

SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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FOR PEACE AND LIBERATION



ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

The Whole System is Rotten

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

- **Ensure jobs and a living wage for all.**
- **Defend wages:** unions should demand cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) clauses in all new and existing contracts.
- **Put planet before profit:** fight climate change with a green jobs program.
- **Take the market out of housing:** 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.
- **For 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 sectors 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. ★



International Socialist Alternative

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SA in Action: Solidarity with Palestine

Ray Goerke

Millions of people are horrified at what is happening in Gaza. They have taken to the streets, week after week in protest and spoken out in their workplaces, universities and communities, often despite repression and reprisals. People have built lasting connections. Around the world, there are solidarity actions with Palestinians, raising the urgent need for a ceasefire and the necessity to stop the Israeli killing machine once and for all.

What is happening in Palestine is not isolated from the rest of the world. The Israeli occupation and systematic colonial violence is possible only because of the support for the Israeli state by US imperialism and its allies, including Canada. Scotiabank owns a 5 percent stake and is the largest foreign investor in Elbit Systems, Israel's largest arms company that supplies land-based military equipment and 85 percent of the Israeli military's drones.

This spring, Socialist Alternative members took an active role in a global movement targeting Elbit Systems. Our members joined a national day of action against Scotiabank, targeting Scotiabank branches across the country to expose the bank's role in funding the genocidal war in Gaza.

We continue to participate in many solidarity rallies, discuss our program for workers' unity against repression and fundraise (\$4,000 raised so far) for our comrades in Socialist Struggle Movement, the Israel-Palestine section of International Socialist Alternative, who face intense state repression as they work to build the anti-war movement in Israel. The fight for peace and liberation in Palestine is the fight for international working-class solidarity and socialism. Get in touch to join Socialist Alternative! ★



SA members protesting Scotiabank's funding of Elbit Systems

Imagine: Practical Hope

Grace Bodie

To desire and imagine a world we want to see are the first steps to creating one. But the hope and optimism of people today, increasingly, are not simply ideas. They are rooted in the reality of what can be achieved through collective power — against this capitalist system that suppresses the majority of humanity’s rights, quality of life, and freedoms.

We are seeing a rising movement of people raising their voices, leveraging their power as workers, and linking struggle to other working people across oceans. Thousands of people have been rallying and striking worldwide in response to Israel’s indiscriminate attacks against Gazans. Last year saw a 280 percent increase in workers’ strikes in the US. 1.5 million Germans hit the streets to protest the far-right agenda of the AfD in opposing immigration and nearly 1 million Argentinians protested their far-right government. People’s hearts and minds are shifting and fighting for a better world.

Capitalism Causes Misery

Capitalism operates for the profit of a few on the backs of the majority. We have been sold and indoctrinated and fear mongered with the lie that socialism doesn’t work, yet we know this capitalist system doesn’t work for average people and we yearn for a fairer way of life. We currently have one million empty homes in Canada, many owned by rich investors, and we have 30,000 people who desperately need housing. Let us imagine and fight for a world where everyone has access to safe and affordable housing. Little children in the Congo are beaten, starved and worked to death so that companies like Apple and Tesla can have cobalt batteries to make their billions. What if we controlled the production of the things we needed, creating fair and safe jobs for everyone according to their abilities and where children’s lives are cherished and protected? Canada’s military budget just increased by \$8.1 billion over the next five years, meanwhile our healthcare sector is suffering. (I don’t remember voting for that!). Imagine a world where we can have adequate healthcare systems that address the needs of everyone, including mental health, trans health care and more.

When We Fight, We Can Win

These seem like really big issues to tackle. However, socialist struggle has achieved many of these things. We have fought for minimum wage and better working hours.



Socialist Alternative Youth marching with hope

Workers’ struggle has ended child labour in many countries and has achieved rights for women. It has revolutionized education systems, increasing literacy and life expectancy in countries including Spain, Cuba, Bolivia, the state of Kerala in India and so many more examples.

The capitalist system fights tooth and nail to suppress these wins, to squash any building towards socialism, yet we continue to hope, and we continue to fight.

Empires rise and they fall: they do so because of average people who fight back against the contradictions between themselves and those in power, for a better world that we can imagine so clearly, we know it’s right. The task at hand is to have hope and it is our responsibility to apply that hope and that longing for a better world to practical solutions. It is our responsibility to understand the faulty system we are dealing with in this era and address it for what it is — a class system based on those who own property, who have the rights to produce things, the rights to the profits of things produced on the backs of average people who must sell their labour to survive.

May we turn the word “class” into a distant memory in the history books and create a new system of equality. The solution is baked into the very problem; capitalism cannot function without us. There would be no designing, nor production, nor distribution of the things we need without us workers. The only issue is that capitalists are entitled to the profits of everything created. It’s important to encourage ourselves and those around us to stay learning, to stay vigilant, to keep imagining. To take up the struggle of those before us and to use our labour power to create a system that nurtures us in our inextricably linked humanity. ★

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Alberta's UCP Attacks Municipalities

Derek Haines

A pernicious thread of political domination and control is woven throughout former big-business lobbyist Danielle Smith's tenure as Alberta's Premier. First, the United Conservative Party (UCP) dismantled Alberta Health Services to concentrate decision-making power over health care, which is now being privatized piece by piece, in the hands of the Health Minister. Next Smith launched an attack on life saving, gender-affirming care for teenage trans and intersex kids. Then the UCP created arbitrary new restrictions on where wind turbines and solar panels can be installed.

Now, the UCP has tabled legislation to attack local democracy. Bill 20 gives the province the power to fire mayors and municipal councillors and to overturn bylaws. The president of Alberta Municipalities, Tyler Gandam, called this a "power grab."

Smith Blocks Municipalities' Funding

This follows the announcement that municipalities can only accept federal funds if the province gives approval. That's right: Danielle Smith wants to deny municipalities federal funding whenever she disagrees with the project — and she has plenty of disagreements with the federal government. Bill 18, the *Provincial Priorities Act*, will allow the UCP to prevent communities from getting federal dollars for housing, health care, transit, education, and more. In a press release, the UCP stated they might even use it to interfere with the new federal pharmacare and dental care programs. It's safe to assume that any fossil fuel related corporate handouts will have no issue being approved. Talk about a bureaucratic, oligarchic nightmare.



