

Turn Left Virez à gauche

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

NDP  NPD



Winter/
hiver 2022



LATE CAPITALISM

Booms, Bubbles and the Coming Bust
of Housing Markets in Canada

After nearly four years of the most regressive, incompetent and corrupt Ontario government in decades, opinion polls show the Doug Ford Conservatives leading, and the New Democratic Party mired in third place, well behind the Liberals, on the eve of the June 2 provincial election. How is this possible? Only exceptionally weak NDP policy and leadership can account for this disturbing situation. It's certainly not a function of popular satisfaction with the status quo.

Before the onset of the current third wave of the pandemic, the economy was slowly emerging from depression. Suddenly, millions of workers found themselves without emergency benefits, without employment insurance, and still without extended paid sick leave. Giant corporations, including retail chains, big pharma, telecoms and banks, have reaped billions of dollars in profit over the past two years.

ened strike action and made gains. Thousands of public sector workers went on strike in New Brunswick to blunt the attacks of the Higgs-Tory regime. Congratulations to Canada Goose employees in Winnipeg who won union recognition. Even non-union workers are doing better, posting increases of 9 per cent over the past two years, according to Statistics Canada.

The rank and file are restless. That was evident in substantial support for the radical Workers' Action Movement candidates for executive at recent conventions of the Ontario Federation of Labour in early November and at the Canadian Labour Congress in June 2021.

A strike wave is underway in the United States. Teamsters for a Democratic Union won control of the giant North American Teamsters' Union in a ground-breaking election. Canadian economist David Card won the Nobel Prize in economics for showing that a rise in the minimum wage does NOT reduce employment. In other words,

PRESS ONTARIO NDP TO FIGHT FOR A WORKERS' AGENDA

Not only do they pay minimal taxes -- they derive huge subsidies from the government. The priority of the bosses remains to build super-highways, not homes; to fund pipelines, police and the military, not provide clean water on Indigenous lands; to extend licenses for private profit-gouging Long Term Care firms rather than to extend non-profit quality public health care to include seniors, medical drugs and mental health.

Inequality is rising, stoked by the flames of inflation. Staggering increases in the cost of food, fuel and rent are a cause of stress that is taking a high toll, especially on young workers who see no future for themselves, or for the natural environment, under the capitalist system.

But there are signs of growing resistance. Increasing strike activity indicates organized labour is emboldened at a time of staff shortages in some sectors. In September there were 44 work stoppages, the most in one month since 2018. Casino workers in Belleville negotiated a 13 per cent pay increase over 3 years. Thousands of workers at a Cargill meat packing plant in Alberta threat-

Barry Weisleder is the NDP Socialist Caucus candidate for Vice President

'Dare to struggle, dare to win!'

But how daring, how bold has the NDP leadership been?

The federal election on September 20 was a sad-denying milepost along the wrong road. While the NDP is a party based on working class institutions, with trade unions represented directly at NDP conventions, it is burdened by a right wing, pro-capitalist, undemocratic leadership. More undemocratic than ever, the NDP brass increasingly hand-picks candidates without holding a local nomination meeting. This is done often to exclude socialist contenders. NDP officials spent most of the party's federal campaign money on the Leader's tour and TV ads, over half of an unprecedented treasure chest of \$25 million.

The federal Leader failed to draw the lessons of

Canadian imperialist crimes in Afghanistan, Libya and Haiti. He is loyal to NATO, silent on Venezuela, condones the Zionist Apartheid state, and seeks a more rabidly anti-China and anti-Russia policy. Jagmeet Singh sparred with Justin Trudeau over housing prices, but offered no effective plan to spur housing supply. Singh's demand for a 1 per cent tax on the super-rich wouldn't sustain national childcare, let alone generate mass social housing, free post-secondary education, or an all-service Medicare system, including free medical drugs.

He would cut subsidies to the oil industry, but not reduce the military budget. He declined to denounce the British Columbia NDP John Horgan-led government for calling on the RCMP to arrest pipeline protesters on

Wet'suwet'en territory. Singh's vain attempt to turn his personal 'likeability' into votes clearly didn't work. In any case, a popularity contest, such as the one Trudeau won seven years ago, provides no basis for meaningful change. Sadly, the NDP leadership is dogmatically devoted to petty reform

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of a system in its death throes.

Socialists propose a program to mobilize working people and our natural allies in a series of mass struggles aimed at challenging the capitalist system and ultimately overthrowing the polluters, exploiters and oppressors, and their racist, sexist system in favour of a Workers' Government. A Workers' Government could expropriate the great resources and productive apparatus now owned privately by a few wealthy families.

In Ontario NDP officials are obsessed with electoral preparation. Leader Andrea Horwath has obsessed about the June 2022 provincial election since shortly after the June 2018 election. Thug Ford's cancel-



photo: Mary Crandall



Holistic Healthcare for A Just Recovery from COVID 19

BY DIRKA PROUT

Health care is Ontario's largest budget item and it is rising. How can Ontario effectively manage the rising cost of health care, and create a sustainable system with more equitable and improved health outcomes?



Well, comprehensive public health requires expenditures outside of the health care system. In 1854 England, Dr. John Snow's dedicated contact tracing convinced skeptical public officials to remove the handle of the cholera contaminated Broad Street pump. This effectively stemmed the local outbreak. Yet health officials needed wide implementation of water and wastewater systems by municipal engineers to eradicate cholera epidemics.

Our health care crisis is about three decades in the making. After Conservative Premier Harris made devastating budget cuts in the 1990s, health care spending continued to

fall below the minimum required to meet demand. Coupled with federal underfunding, there are fears that Ontario's public funded health system may be unsustainable. The question is, how can we manage the rising costs in the face of an aging population, inflation, and more expensive medical technology and drugs?

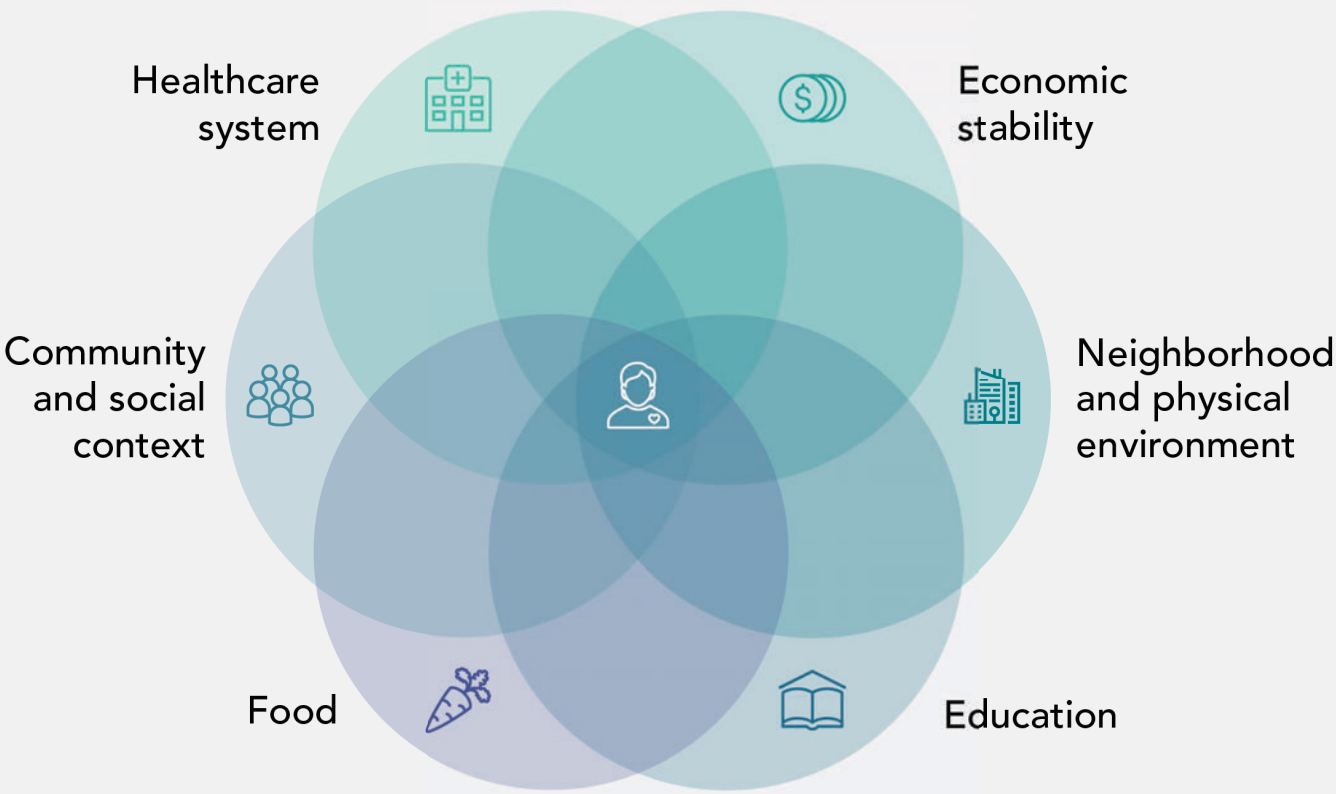
The answer is to adequately fund health care but make supporting investments in the social determinants of health (SDOH). The SDOH are factors that affect health outside the health system. They impact and predict the health of individuals and populations. Four of the most important SDOHs are social services, geographic location, education and housing. Spending in these areas can result in improved health outcomes, decreased demand on the health system and financial savings.

