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Photo: Kourosh Keshiri

# Socialist Worker

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**\$65 BILLION WASTED**



Trump says 'jump' – PM Trudeau answers 'how high?' as Canada massively increases defence spending.

# STOP THE LIBERAL WAR BINGE

**T**he federal Liberal government has announced a massive increase in military spending over the next decade. They plan to increase spending by a total of \$65 billion, with yearly spending up from the current \$20 billion to \$36 billion.

It seems that whenever we need money for things human beings actually need, the cupboard is bare. But when our government wants to go to war, the money is always available.

There are currently 150 indigenous communities without clean drinking water. Millions of dollars promised to support indigenous children have not been released, despite many court rulings that the Liberals do so. It is to Cana-

da's shame that they have decided to prioritize weapons of war rather than take care of the basic needs of First Nations.

Why do they want to spend so much on war? According to Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland and Minister of Defence Harjit Sajjan, the Liberals want to project Canadian leadership on the world stage. If they were serious about that leadership, they would use this money to meet and exceed Canada's greenhouse gas emission targets.

According to Greenpeace, it would cost \$15,000 to retrofit an individual building to make it more energy efficient. For \$1.5 billion, we could retrofit 100,000 buildings a

year. This plan would also create 30,000 jobs each year.

Liberals claim the money will be used to defend the country in an increasingly hostile world. The world is hostile, not because of too little defence spending but because of the brutal wars started by western countries. It's like saying that the best way to put out this fire is to pour some more gas on it.

The last thing the world needs is more weaponry in the hands of the imperial powers. In Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya the main reason for the ongoing chaos is that the US and its allies have obliterated the countries.

And what of health spending? The Liberals

have decided to continue the Harper government's plan to decrease health transfer spending by \$36 billion over the same period as the military spending increases.

And what of a planned pharmacare program or money for subsidized daycare? These programs would have an immediate and beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of the people. Instead, the Liberals want armed drones that can assassinate people on the other side of the world.

Austerity and war go hand in hand. As long as money goes to militarism, it will not be used to benefit humanity. It's time to tell the Liberals to cancel the money for war.

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# Tap into bitterness of 99%

by **Ritch Whyman**

**W**ith three months left in the federal New Democratic Party leadership race questions are being asked as to why it hasn't sparked any boost to the party in either polls or a swell in grass-roots interest.

The NDP languishes at 15% support in the polls. Yet the terrain is favourable to a party that is seen as fighting for the working class, that reaches out and taps into the bitterness and anger of the 99%.

Instead the most remarkable part of the leadership race to date has been that it hasn't generated much interest beyond the political commentariat and party members themselves.

The public debates haven't produced a clear frontrunner, although two candidates, Peter Julian from BC and Niki Ashton from Manitoba, have pushed the debate to the left.

In the Toronto debate, Ashton deepened her reputation as the most left candidate and the one most open to linking up with struggles outside of parliament. Her references to Corbyn and Sanders received large applause. She is calling for a platform against austerity and against attempts to privatize services.

## Provincial NDP governments

The fortunes of the NDP federally have always been linked to the track records of their provincial counterparts. The excitement around Rachel Notley defeating the Tories in Alberta on a platform that promoted a \$15 minimum wage has given way to demoralisation as the Alberta NDP supports the growth of the tar sands and hugely unpopular pipelines.

In Manitoba the NDP lost badly after introducing an increase to the provincial sales tax rather than taxing the wealthy. In Saskatchewan the NDP has been in disarray and unable to take advantage of the corruption scandals of the right wing Saskatchewan party.

In Ontario the NDP polls well behind the Tories, who have captured the anger over Hydro costs. The party has been outflanked, again, to the left by the ruling Liberals who have just introduced sweeping labour law reform. Unfortunately the NDP has done little to relate to or organise around the anger at Hydro bills and Liberal corruption.

The only beacon of hope this year was that the BC NDP could defeat the right wing Liberal Party. Despite being well up in the polls, the NDP was unable to capture a majority.



NDP leadership campaign: the only space to move is to the left.

The one province where the NDP tried to take a page out of the Corbyn playbook was in Nova Scotia, where Gary Burrill won the leadership on a platform to move the NDP to the left. In the provincial election, the NDP was able to gain seats and defeat some leading Liberals.

## Need to move left

It should be clear to the NDP leadership that there is no room in the centre, the only space to move is to the left.

So why aren't the leadership campaign or the various provincial parties moving left as has been shown to work elsewhere? The problem is the very nature of Social Democratic parties.

Firstly, the various swings to the left and for more activist parties haven't been done through the "official channels" of the parties. In the UK, Corbyn relied on his years of being linked to the anti-war and anti-racist movements, and he linked his campaign to struggles outside of the Labour party.

Secondly, any campaign that is contained by the NDP party leadership will reflect the parliamentary logic that the main objective is win seats and manage capital in a more humane way.

This means that the campaigns are tightly controlled and not based on mobilising and raising expectations but by showing how "responsible" the NDP will be in government. The whole history of the NDP in power has been one of, at best, dashed hopes and, at worst, open attacks on workers and the poor.

Even in opposition the NDP seeks to contain and channel opposition into parliamentary debates. This was seen when the NDP was prepared to drop its opposition to the war in Afghanistan for a few cabinet positions in a minority government with the Liberals.

It is based on the wrong assumption that power lies in parliament not in the workplace or the street. However, a quick look at most of the reforms that have made gains for working people have come not from parliamentary motions but from struggles outside of parliament.

But a shift to the left by the NDP can help create openings for the left both in and out of the NDP. That is why it is important to push for the leadership campaign to break out of the constraints of the party brass.

Candidates should seek to replicate the success of Corbyn by moving beyond these constraints, reaching out to those beyond the party and speaking to and mobilising the aspirations of the 99%.

# Electric cars are no cure for climate crisis

by **Sam Connolly**

**Bad news: Donald Trump is pulling the United States out of the Paris agreement, one of the largest icebergs is about to break off of Antarctica, and electric cars are just one more detour to climate catastrophe.**

When electric cars leave the manufacturer, they are the cause of significantly more CO2 emissions than a gasoline powered car. This is due to the production of the battery, which is essentially the gas tank of an electric car. These lithium-ion batteries often used in electric cars are energy intensive to produce.

Additionally, the raw materials for these batteries are largely mined, causing the other ground and water pollution associated with mining. There is potential for recycling of these battery materials, though it is currently more expensive than mining new materials.

CO2 production by electric cars depends most on how the electricity it uses is produced. In areas where electricity is coal-based, electric cars are no better than gasoline powered cars. For Canada, the lifetime production of CO2 by electric cars is lower only in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

In addition to their higher production of CO2 in manufacturing, electric cars don't last as long as traditional cars. Most gasoline cars will last for 320,000km, whereas electric car batteries last half as long—or around 160,000km. Though the battery can be replaced, it is a major source of CO2 production.