Union members protest UCP government

The bill will enable the Government of Alberta to interfere in any agreements negotiated between the federal government and municipalities. It marks an escalation of the UCP's fiscal attacks on municipalities, which Jason Kenney started when he was at the party's helm. Every UCP budget has starved municipalities, with deep cuts to funding for universities, public schools, public services, health care, and even for fighting forest fires. When municipalities are denied funds by the province, they typically choose to make big budget cuts themselves and raise property taxes. This squeezes homeowners and renters alike in every city and town. Municipalities in Alberta are forbidden from running a budget deficit, making federal and provincial funding essential to ensuring the continuation and expansion of public services. The City of Edmonton recently used a lack of provincial funding as an excuse, threatening to increase property taxes during wage negotiations and a labour dispute with unionized city employees who hadn't received any raises in five years.

Alternative Needed for the Working Class

It's already been far from affordable to live in Alberta under the UCP. The minimum wage hasn't budged from \$15 since 2018 even though the province has the highest inflation rate in Canada. Anyone making minimum wage in Calgary or Edmonton, where the living wage is \$22.25 and \$23.70 respectively, struggles to make ends meet as the cost of housing, utilities, groceries — and everything else — continually rises. That doesn't matter to the UCP, who are ideological free-market fundamentalists. The opening salvo against workers during the first year of UCP governance was horrific, as workers lost two statutory holidays, wages, union card check legislation, and many legal protections and guarantees.

Danielle Smith and the UCP have nothing to offer Alberta but extreme political posturing on any issue that Smith claims has a hint of jurisdictional overlap with Ottawa. Emboldened by the ascendancy of the Canadian right wing, and dominated by the far-right organization Take Back Alberta, they are enacting their market-fundamentalist, fossil-fuel-friendly agenda with impunity. In Smith's world, there is one simple solution to fix everything wrong in Alberta: take on Trudeau. All this posturing helped her get elected, but these ideas are not working in practice, and every working-class Albertan is paying the price. Most of Smith's big ideas fall flat, like the Alberta Pension Plan, but refusing federal funding for any project is just plain stupid. If all that the political representatives of the ruling class can do is squabble over jurisdiction and withhold funding as the rest of us sink deeper into debt, then a political alternative that fights tirelessly for the working class is urgently needed. ★

The Dental Care and Pharmacare Cop-Out

Leslie Kemp

It has been a long wait for public dental care and pharmacare. *The Dental Benefit Act* was passed in November 2022 and the *Canada Pharmacare Act* was introduced in February 2024. Unfortunately, both fall far short of what is needed “to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers,” the promise of the 40-year-old *Canada Health Act*.

The *Canada Health Act* lays out five key principles: universality, comprehensiveness, portability, public administration and accessibility. Neither the dental care nor pharmacare programs attempt to adhere to these much-lauded principles, which have been ignored when it’s not profitable for big pharma, insurers or doctors.

Dental Care Undermines Universality

Universality is about ensuring that programs are available to all. From the introduction of public health care, in 1966, universality was widely popular but vehemently opposed by corporate interests and some doctors, who saw health care as a commodity to be bought, rather than a right. Universality includes providing a full spectrum of services throughout one’s life such as physiotherapy, home care, long-term care, as well as dental care and pharmacare.

In a completely universal system, the insurance industry has no role and therefore makes no money. Yet the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) is administered by Sun Life, a private insurance company. Moreover, anyone who has coverage, even inadequate coverage by employer/pension-sponsored or private plans, is not eligible. Once the program is fully rolled out (it is being phased in by age, with the eldest to receive coverage first), “up to” nine million Canadians with an income less than \$90,000 could benefit from the program. Out of the 30,500 dental professionals in Canada, just 9,000 have signed up to participate so far, and many seniors report that their dentists have not enrolled. Clearly the program is not accessible to all nor is it universal or publicly administered. The very premise of the dental care plan shows how little teeth the *Canada Health Act* has. In fact, the dental plan undermines publicly provided health.

Pharmacare is Not Comprehensive

Comprehensiveness means that “All medically necessary health services provided by hospitals and doctors must be covered under provincial/territorial health care insurance plans.” Not covering prescription medications violates this principle. Only if you are hospitalized is necessary prescription medicine provided without cost. If a doctor



Union members against privatization and for universal public pharmacare

outside of hospital prescribes medication, it isn’t covered. A recent poll found that a quarter of Canadians struggle to pay for prescription medications and so are skipping pills or not refilling their prescriptions. Canadians have long demanded pharmacare coverage and while this entrée is welcome, there is a big “but” — what about comprehensiveness? NDP leader Jagmeet Singh called this “a big bold step” and “historic,” but how is it bold to cover only contraceptives and diabetes medication? It is at best a cautious step forward. Unlike dental care, there are no ghettoizing means tests to access these prescription medications and the program is publicly administered, but its scope is extremely narrow.

Struggle Needed For Full Public Health

If the pharmacare program were truly comprehensive and publicly administered, big pharma and the insurance industry would fight it tooth and nail. The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association, who represents insurers that make a profit out of every prescription filled, issued a stark warning that public insurance will weaken drug coverage. This is fearmongering. A single-payer universal drug plan would end the need for private drug coverage, threatening its profits.

Forty years after the passage of the *Canada Health Act*, dental care and pharmacare are making a shadowy entry into our public health care system. The NDP should have demanded a better deal, rather than this compromise that benefits far too few people while undermining the foundations of the public health care system. Capitalism will always fight against a universal, comprehensive, accessible, and publicly administered health care system. We won public health by fighting the private interests that profit from health care. This is one of many reasons for continuing this fight and going further: building a socialist world that meets everyone’s needs instead of a system that profits the few. ★

Too Much Safety, Not Enough Training

Pete Marlowe and Tim Heffernan

Last December, one of the co-authors of this article was working on a construction site in south Vancouver, the largest private development in the city's history, with Ellis Don as the general contractor. It is a non-union site, and on February 20, a load fell from a crane, killing Yuridia Flores, a young mother from Mexico. It was the third "accident" involving cranes in the lower mainland during the first two months of 2024. Nationally, construction sites see 20.2 fatalities per 100,000 workers each year. After fishing, mining, and logging, it's the fourth most dangerous category of work in Canada, and the source of one out of every five worker deaths.