Poverty limits access to healthy food. Food insecure households experience higher rates of major depression and multiple chronic conditions. Within poor families, childhood malnutrition

is a concern as it has a long-term effect on a child's physiological and psychological development. The ONDP's promised food strategy, which promotes "access to healthy food" and strengthens "the resilience of Ontario's food systems" is part of the solution. This should be augmented with a school nutrition program which provides access to healthy food to all children and builds food literacy skills. Provision of universal childcare can also help families free up funds for food purchases.

Persons living in rural areas can have limited health options. Travelling to a hospital or doctor's office can be a challenge due to distance or lack of public transportation. Actions such as restoration of the Northlander passenger rail and improved intercity transportation, as the ONDP has proposed, will improve health care access. Until transportation is improved, expansion of telehealth will be necessary for provision of equitable healthcare to reserves, rural/urban citizens who are disabled, shut-ins or have limited

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH



transportation options. This must be implemented in conjunction with province wide low-cost, reliable broadband, which itself is now being viewed as an essential SDOH.

Research indicates a correlation with health and education. Higher educational attainment brings greater earnings, more secure employment with better working conditions, resulting in healthier individuals. In 2019, the Ford government enacted changes to post-secondary education (PSE) that reduced access to PSE for low-income individuals. In addition to free tuition, the Ontario and federal governments need to commit to adequately funding PSE to provide equitable access and improved education standards.

Neoliberal approaches

to policy making fundamentally conflict with incorporating SDOH. An intersectional approach requires ministries to co-ordinate policy making and implementation. These tasks are impeded at the parliamentary level by our outdated first-past-the-post system that entrenches adversarial behaviour and short-term thinking, rather than cooperation and foresight. It is also rare to have policy discussion on the importance of non-medical and non-lifestyle determinants of health.

To overcome these challenges, we need social democratic governments that are more likely to develop public policies that consider the SDOH. They also work to increase union density, which impacts employment and working conditions, another SDOH. High rates

of unionization reduce wage inequity particularly for women and racialized workers. Unions also secure legislated rights for workers across the board.

The first principle for a Just Recovery from COVID, according to 350.org Canada, is to "Put people's health and wellbeing first, no exceptions." Healthcare funding must be increased and the system expanded to include Pharmacare at least. Then we must produce a sustainable, equitable and accessible system by enacting policies that effectively address the SDOH. ■

Dirka Prout is a Socialist Caucus candidate for the ONDP's Women's Committee and a Member-at-Large of the London North Centre Federal NDP Executive.

When Canada’s Housing Bubble Pops, It Will Cause Misery and Ruin

As recently as ten years ago property speculators were a minority amongst Ontario’s home buyers. Investors now surpass first-time buyers as well as the total number of people moving between homes. According to a recent report, between January and August of last year investors were responsible for a quarter of house purchases in the province.

These speculative investments are, of course, driving up prices. They are also creating major problems for the economy as a whole because the rising cost of housing has increased the amount of private debt held by individuals. Whilst interest rates have remained low this debt has been sustainable. The possibility of hikes now threatens to bring Canada’s housing market crashing down.

The Bank of Canada is warning that a “frenzy of real estate investment,” combined with impossibly high levels of household debt, “could destabilize the economy as rates start to rise.” The central bank’s deputy governor Paul Beaudry suggests that a reckoning is fast approaching because the Bank of Canada now plans to increase interest rates. Beaudry warns that: “A key concern here is that financially stretched households have little breathing room to absorb any disruption to their income. A job loss could force many to drastically cut their spending to keep servicing their debt.”

In the last two decades, home prices have gone up by 375 percent in Canada. These increases have been especially marked in in Toronto and Vancouver, where prices have swelled by 450 and 490 percent respectively. This rise far outstrips any other developed markets in the world. In recent years, an incredible gulf has opened between house prices and real income. Even high-level investment bankers such as David Doyle, head of North American Strategy & Economics at Macquarie Group, have rung alarm bells. “Prices,” according to Doyle, “are totally disconnected from the fundamentals.”

The cause of this instability is the



John Clarke is the Packer Visitor in Social Justice at Toronto’s York University.

commodification of housing, and unimpeded it will lead to further indebtedness on the part of private buyers and threaten millions with economic dislocation. It also drives up rents, forces precarious housing on many, and forces growing numbers of people into homelessness.

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has produced data showing that “rents are going up, pandemic or not.”

Predictably, the threat of eviction hangs over the heads of a huge number of tenants. The Globe recently reported that in Vancouver, the Canadian epicenter of unaffordable housing, 10.5 percent of renter households moved from their previous home because they were evicted. The figures for Toronto and Montreal are 5.8 and 4.2 respectively.

When landlords want to evict tenants, the legal system and its enforcers are only too ready to provide support. During the Easter holidays, landlords removed a Toronto father and his two young children from their home with the assistance of dozens of police officers who stormed into his apartment on Good Friday. This was a day before the Ontario government enacted a province-wide shutdown. As the tenant put it, “there’s no justification to sending twenty-six cruisers to evict a single peaceful man, and his two children. That is inhumane.”

As you would expect, the rise in housing prices has led to a rise in homelessness. In major cities, local authorities, instead of working toward meaningful solutions, have decided to sweep the problem under the rug. Toronto has seen a major increase in homeless encampments, often set up in public parks. The pandemic has increased the visibility of urban destitution. Cities have responded by increasingly resorting to brutal police operations to clear encampments.

At the start of the 1990s, Canada’s governments slashed funding for social

“The cause of this instability is the commodification of housing, and unimpeded it will lead to further indebtedness on the part of private buyers and threaten millions with economic dislocation. To press governments into public housing development, mass social action will be required.”



housing and opened the housing market up to complete domination by private interests. Today, as housing prices and rents skyrocket, and homeless shelters overflow, mainstream public policy is entirely reconciled to the idea that housing must be a commodity.

The Trudeau government has recently made a lot of noise about the need for a housing fix, but while the crisis spins out of control, it appears that the Liberal’s solutions amount to little more than empty talk. In Toronto, the largest city in the country, both left and right members of City Council are wedded to the pro-property developer position that including some “affordable” units in their reckless buildout of upscale housing is a reasonable solution to the crisis.