In the best-case scenario, an electric car will produce half the CO2 emissions of a regular gasoline car. This is with the use of only electricity generated by renewable energy and when having the cars for comparable time.

Even if every car on the road were fully electric, the vast majority of CO2 being released into the atmosphere would continue.

## Mass transit

Electric cars are not a solution for the levels of CO2 production, not even in the transit industry. Mass transit produces far fewer emissions per person, per kilometer than electric cars.

Currently, 75 per cent of Canadians commute using a personal vehicle, compared to the 12 per cent using public transportation. Personal vehicles, electric or not, cause many other environmental and socio-economic problems. Cars encourage sprawl, long-hour commutes, and social isolation.

Electric cars are one more thing to produce and market. The automobile industry is interested in expanding the market for new vehicles, not protecting the environment.

We must demand free, comfortable, convenient, public transportation to significantly change our path from climate catastrophe. Building this mass, sustainable infrastructure is part of a just transition for workers and an essential step to stop the climate crisis.

# Interview with Peter Julian

by **Kevin Taghabon**

KT: *What is your position on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)?*

PJ: The federal government should be signing it, implementing it. We talk about UNDRIP and the process of reconciliation, but also the emergency supports that need to be brought in to indigenous communities. There are crises of mental health and addiction, of affordable housing, drinkable water, that need to be addressed immediately.

And more importantly, looking at the fundamental issue of [UNDRIP's] free prior and informed consent. That's what we're seeing around energy projects, that being pushed aside. If the process of reconciliation teaches us anything it's that we have to change the government relationship with indigenous communities.

*[Candidates] talked about the creation of crown corporations that are responsible for green transition. Are you interested in nationalizing any other industries?*

Establishing, re-establishing the postal

banking network. What it does is provide access to banking services right across the country. A second key example is the Smart Grid that needs to be put in place. It starts with Alberta and Saskatchewan, retraining energy workers. The Smart Grid is something that would be under public ownership.

What that does again is democratize sources of energy. We've seen in Europe, having a Smart Grid in place has allowed energy cooperatives, municipalities, communities to actually feed into the grid. What we see then is public ownership also fuelling other types of ownership that helps to benefit whole communities.

*This government is not going to be repealing Bill C-51. It doesn't seem that this government is serious about tackling mass surveillance [and] protecting the privacy of citizens.*

It is not mass surveillance that is going to protect us. That is a wrong-headed myth that is put out by the Right. One of the key elements that communities that are vulnerable right across the country have been calling for is support to counter radicalization. Those communities have received no support at all.

When you talk to [Department of] Justice officials, they actually indicate that the penchant for violence in terms of the collective violence in North America is above all from white supremacists.

We saw this in Quebec. If we actually want to build safety and security in this country it takes a whole different approach. That's making sure vulnerable communities have the resources they need, ensuring that we have mental health supports and addiction supports.

The man that went up to Parliament Hill [2014 shooting] had been identified in my community in BC by the local Mosque. They sought supports for him. He was on a waiting list for months.

*What movements do you draw inspiration from for your campaign?*

The environmental movement, absolutely. What we're seeing is young Canadians involved in unprecedented numbers. The push [against] pipelines that are being promoted by the Trudeau government. They're saying "no, this is not the way we want to do this." I get inspiration from them and also the movement to end tuition fees.

# 100,000 protest in UK

by **Socialist Worker UK**

**A great wave of defiance against Theresa May's government swept through central London on July 1st.**

Tens of thousands of people marched who are angry at austerity, racism and pay cuts. The Grenfell Tower fire was seen by many as the symbol of all that is wrong with a society that puts profit before people's lives.

And there was universal fury at the grubby deal with the bigots of the Democratic Unionist Party that is enabling May to stay in office—and continue to implement her toxic policies.

Several of the speakers at the rally said 100,000 had joined the “Tories Out, Not One Day More” demonstration.

Called by the People's Assembly and backed by many trade unions and campaigns, it showed the mood to resist the Tories—and also a sense of optimism and confidence after the surge for Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party in the general election.

It was a very positive sign of the readiness for a fightback and to push for a different sort of society.

In front of a crowd singing “Oh Jeremy Corbyn” in Parliament Square, the Labour leader said, “When we met in Parliament Square two years ago we had a Tory government in office, hell bent on austerity.

“We said we'd fight that and that's what we've been doing the last two years.

“We were written off by the mainstream, but something happened.

“It was the people registering to vote and the people getting involved in the social media campaign — and it was the tens of thousands who came to rallies saying that the people are united and determined.”

Corbyn added, “The Tories are in retreat, austerity is in retreat, the economic arguments of austerity are in retreat.

“It's those of social justice, of unity, of people coming together to oppose racism and all those that would divide us, that are the ones that are moving forward.

“This is the age of imagination, this is the age in which we will achieve that decency and social justice that we all crave.”

He added the last election was about the



The Grenfell Tower fire is seen by many as the symbol of all that is wrong with a society that puts profit before people's lives.

“gross inequality of modern Britain” and the next one would be too.

Len McCluskey, the Unite union general secretary, said, “You have come from all across the land to fight for a people's government.

“To Theresa May, your party and cruelty have failed the people - let Labour get on with the job. Prime minister, for the good of the nation, go and go now.”

But some of the marchers were clear they expect more from the union leaders.

Mark, a Unison rep from Manchester said, “There's a different mood at work now. People gather to discuss protest and industrial action whenever someone mentions it. I've been saying to them to join a union and get onto more of these marches.

“I'd like to see the union at a regional level

getting branches connected more and start pushing for action, holding big local rallies. They've got to give a lead.”

Mona Kamal, a junior doctor, told the rally to loud cheers, “I was one of the 50,000 junior doctors that struck last year.

“If and when my nursing colleagues do the same, they will have 50,000 junior doctors standing behind them in solidarity.

“We are going to keep going until the Tories are out.”

There is a new sense of hope after the election. But although Conservative MPs could topple May for their own reasons, getting rid of the Tories will require a serious mass mobilisation.

The mood for change needs to fuel action in the streets and the workplaces, not just inside the Labour Party or in elections.

## ANGER at the Grenfell Tower fire is boiling over across the UK.

The criminal neglect that led to the deaths of at least 79 people happened in the capital of one of the richest countries in the world, in the richest borough in all of Europe.

These innocent people died because of cost-cutting that saved £2 per square metre for cladding to make the building more attractive to rich people nearby.