Why is this happening? Forty years ago in BC, the construction unions were broken, in a united effort between industry and the right-wing provincial Social Credit government. Then in the 1990s, the NDP government legalized temporary workers on construction sites, and within a decade, temp agencies, using unskilled and untrained "employees," were flourishing.

And in 2002, the right-wing BC "Liberal" Party gutted the health and safety regulations, arbitrarily cancelling one third of them. Now, the entirely predictable results: an untrained workforce, in skills and safety, and a once-proud career now a series of short-term low-paid gigs.

The bosses always try to cut corners. They put pressure on the workers to go faster, obviously. Although they are legally required to train workers on the specific dangers of every single task, if workers don't ask for it, out of fear of reprisal, chances are it won't happen. Even when unionized, there is no guarantee of work, and being illegally fired can always be claimed to be a layoff "due to lack of work."

All three workers involved in the Ellis Don homicide, the crane operator, the rigger, and the victim, signed off on "safe work procedures," the paperwork safety that has replaced actual training, and that is designed to throw as much blame as possible on the injured or dead worker, rather than on the corporation that didn't provide them with the knowledge necessary to do their job. The training is so inadequate that all you have to do to operate a crane in BC is pass an online test. Yes, the company can put all the workers and the public at risk of death by having their crane operated *by someone who has never actually been in one.*

A 2021 study by the Institute for Work and Health found that lost-time injury claims are 31 percent lower on unionized building sites than on non-union. That leads to the conclusion that the unions need to try and organize non-union sites. In Québec it is mandatory to be in a union to work in construction, and to have 30 hours of basic health and safety training. The rest of Canada must follow suit to ensure that training is managed by the unions. Another issue is that all Canadian provinces have "the right to refuse unsafe work" incorporated into labour law, but worker complaints are rarely upheld by government inspectors. The unions need to challenge this.

Over 100 years ago, Mother Jones, who was described as "the most dangerous woman in America" for union organizing, famously said "Mourn the dead and fight like hell for the living." This is just as true today.

Socialist Alternative demands that BC's NDP government immediately restore all workers' rights and safety protections stripped away two decades ago, and require all companies to provide, at their own expense, all the training each worker requires to do their job safely, and that the training not be designed by the well-meaning suits in Victoria offices who make our jobsites more dangerous, but by experienced workers who actually know how to do the job.

We are already in the process of making these demands a reality. We urge all workers across the country to do the same. Unionized workers need to control training and safety on the job. ★

***"Mourn the dead
and fight like hell
for the living!"***

—Mother Jones



Mother Jones was a union organizer and socialist activist

The Life of an Architect

Anonymous



Legally, architecture is a profession. In practice, it's a job without employment standards and unionization rights. In architecture school students are taught to take pride in their professional status and think of themselves as better than ordinary workers. They're also taught to work extremely long hours, go without sleep, and sacrifice their physical and mental health for the sake of their supposedly noble "creative" profession.

The school, it turns out, actually prepares them well for the reality of labour in architecture offices, although perhaps not in the way they may imagine. The disconnect from everyday life, the world around us, and all that is beautiful and ugly in it, is not particularly useful when it comes to designing spaces for that same life and that world. It is, however, quite useful in making architecture students enthusiastically accept their entry into the workforce. When we got our first jobs, we thought, "Isn't this great? It's just like school, except they're paying us for it!"

Despite the flattery, the professionalization of architecture, first introduced in the late 19th century, never made much sense to architects themselves. In fact, at the time, many had quite stubbornly resisted it. The true purpose of professionalization reveals itself in the clauses of the Ontario *Employment Standards Act*. Unlike other workers, architects "are not entitled to minimum wage, daily or weekly limits on hours of work, daily rest periods, ... overtime pay, sick leave, ... and vacation with pay." Architects are also not entitled to protections usually granted to unionizing workers.

Fortunately, magic words like "profession" and "creativity" are beginning to lose their spell upon the minds of the architects. The time has come to recognize ourselves as workers and unionize. ★

What Makes Me Angry: "Axe The Bullshit"

Larry Hyink

In the political theatre of the absurd passing for Canadian political debate we get to watch Pierre Poilievre parade around, post cosmetic makeover to "worker guy," chanting his rhyme; "Axe the Tax."

On the other side there's sincerely suffering Justin Trudeau, bleating that low- and middle-income Canadians get more back than they pay, mostly.

Meanwhile, back in reality, neither mentions that the biggest carbon polluters get cushy exemptions from paying the full tax ordinary Canadians have to cough up. For example, in 2020, working people paid an average of about \$30 a ton in carbon tax. Suncor Energy, Canada's biggest fossil fuels polluter, paid only \$2.16 a ton. Governments have got to keep our polluters competitive.

On top of giving capitalists yet another free ride on the carbon tax, average Canadians are dealing with rising taxes to cover climate disasters:

- Fire fighting costs in BC, Alberta, and the Northwest Territories ran close to \$2 billion last year.
- In 2023 climate disasters caused \$3.1 billion in "insured" damages. As anybody who's ever filed a claim knows, after the deductible and the general undervaluing of reconstruction costs, what insurance pays is a drop in the bucket of what you've lost. Plus, you and everybody else who can even get insurance faces rising premiums so the industry can cover increased climate risks and still make a profit.

The best subplot going unmentioned in this sham political debate is that Canadian taxpayers picked up the tab for \$18.6 billion in fossil fuel subsidies last year.

The paltry \$5 billion or so raised by the carbon tax yearly is pretty small potatoes compared to all that.

Maybe blue-collar Pierre, who's never had a job outside of politics, could ask that big corporations pay at least as much as real workers in carbon tax, and perhaps Justin could stop whining that, "It may be inadequate, but it's all we've got."

Don't hold your breath.

We need a socialist alternative to this sterile charade. One that takes the big corporate polluters into public ownership for a planned exit from capitalism's suicidal addiction to fossil fuels and for the development of a real green economy in the interest of everyone instead of the bloated rich. ★

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Bill Hopwood

The horror inflicted on the people of Gaza by the Israeli killing machine continues unabated. Over 35,000 people have been killed, with many more bodies uncounted, buried under the rubble of their homes. Most of Gaza's population, 1.5 million people, have fled to Rafah. The Israeli regime is now attacking this formerly "safe" area; people are fleeing again, and delivery of food has almost ceased.

