Sanders and Sawant

Sarah Champernowne, Seattle Socialist Alternative



Sawant with Striking Teachers

Socialism has gained so much interest in the US that Donald Trump used his 2019 State of the Union address to reiterate, “Tonight, we renew our resolve that America will never be a socialist country.”

The rising support for socialism challenges Trump, the Republicans and establishment Democrats. More young people support socialism than capitalism. The election of dozens of Democratic and independent candidates across the country campaigning on socialist ideas, free of corporate cash, threatens the powers that be. Especially among teachers and hotel workers, there is a significant rise in union participation, protests, and strikes.

Sanders, after shaking up US politics in 2016 with his call for a “political revolution,” is running again in the Democratic Party primary. Now he’s a front-runner, and his proposals for Medicare for All, free college education, a Green New Deal, tax increases on the super-wealthy and a \$15 minimum wage are defining the election issues. Unlike establishment Democrats like Joe Biden, Sanders maintains that a bold pro-worker platform is needed to unite working people against Trump. Socialist Alternative is calling for a vote for Sanders while also campaigning for socialist policies, including taking the biggest 500 corporations into public ownership and building a new mass working-class political party.

Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative’s Seattle city councillor, is running for re-election. She is standing on her strong record of fighting for working people, including helping win the first \$15 minimum wage in a major US city as well as numerous victories alongside renters, union and non-union workers, women, and marginalized communities. After a unanimous city council vote for a small tax on big businesses like Amazon, Sawant was one of only two councillors to oppose its repeal one month later. The rest of the council was involved in a secret – and illegal – chat

group with Mayor Durkan to coordinate the repeal.

Sawant’s campaign is helping to build the housing movement, demanding rent control and social housing. She wants a “Green New Deal” for working people in Seattle. She has the most donations from her district, and support from union locals, Seattle’s progressive newspaper *The Stranger*, and prominent community activists.

In the primary, out of six candidates, she came first with 37% compared to Egan Orion at second place with 21.5%, her opponent in the November 5 general election. He is an openly corporate candidate, so the choice is clearly whether corporations or working people run Seattle council. Winning will be an uphill battle.

This election is a class battle with Amazon and other corporations pouring in millions of dollars to defeat Kshama Sawant. She is a proud socialist and the only councillor willing to take a principled stand for working people. The hostility of big business to Sawant is a compliment to her inspiring demonstration of the role of an elected Marxist.

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

Québec's Secular Law

Chantal

Québec’s right-wing CAQ government passed a law in June that increases discrimination and prejudice. Under the guise of secularism – keeping government free from religion – the Bill bans many government employees, including judges, lawyers, police officers and teachers from wearing religious symbols.

The Bill does not define a religious symbol. Minister Jolin-Barette defined it as “clothing, symbol, jewelry, ornament, accessory or headgear that is worn in connection with a religious conviction or belief and can reasonably be considered as referring to a religious affiliation.” This is so broad that almost anything can be classed a religious symbol, rendering the law inoperative. The CAQ is trying to tiptoe around the obvious: they are targeting women who wear headscarves – specifically Muslim women.

To pass this Bill the CAQ government had to use the “notwithstanding clause,” which overrules Canada’s and Québec’s Charter of Rights. The Parti Québécois has criticized the Bill for not going far enough. Québec Solidaire is the only party in the National Assembly to oppose this law.

Secular laws and principles were introduced in the early sixties as part of the Quiet Revolution that broke the Catholic Church’s domination of state and

Sudan's Revolution Continues

Simon Schweitzer

After months of mass protest in Sudan, a three-year transitional administration took office in August. The protest movement, sparked in December by the tripling of bread prices, spread across the country despite violent repression. As the protests grew in numbers and confidence, the military leadership feared a complete overturn of the state.

Sudan's hated dictator Omar al-Bashir was removed on April 11, 2019. He seized power in June 1989, with the aid of the National Islamic Front. He established a totalitarian regime, banned political parties, trade unions, and the independent press, and waged vicious wars in South Sudan and Darfur.

