

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE



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- Alberta's Misery Continues P.3
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ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

The Whole System is Rotten

We oppose capitalism's focus on profit before people and environment. Capitalism does not serve the interests of the vast majority of humanity.

- **Ensure jobs and a living wage for all.**
- **Put planet before profit:** fight climate change with a green jobs program.
- **Take the market out of housing:** for a mass program to build and renovate decent, safe and affordable public housing run by tenants' democracy.
- **Fight for health, education and services:** seize tax havens and drastically increase taxes on the rich and big corporations, to fully fund public services.
- **Encourage fighting, democratic unions** run by and for the members, to campaign for better pay and working conditions.
- **Respect and enforce existing Indigenous treaty and resource rights.**
- **Take into public ownership key sections of the economy** including banking, the internet, the energy industry, transportation and privately-owned utilities.

Join Socialist Alternative to help create a future free of exploitation and oppression, where people and the planet flourish. ★



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Paid Sick Days for All!

Ray Goerke



Tabling for Sick Pay in Vancouver

This spring and summer Socialist Alternative in Metro Vancouver has been campaigning for paid sick days for workers in BC. At the start of the pandemic nearly 90 percent of workers in BC with incomes below \$30,000 had no paid sick days. That's why the Worker Solidarity Network launched a petition, Paid Sick Days for All, which demands that the BC NDP introduce a mandate for business to provide paid sick days for all workers under the *Employment Standards Act*.

Socialist Alternative members campaigned at farmers' markets and on street corners to collect hundreds of signatures for the petition. The vast majority of people we talked to recognized the importance of paid sick days, especially during a pandemic, and many were shocked to realize how many workers in BC didn't have access to them.

Even after the BC NDP announced its inadequate temporary plan in May that mandates only three paid sick days for the remainder of the pandemic, Socialist Alternative members continued to collect petition signatures, as the NDP has said it will review the scheme by the end of 2021. It was clear from our conversations that many people are still concerned about the lack of paid sick days, and that a temporary plan for only three days is not going to be enough.

We need to keep up the pressure on the BC NDP to deliver a better program. Otherwise, they'll continue to betray the essential workers keeping our economy running in order to satisfy the bad faith concerns of the business community. Socialist Alternative will continue to collect signatures and help fight for a permanent plan that will ensure no one has to decide between paying rent or going to work sick. ★

Alberta's Misery Continues

Laura Blustein & Jared Blustein

The disaster that is Alberta premier Jason Kenney and his United Conservative Party (UCP) continues: failing on COVID, pipelines, jobs, education and more. Polling puts his support at 31 percent, the lowest figure of any premier.

The UCP live in a delusional world detached from economic and medical facts. In the spring, Kenney ignored rising COVID infections, pushing Alberta to the highest rate of cases in North America. He then broke his government's own rules with unsafe dining at the "Sky Palace," confirming the UCP's elitist, out of touch character. He tried to scapegoat people of colour and essential workers, blaming them for the COVID disaster, rather than his government's repeated failures to close unsafe workplaces like meat plants and those around Fort McMurray.

The UCP's energy policy is a shambles. After powerful and widespread public outcry, it retreated on its 2020 revoking of the 1976 coal mining policy. However, the government allowed companies that began coal exploration before the reversal to continue. Only the environmental review stopped the potentially disastrous Grassy Mountain open pit mine.

Kenney took a high-risk gamble on the Keystone pipeline; he lost, throwing away \$1.3 billion of Alberta taxpayers' money. This is only the latest action destroying Alberta's public sector. In July 2020, Kenney slashed corporate taxes to 8 percent (the lowest in Canada), claiming it would prevent job loss. Predictably, the layoffs continued, while the deficit ballooned to \$77 billion. Kenney's answer is to continue cutting jobs and services on top of the 60,000 jobs slashed from July 2019 to May 2021. Post-secondary education had cuts of \$135 million. Rather than increase taxes on big business

and the rich, the UCP increased income taxes, property taxes, school fees, tuitions, utility costs and introduced a \$90 fee to visit Kananaskis Park.

The UCP is enforcing a new school curriculum that by removing information on residential schools "white washes" history, expands "religious education," and reduces critical thinking skills.

Meanwhile, funds for educating students from pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 is cut by \$117 million by 2023.

The UCP is on the ropes. Some support has gone to the Wildrose Independence Party, a far-right, racist party. The NDP is now in the lead with around 40 percent support, enough to win, especially with a divided right. However, labour, the NDP and socialists can't just wait to defeat Kenney in 2023. They need to campaign now to drive out the UCP. Even more urgent is a program to rebuild Alberta's economy, protect jobs, public services and the environment, and end carbon fuel dependency.

Socialist Alternative is working to win that program and is on the rise! ★



Slashing Cuts in Newfoundland and Labrador

Corey Snook

How do you make a bad news budget feel like good news? Like any good magician, apply a healthy dose of misdirection. This is how the Liberals in Newfoundland and Labrador have continued the province's push to austerity with a good news grin for the cameras.

In preparation for the 2021 budget, the Liberals commissioned the neoliberal Greene report, which predicted a budget deficit of \$1.4 billion. Austerity was recommended, cutting spending on health care by 25 percent and on post-secondary education by 30 percent, mass layoffs, and privatizations of NL Hydroelectric, NL Liquor Corporation and more.

Yet, on budget day, May 31, the projected deficit was only \$820 million. The spin is that the crisis was averted due to good economic governance; most would assume this means the cuts are off the table.

Unfortunately, the Liberals will follow the Greene report, albeit gradually. For now, the highlights are the merging of departments (meaning layoffs), some changes to taxes – both progressive (a tax on high earners) and regressive (on sugary drinks, tobacco and gas) – and plans to scrap university funding with costs to rise more than \$3,000 a year per student.

The biggest feature of the budget is that it cements the status quo today and promises hell tomorrow. The Liberals say they want to cut \$900 million from the budget in the coming years. This will mean privatizations, more job cuts and gutting the public sector. Unless this is opposed it means opportunities for business to swoop in and a slow burn to a dead province for workers. ★

Ontario's Education Shambles

Roseanna Perchard

For the past year, Ontario secondary schools have operated a “quadmester” system. For those who don't know what this is, it is bewildering. For teachers and students, and many parents, it creates massive amounts of stress and anxiety during the deadly pandemic.

For ten weeks, students study only two subjects, with three days of the week in school for a 3-hours-and-45-minutes class and two days on-line (or exhausted) called “asynchronous.” After the ten weeks, on to the next two subjects.