The Israeli government uses hunger as a weapon of collective punishment – a war crime. They have deliberately restricted food, water and electricity to create famine and disease. Over 56 percent of Gaza's buildings have been destroyed or damaged, including 88 percent of schools, and many mosques. The United Nations estimates it will cost up to US\$50 billion to repair the damage.

Gaza's health system is destroyed with most hospitals in ruins. The Israeli blockade means medical supplies are virtually non-existent and no anaesthetics for operations. The lack of electricity means babies in incubators are dying and sewage is untreated. The risk of epidemics grows daily.

End the Slaughter

Worldwide mass protests calling for the end of this genocidal slaughter have pushed many western governments to urge restraint or caution. But the fundamental, capitalist, interests of most of these governments is to support the Israeli regime, including supplying weapons.

Endless talks for a temporary ceasefire cruelly raise Gaza's hopes only to have them dashed. Netanyahu refused to accept a deal accepted by Hamas and backed by western imperialism.

Many Arab rulers are desperate for a ceasefire, fearful that people's seething anger will erupt in mass protest that could overthrow these hated reactionary governments.

The Israeli regime may accept a temporary ceasefire but is determined to continue the slaughter and suffering in Gaza.

Mass international campaigns and pressure are needed to stop the unfolding genocide.

Threat of Regional Conflict

By early April, Netanyahu was losing ground. On March 25, the US did not veto a UN Security council resolution calling for a ceasefire. On March 31, 100,000 protested in Tel Aviv with over 50 other rallies. On April 1, the Israeli military killed seven aid workers, who were travelling in clearly identified vehicles, provoking international anger.

On April 1, the Israeli regime bombed the Iranian embassy in Syria, fully aware that Iran would respond to this clear provocation (embassies are considered part of the country's territory). Iran responded on April 13, but gave plenty of warning and did not mobilize Hezbollah's powerful arsenal. Iran's drones and missiles were intercepted, but only due to US, British, French and Jordanian military action. Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates provided assistance.

For Peace and



Banner reads, in Hebrew and Arabic: "Stop the war. There is no solution."

The Israeli action had the desired effect. Biden faces significant opposition to his support for the Israeli regime's crimes against humanity, with over half a million "uncommitted" votes in the primaries. However, US imperialism's strategic interest is to defend the Israeli state; its support remains "ironclad."

All the major powers involved in the region — the US and its allies, Turkey, and Iran with Russian and Chinese support — do not want a wider regional conflict. This time a regional war did not erupt, but every week the risk grows. A section of the Israeli regime would like to expand the conflict. Israel is threatening to invade Lebanon, although Hezbollah is much better armed than Hamas. Killings and assaults by Israeli settlers have sharply increased on the West Bank. The slaughter in Gaza is increasingly part of the global geopolitical struggle between the US and China (page 13).

Conflict's Long History

The policies of Netanyahu and his far-right allies are driving the latest bloody assault on Gaza. For years, Netanyahu encouraged Qatar to fund Hamas. He used Hamas's threats to drive the Jews out of all Palestine (from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean) to bolster his own support. He ignored credible warnings of the planned Hamas attack. He has refused to seriously negotiate for the return of the hostages.

The roots of the conflict over Palestine go back over 100 years. The Zionists' goal of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, backed by western imperialism (page 10), inevitably clashed with the hopes and needs of the Palestinian people.

The Zionists have constantly pushed to expand Israel's territory. After the 1967 war the Israeli state took control of Gaza, the Golan Heights and the West Bank. Although the 1993 Oslo Accord talked of Palestinians gaining control of their lands, it was never implemented. Now, Israel controls most of the West Bank and militarily dominates all of it.

Before October, the Israeli government focussed on gaining control of East Jerusalem and increasing settlements in the West



tion without a struggle against the occupation, siege and poverty"

Bank. This steady ethnic cleansing has pushed the Palestinians onto an ever-diminishing area of land. In 1993 there were 110,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, now there are half a million. The far-right Zionists in the government are pushing to remove Palestinians from Gaza and large parts of the West Bank.

The aims of Hamas and Zionists are irreconcilable. The Israeli regime cannot destroy the desire for a Palestinian homeland. Hamas, even with the support of Hezbollah, cannot defeat Israel's military. The strategy of Palestinian groups, from the Palestine Liberation Organization to Hamas, has been to pressure the Arab regimes and the US to make Israel negotiate a Palestinian state. It is clear that this will not happen.

Role of the Working Class

The only force that can stop the Israeli ruling class is the Israeli working class, both Jews and Arabs, linked with the Palestinian and international working class. The Israeli capitalist class relies on Palestinian workers who live in Israel and those who came from the West Bank and Gaza before October. They comprise 40 percent of Israel's health workers and are essential to construction. The capitalists use Zionism, an extreme form of nationalism, to keep the class struggle in check and workers divided.

Today's Jewish working class has contradictory views. It still supports the military against Hamas, but there are growing demands to end the assault and bring the hostages home, with rallies of over 100,000. Demonstrations for a ceasefire are growing. The Netanyahu government is widely hated and deeply divided.

Israel is a very unequal society, even among its Jewish population. It has more billionaires per capita than the US. Israeli workers will pay for the cost of the war. Ahead are years of austerity. The future for Israel, Palestine and region is increased instability and economic hardship.

While the idea of working-class unity of the peoples of the region seems far away, it is a much more realistic prospect than a peaceful solution based on capitalism. Our comrades in Socialist Struggle Movement in Israel-Palestine are working

to win peace, build unity and overthrow capitalism.

Socialism would share the wealth of society. SSM argues for a socialist Palestine alongside a socialist Israel, with negotiated borders. This would inspire the masses in the neighbouring Arab countries to overthrow the rotten dictatorships that keep people in poverty.

Solidarity in Canada

Across Canada there have been weekly rallies, now university camps, in solidarity with Gaza and calling to end Canadian government and business support for the Israeli regime's genocidal attack. There is widespread support for a ceasefire.

The right wing and pro-Israeli government lobby claim that these demos are antisemitic. Overwhelmingly this is false, with many Jews in the solidarity movement. Condemning the Israeli state's war crimes is not antisemitic, any more than criticizing the Iranian regime's suppression of women and workers' right is anti-Islam.