It’s clear that only a real challenge to the commodification of housing can make a meaningful difference in this situation. In the wake of the dislocations and hardships that were triggered by the pandemic, many politicians have paid lip

service to the need for a “just recovery.” The reality, however, is that any gains that working people make during the period ahead will have to be fought for.

The struggle for housing will require a massive expansion of public housing. The call for public housing will have to be clearly articulated and very specific local demands will have to be put forward. However, to press governments into public housing development, mass social action will be required.

The breakthrough in the fight for union rights in North America took place in the 1930s, when workers occupied the factories in order to press their demands. Under present conditions, a comparable method of advancing the struggle for housing is possible. As investors take over the housing market, it is estimated that 1.3 million homes are sitting empty in Canada.

According to a Toronto lifestyle magazine, the city “has more construction cranes than any city in North America with roughly two thirds of them working on

condos.” This construction represents an astonishing market failure — a staggering sixty-five thousand condo units in the city are thought to be presently unoccupied, serving no other purpose than speculative investment.

The housing crisis requires major social mobilization. The occupation of these empty homes by all the people who the market has displaced would take the challenge of housing beyond the limits of abstract debate and into the realms of real action. It would be a real, grassroots “build back better” initiative.

Canada’s housing market is sick and grossly distorted. It causes tenants to live in constant fear of eviction and ensures that the unhoused sleep on the streets. The subordination of housing needs to profit has created a dangerous bubble that threatens an economic catastrophe. An effective “correction” to this situation could begin with a movement of people on the streets who insist that housing is a human right. ■

The Campaign for Socialism and Democracy in the NDP

The Socialist Caucus is presenting a common team of candidates for Ontario NDP Executive 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.



IAN McNAMARA *
Treasurer

Ian McNamara, 38, is originally from Sudbury and studied at Laurentian and McMaster Universities, earning a BA. He is presently training with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees to become an electrician in the industry. He is a member of the Socialist Caucus Steering Committee.



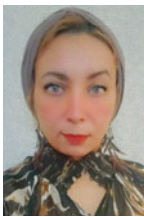
CATHY VARRETTE
Vice President

Cathy Varrette is a member of the Democratic Socialists of Canada and the Socialist Caucus. Her driving force has been her seven-year-old, who has profound needs. Cathy believes it's going to take all of us working together to remove the right wing government, and win a Workers' Agenda.



SHIAM ABDELAAL
Vice President

Shiam is Director of Communications for the Women's Committee of the Ontario NDP. She seeks the Vice President position on a bold, left-wing platform that aims to leave no one behind, including mass construction of rent-geared to income housing, quality childcare and universal Pharmacare.



KIRI VADIVELU
Vice President

Kiri Vadivelu is an undergraduate of Ontario Tech University majoring in Justice and Policy Studies. He was a steward in the United Steelworkers Union and is currently a tenant organizer in Toronto. Kiri demands to build housing for all and nationalize the giant landlords.



BARRY WEISLEDER
Vice President

Barry is a teacher, union organizer, writer, and member of the NDP for over 50 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.



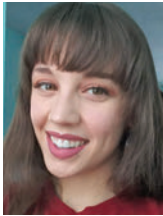
RUBINA CHOWDHURY
Member at Large

Rubina Chowdhury is a member of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. As an activist working for several years, Rubina focuses on opposing gender-based violence. She has worked for marginalized groups in help crisis, harm reduction, and advocacy.



EMILY STEERS
Member at Large

Emily (she/her) is based in Guelph (unceded Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee land). She has been involved in NDP campaigns and recently served as secretary treasurer for PSAC Local 902 for Wilfrid Laurier teaching assistants, a union she helped create in 2019.



JULIUS ARSCOTT
Member at Large

Julius Arscott is a longtime socialist and labour activist, Executive Board Member of Ontario Public Service Employees' Union/SEFPO, and former Workers' Action Movement candidate for President of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).



DIRKA PROUT
Women's Co-Chair

Dirka was the 2019 and 2021 federal candidate for London North Centre, federal Women's Commission Co-Chair 2018-2021 and a past President of London West (federal and provincial). Dirka is eager to build on the great work that the Women's Committee has carried out.



COREY DAVID
Member at Large

Corey is from Scarborough and has worked as a machinist for the past six years. In January 2021, Corey ran for Toronto City Council. He has volunteered for multiple campaigns and is a Provincial Council Rep. for the Scarborough South West EDA.



BOB MacDIARMID
East Region Co-Chair

Bob is a long-time NDP member, workers' rights activist, and labour union member of the ILU, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way, the Carpenters Union and the USWA. He is also a member of the Kingston NDP Riding Association.



TOM BAKER
West Central Reg. Co-Chair

Tom is a semi-retired veterinary epidemiologist and a life-long socialist who has provided leadership in the Hamilton Centre NDP riding for several decades. Tom believes that our party must champion the struggles of working people in our communities.



JUDY KOCH
Dis-Abilities Co-Chair

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
LGBTQ Co-Chair

John Wilson is an outstanding, life-long, leading activist for social justice. He was a member of Ottawa CCF youth beginning in 1954, and delegate to the NDP founding convention in 1961. He is presently a steering committee member of Queer Ontario.



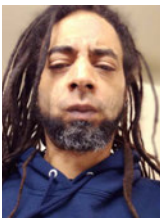
OMAR EL NAGGAR
Youth Co-Chair

Omar is a young socialist with a degree in Political Science from Western University. He serves as the Youth Officer for the federal and provincial London North Centre EDAs. He is a passionate advocate for improved transit and universal access to mental health support.



BEAUVIER DUQUESNAY
Ethnic Liaison Co-Chair

Beauvier duQuesnay (He/Him) was born in Canada to African and French/British immigrants. Beauvier has been educated and employed as a digital media artist, and has participated in volunteering, fundraising, and efforts to strengthen local communities.



SEE 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

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.

"Workers Agenda," continued from page 3

lation of the modest minimum wage hike, his clash with teachers, the death of thousands of seniors in for-profit Long-Term Care, the incidence of cops killing Black and Indigenous people in Toronto, in Peel, and beyond, did not prompt Horwath to join, not even to urge mass action in the streets. Her mantra was unswerving: Defeat the Tories at the next election. In other words, the best use of your time is to go to an NDP election training workshop. Working class aspirations for change cannot prosper on such cynicism. Socialist policies offer a constructive alternative.

In Ontario the housing crisis is severe. Instead of limp proposals for 'inclusionary zoning' to set aside a mere 5 to 10 percent of new condo development in structures with over 100 units for "affordable housing", the working class needs a government prepared to expropriate vacant units in large buildings and create a publicly-owned Housing Construction industry to assemble land and build rent-geared-to-income decent, accessible housing on a mass scale.

In Ontario, instead of passively watching police budgets bulge at the seams, the ONDP should demand the rapid de-funding of police forces by 50 per cent, transferring funds to necessary social services including, but not limited to housing, mental health, and addictions treatment; the

disarming of police, beginning with the removal of all military hardware, gas, pepper and other sprays, and guns; and the permanent removal of all non-Indigenous police forces from Indigenous lands.

Instead of becoming less democratic, the party brass should stop interfering in local candidate selection; it should start adhering to adopted policy, and it should allocate at least 80 per cent of convention time to policy debate.

Fortunately, the Socialist Caucus is fighting for a Workers' Agenda. We won the federal convention to the demand for a \$20/hour minimum wage. We strive for greater victories at the Ontario NDP convention in February 2022. Dare to struggle! Dare to win! ■

We Cannot Dispel the Federal Role in Canada’s Drug Poisoning Crisis

“We need to meaningfully begin treating the drug poisoning crisis as a health problem, which means recognizing its root as a crime problem and breaking the oppressive chains of criminalization.”

