

# SocialistWorker

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## STOP LIBERAL ATTACKS



### FEDERAL

**Prime Minister Justin Trudeau**

- \* continues Bill C-51
- \* expands war
- \* arms Saudi Arabia
- \* promotes pipelines
- \* supports the TPP



### BC

**Premier Christy Clark**

- \* supports pipelines, Site C dam and Massey megabridge
- \* refuses \$15 minimum wage
- \* blames immigrants for the housing bubble



### ONTARIO

**Premier Kathleen Wynne**

- \* privatizes Hydro
- \* cuts healthcare
- \* refuses \$15 minimum wage
- \* ignores Grassy Narrows
- \* supports Energy East and Line 9 pipelines



### QUEBEC

**Premier Philippe Couillard**

- \* supports Energy East
- \* cuts public services
- \* refuses \$15 minimum wage

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Facts & figures

**12.20**  
Current minumum wage in Alberta

**15**  
New minimum wage by 2018 in Alberta

**16**  
Number of months in a row with a record high global average temperature, as of August

**122**  
Number of kilometres that the “Marche pour nos rivières” marched along the Ottawa river to bring attention to the threat of Energy East pipeline

**16,000**  
Number of Indigenous children removed from their communities in the “Sixties Scoop”

**150 million**  
Number of Indian work-ers on strike September 2 against austerity

In their own words

**“Tar sands are, I think, a national shame. If it were up to me it would be shut down tomorrow. But it would cause a lot of pain for people in Alberta, so our alliance is going to promote, in the strongest possible terms, massive investment in Alberta in another type of economy. These two actions, they go hand in hand. We’re not proposing to de-stroy Alberta, we’re trying to help it, and we’re trying to help the country, and we’re trying to help this planet.”**

-Kanesatake Grand Chief Serge Simon, signatory to the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion

**“That’s called business”**  
-Donald Trump, de-fending his profiteering from the housing crisis

**“Outgunned”**  
-Hilary Clinton’s char-acterization of the police, claiming they do not use excessive force but are someone not armed enough

Resisting the “Sixties Scoop”

by VALERIE LANNON

**“Treaties did not give the government the right to take our children,” announced Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day to over 300 people who attended the August 23, 2016 rally in Toronto to support survivors and families of the “ ‘60s Scoop.”**

The term refers to a concerted action by federally-funded provincial governments across Canada to sup-posedly keep Indigenous children safe through arranging permanent foster care or adoption into non-Indigenous homes—often hundreds if not thousands of miles from the children’s communities.

**Colonial theft**  
Their removals were “justified” by the enforcement of child welfare agencies policies which saw First Nations’ ways of parenting as not up to the “standard” of white, Eurocentric society. This was combined with a refusal to alleviate the harsh conditions caused by colonially enforced poverty that made families vulnerable. In Ontario alone, over 16,000 children were removed. The effects were devastating for the parents whose children were taken away. And those who were removed, like virtu-ally all adoptees, ultimately wanted to come home. If they were allowed to find out where home was and if they were able to get there, they often felt they did not fit in because they had no knowledge of the community’s language or traditions.

**Fighting back**  
But the spirit of resistance was never far away and today in every province Indigenous peoples are fighting back through lawsuits against either the federal or provincial governments responsible. In Ontario the fight is led by Beaver House Chief Marcie Brown Martel. As Justice Ian Nordheimer, part of the panel that rejected the government’s efforts to have the class action thrown out, wrote, “The respondents allege that . . . Canada wrongfully delegated its executive responsibility as guard-ian, trustee, protector and fiduciary of aboriginal persons by entering into an



agreement with Ontario that author-ized a child welfare program that systemically eradicated the aboriginal culture, society, language, customs, traditions and spirituality of these children.” The survivors are asking for \$85,000 each in damages and allege that many children suffered emotion-al, psychological and spiritual harm as a result of a loss of connection to their indigenous culture.

One Indigenous activist in at-tendance was Sandi Mansfield, now living in the Niagara region. She told socialist.ca, “Even though colonialism ended residential schools, govern-ments scooped kids who they set out to adopt or foster. This wasn’t unique to Canada. The federal government (under Harper and now Trudeau) has fought for seven years to have this court case thrown out but in June of this year, the case was allowed to pro-ceed. The issue has brought together a lot of First Nations.”

Placards at the rally had slogans like “Canada can’t hide genocide”, “Sixties Scoop, shame on you”, “Stealing a child government genocidal policy.” Many First Nations were represented at the rally from locations around Ontario including

Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharine’s, Ottawa, Attawapiskat, Beaver House, Wikwemikong and many others. Speakers included survivors like Beaver House Chief Marcia Brown Martel, one of the individuals leading the class action lawsuit. She was only four years old when she was removed. After several placements in foster care she was adopted and moved to Texas. Her tragedy was compounded by the fact that her community was physic-ally relocated so that by the time she came “home” there was no land base for the community. Stacy Laforme, from Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, said “Reconciliation is about truth and jus-tice... you have to redress the wrongs, deceits and lies. Show the same future for our children as yours... The irony is that Canada now needs First Nations to take the lead role to save our planet.”

As Deputy Grand Chief Glen Hare noted, “During the election the Liberals said there was going to be change. And First Nations made a dif-ference because of our big increase in votes. But nothing has happened with child welfare... See what it would be like for you if I took your kids away for even two days. Don’t ever quit

because the older adoptees are still trying to make their way home.” Another survivor, Chief Janice Henderson, has been striving to regain her dignity, which has been a challenge because of having to learn her language. She said “Don’t give up. Try to learn your language and way of life.” NDP MP Charlie Angus said the movement of history is against the Liberals’ efforts to stall this court case. He noted that Beaver House, with no land for its Indigenous people, is the site of one of the largest gold reserves in the world. He called on the government to stop fighting the court case and to try reconciliation instead.

**Next steps**  
The August 23 hearing was a one-day event to mark the beginning of the court process. Hearings will resume in December of this year for the Ontario lawsuit, but you can learn more about court actions happening across the country by checking with your province’s First Nations leadership or-ganizations. It is important to support survivors and their families against the ongoing efforts by governments to trample Indigenous rights.

Interview: Sid Ryan speaks out

*Carolyn Egan spoke with Sid Ryan, long-time labour activist and former president of the Ontario Federation of Labour about the state of the labour movement.*

**Sid, I wonder if you could com-ment: you had made a number of statements about the appearance of Kevin Flynn, the Minister of Labour for the Liberal government, at Labour Day this year.**

Yes, I was quite frankly shocked to see that the labour movement had invited a Minister from the Liberal government to march in the Labour Day parade. Now, I have nothing against the Minister—I’ve worked very closely with him on a number of issues down through the years. But the idea of inviting a Minister of Labour who is from the Liberal government, when the labour movement official policy is that we support the NDP—and we had the leaders of the NDP both federal and provincial marching at the back of our parade, or in the middle of it at least, and the place of honour was given to a Minister of the Crown?

I just couldn’t understand that. Why, this is the first time in the 150 or 160 year history of the Labour Day parade that we invited in a Liberal to march. I just don’t get it. I think it’s wrong, I think it sends the wrong signal to our members that somehow this is the party that we support, when we don’t. We’ve had nothing but trouble with this government, in terms of the selling off of Hydro, with respect to school teachers and 115 and rolling back their wages and

their benefits. We’ve had trouble with them over labour law reforms which they’ve yet to deliver. They’ve been in office for 12 years, they never gave us anti-scab legislation, they’ve not given us card-check. I hope to God that the membership at the CLC, the OFL and at the labour council call these leaders to task and say “Don’t ever do that again.”

**Do you feel that this is a bit of a contradiction, since October 1 is going to be a Day of Action for decent work, the fight for \$15, labour reform and improvements to the Employment Standards Act?**

Well, it makes a mockery of it because here we are walking arm in arm and slapping each other on the back and laughing and joking, and then we’re going to go up on a Saturday to shout at the building, and all this mock anger at the govern-ment—when in actual fact, here we are buddy-buddy with them. We’re sending the wrong signal again. I think we’re undermining the serious-ness of our campaigns when we’re out there, because they’re all laughing and joking back at the Legislature saying, “Don’t worry it, the CLC, OFL and Labour Council, they’re all onside, they’re not giving us a hard time, they even invited me into the Labour Day parade.”

**What do you think would be neces-sary to bring back the militancy to labour in this province?**

Well, it’s going to take leaders that understand who elected them and why they got elected...We have to

start challenging the capitalist system, we have to start to challenge these employers, and you can’t have union leaders that are basically selling out the next generation and then lobbying for taxpayers’ dollars to go into profit-able corporations. That’s the kind of stuff that needs to be exposed and that needs to stop if you’re going to build a militant movement.

**There have been major demon-strations at Standing Rock in the United States, of Indigenous peoples around pipelines. The Chippewas of the Thames in Ontario are doing a court chal-lenge to Line 9 here, and I’m just wondering what you feel about how the labour movement should relate to these pipelines and the protests that are developing.**

The labour movement is so far out in left field when it comes to pipelines and the fossil fuel industry. The world is moving away from fossil fuels, and here we are fighting with ourselves, destroying internally the labour movement over should we be building pipelines and saving some jobs in the pipeline industry and the fossil fuel industries, when in fact what we really need to be doing is taking a look at the Leap Manifesto, embracing the principles of the Leap Manifesto, moving away into a new green energy economy that’s based on solar and wind power and thermal power. These are the jobs of the future—it’s not pipelines. And we have to stop saying that somehow we have to take the dirtiest oil in the world, which is the Alberta tar sands, and taking that

bitumen and then pumping it across Canada. It’s simply wrong. And the labour movement, we’re like Luddites when it comes to new economies and a new green economy. And so I think we have to stop and look ten, 15 years down the road and not look the next three or four or five years. I mean, the deal—if you want to go back to it for a moment, at General Motors—they had 20,000 members 15 or twenty 20 ago. They were giving concession after concession after con-cession to try and save jobs, and now they’re down to 2,500. Well, it hasn’t worked. And the same thing is going on with this industry. This is a dying industry, whether we like it or not. And it’s not because of something that we did here in Canada, it’s just that people around the world are moving away from these old industries and it’s time that the labour movement started to get its act together and began to look at these new technologies. Let me just give you one quick example. If you take a look at a windmill, there’s 200 tons of steel alone in the base of a windmill, in the towers. That’s put steelworkers to work. There’s 10,000 moving parts in the turbines. They all have to be manufactured here in Canada. And they all have to be serviced here in Canada. There’s a massive amount of employment involved in the green energy fields, and these are jobs you can’t ship to China. The pylon and these towers are here, the windmill is here, so it needs to be serviced here. That’s a tremendous amount of jobs—high skilled jobs, good paying jobs, and hopefully unionized jobs.

