

MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas



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CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
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Misinformation and democracy

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MONITOR

Founded in 1980, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is a registered charitable research institute and Canada's leading source of progressive policy ideas, with offices in Ottawa, Vancouver, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto and Halifax. The CCPA founded the *Monitor* magazine in 1994 to share and promote its progressive research and ideas, as well as those of like-minded Canadian and international voices. The *Monitor* is published six times a year by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and is mailed to all supporters who give more than \$35 a year to the Centre. Write us at monitor@policyalternatives.ca with feedback or if you would like to receive the *Monitor*.

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Cover image: Gary Alphonso is a freelance illustrator based in Toronto. In 1982 he graduated from the Sheridan College illustration program and then continued his studies at the Ontario College of Art and Design. Inspired by early 20th century art, Gary's illustration is often nostalgic. He uses a unique digital style that's rich in detail with a focus on colour and tone. His award winning artwork is part of special editions and private collections and can also be found in books, editorials and advertising campaigns around the world.

JON MILTON

Arming ourselves in the fight against disinformation

Disinformation, when practiced at scale, can fracture societies. It's up to us to stop it.

WHEN COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in March 2020, initial public reaction across Canada was, nearly uniformly, to exercise the maximum degree of caution, follow public health guidelines, and stay home. Downtowns across Canada became ghost towns as large swaths of the economy shut down to keep the new and largely unknown virus in check.

Nearly two years later, a group of far-right activists launched the most successful crowdfunding campaign in Canadian history in order to lead a caravan of thousands of people to the nation's capital demanding that all public health restrictions be lifted, COVID be damned. The so-called "freedom convoy" occupied Ottawa for over a month—creating a social crisis that culminated in the convoy's eviction by police following the federal invocation of the *Emergencies Act*.

How did such an enormous shift happen over such a short period of time?

It's impossible to understand the social dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shifts in public opinion over time, without understanding disinformation.

Disinformation has been on journalists' and experts' minds a lot since around 2016, a watershed year that saw the passing of the Brexit referendum in the UK and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States—both driven in large part by disinformation networks on social media. Those

concerns exploded with the onset of the pandemic.

The World Health Organization calls it an "Infodemic," a pandemic of misinformation and disinformation. That disinformation has taken on many forms.

COVID-19, which has killed at least 6.6 million people worldwide, was described as being barely worse than a cold. Masks, which reduce the spread of the virus, were described as being ineffective. Vaccines against COVID-19, which have saved countless lives by reducing the severity of the disease, were described as more dangerous than the virus itself.

These are, unfortunately, not fringe ideas. Nearly one in five Canadians believes that COVID-19 vaccines, which are safe and effective, have killed a large number of Canadians but that the true figures are being covered up by the government.

Such beliefs are fueled by disinformation, which has found an active partner in America's social media giants, particularly Facebook. On Facebook, one study found that COVID-19 misinformation and disinformation receives fully six times the engagement that factual information does. With over three quarters of the Canadian population on Facebook, the company's failure to properly root out disinformation is a dangerous problem.

It's no wonder, then, that nearly one in three Canadians supported the convoy or its demands. The scale and breadth of disinformation has created a situation where a growing

number of our neighbours can no longer agree on what constitutes baseline reality. Such a situation is a powder keg waiting for a spark.

Despite their protestations to the contrary, America's tech giants do indeed have the capacity to wipe disinformation off their platforms. They did so as part of the "Madison-Valleywood Project," a government-coordinated operation that wiped out the vast majority of content associated with the so-called Islamic State terrorist group from Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Google services in 2016. Why, then, are domestic disinformation agents, and the far-right extremists they produce, not subject to a similar purge?

The answer, perhaps, lies in the nature of the threat at hand. There were no powerful domestic interests that backed the so-called Islamic State, but there are powerful interests that back far-right disinformation. The Syrian-based terror organization does not have the backing of Western hedge fund billionaires like Robert Mercer.

Which means that the fight against disinformation is more than simply a fight over facts, but rather a fight over the future itself. In an era of cascading crises—from climate change to COVID-19 to the destruction of the welfare state—understanding the ways that disinformation serves the powerful is more important than ever.

We hope that this edition of the *Monitor*, which examines disinformation from many angles, will serve you in that fight. **M**



New from the CCPA

CCPA BC

Big living wage increases in B.C. this year tell a story not just of rising inflation, but the crisis in housing affordability.

CCPA-BC calculates the living wage annually for Metro Vancouver, and works closely with the Living Wage for Families Campaign and local communities to calculate the rate in their areas.

It now takes an hourly wage of \$24.08 in Metro Vancouver for two parents each working full-time to support a family of four – an increase of more than \$3.50 over the 2021 rate.

For the first time this year, the living wage for Victoria has outpaced Metro Vancouver, and rates in numerous mid-sized and small communities are close behind – reflecting the soaring costs of housing across most of the province.

BC's 2017 election was won on the promise to make life more affordable. Since then, the provincial government eliminated MSP premiums, brought in a new child benefit and made historic investments in child care. These actions concretely reduced the cost of living for families with young children and

actually lowered the Metro Vancouver living wage rate in 2019. But these savings have now been effectively wiped out by ballooning rent and food costs.

The provincial and federal governments have made some important investments in affordable housing in recent years. But the scale of this investment is nowhere near what's needed to make up for two decades of inaction by austerity-minded governments.

The time is now for B.C. to step up its game and massively increase investment in dedicated affordable housing. The province can afford to do so, even in the current uncertain economic environment. That means a massive expansion of affordable rental housing. Other measures like vacancy control (capping rent increases even when tenants move out and a unit is re-rented) are also needed to bring down rents.

Check out the CCPA-BC blog policynote.ca for more on the 2022 Living Wage and to read more about our agenda for affordable housing.

CCPA Manitoba

One of the most anticipated report releases from our office this year was *Safer Schools Without Policing Indigenous and Black Lives in Winnipeg*, by Fadi Ennab. The report finds that for Indigenous and Black students in Winnipeg, safety in school is not the norm; schools are spaces where racism permeates their relations

with peers, staff and police. The report was covered by all major media outlets. The report is part of the SSHRC partnership grant hosted by the CCPA Manitoba via the Manitoba Research Alliance "Community-Driven Solutions to Poverty: Solutions and Possibilities."

Ennab, a PhD student at the University of Manitoba, also authored a second report released this fall: *The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugee Families in Winnipeg*, which documents how much harder COVID made the settlement process for refugees and what's needed to support refugee families' settlement journey as well as their improved economic and social status.

This past fall, the Manitoba office also released *Building the Best Adult Education System in Canada: A Roadmap and Action Plan for Manitoba*, by Jim Silver, at the Adult Secondary Education Council fall conference, where Silver was the keynote speaker. A follow up to Silver's previous report, *Unearth this Buried Treasure: Adult Education in Manitoba*, this report is a roadmap for the implementation of a revitalized and highly effective adult education system in Manitoba. The benefits of such a system are many: when adults go back to school, they become role models for their children, improve economic prospects and can break the cycle of poverty.