The justification was to reduce class sizes during COVID. However, as the Ministry failed on so many issues, it was probably more about saving money. There were no staggered start times, no safety monitors outdoors, no outdoor classrooms, or more buses to keep students off public transit. The lack of ventilation and crowded entrances and routes to buses meant the Ministry's safety plan was full of holes.

In quadmesters there are no days for teachers to recover, and little time to prepare lessons and mark work, which gives students uncoordinated, unprepared classes. The quad system has been appalling for the mental health of both students and teachers. Seventy percent of teachers reported being burnt out and anxious. Students were subjected to the extreme stress of learning several new concepts in a day with little time to digest them. Before COVID, “Teaching to the test,” with the focus on students memorizing for exams rather encouraging understanding of the material and how to apply it, was a problem. With the quadmester system, it was the only teaching possible, damaging both teachers and students.

With the Ford government's horrific mishandling of education, before and during COVID, the teachers' unions should have mobilized to defend their drowning workers. When the second year of quadmesters was announced, the unions barely made a fuss. Teachers have the most power in the education system, and the unions should have mobilized it to defeat the quadmester system. Students and parents were left alone to fight – which they did – and won. Quadmesters are cancelled.

Students, parents, and teachers fighting together can win victories! We need more funding for education, a better employment system for teachers, and a better curriculum for students. All of this and more is possible if everyone in education unites towards a common goal. ★

To learn more about Socialist Alternative Youth, follow us on Instagram: @socialistalternativeyouth or email: sayouth.ca@gmail.com



Stolen Lives, Stolen Land

Allie Pev, Métis Cree, Treaty 6

One of the most gruesome of Canada's crimes against Indigenous peoples has been the theft of Indigenous children. Over 1,000 unmarked graves on residential school grounds have been recovered so far; this number will grow until all 139 schools are searched. The news is extremely re-traumatizing for Indigenous communities. This is on top of a global pandemic, which has disproportionately affected those in poverty, women and Black, Indigenous and people of colour, and on top of the growing climate crisis, deadly heat wave, opioid crisis and constant land struggles. The systems that uphold the Canadian state are systems that abuse, exploit and kill Indigenous peoples. These horrors are not solely historic nor are they a new development, but rather ongoing injustices perpetrated for the purpose of maintaining control, ownership and ability to profit from the land.

July 1st marked 154 years of confederation and the Canadian state's occupation of Indigenous homelands. To be clear, Indigenous peoples have never stopped resisting the violence of Canada, have never surrendered and will continue to defend their territories and sovereignty against ruinous industry expansion and the police state that protects it. The history of Canada reflects the intersections of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, racism, police violence and environmental destruction. All facets of contemporary Canadian society have a historical basis that impacts present-day institutions, policies, consciousness and day-to-day life. Prior to contact, Indigenous peoples lived in complex and vibrant societies. Their relationship with the land transcends ownership and possession.

Colonialism, imperialism and capitalism flat out reject any type of relationship with the land that isn't motivated by commodification, exploitation and profit. Capitalist expansion demands unending growth and requires ever-expanding markets. Canada's land mass was considered “unused” and ready for the taking.

Legislated Genocide

The Canadian state required an all-encompassing

Kamloops

by Pete Marlowe

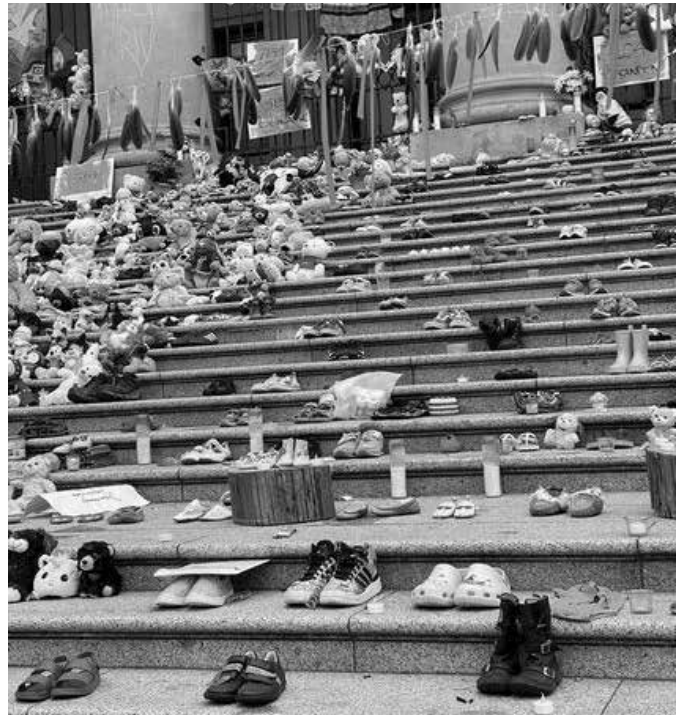
I walked through childhood safe in sweet belief.
With my country founded as a Just Society,
my church upon faith, hope and charity,
I genuflected to the cross and maple leaf.

Now, in buried echoes down my soul,
this long lost unmarked hole
where I by faith and country stand accused,
I hear no anthems, no bells toll,
just empty footsteps of tiny shoes.

set of policies and laws addressing nearly every aspect of Indigenous existence to control and eventually assimilate Indigenous peoples. The *Indian Act* is one of the most genocidal pieces of legislation ever to be implemented. For many years it prohibited bands from raising money or accessing lawyers to pursue land claims. It defined who was and who was not an “Indian” under Canadian law with absolutely no regard for complex kinship systems; many women and their descendants lost status this way. Hereditary and matriarchal leadership systems were undermined by the implementation of the Band and Council system. To further assault Indigenous identity, the Act banned the Potlatch and Sun Dance ceremonies and eventually came to oversee the expansion of residential schools, granting churches financial and political support. Indigenous peoples were forcefully displaced to small portions of land, dispossessed of traditional territories and food systems, unable to retain self-sufficient and reciprocal relationships with the land. Indigenous kinship and governance systems have been disrupted, forcing communities to become dependent on the colonial system, leading to cycles of poverty. The Canadian state intentionally ignores poverty, inadequate housing and no access to clean drinking water on some reserves (basic human rights), leaving communities in deadly situations. Indigenous peoples endure the disproportionate harm done by reactionary, punitive and racist systems.