A society that won't spend £20,000 on a sprinkler system that would have saved lives, but will spend £360 million renovating Buckingham Palace for the Queen, is a rotten society that must go.

# Trump dumps Paris Climate Accord

by **Brian Champ**

**T**ump announced last month that he was withdrawing the US from participation in the Paris Climate Accord. This was an election promise, tailored to his base of climate change deniers.

Trump has declared climate change a “hoax”, denying the increasingly undeniable fact of rising global average temperatures, joining the only two other nations to opt out of the accord: Syria and Nicaragua.

This is a terrible blow for the efforts of world leaders to maintain the lead in the fight to curb rising global carbon emissions. Angela Merkel described the move as “deeply regrettable...[we] need this Paris accord to preserve our creation. Nothing can and will stop us.”

Municipal and state governments have already responded to the decision by the Trump administration and declared that they will continue to act to meet their emissions targets. California and China have inked their own bilateral deal to reduce emissions, while Hawaii has enacted legislation aligning emissions reduction targets to the Paris Accord. After Trump tweeted “I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris” to defend the withdrawal, the mayor of Pittsburgh pledged that the city was committed to emissions reduction targets.

## Rift among elites

The Trump presidency has laid bare a world-

wide rift between sections of the elites. The majority of nations around the world have formally acknowledged the scientific consensus that the planet is warming and that it is being caused by burning fossil fuels.

Some of this is political expediency to placate the growing movement for climate justice, but many also see an opportunity to profit off the emergence of new industries and technologies. Germany relies heavily on oil imports so of course its elites are going to be more open to energy alternatives, and will claim this strategy is driven by concern for the planet.

Similarly, the reaction of newly elected, right-wing French President Emmanuel Macron to the withdrawal is instructive: “To all scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, responsible citizens who were disappointed by the decision of the United States, I want to say that they will find in France a second homeland. I call on them: Come and work here with us — to work together on concrete solutions for our climate, our environment. I can assure you, France will not give up the fight.”

But these changes, even in countries where the drive to reduce emissions has been embraced, cannot change the reality that energy generated from burning fossil fuels is crucial to economies the world over, and there are structural, economic and political barriers to overcome.

The biggest multinationals in the world are the oil companies, and they exert enormous pressure on governments to ensure that

infrastructure decisions and regulations remain favourable to them. This is most evident in oil producing countries like Canada, where the Trudeau government rhetorically supports global efforts to reduce greenhouse gases and yet publicly champions new pipeline projects whose inevitable result will be to expand the tar sands and explode emissions.

This split infects the NDP as well: Rachel Notley, premier of Alberta, declared the Trans-Mountain Pipeline project as “fundamentally important” to Alberta job creation, while many grassroots members embrace the Leap Manifesto and want to see an end to pipeline politics.



A mood for real action on climate crisis.

## Climate justice

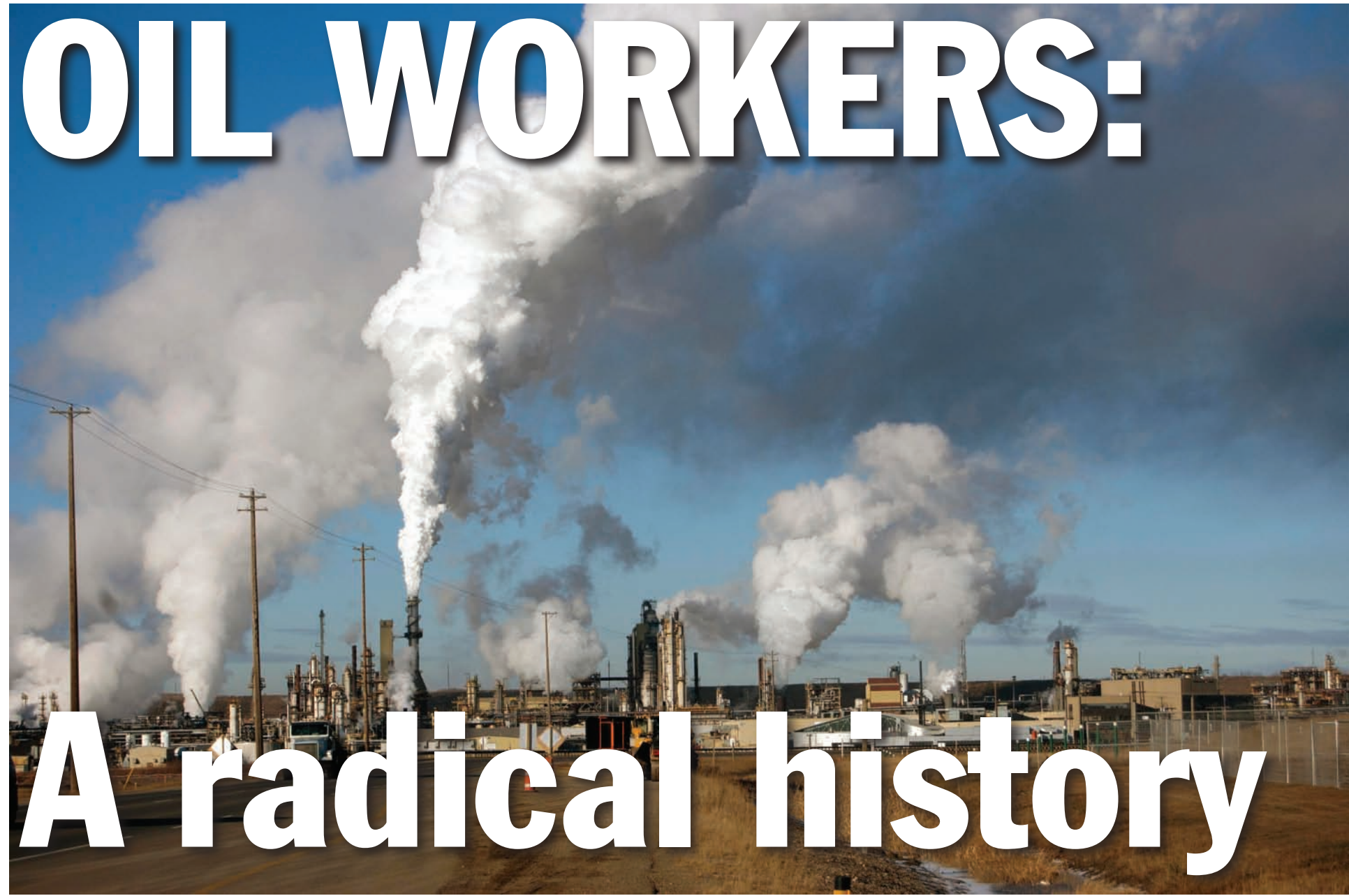
While Trump's move separates the US from involvement in global efforts to address climate change, the Paris agreement was inadequate. Its stated goal is to keep global warming to 1.5° C, but it is toothless, providing only guidelines for nations to curb emissions while providing no penalties or mechanisms for enforcement.