The military arrested al-Bashir, hoping this would end the upheaval as it had in Egypt in 2011. However, the Sudanese people had learned from the experiences of the Arab Spring that removing the dictator is only the first step of the struggle. A popular slogan in Khartoum was "Either Victory or Egypt." The Transitional Military Council (TMC), representing the military elite and backed by regimes in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, took power as protests for civilian rule continued.

On June 3, the Rapid Security Forces (based on



militias that fought in Darfur) killed 127 people. The response was a country-wide general strike, followed by the largest protest in Sudan's history on June 30. Waves of protest demanded a civilian administration.

The determination of the Sudanese masses has been the key to every step forward. Sudan's small working class has a militant history, including a mass communist party in the past. Workers are now re-establishing independent unions.

However, the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) leadership, after playing a key role, are now seeking a non-existent path between independent revolutionary mobilization and negotiations with the TMC. The working class and SPA are the core of the resistance, but the SPA leaders have tied themselves to the Forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change, which includes pro-capitalist establishment parties.

In July, a deal between the TMC and opposition leaders established the three-year transitional administration. While there is a civilian prime minister, the military continues to dominate with al-Burhan, former head of the TMC, in charge. The current deal resolves nothing. If the military elite are not removed, at some stage they will again move to repression.

Resistance committees have been established in working-class areas – an important development that was absent in Egypt. The sympathies of ordinary soldiers lie with the masses, and so the regime has used paramilitary forces to attack protests. However, soldiers risk execution by the officers for isolated acts of mutiny. A bold appeal on class lines could turn the soldiers' sympathy into united action, to remove the officers and join the masses.

The Sudanese people have shown great revolutionary determination. They need a program and organization to complete the revolution.

Fuels Discrimination

Ide

society. Now secularism is used as a cover to whip up prejudice. There is a connection between banning headscarves and attacking mosques.

As well as the Bill's obvious racism and Islamophobia, it attacks workers' rights in general. Unionized workers are under attack, as any clause in their collective agreement that prohibits religious discrimination is now invalid. Employers may deny employment using discriminatory reasons. By passing this new law the government shows the working class it can exert power over us, rendering collective bargaining ineffective. Students, who wear religious symbols, are now barred from jobs even before graduating. This Bill is an open door to egregious discrimination in the workplace.

Some school boards said they would not enforce the laws but, shamefully, have retreated. Now, unions will have to step up their resistance. Many grassroots groups are actively protesting. As part of Alternative Socialiste's (Québec) campaign, it is working in unions to adopt strong resolutions against this anti-workers' Bill. The struggle will increase in the next few months.

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

Page from History: Red River Resistance, 1869

Aiden Sisler



Riel and the Provisional Government

Upsetting the narrative that Canada is founded on “peace, order and good government” is the Red River Resistance, a vibrant act of democratic resistance followed by violent suppression and subversion.

In 1670, King Charles II in London gave one-third of Canada’s land mass to his friends in the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC).

Along the Red River grew a Métis settlement of farmers and buffalo hunters, with its own cultural, economic, and governance systems, blending the heritages of the French and Scottish fur traders and their Indigenous wives.

The rulers of the newly-founded Canada aimed for a unified capitalist state, which required settling with farmers the land between Ontario and BC. Two-year old Canada bought the HBC’s vast lands for £300,000 (\$32 million today). Neither asked or cared about the First Nations and Métis people living on these lands.

Prime Minister Sir John A Macdonald imposed Governor McDougall over the heads of the local people and dispatched a team to survey the land, completely ignoring the existing land settlements of narrow farms running back from the rivers. The surveyors’ arrival on August 20, 1869 stoked the Métis’ concerns so, led by Louis Riel, they stopped the surveying.

The Red River Settlement challenged Macdonald’s plan to take away their land, independence and livelihoods by organizing a provisional government, with equal representation for French- and English-speaking communities. This body drafted proposals to negotiate with Canada about joining as a province with full democratic rights for the resident people.

Canada’s government established Manitoba. At the same time, they sent a military force to cooperate with a small minority of recently arrived English-speakers, who had tried to overthrow the elected provisional government. The Canadian state’s first military action was against its own people. The army aimed to kill Riel, and its arrival forced him into exile. Although unable to take his seat, he was elected three times to the House of Commons.