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e-mail: [reports@socialist.ca](mailto:reports@socialist.ca)  
web: [www.socialist.ca](http://www.socialist.ca)  
lphone: 416.972.6391

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**Socialist Worker**  
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# India: 150 million on strike

**Millions of workers in India joined a one-day general strike on September 2.**

The right wing media have been quick to report that it’s “business as usual” in most of India, but a mass of reports from around the country paint a different picture.

In states such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tripura, the strike brought about a near total shut-down. Buses, auto rickshaws, and trains were paralysed as striking workers blocked roads and railway tracks.

As a result, many schools, colleges and offices also closed.

Called by nearly all of the country’s trade union groupings, the strike is against the economic and labour policies of the Narendra Modi government.

In particular the unions oppose

proposed “reforms” that will remove basic legal protection from huge numbers of workers. They would make it easier to sack people, ram through increased contract work and enable employers to hire at less than the minimum wage.

Unions are calling for a universal minimum wage of 15,000 rupees (£175) a month.

In Kolkata, the state capital of West Bengal, thousands of workers marched along railway lines with a sea of red banners emblazoned with hammer and sickle emblems. They brought an attempt to run scab trains to a swift end.

India’s banking system also ground to a halt with millions of rupees worth of financial transactions blocked by the action. Some 15,000 bank workers in the Telangana

region of southern India joined the strike.

In the capital New Delhi over 1,000 nurses started an indefinite strike. Police manhandled many of the strikers and even arrested some of their leaders, but the nurses remained defiant.

GK Khurana of the Nurses Federation union said, “Nurses across India have joined this strike. My detention will not deter us. We strongly condemn the manner in which the government is treating its employees.”

She added that the union has been struggling for over nine months seeking a rise in the entry level pay scale.

Some heavy industry has also been hit hard.

The All India Coal Workers Federation general secretary DD

Ramanadan said, “Dispatch, production and transport of coal have come to a standstill. Around 300 workers have been arrested in Rajmahal and Chitra mines areas.”

In the Gurgaon-Manesar-Bawal industrial region, near New Delhi, many car factories came to a standstill as workers stayed away.

While some reports suggest an uneven response to the strike, it is clear that the action has caused major disruption.

If the unions continue to make common cause with non-unionised workers and students they could turn a day of opposition into a far greater threat.

*This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)*

# Britain: Corbyn re-elected

**Jeremy Corbyn’s re-election as Labour Party leader last Saturday is a boost to the whole of the left.**

Not only did Corbyn win, he increased his share of the vote to 62 percent from the 59.5 percent he achieved last year.

Corbyn defied the plotting of 172 Labour MPs who voted “no confidence” in him.

He won despite Labour’s national executive committee (NEC) blocking 130,000 people who joined after 12 January from voting.

The NEC barred another 50,000 for “technical reasons” while the “compliance unit” weeded out thousands of others.

Corbyn’s success is a clear sign of the feeling against austerity, racism and war.

He has shown that socialist ideas can be popular and that the crisis of mainstream politics can be resolved to the left.

But there are now choices to be made.

Instead of being directed towards inner-party manoeuvres, his victory must be a launchpad for increased resistance in the workplaces and on the streets.

This is the crucial arena of struggle.

Workers are more open to radical ideas and less likely to blame migrants when there are lots of strikes and protests.

Resistance is crucial anyway. It’s well over 1,300 days until the scheduled general election—we need a fightback now.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) looks forward to continuing to work with Corbyn and his supporters.

**Deepen**

We need to resist disastrous Tory policies that threaten to destroy public services, deepen poverty,

whip up racism and launch more imperialist wars.

Corbyn’s rallies have seen large and enthusiastic audiences come to cheer a socialist message. Those people must become a movement in the streets and the workplaces that can block and then remove this Tory government.

The SWP is not part of the Labour Party. But on Sunday, alongside Labour members, we will be part of the demonstration at the Conservative conference in Birmingham.

On Saturday 8 October we will join the Stand Up To Racism conference which is dedicated to building a mass anti-racist movement—and where Corbyn will speak.

The Labour right wingers who have tried so zealously to remove Corbyn are not going to halt their manoeuvres. They will accept unity only on their own rotten terms.

There will now be massive pressure on Corbyn to appease the right. That would be disastrous. Boldness and a break from “politics as usual” won Corbyn his support. He must not back down.

Real change will need an assault on wealth and power. The election of the left wing Syriza government in Greece in January 2015 sent hope across the world.

But it faced the brutal political and financial pressure from the European Union, the bankers and the rich.

It is now implementing a worse round of austerity than that imposed by its Tory predecessors. That’s one clear reason why we need a movement independent of Labour.

*This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)*

## Greece: strikes and protests confront the Nazis

by Giorgos Pittas

**Thousands of people joined dozens of demonstrations against fascism across Greece—including at the Keratsini neighbourhood of Piraeus near Athens.**

It marked three years since members of Nazi party Golden Dawn murdered anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas there.

The protest was full of trade unionists—teachers, hospital workers, shipping and dock workers and others—as well as students. There were also Pakistani and African migrant groups, and Albanian migrants protesting over a recent death in police custody.

**Trial**

Pavlos’ killing is one of three cases covered in the trial of Golden Dawn as a criminal conspiracy. The others are an attack on Communist Party trade unionists in the same week, and an attack on Egyptian fisherfolk in June 2012.

The court finished hearing evidence relating to Pavlos’ killing last week, and this week the Egyptian fisherfolk’s turn begins.

They were attacked at night, their home smashed up and their heads smashed in. One almost died. The attack came shortly after a Golden Dawn rally nearby where an MP, trying to win support from fishmongers and fishing boat owners, vowed to put a stop to alleged thefts by migrant workers.

After Saturday’s demonstration the fisherfolk joined Pavlos’ family and friends for a candlelit vigil to show their unity against the fascists.

**Strikes and protests**

Public sector union federation ADEDY called a stoppage so that workers could join the protest against Golden Dawn outside the court.

Anti-racist and anti-fascist movement Keerfa is set to protest outside state broadcaster ERT next Monday against the TV coverage it is giving a Golden Dawn rally.

Both Golden Dawn and Tory party New Democracy (ND) have tried to hold protests in areas where refugees have been put in camps.

The policy has started to bear its rotten fruit—fights sometimes break out among the overcrowded, hungry and desperate inmates. The media seize on this and exaggerate it.

Then ND mayors or Golden Dawn groups issue statements saying people don’t want refugees in their area.

**Schools**

In Oreokastro in Thessalonika in northern Greece a parents’ association and the mayor came out against letting refugee children attend school. This caused an outcry from organisations locally and nationally.

Campaigning by parents’ associations and teachers’ unions mean child refugees were able to start school last week. The teachers’ union in Oreokastro put out a statement saying refugees are welcome, racists and fascists are not.

*This is shared from Socialist Worker (UK)*



# Marxism and wage labour

by Pam Frache

**As Marxists, we must first understand that the price of labour is conditioned by objective and subjective factors. Objective factors are things like the actual physical capacity of the class to reproduce current and future labour power. The subjective factors are historically or socially determined and a product of the balance of class forces at any given moment.**

At its barest, the capitalist marketplace is the place where two commodities are exchanged. Capitalists exchange money (a commodity) for labour. Workers exchange labour for money. We are told this is a fair and equal exchange because two commodities are exchanged for an agreed upon amount between two individuals who are “equal” within the market.

### The unequal workplace

However, because the capitalist starts out with money and the worker starts out with only labour, the capitalist has the upper hand because the capitalist can wait for all eternity to get the best value for his money. The worker, on the other hand, risks starvation, homelessness, or other catastrophes if they hold out for too long. Thus, workers are often compelled to work for bad wages because the alternative is actually worse.

And when workers do hold out for a better price for their labour by joining unions and organizing strikes, capitalists will often go to the state to intervene to either force workers to work via legislation and threats of fines or jail; by threatening to make them personally financially liable for the company’s lost profit; by threatening to or actually deporting them; or other strike-breaking tactics. Similarly, if workers use social assistance or employment insurance or pensions to help them hold out for a better price for their labour, the state intervenes to reduce or eliminate those payments in order to force workers back to work as early as possible. This is another reason why strong social wages helps workers win better workplace wages.

### Exploitation

For Marxists, all wage labour is exploitation—workers generate more value in output than they receive in wages. This gap between the value of produced goods and services and the compensation received by the worker is the source of profit. Only living labour produces new value because only living labour produces more than it receives in compensation. Once purchased, a lump of coal cannot produce more coal. But because a worker sells labour-power (effort) a worker can produce more goods and services than she receives in wages. Profit comes from that portion of the workday that is unpaid.

As capitalists compete with each other, using ever advancing equipment and technology (means of production) they are attempting to produce goods and services more cheaply, so as to win a short-term advantage over their competitors.

This is possible because there is a lag between the productivity boost resulting from technological change (or speedups or wage cuts) and a prevailing price for a good or service, and this can generate healthier profit.

However, as soon as the new technology is generalized, capitalist competition tends to produce price-cutting (where one firm might forgo a bit of profit in order to undercut their competitor’s price) as well as new investments in technology to again reduce the amount of socially necessary labour time required to produce a good or service. Both of these tendencies serve to cheapen the value of goods and services—which explains why things like clothing, calculators and TV sets are cheaper today, compared with their equivalents decades earlier.

### Wages

As Marx discovered, the general value of wages will tend to fluctuate around the rate at which the working class can reproduce its labour power, both present and future. These costs, he argued are determined not merely by the physical limitations of workers themselves, but also by the subjective element—that is the costs of reproduction that are socially or historically constructed at any given time. But, he was also careful to point out that the costs of reproducing present and future labour power is not based on this or that individual worker or this or that individual workplace, but rather on the costs of reproducing the labour power for the entire working class—even those who, in their millions do not, presently, earn enough to sustain themselves.

In this way, Marxists understand that low wages anywhere put downward pressure on wages everywhere. It is the material basis for uniting the working class behind common, as opposed to fragmented, minimum standards. While the class must fight to raise these standards in individual workplaces, it must also seek to generalize these standards across the entire class, or be subjected to the downward pressure exerted by the millions of workers whose wages are falling below historical or societal norms.

Before there were ever decent wages and benefits, there was first struggle by workers to make bad jobs better. There is nothing inherent about any job or sector that produces good wages. Before the waves of mass struggle and industrial organizing, industrial wages were generally terrible. It was workers collectively organizing, unionizing and striking that made better wages possible—and inspired others to fight.

## ANALYSIS



# Disabled Ontarians are fighting for fairness too

by MELISSA GRAHAM

On October 1, 2016 activists from across the province will be gathering at Queen’s Park in Toronto as part of the campaign to Fight for \$15 and Fairness.

