

Turn Left Virez à gauche

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Capitalism vs. Life on Earth



It's time to take a side

What's Happening to the NDP?

BY BARRY WEISLEDER

Is the labour-based New Democratic Party, successor to the left social-democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1960, being surpassed by the Green Party in 2019?

In the 2015 Ontario election, the NDP, running on a left-reform platform, surged to 33.6 per cent of the votes cast and nearly doubled its seat total to 40. Several of its best policies (re-nationalize Hydro One, provide free university, drug and dental care, raise taxes on the rich, build social housing and public transit) came straight from the NDP Socialist Caucus playbook.

Andrea Horwath was over-the-top ecstatic at becoming Leader of the Official Opposition, pledging to hold Ford "to account". But, as predicted, this was insufficient. The Tory agenda today is much more aggressive than that of right wing Premier Mike Harris in the mid-1990s. Thug Ford's horror show must be confronted by mass protest in the streets and work places, not by reliance on polite parliamentary criticism. Ford is not afraid of Andrea Horwath. He is afraid of a well organized, militant working class.

NDP and union leaders should lead the fight outside the Legislature. In fact, the labour tops should have mobilized the ranks to campaign for the NDP, to counter the threat of the rampant anti-worker agenda of Ford and his conservative hate mongers. A serious effort to expose Ford's populist propaganda might well have won the Ontario election for the NDP. Instead many labour officials sat on their asses; some even urged 'strategic' voting, which meant a vote for the Liberal Party. That was unforgiveable.

It shows why union leaders

should be paid no more than the average wage of their members, why their privileges and fat expense accounts ought to be gone, and why they should be subject to immediate recall! The same applies to NDP officials. Replace the conservative bureaucrats with rank and file militants, and turn the unions and the labour party into instruments of class struggle. One year on, it is clear that only escalating job actions and general strikes will be able to force an early election and terminate the catastrophic cuts.

But Horwath is not re-shaping the ONDP into the vibrant, dynamic opposition needed in the streets and work places. Socialist policies were shelved. Milquetoast, defensive policies allow the Liberals and Greens to steal the limelight and surpass the NDP. Toronto's Mayor John Tory, a lapsed Conservative who castigates cuts aimed at his city, is touted as the real leader of the opposition to Ford – that's how low the bar is set!

The June 2018 election did not signal a unilateral shift to the right. It rather reflected a polarization to both the left and the right. The highly disproportionate first-past-the-post electoral system perpetuates capitalist rule by usually delivering a majority of seats to parties that gain a minority of votes. The Conservatives captured 61 per cent of the seats (76 in total) with only 40.5 per cent of the votes cast.

In other words, nearly 60 per cent of those who cast ballots supported parties ostensibly to the left of the

Tories. That includes the Green Party which won 4.6 per cent and (for the first time in Ontario) one seat. Taking into account a voter turnout of 58 per cent (up from 51 per cent in 2014), it is evident that only about a quarter of the electorate backed Ford Nation.

Now mass hatred of the Conservatives is swelling visibly. Witness the enormous walkouts by students (April 5), and the huge protests against cuts to education (April 6) and to health services (April 30) at Queen's Park.

The question is: why is the Official Opposition NDP in the Ontario Legislature neck and neck with the despised Tories, 31 to 30 per cent,

and only 5 points ahead of the dilapidated Liberals, while

the Ontario Greens have risen to 11 per cent, according to a Pollara survey? Indeed, the Green Party has made substantial gains in B.C., Ontario, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, and has done so at least partly at the expense of the NDP.

Why is the federal NDP starved of funds? Why have one quarter of its incumbent MPs stepped aside, not seeking re-election on October 21? Why did Rachel Notley and the Alberta NDP lose so decisively to the radical right wing United Conservative Party of Jason Kenney in April? At a time when interest in socialism is rapidly rising across North America, especially among young people, why do NDP leaders seem terrified to use the word "socialism"? How did the NDP lose its seat in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith (British Columbia) by-election on May 6?

"Thug Ford's horror show must be confronted by mass protest in the streets and work places... NDP and union leaders should lead the fight outside the Legislature."

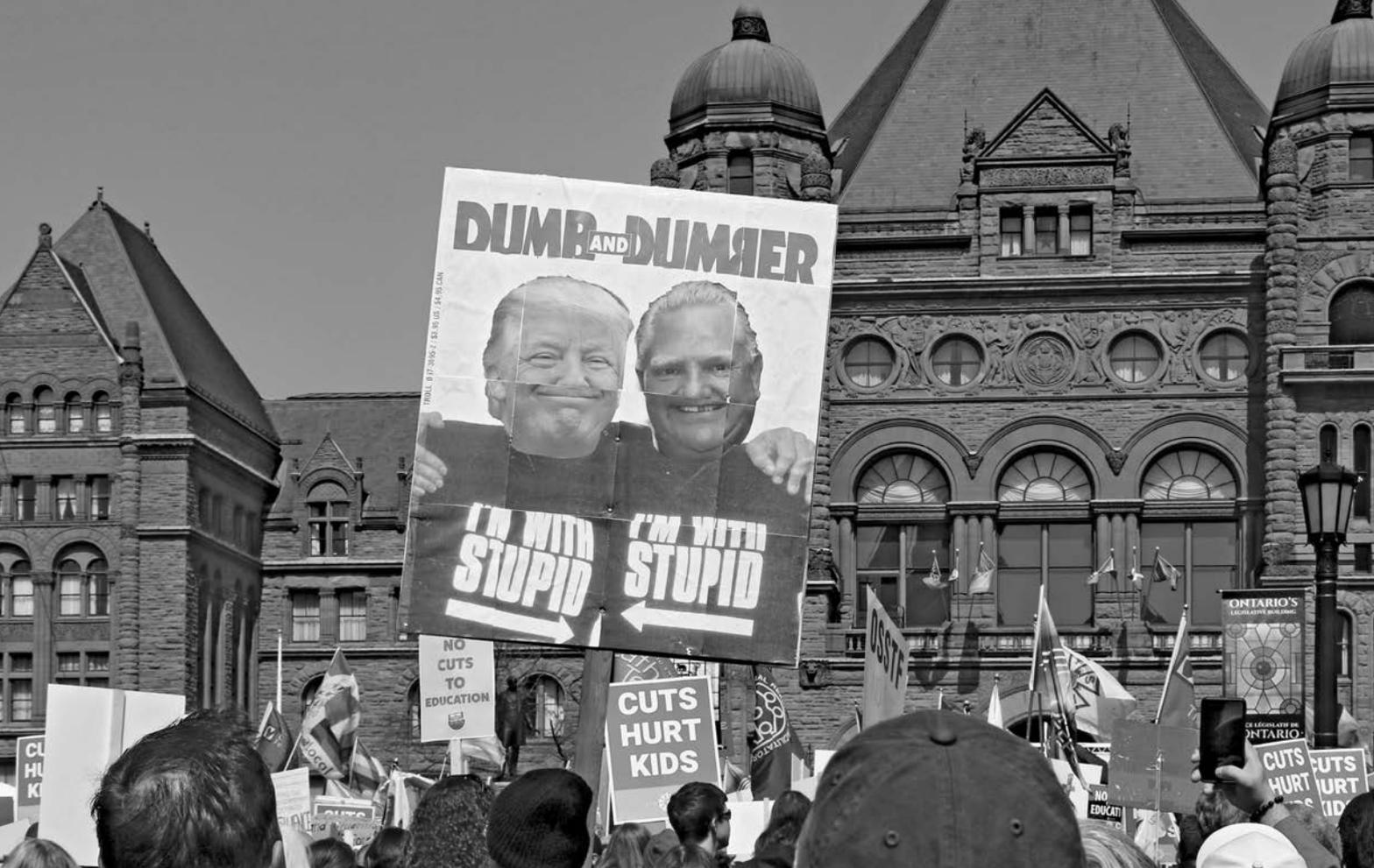


photo: Can Pac Swire (flickr)

The Revenge of Palestine and Venezuela

It is beyond ironic that the by-election winner was Paul Manly. He joined the Green Party after he was prevented from being the NDP federal candidate in 2015. What was his crime? He asked then-NDP Leader Tom Mulcair to demand the release from an Israeli jail of his father, Jim Manly, a former NDP MP. Jim was 80 years old in 2012 when he was illegally seized from the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza, in international waters, by the Zionist navy. So, the NDP loss on Vancouver Island is a blow to the party brass both for undemocratic nomination practices and a backward policy on Palestine.

