

Turn Left Virez à gauche

Voice of the NDP Socialist Caucus / Voix du caucus socialiste NDP

NDP  NDP



Spring/
Printemps 2021



PUBLIC OWNERSHIP NOW

End the nightmare of
private, for-profit home care

CAPITALISM IS OVER! IF YOU WANT IT

photo: Thomas Hawk (flickr)

Make the 2021 NDP Convention a Step Forward

BY BARRY WEISLEDER

The decision by the New Democratic Party leadership to host an online federal convention in April 2021 may be a step forward. It depends very much on how delegates are chosen, how resolutions can be submitted, which resolutions are brought forward for debate, how the convention chair will permit delegates to speak on resolutions at the gathering, how votes will be recorded, etc.

The Socialist Caucus began agitating for a federal NDP convention when the party brass cancelled it in early December 2019. That was months before the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in March 2020. The party constitution required that a federal NDP convention be held in February 2020, two years after

the previous one. However, following the NDP federal election debacle in October 2019, when the party lost nearly 1 million votes and half of its seats in Parliament, Leader Jagmeet Singh and the executive around him sought to avoid a leadership review. The excuse was the Minority Government, the possibility of a snap election, and later it was COVID-19. To be sure, the federal NDP convention now set for April 9-11, 2021 is a victory for the Socialist Caucus, but it remains to be seen how democratic the convention will be.

We have said for a long time that, for the NDP to survive it must turn sharply to the left. The NDP must differentiate from the Liberal Party, and also from the Green Party that has been nibbling at its electoral base. Can it become a party of the streets, a tribune of Black Lives Matter, Indigenous rights and workers fighting

cuts to health services? How should the NDP membership act to position the labour-based party?

1. Pandemic measures are urgently needed: Socialists say extend the public healthcare system to include Long Term Care, medical drugs, research, development and delivery of vaccines to combat COVID-19. Nationalize Big Pharma. Expropriate the private, for-profit nursing homes and seniors' residences. Operate them under the democratic control of their workers and the families of residents. End the overcrowding and unsanitary conditions; hire more front-line staff, provide job security, and double their pay.

2. End the housing crisis by demanding that the government launch the

construction of a million good quality housing units per year, until the scourge of homelessness is vanquished. Take control of the land development and construction sector, under workers' control.

3. Stop the gouging of consumers by the giant telecoms, like Rogers, TELUS and Bell. Reduce internet rates and operate the industry as a public service.

4. For a Green New Deal based on a rapid transition to sustainable energy systems in production and transportation. Conscript the wealth of Big Oil and Gas. Re-train displaced carbon energy workers. Leave no one behind. Provide restitution to Indigenous peoples who have been harmed by the plunder of nature and their ancestral lands.

5. Tax profitable corporations and the rich, seize offshore tax haven accounts or the equivalent-value domestic assets, and nationalize the big banks under workers' and consumers' democratic control.

6. De-fund, disarm and disband the RCMP and other systemically racist police forces. Rapidly replace them with community-controlled policing practices. Shift away from incarceration in the court and penal system towards restorative justice.

7. Cancel the new fighter jets. Cut federal spending on the military, which should be reduced to a rescue and recovery role. Convert the arms export business to production to meet human needs. Build homes, schools and hospitals -- not bombs, bullets and anti-personnel carriers.

8. Canada out of NATO now! Quit the Lima Group. Defend the right to self-determination of Venezuela, Cuba, Syria, Iran and other countries suffering imperialist embargo and military intervention. Reject the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism, which conflates the latter with anti-Zionism and constitutes an attack on free speech. Apply Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against the Zionist apartheid state of Israel to End the Occupation. For a democratic, secular Palestine, and for the Right of Return of all Palestinian refugees. Free Meng Wanzhou. Normalize relations with China. Hands Off whistleblowers Julian Assange and Edward Snowden! No to their Extradition.

There is a great appetite for change in Canada. Trudeau's spending on the pandemic falls far short of needs and expectations. The mood at the grassroots level is reflected in the growth of the Socialist Caucus across the country,

especially in New Brunswick and across western Canada. It was evident in the marvelous campaign of SC member Bryn Smith in Surrey-White Rock who came within 224 votes of winning the seat in the BC election. We should seize the opportunities apparent in this situation with both hands.

The Liberal Party is the prime vehicle of big business rule in Canada. The Green Party purveys the illusory goal of a green, sustainable capitalism. Both are wedded to the private profit system that poses an existential threat to nature and civilization.

The NDP should counter-pose to the failed and toxic global capitalist system the only realistic alternative -- a democratically planned economy under workers' and community control. The NDP should invite more unions and working class organizations to join it in the quest for a cooperative commonwealth, a socialist future of freedom and prosperity for all, in harmony with nature.

Those lofty goals are reflected in policy resolutions that party members can find at www.socialistndp.ca and can then seek to get them adopted at local meetings, and ultimately, at the federal convention. Along the way, raise political awareness. Winning NDP members to the vision of a transformed world is a central task of the Socialist Caucus. ■

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All My Single Ladies Revisited: A Just Recovery Opportunity

BY DIRKA PROUT

Measures taken to fight the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a uniquely female driven recession, dubbed a “she-cession,” which threatens to set women back decades.



Single poor women in particular were vulnerable pre-COVID. What would it take to lift them out of poverty and produce a just recovery? Pre-pandemic, the Canada Child Benefit was instrumental in lifting families out of poverty Canada wide. For senior women, Canada’s retirement security system did the same.

For decades however, the blind spot for policy makers was working-aged singles without children; many of whom live in deep poverty. According to the 2016 census, working-aged singles is the largest demographic receiving social assistance. Single persons without dependents swell the ranks of those in deep poverty, defined as those with incomes 75% of the poverty line or less than \$10,000 per year. At this income level, one often expends 70 to 80% of their income on housing and cannot meet basic needs.

Pre-COVID, women were vulnerable because of a higher likelihood

of minimum wage employment, a heavier burden of unpaid care and the gender wage gap. Women comprised forty percent of social assistance recipients. New immigrants, BIPOC, disabled, elderly and LGBTQ1A2S women were overrepresented in poverty.

COVID-19 struck and flipped the typical recession script where act one plays out with losses of primarily well-paid manufacturing jobs held by men. The second act is the initial recovery led by women securing lower paid service sector jobs. Since February 2020, the utilization of women’s paid labour has been consistently lower than men’s. While some rebound was noted in late 2020, lower paid women, youth and BIPOC individuals were not the primary beneficiaries.

Women are now dealing with compromised support systems stretched to the limits. Lockdowns resulted in victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV) arriving at shelters only when in dire circumstances. Historic defunding combined with inflexible project-based funding allowed the pandemic to heavily impact operations of women’s organizations. To cope, several moved to virtual service delivery. Just over half reduced services and about 48% cancelled them all together. Accessing COVID emergency grants was problematic since many establishments could not

spare resources needed for urgent project delivery. Others applied only to find that they were unavailable to women’s organizations.

Childcare spaces, already inaccessible and expensive before COVID, evaporated. Faced with homeschooling on top of existing unpaid care burdens, several working mothers elected to exit the workforce.

Economist Armine Yalnizyan has stated that “There will be no recovery without a she-covary, and no she-covary without childcare.” In November 2020, the federal Liberals once again promised a national childcare system in their fiscal update. Their original promise dates back to 1984. Can we trust them now? They do admit that “Accessible and affordable child care helps create jobs and spurs economic growth.” It also creates direct employment for mostly female childcare workers and will facilitate women’s re-entry into the labour force.

Housing is an important social determinant of health. To preserve mental and physical health and reduce homelessness, a national eviction moratorium should be imposed until the pandemic is under control. Housing subsidies should be increased. Increased investments in shelters, transitional housing for GBV victims and rent-geared-to-

income housing are also urgently needed. In the long term, rent control should be expanded and tied to the unit, instead of the tenant, to prevent extreme rent escalation due to high turnover.

Social assistance rates must be immediately increased and based on need, not family status. Rates are too low, especially for disabled persons. The guaranteed liveable basic income proposed by NDP MP Leah Gazan should be adopted. A basic income will result in lower costs for shelters, jails and other response measures. Help the people before they are placed in a position of needing rescuing. Housing costs need to be factored in as often these are higher than the inflation rate or overall cost of living.

Employment insurance should be redesigned to recognize the precarious nature of work that many women and the working poor do. Minimum wages must be increased and lower minimum wages, such as those used in the female dominated hospitality sector, abolished.