The House of Commons passed a non-binding resolution to stop exporting arms to Israel. However, the Liberal government made clear that present contracts will be fulfilled. Canada also exports many "non-lethal" components that, when assembled, produce lethal weapons. There is no proposal to stop these exports. Canada's Department of National Defence is hosting an event in May-June that includes an Israeli weapons manufacturer.

Canadian investments support Israeli murder. Just Peace Advocates reported that Québec's public pension fund has \$14 billion of investments that support the Israeli regime. The Mizrahi Organization of Canada supports settlements in the West Bank yet has charitable status. Scotiabank is a major investor in Elbit, one of Israel's largest arms manufacturers. Universities across the country have investments in companies that aid the Israeli regime's mass murder.

Neither Liberal nor Conservative politicians will deliver real solidarity with Gaza. One power that can make a difference is union workers. Several Canadian and Québec unions, along with Labour councils and union locals, support Ceasefire Now. Unions should declare a Canada-wide day of solidarity rallies with serious union mobilizations. Arms Embargo Now is backed by several unions, however, only workers' actions can deliver this. Workers in industries that support the Israeli killing machine could discuss how to obstruct and stop the companies' complicity in state terrorism.

Canadian workers face the same international capitalist class as Palestinian and Jewish workers. The struggle for socialism is international so the fight in Canada and Palestine are linked. Socialist Alternative Canada has been part of many rallies, camps and protests. In these, we seek to raise the idea of working-class action and solidarity, here in Canada and in the Middle East. ★

(This article was written in May, see updates on our website.)

For more on Israel-Palestine: <https://socialism.org.il/>

Imperialism's Bloody Role in Middle East

Ray Goerke

The people of the Middle East have suffered from over a century of western imperialism's (US, France and Britain especially) actions to dominate the region.

In 1916 British and French imperialism secretly agreed to seize parts of the weak Ottoman Empire, ignoring the wishes for liberation of the peoples who lived there. France got Syria and Lebanon, and Britain took most of Iraq, Jordan and Palestine.

Movements to end colonialism and for national liberation swept the world at the end of World War II. Many in the liberation struggles were socialists, and mass communist parties existed in many countries.

Coups and Invasions

Left-wing governments swept wide parts of the Middle East, horrifying imperialists as their economies relied on oil from the region. The west stopped at nothing to remove these governments. US and Britain either invaded or supported coups to overthrow leftist governments, in Iraq (1940 and 1963), Iran (1953), Egypt (1956) and Lebanon (1958 and 1982).

More recently, US-led forces invaded Iraq in 1990 and again in 2003, leaving a shattered country. Afghanistan has been ravaged by imperialist forces and the Taliban (originally created by the US) for decades.

Since 2015, Saudi Arabia, with the backing of other reactionary Arab regimes and the US, has bombed and invaded Yemen.

The failure of the left, whether "Arab socialism" or the communist parties, and especially the role of imperialism, created misery for the masses and a hatred of the "West." This provided fertile ground for the rise of reactionary Islamists of many stripes, including the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Iranian mullahs and their allies among the Houthis, Hezbollah and Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

Palestine

The Zionist movement, founded in 1897 by well-off European Jews, aimed to establish a Jewish homeland. More Jews were members of the Bund, a working-class organization, critical of Zionism.

As the Ottoman empire was dismembered, British imperialism encouraged both Arab and Jewish nationalism, making contradictory promises to each, none of which it intended to keep as imperial forces had already agreed to

divide the Middle East among themselves. Britain's 1917 Balfour Declaration supported a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.

Jewish migration to Palestine grew in the early 20th century, although many Jews understood that creating a Jewish state in a land that was already inhabited by many who were not Jewish was a recipe for disaster. When German capitalism backed the Nazis in 1934, Jews looked to escape. Britain, the US, and Canada largely refused them asylum, so many more moved to Palestine.

Britain, after 1920, controlled Palestine and using its well-established policy of "divide and rule," fostered divisions and hostility between Arabs and Jews. In 1936, Arab Palestinians launched a revolt including a six-month general strike that was crushed by British forces aided by Zionist paramilitaries. Even more dangerous for British imperialism was the 1946 general strike involving 30,000 Palestinian and Jewish workers.

A successful Palestinian-Jewish struggle against imperialism would have been a threat to colonial capitalism. After WWII, with the radical wave in the Middle East, US and British imperialism needed a safe base in the region to protect their oil supplies. This was a key reason they backed the establishment of Israel.

The imperialist powers that dominated the United Nations (with full support of the Soviet Union) divided Palestine in 1947, giving 56 percent of the land to the new state of Israel even though Jews were only 30 percent of the population. The establishment of Israel, founded on Zionism, was opposed by the majority Arab population. In the formation of the new state, 750,000 Palestinians were driven off the land; this is known as "the catastrophe" or *Nakba*.

Imperialism, especially the US variety, has backed Israeli governments to secure capitalism's interests. The most effective way to resist and defeat capitalism and imperialism is the united struggle of the working class of all nationalities, including within Israel. It is mass struggle for socialist change that will win lasting peace, self-determination, liberation and equality for the Palestinians and all peoples. ★



Arab workers in 1936 vote for General Strike

Economic Reconciliation

Allie Pev

“Economic reconciliation” is the latest buzzword being used by governments, central banks, chambers of commerce and political parties. The 2023 federal budget pledged \$65 million toward “advancing economic reconciliation by unlocking the potential of First Nations lands.”

This strategy claims to bring economic prosperity to First Nations by encouraging them to participate and invest in resource extraction and exploitation. “Project Reconciliation” aims at 100 percent ownership of Trans Mountain Corporation (TMC) by 129 Indigenous nations. Other examples of “economic reconciliation” are in fisheries, mining and forestry.

However, the issue is *not* First Nations planning for and controlling the use of the land, air and water that they hold Aboriginal Title to. The issue is Canada — a colonial, capitalist state, keeping nations under their thumb by setting the terms of doing so within a capitalist framework that inevitably leads to further displacement and social disenfranchisement of Indigenous people and catapults us all towards climate catastrophe.

Capitalism is self-seeking and can be clever to move with the changing tide of public opinion. Why else would the Canadian state place such an emphasis on “reconciliation” and a newer trend of “economic reconciliation”? The Canadian Chamber of Commerce defines this as “the process of making economic amends for historical injustices to Indigenous Peoples.” An explicit acknowledgement of Canada’s unspeakable violence but it shies away from pointing to ongoing and longstanding injustices, including those that Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission pointed to almost a decade ago and are still unaddressed.