Then there is federal NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh's soft-complicity with the attempt by Trump, Trudeau and the EU to overthrow the government of Venezuela. When asked by the media "Who is the President of Venezuela?", Singh would not admit that Nicolas Maduro was democratically elected to the office. He said "the Venezuelan people will decide", and opined that Canada can help with the "humanitarian crisis" and foster "free and fair

elections".

Thus, Singh obscured the real role of the imperialist powers, including Canada, in causing material shortages, in seizing Venezuelan assets abroad, in sabotaging the electricity grid, fomenting violence, subverting elections, and violating the rule of law.

Cynics say that few votes are won or lost on foreign policy issues. But principles know no borders.

Inspire, or Expire

NDP politicians have succumbed to unprincipled, pro-capitalist, anti-environment policies on the Site C dam and the LNG pipeline in B.C. The Ontario and federal NDP have failed to call for nationalization of General Motors in the wake of GM's decision to kill over 2,600 jobs in Oshawa.

Horwath and Singh talk about a green new deal, but their prescription is exceedingly vague, making no mention of public ownership of the energy sector. They push pharma care for all, but not for all the needed medical drugs. They limit the role of government to being a big bulk buyer, rather than becoming a researcher/producer/distributor. Tax

the rich? They propose only a modest increase to those in the upper income tax brackets.

The problem with all of this is a lack of vision, and a lack of teeth. The current leaders propose only modest reforms, leaving in place a system that puts private profit and greed above human needs. The more timid the leaders are, the weaker the party gets. It permits the capitalist Green Party to channel left-populist discontent. It encourages left-liberals to stay put. And it helps the Tories succeed where the discontented majority cannot see a strong socialist path to meaningful social change.

It's time for a reality check. Trade wars are deepening. A global recession looms. Racism, sexism and homophobia are rampant. Displaced millions are on the move as humanity is at the brink of climate catastrophe.

In short, the NDP, still a working class party, must turn sharply to the left to survive and to advance. Join the socialists to make it happen. ■

Barry Weisleder is a Socialist Caucus candidate for ONDP Vice-President.

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Universal Child Care – Because It’s 2019

BY DIRKA PROUT

A national child care plan is an investment in children and women’s equality. My involvement in spelling bees taught me that the early life experiences of children influence their health, employment, and overall success as an adult.



My fellow Canadians must think the same way too. A 2016 poll indicated that three-quarters of them supported a national child care program. What can Ontario and Quebec’s child care approaches teach us?

In their Ontario April 2019 budget, the Conservatives introduced Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses (CARE) tax credit. It will reimburse up to 75% of the cost for any type of childcare expenses; from actual daycare to camps. The amount is offered on a sliding income scale with caps, per non-disabled child, of \$6,000 up to age 6 decreasing to \$3,750 for ages 7 to 16. They also plan to spend \$1 billion over the next five years to build new child care spaces.

Affordability wise, the Ontario Tories CARE credit is a wet band aid on a bleeding wound approach. Ontarians can spend as much as \$36,000 annually for child care. Faced with such alarming costs, Ontario women will continue to disproportionately shoulder the child care burden.

Quebec women have the second highest labour participation rate in the world and a better work-life balance thanks to their provincial \$7 per day child care program. Between 1997 and 2016, the labour force participation rate for Quebec women with children aged 5 or under increased by 16%. Their counterparts in the rest of Canada saw only a 4% increase.

The hugely popular Quebec system is beautifully comprehensive. The fees usually represent less than 20% of the actual cost. Users face no barriers due to

their employment, income or marital status. Ten hours of child care are offered for 261 weekdays. A universal system guarantees buy in across all economic classes. This makes it more difficult to cut under austerity minded governments.

The Ontario Tories CARE tax credit will only benefit those who can both afford and find child care spaces. In the matter of creating spaces, the Ontario Tories are trying to be illusionists. How many public child care spaces will disappear only to be replaced by private ‘new’ ones over the next five years? In early May 2019, they announced cuts of 50% each to the fund to administer the licensed child care system and the cost sharing agreement with municipalities.

Who provides the care is of importance to children. Researchers examined Quebec’s non-profit centres de la petite enfance (CPE) and found that:

- 1) Across all income classes, cognitive and behaviour vulnerabilities were lowest for those in licensed care.
- 2) The reduction in vulnerability risk is most pronounced for low income families.
- 3) The cognitive differences between low income and medium to high income children is eliminated at least until Grade 6, provided that children enter the system early and attend consistently.
- 4) For children with depressive mothers specifically, problems are significantly

reduced.

A 2014 survey by the Institut de la Statistique du Québec found the quality in non-profit CPEs was good to excellent for 45% of the children and inadequate for only 4%. More than 87% of CPEs met the regulation stating that at least two thirds of the educators be qualified. In contrast, only 18% of the full-fee garderies met this standard. Lack of qualified staff was likely why the survey found only 10% of garderies were good for children with 36% found to be inadequate.

Canada’s NDP may present a child care plan similar to the Ontario NDP’s 2018. The ONDP plan, lauded by experts, focussed on low fee child care delivered by licensed non-profits. Its main critiques were that it was too “ambitious” and would create too much demand. In 1997, Quebec ignored a similar ambition critique and charged ahead.

Their program now pays for itself, and more, thanks the substantially higher labour force participation of women. Quebec did experience a demand problem in the mid-2000s. It was solved by allowing for-profit centres with users’ costs reimbursed through a tax credit. To maintain low costs and high accessibility, the Quebec system allows the garderies to operate below the regulated minimum standards due to insufficient oversight. If faced with a similar situation, Canada’s NDP should require and enforce uniform training and quality standards to maintain the best outcomes for children across private and public delivery schemes.

I look forward to presenting to voters, on behalf of Jagmeet and the NDP, our vision of affordable, universal public funded child care. The need is great. The majority of Canadians want it. We just need a party like Canada’s NDP to have the courage to deliver it.

“The ONDP plan, lauded by experts, focussed on low fee child care delivered by licensed non-profits. Its main critiques were that it was too “ambitious” and would create too much demand.”

Dirka Prout is a geotechnical engineer, co-chair of the Federal NDP Women’s Council and the nominated federal NDP candidate for London North Centre.
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BY BRUCE ALLEN

The harsh reality of the Unifor – General Motors agreement to “save” the jobs of Oshawa GM workers is undeniable. Altogether, GM workers, plus about 2,500 low paid workers employed by the supplier companies located in and around GM Oshawa, will be hit hard.

As a result, a workforce of over 5,000 will shrink to about 300. Furthermore, the long-term employment of the 300 GM workers who will survive the assembly plant’s closure is quite uncertain. No one is guaranteeing that these remaining jobs, which are to be located in a small metal stamping operation, will survive past the 2020 Unifor – GM contract negotiations. GM’s promises that there could eventually be up to 500 jobs are as worthless as its unkept job security promises to Oshawa workers in the past.

The overlooked, poorly-paid workers in the supplier operations are the most victimized by this agreement. They get nothing. By contrast, senior Oshawa GM workers eligible to retire, or nearly eligible to retire, can either get lucrative retirement incentives with pensions or the opportunity to fill a small number of job openings the agreement will create in what’s left of the St. Catharines GM plant 169 kilometers south-west of Oshawa.

Oshawa will be devastated. To grasp the severity of the situation, one only needs to recall how union leaders often said that every auto industry job generates six or more jobs in surrounding communities. Do the math in order to grasp the magnitude of the economic hit Oshawa faces.

Just recall what happened to Flint, Michigan after GM gutted its operations there, slashing the workforce to a fraction of what it once was, leaving behind a desperate population now living with a water supply poisoned by lead.

This sorry outcome is all there is to show for an ineffective Unifor fightback to save GM Oshawa. Hampered by a glaring lack of support from the rest of a labour movement (Unifor withdrew from the Canadian Labour Congress in 2018), weakened by feeble backing from Unifor leadership where GM has other operations, and an impotent boycott that pandered to xenophobia by targeting GM vehicles made by Mexican autoworkers, this ‘fightback’ was little more than a minor nuisance to GM. Indeed, GM relished the lack of support for the resistance outside



GM Retirees Call for Nationalization to Make Vehicles We Need

of Oshawa. GM had to be especially pleased by the American UAW’s lack of interest in supporting a Unifor fightback.

Things did not have to go so badly. GM retirees in Oshawa and St. Catharines, who are the backbone of remaining activism in the auto sector, demonstrated this. They showed more willingness to fight back than the active members, with the notable exception of the Oshawa GM workers who staged brief sit-down strikes immediately after the closure announcement. The retirees also showed a degree of radicalism absent from auto since the Oshawa Fabrication Plant was occupied during the successful twenty-day strike against GM in 1996.