It is a way for governments to be seen to be doing something, while attempting to position their economies to profit from the emerging clean energy sector and supporting technologies.

Trump exposed how inadequate the climate accord was by simply walking away without any consequences. The solution is not self-serving commitments from sections of elites, but mass struggle from below.

The emergence of a world-wide movement for climate justice is of incredible importance. We have to build on this movement, strengthening the links between Indigenous struggles at the forefront with workers fighting for a just transition to green jobs and with environmental organizations that have been sounding the alarm for decades.

The confusion and divisions at the top, and the general mood for real action on this issue, provides a major opportunity for the climate justice movement to push for the more fundamental changes to the economy required to actually address the crisis.



# OIL WORKERS: A radical history

by Jesse McLaren

**O**il workers embody the contradictions of capitalism. Their labour extracts from the earth fossil fuels that are the lifeblood of the system—generating massive profits for oil companies and power for the states that back them.

But this work exacts a health toll from workers and surrounding communities, and contaminates the environment. When oil workers have moved into action to challenge these contradictions, they have helped topple regimes, win health and environmental regulations, and imagine a world beyond capitalism and oil.

## Capitalism and oil

Two hundred years ago, the economy was based on water power, but Britain’s industrial revolution changed it to coal-powered steam. As Andrea Malm explains in *Fossil Capital: the Rise Of Steam Power And The Roots Of Global Warming*, “The transition from water to steam in the British cotton industry did not occur because water was scarce, more expensive or less technologically potent – to the contrary, steam gained supremacy in spite of water being abundant, cheaper and at least as powerful, even and efficient.”

As a writer explained in 1833, “the invention of the steam-engine has relieved us from the necessity of building factories in inconvenient situation merely for the sake of a waterfall. It has allowed them to be placed in the centre of a population trained to industrious habits.”

In other words, the fossil fuel economy emerged—first with coal and then with oil—because capitalists wanted a mobile source of power disconnected from the earth and a more exploitable pool of human labour.

Capitalism’s privatization of the commons, driving people off the land and into cities to produce commodities, was intertwined with its shift to a form of power that could be extracted and privatized from the earth.

Economic competition between capitalists, each dependent on private fossil fuels, also became intertwined with geopolitical competition between states. This has produced a constant stream of wars for oil, fueled by oil.

But there are contradictions in the oil economy. Despite the mobility of oil once it’s extracted, the process of extraction and refining is largely immobile. Fossil fuel extraction represents some of the largest industrial projects, requiring the longest term and most intensive investment of fixed capital of any sector. The tar sands is now the largest megaproject on the

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planet, and capitalists must operate projects for decades to get a return on investment.

While capitalists often use the threat of mobility to extract concessions from workers, oil extraction is rooted where the oil is located and dependent on oil workers. This gives oil workers incredible potential power to shut down the key resource of the capitalist economy and strike a blow at state power. Throughout history, oil workers around the world have played a key role in anti-capitalist and anti-colonial rebellions.

## Anti-capitalism, anti-colonialism

As Rosa Luxemburg observed in *The Mass Strike*, the political revolution in Russia in 1905 against the Tsar had its roots in “the great thunderstorms of mass strikes in South Russia in 1902 and 1903.” This included a mass strike by oil workers in Baku, which who won the eight-hour day in December 1904—a month before the 1905 revolution erupted. This was a dress rehearsal for the great revolution of 1917, which also included oil workers in Baku.

At the centre of Muslim-majority Azerbaijan, an oppressed nation with the Russian empire, Baku was the site of a major conference in 1920 linking worker struggles and national liberation movements.

As the American socialist report John Reed said at the conference, “Do you know how

‘Baku’ is pronounced in American? It is pronounced ‘oil’! And American capitalism is striking to establish a world monopoly of oil. On account of oil, blood is being shed. On account of oil, a struggle is being waged, in which the American bankers and the American capitalists attempt everywhere to conquer the places and enslave the peoples where oil is found... In

part of a mass revolution that toppled the Shah. Because of their centrality to the capitalist economy, oil workers have been the target of counter-revolutionary regimes and imperialist wars—from Stalin in Russia and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, to US intervention in Iraq and Libya.

As the president of the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions explained in 2008, “Five years of invasion, war and occupation have brought nothing but death, destruction, misery and suffering to our people... Our union offices have been raided. Union property has been seized and destroyed. Our bank accounts have been frozen. Our leaders have been beaten, arrested, abducted and assassinated. Our rights as workers are routinely violated. This is an attack on our rights and the basic precepts of a democratic society.”

Whereas earlier lobbying failed to win health and safety regulation from Democrats, worker mobilization succeeded in extracting reforms from Republicans. Mazzocchi explained the lesson, which is important for today: “What’s incredible was the guy who was president then was Richard Nixon, which shows that when you build a big movement from down below, regardless of who’s in the White House, you can bring about change.”

OCAW workers went on strike to protect this shared environment. Amidst the speedups to fuel the Vietnam War, and cutbacks in maintenance, thousands of Shell workers went on strike for their health and safety. They demanded independent inspections, a health and safety committee, information on chemicals and illnesses and free medical examinations.

Oil workers were also part of strikes against Western control of oil in Iran the late 1940s—which encouraged Mossadegh to nationalize the industry in 1951. The US organized a military coup and imposed a brutal dictatorship. But in 1978, oil workers went on strike for both economic and political demands—including against the secret police, and against oil shipments to Israel. These were

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Mass pressure pushed Mossadegh to nationalize oil in 1951.



Nurses show solidarity with oil workers at Tesoro refinery

The early environmental movement focused on conservation and the impact of chemicals on wildlife—ignoring the workers who produced and were exposed to chemicals. The labour movement linked environmental and health concerns, and contributed to regulations in the 1970s.

Following fatal air pollution from a factory in Pennsylvania, the Steelworkers became a driving force for the Clean Air Act. Following mine disasters and chronic lung diseases, coal miners mobilized to win the Mine Safety and Health Act. The United Farm Workers made opposition to pesticides central to farm workers unionizing. Declaring that “pesticide poisoning is more important today than even wages”, Cesar Chavez launched a grape boycott that highlighted health concerns, and contributed to banning DDT. And oil workers played a key role in the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Anthony Mazzocchi was a WWII-vet and anti-war labour activist with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) who saw the devastating cancer epidemic that struck Navajo uranium miners. Inspired by the ecologist Rachel Carson and working with Ralph Nader, he organized townhall meetings across the country where oil workers spoke out against the dangerous conditions in the workplace. He also spoke at the first Earth Day events in 1970.