Women’s organizations must be provided with secure, low-barrier accessible emergency COVID funding without delay. Without this funding, they cannot cover essential operating costs and restore pre-pandemic service levels. A permanently revised funding model that provides stable core funding to women-serving agencies is also necessary.

A just recovery is a “she-covary,” built on a foundation of universally

accessible, affordable public childcare. It incorporates measures that enshrine housing as a human right. Health and wellbeing must be placed first with no exceptions. An intersectional, gendered and multi-pronged approach is required to strengthen the social safety net and build resilience to weather future crises. Investments in the elimination of income inequality and poverty bring us closer to a just society. ■

Dirka Prout is the Socialist Caucus candidate seeking re-election as Co-Chair of the Federal Women’s Commission. In this article she revisits her 2017 Turn Left contribution, “All My Single Ladies,” which examined single women in poverty.

photo: Yooerann (flickr)



The Land Back Movement and Indigenous Liberation

By Corey David

The Land Back Movement is built from the work of generations of Indigenous struggle against Canada's oppressive state and corporate domination of peoples and the environment. Though not rigidly defined generally, it is a variety of strategies and teachings directed at dismantling Canada's colonial system and reconnecting First Nations with the land and their way of life through challenges in Canadian courts, community building, and direct action.

As I'm writing this in February 2021, the barricades are coming down at 1492 Land Back Lane, a reclamation act that pushed the movement to the forefront in Ontario. The land is part of the Haldimand tract, territory on either side of the grand river that was recognized by the Crown as sovereign Six Nations territory. Canadian courts, police and the capitalists attempting to develop the land have all tried to criminalize, remove and punish community members and their allies

for protecting it from more urban sprawl and new attempts at legitimizing stolen land.

The Crown is responsible for the majority of violence against Indigenous people, nations, culture and way of life, yet treaties between the crown are often the sole legal protections against capital and colonial encroachment. However, they are also used to restrict the somewhat collectivized land and used as an excuse to do nothing when environmental destruction caused by industry kills and causes suffering to many, such as in grassy narrows.

Land defenders are attacked, harassed and arrested, community activists are removed from meetings, yet the solidarity actions between Nations continue. It's not a document that protects First Nations but the will and determination of the people both from within and without that stand against injustice. The piece of paper like all contracts is a form of mediation, but promises can be broken. It is up to the parties involved to discuss in good faith and look at each other as equals and deserving of respect, something the crown has never done when

coming to terms with First Nations. Speaking with organizers at Wiigwaasikaa, a land back project in Toronto, the goal is to protect the land from more devastation, protect their traditions and teachings and their children's future ability to connect with their roots, and live as they choose, not as defined by the Canadian state. "We're not going nowhere, and we're not changing who we are" (as heard at a solidarity March at 1492 land back).

There is a divide within all communities over how to move forward, whether to change and in what way, or to keep tradition. The history of Canada, like any colonizing power, has never given choice and has continuously acted to control and destroy. There are countless examples from the theft of land, forced dislocation, culling of sled dogs by the RCMP, mass arrests, military and police violation of Territory, environmental destruction, theft of resources, kidnapping and abuse of children, etc....

There was a time when it was almost impossible to resist this attempt at

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photo: Shawn Harauil (flickr)

genocide, but as First Nations have done since settlers and colonizers arrived, they have built relationships and formed bonds with their neighbours where there was mutual respect. Through acts of solidarity, more citizens of the Canadian state have come to challenge the narrative and are standing with the oppressed people.

Other oppressed people from around the world support each other in recognition of their struggle against colonial and imperialist powers. "From Turtle Island to Palestine, colonization is a crime" is a common slogan at rallies. The colonial system in Canada is still vast and though some of it has eroded under the light of the camera and undaunted resistance, in other ways it has become more efficient and subversive.

Just as some European settlers were misled a century ago as to Canada's

history and functions, new immigrants are also led to pledge themselves to the Crown who in many ways is responsible for the deplorable conditions of former colonies and war-torn states from which people seek a better life. The chauvinist appeal of right-wing Canadians and fascists still seek to take a blunt instrument to oppressed people, for the ruling class and the little privilege they enjoy.

They use subversive forms of media, looking to pride themselves in the crimes of the founders of the Canadian state and the "strength" of this violence. Oppressed people always know oppression is wrong and not to be celebrated.

It is key to dispel these myths and bring the truth to light among the general public, and especially workers who are also oppressed by the Canadian system in many ways. Some enjoy certain privileges,

whether it be from systemic racism or their importance to the enforcement of the capitalist system, but all are exploited at some level by the ruling class.

The only just way forward for allies of First Nations is to build relations with our neighbours, recognize the truth about our shared history, and seek to work in solidarity and support self-determination for First Nations, building a future together that respects the people's right to the land and the need to defend it as capitalism increases its appetite in the face of global environmental catastrophe.

"Workers and oppressed people of the world unite" is a slogan of International Workers Day. The liberation of all peoples is linked, and together we can change the world. ■

How We Will Win

By Jessa McLean

Bernie Sanders didn't win the Democratic Nomination, but there is no arguing that the level of grassroots mobilization achieved was something to be admired, and imitated. Not only did both Presidential runs yield massive amounts of small level donations, but they were able to meaningfully engage thousands of volunteers towards a common goal while spending very little doing it. If we ever want a serious shot at power, we need to do the same for the NDP, and it looks like we have to do it ourselves.

Right now, there is no NDP 'grassroots'. There are plenty of supporters, but there is no active collective. And this is by design. As a Party we are so poor at engaging our membership it can only be intentional. A mobilized grassroots can challenge the leadership, can demand more of their Party. This is democracy, but it is far from embraced by Party brass.

Right now, Ottawa's idea of engagement are petitions that do nothing but mine our data, and sharpening their social media campaign. All tools of the game, but none of these things gets dedicated members doing the work that needs to be done to win elections and to change the narratives in our communities.

In particular, we have failed the riding associations.

Most of them doing what they can with quite literally, zero resources. There is often no support or even contact from the headquarters in Ottawa. Ontario has a single organizer dedicated to the XXX Riding Associations in the Province. One. That is no way to grow a movement. There are dedicated members struggling to run Riding Associations on their own, all around the country. Many quite literally don't know where



to start. These are people who have stepped up, gone beyond what most typically do, and are trying to organize in their community for the Party. All they ask for is a modicum of support. Most get none.

The lack of resources isn't the issue. This is work that can be done on our shoestring budget, and how to do it isn't a well-kept secret. Bond and Exley's book, Rules for Revolutionaries, tells how they were able to do what they did with almost no paid staff, and very few initial resources.

They remind us, "the Revolution will not be staffed." By necessity, the Left must maximize the capacity of volunteer power - we have to enable and connect the grassroots. We will never have the financial resources to outspend our opponents, or to overthrow Capital. We must leverage, empower and grow our active volunteers.

Ridings are not merely a source for fundraising and filling out the ballot with a candidate. They are seeds spread throughout the country, from which a powerful movement can grow. We will not just be a more effective membership, but a powerful one as well. There will be no more begging for scraps at the Convention table, or straining to have our voices heard on key issues often ignored by Party leadership.

Lateral communication is key between these groups. There has been no attempt to do this from above, and any requests to share contact information between Riding Association Presidents is refused. There are endless, free tools that we can use so all these people can work together. So they never have to call Central with a question that will never get answered.

Volunteers need to be able to share knowledge and resources. Right now, NDP mobilizing tools,

phone scripts, basic know-how tools, are carefully guarded as though it contained miraculous industry secrets. This stuff needs to be accessible to anyone who wants to get involved.

It is only then we can start to make big asks of our volunteers.

Riding Associations are the absolute heartbeat of campaigns. If we don't spend an ounce of effort in empowering these groups between contests, we will never win. And if we don't incorporate constant between-election community organizing, our ranks will never grow. Using distributive organizing we can empower every level of volunteer. No matter how much time they have to spend, or what skills they come to the fight with, we have the means to provide them with everything they need to jump in.

We also need to reach out to the places we've given up on. There are many, many ridings that do not have an association. Many "Presidents" listed with Elections Canada are staff in Ottawa, and there is nothing being done to connect people in those areas. Worse, volunteers coming forward to start an organization in their community are often stonewalled with unresponsiveness. Similar treatment is given to ridings deemed "unwinnable".

Much of this is not news to those involved with the Party. Many have submitted resolutions with suggestions on how Central could do a better job. The reality is though, the answer is not going to lay at headquarters - we are going to have to do this work ourselves.