Government Unwilling to Act

Governments don't lack the ability to act, they are unwilling to do so. Numerous government inquiries, commissions and research projects have concluded that Canada is guilty of genocide against Indigenous peoples and that immediate action is required to preserve and revitalize Indigenous culture and ways of life. But governments will fight against systemic change. The exploitation of Indigenous people and land is international, destroying communities, culture, language and pushing us closer every year to climate catastrophe, which is arguably already here. Massive forest fires, widespread weather pattern changes, and this year the Pacific Northwest was hit with an unprecedented heat wave that killed over 600 people in BC alone and tragically burned the town of Lytton to the ground, displacing thousands. The heat was certainly an accelerator but the rail lines running throughout the territory have long been an issue raised by the community, citing the imminent hazard of sparks causing a blaze. Only 5 days after the fire, trains were running just south of Lytton. We can't examine climate change removed from the capitalist system that always puts profits before people. Climate change impacts Indigenous and low-income people first. The risks of



In memory in Vancouver

exploitative industries are not only extremely high but any leaks, spills or just the expected consequences of carbon intensive projects have worldwide impacts.

The struggle is international

Because this oppression and exploitation is international, so too must our struggle against it be. No transformative changes to this system can exist for long in isolation. “Even without leadership, spontaneous struggles can grab temporary victories, or force the ruling class into partial concessions,” says the International Socialist Alternative. “But such spontaneity will eventually run into limits, and concessions can be rolled back if these movements are not able to bring themselves to a higher and more organised level, including by embracing a program that goes beyond the logic of capitalism.” Only in cooperation with international Indigenous struggles, women's struggles, workers' struggles, the fight against racism and other movements can we see the return of land to Indigenous peoples and challenge the system that threatens to destroy the conditions for life on this planet. On this basis, we can fight for a clear revolutionary program that includes protecting the land and people and ending the systemic oppression of Indigenous peoples. This means completely dismantling capitalism and colonialism, replacing it with a socialist system that supports people and the planet. ★

For a complete version of this article visit: socialistalternative.ca

Unite Here: The Struggle Continues

Sam Gates & Brendan Smith



Unite Here on the picket line

BC Hotel workers, many of them members of Unite Here Local 40, have achieved some important victories since COVID began. Through determined organizing, workers at the Hyatt, Pinnacle, and Westin hotels have successfully secured the right of recall to their former jobs after management tried to have many of them permanently laid off during the pandemic.

However, many more hotel workers are still fighting to keep their jobs and secure the right to recall as hotels use COVID as an excuse to replace workers and worsen working conditions. At the Hilton, the imposed lockout of the workers drags on, even as travel restrictions relax. The Pacific Gateway Hotel can afford major new construction but claim they can't afford to pay the workers. This hotel was a COVID

quarantine hotel, but Trudeau's Liberals were happy with management attacking the union.

At the Hilton, hotel workers convinced Lufthansa's unionized flight crews to stop crossing the picket line. The Hilton's owner has a number of properties in Edmonton, where further possibilities for worker solidarity would prove indispensable. Unions and other organizations are refusing to use the Hilton and it is losing a lot of big-event business.

In 2020 workers demanded that the government not give hotels relief money unless they agreed to hire back laid off workers. But the NDP Government refused to act, claiming it could not interfere with collective bargaining.

The NDP continually tries to find some middle road between labour and capital. Right-wing governments know there is no middle ground: they serve the interests of big business and regularly interfere in collective bargaining on the side of the bosses.

Local 40 won major victories in 2019 by determined on-the-ground organizing. This was how the unions were built and remains true today: when workers fight, they can win.

Socialist Alternative has been proud to volunteer in the struggles of Unite Here including the hunger strike, customer boycott campaigns and picket line. ★

Fight for Sick Pay: Join a Union

Alex Gennai

Recently, the governments of Ontario and BC announced temporary sick pay programs in response to COVID. It took the governments over a year to act. Only PEI and Québec had programs before COVID, and most provinces still have none.

It would be a time to celebrate if the programs were in any way adequate. At an absurdly short three days, they don't even come close. It's clear that no government, conservative or social democratic, is willing to grant workers their rights. They must instead be won in struggle.

If workers are sick, they need time off. Viruses have their own schedule. They do not wait for weekends or vacations to strike. Sick pay means the autonomy to choose when to let the body heal. It means healthier co-workers, and in a pandemic that means lives will be saved.

Doug Ford, Ontario's Conservative premier, acted before BC's supposedly worker-friendly NDP. In Ontario, the NDP opposition proposed ten days of paid sick leave, which the Ford government defeated, yet the NDP in government in BC is only in favour of three days! Both programs are essentially low-barrier subsidies for employers that don't already offer sick pay, effectively rewarding their exploitation of workers. According to the BC Minister of Labour, this is supposedly meant to "bridge

the gap to the federal [sick pay] program" – another wholly inadequate program that subsidizes business.

BC's current program will be succeeded by a permanent one at the end of the year. The legislation for that program has yet to be written. In such struggles, workers' leverage can be measured by how organized they are. Democratically run unions are the only way for workers to have political power. The ones we have in BC are far from perfect, but they are advocating for all workers, union members or not. The fight is not over. Join a union and help secure a victory for working people. ★



The fight for paid sick days

Life of a Grocery Worker



It's not all smiles in the grocery aisle

I've worked in the grocery industry for my entire career. I've been at this current store for over a decade. I've also worked at a distribution centre.

Our new boss is the worst. The kind of boss who claims they don't have a lot to go over at the beginning of a meeting but manages to stretch it into an hour-and-a-half. The kind of boss who breathes down my co-worker's neck, even though he's a proven hard worker. Not to mention, the lack of a spine – acting more like a store manager kowtowing to corporate headquarters, than a franchise holder, which they are, and so could show more discretion. Far worse than what I'd ever seen before from our old bosses (and dragging all the workers along in the process).

It's frustrating to be forced to order products from an inferior and previously tested supplier – resulting in vast amounts of waste – but it's satisfying to see the eventual about-face back to ordering from the superior source.

I've also noticed their complete inability to find out easily accessible information. For instance, this boss likes to ask us about products in short supply, hoping to catch us having forgotten to order something – but the issue is typically that the product just didn't ship. Our old boss would just check the invoices every morning; it really is that easy.

There's nothing like having your lunch break turn into an impromptu meeting on new merchandising programs or being told that you have to completely change your personality in order to be an optimal employee. There was also that time where the boss said our entire department was "slow" – even though we obtain steady sales and profit growth. Maybe we will demonstrate a real slowdown one day.