Oshawa retirees are calling for the nationalization of GM Oshawa and retooling the plants to produce future-oriented, green vehicle technology. Likewise, St. Catharines retirees wrote to Unifor President Jerry Dias calling for the plant to be handed over to the workforce and the community, so that operations can continue, much like happened in idled factories in Argentina which have been successfully occupied and run by their own workers.

Unifor’s national leadership disregarded these proposals. The agreement that claims to save 300 jobs is all they came up with instead.

In effect, the Oshawa and St. Catharines retirees saw the closure announcement as an opportunity to save far more jobs, to protect the community of Oshawa and produce non-carbon-emitting vehicles -- an excellent response to the accelerating climate change crisis.

Top Unifor leadership and leading federal and provincial politicians inexcusably failed to see the opportunity. They weren’t interested. Just as they aren’t prepared to do what’s necessary to tackle the threat to the environment and civilization.

Consequently, most of the affected workers face a fate of trying to survive in an increasingly low wage economy which involves more and more precarious work. Every challenge presents an opportunity. GM’s Oshawa closure announcement presented an opportunity to address the crisis facing these workers and the ecological crisis threatening the planet.

That opportunity was squandered. It was squandered by leaders lacking vision who demonstrated their subservience to Capital by bending to the will of GM. ■

Bruce Allen is a GM retiree and Unifor activist/leader since 1977

SC resolutions feature green jobs, housing, peace and mass action

BY ELIZABETH BYCE

How can we get the Ontario NDP to fight for a working class agenda that makes jobs and justice a priority? By fighting at the June 14-16 ONDP Convention for socialist policies. That's how.



When the NDP's organized left, the Socialist Caucus, held its province-wide conference on March 16, it adopted over 30 policy resolutions.

Many of those resolutions have been endorsed, some by numerous ONDP electoral district associations, which then submitted them to party headquarters for debate on the convention floor by the 1,000+ delegates who will gather in Hamilton.

Here are the top five motions. They show the direction the NDP needs to go if it is to offer a working-class alternative to the Liberals and Greens.

1. Nationalize General Motors

In the wake of the General Motors decision to close most of its production facilities in Oshawa this year, the Socialist Caucus asks the ONDP to "actively campaign for the creation of a publicly owned transportation industry, under workers' and community control, that would begin with the nationalization of the Oshawa GM plants, and integrate, under public ownership, existing parts-making, assembly and research facilities, and build new capacity so Ontario can be a leader in the production of electric and hybrid public transit, freight and personal vehicles."

2. Build Social Housing as an Emergency Priority in Ontario

Today shelters are often overflowing, rental unit rents are skyrocketing far beyond inflation, and home ownership is not available

to thousands of working-class Ontarians. Builders and land developers seeking profit have failed for decades to bring any significant amount of affordable housing to the market. The Socialist Caucus urges the ONDP to "actively campaign for the construction of 250,000 quality, affordable housing units, to be built within five years by a new publicly-owned Ontario Housing Construction Corporation that would sustainably acquire land and build affordable housing comprised of a mix of freehold, cooperative, co-housing, mixed income, rental and subsidized rental units."

3. NDP should be Clear: Hands Off Venezuela!

The Ontario party has a duty to address the federal NDP's violation of the party's long commitment to peace, social justice and non-interference in the affairs of other countries. When the NDP Foreign Affairs Critic attacked the elected government of Venezuela, supported the Lima Group and U.S. President Trump's fake "humanitarian aid" gambit, and condoned the bid by foreign powers and the domestic ultra-right for regime change, she dismayed most New Democrats. In addition, the federal Leader refuses to acknowledge that Nicolas Maduro is the democratically-elected President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Socialists ask that the Ontario NDP "actively oppose foreign interference in Venezuela, defend Venezuela's right to self-determination, reject alignment with U.S. foreign policy, demand 'Canada Out of the Lima Group', and request the federal NDP immediately to remove MP Helene Laverdiere as Special Advisor to the NDP Leader on Foreign Affairs."

4. Dump Thug Ford with Mass Extra-Parliamentary Action

The Doug Ford PC government has proven lethal to the labour movement, the environment, civil liberties, social well-being

and the interests of the vast majority. We cannot afford to confine our efforts to the Legislature, much less to waiting for the election in 2022. We call on the Ontario NDP "to actively support mass protests, including rallies, demonstrations and job actions, up to and including sectoral and general strikes, against Doug Ford - PC government attacks on public services, civil liberties, equity seeking groups, unions and non-organized workers in this province. The ONDP, unions and social justice partners, in anticipation of serious cuts to jobs and services, should go on immediate strike alert and build a broad, democratic united front of resistance."

5. Share the Work, Shorten the Work Week

Long, exhausting workweeks for millions of workers in Canada cause high stress, illness and lowers productivity. But tens of thousands of new jobs would be created, especially in light of the rampant robotization and automation underway, if the available work is shared. Socialists ask the ONDP to campaign to:

- a) reduce the work week to 32 hours, beyond which overtime rates would apply, without the loss of pay or benefits to workers,
- b) reduce the maximum work week to 35 hours, from the present 48 hours, and outlaw mandatory overtime.

What can you do now? Please go to the Policy Priority Workshops on Friday, June 14 to ensure that these and other Socialist Caucus resolutions are ranked at the top of the list, in each topic area, for debate at the convention. ■

Elizabeth Byce is an activist with the NDP Socialist Caucus. All 33 resolutions for convention are located on the Socialist Caucus website at www.ndpsocialists.ca

Québec : vaincre le projet de loi raciste 21 de Legault

Robbie Mahood

Le gouvernement québécois de François Legault est déterminé à adopter une loi interdisant le port de « symboles religieux » par les employés de la fonction publique. La Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) de Legault détient la majorité des sièges à l'Assemblée nationale du Québec. Le projet de loi 21 ciblerait les juges, la police, les gardiens de prison ainsi que les enseignants.

Legault soutient que la loi est nécessaire pour défendre la laïcité, la séparation de l'église et de l'État. Il la défend comme étant juste, puisque le crucifix installé il y a 85 ans à la Chambre des députés sous Duplessis sera retiré de l'Assemblée nationale.

En réalité, la principale cible de la loi 21 est la minorité musulmane du Québec et plus spécifiquement les femmes de cette communauté. Les hommes musulmans portant la barbe ne subiront eux, aucune sanction. Le projet de loi vise les femmes portant un hijab (voile couvrant la tête) ou le nombre réduit de femmes portant la burqa (voile intégral). Lorsqu'on lui a demandé de justifier l'interdiction d'enseigner pour les femmes portant le hijab, Legault a répondu avec arrogance: «elles n'auront qu'à se trouver un autre emploi». Il faudra être à visage découvert pour avoir accès aux services publics, même pour une chose aussi banale que de prendre l'autobus.

Si la loi finit par être déclarée inconstitutionnelle, Legault a menacé d'invoquer la clause dérogatoire, célèbre pour avoir été utilisée pour protéger la loi 101, loi linguistique québécoise vieille de 40 ans. Cependant, la protection du français comme langue d'enseignement et de vie dans l'espace public jouit d'un soutien beaucoup plus important que la victimisation de femmes appartenant à une minorité, victimisation inscrite dans le projet de loi 21. L'interdiction du foulard et du voile est très populaire en zone rurale et dans les petites villes du Québec, malgré le nombre réduit de femmes musulmanes qui y vivent. C'est à Montréal, où se concentre la plupart des minorités culturelles et religieuses et où la tolérance est plus répandue, que l'antipathie à ce projet de loi est la plus forte.

L'islamophobie gangrène la société québécoise depuis plus de dix ans. D'abord cultivée par les prédécesseurs populistes de droite de la CAQ, elle a été reprise par le Parti québécois qui a tenté d'imposer une «Charte des Valeurs» à la province en 2013. En 2017, un



jeune homme baignant dans le milieu raciste blanc a ouvert le feu dans une mosquée de la ville de Québec, faisant six morts et 19 blessés parmi les fidèles.

Alors que les perspectives d'indépendance du Québec se sont amenuisées, le nationalisme blanc identitaire a pris son essor, ouvrant la voie à des partis de droite comme la CAQ et alimentant les manifestations racistes.

Comme pour la Charte des Valeurs du PQ, il faut s'opposer au projet de loi xénophobe et anti-femmes de Legault. Ce projet met les femmes des cultures patriarcales conservatrices au banc des accusés. Ce sont les femmes et les femmes seules qui doivent décider de leur tenue vestimentaire et de leur manière de se présenter en public et non l'État et son dictat, ou la notion d'objectivation du corps de la femme promue dans la culture capitaliste patriarcale qui l'entoure.