Over time, many of the Métis were driven from Manitoba, and forced again, in 1885, to fight for their rights.

Renters’ Dilemma

Martin Lebrun

Review of *Unaccommodating*, by David Macdonald, CCPA



“There is no substitute for building new dedicated affordable housing” is how Macdonald concludes his study on the dire situation by Canada’s renters. Renters are 32% of Canada’s population, but much higher in the major cities.

Macdonald measures affordability using the “rental wage,” the hourly wage that a full-time worker must make to be able to rent an average two-bedroom apartment using no more than 30% of their income.

The average rental wage needed to afford a two-bedroom in Canada is \$22.40/hr, well above all provincial minimum wages. The most expensive place is Vancouver where you need to make \$35.43/hr to afford a two-bedroom or work 112 hours a week if you make minimum wage. There are only 24 of 795 neighbourhoods (3%) in Canada where a full-time minimum wage worker can afford to rent an average two-bedroom apartment.

How did we get here? In the early 1980s over 100,000 new rental apartments were being built each year, half affordable housing units paid for by public money. But purpose-built rental housing construction plummeted to 10,000 a year in the early 1990s when the Tories cut and the Liberals then terminated federal social housing programs.

In 2017, Trudeau relaunched Canada’s National Housing Strategy (NHS) claiming to invest \$55 billion over 10 years. But the portion of new affordable units in the Strategy is a drop in the bucket. At no time will construction reach the level of affordable units built annually in the 1970s and 1980s, when the population was much smaller.

Trudeau’s NHS is a lot of smoke and mirrors. *The Globe and Mail* reported that only \$16 billion of the NHS is new funding – the rest renews funding for existing housing. The NHS actually reduces the funding targeted for households in core housing need.

Macdonald’s study confirms what socialists argue, that public policy is what provides affordable rentals, not market forces. As well as strong rent controls, Canada needs massive investment in public housing, built by union labour working for publicly-owned construction, funded by taxing the rich.



A New Politics Needed: Strong Left is Best Answer to the Right

(Continued from back page)

Québec and risks losing almost all these seats this time. Many Canadians who support the NDP's ideas are not convinced it can make a difference and for years have experienced the party's under-performance in elections and in governments. Given the choices available, we support voting NDP. However, whoever wins, the key battles ahead will not be won in Parliament but by movements and unions in struggle.

The Liberals' election prospects are helped by the continuing, albeit weak, economic growth. However, behind the headlines are real problems that politicians largely ignore. Real wages have barely increased in 40 years, even after ten years of economic growth. Personal debt remains high: households owe \$1.78 for every dollar of income. Nearly half of Canadians are \$200 or less away from financial disaster. Rents across almost all of Canada are unaffordable. A growing number of people, especially the young, have precarious jobs. Alienation, insecurity, worries about the future and mental health problems are growing.

World Crises

Almost totally ignored in the election is the world situation, or the proposed answers are ineffective. An impending recession, made more likely and probably worse by the growing trade war between the US and China, could hit Canadians' income and jobs hard.



None of the underlying causes of the 2008 recession have been solved – many are worse as capitalism

continues seeking short-term profits. Canada is caught in the middle of this historic struggle between the declining US and rising China for international domination. The world's economic and political order is unravelling as international agreements, treaties and rules of trade are cast aside. The collapse of Stalinism gave US imperialism a few decades of world supremacy – this is ending.

Anger and frustration are mounting across the world as elites ignore the reality of billions of peoples' lives. Inequality, unimagined in history, feeds this anger. Internationally, nationalist right-wing populist governments and parties feed on this anger. This is especially the case where the left is weak or timid.

While the mainstream news is dominated by gloom and fear, new positive forces are growing. Around the world women have marched, struck and protested for an end to sexual harassment and abuse and for reproductive and equal rights – winning victories such as in Ireland.