I've adopted something of a coping mechanism – that is, avoiding unnecessary contact with the boss, at all costs. I've suggested the same course of action to co-workers who are dealing with similar irritations. Workers of the world, avoid your boss! You have nothing to lose but your anxiety!

A fighting union might be good too. ★

What Makes Me Angry: Money Talking

Larry Hyink




The CBC reported a court decision curtailing the Canadian government's ability to "arbitrarily" revoke a person's Nexus card. For those souls who are unfamiliar with Nexus, it's a program between the Canadian and US governments allowing people who frequently go back and forth across the border to skip most customs checks.

In this case, the traveller said he had \$6,000 US in cash, but, whoopsie-daisy, he actually had \$7,736 US plus another 1,450 euros in an envelope that he "forgot." This put him over the top (\$10,000 CAD) for bringing undeclared cash into Canada. As a result, his Nexus card was cancelled then and there. Obviously, every MIDDLE CLASS CANADIAN, of the sort Justin Trudeau likes to pretend he caters to, is outraged by this arbitrary overreach! Um...well...I guess they are ... somewhere. Talking to every "middle class" Canadian I can lay my hands on, I haven't found a single one who even has a Nexus Card (cost ~\$60 CAD), much less a big pile of "forgotten" money. The judge, on a salary of over \$300,000, thought forgetting \$12,200 CAD was an "isolated, honest mistake." Most of us wish we had that sort of money to forget!

As a gesture of goodwill to "middle-class" folks wherever they are, having trouble keeping track of their wads of cash, the government has decided not to appeal the Court's decision. Appealing court decisions in forever wars of litigation only seems important to the government of Canada in the interests of denying equal treatment to First Nations children or denying the very existence of First Nations victims of Canadian ethnic cleansing.

Most media sources don't connect the dots between government's willingness to make life easier for the privileged to move money with minimal inconvenience vs. the die in the ditch attitude towards simple economic and social justice for those just plain too poor or institutionally disadvantaged to qualify for more than the soothing mantras of Justin Trudeau's apologies and promises. Connecting these dots gives a picture of what this government or any capitalist government is really about: Protecting Private Property and Profits. "Truth and Reconciliation," "Climate Action," "Social Justice" and other feel-good slogans trotted out by Trudeau and his pals are just window dressing for the same old system of "From the Needy to the Greedy." ★





Bill Hopwood & Tim Heffernan

COVID

COVID has been brutal. It exposed and pressure-cooked many pre-existing conditions and problems: inequality, rundown public health systems, utterly inadequate seniors' care, opioid pandemic and more.

Repeated government failures made COVID worse, boosting infections and deaths, piling on anguish, stress and worry, hitting employment, exhausting essential workers and fuelling a mental health crisis.

Now there is hope that the worst is over although new more infectious variants risk further waves. Moreover, the future looks very different depending on people's circumstances. COVID has stretched inequality to the breaking point – we were never "all in this together."

The rich got even richer. Canada's 47 billionaires gained \$78 billion during COVID. In contrast, 53 percent of Canadians are \$200 a month away from being unable to pay their bills, literally living paycheque to paycheque.

Roaring Twenties?

To save big business and stop total collapse, Canada's government poured over \$300 billion into the economy through various COVID programs. The Bank of Canada bought nearly \$200 billion of bonds.

But even in an emergency, inequality increased. The richest 20 percent of families got \$2,631 more from COVID programs than the poorest 20 percent. Some wages are so low that workers were better off on CERB's \$2,000 a month – proof that minimum wage must increase everywhere.

Corporations received generous support, including companies that took CEWS (Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy) and then fired workers. Others took the subsidy and boosted CEOs' pay and shareholders' dividends. Thirty corporations taking CEWS gave nearly \$2 billion to shareholders.

Profits have soared, up 52 percent on pre-pandemic levels. Now profits are 16 percent of the national income, the highest since 1961. The big five banks' second-quarter profits in 2021 are 2.5 times, or \$7.7 billion, higher than last year.

The rich and better-paid came through COVID just fine. With limited spending on restaurants, entertainment and travel they have money in the

bank; household savings increased by over \$200 billion. The wealthy have poured money into speculative bubbles. The stock market is in the stratosphere and bitcoin prices are insane.

All the money held by banks, corporations, the rich and well-paid workers has economists and businesses hoping for a boom. As COVID restrictions end there will be a Roaring Twenties for the well-off.

However, as in the 1920s, many will be left out of the fun. Low-paid workers were hit hard by COVID and many have not recovered. Over 1.6 million people are unemployed and nearly one million more people are "underutilized." Youth unemployment is 14 percent, nearly double the overall average.

Any boom will have weak foundations. Before COVID, the world was heading to recession.

Governments' mass spending has given capitalism a boost. But like a drug high, afterwards comes a crash. The huge surplus of goods and overcapacity in production means capitalism is not investing, and productivity is growing at a snail's pace. The pent-up demand from months of lockdown in some places will not sustain the economy in the long term. Total world debt climbed to \$US281 trillion at the end of 2020. When interest rates rise, the debt mountain can cause financial crises.

The continuing US-China conflict destabilizes the world. The post-COVID boom could be short-lived, followed by another recession or even depression.

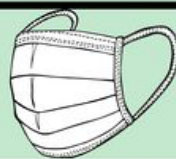
Housing

The frenzy of speculative capital has hit ordinary Canadians with exploding house prices. In one year to February 2021, house prices were up 25 percent. The madness spread from Toronto and Vancouver to Canada's small towns and suburbs, as people with high salaries working from home moved from the big cities. In some areas, prices have jumped 50 percent.

Rents are rising again. Many renters piled up debt as they were laid off during COVID. They now have to pay back the arrears and the rent eviction



GO



AMAZON
TAXED!



bans have ended. Some renters face a grim future.

With crazy prices, mortgage debt has soared to \$2.1 trillion. An interest rate increase would put many recent home buyers into crisis. The seeds of a future disaster are being sowed. Housing remains a nightmare for millions.

"Essential Workers"

Workers described as "essential" didn't have good wages or sick pay but were much more likely to get COVID. Sickeningly, politicians, to distract from their failings, blamed young people and South Asians for spreading COVID. Work was a major spreader of COVID, but was hardly ever mentioned by politicians. Repeatedly, governments and public health officials refused to close down unsafe workplaces, looking after their big-business friends.