In the context of the Changing Workplace Review, the demands of this demonstration include promoting full-time permanent work, fair scheduling, three weeks paid vacation, paid sick days for all workers, protections for the right to organize, protections from bullying in the workplace, and of course a \$15 minimum wage, with no exceptions.

### Disability oppression

The demand to increase the minimum wage is especially important for those most oppressed by capitalism: disabled people, migrant workers, racialized and Indigenous people, all of whom disproportionately earn a minimum wage that continues to fall below the poverty line.

Even where employed, people with disabilities are 1.5 times more likely than people without to live with low income. For people with disabilities who can and are able to find work, the choice to work is a difficult one, because, without adequate workplace benefits, workers with disabilities must pay for expensive medications and equipment repairs out of pocket from wages that are already too low. Such expenses are covered if a person is on social assistance.

For the two-thirds of working-age disabled Canadians living on social assistance, these costs -- and the costs to their own health -- are a significant factor in remaining on Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support program. As of October 2015, a single parent on the Ontario Disability Support Program would receive a maximum of \$1,638 per month. On Ontario Works, the maximum the same family could receive is \$1,062 per month. 18.4 per cent of working-age women with disabilities in low-income households are lone parents. Meanwhile, an adult minimum wage earner who is lucky enough to find a

35-hour per week job would earn only \$1,596—before tax—for four weeks.

Although a person is permitted to supplement social assistance with modest earnings, the precarity of persons with disabilities has contributed to their being exploited at work or even having to work without pay. This helps explain why, although sheltered workshops are shutting down in Ontario, thousands of intellectually disabled adults in Canada are still earning less than \$2 an hour under similar programs.

### Divide and conquer

The frustrating irony in Ontario is that many legislators have used the low minimum wage to keep social assistance rates even lower, insisting that a raise in social assistance would either disincentivize work or provoke a minimum wage hike that would supposedly ruin the economy. In other words, a low minimum wage floor acts like a ceiling on social assistance levels.

It’s time to turn this around. The evidence shows that a stronger minimum wage creates a stronger economy, and a higher minimum wage can help raise social assistance rates. When workers with and without paid work have more money to live, the whole economy improves. That’s why wages and social assistance must provide a decent living for all. It was a step forward when, in 2014, the movement forced the Ontario government to index the province’s minimum wage to the rate of inflation so that the wage no longer loses its value as prices rise. We need to demand the same for all forms of social assistance.

### Solidarity

With that in mind, we can all fight for \$15 and Fairness, where fairness means:

- 1.Increasing the minimum wage,
- 2.Providing adequate workplace benefits that accommodate all workers’ needs,
- 3.Raising social assistance rates and/

or shelter components to provide more adequate and dignified standards of living.

4.Indexing all social assistance to the annual cost of living to ensure that income does not lose its value over time.

That’s why we all need to support the Toronto Disability Pride March on Saturday September 24 starting at 1:00 pm at Queen’s Park and the demonstration for \$15 and Fairness at Queen’s Park, Toronto on October 1. The Queen’s Park Rally is at 1:00 pm, with pre-rally contingents start gathering at 12:00 pm. There will be a variety of campaigns connecting their issues with the Fight for \$15, from migrant workers to climate justice, and we should add fairness for disabled people.

Together we can make our communities stronger.

*Sources: Income Security Advocacy Centre and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.*



# Working for cool capitalists

*George Burns discusses the political economy of hipster capitalism*

**It's Sunday afternoon, and I'm cutting the tops off of strawberries. The gleaming countertop reflects back an image of me as I work: vintage Indigo Girls t-shirt, tidy little moustache, blue paisley bandana. In the background the stereo plays Jazz standards off of a youtube playlist and two customers argue over how best to pickle green beans. An idyllic scene: hipster at work.**

I was born in the 1990's, and thus my entire working life has taken place in the context of a major capitalist crisis. Unlike many of my peers, however, I have never worked for a fast food chain. I have never had to wear a uniform or watch training videos from corporate headquarters. Every job I have ever held has been with a small independent business.

## Austerity

Despite the precarious nature of my work and the meager wage it earns me, to my peers, my current job and others I have held make me lucky. I've had a few cool jobs—I've worked for a craft brewery, an independent bookstore, a few independent restaurants, and an organic food store. My friends tell me I have the coolest jobs. They work at Arby's, or Petco. A job like mine is what many of them are hunting for. They want to work somewhere small and independent, where they can listen to good music, wear their own clothing, and grow a beard without having to wear a net over it. They want cool jobs. To me, the fact that my peers consider cool jobs good jobs reveals just how much my generation has had to lower its expectations towards work.

Youth unemployment in Canada stands at 13 per cent, twice the national average. According to the Canadian Labour Congress, twice that number is underemployed—meaning they work part-time, or at a low-income job. At the same time, union density rates in Canada have plummeted to an all time-low of 28.8 per cent. This decline is most pronounced among young workers. Forget a living wage, protection against arbitrary dismissal, benefits, a pension, a modicum of control over our workplaces, or even a regular schedule; the best we can hope for is a less humiliating minimum wage job.

Part of the appeal of cool jobs is no doubt due to a radical adjustment of expectations, but this alone is not a sufficient explanation. Many of my co-workers are proud to work for independent businesses. I have witnessed young workers living paycheque to paycheque in one of Canada's most expensive cities volunteer their leisure time to work a cash register without pay for the benefit of the private for-profit company they work for. To many, small independent businesses represent an ethical way of doing business.

I used to hold this view. When I was younger I sought out independent businesses for employment, vowing to myself that I would never work for a chain. I was motivated by a vague anti-corporatism, but had not yet become acquainted with Marx's brilliant critique of capitalism. As a socialist, I go to work conscious of the fact that I am being exploit-

“Small businesses are just as exploitative as multinational corporations, just on a smaller scale. The owner of a private business, regardless of how large or small it is, regardless of how “independent” they claim to be, depends on profit. The little craft brewery with its brickwork counter and funky wall art could not exist without stealing from its workers a portion of the value they produce. This theft is the same whether the thief is big or small.”

ed. I take home my twelve dollars an hour knowing that about twice that sum is being stolen from me before I'm even paid.

## “Crony capitalism”

After almost a decade of recession, all but the most reactionary market fetishists will admit that capitalism has problems. Though capital's apologists acknowledge some of Capitalism's faults, they present these problems to us as something external to capitalism: “crony capitalism,” the disease of greed eating away at the good ol' American way.

The desire to work for cool capitalists reveals an acceptance of this narrative. The inevitability of capitalism has been drilled into us since childhood. Because capitalism seems eternal, and because we have been taught that imagining alternatives to capitalism is naïve and hopelessly passé, many of my peers look for solutions to capitalism's problems within the framework of capitalism. To many, small business capitalism presents an appealing alternative to the status quo. After all, the local restaurant owner doesn't buy wells in Africa and sell the water back at extortionate rates. The cool capitalist may have socially progressive ideas, and even support social democratic parties.

Without a class perspective, the small business capitalist looks very different from his big competitor. In this conception, scale is the problem, and not substance: if every business was small, then maybe the globe plundering impulses of capitalism could be restrained. Social Democratic parties are quick to lend support to this view of capitalism. They tell us that we just need to make some minor tweaks, break up a few banks, begin a few public works projects, and we'll be right back to a friendly meritocracy, where everyone can work to better their lot in life.

The truth is this ideal version of capitalism, where every business is small and every worker is treated fairly, has never existed and it never will. As Lenin wrote in his pamphlet *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, “The enormous growth of industry and the remarkably rapid concentration of production in ever-larger enterprises are one of the most

characteristic features of capitalism.”

## “Independent” business

Even if it were possible to restrain capitalism's tendency towards capital concentration and eventually monopoly, would the fantasy of small business capitalism really mean an end to exploitation? Of course not.

Small businesses are just as exploitative as multinational corporations, just on a smaller scale. The owner of a private business, regardless of how large or small it is, regardless of how “independent” they claim to be, depends on profit. The little craft brewery with its brickwork counter and funky wall art could not exist without stealing from its workers a portion of the value they produce. This theft is the same whether the thief is big or small. The awesome productive forces of our species are the result of millennia of human labour, and these forces, along with the materials available to us, are the common inheritance of the entire human race. Private ownership of capital is parasitism, an injustice whether big or small.

Many of my peers acknowledge that cool capitalists are just as exploitative as big capitalists, but they see exploitation as inevitable—maybe even fair if everyone gets their chance to become the exploiter. Again, capitalism is viewed as problematic because of its excesses, which are treated as some kind of external problem which can be dealt with without fundamentally challenging the logic of capitalism. If every capitalist was a small capitalist, then maybe we could have peace.

Unfortunately for this viewpoint, class antagonism is real. Even if we were to ignore the expropriation of the products of our labour by a class of parasites, even if the unchecked perpetual expansion necessitated by capital were not endangering our ability to live on this planet through the threat of catastrophic climate change, even then capitalism would still be inherently unstable due to the conflict it creates between classes. This antagonistic relationship is the same in a small independent business as it is in a multinational corporation. Competition between capitalists

obliges business owners to pay as low a wage as they possibly can, regardless of how small or how cool their business is. Squeezed between inflation and the capitalist impulse to lower wages, workers are forced to resist capital in order to protect their purchasing power, and thus their material existence. As long as there are owners and workers, there will be conflict between them. Restricting the size of businesses can never resolve this basic contradiction, which is inherent to capitalism.

## Beyond capitalism

Every day, we are confronted with the failures of capitalism. Thousands of passionate, skilled young people sit idle, unemployed due to the whims of capital, while all around us infrastructure crumbles. My generation is not stupid, and they have correctly identified their greatest antagonists: the tiny class of robber barons who control the world's largest capitalist enterprises. Distressed by capitalism's senseless waste and brutal destruction of human lives, but blinkered by the deeply ingrained notion that the present economic system is inevitable and eternal, young people turn to cool capitalists for a solution.

But cool capitalists cannot fix capitalism's problems. The failures of capitalism are systemic. Changing a few parts will not change the nature of the machine. The concentration of capital, leading to the rise of vast corporate empires, is the inevitable outcome of private ownership of capital. Small businesses cannot compete against multinational corporations, and even if they could, they would not put an end to exploitation, expropriation, and the struggle of class against class.

Capitalism cannot be saved. The only real solution to the failures of capitalism is the complete reorganization of the economy along democratic lines. The bourgeois state must be dismantled, and the bourgeois class must be stripped of its power to oppress and exploit. Only by establishing worker control of production can we provide for ourselves in a free and equitable manner.