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



As we enter the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada is faced with ever growing and competing crises that vie for federal government action. Faced with increasingly limited resources to deliver change on pressing issues all while mediating a polarized citizenry, the federal government and opposition parties have allowed

meaningful action on the drug poisoning crisis to once again fall through the cracks. Between January 2016 and June 2021, there were nearly 25,000 deaths attributed to opioid poisoning across Canada. This rate has not been constant throughout this time, of course. There was a slight decline between 2018 and 2019 due to the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act, broader availability of Naloxone, and approval of numerous safe consumption sites as well as constant pressure from advocacy coalitions across the country. However, as the pandemic took hold in 2020 the national crude rate of

apparent opioid deaths exceeded those in the early years of federal tracking (which only began in 2016). By the end of 2021, many provinces (particularly B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan) were reporting the ‘deadliest year’ on record for fatal drug poisoning. Since enacting the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act in 2018, the federal government has mainly focused on decentralizing accountability over this crisis to provinces. By this I mean that the federal government and, frankly, all major political parties, have communicated that federal politics have less of a role in overcoming the drug poisoning crisis than other jurisdictions. It is now very

common to hear that **we need to treat the opioid crisis as a health problem, rather than a crime problem.** This is a sentiment I completely agree with – the sentiment has a role in destigmatizing drug use and affirming the failure of the war on drugs, but I urge us to use this sentiment while maintaining a critical eye. I think this sentiment allows the federal government to dismiss the enormous role it has in allowing this crisis to grow deadlier and deadlier. The root of the drug poisoning crisis is in drug control legislation and criminal law, which the federal government has jurisdiction over through the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, and the inclusion of

the Act in the broader Criminal Code. Healthcare, however, is the role of the provinces. Beyond the vastly different COVID-19 mandates across the country, look to the debate in Parliament last summer around universal pharmacare (Bill C-215): provincial authority over health policy is coveted and heavily protected. When those in federal politics laud this new, health-focused way of considering the crisis, oftentimes they dance around the lingering effects of its history as a crime issue and continued existence within criminal institutions. Criminalization not only reinforces the structural racism well-documented in the drug poisoning crisis, but it also

constrains other harm reduction efforts through the slow deaths of bureaucracy and pursuit of exemptions from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Criminalization is a further institutional reminder of what the state thinks of those who use drugs, regardless of what sentiments and rhetoric are espoused. Criminalization sabotages social change. Those in federal politics needs to recognize the federal role in the poisoning crisis. We need to **meaningfully** begin treating the drug poisoning crisis as a health problem, which means recognizing its root as a crime problem and breaking the oppressive chains of criminalization. ■

FIGHTER JETS USELESS AGAINST REAL SECURITY THREATS



Canada shouldn't spend huge sums on 88 new fighter jets incapable of protecting the population against pressing security threats. The warplanes will simply strengthen Canada's powerful, offensive air force.

Amidst a pandemic and climate crisis, the security argument for spending \$19 billion – \$77 billion over their life cycle – on fighter jets is extremely weak. New warplanes won't protect against climate induced disasters or new viruses. Worse still, purchasing heavy carbon emitting fighter jets diverts resources away from dealing with these genuine security threats.

But we require these warplanes to protect Canada, say the militarists. In fact, many countries don't have fighter jets. More than 30 nations, including Costa Rica, Iceland and Panama, don't have an active military force at all while Ireland hasn't had fighter jets for two decades. Nor has New Zealand, but the militarists who demand Canada follow its "Five Eyes" counterparts won't mention

that.

Nor do they discuss how Canada's free trade partner Mexico has no operational fighter jets. Doesn't that country face a similar menace from the Russians or Chinese? The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) is far better equipped than its counterpart in Mexico, a country with more than twice Canada's population.

RCAF has about 90 operational CF-18s. It is one of the better warplanes and will remain a top-tier fighter jet for many years to come. RCAF is about the 16th best equipped air force in the world. But Canada is the 39th most populous state. Should Canadians spend lavishly to maintain an air force far better equipped than this country's relative population size?

Considering the resources required to mitigate the climate crisis and pandemic, why not simply maintain the CF-18s, and when the RCAF's standing approaches Canada's share of the global population, consider purchasing new fighter jets? If the RCAF were designed

to defend Canada, that would be the sensible approach. But that is not, in fact, its purpose. The RCAF is structured primarily to support the US war machine. Canada's air force says CF-18s intercept 6-7 aircraft each year in Canada's Air Defence Identification Zone, which is 100-200 nautical miles from its coastline. (Canada's territorial airspace is 12 nautical miles from the coastline.) By comparison, notes Brent Patterson, Canada's CF-18s have conducted 1,600 offensive bombing missions over the past 30 years in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Syria and Libya.

While the military tightly controls news during fighter jet missions, some information has trickled out about what happens when these planes drop bombs from the sky. Pentagon documents suggest CF-18s were responsible for a January 2015 air strike in Iraq that killed as many as 27 civilians. The RCAF claimed it had "no obligation", reported the internal US documents, "to conduct an investigation" of the incident. In October 2015 the CBC also reported,

"Canadian fighter planes have now been connected to a second airstrike in Iraq that has been reviewed by the Pentagon for possible civilian casualties." In another incident, a CF-18 reportedly killed 10 and injured 20 Iraqi civilians on November 19, 2015.

In 2011 seven Canadian CF-18 fighter jets dropped at least 700 bombs on Libyan targets. Two months into the bombing United Press International reported that Ottawa "ordered 1,300 replacement laser-guided bombs to use in its NATO mission in Libya" and a month later they ordered another 1,000 bomb kits.

A number of coalition members placed strict restrictions on their forces' ability to strike ground targets. These and other countries' militaries frequently "red carded" sorties, declaring that they would not contribute. "With a Canadian General in charge" of the NATO bombing campaign, explained the Globe and Mail, "Canada couldn't have red-carded missions even if it wanted to, which is why Canadian CF-18 pilots often found

themselves in the most dangerous skies" doing the dirtiest work.

In the spring of 1999 eighteen CF-18s dropped 532 bombs in 678 sorties during NATO's bombing of Serbia. About two thousand died during NATO's bombing. Hundreds of thousands were internally displaced and hundreds of thousands were made refugees in a war that contravened international law. Two dozen CF-18s were deployed to Iraq in 1991. Among few other coalition members, Canadian fighter jets engaged in combat. They joined US and British counterparts in destroying most of Iraq's hundred plus naval vessels in what was dubbed the "Bubiyan Turkey Shoot." Coalition bombing destroyed much of Iraq's civilian infrastructure.

The country's electricity production was largely demolished as were sewage treatment plants, telecommunications equipment, oil refineries, etc. Twenty thousand Iraqi troops and thousands of civilians were killed. The UN resolution allowed for attacks against Iraqi establishments in

Kuwait while the US-led forces bombed across Iraq in what Mark Curtis described as the open "rehabilitation of colonialism and imperialism."

Buying 88 new fighter jets has little to do with protecting Canadians. It's about funneling public resources to arms firms and strengthening the Royal Canadian Air Force's capacity to fight in offensive US and NATO wars. Is this really how we should be spending public resources? If the government was truly concerned about security, it would spend the money on public/co-op housing, cleaning up ecological devastation and preparing for the next pandemic. ■



Yves Engler is a Montreal-based author of 12 books. His latest is "Stand on Guard For Whom? A People's History of the Canadian Military."

photo: aeozoss

When Do We Politicize People?