We need to find ways to act like the dedicated collective we are - not the fragmented fundraising fodder we've been treated as. When we do this, we will win. ■

Jessa has received the proud endorsement of the Socialist Caucus for NDP President

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DEMOCRACY

The Campaign for Socialism and Democracy in the NDP

The Socialist Caucus is presenting a common team of candidates for Federal Executive and Council. Here's our chance to build a more participatory and activist NDP that fights for socialist policies. * Denotes endorsement by the Socialist Caucus.

JESSA MCLEAN *
President

Jessa is a community and political organizer, two time federal candidate, and President of the York-Simcoe NDP. She is a socialist, invested in pushing the party back to our roots as a bold, left-wing alternative to neo-liberal austerity. Jessa holds a degree in political science from York University.



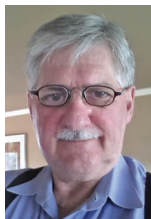
YVONNE HANSON
Vice President - Labour

Yvonne Hanson is a dedicated environmental activist and former NDP candidate in the hotly contested Vancouver Granville riding in the 2019 federal election. She is also involved in the labour movement, working as a support staff for BCGEU, one of the largest labour unions in British Columbia.



GARY PORTER
Treasurer

Gary is a retired CA and CGA and former chair of the investment committee of the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan Board, a \$200 billion fund. Gary has a unique understanding of capitalism and its entirely destructive nature. He is running to advance a socialist program and leadership for the NDP.



DIRKA PROUT
Women's Commission

Dirka is seeking a second term as a Women's Commission Co-Chair. She was the 2019 candidate for London North Centre and a past President of London West. Dirka is board member of the Unity Project, and believes that a strong Women's commission will be an asset to the NDP.



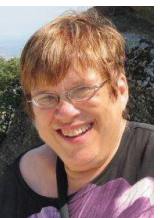
JOHN WILSON
LGBT Committee

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.



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.



JULIUS ARSCOTT
Ontario Representative

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.



EMILY STEERS
Ontario Representative

Emily (she/her) recently graduated with her MA from Laurier University, where she helped organize the PSAC local 902 for teaching assistants, and now works as a music teacher. She is passionate about eco-justice, queer liberation and student debt cancellation.



HANNAH LEICHNITZ
Quebec Representative

Hannah is a student and future college teacher in Montréal. She has been an advocate for queer liberation and worker's rights since she started her undergraduate's degree, and became involved in local politics shortly after.



DANIEL LAMONTAGNE
Quebec Representative

Diplômé en science et kinésiologie, Daniel vise à améliorer les conditions de travail pour nos ouvriers et ouvrières, promouvoir une transition écosocialiste ambitieuse et d'être une voix forte pour un accès juste et équitable au système des soins de santé.



STEPHEN CROZIER
BC Representative

In the 2019 election, Stephen was the NDP candidate in South Surrey – White Rock, and is currently on the BC NDP Provincial Executive for the Surrey – White Rock EDA. Stephen has been a teacher for over 30 years, most of his last 15 at Douglas College in BC.



STEPHANIE LANGFORD
BC Representative

Stephanie Langford grew up in a socialist, feminist family. Her mother, Carol Langford, ran federally and provincially for the NDP. Stephanie is a registered nurse of close to fifty years and a university professor (BScN program) for almost thirty years.



ROSEMARY HNATIUK
Manitoba Representative

Rosemary is a lawyer specializing in Indian Residential School claims. Fluent in both official languages, she has been active in the Manitoba NDP for the past two decades. Her interests are engaging members and advocating for grassroots participation.



BEV CURRIE
Saskatchewan Rep.

Bev Currie joined the NDP in 1949. In the 1950s, he ran twice for the party in federal elections, was elected to the Saskatchewan NDP provincial executive, and in 1970 was its President. In the 1970s, Bev was a prominent member of the Waffle movement.



VICTOR MORGAN
Atlantic Representative

Before the pandemic, Victor was a manager of a chain business on the Island. Victor has lived in Newfoundland his entire life, and has personally seen the desperate need for socialism, and hopes to be part of the team that makes that happen.



RILEY NEILSEN
Atlantic Representative

Riley joined the Nova Scotia Socialist Caucus in 2020 and worked on the Caucus' Constitution. Riley has a Bachelor of Public Management from Florida Atlantic University and is a current Masters of Public Administration student at Dalhousie University.



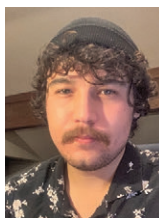
ROBIN GRAHAM
PEI Representative

Robin is an activist from Charlottetown who has helped raise thousands of dollars for foodbanks in the area. Taking part in multiple media interviews on the issue, Robin is a tireless advocate for providing access to safe, secure and affordable housing for all.



YUNUS EMRE SAHIN
Alberta Representative

Yanus is from Turkey and currently finishing his Masters in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Toronto. He also has a Bachelors in Political Science from the University of Alberta and cares deeply about the environment, systemic inequality, and Indigenous politics.



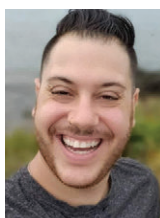
COREY DAVID
Ontario Representative

Corey David is a socialist, artist, activist and member of the Workers Action Movement. He has worked in supporting people with intellectual disabilities and currently works as a machinist in Scarborough. Corey is a supporter of human rights, renewable energy and the arts.



DON PAULIN
New Brunswick Rep.

Don is a member of the provincial executive of the New Brunswick NDP and was the NDP candidate in the recent NB provincial election. Don is a long time member of the working class and labor movement, including an executive member of several union locals.



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.

NDP SOCIALIST CAUCUS ENDORSES JESSA MCLEAN FOR PRESIDENT

The New Democratic Party Socialist Caucus steering committee, representing hundreds of party members from coast to coast, voted unanimously to advance a joint team of socialist candidates for NDP Executive and Federal Council, headed by Jessa McLean for Federal NDP President.

Jessa McLean, the president of York-Simcoe NDP and twice an NDP candidate for Parliament, enjoys the endorsement of Courage, Democratic Socialists of Canada, Justice Internationale and MP Niki Ashton. McLean is backing

the Socialist Caucus candidates for over 20 positions on the party executive, and the SC is backing her, and her associate Gabriel Masi for Youth Chair.

This is the first united socialist slate of candidates in the NDP in decades. The current convergence of leftist activists is actuated by a common desire for greater democracy and a commitment to socialist policies and grassroots organizing within the party.

The united socialists stand for public ownership of industries, an uncompromising Green New Deal,

Land Back for Indigenous Peoples, Defunding the Police, Free Post-Secondary Education, Free Transit, Universal Childcare, Abolishing Billionaires, Rent Freezes during the Pandemic, as well as a major crackdown on polluters, tax evaders, and bad bosses. They stand in solidarity with Palestine, for boycott, divestment and sanctions against the Zionist apartheid state, and demand Canada Out of NATO, and Hands Off Venezuela. ■

VOTE
JESSA MCLEAN
WWW.JESSAMCLEANNDP.CA



Our grassroots membership
deserves more:

- Of our voice in the Platform,
- Power in choosing local Candidates,
- More resources to do meaningful Community Engagement.

And we are going to deliver that to them.

WWW.JESSAMCLEANNDP.CA

VOTE
JESSA MCLEAN
for NDP PRESIDENT

WE WILL EMPOWER
GRASSROOTS MEMBERS TO
FIGHT FOR



SOCIAL



RACIAL



ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC

JUSTICE

FOR CANADA'S NEXT
**NDP
PRESIDENT**



Big Organizing
Grassroots Democracy
Bold Ideas

NDP PRESIDENT

BASIC INCOME FOR CANADIANS: FROM THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY TO FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR ALL

Basic Income For Canadians:
From the COVID-19 Emergency to
Financial Security for All
Authored by Evelyn Forget

Book Review by Rosemary Hnatiuk

Manitoba was the site of the first Canadian experiment with Basic Income (1975-1978) under the provincial NDP. The successor Conservative government canceled the program, and 1,800 boxes of unanalyzed data were archived.



Evelyn Forget, economist at the School of Medicine at the University of Manitoba, has since gained access to it. Her book, “Basic Income For Canadians: From the COVID-19 Emergency to Financial Security for All” analyzes the data just as the Basic Income discussion is rekindled. Within days of the national pandemic lockdown, income replacement was delivered to those who lost work or experienced a radical drop in earnings.