L'opposition à la loi 21 est souvent posée en termes de droits individuels. Mais les socialistes souhaitent aller plus loin. Nous luttons contre l'oppression et le racisme parmi les travailleurs dans leur ensemble et la société en général afin de renforcer l'unité de la classe ouvrière. La défense des membres les plus vulnérables de notre classe n'est pas

seulement une question de droits humains mais aussi un principe stratégique important. Une campagne antiraciste pour la défense des droits des femmes musulmanes est cruciale et prend corps petit à petit. Québec Solidaire n'a pas été épargné par l'islamophobie, mais, initiative bienvenue, s'est prononcé contre l'adoption de la loi 21. Une des deux grandes centrales syndicales du Québec, la Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), s'oppose maintenant à cette loi, restant fidèle aux meilleurs principes du mouvement syndical de se porter à la défense de ses membres les plus faibles.

S'opposer à Legault et au projet de loi 21 de la CAQ c'est renforcer nos luttes sur d'autres fronts : contre les coupures imminentes dans les services publics, les attaques sur les salaires et les conditions de travail, ainsi que contre la dégradation continue de l'environnement et le pillage par les entreprises des richesses naturelles du Québec discrètement orchestré par l'administration Legault favorable au monde des affaires. ■

Robbie Mahood, Caucus socialiste du NPD, Montréal



Towards a Green Transportation Industry

BY JOHN ORRETT

With one third of Canada's population spread close to the shores of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway, Ontario is Canada's largest industrial manufacturing province. It has the potential to shape the country's total carbon emissions. Will Ontario remain part of the environmental problem or part of the solution?

Clean renewable energy is the place to start. The Province needs to ramp up its resolve in this area, but to do so it must take control of decision making. The disparate parts of the former Ontario Hydro, sold off by Conservative and Liberal Governments, should be brought back under public ownership. Hydropower from Quebec should be imported at fair cost to replace power lost through decommissioning the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, one of the oldest in North America.

A new subsidiary of Ontario Hydro should be created. The new Ontario Solar Panel Corporation would build the most advanced solar panel manufacturing plant, designed by its research and development department that would scour Canada and the planet for leading-edge developments in solar energy technology.

Wind turbines could also be manufactured in Ontario instead of being imported from South Korea. A mid-size

manufacturing plant would use Canadian materials and metallurgical skills to sustain a long term and steady source of employment for skilled jobs.

The electrical energy produced is necessary for transitioning to a more environmentally friendly transportation regime. It is the internal combustion engine and the automobile era that has contributed heavily to the build-up of carbon in our atmosphere. No serious global climate change initiative is possible without addressing transportation.

To this end, Ontario needs to partner with Quebec, with its abundant electric power, to create a new publicly owned, high-speed electrical train system starting with an express Montreal-Toronto route, and gradually expand East to Quebec City and West to Windsor. Bombardier could design and build these trains as they have already done so with the high speed electro-magnetic Bullet Train from Shanghai to Beijing.

But this designer and builder should be a new publicly owned Bombardier, not the current scandal ridden stock corporation that takes public monies to pay its senior management even while suffering mega-losses, and fails to deliver its contracted streetcars to the Toronto Transit Commission on time.

A Bombardier that has a two-tier stock ownership structure is undemocratic and should be outlawed. A company that flips in and out of the aerospace

industry solely to adjust to tariff and tax considerations of our so-called free trade agreements is not acceptable. It's time to take over this company.

A high-speed rail corridor would take cars off the road. But the real gains in reducing carbon emissions from gas and diesel vehicles will occur by shifting production and use to electric ones. Ontario is at a crossroads right now. General Motors announced the end of automobile assembly in Oshawa. We can decide to either sit back without any say in where electric cars are produced, or we can act decisively and take over the GM Plant in Oshawa and all their other Canadian facilities, and use them as our entry into the electric vehicle industry with a goal of being a world leader in this field.

This may require a worker led occupation of the Oshawa plant and a labor leadership that supports it. Will Unifor National President Jerry Dias lead this effort or settle for 300 jobs in a stamping plant, a glorified race track in Oshawa, and improved worker termination agreements? The very fact he sat in with GM President Travis Hester at a news conference to announce the agreement and referred to it as "innovative" raises doubts much further opposition to GM head office will be forthcoming.

These rail and auto projects would necessitate a dynamic steel

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THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM: HOW NEOLIBERALISM RUINS EVERYTHING

BY LISA HOWARD

The private sector is bad at everything. It's the exact opposite of what people usually say. The private sector should get out of the way and let government do what is in the public interest in areas such as health care, education, and the environment.



Take health care. Public, universal health care systems are more efficient at providing services to citizens at a lower cost. In the United States, for example, Americans pay twice what Canadians pay for health and tens of millions go without health insurance. This has become so obvious to Americans that it has sparked a movement to leave the private health care trap completely and finally establish universal, public health care for all.

With our environment, the private sector should step aside and let the government nationalize sectors of the energy industry, buy up infrastructure like the General Motors plant and convert its output to electric and solar-powered vehicles. The current government, for its part, should institute a national strategy to regulate and build infrastructure, especially affordable trains and other public transportation, to make them more environmentally-friendly and sustainable.

Unfortunately, none of that will happen until we stop believing in neoliberalism, the debunked theory that the private sector is always better than the public sector and should be expanded to include most services we now receive from the government.

It goes by a handful of other names, and the theory is often described through the various policies that are entailed by it, including trickle down, privatization, deregulation, laissez faire capitalism, and most recently: austerity. But these are really just features of neoliberalism.

Trickle down is the aspect that deals with tax cuts, and defends how and why we should give them to rich people and corporations. The assumption here is that if we reduce taxes on them, it will stimulate the economy and result in more jobs for average citizens. Yet as we have seen from mounting evidence, giving tax breaks to the wealthy never results in the kind of spending that actually creates jobs.

Even an increasing number of wealthy business owners don't believe in the theory of "trickle down." One of them, American Nick Hanauer, often tells a personal story in his many media appearances of how it fails every time: rich millionaires like him won't go out and buy a thousand pairs of pants. But if you spread the wealth around, giving a larger share to the working class and the poor through higher wages and/or a guaranteed annual income, they will repair their cars and pay for the babysitter. The wealthy won't spend the extra loot, they'll sock it away in banks.

A complementary part of trickle down is austerity, because once you lower taxes on the wealthy, you're going to have less money

treat fellow citizens as "customers."

In any case, we've had about forty years of this kind of approach from government, following the urgings of the private sector. Starting in the 1980s, most politicians, even supposedly left-wing ones, were converted to the theory of neoliberalism.

We've had neoliberalism under Liberals. We've had it under Conservatives. We've even had it under the NDP. It's a bit like that children's book by Dr. Seuss where we are asked to accept green eggs and ham in various different guises.

Under the NDP and the Labour Party in the United Kingdom, it was called the "Third Way." Under liberals and US Democrats, it was



to spend on services. And when public sector budgets are diminished in this way, there's less money for roads, schools, health care, and support for the elderly.

Neoliberalism comes with its own bureaucratic language. Its proponents will talk about market solutions and public-private partnerships. They will use buzzwords like "incentivize," "nudge" and "stakeholder." There's a lot of emphasis on entrepreneurship as people who have been laid off will be told to strike out on their own and become independent contractors. Even in the public sector of the neoliberal age, workers are told to act as though they are in the private sector and

called "centrism." And under the Conservatives, it's called cutting taxes, or fiscal responsibility, or even "common sense," as in Mike Harris' Common Sense Revolution of the 1990s.

The end result of neoliberalism is when we need to act in concert for the public good, especially when dealing with life-threatening matters like climate change, governments no longer know how to even do it. ■

Lisa Howard is a writer and social democrat who lives in Ottawa

Nationalize the Ring of Fire under First Nations, workers' and community control

BY JULIUS ARSCOTT

The Ring of Fire is one of the largest potential mineral reserves in Ontario. It is considered one of the most promising mineral development opportunities in Ontario in more than a century -- the economic equivalent of the Athabasca oil sands, with the potential to generate \$120 billion in profits.

It is situated in a remote part of northern Ontario, and will impact nine First Nations' communities. These communities should be the first to be consulted, and if they agree, the first to benefit from development. In the past, Indigenous people have been shunted aside while the landscape is plundered. The result has been destitution,

which must be rectified, before there can be peace. Some capitalist politicians call for nation to nation reconciliation. But there can be no meaningful reconciliation without restitution.