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As one oil worker explained, “we recognize that all the things that we have gained in the way of wages, and everything else—if you die getting them, they are not going to do you any good.” Unable to dent the profits of the oil giant that used helicopters to support its scab labour, OCAW called for a boycott of Shell.

The “Shell No!” campaign mobilized workers across the country, from New York cab drivers who refused to refuel at Shell stations, to San Francisco longshore workers who refused to unload Shell oil.

It also included crucial support from major environmental organizations, who issued an open letter a week into the strike: “We have increasingly come to recognize that working people are among the hardest hit by the hazards of pollution in the workplace. If toxic substances are present in oil refineries, they most assuredly are spreading outside the plant walls to neighboring communities... This struggle is of historic importance in that it is the first time a major union has struck on what is fundamentally an environmental issue. It illustrates the shared concerns of workers and environmentalists about the quality of our environment, whether inside the plant or beyond its gates. We support the efforts of the OCAW in demanding a better environment, not just for its own workers, but for all Americans.”

The strike not only won the demands for safety committees and information on occupational hazards, but also built bridges between the labour and environmental movements. Neoliberalism worked to bomb those bridges, attacking union rights and blaming layoffs on environmental regulation to pit workers against environmentalists. As Mazzocchi lamented, “Corporate America has painted everyone into a classic dilemma. Now it’s jobs versus the environment. The worker has a choice between his livelihood and dying of cancer.”

But the alliance is reforming. In 2015 Shell workers went on strike again, and received support from Friends of the Earth, Sierra Club and 350.org.

As Labor Network for Sustainability explained in it, “Oil refinery workers are in the front line of protecting our communities against the environmental hazards of the oil industry. Their skill and experience is critical for preventing devastating explosions, spills, and releases... organized labor must recognize its shared interest with those vying for a healthier planet. As we work to protect the earth from climate change, it is particularly important that we advocate for the needs of workers in fossil fuel industries whose well-being must not be sacrificed to the ne-

cessity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

Just transition  
Oil workers have gone on strike against the profit-drive leading to spills and explosions, and also articulated a vision of how to move beyond oil.

As a WWII-vet, Mazzocchi experienced the GI Bill of Rights, which provided education and training for soldiers so they could transition from the trenches abroad into jobs at home. In the 1970s, he spoke with nuclear weapons workers about the contradictions of their job and the need for alternatives: “You’re either gonna use this weapon, and none of us will be around, or you’re gonna stop making it... Peace is going to break out. Then what are you going to do, march to demand more hydrogen bombs?”

Then in 1980, the government announced a Superfund to clean up polluted sites. If there was money to clean up pollution, there should be money to help workers transition out of polluting industries, and Mazzocchi called for a Superfund for Workers.

Like the vets who were supported in their transition from military to civilian life, oil and atomic workers of his union should get full government support for the education and training required to transition from jobs that destroy the planet to those that preserve it.

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“We hope we’re seeing the end of fossil fuels for the good of everybody. But ... we’re going to need a transition.”

and oil worker activists continue to demand it. As oil sands worker Ken Smith said at the Paris climate conference in 2015, “We hope we’re seeing the end of fossil fuels for the good of everybody. But how are we going to provide for our families? We’re going to need some kind of transition.”

The climate justice movement is increasingly raising these demands. As the Leap Manifesto states, “we want training and other resources for workers in carbon-intensive jobs, ensuring they are fully able to take part in the clean energy economy. This transition should involve the democratic participation of workers themselves. High-speed rail powered by renewables and affordable public transit can unite every community in this country—in place of more cars, pipelines and exploding trains that endanger and divide us.”

The recent CLC convention built momentum for Workers for the Leap, for unionized workers to push for just transition.

Uniting the democratic aspirations of oil workers for a safe job and clean environment with the broader labour and climate justice movements is part of building towards a mass transition in society, beyond the oil-dependent capitalist system.

Climate justice activists join refinery workers picket line in California, 2015.

A Rapid Response Team of trade unionists has also been organized to counter the presence of the far right on our streets. The bigots have been harassing people going into mosques, and trying to hold rallies and marches at city hall square. A labour presence has been very important in showing support for the Muslim community.

Unions have also been asked to endorse a Charter for Inclusive Communities – developed by the NCCM as a tool to discuss the issue of Islamophobia – and many unions have signed on.

This is not the time to be silent. People of good will must stand up and be counted. The broader the resistance, the stronger the movement for a better world with dignity and respect for all.

# Labour campaign targets racism



by Carolyn Egan

Recently, a neo-nazi rally in Calgary brought out local people in response, strongly objecting to their bigotry. This type of event has been happening across the country, and it’s pretty clear that Donald Trump and others such as Kellie Leitch in the Conservative Party have given license to these extremists to spout their hate.

They have crawled out of the woodwork, feeling confident that they can draw others to their cause.

The economic crisis and the anxiety so many working people feel about the future has created polarization to the left and to the right around the world. They are fed up with the world that is and are looking for something different. Unfortunately, some fall to the racism and scapegoating of groups like the National Front in France and the UK Independence Party (UKIP).

In Toronto, the labour, anti-racist and women’s movements have organized against this. International Women’s Day drew 11,000 out in freezing temperature, marching to the theme “Stop the Hate – Build the Resistance”. The Toronto and York Region Labour Council, along with the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, filled City Hall on March 21st under the theme “Stop The Hate”. Many trade unionists attended and pledged to build a movement to resist bigotry and Islamophobia.

During Ramadan, the labour council joined the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) in sponsoring an Ifar (where the fast is broken) once more filling City Hall chambers to capacity. The food was donated by the Society of Professional Engineers, a union that has initiated a major program among its members to counter Islamophobia in the workplace and the broader community.

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# Where we stand

## The dead-end of capitalism

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

## A system that is killing the planet

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

## Socialism and workers’ power

Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs. Capitalist monopolies control the earth’s resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

## Oppression

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

## Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples

Canada is not a “colony” of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec. We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples’ original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

## Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We support all genuine national liberation movements. The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. But it was defeated when workers’ revolutions elsewhere were defeated. A Stalinist counter-revolution, which killed millions, created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control. In Eastern Europe, China and other countries, a similar system was later established by Stalinist, not socialist, parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

## Elections and democracy

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

## Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, to reform the system—to improve living conditions. These struggles are crucial in the fight for a new world. To further these struggles, we work within the trade unions and orient to building a rank and file movement that strengthens workers’ unity and solidarity. But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

## The revolutionary party

To achieve socialism the leading activists in the working class have to be organized into a revolutionary socialist party. The party must be a party of action, and it must be democratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass organizations of the working class and in the daily struggles of workers and the oppressed. If these ideas make sense to you, help us in this project, and join the International Socialists.