Both the fact of the rapid delivery of aid and the relief it brought to those already living in precarious financial circumstances moved the idea of a Basic Income from the realm of utopian fantasy to realizable measure. Professor Forget examines other BI trials in Europe, the United States and the developing world. In all cases, researchers

noted improvement in the physical and mental health outcomes of the populations. The lives of women and girls were enhanced, housing conditions improved, and social trust/solidarity increased.

Her book is laced with many narratives. One memorable story comes from Winnipeg Harvest. “Big Bill” Adamson, a volunteer at this food bank, who had been showing up for years wearing all the clothes he owned (to prevent them being stolen) in a rather parlous state of hygiene, suddenly arrived with a haircut, new clothes and a much more cheerful demeanor. He disclosed that he had turned 65 and was receiving his full Old Age Security and Supplement benefits. He was able to move out of his dive hotel room and buy food of his choosing rather than relying on Winnipeg Harvest.

Most BI experiments have focused on discovering whether people would work less under BI. The answer is “sometimes” or “yes, BUT...”. In the Dauphin, Manitoba experiment, a drop in employment among male teens and young adults was noted. With BI, Forget found young males continued their education before entering the job market. Many young males

otherwise quit high school and worked to support or not be a burden on their family. This greatly impacted their job and income prospects in life.

Forget returns time and again to the theme of independence and dignity inherent in a well-designed BI system. Her observation is that allowing people to decide for themselves how to spend their money and organize their lives results in the best outcomes. Most existing social programs (EI, social assistance) impose paternalistic requirements.

One single mother in Manitoba left welfare to join the Mincome experiment as it gave her freedom to take job training which her otherwise supportive caseworker couldn’t see the point of. Forty years later, she expressed pride at having modeled independence for her daughters.

A chapter on mythbusting addresses 13 objections to BI. Three of these relate to fears of losing existing social programs, making intended recipients worse off, and scrapping the good government jobs associated with program delivery. Forget points out that maintaining an inefficient and disempowering system will not prevent cutbacks. There is no

“Some argue it is better to address the complex root causes of poverty, such as mental health and substance abuse... Forget notes that the vast majority of people who would significantly benefit from BI do not have these issues. The cause of their poverty is simply a lack of money.”



need to accept such a trade-off, as the measure of success of any changes is to make people better off.

Other objections relate to impact on the world of work. Some say BI is a subsidy to employers who will pay lower wages. Others say no one will want to do unpleasant but necessary work. Unpacked, these two arguments neutralize each other. Forget points out that workers receiving BI would have the ability to walk away from lower-paying jobs whereby employers would have to either raise wages or improve benefits and working conditions.

The same applies to work of the unpleasant necessary variety. Employers would have an incentive to revert to technology rather than squeeze labour out of marginalized groups (immigrant, racialized, etc.). In both cases, the bargaining power of labour is increased. Some advocate a “jobs guarantee” rather than BI with no conditions. In practice, this means government subsidizing private-sector employers. Forget points out this would indeed shift the cost of low-wage labour from private firms to government, but without empowering workers.

The objection of some liberals is that bad jobs will be shipped abroad where workers continue to be exploited. Forget says advocacy for foreign workers is better than simply depriving Canadian workers of BI. The concern about prices rising – the classic argument about inflation, Forget answers in part by noting that people

with BI would actually be able to afford somewhat higher prices.

Would rents increase, hurting the most vulnerable? Forget notes the prevalence of the most deplorable conditions in low-quality housing where rent is paid directly to landlords on behalf of “vulnerable” clients. BI gives control of money to the intended beneficiaries. In the case of Big Bill Adamson, more than half of his provincial income assistance was paid directly to his landlord who in turn provided a tiny residential room in the dive hotel with a shared shower that seldom worked. Now a “respectable gentleman” senior, Bill has his own modest apartment.

Some argue it is better to address the complex root causes of poverty, such as mental health and substance abuse. It is estimated that 235,000 Canadians experience some sort of homelessness yearly but only a small core have the complex needs requiring supportive supervised programs. Forget notes that the vast majority of people who would significantly benefit from BI do not have these issues. The cause of their poverty is simply a lack of money.

Forget ends her book with various scenarios for the financing and structuring of BI. It is clear from this exercise that BI is neither impossible nor a pending catastrophe, but rather a question of political will and a shifting locus of continued class struggle. ■

Socialists Demand Nationalization of Home and Long-Term Care Companies

“

IT'S HIGH TIME TO NATIONALIZE THE PRIVATE HOME AND LONG-TERM CARE CORPORATIONS, AND BRING THEIR NEGLIGENT MANAGERS AND CEOS TO JUSTICE.”



Dozens gathered for a loud protest and news conference held at Tendercare Living Centre, at McNicoll and Victoria Park Avenues in Scarborough in January. Over 50 residents have died of COVID-19 in less than three weeks at the seniors’ home in north-east Toronto. A further 101 were infected, and 53 staff were isolating at home.

Tendercare is operated by Extendicare (Canada) Inc., a for-profit, long-term care corporation. A Toronto Star analysis of the financial statements of Extendicare, Sienna Senior Living and Chartwell Retirement Residences shows that in the three-quarters of 2020 (ending Sept. 30), these for-profit companies collectively paid out nearly \$171 million to shareholders while they received \$138.5 million in pandemic funding from the provincial and federal governments.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care released the results of a December 16 inspection of Tendercare revealing that Extendicare “failed” to ensure its staff implemented an infection-control program.

“Why should the care of elderly, ill and vulnerable people be entrusted to private for-profit vultures?”, said Corey David, the socialist candidate in the Scarborough-Agincourt by-election set for January 15, 2021.

“Long Term Care should be an integral part of the public health care system. We demand more full-time staff, with much better pay, equipped with proper PPE, no more than two residents per room, and strict quarantine of patients with serious

illnesses like COVID-19. It’s high time to nationalize the private home and long-term care corporations, and bring their negligent managers and CEOs to justice.”

Passing motorists honked in solidarity as protesters chanted “More staff, Higher wages”, “Seniors Lives Matter”, “People Before Profits” and “Nationalize Long Term Care” at the event sponsored by Socialist Action. Many participants held hand-made signs. A stiff breeze animated SA red flags and union ensigns.

In separate statements, the Ontario Health Coalition demanded that the Canadian military intervene in the crisis-racked facilities, and Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath called on the Minister of Long Term Care, Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, to resign. In the meantime, Conservative Premier Doug Ford appointed to the Order of Ontario former Tory Premier Mike Harris. Harris slashed health, education and welfare spending in the 1990s, and currently is a top executive at Chartwell.

In addition to Corey David, members of the Service Employees’ International Union (which represents staff at Tendercare), the Ontario Public Service Employees’ Union, former NDP MPP Cheri Dinovo of the United Church of Canada, and relatives of patients at Tendercare and other LTC centres spoke to the rally. Crews from CTV, CBC, CityPulse24 and CITY-TV interviewed participants and broadcast segments of the event to an audience of millions. ■

A LABOUR AGENDA FOR THE SECOND TERM OF THE BC NDP



photo: BC NDP (flickr)

The BC NDP won a thrilling and substantial victory on October 24 in BC. In comparison to the opposition parties, the victory was the best result for BC workers. The Liberal Party is a party of the mine and forestry corporations, the oil cartel and the banks. The Green Party is a conservative, middle-class party with a futile program of green capitalism, suspicion towards labour and a not well-concealed hostility toward the working class or even a class analysis.

The question many are now asking is this: "Will John Horgan and the NDP have the courage and vision to use such a mandate to do what is desperately needed, or will they simply try to patch up the abscesses of a system that puts profit before people and billionaires before everything else.

The capitalists are destroying the biosphere, causing and mismanaging pandemics, causing endless war, spiraling waste on the escalating arms race, endless hunger, disease and suffering as the gulf

Gary Porter is the Socialist Caucus candidate for NDP Treasurer

between desperate poverty and obscene wealth yawns into a chasm from which there is no recovery under capitalism

Reform is a completely unrealistic approach, a way of easing liberal consciences while the exploiters ruin billions of lives and ultimately the planet. It is a betrayal of the possibilities for a new world, a socialist world, of true solutions to the terrible inflictions of capitalism on humanity and the planet

The BC NDP Socialist Caucus proposes a program of solutions, and not patches or temporary reforms. Our proposals aim towards a publicly-owned and democratically-controlled economy in which workers hold the power and bosses have no role - a path towards socialism.

1. FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE - Cancel the big oil and gas projects. Cancel the Site C Albatross. Nationalize the fossil fuel cartel

and the big banks who support them for zero proceeds. Shut them down ASAP and clean up the mess. Build a public green energy grid in consultation with the workers and Indigenous Peoples of BC and under their control.

2. FULL REFUNDING FOR HEALTH AND EDUCATION - End wait times, increase investment in key diagnostic and therapeutic equipment. Pharmacare now, as well as dental care, eye care and mental health care. Fund free post-secondary education, and cancel student debt.

3. FULL SOVEREIGNTY TO INDIGENOUS NATIONS - get the cops off Indigenous lands, for good, full restitution and compensation for stolen lands and genocidal policies.

4. MASS PUBLICLY BUILT AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL - Use union labour for safe standards and quality work. No tenant evictions. Enforce building standards proactively in rental housing.

5. DEFUND, DISARM AND DISBAND RACIST COP ARMIES - No more war equipment to be used against working people. Throw the racist RCMP out of BC.

6. MASS FREE, FREQUENT PUBLIC TRANSIT BOTH INTRA URBAN AND INTER URBAN - Rapidly reduce traffic pollution and congestion and ensure freedom of movement as a human right.

7. SAFETY FIRST, FULL PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT - No rushing back to work or school. Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work with no loss in pay.

8. END THE GIG ECONOMY - End fake contract work and piece work. Amend labour laws so that all workers are protected by union rights, unemployment insurance, sick leave, fair wages and vacations.

9. END MONOPOLY RULE - Nationalize

the forestry mining and oil industries, and the banks who finance them. Run them to serve public needs, not private profit. Workers' control of operations.

10. FULL UNION RIGHTS - No required vote when a majority have signed union cards. \$16 per hour minimum wage escalated by inflation. This is equal to \$15 per hour when the Horgan government was elected. Outlaw scabs.

11. FULL NDP GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGEMENT AND ASSISTANCE TO ORGANIZE THE UNORGANIZED - The essential workers, the gig workers, the warehousing and delivery workers, the retail and service workers. This is the kind of support capitalist parties give to big capitalist companies all the time. Why should a labour party not support labour? ■

Drug Decriminalization a Necessary Measure in Combatting Opioid Crisis

Written by Megan Aiken, PhD candidate at the University of Alberta

Throughout the 2010s, the opioid crisis came to the forefront of the public agenda. Between January 2016 and June 2020, more than 17,500 Canadians died from opioid overdose.

While deaths plateaued under the spotlight, the COVID-19 pandemic has diverted attention away, and now deaths are rising once more. In order to truly combat the crisis, the problem needs to be addressed at its root: criminalization.

For over a decade, ways to control this crisis have existed to varying degrees of importance across party lines. These ideas tended to highlight a dichotomy where mitigating opioid-related deaths demanded more urgent action for some groups of people more than others. Rooted in social norms of a bygone era, this dichotomy has been fostered through over 100 years of prohibition, and determines acceptable opioid consumption based on form, use, and procurement of the substance.

In 1908, opium became the first drug recreationally prohibited. Rather than a measure to curb drug use, it was a racist and classist law with the goal of controlling immigration and appeasing the white-settler working class. However, opium in more socially-acceptable forms could still be purchased legally through a pharmacist. Criminalization created two classes of drug user. Acceptable users were those who were able to legally obtain the drug, but if they developed addiction, they would become part of the addict, illicit-user class that was contributing to the drug evil plaguing Canadian society.

“Over the past decade, sentiment has begun to favour decriminalization with many groups, including law enforcement associations and health policy bodies, agreeing that criminalization has been a socially and economically costly failure. At this point the only thing missing is political will.”



By the mid-20th century, Canada had some of the strictest anti-drug laws in the developed world. Any kind of ‘war on drugs’ was present in Canada long before Brian Mulroney’s 1986 declaration.

In the late 1990s, there were two growing crises that laid bare the contradiction inherent in licit versus illicit drugs laws: the HIV/AIDS crisis (in which intravenous drug users were doubly-stigmatized through anti-drug panic and HIV/AIDS prejudice) as well as post-1996 lax prescribing of opiate narcotics and the aggressive marketing campaign of OxyContin.

Yet the federal government continued separating the two into separate policy problems. In fact, the Mulroney to Harper years followed the same logic on drug policy despite changes in party and leadership.

On the licit side, cuts to health transfers that began in the Jean Chrétien years were made worse when Stephen Harper took power in 2006, leading to doctor shortages, long wait times, and unaffordable treatments. Pharmaceutical regulators also began tightening prescribing guidelines, a consequence of which was that those made dependent on painkillers suddenly found themselves in the class of drug user that was long-perceived as suffering from a moral failing.

On the illicit side, the Chretien government’s Controlled Drugs and Substances Act paved the way for a significant expansion of the prohibition regime. During the Harper era, enforcement was significantly broadened through the Safe Streets and Communities Act, resulting in mandatory minimum sentences for possession of narcotics (when linked to an aggravating factor), and increased rates of opioid addiction throughout



Canada’s prison system.

For over a quarter-century, scholars and activists contended that legislation on illicit drugs, like opioids, is a criminal law solution to a public health problem. At the same time, the Senate Special Committee on Illicit Drugs has regularly heard testimony that drug prohibition is a failed policy that, really, has not usually been about drugs as much as the social norms associated with them. The Le Dain Commission even recommended decriminalization in 1973! So why has there not been transformative change?

Until widespread over-prescription of OxyContin and other painkillers, there was historically a clear distinction between good and bad drug users. Before socially acceptable folks began dying, the federal government was arguably not concerned about stopping opioid-related mortality. In fact, before 2016 there was no publicly available national monitoring of overdose deaths.

2016-2019 were golden years of rhetorical and incremental federal action on the opioid crisis. Canada legalized

marijuana! Maybe the opioid crisis could finally be addressed! Instead, during this time federal government policy has been to offload most decisions, like managing safe consumption sites, onto the provinces and municipalities. This has resulted in nationwide inconsistencies in access to treatment and care.

Of course, COVID-19 is a major problem that needs to be dealt with – but overdose deaths are on the rise again. Safe consumption sites are being closed based on ideological principle (see: the 2020 report from the Government of Alberta called Impact: A Socio-Economic Review of Supervised Consumption Sites in Alberta).

Interest began to wane before the pandemic, though. During the 2019 federal election, the crisis was a budget problem in the Liberal platform, a prison problem in the Conservative platform, and not-a-problem in the BQ platform.

The NDP and Green Party made similar commitments to directly address the crisis, yet most other political issues were deemed more pressing. Since re-election, the Liberal government

has repeatedly placated calls for action through band-aid measures and deferral to other levels of government.

Combatting the opioid crisis fundamentally requires a social reframing of how drugs are perceived, but this can’t happen through a single policy decision. Decriminalization would be an institutional measure to begin the process of unraveling decades of normative prejudices, and would put an end to a value-distinction based on what kind of drug user someone is. Portugal decriminalized in 2001 and now devotes a significant amount of funding toward health and social services. Closer to home, Oregon voted to decriminalize in December 2020. It can be done successfully!

Over the past decade, sentiment has begun to favour decriminalization with many groups, including law enforcement associations and health policy bodies, agreeing that criminalization has been a socially and economically costly failure. At this point the only thing missing is political will. ■

New NB NDP Interim Leader, Chris Thompson, Urges Turn to the Left for the Party

BY CHRIS WANAMAKER

If Chris Thompson could wave a magic wand and create just one change in New Brunswick, it would be to nationalize the large monopolies that exert so much power over the province's economy.

The new Interim Leader of the NB NDP and a member of the NB NDP Socialist Caucus, Thompson would like to see more corporations transform into worker-run enterprises. In such an arrangement, workers would discuss company matters and vote on them. It would be a radical change from the present economic system, in which CEOs and board members typically manage corporations with their own interests in mind.

Thompson also says he would like to see more small business, worker-owned co-operatives such as gas stations and grocery stores. However, he sees this as just one change of many possible ones, changes that would not necessarily come from him.

He wants to bring everybody into the party together, he says, including socialists, Indigenous people, women, LGBTQ+ members, environmentalists, labour, Francophones and seniors. Thompson believes that such a united front could invigorate the party.

"Together we will form a coalition. As much as we want it so, Labour isn't going to be enough to overthrow the Liberals and Conservatives. An Indigenous party wouldn't be enough. Neither would an Environmentalist party. But if we group

together on the same team, as a large coalition of people who've been left behind saying, 'we have had enough,' we can get everything we want to get done, and more..."