Public ownership of the Ring of Fire may generate opportunities to create jobs and long-term prosperity for the Canadian working class, including First Nations people for generations to come. We should take this opportunity to consider the development of resources based on human need and not Bay Street greed. Social democratic governments around the world have implemented public ownership of resource extraction to the benefit of the majority -- to provide jobs and excellent social services.

Public ownership would also

mean that Indigenous peoples and workers would have the final say in what resources are extracted, how they are extracted and processed and in what quantity in order to mitigate damage to the natural environment and ensure that the wealth created will be utilized for the benefit of present and future generations.

The NDP campaigned in favour of significant social gains in the last provincial election. It is necessary to explain how important social services will be paid for in order to gain the confidence of workers across the province. Public ownership and responsible development of profitable natural resources would be an important step in that direction. ■

Green Transportation, from page 9

industry in Ontario, not its dismantling as seen in the last decade. Now is the time to transcend the failures of the past to protect our steel industry. It is time for the United Steel Workers and the ONDP to call for a nationalized steel industry that will take over what is left of US Steel as well as the Luxembourg based AcelorMittel which owns the Dofasco mill and the Indian owned Essar Steel Algoma.

It is ridiculous that all major steel producers are foreign owned by integrated capitalist multinational corporations, as is the world's second largest nickel producer in Sudbury, owned by Vale Brazil. Nickel is used in galvanized steel, another input into auto and train manufacturing.

How can we take control of decisions made in these key industries if they are not owned and controlled by the people and workers in Ontario? Why are we letting profits from basic industry leave the country?

Many organizations such as Courage to Leap and the Green New Deal in the U.S. Democratic Party are building support across North America to change the economy. The response to these initiatives is encouraging as they indicate a willingness to challenge the system. The Socialist Caucus joins forces with these and other progressive movements in calling for climate change initiatives, like stopping new pipelines and providing safe drinking water and affordable housing to our indigenous communities, but we

believe that the grand solution must entail the eradication of the capitalist system.

We are tired of the men and women in suits at the end of the Kyoto, Copenhagen, and Paris International Climate Change Conferences, patting themselves on the back and falsely declaring that their nations will now address climate change before it is too late. It is nearly too late now. Our only hope now is to mitigate the storms, fires and floods to come, slow the migration of

starving and landless peasants worldwide, and save some of the animal species that are heading towards extinction.

We need decisive carbon reduction action now. In Ontario we can contribute by nationalizing under worker and community control all the essential inputs required to manufacture electric vehicles and build more public transportation. This should be the policy of the ONDP. ■



**OPSEU
SEFPO
Local 532**

Ontario Public Service workers in the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Landlord and Tenant Board; and the Ontario Clean Water Agency.

'We fight against concessions bargaining, for union democracy and with our labour and community allies we aspire to build a mass movement to bring down the Ford government. We stand with workers everywhere!'

PROTECTING FARMERS THROUGH SUPPLY MANAGEMENT



photo: Richard BH

By Joseph Gubbels

Canada's supply management system for dairy, poultry, and eggs is a uniquely popular and successful policy in Canadian politics. This form of economic planning is a notable exception to the norm of market economics, and the system is so widely liked that even the Liberals and Conservatives are forced to pay lip service to supply management in order to maintain rural support.

The supply management system relies on five crown corporations, each responsible for management of a single sector (eggs, hatching eggs, turkey, chicken, dairy), that set prices for their sector's products based on the average farmers' cost of production. Production quotas are established regularly based on consumer demand thereby avoiding under- or over-production. There are also strict limits on the market share for imported products, ensuring unmanaged imports from giant farms in other countries don't drive Canadian farmers out of business.

The supply management system saves the federal government from having to spend billions on farmer subsidies like in the U.S., where the government spends \$17 billion per year supporting dairy farmers who are paid less than the cost of production by processors. Supply managed prices also allow Canadian farmers to make a fair return for their labour and investments.

The system also protects small farms and rural communities that rely on them by ensuring prices that allow farmers to make a living without having to expand into American-style factory farms that threaten

public safety through the use of antibiotics, cause mass animal suffering, and harm the environment.

The average Canadian dairy farm size is 85 cows versus 225 in America, and while American milk production has not remained relatively constant, the number of dairy farms in America has gone from over 80,000 in 2000 to under 40,000 in 2018, meaning fewer but larger farms, and hundreds of thousands of people losing their livelihoods.

Opponents of the supply management system often claim that as a result of the system, Canadians pay more for supply managed products, especially milk. The facts do not support this assertion over the long term. American milk production is enhanced with the use of growth hormones which are banned in Canada due to animal health and welfare concerns. When comparing equivalent hormone-free milk across the two countries, Canadians actually pay less for milk (\$1.50/L vs \$1.64/L).

The unregulated US market with its fluctuating, below-cost prices, and threat of over-production has left American farmers with increasingly stressful, unpredictable lives. Tragically, the result is a suicide epidemic among American farmers, who have a suicide rate more than double that of military veterans. Recent studies of Canadian pork and beef farmers have shown this same alarming crisis.

It must be a priority for socialists to not only defend the supply management system and the Canadian farmers covered by it, but to demand that government offer similar protection to all farmers. Expanding the supply management system to cover all

crops, meat, and other farm products would not only stabilize prices in these sectors and protect small farmers, but also help tackle many of the worst effects of market competition on these sectors.

Outside of the supply managed sectors, Canadian farmers are still forced into competition with giant vertically integrated agri-industry from other countries, subject to fluctuating market prices, and left at risk of overproduction, and thus are unable to ensure a stable living off their farms. Many pork and beef farmers are forced to work off the farm in order to subsidize their family income, much like their American counterparts

Large corporate farms dominate many other sectors in Canada, forcing all farms into a race to the bottom on prices, resulting in environmentally unsustainable production, huge amounts of greenhouse gas emissions, and inhumane factory farming.

A quota system would prevent over-production and waste, allowing a maximum cap to be set on the size of farms which would let smaller farms to thrive. Supply management would stabilize and reduce grocery costs for working families by preventing huge fluctuations in consumer prices, protect local economies from unregulated competition with global supply chains and ensure rewarding and reliable life-long careers for Canadian farmers.

Expansion of the supply management system to encompass the entire farming sector ought to be a focus for socialists in Canada, and it ought to be a policy pushed within and by the NDP. ■

BY GARY PORTER

Many on the Left see the nearly four years of Rachel Notley's NDP government in Alberta as unmitigated betrayal on tar sands development, pipelines, and caving in to the oil cartel and corrupt swindlers such as Kinder Morgan. But the period of NDP rule looks different to people in Alberta, especially those who lean politically left.

To David Climenhaga, a well-known political blogger who works in communications for the United Nurses of Alberta, the pipeline drama is an unfortunate distraction from a long record of legislative victories: the first \$15 minimum wage in Canada, stabilized funding for healthcare, restrictions on big money in elections, and tax increases on corporations and the wealthy. The Notley Government was



Notley Failed for Lack of (Socialist) Vision

a “genuinely progressive party, even if you disagree with their environmental policies.”

He and others note that even on the environment it can be difficult to make generalizations. At the same time that Notley called Kinder Morgan opponents “extremely foolish” and threatened to cut off oil shipments to B.C. unless the project was built, her NDP regime phased out coal-fired electricity and implemented an economy-wide tax on carbon.

Notley spent her first year in a legislative blitz. Starting with a ban on corporate and union donations in elections, her government passed 33 bills, along with thousands of pages of new regulations. “There’s lots of change going on, we’re bringing Alberta from the back of the pack in terms of the environment, social and labour issues, to the head,” NDP House Leader Brian Mason told the Globe and Mail.

The NDP raised corporate taxes two per cent, adopted plans to get rid of the province’s flat tax on income (which had favoured the wealthy), and cracked down on a system of corporate patronage set up by previous Tory governments.

Yet, even in this, the NDP acted more like mild reformers than radicals. Its corporate tax increases just brought Alberta up to Canadian standards. “I don’t think that they’re a government that’s putting the one per cent under deep pressure,” Climenhaga said.

Notley’s NDP reversed about \$1 billion in spending cuts to healthcare planned

under Premier Prentice, even though it caused the provincial deficit to grow. For the first time Climenhaga can remember in Alberta, “there’s a sense that there’s no crisis in healthcare, it’s properly funded, it’s running smoothly.”

Notley defended oil, she said, to defend high paying jobs. But these jobs are already disappearing amid low oil prices and falling demand for Alberta’s dirty and expensive oil. The Trans Mountain Pipeline is supposed to get tar sands oil to the Tidewater principally for China. Yet the first tanker of 2019 did not leave Burnaby until April even though the first stage of Trans Mountain has existed for years.