# Capitalism and wages

by **Faline Bobier**

*Value, Price and Profit* was a speech given to the First International Working Men’s Association in June 1865 by Karl Marx. It was written between the end of May and June 27 in 1865, and was published in 1898.

Marx was polemicizing against the viewpoint of John Weston that “(1) that a general rise in the rate of wages would be of no use to the workers; (2) that therefore, etc., the trade unions have a harmful effect”. One of the arguments was that increasing workers’ wages would only result in an increase in prices and therefore make any wage gains ineffective. The other argument was that an increase in wages across the board would decrease the profits of the capitalists and lead to all sorts of catastrophe.

Marx talks about the introduction of the Ten Hours Bill in England in 1848: “all the [...] official economical mouth-pieces of the middle class, proved [...] that it would sound the death-knell of English industry. [...] Well, what was the result? A rise in the money wages of the factory operatives, despite the curtailing of the working day, a great increase in the number of factory hands employed, a continuous fall in the prices of their products, a marvellous development in the productive powers of their labour, an unheard-of progressive expansion of the markets for their commodities.”

Marx locates the source of all profit in the surplus value extracted from workers by capital. Under capitalism, he argues, it can seem like ‘a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work’. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a worker, you spend some portion of every day working to replenish yourself (and your family) – making enough money to cover what Marx calls the ‘necessaries’ of life: housing, clothes, food, etc. If it takes, say, the first half of the day to make enough wages to cover those necessities, the rest of your work day is essentially spent making profit for your boss. As Marx puts it, the worker is essentially working for nothing for a part of the working day: “Although one part only of the workman’s daily labour is paid, while the other part is unpaid, and while that unpaid or surplus labour constitutes exactly the fund out of which surplus value or profit is formed, it seems as if the aggregate labour was paid labour.” When bosses and pundits bemoan the success of the \$15 an hour mini-



mum wage campaign and argue that it will mean rising prices for commodities and services, businesses shutting down and workers losing their jobs, what they are essentially arguing is that workers should agree to sustain an economy based on their impoverishment. Marx’s key argument was that, while a general increase in pay levels wouldn’t necessarily affect the prices of goods and commodities, it might affect profit rates. But in this struggle between workers and bosses Marx locates a duty for working people to defend themselves against the encroachments of capital that prevent them from living truly human lives. When workers struggle for higher wages or against wage cuts, according to Marx, they are fighting to “set limits to the tyrannical usurpations of capital... A man who has no free time to dispose of, whose whole lifetime...is absorbed by his labour for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden. Yet the whole history of modern industry shows that capital, if not checked, will recklessly and ruthlessly work to cast down the whole working class to this utmost state of degradation.” This still rings true today when you hear the testimony of workers – women, men, Black, Hispanic – who are struggling in the Fight for 15, against some of the wealthiest mega-corporations in the world. Here is Derrell Odom, Iraq war veteran and KFC worker, currently earning \$7.25 an hour, when he spoke in Atlanta for the \$15 an hour minimum

wage and for union rights: “I’m a man who came home after serving in Fallujah and Ramadi and I can’t even put food on the table for my family...I don’t want my son to look at me like I’m something less because I have to work for \$7.25 when I bust my butt every day and I take pride in what I do. We have a voice and we want it to be heard. We want \$15; we deserve \$15.” Struggles in the public sector are for similar aims. When governments argue that the money isn’t there for public sector workers, what they really mean is that they intend to keep public spending low, to permit continued spending on the military and wars, and to allow the continuation of a benign tax regime for corporations and the rich. Marx finished his speech with these final important points: “Firstly. A general rise in the rate of wages would result in a fall of the general rate of profit, but, broadly speaking, not affect the prices of commodities. “Secondly. The general tendency of capitalist production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages. “Thirdly. Trades Unions work well as centers of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class that is to say the ultimate abolition of the wages system.”



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# Bound for glory: Meet Andrew Scheer

by John Bell

Canadians are often so transfixed by international news that domestic stories go unnoticed. As astounding/horrifying as is the unfolding Trump saga, as entertaining as is watching the meltdown of Teresa May's Tories and the rebirth of the British left inspired by Jeremy Corbyn—our domestic political machinations take a back seat to no one.

Pop quiz: how many of you can name the new leader of the Conservative Party of Canada? MP Andrew Scheer was hardly a household name, a deliberate choice to avoid the lingering stink of having been in Stephen Harper's inner circle. Not knowing who the hell he was didn't stop 37 per cent of respondents to an Angus Reid poll from saying he would make the best prime minister to handle financial matters.

The first thing to know about Scheer is that he has always been a Harper loyalist. Unlike Maxime Bernier, Lisa Raitt, and Kelley Leitch who were among the throng that sought party leadership, Scheer was never a cabinet minister. But there was more than one way to serve the Boss.

First elected in 2004, Scheer joined other with-wing back benchers, learning to keep their more extreme ideas under wraps, until given permission by the Boss to trot them out. Scheer took to heart Harper's mantra: Canadians will never give us a majority if they know what we really think.

While Scheer smiled and toed the line laid down by Harper, in some ways he has more in common with Jason Kenney. Like Kenney, Scheer is guided by a very right-wing variety of Catholicism. He has consistently opposed abortion rights. He is against same-sex marriage and was part of the move to "redefine" marriage as a union between a man and a woman. He gets top marks from Campaign Life Coalition.

In 2004 Scheer hosted an Ottawa luncheon meeting with guest Vicar Msgr. Fred Dolan, of Opus Dei. For the uninitiated, Opus Dei is to the Catholic Church as the Taliban is to Islam. Breaking out the dimples, he used the time-tested tactic to avoid criticism: bait and switch. Specific (and justified) exposure of Opus Dei is portrayed as a misguided attack on all Catholicism. "The last time it was a crime to be a Catholic was in 1827 in Nova Scotia when they repealed the penal laws," he said. "It is a shame that some people are trying again to make members of certain faith groups disqualified from public life."

You might think that this champion of religious freedom would have been vocal in defence of Muslim Canadians, but, oddly, such seems not to be the case.

Successfully camouflaging his right-wing ideology behind boyish looks, dimples that appear to be surgically enhanced and an "aw shucks" demeanor, Scheer was elected Speaker of the House, the referee of parliamentary debate. Thanks to Harper's majority, Scheer didn't have to preside over any obviously partisan manoeuvres. So when Harper went down to defeat, Scheer had managed to earn a reputation with his peers as a consistent social conservative and a loyal party player, while avoiding being too closely linked to Harper among an electorate that had grown tired the Boss's right-wing policies.