He sees the party as a catalyst for political unrest that will empower New Brunswickers.

"What we need to do as New Brunswick New Democrats is to offer these people a home," he said, referencing those left behind by the current political/economic system. "We are not to go to these people and say: 'Here is what we think is best for you. Come and vote for us.' We are to say: 'You tell us what is best for you. We are your home now,' and let those people know they will choose what happens in their new home."

He hopes tens of thousands of New Brunswickers will start to stand up and create a political party they believe in and the futures they want to see, so as to create a political revolution.

"I think the system is so fragile here – the Irvings and McCains are so used to getting what they want - there is a chance that a motivated group of people could breeze into the legislature with enough votes, without them being able to do a darn thing about it." He says he already notices signs of change.

"We have to ask ourselves, why do we see so many young, energetic people joining the party who have really good points of view, who seem to have life experience you wouldn't expect them to have? Just seeing that alone tells me there could be a political revolution."

The recent protests in New Brunswick's major cities, Saint John, Fredericton and Moncton suggest that a groundswell of opposition could be building, adds Thompson. Those protests have included large Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the midst of the pandemic, as well as protests against out-of-control rents, climate change, glyphosate, fracking, the closure of a Clinic 554, sexual violence on campuses, the visit of Alberta Conservative Leader Jason Kenney, the threat of U.S. war on Iran, and Israel's proposal to annex parts of the West Bank.

The 25 year old's political views have evolved from five years ago when he supported federal Liberal candidate Matt DeCoursey.

"I was excited at that time about things like electoral reform," he said. "DeCoursey is a nice guy and I like him, but he didn't do anything for us. He didn't do anything at all. We're in exactly the same situation we were in before, if not worse."

Uniting the left and giving ordinary people a voice plus a way to become more active politically could spark a political turnaround in the province, Thompson says.

"We need to bring people together and make these high energy campaigns around every single seat the Liberals and Conservatives sit in. And we are going to take them over, because they are not doing what the people need them to do."

The New Brunswick NDP acclaimed Thompson as interim leader for December 12, 2020. ■



“

The new Interim Leader of the New Brunswick NDP and member of the NDP Socialist Caucus, Thompson would like to see more corporations transform into worker-run enterprises. In such an arrangement, workers would discuss company matters and vote on them.

”

Does it make sense for a nation of latte servers to worship an arch capitalist like Jeff Bezos?

Imagine a world of no rights, low wages and zero-hour contracts, without proper compensation, or care for injuries. Imagine such a world with excellent PR, in which workers' problems are brushed aside and yet the workplace itself is called a "fulfillment" centre. That world is fast approaching.

Wealth inequality was bad even before COVID 19 appeared on the scene, but since the pandemic began, things have worsened considerably. Sometimes the causes of increased concentration are obvious. There is the case of Amazon's making a killing off lockdowns and social distancing. There's the growing demand for online shopping and video streaming, which

gas resources. The Amazon CEO's wealth also exceeds the GDP of Iceland, Luxembourg, and Sri Lanka combined, according to the World Bank data."

And according to an article by NPR, his net worth is \$182 billion. I don't mean to pick on Bezos himself, and since he claims to be retiring, I should point out that the issue is structural, not personal. Still, Bezos is a powerful symbol of a world of increasing exploitation. As one activist wrote on her sign during a protest for better working conditions: "Amazon made \$74 billion while we risk our lives."

"Well, what's the big deal?" people sometimes ask me in arguments online. "Why should we care? There has always been income inequality and there always will be." The issue is

CORPORATE CONCENTRATION AND GROWING INEQUALITY UNDER COVID

are a perfect fit during a pandemic. And now that we have social distancing, things like automated tellers don't seem so bad.

In some cases, local policies have played a role, like the decision by the Ontario government to allow big box stores to stay open while insisting that smaller retailers aren't essential. Other factors are the effects of new requirements involving personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitary procedures and how new policies are being enacted. A larger store will have more resources to bring in broad policies like frequent cleaning than would smaller ones. And small businesses that have small profit margins are often less able to weather the stop and start effects of pandemic policy.

According to the OECD website: "COVID-19 has dramatically disrupted the [retail] sector, with the shock differing massively between brick-and-mortar versus online shops, essential versus non-essential stores, and small versus large retailers."

The difference between small and large, between rich and poor, is growing. But how big is too big? I asked Google how rich Jeff Bezos was and it told me that: "Bezos' fortune is comparable to the GDPs of entire countries. His net worth is greater than the GDP of Qatar, a country rich in oil and natural



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

that extreme inequality has side effects we want to avoid. Income and wealth inequality means fewer good jobs and unequal treatment for average members of society.

People talk about how some of us are "fungible" while others aren't. This has implications for how we live our lives, for the kind of jobs we'll be able to find, and for our long-term prospects and those of our children. Inequality means some of us are listened to and heeded, and some are not.

Noam Chomsky talks about the policies that the vast majority support versus the ones we get. The vast majority of people support free tuition and public health care. But the policies that are popular among elites are what we get: tax cuts for the rich and job cuts for the rest of us.

All of this is related to growing inequality and our economic status. Some of us are valued more while others are valued less. It's an undemocratic trend. In everyday life, it means some of us get to stay home, while others are on the "front lines."

MONOPOLY



Grocery store clerks are now risking their health, and in some cases their lives – and the lives of family members, to serve customers.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we were grateful to these brave souls. And many of us tried to thank them. In some cases, they were offered an emergency raise for this work. But in most cases, the appreciation was largely symbolic. There were events where the public would be filmed clapping for these "heroes," but few were willing to campaign to raise their salaries permanently. There's a thinness or lack of depth to the support among what Barbara Ehrenreich calls the "professional managerial class".

Wealth inequality is not only undemocratic, it's self-reinforcing. The more wealth inequality there is, the more there will be. People with excess wealth donate to political campaigns and make laws that

favour their own financial interests at the expense of the public good.

What corporations like Amazon do is exert downward pressure on wages and working conditions everywhere in the

economy. An undercover report about Amazon said that its workers, because they were allowed very few bathroom breaks, were urinating in bottles to keep up with the breakneck company schedule.

Ultimately, the issue of inequality is related to another question: what kind of society do we want to live in? An unequal society is one where people have to struggle for basic considerations like workplace safety and the right to feed themselves and their families.

Solutions to massive inequality include progressive taxation, breaking up the big monopolies, a guaranteed annual income, and in some cases, public ownership of businesses and industries that are deemed to be essential. These are policies that have been enacted successfully in the past, and it's time to bring them back again, especially in a post-COVID-19 world. ■

"Wealth inequality is not only undemocratic, it's self-reinforcing. The more wealth inequality there is, the more there will be. People with excess wealth donate to political campaigns and make laws that favour their own financial interests at the expense of the public good."

INTERVIEW WITH NDP MP LEAH GAZAN

By Marianne Cerilli

Marianne Cerilli - You are making an impact, Ms. Gazan. You have been named one Canada's influencers by McLean's Magazine, changing the way people think.



Leah Gazan - I've been a long-time advocate. I have a bold agenda and I've been honest about that. It's community driven with a vision of a grassroots party. The roots of the CCF and the NDP are very much in line with my approach and my politics. I want to bring back the party to our roots. JS Woodsworth represented this riding, and I'm honored to now represent Winnipeg Centre.

I come from family committed to social justice and peace. My father actually lost a teaching job for wearing a peace button at school.

MC - What are some of the dominant narratives, or thinking patterns that you would like to change?

LG - I base my decisions on human rights. We need to make sure that we are following human rights and uplifting the voices that are on the ground at the grassroots. I believe in democracy and I know where I stand in advocating for the rights of Indigenous people. Being an Indigenous person in Parliament, I realize it is a violent, colonial place where they drafted and passed the Indian Act. And every day I hear the rights of Indigenous Peoples up for debate.

MC - Let's discuss your legislative agenda. In your nomination you got people excited about a climate justice agenda, UNDRIP, addressing poverty? What do you want to achieve?

LG - It is about our Charter, which says people have the right to live in dignity and security of the person. If we followed the law in Canada, no one would be homeless or living in poverty, and everyone would have safe water and food security. The Liberals voted down the motion on the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal for First Nations.

MC - There is some discussion about how to link green jobs with the basic income

agenda. How do you view that? It is smart to link it the COVID benefit and green transition to a permanent benefit?