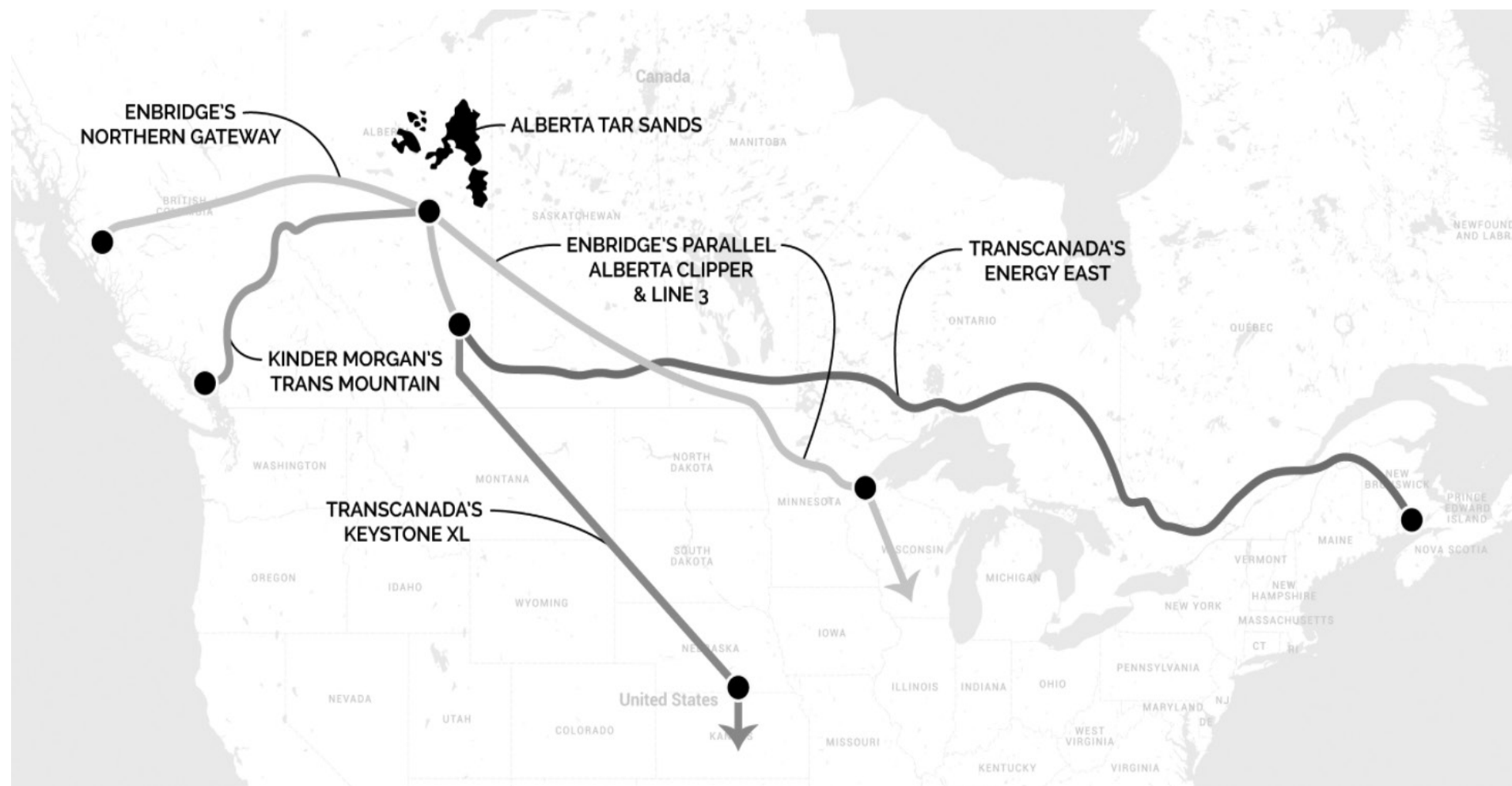
We can build a just future, but we'll have to do it ourselves. The capitalists won't help us, cool or otherwise.





# THE FIGHT AGAINST TAR SANDS EXPANSION

*Eric Lescarbeau, Valerie Villemarie and Chantal Sundaram write about the growing resistance and solidarity against pipelines, and in support of an economy built on climate justice*



## Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion

by Eric Lescarbeau

**An historic advance in the struggle to stop expansion of the Alberta Tar Sands has taken place with the signing of The Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion.**

After years of waging separate struggles to stop individual pipeline projects the climate justice movement in North America has finally been united through the leadership of First Nations and Indigenous Tribes to form a wall of opposition that will prevent any further expansion of the Alberta Tar Sands.

This treaty also presents a challenge to climate justice activists in settler-colonial society to stand in solidarity to preserve, build on and strengthen this united movement. We must now rise to the level of First Nations by overcoming divisions within our own communities and connecting the fight against climate change to the struggle for social and economic justice and embracing the fight for a green economy.

### Treaty Alliance

On Thursday, September 22 more than 50 First Nations and Tribes from across Canada and the Northern US gathered together on Musqueam Territory in Vancouver and Mowhawk Territory in Montreal to sign a continent-wide Indigenous Treaty: The Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion. The treaty commits signatories to working together to stop all proposed tar sands pipeline, tanker and rail projects in their respective territorial lands and waters including Kinder Morgan, Energy East, Line 3, Northern Gateway and Keystone XL. As the Treaty explains, “Tar Sands expansion is a collective threat to our Nations. It requires a collective response. Therefore, our Nations hereby join together under the present treaty to officially prohibit and to agree to collectively challenge and resist the use of our respective territories and coasts in connection with the expansion of the production of the Alberta Tar Sands, including for the transport of such expanded production, whether by pipeline, rail or tanker.”

Led by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, under the leadership of Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, the treaty follows on the remarkable unity achieved in the Yinka Dene Alliance’s Fraser Declaration which united nations along the route of Enbridge’s Northern Gateway pipeline to successfully oppose the project.

“The Yinka Dene have already shown in the case of Enbridge’s Northern Gateway that a pipeline cannot hope to pass through a unified wall of Indigenous opposition,” said Carrier Sekani Tribal Chief Terry Teegee. “You will now see the same thing play out with all other tar sands pipelines, including another failed BC pipeline—Kinder Morgan.”

“What this Treaty means is that from Quebec, we will work with our First Nation allies in BC to make sure that the Kinder Morgan pipeline does not pass and we will also work with our Tribal allies in Minnesota as they take on Enbridge’s Line 3 expansion, and we know they’ll help us do the same against Energy East,” said Kanesatake Grand Chief Serge Simon.

He went on to explain that opposition to tar sands goes hand in hand with expanding climate jobs: “Tar sands are, I think, a national shame. If it were up to me it would be shut down tomorrow. But it would cause a lot of pain for people in Alberta, so our alliance is going to promote, in the strongest possible terms, massive investment in Alberta in another type of economy. These two actions, they go hand in hand. We’re not proposing to destroy Alberta, we’re trying to help it, and we’re trying to help the country, and we’re trying to help this planet.”

### Colonial response

The Federal Liberal government responded to the treaty the following day, refusing to address its content, and instead attacking the unity of First Nations. “If you put the mayors of major cities in British Columbia and Alberta in a room you’d probably not get consensus and you’d certainly not get unity. If you put the premiers in a room talking about these energy projects

there would be a difference of opinion. So too, no doubt, there will be a difference of opinion in Indigenous communities,” Natural Resources Minister, Jim Carr said in an interview with Chris Hall on The House. Carr argued further that there are other Indigenous communities “who have spotted opportunity” in natural resource development.

Carr’s statements continue a long history of divide and rule policy from Canada’s corporate elite. For hundreds of years they have used the Canadian state to fragment and isolate First Nations, undermine their traditional governance structures and cultures, destroy their languages and shatter their social cohesion in order to sever their ties to the land, air and water and open up their territories for profitable extractive development.

First Nations today are faced with a constant barrage of demands from regulatory agencies working hand in glove with the resource extraction industries; demands which they often do not have the funds to adequately assess or respond to. These captured regulators, backed by the state, perpetually seek to create an air of inevitability and forward momentum for these projects—forcing First Nations to choose between stoically defending their identity as a people, as defined by their connection to the land, air and water, or receiving desperately needed resources to rebuild communities devastated by hundreds of years of genocidal colonial policy.

### Settler solidarity

In this context it is hardly surprising that some First Nations and First Nations’ Leaders have decided to support some of these projects. Many do so with a heavy heart, but feel they have a duty to bring badly needed jobs and resources to their communities. As members of settler-colonial society we have no right to criticize the decisions made by First Nations leaders and their communities. Genuine solidarity means fighting our own 1% and lifting the boot of the settler Canadian state off the backs of our First Nations sisters and brothers. This kind of solidarity from non-Indigenous climate activists and organizations can play a vital role in making it easier for First Nations to resist the immense pressure put on them by government, regulatory agencies and industry.

One of the most profound examples of this happened in the midst of the mass protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999. Poor nations were being railroaded by a trade negotiation process that was stacked against them into opening up their fragile economies to further exploitation by first world corporations. Inspired by the united protests of tens of thousands of social justice, environmental and labour activists, representatives of more than 40 of the poorest nations walked out en masse and joined protestors in the streets—permanently derailing the talks, sparking solidarity protests in dozens of countries and launching a mass anti-globalization movement that swept across the globe over the next two years.

### Standing Rock

The Treaty Alliance also comes in the wake of the massive and inspiring blockade of the Dakota Access Pipeline led by the Standing Rock Sioux. Assembled in a relatively isolated location along the Missouri River in North Dakota, the camp has drawn thousands of activists from hundreds of First Nations and Tribes across Turtle Island, turning the camp into a small city. After weeks of escalating confrontations between non-violent land and water protectors, trying to stop the destruction of sacred burial sites, and racist police and security forces, the state governor called in the National Guard.

In that week hundreds of solidarity demonstrations were held in cities and towns across North America. An important report from Democracy Now anchor Amy Goodman recorded racist security goons using their attack dogs against unarmed women, men and children. It was picked up by major networks after weeks of a virtual media blackout, exposing for millions of Americans what was going on. It was in the face of this solidarity that president Obama felt forced to intervene to stop construction on some sections and Army Corp of Engineers refused to



cooperate with the project. The fight to stop DAPL is not over but this victory demonstrates what is possible with solidarity.