Workers in seniors' homes, health services, distribution, warehouses, factories, meat plants and grocery stores are essential, but capitalism treats them as disposable. As capitalism relies on multiple oppressions, these workers are often women, racialized people, young people and recent immigrants. COVID has starkly shown which workers are essential to society – clearly not the rich – many will demand a reckoning as COVID ends.

Indigenous

The findings of unmarked children's graves have reignited the deep pain that runs through Indigenous peoples' blood memory (p 4) who always knew of these sites. Time is needed to grieve, to remember, and for ceremony. But the time for inquiries, platitudes and apologies is over. Many non-Indigenous people agree: now is the time for real action.

Climate Disaster – Dirty Thirties

Climate disasters are hitting hard, with worse to come (back page). For more than forty years the fossil fuel industry denied the science and blocked actions.

Alongside the Great Depression, a drought hit North America causing crop failure and soil blowing away – the Dirty Thirties. Again, parts of the prairies are in extreme drought.

Capitalism treats the natural world, essential to life, as "external," to exploit and pollute. Tackling climate change and the other ecological disasters requires

major investment now to avoid future catastrophic loss of lives and jobs. International planning and cooperation are fundamental. The environment alone is reason enough to overthrow capitalism and build a socialist society.

Struggle Ahead

COVID paused some struggles but they will return. Indigenous struggles never ceased and are a rising tide. There is deep systemic racism in the police, courts and other institutions, fed by some politicians. Yet the huge outpourings after recent killings and the Kamloops findings show the outrage. Summer 2020 saw Black Lives Matter rallies across Canada, from small towns to cities, and most of the participants weren't Black.

Essential workers have suffered COVID hell: long hours, stressed beyond limits, often without proper protection and risking their health and lives. They still have low pay and will push for this to end. So far, union leaders have mostly held back struggle, but increasingly union members are demanding action.

Make the Rich Pay

Canada is awash with wealth. Most Canadians do not want to return to the pre-COVID "normal" of low wages, soaring inequality, homelessness, profound racism and discrimination, and climate disaster.

The present lack of good public transit, a mass house-building program, universal healthcare (including seniors' care), clean water on reserves, good wages and public services all cost working people money and their health. Instead of working people paying, the rich should pay: they are rolling in money.

Canada needs a fair tax system that is not a gift to the super rich. A modestly progressive tax program would raise over \$150 billion for public services, which would go a long way to tackle the problems that Canadians face.

The wealth of Canada's capitalist class is based on stolen Indigenous lands and the mass exploitation of the working class. Justice demands taking this unearned wealth from a tiny minority and establishing a fair society. Placing key sectors of the economy in democratic public ownership will enable us to get to the root of the mounting problems. This would open up a socialist transformation of society, providing a good quality of life for all and a healthy planet. ★



"Can't Have Capitalism Without Racism"

Ray Goerke



The targeted killing of the Afzaal family is despicable and is the latest in an unmistakable trend of increasing anti-Muslim violence over several decades. It followed the discovery of 215 unmarked graves by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation at a former Kamloops Residential School, a painful reminder of the longstanding history of racist violence against Indigenous people in Canada.

This spring a shooting rampage claimed the lives of eight people in Atlanta, motivated by anti-Asian hate. Last year a global rebellion followed the police murder of George Floyd. This, and the killing of Chantel Moore of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation by New Brunswick police during a "wellness check," brought people onto the streets in Canada. It's clear that racism is part of society.

Much progress has been made through the efforts of mass organizations of racialized people to demand equal rights. Only a few generations ago there was more blatant discrimination and segregation of Black, Brown, Asian and Indigenous people throughout North America, not to mention the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow in the United States. Despite these gains systemic racism remains baked into society today.

Most progressives recognize that racism is not merely the result of personal immorality. The institutions that decide how resources are distributed and how punishments are administered are all stacked against racialized people in ways that are impossible for individuals to prevent. Black people in Canada make up 3 percent of the overall population but 8.5 percent of those in federal custody. Indigenous people make up 5 percent of the overall population but 30 percent of those in federal custody. Indigenous children comprise 65 percent of children in state care, and that percentage increased each of the last four years.

These statistics show that even when discrimination is outlawed, the actual systems of racism can remain

and continue to perpetuate poorer material outcomes for racialized people. This is not surprising when you understand the origins of racism. Racism has not always existed and is in fact a modern phenomenon. While human societies have long had different kinds of xenophobia or bigotry towards people who were "different," the idea of hereditary biological categories of humans emerged out of specific material and economic conditions, coinciding with the emergence of capitalism itself.

The ruling class in pre-capitalist feudal European society had no use for racism, in fact it would have found it counter-productive. Feudal rulers justified the acquisition of new land and serfs by the policy of religious conversion. It was thus in their interest that all foreigners could be converted to Christianity. In contrast, the rising capitalist class in the 17th century was guided by Enlightenment philosophies of rationality and secularism. Nevertheless, the growth and development of capitalism within Europe required the constant expansion of markets, facilitated through the expansion of colonialism and slavery. This project required a new pseudo-scientific justification for the subjugation of whole populations of people.

Material economic interests, philosophical ideals, and racist ideology influenced and justified one another as the modern world evolved. Anti-Black racism was used to justify the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, which the European capitalist class used to meet the enormous demand for labour in their new colonies. Later, capitalists like John A. Macdonald used racism to justify genocide by employing the RCMP (then called the North-West Mounted Police) to remove Indigenous people from their land to convert it into private property and expand capitalism's reach. As the labour movement grew in power, racism was used to create divisions in the working class that drive down working conditions for everyone and create a barrier to true class solidarity.

Capitalism required the invention of racism for it to grow and used it at every stage in its development to serve the interests of the ruling class. Racism was built into capitalism from the very beginning, and it has endured to this day. That's what Malcolm X meant when he said, "you can't have capitalism without racism." Capitalism brought racism into existence. There is no basis to end racism without ending capitalism itself. ★



Malcolm X

The Road to Peace in Israel and Palestine

Huey Wilde & Leslie Kemp

The longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict can seem unending and beyond solution to those outside of the country. To those directly involved on the ground, the complexity of issues around land settlements, displacement of Palestinians, a one- or two-state solution, eruptions of violence and more have a sharp dividing line: do you support the right of Palestinians to their own land and government?