The Manitoba office was thrilled to honour Jim Silver on October 30, 2022 at our annual Errol

Black Chair in Labour Issues fundraising brunch. Silver was honoured for his contributions to social democracy in Manitoba and participatory, policy-oriented action research. Jim Silver was also a co-founder of the Manitoba office and has been heavily involved in CCPA for 25 years. We were thrilled that Armine Yalnizyan, the Atkinson Fellow on the Future of Workers, was able to join us in person as the keynote speaker at the brunch. *Monitor* readers will remember Yalnizyan's time with CCPA as senior economist and co-founder of the inequality project. Yalnizyan's down-to-earth and inspiring talk was titled "Standing at the Crossroads of History: How We Could Make Every Job a Good Job." We were pleased that 310 people were able to attend, most in person and some online.

2022 marks the 25th anniversary of the Manitoba office of CCPA. We are grateful to all of our supporters for their dedication. The Manitoba office now holds a third of the "share of voice" in the media for think tanks in the province, outpacing the growth in the media market compared to competitors like C.D. Howe and the Fraser Institute. We are grateful to Larry Brown and Bruce Campbell for their support in starting the office, and to the whole CCPA community for your ongoing support.

CCPA National

With inflation raging and interest rates rising,

our experts have been in high demand in the media for our take on this unusual period in Canada's economic history. Inflation is hitting Canadian households hard, but CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald has been relentlessly tracking the industries that have been reaping excess corporate profits—including grocery store giants, whose \$1.5 billion in profits in the first two quarters of 2022 are twice as much as their pre-pandemic profits. We've been calling on Ottawa to expand excess taxes to include the grocery store giants. Macdonald has also written about the tale of two pandemics: one where the richest one per cent saw a raise of 3.8 per cent in income + capital gains in 2020; another where the bottom 50 per cent's market income dropped by 14 per cent.

The pandemic is not only entrenching existing income inequality, CCPA Senior Researcher Katherine Scott is tracking how it's destabilizing the labour market for many women. In her latest Beyond Recovery labour market update series, Scott shows that women's salaries are failing to keep pace with inflation. That might be fueling a new trend, where women workers are taking early retirement—especially women working in pandemic-affected industries.

You can count on the CCPA to keep tracking income inequality and advancing solutions that governments can, and should, readily

adopt—including taxing the wealthy.

CCPA Nova Scotia

We continue to draw on the housing for all report released last year to show the path out of the housing crisis. When the Nova Scotia government introduced housing legislation that did not address housing as a human right, the core principle guiding this work, members of the Housing for All Working group stepped up to recommend changes when the Bill was in Law Amendments. Our office's submission underlined the urgency needed to support those who are homeless and housing insecure, by addressing the root causes; whether inadequate income assistance, low minimum wage, housing allowances, which are not universally available and which are capped at average market rent, or lack of control over the cost of housing, as well as decades of underinvestment in non-market housing and in tenant supports.

With university strikes happening or threatened across the country, we published a timely blog that raised serious concerns about the professional and economic conditions of contracted university instructors compared to full-time tenured, tenure-track faculty, and the need for action to address the disparities. Our annual Nova Scotia Child and Family Poverty Report Card is cited throughout the year in the media and

is the basis for advocacy campaigns admonishing government for its policy choices, which have left so many Nova Scotian families unable to provide for what their children need to thrive. The 2022 report was delayed into the new year as we were awaiting data including from the Census that allows for a more in-depth look at which families face the highest poverty rates, and what we can do to eliminate poverty for all.

CCPA Ontario

The Ontario government continues its relentless campaign to defund its own operations.

The November update from the Ministry of Finance brought a new wave of cuts to provincial revenues. New tax cuts will drain over \$700 million from public coffers this year. Since 2018, the Ford government has brought in more than two dozen revenue changes that are now costing the province \$8.2 billion annually.

That's real money—roughly four per cent of provincial revenues. It's money that is not going to fund overcrowded emergency rooms, or affordable housing, or education, or any of the other services Ontarians depend on. It's money that is not being spent on wages for public employees barred by law from bargaining to keep up to inflation. It's money that is doing nothing to address the climate emergency or the fact that COVID-19 is clearly not done with us yet.

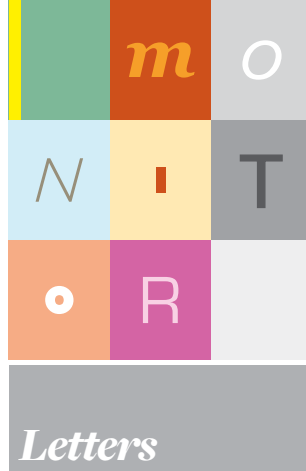
To make matters worse, Queen's Park is underestimating its own revenues for this year by at least \$10 billion. This creates the impression that the province is in deficit, when in reality government books will very likely show a surplus this year for the second time in a row.

In the midst of all this, CCPA Ontario is working to shine a spotlight through the thick fog of government spin to show Ontarians what is really going on with provincial finances. To find out more, visit monitormag.ca/topics/ontario or follow us on Twitter at @CCPA_Ont.

CCPA Saskatchewan

Writing in the *Toronto Star*, columnist Gillian Steward asks 'How did anti-vaxxers get such a stranglehold on Alberta politics?' Her answer draws extensively on research conducted by Saskatchewan Office Director Simon Enoch and included in this issue of the *Monitor*. Simon demonstrates how key organizers and advocates within what would become the Freedom Convoy became radicalized and honed their strategies and tactics in earlier anti-carbon tax and pro-oil and gas protests in Western Canada. These earlier protests were often directed and encouraged by the Canadian oil industry that sought to emulate the environmental movement's passion and conviction in order to drive its members to "take action" and "take to the streets." Powerful industry groups, like the

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, sought to build its own social movement through “petro-populism,” which encouraged supporters to view the industry and themselves as ‘under attack’ by sinister outside forces that sought to destroy their economy and even their very way of life. However, as these protests grew and evolved into what would become the Yellow Vests, United We Roll and ultimately, the Freedom Convoy, industry began to lose control of their creation as anti-immigrant sentiment and growing conspiracies seeped into the movement. But even as the movement pivoted from energy and climate politics to lockdowns and vaccines, the underlying worldview of petro-populism continued to animate their worldview. As Simon concludes, “If you believe that corrupt, traitorous eastern elites are selling out your economy and livelihood to satisfy foreign environmentalists based on spurious climate science, it is not too far of a leap to believe those same corrupt elites would sacrifice your economy and livelihood to satisfy the interests of pharmaceutical corporations based on what you believe to be equally spurious vaccine science.” **M**