Two Roads

George Manuel, a Secwépemc leader who led the National Indian Brotherhood, was active in the successful fight against the 1969 *White Paper* that proposed assimilation of Indigenous people in Canada. He said “*we have only survived within a prison of deprivation, poverty and genocide. For too long now we have accepted freedom as a gift and that always produces berries with poison in it.*” In 1980 he helped lead the Constitution Express, in which hundreds of Indigenous people travelled by train to Ottawa to pressure Prime Minister Trudeau to include Aboriginal rights in the Constitution. Manuel was defiant about this struggle, saying that habit has “*compelled us to accept all policies and laws of the federal and provincial governments regardless of what misfortune, pain, sorrow and injustice*



George Manuel confronts Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau

they imposed upon our people... In our struggle to have our own Indian Government as a means to recover part of our aboriginal rights, we have only two roads that we can travel. The rules on one road are to adjust, to cooperate, to be silent, to submit, to obey, to betray, to compromise and the rewards are deprivation, poverty and genocide for the masses of our people and riches for a small number of native Indians. The rules of the other road are to fight, by any means and at any cost, to recover our pride, our dignity, and our aboriginal rights, to recreate and strengthen our Indian cultural, social, economic and political institutions” (B.C. Indian World, January 1981). The Constitutional Express was successful.

There is no blaming of any nation or group for participating in the fossil fuel industry or other forms of resource extraction. The decision is not made lightly considering the unimaginable responsibility of providing for communities that suffer the worst of capitalism’s greed and destruction. Capitalism’s *raison d’être* is to create profits for owners and shareholders. Capitalism succeeds and thrives through divide and rule tactics, often pitting one group against another and sowing divisions within groups. Economic reconciliation is the latest attempt to turn Indigenous people into capitalists, with a few winners and many losers.

Reuben George is an example of many Indigenous leaders who reject succumbing to capitalism’s resource extraction agenda, at any cost to people or land. He is Sundance Chief and a member of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. George manages the nation’s Sacred Trust initiative to protect the unceded Tsleil-Waututh lands and waters from the Trans Mountain Pipeline. In a recent CBC interview, he warned about the prospect of a spill from the pipeline and the dangers to their sacred territory. Acknowledging the pipeline is a reality, he said, “sometimes you can’t unscramble the egg, but you can unscramble the egg in the future.” He is looking, not to “economic reconciliation,” but to alternatives that don’t compromise the abundant gifts of land, water, fish, birds and people.★

Modi Does Everything to Ensure Election Win

Larry Hyink

India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, is taking every possible step to ensure he wins a third term in the general election, which runs from April 19 until June 1.

Modi's party, the BJP, is based on far-right Hindu chauvinism, Hindutva. Modi himself rose to prominence through the fascist inspired Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which is the backbone of the BJP. Modi presents himself as a strongman, defending Hinduism.

The BJP's electoral prospects are boosted by its domination of mass media, including the Bollywood film industry, which supports Hindu supremacy.

The government has arrested nearly 150 opposition politicians, including Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi, and, most recently, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The government routinely brands opponents such as journalists as terrorists. The Elections Commission of India has faced criticism for tolerating pro-BJP campaigning, even when it crossed the line into defamation and hate speech.

Voter suppression is ongoing involving purging of tens of millions of voters, mainly Muslim, Dalit (lower caste), poor communities and women. All people who are less likely to support the BJP's Hindu supremacist and misogynist policies.

Lack of Viable Alternative

Modi's policies, including the demonetization fiasco in 2016 and the handling of COVID, have faced repeated mass resistance. In 2019 and 2020 workers organized mass general strikes, mobilizing up to 250 million people. In a year-long protest, in 2020 and 2021, Indian farmers blocked the capital, New Delhi, in response to government's attacks on their living standards. The farmers successfully forced Modi to retreat. A defeat that still rankles.

The opposition parties, especially Congress, wasted these huge openings to defeat Modi and the BJP. The political parties of the left, the two mass communist parties, have been losing ground. The Congress, which dominated Indian politics from Independence until 1996, has lost much of its support, due its decades of failing to deliver real improvements for workers and the poor. It is now part of a 41-party alliance against the BJP.

The absence of any working-class party that mobilizes the masses around a political program of demands has meant that Modi's right populism has risen with little challenge.



Indian farmers' mass protests inflicted a defeat on Modi

Western Imperialism Supports Modi

The capitalist West and its media outlets give Modi a virtually free pass for his anti-democratic actions. Even India's support for Putin's Ukraine invasion, with its sanctions-busting purchases of Russian oil, is ignored or covered up. Its campaign of international assassination impacting Canada, the US and Pakistan is met with a few polite grumbles, quickly forgotten.

India is a big market and there is money to be made by staying on the good side of the government. Modi has been very good for big business and the billionaire class, foreign and domestic. Wealth inequality has skyrocketed, with friends of the BJP doing especially well.

Most importantly, India's main geopolitical rival is China. China is a true global power that challenges US imperialism's historic domination. If Modi stays onside, acting as a counterweight to Chinese imperialism, western leaders will largely turn a blind eye to his repression in India and abroad.

Repression will escalate if Modi wins. Behind the BJP is the RSS. One of its early leaders, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, held "being a Hindu was a matter of race and blood, not only a matter of culture." Everyone else is an invader or a carrier of contaminating foreign ideas. Repression of Muslims, Sikhs and lower castes will increase. Modi has tried to brand all Sikhs as supporters of an independent Khalistan, trying to reverse the humiliation of the farmers' victory in which Sikhs played a prominent role. The National Citizenship Registry, which discriminates against Muslims and others, is part of Modi's repressive plans.

However, he will face mass opposition from millions of Indians who are not part of his racist vision. Democracy can find a voice not just at the polls, but in the streets. But to end the mass poverty, oppression and discrimination that blights Indian society, the working class needs to build a genuine revolutionary party. ★

Money for People, Not Wars!