International Socialist Alternative has a class perspective on struggles, including on the issue of the right of nations to self-determination. This is a challenging view to put forward in the polarized atmosphere of Israeli-Palestinian politics. However, our organization in Israel-Palestine, *Socialist Struggle*, does just that. It has engaged in working-class struggles and left movements on both sides of the national divide, advancing working-class solidarity in struggles against exploitation, poverty, lack of affordable housing, oppression, the occupation, the siege of Gaza, imperialist wars and for socialist change and regional peace.

Outrage and public scrutiny have done nothing to stop illegal Israeli settlements and Palestinian displacement; they're as ineffective as the rocket and mortar attacks fired from the Gaza strip. What shakes a ruling class is mass movements of a united working class because it hits profits and shifts the power dynamic between the two.

The general strike on May 18 was a step towards working-class solidarity. It saw sweeping closures of Palestinian business and labour strikes across the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, and within Israel. Moving examples of class solidarity emerged such as Israeli

bus drivers who offered rides to their Palestinian counterparts, giving them safe passage in the chaos. The strike was a major blow to the Israeli economy, hitting the construction industry (an area heavily dependent on Palestinian labour) with losses totalling \$40 million. The last general strike of note of Palestinians was in 1936, part of an uprising by Palestinian Arabs against the British administration of the Palestine Mandate.

Since 1936 the landscape has changed: Palestinians and, increasingly, the Palestinian Youth Movement, both at home and within their diaspora, have the ability to organize and influence like never before. Given the deeply polarized politics within Israel and Palestine, working-class struggle along class lines, rather than national lines, holds promise for long-term change. True peace will come to this region when capitalism is overthrown and the socialist states of Israel and Palestine create a new society of justice, peace and solidarity. ★

For more information on our Israel/Palestine section
Socialist Struggle: <https://socialism.org.il/>



Global Protests Continue

Christopher Fofonoff

The start of COVID paused the worldwide protest movements of 2019: on climate, for women's rights, and in many places including India, Hong Kong, Sudan, Chile, France and Lebanon. After over a year of COVID, things are fully back to normal – the new “normal” of mass protests and resistance.

Protestors and mass strikes in Colombia against regressive tax and healthcare attacks have not been defeated by bloody repression. In Thailand, demonstrations sparked by royal corruption and a fraudulent election roiled the country from February 2020 to April 2021. The huge farmers' resistance to neoliberal agricultural attacks, along with a 250-million-strong general strike, have rocked India for nearly a year.

In Myanmar, resistance to the February coup was sparked by health workers with walkouts and strikes.

The military's brutal reprisals have not stopped the struggle. Workers and youth continue to resist, with widespread strikes and the economy at a standstill. There is the risk of civil war, with the major world powers using the Myanmar people as pawns in their geopolitical struggles. A movement of workers and poor peasants is the way to avert this disaster.

Around the world, those at the top of governments (military and civilian) are tied to international capitalism, which wants countries' natural resources and cheap labour.

The working class are the strongest fighters for democracy and should be wary of kind words from imperialist powers or regimes' attempts to placate them by deals with “liberal” leaders. The workers, allied with the rural poor, have the power to defeat these governments, ending repression and poverty. ★

Biden Presidency: How to Win Progressive Change in the US

Rebecca Green, *Socialist Alternative US*

Biden's presidency began in the midst of the raging pandemic and the economic crisis, and following the January 6 attack on the Capitol. He rolled out policies more radical than his election campaign, including the stimulus package that sent \$1,400 cheques and childcare support directly to families, extended federal unemployment, and massively ramped up COVID testing and vaccinations. His promises of a \$15 an hour minimum wage, healthcare reform, bold climate action and the cancellation of student debt boosted his approval ratings.

But now as COVID numbers have plummeted and there is a sense of a return to normalcy, many of Biden's legislative proposals are dead in the water. Memory of his initial direct aid is fading for Americans who are still tens of billions behind in rent, bracing for the loss of unemployment top-ups, evictions, and a return of student debt collection this autumn.

Democrats, who control the White House and both halls of Congress, blame the Republicans. With the undemocratic, and historically racist filibuster rule in the Senate, Democrats claim they have to win 10 Republican votes to pass any legislation. In reality, the Democrats could have passed a \$15 minimum wage with Biden's initial stimulus without needing any Republican support. But Biden's commitment to collaboration with the openly hostile Republicans and conservative Democrats like Joe Manchin, who rejected \$15, meant the popular promise was dropped.

The Democrats can abolish the filibuster with a simple procedure at any time, but Manchin again is standing in the way. Abolishing the filibuster would clear the way for Democrats to pass legislation including the most pro-union laws since WWII, federal voting rights to stop state Republicans who are pushing hundreds of voter suppression bills, extending legal protections for LGBTQ+ people, and more.

In reality the filibuster is a convenient excuse to abandon policies that many Democrats and their corporate backers never wanted. Conservative Democrats themselves would stand in the way if this procedural barrier was removed. Mass pressure of movements and protest is the way to overcome this reluctance to abolish the filibuster and support progressive legislation. However, movement building has never been in the Democrats' wheelhouse.

In Seattle, Socialist Alternative councillor Kshama Sawant recently won historic renters' rights, including a ban on school-year evictions and evictions due to non-payment of rent under COVID. This follows winning the historic tax on Amazon and big business to fund affordable housing, and a ban on police use of crowd control weapons. Kshama's movement building is the source of these victories, dragging along the city

council Democrats who, like their federal colleagues, pay lip service to progressive issues and then pretend they're impossible to pass.

Now, Kshama is facing a right-wing, big-business recall attempt because of her support for Black Lives Matter. They are coming after her exactly because she has been effective. Her success is the success of independent politics, of rejecting collaboration with pro-corporate politicians, and a militant, movement building approach. This is how we've won in Seattle, and it'll be how we win victories for working people across the country. ★

For more information about Socialist Alternative in the United States: www.socialistalternative.org



Kshama Sawant in Seattle

Québec's Dangerous Health and

Alexandra L., Alternative Socialiste Québec

In October 2020, the right-wing CAQ government dropped a bomb on Québec's workers: Bill 59, which claimed it would reform health and safety. At first, there was enthusiasm as reforms were needed because the regulations had not been updated since 1985. Amongst other issues, the current law does not properly cover sectors where women are the majority, there is a lack of significant mental health coverage and the compensation process after an accident is extremely difficult for workers. If the workers are not unionized, it is almost impossible.