P3s: Price-Profit-Power

I’m just looking through the *Monitor* of September/October 2022 and am dreaming a bit. I recall how we all loved the triple P of Public-Private-Partnerships, eh? We now have a new Triple P in Price-Profit-Power. The Powerful are pushing up Prices so they can make more Profits—in other words, we have Prices and Profits driven by the Powerful, to get the 3-Ps in the order of Price-Profit-Power? This Triple-P creates profit-driven inflation! This may sound simplistic, but we have powerful corporations, monopolies, and oligopolies, and other Powerful people and institutions in collusion, who are pushing up prices. They make excuses of having poor supply chains, low resources, false claims of superior products that should get higher prices, etc. Their claims could easily be just another element of false news that is currently exploding. I’m sure others can recall even better excuses used by the Powerful to drive up Prices and get the higher Profits that they don’t remind us of. The *Monitor* points out a few excuses of the

powerful for driving up prices. These higher prices, in turn, create inflation in the profit-driven model of Price-Profit-Power. The *Monitor* points out the institutions that benefit from the higher prices in profit-driven inflation of the Triple-P: the powerful corporations benefit through their higher profits. And, who benefits most—the rich owners of these powerful corporations. I agree with the proposed fiscal policy of many articles in the *Monitor* to cure this Triple P of profit-driven inflation. As prices go up based on false, or at least exaggerated, excuses, we need to have the monetary resources of the purchasers of these goods to also increase. The government can do this through fiscal policy that subsidizes these not-wealthy individuals who must buy these goods, like food and rent, to survive. Come to think of it, the *Monitor* reminds us that most of us are in this group, unless we’re part of the 1%, eh?

Pat Buckley
Ottawa

Land belongs to Indigenous Peoples

Re. September/
October 2022 *Monitor*

Thank you for this very rich issue of the *Monitor*. You have presented a number of ways Canada could be a better country with, to my eyes, a missed opportunity: The rich deposits of critical minerals (like all natural resources) are on land that belongs to the Indigenous Peoples and that Canada

is a signatory to UNDRIP (United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). This is critically important to acknowledge.

One such potentially rich source of minerals, sits in what is called the ‘Ring of Fire the north of Ontario, where nine Indigenous Nations would be impacted and where irremediable environmental risks would be incurred even if only the access road was to be built in the ‘third largest wetland in the world.’

Also, Indigenous labour, not prominent in organized labour, has been crucial in the extraction of uranium, with all the fraught health and environmental issues of health, environmental, ethical, and of course labour related to it.

I did appreciate the very appropriate linkages made by Anthony Morgan.

Bruna Nota
Toronto

P.S. A special ‘military spending’, defence policy issue would also be very welcome.

Correction

In the September/October issue of the Monitor, in the article “Sri Lanka’s neoliberal nightmare” Balasingham Skanthakumar’s name was misspelled as Skanthukumar. That same article referred to Sri Lanka’s labour-intensive high-value apparel industry. It should have read low-value.

Simon Enoch / Saskatchewan Office

The sound and fury of gas and oil extractive populism

WE ARE PLEASED that *Regime of Obstruction: How Corporate Power Blocks Energy Democracy*, edited by Dr. William Carroll, was named the Scholarly and Academic Book of the Year at the 2022 Alberta Book Publishing Awards.

Regime of Obstruction presents research findings from the Corporate Mapping Project, a SSHRC-funded partnership stewarded by CCPA B.C. Office Director Shannon Daub and Dr. William Carroll that includes CCPA B.C., CCPA Saskatchewan, the Parkland Institute and the University of Victoria.

As a contributor to this volume, along with my co-author Dr. Emily Eaton, I think it is worth describing why I think the volume was recognized as such an important contribution to our understanding of Canada's oil and gas industry and how it continues to inform how we should understand the contentious politics of energy and climate moving forward.

At the heart of this collection is the question of how fossil fuel corporations have used their economic, political and cultural power to deny, delay and dilute attempts to transition towards a more decarbonized and democratic system of energy.

Dr. Carroll describes this constellation of corporate power and influence as a “regime of obstruction” that the industry can marshal and mobilize to obstruct challenges and threats to its interests. Certainly, this influence is vast.

While the industry no doubt wields substantial economic power within Canada, it is equally adept at

translating its economic might into political and cultural power as well. *Regime of Obstruction* reflects these different aspects of corporate power.

Divided into three parts, the book catalogues and explains the fossil fuel industry's place within the wider political economy of the country, how the industry attempts to win the “hearts and minds” of the Canadian public and the prospects for resistance and transition to an alternate energy future.

In many ways, the collection can help us better understand the transformation of Canadian politics over the past decade and the oil industry's central role in the rise of populism, particularly in Western Canada.

One of the more helpful concepts to emerge out of the collection is what Simon Fraser University professor Shane Gunster deems “extractive populism.”

For more than a decade, Canada's oil industry has carefully cultivated a narrative, via extensive public relations and advertising campaigns, that portrays itself as the fount of national prosperity, delivering economic benefits throughout the country. Yet, despite this beneficence, the industry also portrays itself as under attack, threatened by powerful outside forces that want to strangle the industry and the prosperity that comes with it.

Due to this existential threat, it is incumbent on industry supporters to defend “our very way of life” from these “sinister forces,” which ostensibly run the gamut from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to foreign environmentalists to Hollywood celebrities.

This “extractive populism” has been eagerly taken up by western politicians like former Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall, former Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe, who readily recycle the industry's core claims and—in the case of Alberta—have even created a government-funded “War Room” to quash it.

This has allowed political leaders in Western Canada to frame support for the oil and gas industry as a kind of loyalty test, with those deemed insufficiently supportive or too critical of the industry accused of failing to stand up for their province's interests.

But extractive populism is not just a fetish of politicians. These sentiments are widely shared among the public in Saskatchewan. Preying upon the very real anxieties that many hold about the future of the oil economy in the province, they shape the way a significant proportion of the public understands energy and climate issues.

The sound and fury unleashed by gas and oil extractive populism have made discussion about sound climate policy in the province virtually impossible, as any consideration of constraints or regulations on the industry are immediately interpreted as an existential threat to Saskatchewan's prosperity and livelihood.

What one will come away with after reading the volume is a profound appreciation of the Canadian oil industry as a central economic, political and cultural actor in our politics. Yet, the book concludes with a look at emergent forms of activism and resistance, a rising *social* power that may be our best and only chance of transforming a highly privatized and carbonized system of energy production to a decarbonized, decolonized and democratic one. **M**

Simon Enoch is director of the CCPA-Saskatchewan office.

CCPA Manitoba co-founder Jim Silver

An activist academic

Molly McCracken, director of CCPA Manitoba, interviews Jim Silver, professor emeritus, activist, and author of 18 books on poverty, labour and inequality. Jim's groundbreaking participatory action research in the inner city of Winnipeg has been key to the transformation of Lord Selkirk Park and Merchant's Corner. Jim was honoured at the 2022 Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues fundraising brunch featuring keynote speaker Armine Yalnizyan.