We will need to continue to build on this inspiring example and to follow the leadership shown in the Treaty Alliance. However, it is not enough for non-Indigenous activists to applaud the leadership of UBCIC and First Nations or to approach solidarity from a purely moral position. For many in the movement the “justice” in climate justice is largely isolated to justice for First Nations but it should also mean justice for working class people in our own communities. This means our task is not simply to stand behind First Nations, supporting their protests, donating to their court cases and admiring their leadership. To limit our solidarity to this would be to hold First Nations up as a shield against pipelines, leaving them to carry the brunt of the struggle. We also can’t opportunistically “piggy back” on the unity of First Nations to build our own as one activist in Vancouver recently described it. A genuine decolonizing approach must learn from Indigenous leadership and apply those lessons to struggles we share in common in settler-colonial society. It means challenging the false division in settler-colonial society between taking action to stop climate change and addressing the social and economic crisis we face as a result of the climate crisis and the corporate drive for profit that is behind it.

First Nations activists have linked the fight to protect their territories to the fight to end violence against Indigenous women, to creating jobs, combating poverty, repairing and expanding public services and many more struggles for social and economic justice. They have also led the way in implementing renewable energy projects to reduce emissions and create green jobs.

As Grand Chief Derek Nepinak of The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs stated when signing the treaty, “The solutions to the climate crisis are at hand and some of our Nations have taken the lead in implementing them.” One inspiring example of this has been the Lubicon Solar project developed by the Lubicon Cree First Nation situated in territories devastated by the Tar Sands. These same struggles exist for millions of working class people in non-indigenous communities from the fight for green jobs, to the struggle to raise the minimum wage to the Black Lives Matter movement.

### Fight for jobs, justice and the climate

This week Tolko Industries announced the closure of its sawmill in Merritt, BC destroying 200 good union jobs, the largest employer in this small town. These workers and their community are direct victims of climate change. The company argues they were forced to close the mill due to a sharp reduction in the Annual Allowable Cut now that the accelerated cutting of forests killed by the Mountain Pine Beetle is coming to an end. More closures are expected in other mill towns. The Mountain Pine Beetle explosion which has destroyed millions of acres of Lodgepole Pine forest in BC’s interior is now spreading across Alberta and threatens to sweep across much of the northern boreal forests into Ontario and beyond. The Pine Beetle is a native species that was thrown out of its natural equilibrium with the trees it breeds in by a one degree increase in the average temperature in BC’s Interior.

The fight to save the mill is now on. This is a fight that the climate justice movement should support along with many others. In Vancouver, bus drivers are pushing to implement a transit plan that would create 4300 full time green jobs annually. Mill workers and environmentalists on Vancouver Island are fighting raw log exports which have fuelled clear cut logging, destroying vital carbon sinks, and starved local mills of timber. In Burnaby, 150 workers at the Chevron refinery are threatened with the loss of their jobs if Kinder Morgan’s pipeline is approved and raw bitumen export replaces local oil refining.

In 1999 it was the alliance of Teamsters and Turtles that inspired a global movement and gave poor nations the support they needed to resist the big imperial powers. Today it is the duty of the climate justice movement to rebuild this unity if we truly wish to be in solidarity with First Nations.

## Outaouais, Québec : La Marche pour nos rivières

by Valerie Villemarie and Chantal Sundaram

**On August 14, La Marche pour nos rivières, a march along the whole length of the Ottawa River, was launched in Saint-André d’Argenteuil, Québec, and ended on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on August 20 - a total of 122 kilometers.**

The march was to bring the attention of people, politicians and the media to the dangers posed by the Energy East pipeline for the water of the region and for the planet. But marchers and their supporters also seemed to be sending a message against pipelines in general.

Since its foundation in April, the committee “Stop Oléoduc Outaouais (SOO)” has worked to organize this march with many other groups. On August 14 the march was launched by a Mohawk delegation, activists from “Coule pas chez nous!” (“No oil where we live”) and Amir Khadir, Québec MNA for Québec solidaire.

And then, on August 20, people from diverse social communities joined the march for the last segment, which left Lac Beauchamp at 9:30am and reached downtown Hull at 1pm. In Hull it was joined by a Québec solidaire contingent to march on to Parliament Hill. There, a crowd was waiting to welcome the marchers. All in all, more than a hundred people joined the march at one point or another. On the Hill Manon Massé, Québec solidaire MNA and environment critic, delivered an electrifying speech condemning Energy East.

Energy East would mean a commitment of forty years in support of the expansion of the tar sands industry. Opposition to this pipeline’s passage through the territory of Quebec is growing and reflects the desire of the Quebec population for a rapid transition to green energy. It is not in the interests of ordinary people for such a pipeline to be built. Energy East would benefit only a small number of wealthy people who don’t live anywhere near the beautiful region of the Outaouais.

SOO is trying to raise awareness since most people don’t even know about the project at all. There has already been a huge mobilization against such a pipeline near Montreal, and it was effective: they couldn’t build the pipeline there because public opinion was so against it. This is why there was a change of plans to build the pipeline along small communities in the Outaouais instead.

Now, some members of the SOO committee are engaging local politicians in discussion to make sure that raised awareness results in real measures taken against the pipelines.



## Fight for \$15 faultlines

**There are a series of fault-lines at play within the working class movement that have the potential to reinforce the fragmentation within the labour movement and disorganize the unity, solidarity and effectiveness of the Fight for 15 movement in Ontario.**

What makes the terrain even more challenging to navigate is that most confusion is emerging from people with really good intentions who don't fully understand the implications of the strategies they are proposing. Or they use terms and language that have their own meanings not associated with a particular strategy, but that serve to reinforce strategies that could undermine the working class orientation of the movement.

### Basic Income / Guaranteed Annual Income

In the 2016 Ontario budget, the Ontario Liberals committed to launching a guaranteed basic income pilot project. There is also a certain logic to the basic income proposal which would allow public tax dollars to subsidize wages and ultimately reduce employer responsibilities for providing decent wages and benefits.

While of course socialists support a decent income floor for all workers—with or without jobs—we must be careful not to let employers off the hook for wages and benefits. It's why socialists should fight not only for higher wages, but also for other forms of wages such as workplace pensions and benefits while also fighting for strong expanded CPP and QPP, public health care, medicare, etc.

To add to the ideological confusion, many well-respected, progressive academics have also championed basic income as a means of accommodating the "new labour market realities." Meanwhile, some on the left see the guaranteed basic income as a more radical approach than "merely" raising the minimum wage which, is inherently low.

Other voices have been more critical, especially in today's context when the labour movement is not at its most militant. CUPE Ontario and OCAP's John Clark have made some important contributions to this debate and more recently, the more liberal Tamarak Institute has also raised important caveats about the implications that the Basic Income proposals would have for social wages and services. (For example, individualizing social programs through individual payments as an excuse for cutting other important programs, services and supports people rely on.)

More pressing for the FF15&F is that, given the widespread confusion among progressives, the Liberals may well seize on this opportunity to offer Basic Income as a program alongside some modest labour law reform. As it stands, this scenario would undoubtedly curb the momentum of the Fight for \$15 and play a confusing and disorganizing role in the Fight for \$15 and Fairness. Given this confusion, it would also allow Liberals to present themselves progressive reformers—even radical—defending the most vulnerable workers. And given the scale of support for Basic Income that is emerging from among well-intentioned individuals and organizations, neither socialists nor the movement appear well prepared theoretically to respond coherently to what could be a very likely scenario in the future.

Navigating this terrain should be part of our ongoing discussions, especially because we aren't trying to point score, we are trying to enlarge the working class movement and bridge fault-lines.

### Living Wage

Many proponents of the living wage see this campaign as an important mechanism to raise the horizons of people who want to see social and economic justice. They are rightly sickened at the plight of workers in low-wage employment. This has a moral edge to it that makes it an attractive slogan for unions fighting for better wages and anti-poverty activists supporting the working poor.

Rather than just a "minimum" wage, they argue, we should be defining and measuring quality of life so that wages allow workers to live well, not just stay alive. It is also, in part, a challenge to the low-horizons of the traditional "left" – rather than just fighting to oppose something, let's raise hopes and expectations.

But there are limitations. First, those employers who do offer "living wage" rates tend to be those that are already viable entities that can afford to make these changes while leaving untouched the wages and working conditions of workers in the most precarious situations. Secondly, other "successes" tend to be employers who are already socially-minded, like unions, church groups, a progressive coffee shop, a bike co-op, the occasional credit union and perhaps even some social service agencies. As such, it offers no pathway for workers in precarious employment to improve their own working conditions, especially in small workplaces where workers lack bargaining power.

However well intentioned, the logic of actually existing living wage campaigns (such as in the UK and previously in the US) is that they see employers as the agent of change, not workers' own self-activity.

The question for us is how to best use the employers who do support decent wages to build workers' confidence, but without damaging the source of real change: the unity, confidence and momentum of the working class.

We must also be aware of the inherent limitations of this cross class strategy, especially if the approach subordinates workers' demands to employers' needs, fragments the class unity required to change provincial legislation, gives employers another tool for undermining wages or otherwise reinforces ruling class ideology.

## ANALYSIS



# It's time for our war on drug dealers: Big Pharma

by John Bell

**For many, awareness of the unbridled greed of the pharmaceutical industry began a year ago with their introduction to Martin Shkreli, the self-described "finance bro." He's the former hedge fund operator who created a new drug company (Turing Pharmaceuticals), purchased the patent on a drug essential to cancer and AIDS patients, and jacked the price up from \$13.50 to \$750 per pill (a 5,000 per cent increase).**

When Shkreli's profiteering made news he was named "the most hated man in America" and other less complimentary things. He reacted with a combination of amusement and confusion.

In an interview with Vanity Fair, Shkreli compared himself to the "robber barons", the handful of dynastic capitalists who became super-rich in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He said: "The attempt to public shame is interesting. Because everything we've done is legal. [Standard Oil tycoon John D.] Rockefeller made no attempt to apologize as long as what he was doing was legal."

He was right. The practice wasn't illegal and he wasn't the only one doing it. Why did Shkreli become so notorious? No doubt it was largely due to his smug, smirking response. But it was the beginning of the presidential election campaign, and Bernie Sanders used Shkreli as an example of the ruthlessness and greed of the 1%. Hillary Clinton jumped on the bandwagon, denouncing the price gouging. Even Donald Trump denounced his personality – although not his practices.

Fearing that Shkreli's notoriety would lead to calls to regulate the drug industry or to impose price controls, his pharmaceutical peers denounced him. But the rat was out of the bag, and more people began to take a hard look at drug corporations' practices.

### "What About the Children!"

Fast forward a year, to the EpiPen scandal. US drug dealers Mylan thought the time was right for a big jump in the price of EpiPens, the lifesaving portable drug that stops severe allergic reactions in adults and children. In fact Mylan had been slowly inflating the price for years. With more and more children developing potentially deadly reactions to foods like peanuts and soy, EpiPen sales are widespread and some sufferers carry several.