After spending thirteen years as a Manitoba MLA and the rest of my time in community development as an activist and educator, I have seen the potential and pitfalls of government from various perspectives. I have come to see how the structures and culture of politics, “democracy” and governance must be changed as they are blocking the actions we need to address the compounding crisis we face: COVID, climate and inequity, a democracy deficit and rise in political violence. As we slide towards collapse, with the rise and fall of the corporate state, we need a clear, bold, shared vision for the NDP.

There is a dynamic in any organization, including political parties and governments, where staff and insiders often take a management approach of command and control, centralizing power, and protecting their positions.

I call it MBA, Management By Abuse. We just saw this play out in Manitoba as the Manitoba PC Party

attempted to coronate Tuxedo MLA, Heather Stepheson, as Premier, culminating in an unprecedented court challenge. This is noteworthy for a few reasons.

First, the public understood the undemocratic nature of our colonial British Parliamentary System that allows the governing party membership, not the public, to elect a mid-term Premier with two years left in the government mandate.

Second, the presiding judge, Edmonds, determined the court had jurisdiction into the internal workings and democracy of a political party, that it was in the public interest for the court to hear the case. In his ruling he cautioned all political parties to clean up their act.

The basis for the court case was the number of people recorded as casting a ballot on the voters list, or PC Party membership list, was about 500 people less than the number of votes from the ballot box and election result



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announced. The case considered many other irregularities and abuses of power leading up to the election on October 30, 2021. But excluded was the fact that some 1,200 PC members didn’t get to vote due to the short time allowed for the election during the pandemic, and how other candidates were “screened” out.

Former PC MP Shelly Glover, the challenger, lost the case because the test to reject the leadership election results was that the impact of the irregularities had to make a difference in the outcome. (Consequently Ms. Glover and her supporters announced a new Manitoba conservative political party, splitting the right, yeah!). The

important thing is that the internal democracy of political parties is not above the law, and that parties are not private clubs, but part of our public governance system. There could be an inquiry into internal party democracy in candidate selection and if political parties have to be democratic, or just have to follow their constitutions, under the Corporations Act.

This is important because political parties have also ramped up their gatekeeping in a few ways: 1. by use of polls to identify celebrity candidates with “electability” over activists who really know about issues or folks concerned with ethical governance; 2. parties now screen out candidates, who raise concerns, based on things on your social media, and under the guise of protecting the public from abusers and extremists; and 3. by weaponizing codes of conduct and other policies aimed at making parties safer and more inclusive. This issue of weaponizing complaints against people who speak out is becoming more and more common, including for women getting elected to municipal councils in Manitoba.

In 2018 there was a successful effort to elect more women to lead Manitoba rural municipalities. To fight back the boys club, municipal councils used a provision in the Manitoba Municipal Act that allows by-laws to be passed to remove the powers of a mayor. One Mayor took her case to court and lost. Judge Vic Toews, former Conservative MLA, MP, and cabinet minister, sided with the boys on the council who felt that the woman mayor elect didn’t have the skills to lead. The appeal of this decision is still an option but the mayor is under pressure to drop the appeal. There is a lot more to unpack on this case, including the harassment and threats against these elected officials.

The point of concern is procedures by a majority on a council was used to remove the powers of a new woman mayor, elected with 63% of the vote. It seems she was asking too many questions and making meetings more public and accessible. This court decision by a former Conservative politician, now judge, undermines

democratic municipal elections and is a precedent for every municipal government in Canada with a similar legislative framework as Manitoba. Manitoba also made some good history recently.

We not only defeated Bill 64, a regressive education bill that would have eliminated school boards and local elections, but we also defeated four other bad bills. And we forced Conservative Premier Brian Pallister into early retirement after his racist comments about residential schools, colonization, and his government’s mishandling of the pandemic response.

On Bill 64, voters in Manitoba organized in a way we have not seen enough of in politics. It proved that voters can be more than polling subjects, donors, or volunteers. It showed average people are activists and they can exercise real political

“More people now understand that the structures of government and “democracy” itself are keeping politics at the level of spectator sport. It is these structures that must be changed for government to be a force to contest the exploitation and neglect of the corporate sector and economy.”

power to do substantive things. People can be politicized on issues through their lived experience to understand, organize and act on their real interests. Even rural conservative voters can reject being bought off using their own money in school property tax cuts or rebates.

The NDP across Canada can learn some good lessons from what is going on in Manitoba. We can realize the politics doesn’t happen only in Parliaments and commit to organizing on issues that matter to people in their communities. Understanding that we win when we bring people together and bring people to us based on our vision and principles, rather than play the political game of pandering to what is perceived as the vote rich middle. A more participatory NDP and NDP governments, with a more activist culture, including better links to social movements and communities, is not

only needed to push a progressive government counter to the pressure they get from corporate interests, but this approach in politics works.

The time for tinkering is past, we need systems change. More people now understand that the structures of government and “democracy” itself are keeping politics at the level of spectator sport. It is these structures that must be changed for government to be a force to contest the exploitation and neglect of the corporate sector and economy. Our party principles talk about cooperation and building a more cooperative world.

The NDP must walk this talk, champion participatory democracy, and a more collaborative political culture as part of making bold public intervention into the economy, with the required massive redistribution of wealth through taxing corporate profits and tax havens.

The climate clock is ticking we have less than ten years to do this to avoid out of control cascades of climate impacts.

In the last federal election, the NDP, for the first time in a long time, ran on redistribution of wealth and taxing corporations. Building the support for this agenda requires the NDP create stronger relationships with social movements and communities. The NDP must help people see the

real causes of the economic, social, and environmental challenges we face and how they are part of the changes needed to address these challenges with political solutions. This is how we politicize people to see that they are part of the solution through their collective actions and that government is not another consumer transaction where you elect people to represent you and take care of governing. Democracy is not a spectator sport.

We all need an UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), or collaboration and democracy between elections on the decisions that affect us. We must de-colonize our political structures and culture as part of our climate and equity agenda. The challenge is to get the pragmatists and idealists in the NDP to realize we need each other and work in solidarity, sharing power. ■



Whither Toronto, Ontario

Hans Modlich is a member of the
Beaches East York NDP EDA

As I am writing this article, a severe cold snap is hitting the GTA along with a record number of Omicron infections. Hospital and shelter beds are over filled and staffing shortages are at an unprecedented high. Yet the fat cat beholden Premier is still holding out on Bill 124 and paid sick leave. The extremes of poverty and wealth are nowhere more evident than in the housing crisis.

65,000 apartment units are empty while tents are still popping up below the Gardiner Expressway as the city's 300 extra beds are snapped up in shelters that are infected already with the highly contagious Omicron virus.

Paradoxically, Toronto's downtown skyline is pierced by the highest number of cranes on the continent.

Building yet more unaffordable condos, in a feeding frenzy for maximum developer profit.

As the glass towers keep getting higher, the units themselves are tinier and tinier – unsuited for the average family on the 180,000 plus long waitlist for affordable housing. Neither are current units built proactively to reduce operating costs and emissions in order to mitigate the climate crisis.

But the 'price per door' of these units has risen 4 to 5 fold in past decade as global financial streams seek shelter from the real rate of inflation, caused by the trillions of dollars EU and US central banks have kept printing during the initial waves of the pandemic and from the 2008 sub-prime mortgage crisis. Mega-investment in residential real estate has become the new gold safe haven.

No wonder then, that this current frenzied rate of construction has become the most active sector of Ontario's

economy -- so long as the building boom lasts!

But what will happen to our already pandemic shaken economy if and when this housing bubble were to burst? Ontario's auto-manufacturing sector is already on life-support, with GM Oshawa producing now only the worst polluting vehicle type, the pickup truck. Promises to lead the shift to electric car manufacturing lag decades behind Chinese and European competitors. On top of that is Biden's protectionist cloud to subsidize only "union made in USA" cars.