China wants less and less of Alberta’s expensive and dirty oil. With higher anti-pollution standards, the advent of electric transportation, the low quality and high cost of Alberta oil, Notley failed completely to take the leadership on moving away from oil toward a future oriented economy where long-term jobs truly lie.

There was no way Notley could

“Notley accomplished some worthwhile but modest reforms, pushed by her labour base. She could have transformed Alberta and led the country.”

defeat Kenney on his own turf, defending the oil cartel until Alberta is broke and filled with rage. Nobody believed Notley was the real thing. Kenney is a benighted, backward-looking, defender of profit, regardless whether it is destroying the planet as a living habitat. If you are looking for Neanderthals, Kenney is your guy.

Many urged Notley, at the outset, to rule like a one term Premier and do the right things, i.e. the left-wing things, the socialist things. Take over the tar sands and phase it out. Build publicly-owned, worker and community controlled green energy plants, 5G tech plants, mass green public transit and regardless of jurisdiction, work with the indigenous people to end their exploitation and subjugation by Ottawa by providing the water systems, housing, schools, social services and job training they need, under their control.

Alberta could have been transformed. Notley accomplished some worthwhile but modest reforms, pushed by her labour base. She could have transformed Alberta and led the country. Now we face four years of Sasquatch, profit over human needs, corrupt old boy politics in Alberta.

Why do I say that? Some 30 UCP candidates were caught advocating patriarchal, white supremacist, anti-LGBTQI views before the election. So this was another missed opportunity by the conservative leadership of Canada’s labour-based party. It truly is time for the NDP to turn Left. ■

NDP ESTABLISHES FIRST BLACK CAUCUS IN ONTARIO HISTORY



From Rima Berns-McGown, MPP for Beaches-East York

QUEEN'S PARK — Official Opposition Leader Andrea Horwath and the NDP caucus announced the official formation of the NDP Black Caucus – Ontario's first formal Black caucus in a political party.

"Black community members should see themselves represented and respected when they look at their government. Black Canadian leaders must be at the table when every decision is made. That's why I'm so proud to announce the formal creation of the Ontario NDP's Black Caucus, chaired by our Anti-Racism Critic and MPP for Kitchener Centre, Laura Mae Lindo," said Horwath.

"This is the first official Black caucus in Ontario's history. It is the first time any party has elected enough Black members to form a caucus, and the first time a body like this has been formally identified as a key priority. What we're putting out there by formalizing this caucus is that we expect and believe that the Ontario NDP MPP Black Caucus will continue for generation after generation, growing after every election."

The NDP's Black caucus was established as a direct result of an initial Black community leaders' roundtable discussion at Queen's Park with the NDP. This discussion, which was a key step in cultivating and advancing an ongoing partnership between

the NDP and the Black community, gave members of the NDP caucus the opportunity to hear from Black community leaders. A key recommendation was the importance of formalizing representation, and direct engagement with the Black community as a distinct group.

The establishment of the Black caucus is part of the Ontario NDP's continued commitment to working with Black communities – from Zanana Akande's trailblazing work establishing the Anti-Racism Secretariat in the 1990s to aggressively pushing the previous Liberal government to abolish carding instead of legislating it, and the NDP's present call for the government to not only eliminate carding in Ontario, but also destroy all data obtained from the unconstitutional practice.

The inaugural NDP Black Caucus consists of:

Kitchener Centre MPP Dr. Laura Mae Lindo
York South-Weston MPP Faisal Hassan
Toronto – St. Paul's MPP Dr. Jill Andrew
Brampton North MPP Kevin Yarde
Beaches—East York MPP Dr. Rima Berns-McGown

The mandate of the NDP Black Caucus is to ensure that Black perspectives are meaningfully incorporated into the work that New Democrats do on every file – from

finance, to health care, education, housing, the Arts and beyond. Our mandate is to work actively and collaboratively with Black communities to address systemic anti-Black racism by proposing policy solutions that will help build a future of equity, justice, respect and safety," said NDP Black Caucus Chair Laura Mae Lindo.

"It's time for political leadership in this province that isn't content with backsliding or even with a slow pace of change, but that instead works actively and urgently with the Black community to build a future of equity, justice, and respect." ■

NDP Socialist Caucus Convention Meetings

Friday, June 14, 8:00 pm

Join the Socialist Caucus for a pub night at the George Hamilton restaurant and bar, across from the convention centre, 152 King St. West.

Saturday, June 15, lunch and dinner adjournments

Attend the Socialist Caucus meetings for candidate speeches and open forum.

Venue: To be announced at convention.

Feast for the Rich, Crumbs for the Rest



By Barry Weisleder

Justin Trudeau's undeserved reputation as a 'progressive' is now officially in tatters. His one-day wonder of a federal budget, calculated to overshadow the ongoing SNC Lavalin scandal, quickly shrank to a footnote. Still, there is plenty of fiscal anguish, even in Liberal ranks.

At the *Toronto Star*, a media pillar of liberalism, there is much hand wringing. The March 20 lead editorial was titled "Morneau's Budget - Liberals can be bolder." *Star* columnist David Olive later wrote, "since it came to power in 2015, the (Justin) Trudeau government's progressive instincts have weakened... this week's budget should have Grits worried that their party is losing its soul." Well, if there be such a thing as a soul, the Liberal Spiritus Sanctus is comfortably dwelling deep within the Canadian Corporate Corpus. The pre-election 2019 federal budget sprinkles breadcrumbs on the sea without raising a ripple against the vessel of capitalist private profit. While the captains of industry and commerce continue to enjoy public subsidies and tax havens abroad for their billions, here are some conspicuous acts of neglect and omission on the domestic landscape.

Pharmacare: About 20 per cent of Canadians are uninsured or under-insured

for prescription drugs. One in ten goes without prescribed medications due to cost. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that universal pharma care would save more than \$4 billion a year if the government exercised its purchasing power as the sole buyer. (Even more would be saved if a public enterprise did the research, production and distribution of medical drugs.) But Finance Minister Bill Morneau kept such a scheme out of the budget. He prefers to wait for the final report of an advisory body he appointed, which may recommend only filling in the gaps left by Canada's current hodgepodge of pharmaceutical plans. That would keep Big Pharma happy.

Skills Training: The budget says workers between the ages of 25 and 64 will be eligible for a training allowance of \$250 a year, to a maximum of \$5,000. Not much training can be purchased for that paltry amount. Worse, the allowance can be accessed only if the provinces change their labour laws to let workers take re-education breaks without losing their jobs. Furthermore, adults who take time off work for re-training will be eligible for a mere four weeks off the job at just 55 per cent of full pay, and only once every four years. Is this the definition of useless, or what?

Childcare: For just one child it can cost as much as \$12,000 a year. The government's Canada Child Benefit has

reduced the child poverty rate, but that doesn't build any daycare spaces. It doesn't enable many more women to go to work, or reduce the debt burden that is weighing down so many people. Canadians have accumulated more household debt than the residents of almost any other country. Debt dismay fuels right wing populism.

Housing: Young workers are shut out of the home ownership market. Many are couch surfing, some even living rough and dying on the streets. Trudeau/Morneau's answer is a "shared equity" mortgage plan. It raises the amount people can borrow from their RRSP (if they have one) to put into a down payment. But the plan effectively caps the price of a home to be purchased this way at around \$500,000. Experts say this no help in big markets like Toronto and Vancouver. Queen's University real estate professor John Andrew calls the move symbolic. "They're trying to appease the real estate lobby... to appear as though they're doing something for first-time home buyers." After WW2, the state built affordable housing to accommodate the baby boom and subsequent waves of immigrants. Socialists demand the creation of a public land assembly and housing construction corporation with a mandate to build 500,000 energy efficient, affordable, quality units within five years. Venezuela built 2.5 million homes in eight

continued on page 19



members urging them to volunteer their time and telling them how to vote every four years will not drown out the populist noise swaying so many workers to the right.

If those workers, like many Canadians, do not understand the societal role of unions, if they don't grasp the power of the working class, or value solidarity, it will be impossible to mobilize them towards progressive political ends, whether that be at election time or for a general strike.

During the Power of Many Conference hosted by the Ontario Federation of Labour in April 2018, John Cartwright of the Toronto and York Labour Council encouraged attendees, which included a large number of union executives, to recommit sufficient resources towards their socio-political responsibilities.