In the US they used to cost almost \$100 for a 2-pack, bad enough. But over a decade, Mylan decided to raise the price 450 per cent, to over \$600 (US). It is estimated the the cost to make the medicine is about \$1 per

dose, and that of the injector is \$5.

Mylan's CEO, Heather Bresch, went the hand wringing route. Bresch told an CNBC interview she was no Shkreli: "Who do you think we are, oil barons? We're in the business of saving lives, not milking our customers for unnecessary profits, we're not like that....And even though my company was founded with the purpose of helping people, at the end of the day, we're still a business and we need to stay on if we intend to keep on helping."

Mylan has spent millions creating an institutional demand for EpiPens; airlines are legally required to carry them, and schools, camps, zoos, etc. stockpile them. Perhaps you think that selling a shit-ton more EpiPens would mean the price would come down. Don't make me laugh. That's the perfect time to raise the price.

EpiPens now account for 40 per cent of Mylan's profits. And that deadly allergy epidemic? The American Academy of Asthma, Allergies and Immunology estimated 225 people die from anaphylaxis each year, many of them because their made-in-the-good-old-USA EpiPens fail or are misused. As a result of all the bad press and outrage, Mylan announced it would market a "generic" version for a mere \$300 per dose. Such generosity.

### Sugar Shock Sticker Shock

In the 1920s University of Toronto chemist Frederick Banting was able to build on decades of research into diabetes and developed insulin to control the condition. For his efforts he won a Nobel Prize; he donated his prize money to further research and sold the patent for insulin for 50 cents.

Insulin was derived from the pancreas of live animals. For years drug companies made insulin a bit purer and a bit safer, but there were no real changes until the 1970s. Then gene researchers found they could produce insulin by adding the gene that naturally produces insulin in humans into recombinant DNA. The process was more expensive.

In many countries (including Canada) the old, cheaper, animal-derived insulin remained in production to provide a generic version to keep costs down. This was the result of activists and consumer advocates, not necessarily any sense of social responsibility on the part of drug companies.

This didn't happen in the US. The corporation making Humulin, the new version, spent millions on marketing and won a virtual monopoly. As it did, prices started to rise. Today an American diabetic will have to shell out \$400 per month. A doctor based at Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University couldn't understand why so many of his patients had so much difficulty managing their blood sugar, until he started asking the right questions. It

turned out that many simply could not afford to take their medicine regularly.

### Canada

All these examples of drug industry greed are from the US, but the practices they expose are global. If there is a difference between the US and Canada, it is just one of degree.

In August of 2015 the Canadian price of cycloserine, a drug treating a deadly and rare form of tuberculosis, went up by 2,000 per cent. Daraprim, used to treat auto-immune deficiencies (particularly HIV/AIDs) went up 5,000 per cent. Both increases resulted from the rights to existing drugs being sold to new corporations, which arbitrarily jacked up the price tag, just as Martin Shkreli had done.

Neither drug is made in Canada, or are generally approved for sale. But they may be imported for specific patients with dire illnesses whose lives may be saved or prolonged by the drugs. Patients using cycloserine or daraprim could pay up or die, thanks to a corporate-friendly loophole.

It remains true that, with some exceptions, Canadian drug prices are lower than in the US. However per capita drug spending in Canada is higher than every other member state in the OECD except the US. Provincial price caps (in some but not all provinces) and federal regulation provide some protection. So has the existence of lower-cost generic drug manufacturers. But these defences aren't what they used to be, largely thanks to free trade laws.

And now there's Dr. Profit, Brian Day. He is the front-man for a right-wing BC Supreme Court challenge to declare the Canada Health Act – the cornerstone of our public health system – a violation of his right to make profit.

Day already co-owns a group of private clinics in Vancouver, the result of stealthy erosion of our medicare over decades. But he is not allowed to charge more for services than they cost in the public system. This, he declares, violates his right to charge as much as the traffic will bear.

The one resounding argument the forces on the right make in calling for privatization is that our public system costs too much. We've heard it so many times, unchallenged, that even some supporters of public healthcare concede the point.

What actually does cost too much is pharmaceutical spending. After the cost of hospitals themselves, the next highest cost factor in our public system is drugs – higher per capita than even the US.

Next time you hear about nurses laid off in your city because of lack of funds, remember the billions of tax dollars going to big pharma each and every year.



REVIEWS



The trauma and medicalization of war

BOOK

Book: *The Evil Hours: A Biography of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*  
Written by David Morris  
Reviewed by Laura Kaminker

**The Evil Hours: A Biography of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is an outstanding book -- meticulously researched, but written in a compelling, accessible style, and with great humanity and compassion.**

Author David J. Morris unearths the social and cultural history of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the fourth most common psychiatric disorder in the US. He surveys the potential treatments. He explores the role of social justice in our understanding of PTSD.

But above all, Morris confronts the meaning of trauma, in society and in his own life. Morris was a US Marine stationed in Iraq. After narrowly escaping death, he returned home questioning everything he thought he knew -- and eventually having to face the reality of his own trauma. Morris' dual role as both researcher and subject give this book a unique power as history, social science, and personal essay.

People have known for centuries, for millennia, that traumatic events produce after-effects, but different cultures in different eras have explained those effects in different ways. The modern history of trauma is linked to the carnage of 20th Century war. And our current understanding of PTSD owes everything to the Vietnam War, and the experience of returning veterans who publicly opposed the war.

In this way, the history of PTSD encompasses a history of 1960s and 1970s peace activism, especially of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, a group that began a sea-change in the culture of the United States. As a student of peace, I found this part fascinating.

Taking this even further, Morris links PTSD and social justice. Powerless and marginalized people are more likely to be traumatized by one or more of the four principal causes of PTSD: war, genocide, torture, rape. Taking a social and cultural perspective forces us to confront a world that causes these traumas. In this view, PTSD is not so much an illness as a moral condition brought on by the worst of human society.

The United States Veterans Administration (VA) sees it quite differently. To the VA, PTSD is strictly a medical condition. And this matters greatly, because research about PTSD is almost entirely funded and controlled by the VA. Explaining trauma as purely medical or biological doesn't address the causes at all. In fact, it does the opposite -- it normalizes PTSD as a natural consequence of unavoidable circumstances.

As for treatment, Morris surveys what's out there and finds most of it useless. VA hospitals and insurance companies prefer therapies that can be "manualized" -- made uniform, with a certain number of treatments and little or no emotional engagement from the therapist. Statistically, these types of therapies appear to be useful -- until one learns that the numbers don't include all the patients who drop out! Talk about cooking the books: everyone for whom the treatment isn't working or, in many cases, is actually worsening their symptoms, is simply ignored.

Morris himself feels that therapeutic talks with an empathetic person with some training goes further than neuroscience can. "What they [the VA] seem to want instead," Morris writes, "is mass-produced, scalable, scripted therapies that make for compelling PowerPoint slides."

Readers of this blog may know that I have PTSD. Much of The Evil Hours brought a shock of recogni-

tion -- the feeling that someone else is expressing your own thoughts, saying exactly what you've been thinking all along. Morris perfectly articulates how trauma plays out in one's life, the depths of change it brings about.

Morris writes: "We are born in debt, owing the world a death. This is the shadow that darkens every cradle. Trauma is what happens when you catch a surprise glimpse of that darkness."

In the immediate aftermath of my own trauma, while trying to write about my experience, this is exactly the image I fixated on. We are, all of us, dancing on the edge of a great precipice, usually unaware of how terrifyingly close we are to that edge. Then something happens, and we understand it, not in some theoretical way, but immediately and profoundly, perhaps in a way humans are not equipped to understand. We talk about "the fragility of life" but we don't know what that is -- until we do. Then we spend a lifetime trying to live with the knowledge.

"One of the paradoxes of trauma," writes Morris, "is that it happens in a moment, but it can consume a lifetime. The choice of how much time it is permitted to consume is usually in the hands of the survivor."

The Evil Hours may be very useful for people who are figuring out how to stop PTSD from consuming any more of their lives. It is certainly a must-read for anyone interested in the effects of trauma on the human mind.

*This is shared from wmtc.ca*

LEFT JAB  
John Bell

US: Status quo wins the debate

**She had all the spontaneity of an animatronic figure at Disney World, delivering platitudes agreeable to the corporate powers that back her. He tried to hide his half truths and outright lies behind bullying bluster yet had the nerve to brag about his temperament.**

Were these two prevaricators -- one an outright liar, the other simply not telling the truth -- really the best the system could find to lead it?

Who "won"? Strictly by the internal logic created by the television debate structure, I would say that Clinton "won." She stuck to her script, got in her jabs and allowed her wooden delivery to exaggerate Trump's shoot from the hip style.

And so it did. He came off as a sexist bully, substituting volume for reason, barks of denial instead of rebuttal. He allowed Clinton to set the terms of the debate and was on the defensive at almost every stage.

He know he lost it too. In the aftermath he tried to claim he was given a "defective" mike; maybe he was, if by defective he meant one which broadcast what he actually said.

The fact checkers were working overtime to expose Trump's lies, so I won't reiterate most of them here. But his biggest gaffes of the night weren't lies, they were moments of brazen, arrogant truthfulness.

As Clinton hammered on his refusal to release his recent tax records, Trump gloated that he paid almost no taxes because he is "smart."

Similarly when she attacked him for publicly crowing in 2006 that the housing crisis (in which millions lost their homes) would just give him golden investment opportunities, the best he could do was sneer: "That's called business, by the way."

Those were the gifts Trump presented to Clinton, that allowed her to "win" the debate. And in doing so Clinton may just have lost the election.

There was nothing in Clinton's robotically competent performance to pull Trump's legions of supporters in her direction.

Her glowing claims about job creation don't stand up to his populist lament for the loss of good manufacturing jobs. Working class America knows that no amount of "gig economy" jobs -- part time, underpaid, bereft of security and benefits -- will replace what they had, what their children will never have.

Trump scored by tying Hillary and the whole Clinton brand to the free trade deals which working and middle class America blame for the destruction of their jobs and lives.

Clinton tried to duck Trump's claim that she has for years been a cheerleader for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, calling it the "gold standard" of trade deals. But those were the exact words she used to describe the TPP on a 2012 visit to Australia. It was only during the current campaign, in an effort to deflect attacks from Bernie Sanders, that she changed her tune and

tried to disavow the deal she spent much of her tenure as Secretary of State negotiating.

Trump exposed the convenience of that conversion, and you can be sure his followers didn't miss the point.

While the media pounces on Trump's lies, and he gives them every opportunity, they are not so diligent in exposing Clinton's avoidance of the truth. Trump gets tangled in knots trying to deny his support for the invasion of Iraq; nowhere is she held accountable for her steadfast support for war.