Molly McCracken: Thank you so much for doing this interview for the *Monitor*. What was your early life like?

Jim Silver: I grew up in a working-class family. My dad was a CNR worker, and there was always conversation at dinnertime about various kinds of political issues. The war in Vietnam had an enormous impact on people of my generation, including me. It was broadcast right into our Canadian living rooms in an unfiltered kind of way. When I was a young man, an opportunity arose to apply to CUSO (Canadian University Services Overseas) and go someplace in the world. I was at a stage where I thought, well, what the hell? Here's a chance to see the world and do something different. Two years in a small, remote village in Ghana had an enormous impact on me and led me to go back to university and through graduate studies, and then ultimately to get the job at the University of Winnipeg.

MM: What were you doing in Ghana?

JS: I taught at a secondary school. I was about the same age as the students and had never had any teacher training whatsoever. I was a quiet, shy young person at the time and not somebody who you would think would end up being a good teacher and liking teaching. But for whatever reason, I loved it right from the get go.

MM: What was your journey to becoming professor in politics at the University of Winnipeg? And then how did you become an activist?

JS: Being in West Africa piqued my curiosity about how the world works. I couldn't understand why these wonderful people were poor. So, I went to university and ended up doing a PhD at the University of Sussex in England, and then wanted to get an academic position and was offered one here at the University of Winnipeg in my hometown in 1982. That fall I was asked to join the editorial collective of *Canadian Dimension* magazine. I got very involved in the free trade fight in 1987–88. So right from the beginning, my academic life and my activist life were intertwined.

Then at the beginning of the nineties, I got involved with and later co-chaired *Choices* (a social justice community and labour group) and *Choices* got me involved in many local Winnipeg issues, especially poverty. There was a remarkable group of people involved with *Choices*. John Loxley led the way in developing alternative budgeting and we did a lot of creative, street-based political theatre. We had an impact on the provincial Conservative government.

When *Choices* ended, Wayne Antony, Errol Black, and I decided to try to create a research institute, which led to the establishment of the CCPA in Manitoba. We had originally intended on it being an independent, stand-alone research

institute. Then we were offered \$150,000 from a person I knew from anti-free trade work, but he needed a tax receipt. We needed to figure out how to get charitable status fast so that we could get the \$150,000. We approached the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and through Larry Brown and Bruce Campbell we became part of CCPA.

I fit into a longstanding Manitoba tradition of people who are academics and who not only publish in peer-reviewed journals, but also are engaged in the community. That tradition continues here today with a remarkable bunch of young people who are faculty members and are engaged in the community in various kinds of ways and involved in CCPA Manitoba.

MM: You've been involved in groundbreaking participatory research, a lot of it published through CCPA, but also through Fernwood and other publications, on the inner city and racially based inner city poverty, and also as a key member of the Manitoba Research Alliance. Can you share your reflections on this approach?

JS: Partly because of my experience in Africa, I became interested in finding out something about Winnipeg's inner city and its poverty. I wanted to get an insider's perspective, which led me to get involved with inner city community development initiatives. CCPA Manitoba and the Manitoba Research Alliance have continued to do lots of community-based and community-driven research on poverty. We've learned that the kind of poverty we have here in Winnipeg—and this is the case in Brandon and Thompson and Regina and right across the West in particular—is a particularly

complex and deeply rooted kind of poverty. It is disproportionately racialized and spatially concentrated, and it is not susceptible to easy solutions. We have also learned that there are in Winnipeg a remarkable group of community-based organizations created by people who grew up in poverty, who understood the inner city, and who have created organizations to meet particular kinds of needs. Many of these organizations are highly effective. Much of our research is conducted with these organizations, which I think has enabled us to develop a deep understanding of the complexities of inner-city poverty.

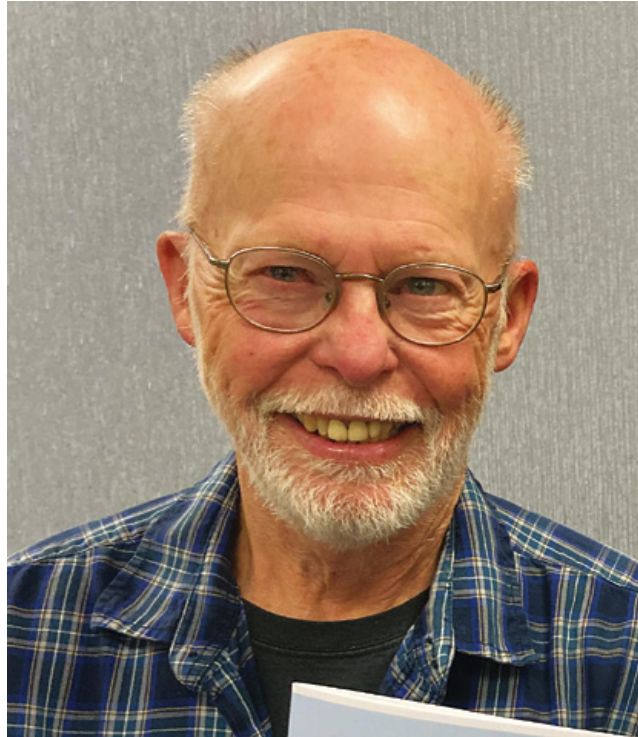
However, part of the conclusion I have reached after 25 years of doing this kind of work is that as effective as this community development, community-based approach is, it will never on its own solve the problem of poverty. Solving poverty would require a massive redistribution of income and wealth and power from the top to the bottom, driven by a government infused with social democratic values and prepared to act courageously in the face of what would be enormous opposition.

The poverty problem has been severely accentuated over the last 40 years of neoliberalism, starting with Thatcher and Reagan. Despite all the terrific work being done in Winnipeg's inner city, we're really not making much progress. We pull one person or one family out of poverty, and another two enter into poverty. We're just preventing the bottom from collapsing entirely. If it weren't for these community-based organizations, I think we would have absolute despair.

We need a social democratic or socialist approach to dealing with poverty, which would mean a different taxation regime to produce revenue in the hands of governments, and then governments having the courage to redistribute that tax revenue to benefit low-income people. For example, here in Manitoba we could design a child care strategy with a massive anti-poverty character by training low-income people to become child care workers, and by ensuring that child care centres are in low-income neighborhoods. More generally, we need to move people into good, decently paid jobs doing the massive amount of work that needs to be done. Through our community-based research we have learned a great deal about how to do that. But it needs to be fully funded by governments that have the courage to re-establish progressive taxation and that are committed to redistribution.

MM: Can you tell me the original name of the CCPA Manitoba office?