When Scheer entered the race for Tory leadership he didn't have the brand recognition of blow-hard reality TV star Kevin O'Leary. He didn't go headline hunting with the dog-whistle racism of Kellie Leitch, although he did join her voting against Bill M-103. He didn't hoist himself on the cross by putting his anti-abortion, homophobic ideas first, the way

by Jesse McLaren

Who better than Naomi Klein to write a book about the rise of Donald Trump and how to resist?

Her book *No Logo: Rise of the Brand Bullies* was a guide for the anti-globalization movement 17 years ago. *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism* expressed the radicalization against neoliberal catastrophes unleashed from New Orleans to Baghdad a decade ago. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate* articulated the climate justice movement a few years ago, and her role in the *Leap Manifesto* continues to encourage organizing. Her insights, reflecting and building resistance movements over more than a decade and a half, help to explain the rise of Trump and how to resist.

## Brand bully and disaster capitalist

As she explains, Trump is the "proto-disaster capitalist" who "seized on New York's economic catastrophe to boost his own fortune". He has become "the personification of the merger of humans and corporations—a one-man megabrand."

In the context of Black Lives Matter, protests against rape culture and growing movements for Indigenous sovereignty and climate justice, Trump represents a "ferocious backlash against the rising power of overlapping social and political movements demanding a more just and safer world." His election was "like a Bat-Signal for hatemongers of all kinds."

As Klein warns, we need some "disaster preparedness" to resist the shocks that could come: a terror attack could be used to further target oppressed communities and round up organizers, financial deregulation could spell more economic disasters and a two-tiered disaster response will protect the rich from the climate crisis. But as she explains, "Trump is not a rupture at all, but rather...the logical culmination of the current neoliberal system."

## Trump's strength = liberal weakness

Trump's victory has been explained by competing narratives, either that he captured a disgruntled vote longing for change, or that he represented a bigoted backlash against social change. As Klein explains, his election represents both: "white men are losing economic security (which everyone has a right to), and their sense of a superior status (which they never had a right to) at the same time. In the rush to condemn the latter form of entitlement, we shouldn't lose sight of something important: not all forms of entitlement are illegitimate".

Identifying these legitimate entitlements is

Brad Trost did.

What he did was gather the endorsements of more members of Harper's caucus than any other candidate. He went to the church basements and Legion halls and promised the Tory faithful to wrap Harper's politics in a fresh, dimpled wrapper.

It took 13 rounds of voting for Scheer to beat his rival, Maxime Bernier, by a wafer thin margin. Literally within minutes of his victory, his campaign website was wiped clean and replaced with a happy photo and a "Thank you". Policy statements on issues from abortion rights, opposition to M-103, support for privatize education and homeschooling, and defending racism, sexism and homophobia on university campuses as a "free speech" issue. (Press Progress, June 2, 2017)

## REVIEWS

# The anti-Trump guide

key to understanding the rise of racism: "The only way to justify such untenable levels of inequality is to double down on theories of racial hierarchy."

Klein makes it clear that Trump's win is because of the failure of the Democrats—from Obama launching drones strikes and deportations to Clinton refusing the support the fight for \$15: "Clinton mocked her opponent's 'Trumped-up trickle down economics', but her own philosophy is what we might call 'trickle-down identity politics': tweak the system just enough to change the genders, colours, and sexual orientation of some of the people at the

liberalism has been broken...the left wing almost-wins of the past two years are not defeats. They are the first tremors of a profound ideological realignment."

## Brands, neoliberalism or capitalism?

By articulating the movements, Klein's books also reflect debates within them—which she combines in *No is Not Enough*. *No Logo* focused on corporate branding that rose in the 1990s, and spoke to the tactic of "culture jamming"—which might expose one company but does little to address the underlying economic system. *Disaster Capitalism* looked further back to the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s, which was not just based on brand bullies but state violence—though the conclusion was to break with the ideology of "fundamentalist" capitalism and return to a supposedly rational Keynesianism. With *This Changes Everything*, Klein connected the current climate crisis with centuries of colonization and capitalism, and called for massive social transformation.

Her latest book goes further than *No Logo*, with only a short section on how to "Jam the Trump brand." The target is not Trump but the system he represents. But echoing *The Shock Doctrine*, Klein sees Trump representing "the current neoliberal system" which emerged during the "neoliberal revolution" of the 1970s rather than the much deeper capitalist system. This leads to a criticism of the Democrats for "putting up establishment candidates" and betraying their supposed roots as the "traditional party of workers and unions" rather than being the twin party of US capitalism. Because the root cause is not capitalism but neoliberalism, the model for change is the New Deal when movements pushed Democrat reform.

This leads to problems explaining the way forward. On the one hand, the inspiration of current movements like Black Lives Matter and Standing Rock are counterposed to past movements—criticizing the anti-war movement for being single issue, or the Quebec student strike for not stopping neoliberalism. On the other hand, there are hopes for a future left alternative in power without assessing the previous results (e.g. Syriza in Greece).

These broader debates aside, *No is Not Enough* is a must-read intervention into daily debates about Trump and how to resist. Its central message combines both warning and hope, expresses the polarization of politics and calls for radical alternatives: "Those who are seen as representing the failed neoliberal status quo are no match for demagogues and neo-fascists. Only a bold and genuinely redistributive progressive agenda can offer real answers...Radical political and economic change is our only hope of avoiding radical change to our physical world."

top, and wait for the justice to trickle down to everyone else."

## 'Utopia: back by popular demand'

As Klein emphasizes, the very failures of neoliberalism that have generated the right-wing response to Trump can also produce a left-wing response. As proof of this is the wildly popular campaign of Bernie Sanders, who was defeated not by Trump but by the Clinton campaign and liberals who would rather put their faith in the philanthrocapitalists than fight austerity.

The desire for change has not gone away. Despite Trump's backlash, his presidency has been marked by massive protests. Klein raises the horizons for the wide audience that exists to keep building this mass resistance.

This is the context for left electoral alternatives like Sanders in the US or Mélenchon in France. As she explains, "the spell of neo-

Gone was evidence of connections between his campaign and Ezra Levant's far-right Rebel Media – his campaign manager is on Levant's board of directors.

And in the end, according to Bernier's supporters, Scheer may have had to cheat to win. After the dust had settled, almost 7500 votes were unaccounted for, when the gap between Scheer and Bernier was just over 1000. How's about a recount? Well, a Tory Party director named Dustin van Vugt ordered all ballots destroyed the moment the results were announced.

But fear not, no one would ever suggest Tories would stoop to dirty tricks to win an election.