But after careful analysis, the workers' movement – both unions and community groups – saw how much this "reform" is a major setback. If enacted, this reform will save employers between \$1.5 to \$4.5 billion a year but will cost injured workers and their families. Workers might end up having to negotiate

Hong Kong & China Solidarity

Martin LeBrun

The dictatorship of Xi Jinping and the misnamed Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is an imperialist regime that oppresses the democratic rights of workers, young people, women and ethnic minorities.

China has a state-capitalist economy featuring CCP state interventions, but also private profits reaped by both foreign and Chinese capitalists. China has the world's most billionaires, and many are CCP members. Its leaders, generals and ministers are wealthier than in any other government on Earth. The dictatorship works with powerful companies to exploit and oppress workers, to maintain its power and to guarantee the private mega-profits now being invested beyond China's borders.

Xi's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a giant program of Chinese infrastructure in over 100 countries around the world, tying these countries to the Chinese economy via trade and debt. In 2017, countries owed more than 6 percent of world GDP in debt to China. The BRI does not aim to improve the lives of working people as debt repayment soaks up funds and pushes nations to worsen working conditions.

The Chinese regime fears all real or potential opposition and increasingly relies on Han Chinese nationalism. It is repressing feminists, workers, and "Maoist" students. The regime is seeking to erase or assimilate Mongolians, Tibetans and Uyghurs, forcing children to use Mandarin. The most extreme repression is currently in Xinjian, with up to 10 percent of the local Uyghur population being subjected to concentration camps, disappearances, torture, rape, and non-consensual birth control.

In response to Hong Kong's huge pro-democracy movement, the CCP took unprecedented steps to repress democratic rights and movements. The 2020 National Security Law harshly punishes any criticism of the Chinese regime, with a maximum penalty of life in prison. The CCP has imprisoned hundreds of democracy activists including many candidates and former members of the now disbanded Legislative Council. We demand the release of all political prisoners, even if we do not agree with their political ideas. We highlight the case of "Long Hair," a prominent socialist leader of the democracy movement who has actively supported workers' causes in China and Hong Kong, women's, LGBTQ, and refugee rights, and opposed US imperialism.

Workers and ethnic minorities in Hong Kong and China can have no confidence in Canadian or US government support. Both have been the regime's satisfied business partners for decades, selling to China and exploiting China's low wages, inferior working conditions and lax environmental regulations. Only now that China's economy threatens to become the largest in the world, branching out into strategic tech sectors, have Canadian and US governments turned to an anti-Chinese cold war. But corporations continue to profit from the dictatorship's exploitation of its people and environment. Governments and big business will not champion the causes of the oppressed in China and Hong Kong.

This is why Solidarity Against Repression in China and Hong Kong highlights what is really happening in China and Hong Kong. It will mobilize solidarity from ordinary people, workers and youth globally. The ISA has already organized hundreds of events. Across Canada, Socialist Alternative protested HSBC bank's support of the CCP and the new National Security Law. There are more actions to come. Get involved! ★

For more information on the solidarity campaign:
<https://www.facebook.com/hkrepression/>

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



Solidarity action in Philadelphia

Safety Plans

with their bosses for health and safety inspection time and could get forced to return to work before their injuries are properly healed. Bill 59 would take Québec workers back 40 years with the worst health and safety regulations in North America.

Activists in the streets, in unions and in community groups are fighting this attack. Together we've avoided setbacks: better recognition that firefighting causes cancer, and employers' doctors cannot decide a woman's maternity leave eligibility. Significantly, the working class's unified opposition has stalled the Bill, with Québec's National Assembly adjourned until September with more than half of the clauses not reviewed.

But the fight is not over. We've bought time to further critique the bill and force the CAQ to drop the reform in the fall. The fight continues! ★

For more information on Québec and Alternative Socialiste: www.alternativesocialiste.org

A Page From History

The Discovery of Insulin, 1921

Jim Sugiyama



Best and Banting

“There is a scourge that is killing millions of children. They unaccountably wither, develop symptoms of extreme thirst, often presenting to hospital out of breath, and lapsing into comas. They suffer from extremely high blood sugar. Modern medicine has tried many things to save these children – starvation diets, carbohydrate-free diets and strict exercise. While some benefit from these therapies, all patients inevitably die.

“Dr Frederick Banting, and graduate student Charles Best, in the laboratory of Dr MacLeod have successfully treated a diabetic patient with a pancreatic extract. Dr James Collip, another member of MacLeod’s group, has successfully isolated the active principle, which he is calling ‘isletin.’

“This groundbreaking research was funded by the Pfizer Corporation, which has patented the extract. Its shareholders are excited by the prospect of a several-billion-dollar profit projected for the new breakthrough drug.”

Thankfully the above is a fantasy. In reality, Banting and Best toiled in obscurity in MacLeod’s laboratory, with meagre funds from the University of Toronto. The purification of “isletin,” later renamed insulin, laid the groundwork for mass production of the protein, which would eventually save millions of lives globally. This was facilitated by the sale of the patent for insulin, by its discoverers, to the U of T, for \$1.

Sadly however, in the murderous grasp of Capitalism, the need to mass produce insulin was assumed by Connaught labs, then an affiliate of U of T, who granted Eli Lilly production rights in the US in exchange for a one-year distribution monopoly. Connaught was eventually bought out by the European giant Sanofi. Today, Sanofi, Lilly and Novo Nordisk control over ninety percent of the global insulin market and have tripled prices in the last decade. The three “monsters” can crush any attempt to produce a generic or grease the palms of generic manufacturers to “cease and desist.”

Meanwhile diabetics are dying outright due to an inability to afford their insulin, the cost of which has increased 11 percent annually since 2001. Thousands of others are forced to ration their lifegiving medication, at the cost of their health.

Whether it is COVID vaccines or insulin, it is time to end the stranglehold of Big Pharma and Capitalism on health! ★

A Good War

by Seth Klein

reviewed by Bill Hopwood



A Good War outlines how Canada could successfully overcome the climate emergency, and tackle poverty and inequality.

Klein correctly argues that “tackling the climate crisis is not a technical or policy problem.” The barrier is political: the “new climate deniers,” politicians and businesses that claim they understand the science but do not act or act far too slowly. They

blame public opinion for their lack of actions. Klein exposes this lie with extensive polling showing 70 to 80 percent support for action on climate that includes jobs and taxing the rich. Even in Alberta, support reaches 56 percent.