LG - I think it's great to frame the basic income as part of a just recovery with respect to workers and livable incomes. If we want to transition people out of the tar sands, they need a livable income. Basic income is about reinvesting and acknowledging that poverty is becoming worse and leaving people further behind. I think it's disgusting that Amazon is making gross amounts of profits during COVID. We know that every dollar invested in people the goes back in the economy. We know there is a lot of first-time homelessness due to COVID.

"I'm excited to see a strong Left in our party and a voice that continues to be outspoken... I am interested in deconstructing systems that have been destroying our earth, and oppressive to the benefit of some and the detriment of many."

MC - What about your agenda in your riding? You have one of the lowest-income and culturally diverse ridings in Canada. It also includes downtown Winnipeg and some very high-income areas, and land-marks like the Forks. What are your priorities in your riding?

LG - I love Winnipeg Centre. I love the diversity. There is a lot of solidarity to fight for social justice, and even people who have higher incomes are progressive and value human rights. The big issue is housing. The NDP pushed to get the \$12.5 million from the federal government for housing. It's a drop in the bucket, but a start. I also worked hard with the community groups to get the 24/7 safe space up and running.

Also, even though we are not in a jurisdiction that is building pipelines, we need to move on a bold climate agenda, which it is important to people in the riding. I'm proud to say people are global in their thinking in Winnipeg Centre, and also concerned about Indigenous issues.

MC - What about the NDP? You define yourself and your politics as socialist, the

NDP often use the term social democrat. Is there a difference? How do you see your role or your challenge in the NDP?

LG - I don't see myself and my job as two separate things. I have a clear sense of values. I wanted to be clear of what my bottom lines are to support a policy. Does it support: 1 - climate targets. 2 - Indigenous rights. 3- human rights in general. 4 - the rule of law. If I can't answer yes to all those, then I can't support it. But let's look at what is radical: I think bailing out pipelines and trampling on human rights are radical. Abiding by the law and upholding human rights aren't. A lot of what we're proposing isn't either.

MC - What about the Greens? How do you distinguish the NDP from them, and how do we distinguish ourselves from them?

LG - They've been called Conservatives with composters. They are bold on climate but not really on social justice. You never know what you are going to get from a Green. Some are progressive, some not. Look at their proposal on guaranteed annual income. It isn't livable and would replace much of the social safety net. This would land more people into poverty.

MC - Thanks for the interview. Any other things you would like the members of the Socialist Caucus and readers of Turn Left to know about you, your politics, and your agenda?

LG - I'm excited to see a strong Left in our party and a voice that continues to be outspoken. In any team, you need people who get things done and you need people who have a vision for a better way. You need both. I am not interested in keeping the hamster wheel spinning. I am interested in deconstructing systems that have been destroying our earth, and oppressive to the benefit of some and the detriment of many.

Marianne Cerilli is a life-long New Democrat and three term NDP MLA in Manitoba. She is a health educator, and CD aficionado with Marianne Cerilli - Change Agent Community Development for Health, Sustainability, Peace.

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Pensions and Poverty

It is unacceptable for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) to ask the federal government to halt pension premium increases for their employees in 2021. This would be equivalent to denying necessary income for working people who are bearing the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic and would be especially hard on seniors, who rely on improvements to their Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) for a comfortable retirement.

Too many of Canada's senior citizens live in poverty. Thousands are in nursing homes where all of their miniscule CPP and Old Age Security benefits go towards paying for their care. These homes are not Shangri-La; poor residents often suffer unpleasant living conditions, poor diets and lack of proper health care. The Covid-19 pandemic has accentuated these harsh conditions.

A necessary method to reduce poverty amongst senior citizens is to improve pension benefits. In 2016, the federal government improved upon the CPP with Bill C-26, an improvement that the Canadian Labour Congress had sought for over a decade. While this was a welcome victory, there is still a great deal that needs to be done.

Unfortunately, the CFIB is opposed to increasing pension rates this year. Their claim that "employers and employees will see their basic CPP premiums rise by 3.8 per cent in 2021" is misleading. This does not take into account that the increase will be 3.8 per cent of the current premium, which is a measly 4.45 per cent.

This will lead to increases of less than two dollars a week for someone earning \$50,000 a year. CFIB president Dan Kelly's insistence that increasing pension rates is a tax on workers is not true; employees do not lose anything as this money is tucked away for their retirement and matched by their employer.



John Orrett is an activist with the NDP Socialist Caucus

Matching contribution rates are expected to rise gradually from 4.95 per cent to 5.95 of eligible earned income between 2019 and 2023. The yearly maximum pension earnings are also expected to rise to capture more of the earnings of Canadians with average

incomes. To freeze these increases is to take money out of the hands of the workers.

The contributions go to a defined pension backed by the CPP. This is a pay increase for workers, not a tax. Employers must match every penny that an individual puts into their retirement savings. Over time this will allow for the CPP replacement income to go from the pitiful and inadequate 25 per cent to over 33 per cent. While this still falls drastically short of the retirement income that most seniors would need to retire in dignity, it is a step in the right direction.

While the CFIB is attempting to curb pension increases, the independent businesses that the CFIB represents will receive millions of dollars of taxpayer-funded government subsidies directly into their pockets. They are more than willing to accept billions from the government and yet they become penny pinchers when their employees' wellbeing is at stake.

This attempt to deny the already meagre increases to CCP premiums should not sit well with working Canadians. The CFIB's request to freeze pension increases should not be accepted by the federal government and it should not be accepted by the working class. ■



Abolish the Governor General and the Monarchy, Too

By Barry Weisleder

The resignation, on January 21, of Governor General and former astronaut Julie Payette, has the Canadian establishment in a tizzy. Her sudden exit comes in the wake of a damning report that found her and her top aide responsible for workplace harassment at Rideau Hall.

What are we to make of this situation? The mainstream media and opposition parties are fixated on the failure of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to properly vet, in 2017, his evidently uncongenial appointee. But this imbroglio is pregnant with another possibility.

Why not abolish the GG, as well as the monarchy that the office so dutifully represents? Consider this. Ottawa spent over \$50 million (including Payette's salary of \$300,000) on the office in 2018. That is to say nothing of the cost borne by each province to maintain a resident lieutenant

governor who performs the same pointless ceremonial functions.

What price reactionary protocol? It's not hard to think of many things on which better to spend the money. How about housing the homeless, or vaccinating front line workers and the elderly?

Julie Payette does not admit to any wrongdoing, although scores of her public service employees beg to differ. She reduced many to tears on a daily basis. Arrogance and a rarefied sense of entitlement seem to go with jobs at the top of the capitalist state. Nonetheless, it's good to see some fruit of the generations of mass protests against elitism, sexism and racism: intolerance of toxicity in the workplace – when it is doggedly exposed.

"It doesn't serve a great purpose now that the governor general has resigned to ascribe blame to individuals," Queen's Privy Council President Dominic LeBlanc told CBC. Is this to save Payette, Trudeau, or the whole anachronistic setup?

Trudeau said that Richard

Wagner, the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, will fulfil the duties of the governor general on an interim basis, and that a recommendation on a permanent replacement will be made to Queen Elizabeth "in due course."

Wouldn't it be supremely better simply to abolish the Governor General position, terminate the presence on Turtle Island of the oppressive, blood-soaked British monarchy, and while we're at it, dispense with the appointed Senate? Remember that the Upper Chamber was created in 1867 to protect the men of property. Canada's first prime minister, John A. MacDonald, put it this way: "The rights of the minority must be protected, and the rich are always fewer in number than the poor." (Confederation, Joseph Pope, 1895)

Though labour bureaucrats and NDP parliamentarians are loath even to ponder it, the working class, when it takes charge, will surely sweep aside the feudal remnants and all the parasites clinging to this malignant system. ■



On October 2, 2020, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the resting place of one of India’s most popular reformist leaders and its second prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. There, Modi repeated Shastri’s now iconic phrase “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan,” (Hail the soldier, hail the farmer), first invoked during the 1965 war with Pakistan. Now, just two months after publicly ‘hailing’ the farmers, the Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government is in a showdown with them.

Farmers in India have been battling poverty and destitution for generations. With liberalization of the economy (implementation of open and free markets) starting in the 80s, farmers have consistently seen a drop in their income and rise in expenses as it relates to the growing usage of fertilizers and seeds produced by multinational corporations like Dupont and Monsanto. Increasing farmers’ distress has led to a suicide crisis in India where many farmers choose to commit suicide just so their families can apply for government benefits.