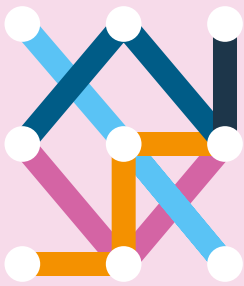
JS: We originally were going to call it the Manitoba Institute for Social and Economic Research. Then one of us had the good sense to realize that the acronym would be MISER. We weren't very effective at marketing! In every respect it's a good thing that we connected with CCPA.



We were successful in getting people to write for CCPA Manitoba right from the beginning. I think that is because we have this long tradition here of academics who are also activists. The very first issue we wrote about was the Filmon government's privatization of 10 per cent of the Winnipeg home care market. We contacted Evelyn Shapiro, who was one of the founders of Manitoba's outstanding home care system and who then was an academic and said, "would you write something for us on this?" And she said, "Sure, when do you want it?" And this was the pattern that developed right from the beginning—we simply have never had any difficulty getting highly qualified people to write for us and work with us. And, you know, that was 25 years ago, and we're still doing great work.

MM: And it is the 25th anniversary this year, and it's pretty neat that we honoured you on the silver anniversary. What gives you hope? Where can we find hope?

JS: I'm a socialist and, you know, you can't be a socialist without hope. We believe a better world is possible. I believe that our ideas, the ideas advanced by CCPA, are the better ideas. So I have hope for that reason. I continue to believe in the importance of rationality. I have hope also because of the many young people doing such remarkable work here in Manitoba, most of them involved with or influenced by CCPA Manitoba. It is true that there are grounds for feeling a bit pessimistic because of the enormity of the challenges that we face. But I think there are grounds for optimism as well. CCPA Manitoba keeps producing important research that makes me optimistic about the future. **M**



Index

Mis/Disinformation

66.87%

In a study published by SAGE Journal in 2021, Facebook was found to be the most prominent social media source of COVID-19 misinformation, producing 66.87% of the total social media misinformation on this issue. WhatsApp came in second, at 10.22%, and Twitter came in third, at 8.22%.

65%

The percentage of Canadian youth aged 18–30 who told an Abacus Data survey in 2021 that they see some form of disinformation at least once a week.

19%

That’s how many of those Canadian youth told Abacus Data that Facebook is their most likely first source of a major news event, followed by Instagram at 10% and TV at 9%.

40%

That’s how many Canadians use Facebook as a source of information in general (not necessarily as their primary source).

54%

The percentage of those Canadian youth who told Abacus Data they are more likely to trust a source if it’s shared by a professor, teacher or mentor; 45% say the same about content shared by a friend or family member.

36%

The proportion of Canadians who report that they “only sometimes” or “rarely” verify the accuracy of the information they find online.

95%

The amount of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation that the “big three” social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) fail to take action to remove after reporting. Much more disinformation is presumably going unreported.

600%

That’s how many more engagement (likes, clicks, and shares) posts from disinformation outlets got on Facebook compared to reputable outlets from August 2020 to January 2021.

8.8%

That’s the estimated reduction in the number of people willing to take COVID-19 vaccines as a result of vaccine disinformation.

96%

The amount of Canadians who gather information online who believe they were exposed to COVID-19 misinformation in the first months of the pandemic. Within that category, 25 per cent believe they were exposed to misinformation multiple times per day.

25%

That’s how many Canadians told an EKOS survey that they support the “freedom movement” in Canada—and 95% of those who support this movement score high on EKOS’ disinformation index (ie, they’ve accepted disinformation as truth) and 66% of them support Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre.

61%

The percentage of Conservative Party of Canada supporters who told an EKOS survey “everything said about climate change is exaggerated.”

81%

The percentage of Canadians who told Vividata in 2018 that they think “the health of our democracy depends on journalists reporting the facts accurately.”

60%

That’s how many Canadians agreed with this statement in 2018: “I worry that the news media is failing to hold politicians and business figures accountable for their actions.”

45%

The percentage of Canadians who said in 2018 that tougher regulations are the way to tackle fake news.

SOURCES: ABACUS DATA, APATHY IS BORING, ABACUS DATA, APATHY IS BORING, ABACUS DATA, APATHY IS BORING, CENTER FOR COUNTERING DIGITAL HATE https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9_b7cedc0553604720b7137f8663366e5.pdf, EKOS <https://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2022/09/public-attitudes-to-the-freedom-movement/> AND <https://twitter.com/VOICEOFFRANKY/status/1577504893094563842/photo/1>, EKOS <https://twitter.com/VOICEOFFRANKY/status/1572788138866614272/photo/1>, EKOS <https://twitter.com/VOICEOFFRANKY/status/1577504736151994368/photo/1>, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/563514/social-networks-used-for-news-canada/>, SAGE JOURNAL <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/03400352211041135>, STATISTICS CANADA <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2021001/article/00003-eng.htm>, WASHINGTON POST <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/09/03/facebook-misinformation-nyu-study/>, VIVIDATA <https://vividata.ca/research-90-of-canadians-are-aware-of-fake-news-but-cant-agree-on-meaning/>



JON MILTON

Disinformation: New tools, same poison

**Disinformation didn't spring out of nowhere—
it's a tool the powerful use to protect themselves from accountability**

SOME TIME in 1914, Ivy Lee was contacted by the Rockefellers. Standard Oil, the American fossil fuel giant owned by the Rockefeller family, was in trouble. Following a long strike by coal miners in Colorado, the company hired a militia to clear striking workers' protest encampment in the town of Ludlow. In clearing the camp, the strike-breaking militia killed 60 people, including children, and burned the workers' tent city.

In the public backlash that followed, Standard Oil hired Lee, one of the fathers of the modern discipline of public relations, to clean up the mess. Lee—the man who invented the press release and press conference—got to work immediately demonizing the strikers. He fabricated a lie that those killed were not actually workers in the coal field, they were hired agitators on the union payroll. He also concocted a bizarre and

unsubstantiated story that 82-year-old union leader Mother Jones was running a nearby brothel.

In the confusion that followed, Lee succeeded in rehabilitating the Rockefellers' image. No longer were they greedy oligarchs who used violence and terror to put down opponents, but rather patriotic industrialists and philanthropists. Ivy Lee worked with Standard Oil—along with other unsavoury characters in the tobacco industry and Nazi Germany—for the rest of his life.

Decades later, when asked about his work covering up the Ludlow Massacre, Lee summarized his view of the work with a question: "What are facts, anyway, but my interpretation of what happened?"

The confusion factory

Before it was called public relations, it was called propaganda. Many of the people who built the modern PR industry got their start in the

Committee on Public Information, the propaganda arm of the American government, which aimed to sell the deeply unpopular First World War to the American public. Among other tactics, the CPI pioneered the use of what we would now recognize as "influencers" in a program called the "four-minute men" in which they recruited community leaders to show up to parties, silent film screenings, and community events to give short speeches in favour of the war.