Climate change is a looming life-threatening disaster. Bold national and international cooperation and planning are needed. Yet, almost all governments,

corporations and Canadian political parties act as if only minor changes are needed. Climate change will shape society and politics for years ahead. Youth strikes and protests are inspiring. Many young people clearly link capitalism to environmental destruction. Support for socialism is growing in the US, an earthquake change from a few years ago.

A Strong Left

While some of these global trends, both positive and negative, are not as pronounced in Canada, it will not be immune from them. Unless a strong left is built, the right will capture some of the anger and alienation in society.

The NDP's core view is that it can manage capitalism better than the other parties. However, economic crises and ecological disaster are not simply management failings, they are rooted in capitalism. The looming world recession and the global ecological crises means that managing capitalism is not an adequate answer.

Missing in Canada is a confident and campaigning left-wing party. There is a great opportunity as 58% of Canadians have a positive view of socialism, indicating there would be strong support for a party that proposes:

- Transition to renewable energy, investment in public transit and upgrading buildings while providing good jobs
- Taxing the rich and big business to reduce inequality and fund a dramatic program to build affordable housing
- Canada-wide \$15 minimum wage
- Comprehensive public health system that covers prescription, eyes and teeth
- National affordable childcare program
- Recognition of Indigenous' rights

Alongside such policies, Canadians need a democratic party where members have real control, that campaigns year-round in communities, workplaces and colleges across the land.

Canadian unions remain a power, an un-used power, with over 30% membership in the workforce. For too long most union leaders have accepted the dictates of the bosses and only asked for what capitalism is willing to give – not much! Union leaders should warn Canadian workers about what is coming and point a way forward. This will require determined action to defend jobs and wages and bring forward plans for alternative useful work.

Socialist Alternative will build support for these policies and point the way ahead to a socialist society.



New Politics Needed

Strong Left Best Answer to the Right

Millions of Canadians are wondering who to vote for in the federal election. Many will decide by going for the least bad option. This is in sharp contrast to four years ago, when there was energy to kick out Harper and make real change. Trudeau successfully harnessed the desire for change, seeming to boldly offer everything – electoral reform, tackling climate change, reducing inequality, respect for women, Indigenous rights and more.

The SNC Lavalin scandal punctured the Liberals' bubble. They are not a party of principles. The scandal revealed the sordid nature of government's links to big business. No surprise, but it was a lightning rod for the growing sense that Trudeau was not delivering his "sunny ways," with many broken or undelivered promises. The Liberals were the same as ever, promising change during the election and governing for big business.

The NDP, after leading in opinion polls before the 2015 election, failed to inspire and dropped to third place, losing over half their seats. Since then they have largely stagnated, wasting two years before electing a new leader, Jagmeet Singh, who waited another 17 months before winning a seat in Parliament. Most of this time the NDP made few strong policy statements and did not organize any significant campaigns.

The Conservatives, with a lack-lustre leader, Scheer, have yet to shake the ghost of Harper. They have no serious policies to tackle climate change and instead focus on tax cuts that mainly benefit the rich and cause

cuts to public services. Their co-thinker, Doug Ford in Ontario, demonstrates what they would be like in office. They have enough skeletons in their closet – on women's rights, sexual orientation, immigration and racism – to fill a graveyard.

Only the Greens are generating any enthusiasm. This is because they are largely untested and seen as radical. The experience in BC and internationally is, in office, they do not deliver, even on the environment. They have been in coalition governments in Europe that carried out brutal cuts, and supported coal mining and increased oil production. They are not strong supporters of workers' rights or unions.

Bernier's People's Party is making little headway, although advocates of intolerance are growing louder. However, it would be wrong to assume that right-wing populism won't grow in Canada as shown by recent elections in Alberta, Ontario and Québec.

This election will see a lot of negative campaigning. The Liberals will point to Doug Ford and the Conservatives' skeletons. The Tories will go on about SNC Lavalin and the Liberals' links to Bay Street – fair criticism but they apply to them as much.

The NDP will struggle to make its voice heard, even though it has the best policies on many issues. It supported pharmacare for years. It is committed to end fossil fuel subsidies and other actions to slow climate change. It proposes a modest increase of taxes on the super-rich and will make university education more affordable. It squandered the 2011 sweep of