The book outlines the actions needed to convert the economy from carbon, tackle inequality, ensure good jobs and respect Indigenous rights. Core to a just transition is government planning of the economy and public ownership.

Klein compares this to World War II, when the government transformed Canada. It fully mobilized resources, money and labour for victory, directing production, capping profits and using publicly owned organizations for production and allocation of resources. Klein argues correctly that this could be done to tackle the climate disaster. However, the barrier is mainstream politicians, locked into a neoliberal framework, who “appease” big business rather than challenge their decades-long refusal to act. Corporations continue to put profits before the needs of humanity.

Workers and capitalists fought the war for different reasons. Workers were fighting for democracy and against fascism. Government and big business were unconcerned about the crushing of democracy or the conquests by Japan, Italy or Germany until the conquest of France and Asian colonies in 1940 and 1941. The capitalists’ war was to defend profits, markets, colonies and territory.

Faced with soaring support for the CCF and its “conscript wealth” policies, Canada’s government shifted, introducing reforms and talking of a “people’s war.”

It is a dangerous illusion to hope that capitalism will have a change of heart as the climate disaster gets worse. The campaign for climate justice needs to rely on the strength of mass movements, building common struggles uniting environmentalists, Indigenous and union activists. Tackling climate disaster needs international planning and cooperation, and putting the needs of people and planet first – a socialist world. ★

Women's Struggle Against Misogyny

Leslie Kemp

Every day, misogyny rears its ugly head: systemic discrimination towards Indigenous women, the failure of police and courts to take sexual violence seriously, harassment at work and on the streets, and violence from intimate partners. The World Health Organization estimates that one in three women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate violence in their lifetime. Most common is intimate partner violence.

Misogyny is both individual and systemic. Personal and political. Misogyny is woven into the fabric of Canadian institutions: police, courts, the military and government bureaucracy.

The military has a long history of sexual abuse. Record numbers of women are reporting sexual harassment and violence. These incidents flow from the highest echelons of the military command.

The conviction rate for sexual assaults in Canada is abysmally low. Sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in Canada. Just 1 in 20 incidents are reported to police: of the sexual assaults substantiated by police, just 10 percent result in conviction.

Mumilaaq Qaqqaq is one of many women



A woman's place is in the struggle

challenging the status quo. The 27-year old said in her farewell speech as a Nunavut MP, "Every time I walk onto House of Commons grounds, speak in these chambers, I am reminded every step of the way I don't belong here. I have never felt safe or protected in my position."

Collective action is needed to challenge systemic misogyny. This should not be left to those most vulnerable. Socialist Alternative works to eradicate sexism while fighting to overthrow capitalism, which fuels this oppression. Join our struggle for a socialist world – one where women feel safe in their homes, on the streets and in the House of Commons. ★

Climate and Jobs (continued from back page)



Sustainable teens action in Vancouver

Climate change will destroy jobs. The 2001-02 drought in the prairies cost the economy \$6 billion, and 41,000 jobs. Droughts and shrinking glaciers that feed the prairie's rivers threaten farming. Climate disaster is the real threat to the economy and jobs.

The billions in government subsidies and spending on pipelines, if used instead to produce renewable energy, provide public transit in cities, improve inter-city rail for passengers and freight, upgrade buildings and take other environmentally beneficial actions, would provide millions of jobs. There is plenty of work in repairing the damaged environment. This would create five to

ten times as many jobs as fossil fuel production for the same level of investment: in well-paid union jobs that are healthier and more rewarding than putting out forest fires or extracting bitumen.

The barrier to action is not technical – the technology and knowledge exist. The real barrier is the greed of big business, and mainstream politicians who appease the corporations. Big business has blocked action for decades and continue to do so. Over the past five years, 60 of the world's largest banks have increased their investment in fossil fuels by \$4.7 trillion. Canadian banks – RBC, TD, Scotia and BMO – are in the top twenty.

Private companies chasing profits cannot solve the climate crisis. It needs international cooperation. The energy sector and the banks need to be taken into democratic public ownership. The resources of these companies and the skills of the workforce, along with re-skilling, would provide a way to tackle the climate crisis and benefit working people. The climate crisis demands the democratic reorganization of the Canadian economy.

2019 saw waves of climate protest, with a million marching in Canada on September 27. While COVID temporarily paused climate struggle, it will return super-charged by the recent heat horror.

Socialist Alternative is fighting for a future of good jobs on a healthy planet. ★



Climate Nightmare

Climate Justice & Jobs

Simon Schweitzer & Bill Hopwood

A heat dome gripped the west of the US and Canada. On the first day in Lytton the temperature rose to 39°C. On the second day it rose to 46.6°C. On the third day it was 47.5°C, and the heat dome's reign was declared "dangerous and prolonged." On the fourth day the temperature was a searing 49.6°C, scorching temperature records. On the fifth day the heat dome descended from the heavens onto the earth as fire erupted in Lytton. On the sixth day 90 percent of the town had burnt and across BC 600 were dead from the heat. On the seventh day there was no rest as 200 fires burned across the province.

The heat, having spent its wrath on BC, moved east to scorch the prairies. Climate change is real and devastating.

The previous hottest temperature in Canada was 45°C in 1937. Temperature records used to be broken by less than a degree. Lytton broke the old record by 4.6°C. The past is no guide to the future.

Canada faces more and worse forest fires, the catastrophic melting of the Arctic and of mountain glaciers, increased flooding, and stronger tropical

storms hammering the east coast. Canada's prairies are gripped by drought with "severe" to "extreme" conditions across southern Manitoba. Tipping points mean changes become self-reinforcing, such as when sea ice melts, the water absorbs more heat and so warms faster. These are becoming more common and are a glimpse of an apocalyptic future.

The federal Liberals' response is to increase their carbon tax to \$170/tonne by 2030. This is too little, too late and will not work. BC introduced a carbon tax in 2007, yet by 2018 gross greenhouse gas emissions were up 7 percent. At the same time, the Liberals are spending \$16.6 billion on the TMX (Trudeau Memorial) pipeline to Vancouver. BC's NDP is spending billions to subsidize the export of fracked gas. Clearly, the NDP and Liberals don't think climate change is an emergency.

The excuse is jobs. The pipeline will produce just 90 permanent jobs. The export of fracked gas, around 400 jobs. Alberta's oil and gas sector has cut 36,000 jobs in 8 years, while output increased. The jobs of a fossil fuel future will be firefighters, dyke builders, emergency responders and undertakers.

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