Trump continues to make noise about pulling back from wars and imperialist adventures, even if he cites high costs as his reason.

Trump is attacked for harbouring racists among his supporters. And his role in propelling the "birther" movement is repugnant. But there is nothing in Clinton's history to suggest she is a friend to a movement like Black Lives Matter. She had the nerve to suggest during the debate that police may overreact because they are "outgunned." The militarization of US police forces began on Bill Clinton's watch, and picked up speed during her service to the Obama administration.

While Trump was getting fact checked for his record of climate change denial, no one has held Clinton to account for her support for pipelines and lack of climate action.

One of the most annoying arguments used by Clinton supporters is that Trump must not be allowed access to the country's nuclear codes, to have his finger on the button as it were. Yet it was Trump who declared that he would never use nuclear first strike as an option. It is the Obama administration, including Hillary Clinton, that back away from adopting a no first strike pledge.

The reduction of the US stockpile of nuclear weapons was less under Obama/Clinton than under any other post Cold War presidency. In fact Obama committed to over \$1 trillion over 30 years to "modernize" the nuclear arsenal.

In short, Hillary Clinton is trying to win this election as the candidate of the status quo, endorsed by past president from both parties. That means being the candidate of war, corporate greed and oppression. Donald Trump's opposition to the status quo is just another lie. Neither deserves a vote.

Millions of Americans are sick of that status quo -- it has stolen their jobs, foreclosed on their homes and taken the lives of their children in useless imperial war. "Winning" the debate, Hillary Clinton gave them not a single reason to support her.

I hope the former Bernie Sanders supporters rise above the moral hectoring that is sure to come their way if Trump and Clinton remain deadlocked. Were I among them I would certainly cast my vote for Jill Stein's Green Party, to break the lesser evilism inbred in the two party model. Not only was she not invited to debate, security forces removed her from the campus where it took place. She really must have something good to say.

Forests and the opening of capitalism

BOOK

Book: *Barkskins*  
Written by Annie Proulx  
Reviewed by Valerie Lannon

**Annie Proulx has a new novel entitled Barkskins. The author of Brokeback Mountain and Shipping News does not disappoint in this sprawling novel that begins with the story of two Frenchmen arriving in "New France" in 1693, and traces the experiences of their descendants up to the present day.**

Barkskins was the name given to those who were woodcutters (current day loggers) and this novel describes

important historical themes. It shows how the rapid development of the logging industry was part of the explosion of capitalism on to the scene in North America in what is now Nova Scotia, Quebec, Maine and Illinois.

This somewhat parallels the burst of cotton plantations and the opening up of capitalism in the southern states, only made possible through the enslavement of peoples from Africa.

Proulx helps us understand, through her highlights of Mi'kmaw history, how, long before the Indian Act, residential schools and oilsands extraction, capitalism exploited the labour of Indigenous peoples and destroyed

their sources of sustenance and very existence.

She also demonstrates how this wanton destruction led us to where we are today with a warming climate and little being done by the ruling class to save the planet. She celebrates indigenous values and respect for nature but concludes on a highly cautionary note.

At a time when solidarity is needed with Indigenous peoples like the Chippewas of the Thames, this is well worth the read!



WHERE WE STAND

The dead-end of capitalism

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty, it threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

A system that is killing the planet

Capitalist profits depend on extracting the world's blood and bone. The devastating impact of capital's assault on the planet affect the world's most vulnerable populations and threaten the long-term meaningful existence of humanity. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

Socialism and workers' power

Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs.

Capitalist monopolies control the earth's resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

Oppression

Within capitalist society different groups suffer from specific forms of oppression. Attacks on oppressed groups are used to divide workers and weaken solidarity. We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of people of colour and other oppressed groups to organize in their own defence. We are for real, social, economic and political equality for women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination and homophobia against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people.

We oppose environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples

Canada is not a "colony" of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec.

We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples' original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. But it was defeated when workers' revolutions elsewhere were defeated. A Stalinist counter-revolution, which killed millions, created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control. In Eastern Europe, China and other countries, a similar system was later established by Stalinist, not socialist, parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

Elections and democracy

Elections can be an opportunity to give voice to the struggle for social change. But under capitalism, they can't change the system. The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary protect the ruling class against the workers. These structures cannot be simply taken over and used by the working class. The working class needs real democracy, and that requires an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, to reform the system—to improve living conditions. These struggles are crucial in the fight for a new world. To further these struggles, we work within the trade unions and orient to building a rank and file movement that strengthens workers' unity and solidarity.

But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

The Revolutionary Party

To achieve socialism the leading activists in the working class have to be organized into a revolutionary socialist party. The party must be a party of action, and it must be democratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass organizations of the working class and in the daily struggles of workers and the oppressed.

If these ideas make sense to you, help us in this project and join the International Socialists.



Activist calendar  
movement events



Hull campaign launch: October 20, 7pm  
at the Centre Communautaire Tétreau,  
361 Boulevard de Lucerne



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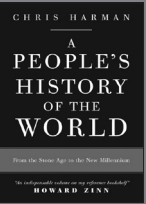
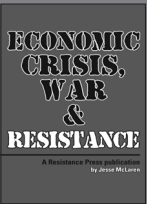
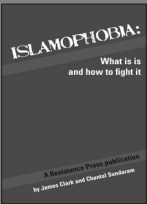
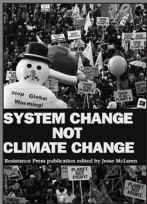
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BC TRANSIT PLAN

(continued from page 12)

The NDP’s promise is welcome news to everyone who depends on transit services. It’s something that every working person should support. However, after last year’s failed transit referendum it is clear that the Mayor’s plan falls far short of addressing the root of the crisis in the transit system and working class people are well aware of it.

Referendum

While the Liberals designed the referendum to fail, it was never necessary for the Yes side to play by the Liberals’ rules. By accepting that already overburdened municipalities had to carry an unfair portion of the costs they allowed themselves to be forced into pushing an unpopular flat tax while defending or dismissing criticism of what is widely seen as a corrupt Translink board and a mismanaged transit service.

The mayors and especially Unifor, which represents transit workers, could have rejected this Faustian deal and demanded that the provincial government fulfill its responsibility to adequately fund Translink services and pay its fair share of the capital costs for the Mayor’s plan. Instead they chose to ally themselves with sections of the business community, in particular the Vancouver Board of Trade, who stood to profit handsomely from the plan while offloading the costs onto the backs of working class taxpayers and consumers. The Yes campaign fizzled in a few short weeks as it became apparent that voters were far from convinced and the Yes side had no way to convince them.

Translink

The problem from the outset was that Unifor and the mayors were promoting a plan and a tax that while providing a much-needed short term band-aid, doesn’t address the deeper long term crisis at Translink and would in fact make this crisis worse.

The root of this crisis is chronic underfunding of Translink’s operating budget by the provincial government, forcing Translink to squeeze services and raise fares to make up the shortfall. This has been exacerbated greatly by the offloading of responsibility for roads and bridges, courtesy of the NDP government back in 1999 when Translink was created. Translink has never received adequate funding to cover the costs of road and bridge maintenance allowing fossil fuel infrastructure to sap funds from the public transit system.

While the NPD and the mayors should be supported in their call for expanding public transit services and creating green jobs, the failure of last year’s transit referendum and the many problems in the Mayor’s 10 year plan show that transit workers and working class transit users can’t rely on them to deliver an affordable and accessible public transit service without building their own independent movement.

One example of how we can build a more effective movement comes from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. A mass door knocking campaign to stop cuts to Door-to-Door Delivery ultimately led to the Liberals halting the cuts. Working together with Friends of Public Services and building People For Posties groups was able to counter Canada Post’s efforts to impose a lockout on Postal Workers in August. The Delivering Community Power Campaign has inspired many with its visions of an expanded, green postal service that addresses social justice and climate change. Campaigns that unite public sector workers with working class people who depend on the services they provide can help to build the kind of movement we need to defend and restore our public transit system.

FIGHTING PRECARITY IN ONTARIO PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS



by Pam Johnson

**The rise in precarious work in Ontario in the past decade has been dramatic. Particularly shocking is the statistic that 50 per cent of all workers in the relatively wealthy Toronto and Hamilton areas are precariously employed.**

Even more surprising is the fact that this extends even to the most densely unionized sector, public service. The rate of unionization in the public sector is 70 per cent compared to 17 per cent for the private sector. But, a growing number of these unionized workers are precarious, part-time and often low-waged workers who do not get the full benefits and protection of the union like their full-time counterparts.

Unionized public sector workers are also experiencing the brunt of the onslaught of austerity by governments at all levels and of all political stripes. Wynne’s Liberal government has continued to escalate this trend and pushing to privatize hydro and parts of the public service.

At the bargaining table, Wynne’s Liberals have continued and encouraged the divide and conquer tactic of always pitting the more protected full-timers against the precarious workers in public sector workplaces. If one group gains something, then the other group has to lose something. In this scenario everyone has been losing ground but, precarious workers have been losing faster.

Backdoor union busting

The result is a widening gulf between full-time workers and precarious workers in the same ostensibly ‘unionized’ workplace. Employers have also been exploiting contract language that allows them to hire non-permanent part-time employees instead of creating full-time permanent jobs. Many of these positions were intended to be temporary or transitional but, have become, in practice, permanent precarious positions.

In Ontario colleges for example, 70 per cent of faculty are now contract faculty with no job security, minimal to zero benefits, and lower wages than their full-time counterparts. In the colleges, as in other public sector workplaces, the complement of workers who receive the full benefit of union protection is decreasing through attrition as employers are replacing full-time with precarious workers.

This back door union busting has

had several impacts. It has reduced the numbers of fully protected workers, and, because the precarious workers aren’t union-protected, it has created a new silenced majority of workers who cannot participate publicly in union activity for fear of losing what little they have.

The full-time/precarious divide in the workplace is often a place of friction. Full-timers see precarious workers as less invested and precarious workers see full-timers as privileged. Building solidarity is difficult in this circumstance. As well, union locals are often made up of only protected full-timers who don’t always know what the working conditions of precarious workers actually are.

Lessons from the Mississauga Library strike victory

The recent Mississauga Library workers strike victory is an example of what can be achieved when the gap between the precarious part-timers and the full-timers is bridged. They pushed back all concessions and every worker gained, including a \$15 minimum wage for part-timers. Some lessons:

- Communication and engagement: The main element was nearly two years of member engagement and solidarity building between the full-time and precarious workers in the lead-up to the strike. This included responding to EVERY request for information or assistance by members.
  - A strategy to put pressure on the employer: The strategy was to use the labour-management committee to show that is was possible to push back against management demands and policies. This also required that the local leadership put in some extra time to prepare and strategize before each meeting.
  - Rejecting the pie: the bargaining team refused to accept that gains made by one group could only be made if another group sacrificed—everybody had to go forward together.
  - Political strategy: The local took advantage of the current political climate in which the issue of precarious, low paying jobs is being raised more regularly in the mainstream. They were able to promote political discussion about workers rights and how real gains could be made through campaigns like the \$15 and Fairness campaign.
- This rank-and-file model put the focus on the members, but also has a strategy to deal with the employer and raise bigger political issues. Every socialist and trade union activist should take a close look at this victory.