When we look back over the last century's growth rate of Toronto's skyline, we can see the same repeated pattern of boom-bust cycles. Peaks and troughs are spaced roughly one generation apart. While during the 1970s, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation boosted rental housing construction, "tight money" in the nineties brought it again to a standstill, and to a virtual trickle now.

“
How do we finance it, how do we build back better? How do we make housing the human right that it should be? The NDP must speak up boldly now for a pandemic wealth tax. This will orient working people to the magnitude of the task at hand to secure Ontario's future and pose the NDP as the clear alternative in the upcoming June election.
”



Doug Ford's 413 "Highway to Sprawl," a gift to his potent developer backers, takes us in the diametrically opposite direction to where a sane social housing policy would take us to lessen impending climate change.

Gray (interspersed) municipal zoning, coupled with block wide, inner-city, re-development utilizing co-operative incentives to share the costs of emission-free heating and cooling and better transit infrastructure are the only sustainable housing solutions -- in contrast to the quick profit-driven, capitalist model.

How do we finance it, how do we build back better? How do we make housing the human right that it should be? Instead

of Jagmeet Singh's faint whimpers of a wealth tax during last September's non-election, the NDP must speak up boldly now for a pandemic wealth tax.

This will orient working people to the magnitude of the task at hand to secure Ontario's future and pose the NDP as the clear alternative in the upcoming June election.

Prevailing polls show regrettably that Andrea Horwath has not made any real dent in the populist's lead. In sharp contrast, these same polls show Ontarians are already clearly in favor of taxing the super rich.

Let's build on it! ■

Like many families, our seasonal festivities were on standby, both because of the pandemic and because I was making the festive meal and working long hours through Christmas and over the New Year.

So after the holidays came and went, I watched the 1946 movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” to try to recreate the mood of the season. While watching, I started to wonder (as one does), about right-wing libertarians (henceforth libertarians). For example, do libertarians think Pottersville is a utopia? Is George Bailey a villain to them?

Also, why do libertarians hate the poor so much? Okay, that sounds uncharitable. Libertarians say (and I think they believe this) that voluntarism will replace all the prosocial behaviour provided by the state. It just doesn’t happen to be true. There’s a little self-deception involved. They’re not all strident Ayn Randists. Some simply believe that if you want that guy who’s pandhandling on the street to be cared for, and you act on doing so, then it’s really a much truer kind of virtue than leaving it up to the government. “You can’t legislate virtue,” they say.

Yet reality shows

that if you leave poor single mothers, people with special needs, persons with a mental health condition or those living with addictions up to the “free market,” we would have a lot more suffering, and more tragically, even death. Read Dickens or any of the pre-New Deal era novels.

A more troubling issue is the idea of freedom and what it means for libertarians. Liberty and freedom always sound great. And really, who could be against them? Yet much depends on what is meant, on which libertarian leaders themselves have been somewhat vague.

For example, when people discuss libertarians and freedom, clearly, we don’t mean, as oppressed people for centuries did, *freedom from want, or*

“What right-wing libertarians are really opposed to are institutions that allowed wage earners and working people, especially in the West, to aspire to class mobility.”



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

freedom from domination. Libertarians mean very specific outcomes when they use the word freedom. They mean ideals like the freedom of business leaders from the fetters of government.

And sometimes in their more honest moments, they would likely also mean the *freedom of the strong to dominate the weak.* As the lyrics to the song go (one belted out merrily by three little girls in cheerleading outfits at one of the Trump rallies in 2016): “Deal from strength or get crushed every time!”

Reagan, an early adopter of this (then) new way of thinking about liberty, used to say that the scariest words in the English language were: “I’m from the government and I’m here to help.”

For several decades we’ve heard this mantra from right-wing thought leaders about so-called “Big Government.”

And the followers among the working class -- many of whom had reasons to fear various aspects of government either because they were marginalized and had been wrongly treated by the justice system, or



DONT TREAD ON ME



TREAD ON THEM

So-called Libertarians don’t dislike government. They just hate DEMOCRACY.

because they were poor and had other bad experiences involving cutbacks and mistreatment from social workers or child welfare -- heard what they wanted to hear and agreed with what the thought leaders were saying. But this is a dangerous game.

Yet in recent statements as wide ranging as the Von Mises Institute, other right-wing publications, and the various musings of Peter Thiel and others, many have spoken in favour of more government intervention. That is, they’re in favour of government that serves vested corporate interests (surprise, surprise). And of course, they always save some space in their hearts for right-wing totalitarians and dictators

like Augusto Pinochet in Chile.

What they’re not in favour of is government of, by and for the people. The Von Mises institute even came out in favour of monarchy (of all things), like society has forgotten about the centuries of subjugation and imperialist oppression that led to democratic revolts and revolutions, including even the US War of Independence itself.

What libertarians are really opposed to are institutions that allowed wage earners and working people, especially in the West, to aspire to class mobility. They’re opposed to public schools, libraries, art galleries and communal pools, public parks, and they’re especially opposed to universal

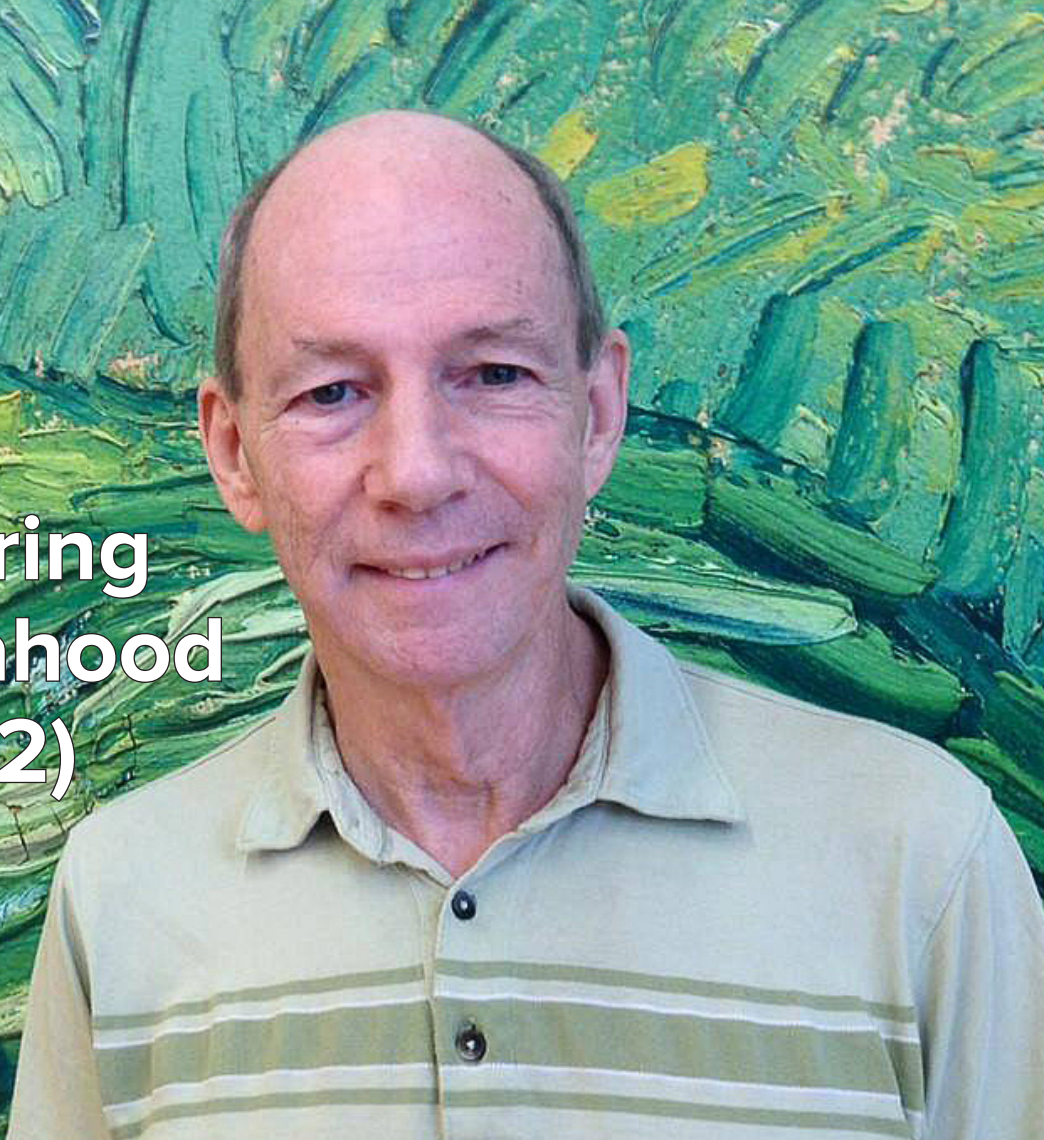
health care and government funded seniors’ homes and pensions, as well as any subsidies to the poor or unemployed.