Unions Struggle to Unite the Working Class

BY JESSA MCLEAN

During the 2018 Ontario Provincial Election, it became clear there was a lot on the line for workers, particularly unionized workers in the public sector. Ford Nation had been openly hostile to labour, was promising austerity measures and was gaining traction in the polls. Those same polls revealed the only real alternative was the Ontario NDP. Yet, even under these circumstances, union support for the 'workers' party' was far from guaranteed.



Successful campaigns need committed volunteers. This is especially true for parties like the NDP, who are often outspent 10 to 1 by their opponents in many ridings. With the potential organized labour holds to make a significant impact in elections, it would serve us well to examine just what is holding so many of them back.

Greg Watkinson, Political Science student and union representative, explains rank and file membership are typically just as politically divided as the rest of the electorate, and just as reluctant to be told how to vote. As

a result, the "response of union leadership is often to not push that envelope."

According to Watkinson, decentralization of many unions has also played a role in limiting partisan support. "More centralized control over political engagement would help liberate locals from feeling the pressure from employers, the public and dissenting members because there is strength in numbers."

The NDP has seen substantial, public support from unions such as CUPE and the ETFO. Just like their members, however, not all union leadership leans to the left. Despite the conservative policies of the Ontario Liberals and their use of back-to-work legislation, they received the endorsement of unions like the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF). This support was eventually withdrawn after direct attacks from the Wynne Government. Some locals went as far as to endorse the Ford PC government. Many other unions simply took to the sidelines, refusing to take a side.

Although official partisan endorsements from organized labour are coveted, they will mean nothing if the work between elections isn't done to engage membership politically in a meaningful way. Simply sending emails out to rank and file

This, of course, is easier said than done. Many unions are simply stretched to their limits. The resources required to be successful during the increasingly hostile environment of collective bargaining leaves very little capacity for grassroots organizing and coalition building, things critical in the fight against neoliberalism. But there is hope.

The Good News

Watkinson assures us that "the tide is turning towards a more engaged and assertive labour movement." This is, in large part, thanks to the relentless cuts by Ford's PCs. Although devastating to the public sector, these attacks have served to mobilize unions, many who have joined community groups across the Province in a fight against a neoliberal agenda.

We are seeing more and more cross-sector solidarity, commitments by locals to political education and engagement, and increasing demands for a general strike. More locals are now being led by a generation of activists who are creating environments for progressive politics to thrive in their union halls and beyond. ■



SIMPLY SENDING EMAILS OUT TO RANK AND FILE MEMBERS URGING THEM TO VOLUNTEER THEIR TIME AND TELLING THEM HOW TO VOTE EVERY FOUR YEARS WILL NOT DROWN OUT THE POPULIST NOISE SWAYING SO MANY WORKERS TO THE RIGHT."

We Must Make the Case For a Socialist Future

BY ALEX CORBETT

There is an undeniable rising tide of popularity in democratic socialism that is sweeping across Europe and the United States. Young people are waking up and craving it, but in Canada this movement doesn't yet exist. Because to this, New Democrats are in crisis across the country. The good news is there's a way to reverse the trend. Bernie Sanders, Jeremy Corbyn and new-left movements all over the world have shown the way.

If the current strategy of playing to the centre was a good one, would the provincial governance map of the country look as it does now? With the only NDP Premier John Horgan remaining in British Columbia? It's clear that the current strategy of tacking to the centre is not a winning one.

We've yet to see compelling evidence that a strategy of compromise with Capital gets us what we want. Canadian capitalists already have two political parties, they don't need a third.

As a traditionally social democratic party, the NDP has won reforms in the past, but will anything Rachel Notley did in Alberta during the last four years, for example, survive a Jason Kenney premiership?

The answer is no, not really, and not because of some technocratic reason, but because of politics. The NDP in power did little to change the landscape of politics and ideology in Alberta. They did not engage in the base-building necessary to win a second term. During the election, the conversation was still one of "who can get the pipelines built?" rather than that of "how are we going to combat climate change?"

Tommy Douglas used the story of "Mouseland" with which to build class consciousness and expose the Liberal/Conservative duopoly. What do our modern NDP politicians have that is comparable?

We need bold policy proposals if we

are going to win. Policy proposals that will galvanize a new generation of political activists to go out and do the work of politics, convincing the people of Canada that there's something worth fighting for.

This will certainly be a challenge. The average person may not think much about politics. They have other, more pressing matters, of bills and rent, to attend to. Many Canadians are living paycheque to paycheque, but when they do have a moment of leisure time, our work is cut out for us as well.

The weapons of mass distraction have never been more powerful.

We have Amazon learning about the kinds of things you buy, tailoring a perfect virtual store just for you. Netflix, learning the sorts of things you like to watch, suggesting ever better shows for you. Steam and Origin, letting you know what games your friends are playing and suggesting new ones all the time. A fantastic world that feels like it's made for you. It's going to feel good and comfortable, right up until the oceans rise, the air burns, and it all comes to a crashing halt.

The left must breakthrough these barriers to counter bourgeois ideology and articulate a positive vision of the future. We cannot be afraid to cast this battle in adversarial terms. There are those who exploit labour and destroy the earth, and



Above: Mouseland, as told by Tommy Douglas (1944)

there are those who do all they can to stop them. We must be on the side of the later, and uncompromising with the former.

Does the NDP have the will to make the case, not just for minor reforms, but for a new society? To tell a compelling story of workers and tenants rising up against their oppressors?

Why doesn't the NDP have its own radio station, or its own TV channel? Aren't there political messages worth spreading? Leftists elsewhere are creating a new media ecosystem that is challenging the hegemony of liberal capitalist ideology. What is stopping the NDP from engaging in this sort of ideological / media project?

Ideological base-building remains the defining responsibility of the Left today. If we don't do it, the corporate media certainly will. More than this, a socialist base must be consciously pushing the masses toward a revolutionary break with the capitalist power structure, lest any of our victories be short lived.

The NDP must turn left in order to make things right. ■

Alex Corbett is the Socialist Caucus candidate for Member at Large

"There are those who exploit labour and destroy the earth, and there are those who do all they can to stop them. We must be on the side of the later, and uncompromising with the former."



THE IMPACT OF THE FORD BUDGET ON EDUCATION

photo: Tomo Tang

By Lewis Waring

The picture painted by the 2019-20 Ontario budget is one of an unorganized and wasteful Ministry of Education that throws money around with no respect for where it comes from and no concern for where it's going.

The solution for the current government is to reduce the amount of money given and demand that it be spent responsibly. In the introduction to this budget, the government says it requested a line-by-line spending review by Ernst & Young LLP, a financial consulting firm, which claimed it could find efficiencies in government spending in order to reduce spending and gradually balance the budget.

Indeed, Ernst determined that education real expenditures for kindergarten through grade 12 had grown by 1.7% while total student enrollment had declined by 0.5%. According to this logic, increasing funding for education is a mistake to correct. In this worldview, education has a market value determined by the invisible hand. Thus, if enrollment decreases by 0.5%, spending ought to decrease by 0.5%.

Ernst's mandate from the government was to find efficiencies which would allow the government to cut spending by 4%. And why? Again, the reason is to balance the budget. The question which is not asked is balance the budget for what? The government claims that it wants to respect taxpayers but it has a strange way of showing it. Is it respectful to demand taxes and take away services?

The government claims it wants to balance the budget by introducing market discipline. Ford knows these talking points well. In fact, he dreams of a world in which the public education system is subject to market discipline just like private commodities.

The government wants to introduce "choice" for Ontario by grinding the public

education system down until private alternatives have room to enter and compete. If subjects taught in public schools are reduced to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, private schools have a fighting chance to provide premium options.

If public schools are reduced to providing a "basic" education for "basic" people, any Ontarian who hopes for a better education for their children will be forced to buy charter school educations. The government's aim is not to balance the budget. The government wants to privatize education by destroying the public system.

Killing public education opens the door to the privatization of education. As stated in the Ernst review, "no private sector business would operate under such conditions and neither should the Ontario government." The problem, according to Ernst and thus according to the government, is a "culture and incentives to always spend more."

The Ford government is under the illusion that its spending must be decreased to match its income and that government income is somehow set in stone. The government would have you believe it doesn't have the power to pay for education in Ontario, and that when it chooses not to fund educational support for autistic students, for example, that that money is thus saved and can be applied to balancing the budget.

The side effect of refusing to fund educational support for autistic students is, of course, a barrier to children with autism obtaining an education. Presumably, the government considers autistic children special cases which will require attending a special school which his or her parents will pay for. Under this logic, the government has saved money by offloading its spending obligations onto the autistic child's family. In this way, the government doesn't have a duty to provide services to all Ontario citizens but only to provide "basic" services to what it views as "normal" Ontario citizens.