Make no mistake, Scheer has none of the ideological fire that drove Harper. Say what

you want about the Boss, he was the "alpha male": he was a canny strategist and ruthlessly controlled his wolf pack. By comparison, Scheer seems to be leading according to a template: smile and flash the dimples, avoid being pinned down on the hateful beliefs that simmer beneath the surface, satisfy the Reform Party base with a wink and a nod. Will the back benchers keep their bigotry under wraps as they did for Harper?

Andrew Scheer may think he's bound for Tory glory, but I don't think it will sell. Will Kellie Leitch stop whipping up Islamophobia? Will Brad Trost stop screaming "What about the children?" It ain't gonna happen. I think the Tories are going to discover that replacing Harper will be a lot harder than finding a new poster boy.

## BC ELECTION

# Liberals ousted – pressure the NDP

by **Bradley Hughes**

It's been a long wait, but 51 days after the BC election, the NDP is in and the Liberals are out.

Former Premier Christy Clark tried everything she could do to hang on to power after winning the most seats in the election, but still less than the combination of the NDP's 41 and the Greens' 3 seats.

Outgoing Premier Clark ignored the agreement signed by the NDP and the Greens, appointed a cabinet and opened the legislature with a speech from the Throne. In an astonishing death bed conversion, BC's penultimate Premier promised to fund the lower mainland Mayor's Transportation Plan, dropping her requirement for a referendum, on top of this adding vast increases in light rail across Vancouver Island, up north to Squamish and east out to Chilliwack.

Onetime Premier Clark also promised \$1 billion for childcare, removing MSP premiums, banning corporate and union donations to parties, to increase social assistance rates by \$100 a month and on and on.

This was summed up by Liberal MLA, Laurie Throness speaking in the legislature on the final day of the BC government: The throne speech "borrowed about 30 elements from the platforms of the other two parties."

Our previous Premier concluded her defence of her throne speech by saying, "If this results in an election, then we will put forward our throne

speech to the people of the province."

After the debate on the throne speech, a motion amended to include non-confidence in the government was passed. Our recent premier was forced to go the Lieutenant Governor. Their meeting was not public, but afterwards NDP leader John Horgan was asked to form government.

The NDP has promised many good things: \$15/hour minimum wage, \$10/day childcare, an end to the Kinder Morgan oil pipeline, more money for transit, money to create affordable housing, and adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls-to-action and the Tsilhqot'in Supreme Court decision.

But their support for Indigenous rights is partially undermined by their refusal to halt construction of the Site C dam on the lands of the Treaty 8 First Nations. Instead, they promise to continue construction of the Site C dam while it is sent to the BC Utilities Commission. There is a real risk that the BC Utilities Commission could conclude that construction has proceeded so far that it is too expensive to halt.

One of the conditions of the agreement with the Greens was that instead of raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour, they will "Immediately establish an at-arm's-length Fair Wages Commission that will be tasked with establishing a pathway to a minimum wage of at least \$15 per hour and overseeing regular rate reviews."



NDP government must be pushed to keep promises and to improve on them, like stopping Site C dam.

This is completely unnecessary. The reasons for raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr immediately are well understood and the pathway is obvious: introduce legislation. Establishing a commission can only be a tactic to delay the needed increase. Every month of delay in raising the minimum wage to \$15 will cost the poorest workers in BC \$600.

The victory of the NDP is reason to celebrate, and the chance to say good bye to our old Premier hasn't come a minute too soon.

However, there will be tremendous pressure on the NDP to back down from their election promises from the business community and their media outlets. And we know from our experience in BC in the 90's the NDP will succumb to this pressure, with wage freezes, funding freezes and so on.

Despite our last Premier's sudden conversion to some progressive politics, the Liberals' role from here on out will be boisterous opposition to anything that benefits workers or the environment. As they have done

in the past, the Greens will often side with the Liberals.

The only way to make sure that the NDP promises are implemented and improved on is to organize in our workplaces, our schools and our communities. We need to demand an immediate increase to a \$15/hour minimum wage, an immediate halt to construction on the Site C Dam, and an immediate start on construction of affordable housing.

Oh, and to our recent Premier: Don't let the door hit you in the ass on the way out.

## Fight employers' attack on \$15 minimum wage

by **Kevin Brice**

Within 24 hours of the historic breakthrough by the Fight for \$15 & Fairness campaign, where Kathleen Wynne's Liberal government conceded the largest single increase to the minimum wage in Canadian history, the employer's offensive intensified.

Immediately, the Toronto Sun lamented on their front page that the "New minimum wage effectively unionizes Ontario". Conservative politicians who weren't confident enough to challenge the passing of Bill 148 began to preach on the imminent small business extinction, and the media began a full offensive against the gains of the movement.

What's taking place isn't just an

employer meltdown but a concerted effort to shape public opinion against these gains in order to determine who's going to pay for them.

Should poverty wages subsidize record high profits? Should the province cover the tab?

The Liberals have been pushed into legislating reforms they have no ability to defend and there is a real chance much of our hard fought gains could be at risk.

Perhaps one of the greatest ironies is we are told by the big business lobby that we should oppose the increase because it isn't fair.

Many of the anti-FF15 initiatives across North America have targeted workers who already earn \$15/hour or slightly above who may feel that

a person "flipping burgers" doesn't deserve the same wage as them, or that it isn't fair because they will receive no increase.

This is a defensive reaction which comes from a profound sense of alienation arising from the powerlessness and abuses all workers experience under capitalism. Under capitalism, workers are forced into competition with one another which obscures their common interests and keeps them divided.

In our case, employers create divisions to justify whatever reprisals they have in mind to make up the lost profit—whether it's cancelling paid lunch breaks, which are not protected by law, working fewer workers harder by cutting back on staff,

or retrenching minor perks some workers in Ontario have.

The Fight for \$15 wasn't won because we had limitless access to the media or an army of lawyers. We won because of the rank-and-file network of community activists, labour militants, socialists, and faith groups which took this fight to nearly every corner of the province in the forms of street canvassing, strikes, and demonstrations.

While we can't match the bosses in terms of media reach, we can still challenge those spaces. Letters to the editor, street canvassing, and most importantly equipping workers with the knowledge to have confidence to resist this offensive.

No reforms are permanent under

capitalism and if we want to cement our current victory beyond the next Ontario election and expand it to include what we didn't win, or go even further, as the victorious strikes at York and U of T showed, then we must maintain our momentum.

Within 6 months, 1.7 million workers will feel a 33% wage increase and they need the confidence, unity, and organization to see this fight through. After all, should the Conservatives win the upcoming election the self-activity of these workers in defense of their interests will be the greatest bulwark in fighting back.

• Join the movement – visit: <http://15andfairness.org/take-action/>