And that’s it.

That’s all their “freedom” amounts to. When right-wing libertarians say they are “anti-government,” what they’re really saying is they’re against democracy. In the United States, they’ve wrapped themselves in the American flag and declared themselves Benedict Arnolds. And no one seems to have noticed.

There you have it, and like they say: patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel. ■

Remembering Robbie Mahood (1946-2022)



BY BARRY WEISLEDER

Robbie Mahood, 75, a founding member and a leading light in the NDP Socialist Caucus, passed away in Montreal on December 26, 2021. He lost his long battle against cancer following a completely debilitating stroke on December 24. Surrounded in his hospital room by family and loved ones, Robbie may have been conscious of the affection and adoration expressed by a number of comrades from across the continent who joined a hastily convened virtual, online gathering at his bedside just hours before his life ebbed away.

Robert (“Robbie”) Fisher Mahood was born in Saskatchewan in 1946. As a teenager, he witnessed the battle for Medicare in that province. Impacted by the youth radicalization of the 1960’s,

he gradually embraced Marxism. After studying history and politics at the University of Regina, he went into medicine and was active in the fight for abortion rights, collaborating with pro-choice activists and Dr. Henry Morgentaler in opening and operating his Winnipeg clinic. Robbie was a semi-retired family physician in Montreal, and a leading member of the NDP Socialist Caucus to the end.

A statement issued by the Mahood family recounts how Robbie “grew up in Saskatoon. He spent some of his early childhood in the Côte des Neiges area of Montreal while his mother studied medicine at McGill, and lived in the Middle East in the early 1960s while his father worked for the United Nations setting up teacher training for Palestinian refugee communities, but Saskatchewan was the place of his youth.”

His parents were deeply involved

in the struggles for universal medical care in Saskatchewan and in many other progressive social movements on the prairies. As a pink diaper baby, Robbie was always committed to fighting for progressive social change. He was a student activist in the 1960s, involved in anti-war activism as well as early community organizing efforts against racism in Saskatchewan. He became involved in direct action politics, briefly working for the National Farmers’ Union, and in factory work in Toronto. He was among other young Canadians who went to Cuba on a work exchange in the late 1960s, and famously played (and lost at) baseball with Fidel.

Robbie was a member of the federal steering committee of the NDP Socialist Caucus. Thanks to his facility in French, he was able to play an important role in advancing the work of the Caucus

in Palestine solidarity, environmental justice and anti-poverty work in Quebec. His longstanding contribution to women’s health and personal autonomy, as a member of Doctors for Reproductive Choice, is inestimable. Robbie was profiled in the Canadian Medical Association Journal in 1988 (“Pro-choice physician says doctors have duty to speak out”) for his pro-choice activism, which at times involved providing services then considered illegal when he worked at the Morgentaler clinic in Winnipeg.

Often, he hosted comrades and friends at his home in Montreal when they visited the city to attend major political events, such as the massive strikes and marches of the Quebec students’ movement against university tuition increases, as well as during a Canadian Labour Congress convention held there in 2017. Robbie’s selfless devotion to revolutionary engagement was strikingly evident in his participation at SA Central Committee meetings in the last weeks of his life, even following physically exhausting blood transfusions.

The family’s text goes on to say that Robbie “contemplated an academic career, completing a thesis in Political Science with an original take on the political career of Mackenzie King. After deciding an academic career was not for him, Robbie decided that studying medicine would allow him to continue his political, intellectual and activist work serving as a physician. As a physician, he was involved in various struggles in health care including studying with Dr. Henry Morgentaler and involving himself in the campaign for reproductive choice, including...as a fly-in (abortion) provider in the maritime provinces. Robbie decided that salaried group medical practice was the best model for delivery of medical services and was involved in several unique group community practices

in Winnipeg (Klinic), and in Montreal (CLSC Côte des Neiges) where he spent the rest of his career.”

In Montreal he remained politically active in various progressive campaigns, continued a lifelong critical involvement in the left of the NDP, and ran (provincially) as a candidate for Québec Solidaire. He was a committed activist for Palestinian rights, for immigrant rights and healthcare, and for action against climate change, which he saw as intricately related to the profit motive of capitalism.

His entire life, personal and professional, was devoted to the battle for progressive social change in key

“The loss of Robbie is a terrible blow. A great personal friend to me, and to many, a brilliant leader of our party, he is gone. It is difficult to grasp the magnitude of this loss.”

sectors of political life. He brought an inextinguishable optimism that a better world was possible, a great intellectual energy, a deep curiosity about the world and its challenges, and a determined expectation that we should all do the same.

He courageously battled cancer for the last two decades of his life, surviving bone marrow transplants and chemotherapy regimes with little complaint and tremendous determination.

Throughout these struggles he maintained his eclectic interests in folk music, film, art and history, constantly sharing his insights and observations with

a broad group of friends and colleagues around the world. He remained highly informed and cognizant regarding the many struggles for equality and decency the world over and could always be counted on to offer a cogent, thoughtful and unique analysis of world events and of the way forward. On a personal level he was smart, funny and never polarizing in his many discussions over just the right cup of Mile End coffee.

He was a devoted father and provider to his four daughters, loving them and exasperating them in equal measure. He is survived by his four daughters (Marie-Laure Mahood, Juliana Mahood, Marjolaine Mahood in Montreal and Meaghan Hogg in California), their children (Margot, Dara, Babette, Suki, Dervla and Aengus), his former wife Isidé Giuliani, and by his long-time companion and comrade Anita Marin, and her son Diego. He is also mourned greatly by his only sister, Sally Mahood, her partner John Conway, and his loving nephews and niece in Saskatchewan (Liam, Aidan, Kieran and Meara Conway) and their families.

The loss of Robbie is a terrible blow. A great personal friend to me, and to many, a brilliant leader of our party, he is gone. It is difficult to grasp the magnitude of this loss. Fortunately, we are endowed with his many articles, interviews and video recordings. His absolute firmness of principle was attended by great tactical flexibility, openness, humility and a supreme elegance of expression. As a revolutionary doctor, Robbie was an insightful guide through the trauma of the first years of the Covid pandemic.

This is a dark moment. Try, we must, to illuminate it with fond and precious memories of Robbie – an indelible example that lives on, that inspires all who strive for a better world.

Robbie Mahood es presente! ■

Women, Sisterhoods, and Liberation

Shiam Abdelaal is the NDP Socialist Caucus Candidate for Vice President of the Ontario NDP

Women around the globe have gone through various hurdles to make it in different areas of life. A topic such as a gender and the need to promote gender equality among men and women are not new to women living in all parts of the world. Equality is not only the problem that women have had to deal with. Oppression is another issue that has negatively affected the lives of women around the world.