STICKING WITH THE UNION

Carolyn Egan

Liberals cut job action centres

**The attacks on workers continues unrelentingly.**

Over the last 12 years the United Steelworkers have received funding from the Ontario government to set up and maintain Job Action Centres. The JACs were staffed by laid off workers and their role was to assist fellow workers who were experiencing workplace closures or permanent lay offs. The peer advocates/ helpers were there to provide on going support for people going through one of the most upsetting and dislocating experiences of their lives.

They provided resume support, retraining, job options, referrals to Life Line—another Steelworkers service fully funded through members and fundraising efforts. Lifeline gives financial and counselling support to those with family problems, addictions, depression and all the accompanying issues that come with job loss.

The JAC’s understand jobs in the manufacturing and other sectors that members work in. They have been through the traumatizing effects of a closure themselves and provide a cup of coffee and a friendly environment where workers have the opportunity to regroup and get back on their feet. They help to bring back the self esteem and confidence that so many workers lose going through this process.

Many of those going through this job loss are immigrants from racialized communities, a large percentage are women. Often they have worked in the same place for 25 or more years. English is commonly their second language and they feel set adrift after they lose their job. The union wants to continue to connect with them and provide the necessary supports they need to find decent employment.

When the JAC in Toronto began it started an organization, Workers Without Jobs, which was made up of the newly unemployed who decided to advocate for their needs for better access to Unemployment Insurance and other necessary services.

It was a vibrant organization at the time that held demonstrations and worked with other unemployed to bring the situation they were facing to the notice of governments and the broader community. This type of self activity is critical.

Liberal attack

A few months ago the provincial government announced that they would no longer be funding union-based JACs and that laid off workers could simply go to government centres and seek employment through their cookie cutter approach. The governments admit that the JACs are

less costly and see more workers than government services but that doesn’t seem to make a difference. They don’t want workers to serve their own members.

After a good sized demonstration at the Ministry offices, one contract was renewed. The other two centres are scheduled to shut down at the end of December, leaving workers on their own to fend for themselves in a dog eat dog world. Jobs are hard to come by and laid off workers need to be treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve.

The fight to stop the closures is continuing and the laid off workers who are struggling to maintain the JACs need all the support they can get. Any victory in a workers struggle can give them the sense that they can succeed as well.

Resistance

That’s why the successful strike by the Mississauga library workers recently is such an inspiration to so many. Four hundred plus strikers took on the city and won! They beat back concessions and gained a \$15 rate for the lowest paid, linking their fight with the broader \$15 and Fairness campaign which has been winning victories all over North America and bringing attention to the difficulties of part-time precarious work.

On October 1 workers from all over Ontario are showing the Liberal government that we all deserve decent work. There is an ongoing fight to both improve the employment standards act for the unorganized, and existing labour law: to bring back anti-scab protection when workers are striking, to provide successor rights when a new company wins a contract so that the workers don’t sink to the bottom loosing all that they have gained, to make it easier to organize so that workers aren’t subjected to employer intimidation etc. This is linked with the Fight for \$15 which affects both organized and unorganized workers in low paid sectors.

The only way that governments of any stripe will listen to the concerns of workers is if we fight back and keep the pressure on. Victories as we saw in Mississauga are due to rank and file organizing at the base, through which workers learn that by working together, leaving no one behind, they have the collective strength to win.

There are tremendous challenges today but also opportunities. Workers have been setting up committees in their workplaces in the building for October 1. We have to keep these committees going, maintain the activism, and continue to build for the fights in the here and now, and for those yet to come.

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# SocialistWorker

## FIGHT FOR \$15 AND FAIRNESS

by Pam Frache

**Ontario's Fight for \$15 and Fairness emerged out of the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage (2012-2014) that won a number of demands: a tripartite panel on minimum wage; an increase in the minimum wage from \$10.25 to \$11.00; historic breakthrough on indexation; and important legislative changes (Bill 18) to address a variety of issues including wage theft & joint responsibility for wages and holiday pay between temp agencies and their client companies.**

Importantly, the government could not contain the movement with these concessions and felt enough pressure to promise a review all the laws that govern workplaces (Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act).

Despite worries to the contrary—and perhaps as a testament to the movement and perceived fragility of the Liberal win—the Wynne government made good on their promise to introduce legislation on some important workplace issues (Bill 18) and also followed-through on their promise to review Ontario's labour and employment laws.

This changed political context provided the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage with an opportunity to re-launch in a manner that could respond to the new circumstances: i.e. majority Liberal government (as opposed to minority); province-wide labour law consultations; and, crucially, growing momentum in the US as a result of the recent victories in SeaTac and Seattle, that brought in, not only pathways to a \$15 minimum wage, but also provisions



for fair scheduling, paid sick days, and more.

### Fight for \$15 and Fairness

After consulting with workers in precarious employment about their priority issues, the campaign re-launched under the banner Fight for \$15 and Fairness, where fairness identified numerous legislative changes necessary to address the structural factors that accelerate precarity and undermine workers' collective action.

Thus, as soon as the provincial election finished, discussions ensued among the provincial networks that had developed in the course of the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage, about re-launching the Campaign under the banner of the Fight for \$15 as a means of generalizing the successes

of the US movement while building confidence of Ontario workers to keep fighting.

In November 2014, the BC Federation of Labour adopted its own version of the Fight for \$15 and by spring of 2015, the Alberta NDP had included the call for a \$15 minimum wage in its party platform during the May 2015 provincial election. Alberta is set to have a \$15 minimum wage by 2018.

After months of preparation, Ontario's Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign officially "launched" on April 15, 2015 as part of a day of action in solidarity with the date selected by the US Fight for \$15 movement.

Since its official launch in 2013, the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage and the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, has helped to forge

networks of rank and file workers, inside and outside unions, among community organizations, elected trade union leaders, and students while generating a public conversation about wages and working conditions.

And although the level of the minimum wage is technically "out of scope" of the Changing Workplaces Review (CWR), the campaign is clearly setting its sights beyond the purely legislative agenda to build a grassroots movement of workers whose united self-activity has the potential to win a \$15 wage and create a path for common activity between union and non-union workers.

Winning starting wages of \$15 per hour, paid sick days, fair scheduling, equal pay, and much more—either by legislation or by collective agreement (like the recent

Mississauga library workers' strike)—becomes a means raising the profile of class demands, not merely union demands.

Throughout this process the Ontario Federation of Labour has been an important ally, supporting and amplifying first the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage and then the Fight for \$15 and Fairness.

Successes of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness (2014 to present) so far:

- \*Forging rank and file networks of workers in communities across Ontario (trade unionists, non-union workers, students, workers without jobs, retirees, anti-poverty activists)

- \*Raising the profile of the Fight for \$15 in Canada (there are now variations of the Fight for \$15 in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan,

Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick)

- \*Extending the conversation about the need for better wages and working conditions

- \*Generating support for trade unions and workers' rights to organize, helping to overcome sectional divisions among workers (especially at the rank and file level)

- \*Activating new layers of people speaking out about decent work from their vantage points, such as health providers, faith leaders

### Campaign Timelines

With consistent and effective organizing that doesn't end with the CWR, the hope is to lay the foundation for making the \$15 minimum wage and other demands substantive issues in the 2018 provincial election.

The Ontario government may decide to take no legislative action on any of the good recommendations, or incorporate some decent labour law reforms as part of their pre-election left tack.

If the NDP waits too long to incorporate the other aspects of the Fairness campaign into its platform, they risk being outflanked from the left by the Liberals, the way they were the last time. Even if good legislation is tabled, it will come under attack by employer organizations.

For all these reasons, the time is right to organize—but organizing and mobilizing will not be enough. There is also an urgent need to raise the level of politics of the class as a whole, to prevent it from being blown off course or demoralized. In this sense, the role of socialists in offering some ideological clarity is very important.

What the government chooses to do – or not do – in this legislative session will be shaped by the balance of class forces in play over the next year.

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## BC NDP support Mayor's transit plan, but is it enough?

by Eric Lescarbeau

**The BC NDP promised last week to ensure full implementation of the Mayors' Transit Plan if elected in next spring's provincial election.**

They plan to do this by raising the provincial contribution from 33 to 40 per cent of capital costs, eliminating the need for Metro Vancouver municipalities to impose a regional sales tax (or raise property taxes) to fund their portion of the costs, the subject of last year's failed transit referendum. The plan would create 4,300 jobs annually and extend transit services significantly—adding 400 new buses, building a subway line along the congested Broadway corridor, most of the way to UBC, and establishing light rail lines in Surrey, along with many

other minor improvements.

This is a capital spending project that would significantly improve access to transit services for working class people in Metro Vancouver while creating thousands of green jobs.

### Congestion

Liberal Minister responsible for Translink, Peter Fassbender, responded to the announcement with predictable contempt, arguing that local Mayors and their working class constituents need to "suck it up" and fund the plan through increases to property taxes and other measures that would drive up the already sky high cost of living in Vancouver.

Fassbender questioned how the NDP would find the money without apparent irony at the same time as the Liberals are pushing the

massive \$3.5 Billion Massey Bridge boondoggle.

The Massey is an unneeded toll bridge aimed at expanding fossil fuel infrastructure at the Port of Vancouver while doing nothing to alleviate traffic congestion and destroying significant tracks of farmland.

It was the Liberals who engineered the failed transit referendum in 2015 by pushing local mayors to raise additional funds through an unprecedented regional sales tax and forcing them to get approval for it through a mail in plebiscite. Since then transit services have continued to deteriorate with service hours dropping from 2.71 hours per capita to just over 2.4—an 11.5 per cent decrease.

A stagnating system has been forced to carry a heavier and heavier burden

with ridership increasing 2.2 per cent last year alone. This has led to more bus pass ups, longer wait times for the Skytrain and longer travel times as overcrowded buses are forced to stop more often and for longer.

In addition, service on routes with less than full ridership has been cut so that more buses could be moved to a small number of high density corridors.

This in turn has spurred increasing development along these corridors, which only exacerbates the problem and drives up rents and housing prices near main transit routes. Overcrowding has increased even during off peak hours with 34 per cent of buses overcrowded compared to 55 per cent during peak hours.

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