CPI alumni Edward Bernays—the nephew of psychology pioneer Sigmund Freud, who put his uncle's insights to use to create propaganda—coined the term "public relations" after the term "propaganda" fell out of fashion due to association with Germany. Bernays was a firm believer that the public were sheep to be led by a ruling elite using the techniques of crowd psychology. In his book *Propaganda*, he wrote that "The conscious and

intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.”

The PR industry really picked up steam in the decades after the Second World War—driven, in significant part, by veterans of U.S. Army psychological warfare operations like Daniel Edelman and Herb Schmertz. During these years, the PR industry developed a toolkit of tactics and strategies to obscure the truth and protect entrenched interests. While this principle applied across corporate PR, certain industries were consistently at the cutting edge of disinformation production, especially tobacco and fossil fuels.

John Hill—founder of Hill & Knowlton, which remains one of the world’s largest PR firms—pioneered what some observers call the “merchants of doubt” method, largely in work for the tobacco industry. This method, analyzed in detail in the book of the same name by science historians Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, is based on hiring scientists who reject a scientific consensus that is harmful to industry and platforming those scientists in public to dispute the consensus.

Hill helped the tobacco industry create the Tobacco Industry Research Committee (TIRC), which hired groups of “expert” scientists to sow confusion around the links between smoking and cancer. TIRC scientists spent much of their time researching causes of cancer beyond smoking, with the goal of presenting cancer as something too difficult to narrow down as causal.

Such tactics were adopted by large corporations across industries, notably in the fossil fuel industry, which hired teams of researchers to study how the demonstrable warming of the earth could be caused by things other than fossil fuels—despite companies like Exxon having proof of the link between fossil fuels and climate change as early as the late-1970s.

The point, across industries, was not to prove their opponents wrong, it was to create confusion. If the public believed that there was a legitimate debate going on, rather than a settled scientific consensus, then they would be less likely to pressure a complacent government to take action and rein in corporate damages.

This “confusion factory” developed many products. They created the concept of “astroturfing,” in which PR firms or industry groups fund the creation of fake grassroots (hence “astroturf”) organizations to advocate on their behalf. The tactic was pioneered by Edward Bernays in a campaign for the tobacco industry called “torches of freedom,” which encouraged women to begin smoking cigarettes. Bernays launched the campaign by hiring women actors to smoke while marching in a parade and alerted members of the press that a group of “feminists” would be breaking the taboo against women smoking in public.

Such a front group is amateur by today’s standards, but was groundbreaking at the time. It set the stage for all manner of industry-funded front groups that would emerge in the decades to come. From the American government fabricating a story about Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq to sell an imperial war of occupation, to the fossil fuel industry’s continued efforts to minimize its role in ecosystems collapse, the world of officially sanctioned disinformation is alive and well, and continuously innovating new ways to manipulate the public.

Networked distribution

If the military propaganda and PR industry created a sort of “official disinformation,” sanctioned by powerful corporations and governments, it’s important to also understand that other place where disinformation breeds: among networks of grassroots actors, generally on the far-right. Unlike corporate disinformation, this type of disinformation it diffused and it spreads via decentralized networks.

Diffused disinformation has gotten a lot of attention over the past few years—beginning with concern over the spread of disinformation online after Brexit and the election of Donald Trump and really heating up with the tidal wave of online disinformation that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic.

These categories are, of course, not mutually exclusive—nor is their distinction particularly novel. One of the most harmful pieces of disinformation in history was the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a forged text created by the Okhrana, the Tsarist Russian secret police, to foment hatred against Jews. The text purported to be the minutes of a “secret meeting” of Jewish leaders plotting world domination. Despite the fact that the document was quickly proven to be a fake, it served as a key inspiration for the German Nazis and the atrocities they committed. No matter how many times it has been debunked, the text continues to be referenced by neo-Nazis today, even with no Okhrana to propagate it. This piece of disinformation emerged from a centralized point in the confusion factory then circulated through decentralized disinformation networks managed by dispersed far-right actors.

Perhaps no piece of modern disinformation fits the “networked” archetype better than QAnon, a conspiracy theory and movement centered around a fictional character named Q, who followers believe to be a member of the U.S. government who uses access to classified information to reveal bizarre conspiracies involving pedophilia and satanism. Since its emergence in 2017 on the the now-defunct hate forum 8chan—likely from the imagination of a 8chan founder Jim Watkins, a former American soldier turned Philippines-based pig farmer and accused child pornographer—the conspiracy has metastasized into a real-world movement and penetrated the Republican party, with support from serving congresspeople,

presidential advisors, and even Donald Trump himself.

Once it broke out of 8chan, the QAnon delusion spread rapidly through mainstream social media outlets. Facebook, in particular, but also Youtube, Twitter, and more. Placards reading “Q sent me” and the “great awakening” (a QAnon slogan) began showing up at Trump rallies. Adherents came to believe increasingly unhinged and apocalyptic narratives about a coming rapture, in which their political opponents—all of whom are, by default, treated as satanists and pedophiles—would be purged from public life through violent retribution led by Donald Trump. Such fantasies played a major part in the fascist uprising on January 6, 2021, in which thousands of Trump supporters attempted to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election and institute Trump as unelected president.

The January 6 coup attempt appears to have been the high-water mark for QAnon, as followers deserted the cult-like network following the failure of Donald Trump to hold on to the presidency, which they viewed as a sign that Q’s predictions had been lies. Combined with decisions by Twitter and (Facebook parent-company) Meta to ban QAnon content from their platforms, the conspiracy theory has seen a decline over the past two years, but continues to inform the ideology of the North American far-right, including the so-called “freedom convoy,” which occupied Ottawa for a month in early 2022.

From a trickle to a fire hose

America’s tech giants have revolutionized the global disinformation industry. No longer do individuals who are prone to conspiratorial thinking need to seek out newsletters or meetings with local chapters of the John Birch Society or the Heritage Front. Now, agents of disinformation can access large swaths of the public with relative ease.

Producing such disinformation is also extremely profitable. Infowars,

the disinformation network run by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, was banking nearly \$800,000 per day during a peak in 2018. Much of that revenue came from direct donations and sales on the website, but a significant portion of it also came from ad sales on mainstream social media sites like Facebook before the outlet was banned in 2019.

Jones is perhaps most well-known for his baseless claim that the children who were murdered by a mass shooter at Sandy Hook elementary school were actually actors—a claim that echoed the one made by PR pioneer Ivy Lee 100 years earlier, following the Ludlow Massacre.

Ad tech companies, including Google’s AdSense, make it very easy to monetize websites through ad sales. A 2019 study by the Global Disinformation Index found that, among 20,000 misinformation websites, over 70 per cent were served by Google, providing approximately 37 per cent of their revenue, or \$86 million annually.