With these grave issues in the background, the central government had passed three farming ordinances without much debate or deliberation in the parliament. These ordinances, they said, would help farmers increase their business and will simplify the market system in which

Indian farmers sell their produce. But the three farming bills (now laws) have met with intense protests and anger from all over the country as many farmers see them as the final nail in their coffins.

These bills are designed to create a parallel market system to Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMC) or the “Mandi system,” where a minimum support price (MSP), the only lifeline to many poorer farmers, is guaranteed to them, and storage capacity of private firms is regulated by the government.

Farmers’ unions argue that the parallel market system would naturally offer cheaper prices to the buyers, as it will not include taxes charged in the Mandis which would slowly dissolve MSP and would allow private companies to hoard agricultural produce, giving them control over the prices of these goods. Many poor farmers see these neoliberal ordinances as their death warrant, and that is why millions have taken to the streets.

Farmers across India, and mainly from the states of Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting in their regions

“The protesting farmers are now far more pragmatic than they were before. They understand that their fight is not against any single party but against neoliberalism, and they are settling for a long struggle just as the government is using more authoritarian means.”

for months. But after no response from Modi and the central government, they decided to march en mass to the capital.

Ruling elites’ retaliation

Farmers reached the Delhi-Haryana state border on November 27, 2020, just a day after the one-day strike of 250 million workers, one of the largest in history which was nearly ignored by the western and Indian mainstream media. On reaching the state border, they were met with police barricades, water cannons and gas shells – shot at them by the police at the central government’s command.

Modi government’s response to the protests has been atrocious, from several ministers of the BJP calling these farmers “terrorists” and “political agents” to entire news channels dedicated to spreading fake news and government talking points about these protests, which has proven to be depressingly effective; all the while union ministers conducted several meetings with farmers’ leaders to offer non-solutions. It has been a shameful display of divisive politics and deliberate inaction from the Indian government.

On Republic Day – January 26th, celebrated to commemorate the adoption of the Indian constitution, the farmers’ unions decided to organise a tractor rally to New Delhi, the national capital. On that fateful day, a significant section of the participants left earlier than

the scheduled departure time. This section of protestors broke off from the decided route and marched towards the historic Red Fort.

Vast majority of the protestors stuck to the original path, continuing their rally peacefully and were welcomed with dance, music, and food by the Delhi citizenry, but only the fringe section made all the news. Videos of these protestors scaling the Red Fort and pushing through the police barricades were shown nonstop on Mainstream media as if to confirm the theory of “agitators, not farmers.”

None of the newspapers or the TV channels would blame the government for ignoring the farmers’ plight for months or their own reprehensible conduct, for frustrating the farmers to such an extent that a portion of the protestors inevitably ended up doing something regrettable.

Death and Resurrection

In the aftermath of the Republic

Day fiasco, it seemed that the ruling party had won and most of the farmers sensing that the Indian population outside of the capital was losing sympathy for them, decided to leave for their hometowns and villages.

The movement seemed dead even to the socialist organisers and the farmers’ union leaders. The government even dispatched the Delhi Police Force to help evacuate the state borders - and then something unexpected happened.

On the night of January 27, Demoralized and exhausted, Rakesh Tikait, a respected farmers’ leader, made an emotional appeal to all the farmers on national television, and it worked! The very next day, protestors returned and in larger numbers than before. The movement had been resurrected.

A Movement Build to Last

The protesting farmers are now far more pragmatic than they were before. They understand that their fight is not against any single party but against

neoliberalism, and they are settling for a long struggle just as the government is using more authoritarian means.

Farmers’ unions are organising the protests in a way that only a few people from each village join. Participants go home after some weeks, and others from their villages take their place. Protesters arrive with all the supplies they need for a long stay, including makeshift homes, cooking appliances, food supply, blankets, mattresses, etc. There is a sense of camaraderie in the air. Every night farmers prepare food for thousands of people. Their local supporters, even opponents, are invited to stay and dine with them.

To counter the biased news coverage they have been receiving, farmers have started their own newspaper and social media accounts to communicate with the people directly. There are regular screenings of revolutionary movies at night and volunteers have also built several libraries where books about workers’ and farmers’ struggle are available. ■



photo: Felton Davis (flickr)

Why are Indian Farmers Protesting?

CANADIAN AID TO YEMEN IS A HUMANITARIAN BAND-AID



photo: EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (flickr)

Written by Yves Engler

Too often international “aid” seems to be like the rich and powerful buying “indulgences” to atone for their sins in medieval times. Certainly it is commonly doled out to gloss over global inequities. It’s definitely a tool Ottawa employs to present itself as generous while sustaining unequal corporate and imperial power structures that benefit Canada.

At a recent donor meeting the Canadian government pledged \$70 million for Yemen. To explain the donation Minister of International Development Karina Gould declared, “Yemen is undergoing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, and its people deserve decisive action. Their suffering must end, and their rights and dignity must be protected. We must do everything possible to make this happen.”

But Gould’s “everything

possible” doesn’t include stopping Canada from fueling a six-year-old Saudi-led war that has left over 100,000 Yemenis dead. In response to the international development minister’s announcement World Beyond War Canada’s Rachel Small tweeted, “genuinely floored by the hypocrisy. \$295 million in aid to Yemen since 2015 is a drop in the bucket compared to \$6 billion in weapons Canada exported to Saudi Arabia in the same period. As Karina Gould knows the most important action needed for Yemen is for Canada to stop arming Saudi Arabia.”

According to Statistics Canada data for January, Canadian armoured vehicle sales reached a whopping \$487 million, the largest ever monthly total. Canada also exported \$4.8 million worth of “arms and ammunition” to the Saudis in January. Additionally, Montreal-based flight simulator company CAE has trained Saudi pilots in numerous locales. “Under Trudeau, Canada Is Saudi Arabia’s Most Dedicated Gunrunner”, explains a recent article by Kelsey Gallagher of Project Ploughshares.

In a sign of the depraved state of Liberal discourse, Canada’s ambassador to the UN, Bob Rae, simply denies it all. He recently claimed, “we don’t sell arms to any of the parties to the conflict” in Yemen while six months ago Rae responded to a UN report that documented Canada’s role in fueling the conflict by labeling Canadian exported armoured vehicles “jeeps”. “It’s not what you’d call a weapon,” he said.

Alongside the weapon deliveries, the Liberals have mostly ignored Saudi violence in Yemen. They have rarely criticized Saudi bombing and when they have it has been in polite terms.

At best Canada’s aid to Yemen is a bandage on a humanitarian catastrophe spurred by a war Ottawa fuels.

A similar dynamic is at play with Canadian aid for international COVID-19 support. In December Canada put up \$485 million to help impoverished nations access vaccines. But Ottawa has hoarded vaccines, having amassed enough to inoculate the entire Canadian population five times

over. More troublingly, the government has refused to support a World Trade Organization (WTO) proposal calling for a temporary waiver of certain rules on intellectual property rights to allow poor countries to produce COVID-19 vaccines.

The World Health Organization and over 100 countries back the “Waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the Prevention, Containment and Treatment of COVID-19”. Canada and a number of other rich countries are refusing to support an initiative opposed by Big Pharma. Under mounting pressure over the five-month-old proposal, the Trudeau government now denies it opposes the patent

waiver, claiming it simply wants more information about the effectiveness of the proposal. In the meantime, the initiative has been repeatedly put off and much of the Global South has little access to COVID vaccines.

Canada’s COVID donation masks Ottawa’s unwillingness to challenge Big Pharma and the broader intellectual property rights lobby.

Individual aid projects are often helpful (though many are not). Still, progressives shouldn’t spend time

calling for more aid. In a just world, transfer payments

from wealthier regions to poorer ones would smooth out inequities. But, in the here and now it’s important to be

“Progressives should challenge corporate and imperial power structures... We need social movements and political parties to challenge the arms economy and upward flow of wealth spurred by intellectual property rights accords and other forms of exploitation.”

cautious about feeding ‘more Canada’ ideology that enables destructive, interventionist, policies.

Rather than pushing for more aid, progressives should challenge corporate and imperial power structures. In this vein, activists recently delivered a letter to the PMO signed by 68 groups, representing one million Canadians, demanding an end to arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Similarly, dozens of groups sent a letter to Trudeau last week calling on Canada to support a WTO waiver for COVID vaccines.

Beyond specific campaigns, we need social movements and political parties to challenge the arms economy and upward flow of wealth spurred by intellectual property rights accords and other forms of exploitation. In brief we need masses of Canadians questioning an unjust status quo.

We need to build a peaceful, fair world where aid is given because we are all our sisters’ keepers. ■