Violet Forrie

Global military tensions are at a boiling point. Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine dramatically accelerated military spending and helped the US pull its allies closer together. Over US\$440 billion has been pledged worldwide to Ukraine. Despite the critical backing of US imperialism, Ukraine's 2023 offensive stalled and then was reversed by Russian advances. War weariness is growing among the population on both sides, but the leaders are not willing to back down. The war in Ukraine is part of the wider inter-imperialist conflict between the US and China, which is about access to markets and resources, control of technology, and global prestige. It has drawn the Russian and Chinese governments into an even stronger alliance. The German military, a major US ally, is preparing for war with Russia "within five to eight years."

China's increasing military exercises in the western Pacific represent not only its growing boldness to challenge US imperialism, but also its desperation to grow its own imperialist bloc as it experiences economic crisis. Taiwan is geographically and economically strategic. Its government has long been in the US camp, but the Chinese government claims the island is part of China. As the Chinese regime increasingly relies on nationalist sentiment, it threatens to invade Taiwan. Tension around Taiwan could erupt into an existential crisis for both imperialist powers.

The explosion of violence in the Middle East creates problems for US imperialism, which risks over-stretching. The US pledged \$16 billion in addition to the regular annual funding to the Israeli government after its military launched a genocidal assault on Gaza. None of the major powers in the region — the US, Iran, China, Russia or Turkey — want an all-out war, but every escalation risks sparking a bloody conflagration.

Under capitalist logic, imperialist blocs form as the result of competition for markets and resources. Meanwhile, climate targets are constantly missed. Climate change, boosted by El Nino, pushed 2023 to the hottest year on record, breaking the 1.5°C target of the Paris climate

agreement. Military equipment and war are deeply damaging to the climate and the wider environment.

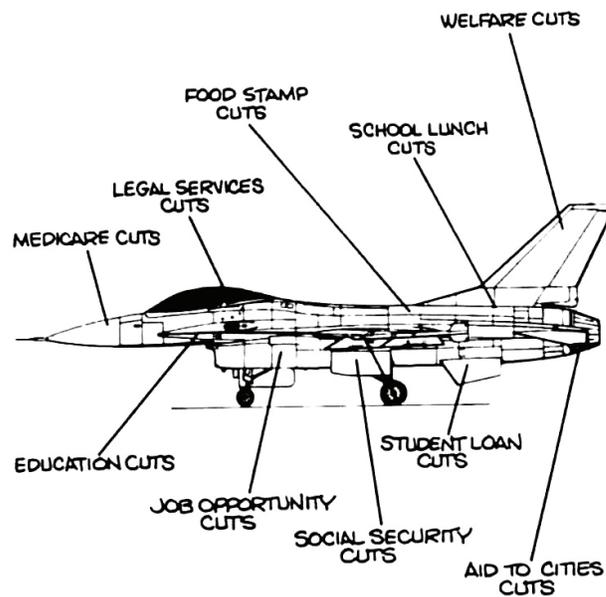
The US's annual military budget has soared to a record \$886 billion. France now spends \$50 billion in military expenditures, and the United Kingdom sits at \$38 billion. In historic shifts, both Germany and Japan plan to double military spending. Germany's target is 3.5 percent of GDP within the next few years. Japan aims to spend \$62.5 billion on its military in 2027. Trudeau's government has announced \$8.1 billion in increased military spending over the next five years but faces pressure to increase it even further to hit NATO's 2 percent of GDP target.

Capitalist governments spend billions on machines to kill people and on subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, yet claim there's not enough money for health, homes or education. Clearly there is! The issue is not how much money there is, but what the money is spent on, and in whose interests. Rather than spending on weapons of war, socialists would invest in programs that would supply the housing that is needed, renewable energy, and good public transit. All these would provide good-paying union jobs. Military budgets would be redirected to bolstering

much needed funding on education and health services. Weapons and parts manufacturers should be taken into public ownership and the machinery and the workers' skills used for socially useful purposes.

Capitalist governments will never agree to such a program because the zero-sum logic of imperialist competition compels them to spend on the military to protect their interests. Workers, organized independently of the bosses, have the power to refuse to send weapons to kill poor and working-class people abroad. The working class has the power to end the capitalist system and redirect the economy from war to meet social needs.

The working classes of all countries have nothing to gain from the victory of any side of any inter-imperialist conflict. Down with all imperialism and for an international working-class anti-war movement! ★



TV Review: 3 Body Problem

Reviewed by Harland Bird



The recent Netflix series *3 Body Problem* has a “novel” premise — in two senses. First, the show is adapted from a novel (namely *The Three Body Problem*, by Liu Cixin). And second, it is genuinely original: scary aliens are set on invading Earth, but — thanks to the vastness of space — it will take them 400 years to get here. It’s a premise that promises to explore how humanity would respond in the face of such an approaching apocalypse. Of particular novelty: in the story, the world’s capitalist ruling classes actually decide to take extreme measures in defence of future generations.

Clearly this is fiction.

But like all great science fiction it provides insightful commentary on the world we live in — even if not intentionally. Take the changes from book to show: whereas the source material was not only written by a Chinese author but also largely featured Chinese characters and settings, the show takes place primarily in Britain and features Western heroes who go about trying to clean up an epic made-in-China mess. It’s like the plot has been friend-shored.

These changes, in turn, mean that the most obvious real-world parallel with the alien invasion is now climate change, and is no longer the existential threat to China posed by the US Empire, as interpreted by many book readers. The irony here is that the blatant Westernization of the story only serves to spotlight real-world US-China tensions all the more brightly.

Wildly successful shows like *Squid Game* or *Shogun* clearly demonstrate that Western audiences will tolerate Asian protagonists and settings (South Korean and Japanese, respectively). So why couldn’t *3 Body Problem* be more faithful to the book, which is an important work of contemporary Chinese culture? The answer is that human culture has been largely corporatized by the profit-driven capitalist system. In this context a show that actually helped bridge nationalist, New Cold War divides would have been truly novel. ★

A Page from History: Cape Breton Miners 1922-25

Chris Fofonoff

Cape Breton was gripped by a labour war in the early 1920s as militant coal and steel workers, led by the Communist Party (CP), resisted the employer’s attacks. In four years, there were over 2 million days on strike. During these years most of Canadian labour was in retreat.

In January 1922, the British Empire Steel Corporation (BESCO) announced a pay cut of one-third for 12,000 Cape Breton coal miners. The conservative leadership of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) District 26 (Nova Scotia) only responded with a work slowdown.