The rapid-fire circulation of disinformation, especially via platforms with widespread adoption, like Facebook, can have dire consequences. Perhaps the most grim example of this reality is Facebook’s key role in the 2017 genocide of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, in which at least 10,000 members of the Muslim minority were killed and around a million displaced to refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh. The violence was stoked primarily through Facebook, which failed to stem the tidal wave of disinformation and calls to violence on its platform.

Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen, who leaked a trove of internal company documents to the Wall Street Journal in 2021, revealed that while only 10 per cent of Facebook users are North Americans, 87 per cent of Facebook’s counter-disinformation budget is targeted towards the United States—and that lion’s share still fails to adequately address the scale of disinformation targeted towards Americans on its platform.

Bringing the war home

Disinformation in the era of Facebook and Google is a Frankenstein’s monster. It has combined the titanic resources associated with the “official disinformation” of PR, industry, and governments, with the paranoid calls to violence associated with fringe conspiracy networks. It has created a social tinder box, ready to spark. In many countries of the Global South, whether America’s tech giants don’t care to dedicate resources, those sparks have already turned to wildfires.

But the metastasization of disinformation of the past few years did not occur in a vacuum. It builds on a hundred years of official propaganda, in which the public relations industry (and the clients they served) honed the ability to make the public question baseline reality, distrust scientists and experts, and identify with the most powerful people and classes, rather than the downtrodden.

While the “conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses,” as Edward Bernays put it, used to be the confines of a small number of powerful individuals, that is no longer the case. Such tactics—which have always been used to foment violence, as seen in their origins in WWI—are now widely accessible through tech companies.

It’s unclear how societies can put that genie back into the bottle, but if it is possible, it will require tackling not just the fringe conspiracy theories that propagate via networks, but also the official channels that have fostered disinformation as an exclusive domain of the powerful.

From John D. Rockefeller to Donald Trump, disinformation has always been a tool the powerful use to protect themselves. The tactics may have changed, but the poison remains the same. **M**

Jon Milton is a senior communications specialist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives’ National Office.

SIMON ENOCH

The oil industry's Frankenstein is set loose

AMID THE CACOPHONY of conspiracies, claims, and controversies emanating from Canada's Freedom Convoy in February, one issue was decidedly muted: energy. While energy issues had been the driving force behind previous right-wing protests in Canada, it was barely visible during the weeks-long occupation of the nation's capital. Indeed, if it wasn't for the infamous court artist rendering of convoy organizer Tamara Lich in her Canada Action-branded "I love Oil and Gas" sweater, the vast majority of Canadians would be unaware of the extensive links between the Freedom Convoy and what has been described as "petro-populism."

If, on the surface, the links between energy and the anti-lockdown politics of the Freedom Convoy seemed scant, they were extensive below the surface. The organization, tactics, networks, and funding for the convoy didn't spring from nowhere. In fact, they were nurtured and cultivated through past protests and campaigns centred on energy issues.

In the wake of the convoy and the attention on its organizers, we have learned that many of these organizers became radicalized and honed their strategies and tactics via the contentious energy politics and protests in Western Canada. Indeed, Freedom Convoy organizers and advocates like Tamara Lich, Pat King, James Bauder, Glen Carritt, and Mark Friesen all cut their teeth on the anti-carbon tax and anti-immigration activism of the Yellow Vests movement that grew in 2018 and the closely aligned United We Roll convoy that would lead a pro-oil truck cavalcade to Ottawa in February 2019.

In fact, it may be more helpful to view the Yellow Vests, United We Roll, and the Freedom Convoy as a continuous and evolving right-wing movement rather than separate or unique events. Jacob McLean, a PhD candidate in the Environmental and Urban Change program at York University, has been studying these movements as they have developed over the past few years. McLean suggests that the Freedom Convoy and the United We Roll convoy should be viewed as "twin convoys" that are actually "two flashpoints in a broader, continuous and growing far-right movement." McLean's research illustrates how some participants in the Freedom Convoy also view themselves as part of a longer trajectory of right-wing activism stretching back to the Yellow Vests movement.

"The Yellow Vest movement has become the anti-lockdown movement," one of McLean's informants notes, "because it's the same people, it's the same people and it's growing in numbers." Kurt Phillips of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network concurs, noting "Every single prominent Yellow Vester that I'm aware of is now an anti-vaxxer."

Given the trajectory and growth of far-right activism in Canada over the last few years, understanding the genesis and advance of these earlier right-wing protest movements becomes all the more important to understanding how and why so many Canadians have been attracted to and radicalized by this movement. However, when one investigates the origins of these earlier manifestations of right-wing protest, one discovers that they have a very curious midwife: the Canadian oil industry.

Beginning in the late-2000s, the Canadian oil industry realized it

had an image problem. Canadian oil—the tar sands in particular—was the subject of growing critical international attention and domestic opposition. As industry struggled to respond to these attacks, it became increasingly clear that its traditional behind-the-scenes lobbying and public relations approach was ill-equipped to counter what was perceived to be a highly effective social media-enabled environmental movement.

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers' (CAPP) then-president David Collyer lamented that while "high-priced advertising could nudge the needle of public opinion in the industry's favour," a "well-timed counterpunch from opponents on social media would almost always push it right back."

Faced with the ineffectiveness of traditional forms of advocacy, industry decided to emulate the tactics of their opponents, adopting a movement-based model of advocacy that sought to mobilize small but motivated constituencies that would take the industry's message out into public debates and forums.

But this would be no "astroturf" operation, the pejorative for fraudulent grassroots campaigns that have little, if any, public support. Rather, what the oil industry sought to create was a "subsidized public" that would facilitate and incentivize public shows of support for the industry by providing supporters with organization, platforms, and messages crafted by industry but delivered by the people.

Canada's Energy Citizens (CEC)—a CAPP-sponsored initiative—would be used for just this purpose. Designed to showcase public support for the energy sector and encourage ordinary Canadians

to become vocal industry advocates, CEC was a carbon copy of the American Petroleum Institute's own Energy Citizens campaign created in 2009. Outwardly, CAPP would characterize their Energy Citizens campaign as merely a means to inspire supporters to be a bit more public in their defence of the industry.

"We're not asking people to take to the streets," noted Jeff Gaulin, vice-president of communications at CAPP. However, internally, the message would be very different. In April of 2015, CAPP invited Deryck Spooner, senior director of external mobilization for the API to present on their Energy Citizens campaign. Spooner's presentation recognizes the environmental movement's passion and conviction that drives its members to "take action" and "take to the streets," wondering how the oil industry might capture the same conviction and "harness it." Building that kind of support, Spooner explains, requires industry to engage with potential industry supporters across a variety of mediums—meetings, social media, rallies, town halls, letters to the editor, message boards, direct mail—to "recruit, educate and train" its supporters in order to "motivate and activate" them in service of industry objectives.