What follows from this dumbing down of the education system is an overall increase in individual household spending for a myriad of services which it used to receive from the government. The net result of that is a poorer province. The new landscape in Ontario is hence a shrinking government which spends less by demanding that its population spend more. If the government does indeed balance the budget, it does so by stealing the wealth of the population.

Solutions for the problems of our education system are a robust and holistic public education system. All educational services required to foster an intelligent society must be funded by the entire population together through the state. Only by ensuring all education is performed within the public sphere can all costs be centralized and spread throughout society.

The solution of Ontario's education crisis is efficiency, after all. Unfortunately, the government fails to understand its most sacred mantra. The government's overhaul of the Ontario education system is not a cost-saving exercise but is instead entirely focused on introducing inefficiency into education by foisting costs onto individual citizens with individual needs.

The state is not a company. It does not generate income by selling a product to consumers. The amount which the state invests in education ought not to be determined by market forces, competition, or the invisible hand of the market.

The state is, at its best, a means by which the population provides for itself, in the most efficient manner possible, goods and services that allow it to survive and thrive. The government can justify its theft as it likes, but, in the end, its professed desire to balance their budget is a veiled theft of our education. ■

Lewis Waring is a Socialist Caucus candidate for ONDP Vice-President.

Feast for the rich, from page 15

years. But hey, that's a government Ottawa wants to overthrow, not emulate.

Energy: The feds opt for a mix of electric cars and dirty oil pipelines. Seriously. To be precise, the Liberal budget allocates \$435 million in incentives for electric or hydrogen-fuel-cell vehicle buyers in order to nudge hitherto unwilling auto makers - after spending \$4.5 billion to buy the Trans Mountain Pipeline (and double that to build a new parallel line). Trudeau refuses to convert the extensive Canada Post delivery fleet to electric -- much less nationalize job killing GM in Oshawa or Fiat/Chrysler in Windsor to produce the trains, buses, freight hauling and personal vehicles for a green, sustainable future. Environmental scientists say it's twelve years to irreversible climate catastrophe.

Farmers: The supply management system in Canada protects farmers in dairy,

poultry and egg sectors by limiting imports from abroad and setting quotas for domestic production and sales. But Trudeau/Freeland signed trade agreements with the EU and the Pacific Rim that opened up these markets to foreign competition. Will the \$3.9 billion support program for these farmers keep them operating?

Low income seniors: Folks aged 65+ have been falling behind for decades. The budget promises to spend \$1.76 billion over four years to increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement - beginning in 2020. It will also increase the amount of income seniors can make without shrinking the supplement payouts they receive. In other words, low-income seniors are encouraged to keep working. O joy!

Pinch the Rich? Hardly. In 2017, 2,330 Canadians 'earned' more than \$1 million and claimed stock options tax deductions (i.e. bought company stocks, only half of

which is taxed). The budget caps at \$200,000 the use of this tax dodge at large "mature" companies (which exempts millionaires at start-ups). Clearly, this measure does nothing to fund social needs, much less close the gap between the super-rich and the working class. According to author Linda McQuaig, top CEOs receive 2,000 times the earnings of the average worker.

And what about electoral reform? Indigenous reconciliation? Feminism? Better forget about it, so long as Colonel Sanders is in charge of the hen house.

Forgive the pun, but under capitalism, big business greed trumps workers' needs. "Affordability anxiety" preoccupies 57 per cent of Canadians, according to the Abacus Data polling firm. With appropriate leadership, it could power a challenge to capitalist rule. ■

GEOFF WAYNE Southwest

Geoff is a union electrician from Ingersoll. He has been involved with the NDP in London and now Oxford county. He believes in equality and creating a Canada that works for everyone, and believes the NDP should focus on workers rights and putting power into the hands of the workers.



LOG ON TO OUR WEBSITE AND SIGN UP TO OUR FACEBOOK GROUP

Our website includes articles from SC supporters and information about past and future events. Don't forget to sign up to our Facebook group. Just type "NDP Socialist Caucus" in the search bar, and you'll find us. Become a member of the group and join in the discussion. www.ndpsocialists.ca.

PLEASE DONATE TO THE SOCIALIST CAUCUS

The Socialist Caucus devotes its resources to publishing editions of *Turn Left*, issuing literature to promote SC candidates for executive, promoting public forums, and producing SC posters, stickers, buttons and more.

If you can give, now is the time. We can make a real difference in creating a more democratic party. Please send a cheque to: NDP Socialist Caucus, 526 Roxton Rd. Toronto, ON. M6G 3R4.

ROB GENTLES East

Rob studied Political Science and Latin American History at the University of Calgary, then attended the University of Alberta for his bachelor of laws. He has worked for the federal government since 2002 in Ottawa, where he lives with his family, and serves as a board member for a local autism charity.



MELINDA REES Central East

Melinda has been a lawyer at a community legal clinic since 1991. She comes from a family of union activists in the U.K., and wants to see the NDP strive for a rapid shift from a carbon-based economy to a socialist model of green development that protects the interests of people over those of corporations.



TOM BAKER Central West

Tom is a longstanding executive member of the Hamilton Centre NDP riding association. Tom has fought for progressive, socialist policies in the party and has worked with local environmental and anti-war activists for over thirty five years, and wants to see the NDP turn to the Left.



ROSS ASHLEY Toronto

Ross is a Vietnam-era war resister, New Democrat for most of the last 45 years, committed socialist, and union militant in SEIU. Ross wants to restore the Party's historic stature as a social movement - a party representing the interests of working people against the financial and political elites.



The Campaign for Socialism and Democracy in the NDP

The Socialist Caucus is presenting a team of candidates for Ontario NDP Executive. Let's build a more participatory and activist NDP that fights for socialist policies.

COREY DAVID President

Corey is a machinist from Vaughan, Ontario. He spent five years as a front line staff for Community Living Toronto. A strong supporter of human rights, renewable energy, the arts and the labour movement, he writes poetry, short stories and plays hockey in his spare time.



JOHN ORRETT Treasurer

Former District Chief with the Toronto Fire Services, John has been an active member of the NDP for over 40 years. He has an Honours BA in Political Science with credits in economics, and is currently President of the Thornhill Riding Association.



JENNE FINLEY Vice President

Jenne Finley is a multiracial Indigenous woman who is committed to working from the ground up to ensure that the working class - and other underrepresented groups - have an active voice in the Ontario NDP. Jenne was born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario.



JULIUS ARSCOTT Vice President

Julius is a member of the Socialist Caucus and an organizer of the Workers Action Movement. He was an Executive Board Member representing 30,000 members of OPSEU in Toronto, and has been an active proponent of union affiliation to the NDP.



BARRY WEISLEDER Vice President

Barry is a teacher, union organizer, writer, and member of the NDP for over 48 years. He is co-chair of the federal and Ontario NDP Socialist Caucus. Barry wants the party to become a bottom-up organization that fights for a Workers' Agenda.



DM MARCHAND Vice President

DM Lafortune is an actor, advocate, educator, and singer-songwriter. She believes understanding our stories allows us to be forgiving of ourselves in order to be patient and compassionate. She runs "Decolonizing the Heart: Deep Learning for Deep Change" workshops.



LEWIS WARRING Vice President

Lewis Waring is a licensed paralegal and writer in the areas of Ontario employment and human rights law. Lewis organized for student's rights in the recent Ontario college teacher's strike and graduated from the University of Toronto with a specialist in philosophy.



EURIDICE BAUMGARTEN Member at Large

A former journalist from Brazil, Euridice is now a tenant organizer and housing advocate in Toronto. In the 1980s in Brazil, as young social justice activist, she helped to found the Worker's Party, which lifted millions of from poverty in 13 years of government.



MITCHELL SHORE Member at Large

Mitchell is a life-long socialist and a member of the Federal Executive for the Beaches-East York Riding Association. He has been an employee of the Ontario Public Service for 14 years. He believes that it's critical for the NDP to turn left and return to its socialist roots.



ALEX CORBET Member at Large

Alex grew up in Markham and has a BA in Political Science from York University. Working for 10+ years in the field of information technology has given him a front row seat to the digitization, automation, and alienation that defines contemporary capitalism.



JUDY KOCH Disability Rights Committee

Judy Koch is a long time social activist and a member of the Toronto Danforth NDP executive. She is a strong advocate for workers' rights people with physical and mental challenges, and an active member of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty.



JOHN WILSON LGBT Committee

John has long been involved in the NDP and its predecessor party, starting with the Ottawa CCF youth club in 1954. Involved in human rights and gay/queer liberation since the early 1970s, John is a founding member of Queer Ontario.