The miners and the CP, in its brief but heroic period as a revolutionary organization, agitated for a total strike and for public ownership of coal and steel. In August the UMWA members voted 6 to 1 to elect a new CP leadership, headed by J.B. McLachlan. All the miners walked out on strike. 1,200 mobilized soldiers couldn’t keep the tunnels from flooding.

UMWA international president John Lewis, like many well-paid union bureaucrats, proved an ally for BESCO, threatening District 26 with suspension.

The miners’ struggle ensured that the accepted pay cut was half of what the company had planned. The workers prepared for the next fight. Miners struck in 1923 in solidarity with Nova Scotia steelworkers, also BESCO employees. Lewis responded by suspending the local, and McLachlan spent three months in jail for “seditious libel.”

In 1925, another BESCO wage cut forced the miners to fight back. After three months of striking, the police attacked miners’ families in New Waterford on June 11, wounding scores and killing William Davis. The miners broke into the BESCO company stores and distributed food to the starving miners and their families. The troops were sent in, and the strike ended.

The strong leadership ensured that the union survived the attacks of BESCO, Lewis and government and that collective bargaining was secured.

Today, the union movement is again advancing. The leadership needed is the revolutionary example set by McLachlan and the CP in its glory days. ★



More Empty Promises

R O'Brien

For decades, governments encouraged the provision of homes by profiteers — developers, construction firms and big landlords. This created today's housing crisis. Suddenly the Trudeau government pledged to build 3.9 million homes by 2031. It is only 2 million new homes, as 1.9 million were already going to be built according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). However, the plan won't hit that target, and most of the homes built won't be affordable.

The Liberals prioritize incentives to private developers, subsidizing their profits with taxpayer money, hoping this will provide more affordable homes. The core of the Liberal plan is the Apartment Construction Loan Program (ACLP) that now has \$55 billion to provide developers with low-cost loans. But only a handful of the units will be affordable for low-income people. CMHC defines affordability based on median household income, \$98,390 a year! The government is subsidizing housing for the better off, not those who are most in housing need.

Developers build homes to maximize profits, not to meet people's needs. The government is perpetuating the reliance on the for-profit system for housing that produced today's mess.

Housing needs to be a human right, provided by public policy. All levels of government have public land that could be used for housing. Governments should build homes directly with union labour and cut out the profiteering. With public ownership and democratic management, rents would be set at 30 percent of tenants' income. A massive public housing program would be a far better use of money than handouts to developers.



This housing program is not going to come from Ottawa, regardless of which party is in government. One-third of the present cabinet has real estate investments. But more importantly, a massive public housing program would challenge the big business rules that almost all MPs defend.

Workers build homes; big business does not. While there are over one million construction workers, many lack proper training. Crucial to a housing program is ensuring that there are enough fully-skilled workers to build good quality homes. A democratic plan would decide what types of homes to build and where. In addition, there are over 1.3 million empty homes. It is perfectly legal to remove a tent that a person lives in, but illegal to take an empty unused condo.

Collectively-owned housing would guarantee affordable homes for everyone.

The developers, the corporate landlords, and their bought politicians will fight this at every turn. But they *can* be defeated by an independent working-class struggle to win homes for all. ★

Democratic Ownership of Oil Industry *(continued from back page)*

The Canadian government will not protect the environment that is essential for all people's survival. The "markets" and capitalism also will not deliver; capitalism has been built on fossil fuels for 200 years.

Energy production and supply needs to be democratically planned and controlled based on public ownership. The oil companies should be expropriated; they have made record profits out of Canadians' pockets for decades.

The billions of dollars of profits and subsidies could then be re-directed to transform the energy system to renewables, alongside many energy saving actions such as re-fitting homes, providing good quality public transit and a major upgrade to inter-city rail. These programs would provide good quality union jobs that would be socially rewarding and worthwhile.

The environment movement and unions should reach out to each other to seriously start building a campaign for good jobs and a healthy environment. Starting with education and discussions, the campaign would build for collective action first to win public support and then mobilize for change. Action would include rallies and demonstrations and build to strikes. Part of the campaign is building a political force to challenge the present pro-fossil-fuel parties. Initial demands would include an end to fossil fuel subsidies, for climate conscious health and safety regulations, free and expanded public transit, high quality rail and bus services between cities, and expansion of renewable energy production. This is a program and plan that Socialist Alternative fights for. Winning it would be truly a just transition for working people and the world. ★

DEMOCRATIC OWNERSHIP OF OIL INDUSTRY



Martin LeBrun and Simon Schweitzer

Was there ever a more tragic pair of lovers than the Canadian government and the fossil fuel industry? A decaying partnership, each holding the other up, just as each feeds off the other, neither able to let go. A dreadful symbiotic death spiral.

Dangerously, their death spiral also endangers the rest of us. Another potentially terrible wildfire season, after a dry winter, blazed up in May endangering towns in BC, Alberta and Manitoba. Also in May, the Trans Mountain pipeline (TMX) to Vancouver was completed, which risks major ecological disasters in BC and ensures more fossil fuels will be produced and burned — adding to climate change. What is being done?

Empty Government Promises

In July 2023, Environment Minister Guilbeault claimed the government would phase out “inefficient” oil and gas subsidies, with future subsidies to be used to reduce or sequester emissions. In other words, to help the companies clean up their mess. The Canadian government provided \$18.6 billion in subsidies to fossil fuel production in 2023, only slightly down from \$20.2 billion in 2022. It turns out Guilbeault’s restrictions do not apply to over \$1 billion for carbon capture and storage, an unproven

and failing technology. Another empty government promise.

On top of government subsidies, the cost in air pollution and climate damage mitigation will be another \$36 billion! Clearly, this government and certainly a Conservative one has no intention of stopping fossil fuel production. To hell with the climate.

The Canadian government and its friends in the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers argue that fossil fuel projects are a backbone of the Canadian economy. They justified the purchase of the TMX pipeline, with total cost of \$34 billion, with just such an argument. These arguments do not hold water as studies have shown time and time again that every dollar spent on renewable energy and other carbon-neutral activities generates far more jobs than the same money spent on fossil fuels. Why then is the government so committed to supporting this industry?

The energy sector, dominated by oil and gas, made up 11.8 percent of GDP in 2022. Equally important to the capitalist class, profit-gouging oil companies have some of the highest profits per employee of any part of the economy. Canadian oil companies made *\$63 billion in profits in 2022.*

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