Women have dealt with work, matrimonial, social, and other different types of oppression in their lives. Some forms of oppression take place at home, workplace, politics, and restaurants that impact human rights. Oppression has led to discrimination in resource allocation among women, denial of human rights such as opportunities to further studies, politics, as well as other events that might lead to their success. Moreover, oppression faced by women does not only originate from their male counterparts, but also from fellow women.

Many women around the world formed different groups called sisterhood to help alleviate the degrees of oppression they go through. Some also used varied feminist theories to help deal with the same problem. Oppression is still a factor that women encounter daily and in different areas despite the struggle to end the vice. This article relies on women of color and indigenous feminist theories to argue this point.

Women liberationists who held the opinion that women are always victims formed the sisterhood movement. The liberationist upheld the thoughts that women are always powerless, constantly passive, and were always victims to all circumstances. Many women expected the sisterhood movement to help them find a better platform for solving the social, matrimonial, and inequality injustices that they dealt with on a daily basis.

Sisterhood was supposed to help deal with inequality issues in areas such as politics, education, and job allocations,

but they failed to help their fellow women find a common ground to do the same. The movement failed to provide a ground for women to work in solidarity. It is important to note that women in the modern global sphere are still experiencing most problems faced by women a long time ago. For example, women in politics face gender issues when vying for offices. It is still hard to find a 50 percent representation of women in most large corporations.

Through the sisterhood, the women hoped to get a solid voice or voices that could bring such injustices and oppressions to an end. However, this was not the case. The ineffectiveness of the movement has been mirrored by several authors who have written about feminists who were unable to work in helping air the oppressions and inequalities faced by women during their time.

For example, women such as Christine de Pizan and Mary Astell educated women and prolific authors in the 17th century. However, none of them had the willing power to challenge the oppressions faced by women in political, religious, and social areas. Instead of penning about issues such as gender inequalities in politics, society, and religious arenas, they decide to keep mum and overlook these issues, choosing to ignore them because they believed in the importance of keeping religious, social, and political order intact.

De Pizan and Astell also educated women who never bothered to tackle the fact that women were not given a chance to receive effective and quality education, just like their male counterparts. Despite living a better life because of the education given to them by their families, de Pizan and Astell did not play a role in shaping women's education during their time.

This is another indication that most sisterhood movements had selfish motivations that could not help women solve the oppressive issue they faced in society. Such actions could not give women a chance to bond with each other with the aim of coming up with solutions to inequalities and oppressions that marred their development. ■



Breaking the NDP from Capitalism - and Colonialism

Corey David is a candidate for Member at Large for the Ontario NDP Executive

“Democracy”... is the battle cry of capitalist mouth pieces. It’s as if a western democratic system will solve the problems of inequality, scarcity and exploitation. History, glaringly so in recent memory, shows that capitalist democracy is little more than the dictatorship of the asset controlling class. Exemplified by the Ontario Conservative Government using their 40.5% (popular vote) election win to smash minimal societal protections and reforms that had been won through struggle.

Today, frontline workers are thrown into the proverbial volcano, persons in long term care are closed off from loved ones and left in deplorable conditions. Private LTC homes rake in millions in profit, former Premier Mike Harris, who is one of the architects and beneficiaries of these schemes, receives the Order of Ontario celebrating the theft of the land and its people for the benefit of the rulers. Ford, after being denied the Toronto mayoral seat, rips apart multiple municipal bodies in the middle of elections and claims it to be a service to the people.

Toronto Mayor John Tory makes a performative appeal that is tossed around the courts until it is denied. “The City is a creature of the province” demonstrates the nature of the societal relationship under capitalist “democracy.” Systems have

been forced on us and they have been named democracy. You must declare fealty to the crown if you wish to become a citizen, to serve in office, all aspects of our political system are determined from the top ‘given’ to us for our ‘benefit’, despite how clear it is who is benefiting.

Property rights under English Common Law (a cornerstone of our legal system) prevents the expropriation of property without compensation (which with the abolition of slavery in the British empire saw slave holders compensated for their ‘loss’). Today we witness massive private profits and a continued theft of the commons (shelter, food, communication, information, transportation, and communal resources) by those who control vast fortunes: the banking cartels, near monopoly corporations like Amazon and shadowy investment firms like BlackRock.

The system is not based on common justice but on further empowering the ruling regime that enforces an individual’s right to wealth and power over the welfare of everyone and our ecosystem. Subversion, distraction, relative privilege, the use of force and crumbs keep the majority participating and accepting the reality of today. At every moment of one’s exploitation, there are new bodies, agencies, NGOs and charities that all employ business managers (“experts” in frugality with salaries far above the national average). They are set up to minimize the problem through schemes of debt re-

lief, “affordable” housing, employment agencies, disability and unemployment support that push the exploited into traps of poverty.

I’ve spoken about support for the Land Back movement and First Nations self-determination in a previous Turn Left article, so movements like that are what we need to support in the NDP if we want to see broader change, and if we want to create a future based on truth and justice.

The NDP is a status quo party. It tinkers with the delivery of our system but stops far short of looking at the foundational issues of capitalism across the province. We are in a housing crisis, and we should be pushing for expropriation of all predatory housing and for a complete end to speculation, but we can’t as long as we tie ourselves to the system that stole the land and concentrates wealth in the hands of the ultra rich who continue to inflict financial ruin and political exclusion on the majority of the population, while more of the economy is shifted to private control.

Towns, cities, the Province and First Nations must be able to decide their future. Property law, unchecked wealth accumulation, and profiting from the needs of others all must be torn away from the political system. If the NDP wishes to be a champion of workers and the poor, it must respect and support the broad interests of the entire population, otherwise it is little more than lip service as it continues to exist within the capitalist dictatorship.



photo: APTN National News

The Crown can pretend to speak for God, but the NDP should speak honestly. Nothing lasts forever. We can try to change things or else ignorantly watch them change around us. Look at BC’s NDP using the RCMP to invade unceded Wet’suwet’en territory for the profits of CGL and its shareholders. Despite words of reconciliation and its adoption of the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), the BC NDP serves the capitalists who rule through their wealth and connections. In response to this betrayal, some members left the party while many protested as the entire party wore the shame.

If the NDP is going to represent workers, then its aim should be a workers’ government. Social democrats telling us to play nice with oppressors have only benefited those misleaders who are serving Capital

(we already have two entrenched capitalist parties). We must join the struggle for a truly classless society. Getting there may be a challenge, but the NDP has principles it should stand on in deed, not just in word.

The Sharing economy and community organizations like Parkdale Organize (Tenants Union) and the Movement Defense Committee (Community Legal Aid) have effectively defended communities against capitalist predation. Open source digital development and digital libraries have provided communal alternatives to the virtual monopolies of communications technology. Though labour union leadership is tied closely to the capitalist system, and the rot is noticeable, the membership is stirring, organizations like the Workers’ Action Movement and individual union activists continue solidarity actions and struggle for a militant rank and file

agenda.

Communities are attempting to empower themselves and present designs to do so. The NDP has the opportunity to support in them the broader struggle for equality in material means and in the division of authority. We must take a clear stand against financialization that leaves so many with nothing. We must break with the system built on private property by making plans that empower workers and communities.

For the Province of Ontario, the greatest task in our immediate path is to remove the gilded boot of the Monarchy that stands on the neck of our political system. Attempts to maintain the crown authority over our political decision making is an attack on the spirit of democracy and a shackle to the domination of the past that will be broken with, or without, the NDP. ■

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TOWNS, CITIES, THE PROVINCE AND FIRST NATIONS MUST BE ABLE TO DECIDE THEIR FUTURE. PROPERTY LAW, UNCHECKED WEALTH ACCUMULATION, AND PROFITING FROM THE NEEDS OF OTHERS ALL MUST BE TORN AWAY FROM THE SYSTEM.