CAPP would follow the same strategy though its Canada's Energy Citizen's campaign, aiming to "shift industry supporters from a mode of passive endorsement to active engagement," with planned mobilizations of its supporters that would "include letter-writing campaigns, lawn signs, events and rallies."

While Canada's Energy Citizens would be the most prolific and well-funded of the new industry "citizen" groups, it would be emulated by other industry advocacy organizations as well: the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors (CAODC), for instance, runs Oil Respect, another citizen-centred advocacy effort. A number of self-proclaimed

grassroots advocacy groups would also develop campaigns to support the industry during this period. Groups like Canada Action, Oil Sands Action, and Oil Sands Strong have attracted hundreds of thousands of followers on social media. While nominally independent, they often work in close coordination with industry groups, promoting and amplifying their message. Canada Action has been in receipt of at least \$100,000 in industry funding that we know about.

It is one thing to identify supporters, but to generate the kind of passion and conviction within those supporters that industry required, they needed a narrative capable of driving supporters to "take the streets." To do that, the stakes must be high and the situation urgent. And the oil industry would deliver this, through its narrative of "extractive" or "petro" populism.

Many political theorists talk of populism as a "thin ideology," which means that beyond its basic narrative of the people versus elites, it often borrows its more substantive content from other sources. The basic narrative of populism is that a "pure" people have been betrayed by a corrupt and unrepresentative elite that does not represent the people's interests and even hold the people in contempt. Extractive populism would put the meat on the bones of this otherwise familiar populist message in Western Canada.

According to Simon Fraser University School of Communications professor Shane Gunster, extractive populism contains three key claims. The first is that the oil and gas industry constitute the anchor of the Canadian economy, delivering a wide range of economic benefits to everyone in the country. Yet, despite bringing this economic prosperity, the second claim is that the oil and gas industry is under an unprecedented and unfounded attack, threatened by a small but highly vocal and surprisingly powerful constellation of political forces. The final claim calls for the political

mobilization of industry supporters who are required to defend "our very way of life" from the sinister forces that threaten it—with those "sinister forces" running the gamut from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to foreign environmentalists to Hollywood celebrities.

As Gunster and his colleagues show, the narrative of extractive populism has been propagated by the industry for more than a decade and already has deep roots in much of Western Canada, with politicians eagerly recycling its core claims and even creating institutions and policies to address it (see, for example, the Alberta inquiry and "War Room"). Moreover, its claims have been particularly prevalent within the social media messaging of the industry advocacy groups described above. Indeed, it is this narrative of existential threat and betrayal of Western Canada by outside forces that allowed industry to activate and mobilize their supporters to literally "take to the streets" for the earliest public rallies in support of the oil and gas industry in 2018.

Four years prior to the Freedom Convoy, Western Canada would witness a series of pro-industry truck convoys and rallies calling on the Trudeau government to support the oil industry by facilitating pipeline construction as well as scrapping the federal carbon tax and the environmental regulation contained within Bill C-69, dubbed "the pipeline killer." These rallies were staged in towns and cities across Alberta and Saskatchewan in the winter of 2018-2019, often organized in concert with industry citizen groups like Oilfield Dads and Canada Action and vigorously promoted by Canada's Energy Citizens and Oil Respect on social media.

Indeed, a December 2019 newsletter from Canada Action claimed to have hosted more than 30 "resource rallies" across Canada. Although organizers were keen to present the fledgling movement as non-partisan and moderate,

participants often went off-script, with early hints of the more violent, conspiratorial, and anti-immigrant rhetoric making its way into news coverage.

As these planned protests progressed, participants began adopting the symbols and messages of Canada's burgeoning Yellow Vests movement, often to the consternation of industry advocates and organizers. While the Yellow Vests' vehement opposition to the carbon tax was more than welcome, its conspiratorial and often virulently racist anti-immigration stance was not. This would inaugurate a conflict within the pro-industry movement that would have profound consequences going forward. As McLean sees it, the industry citizens' groups did not want to be publicly associated with the Yellow Vests, but "the public they had subsidized into action insisted on heading in that direction."

Industry advocates would increasingly try to police the movement they had created, admonishing participants to forgo the symbols and messages of the Yellow Vests. Cody Battershill, founder of Canada Action, speaking on his decision to ban Yellow Vests from a Regina protest in January of 2019, noted that "[t]here is no room for racism. There is no room for some of these viewpoints in our movement." Yet the Yellow Vests' presence would continue to grow within the pro-industry movement. The conflict would come to a head over competing visions for a cross-country convoy targeting Ottawa in February of 2019.

Canada Action, along with a host of other pro-oil groups, announced its intention to send its "Resource Coalition Convoy" to Ottawa early in 2019, with Canada's Energy Citizens promoting the convoy and its fundraising efforts. However, Yellow Vests Canada (YVC) would announce their own competing convoy around the same time, demonstrating further rifts within the movement.

Battershill would again try his best to instill some message discipline into his Yellow Vest allies:

"We're going to do a convoy, other people want to do a convoy too; it is what it is. We just need to make sure that the message that's being sent around supporting the energy sector is not lost in conversations around other issues. That is what would be the biggest travesty. Let's just focus on getting back to work and building support for the resource sector; we don't need to make this about other issues that aren't positive."

Ultimately, Mr. Battershill must have lacked confidence in the ability of his allies to stick to the script, because on January 14, Canada Action announced that the Resource Coalition Convoy would be cancelled due to "unexpected challenges." As McLean observes, "many of the activists who had signed up for the Canada Action convoy promptly switched to the YVC Convoy after the former cancelled, further demonstrating the fluidity and cross-pollination between the movements." The YVC convoy would be roiled by further divisions, as the head organizer, Glen

Carritt, split off to start yet another convoy, dubbed "United We Roll," in an attempt to distance the convoy from the Yellow Vests. Yet, despite the name change, scholars Brooks De Cillia and Patrick McCurdy observe that "leadership remained consistent and Yellow Vest protestors were still welcome, with Carritt stating: 'We still stand behind the 'yellow vests,' but whether you want to wear the yellow vest or not, we welcome all respectful, hard-working Canadians.'"

Despite this continued participation of the Yellow Vests, industry citizen groups like CEC and Oil Respect continued to promote the convoy on social media, as did prominent Conservative politicians like Saskatchewan premier Scott Moe and former Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer.

As we now know, these early protests (and others that followed) would be the incubator within which the personnel, tactics, strategy, networks, and organization of the Freedom Convoy would gestate. And while energy issues would be sidelined in favour of vaccine mandates and lockdowns, the populist message that industry and its allies had been cultivating for over a decade would remain underneath. If you believe that corrupt, traitorous eastern elites are selling out your economy and livelihood to satisfy foreign environmentalists based on spurious climate science, it is not too far of a leap to believe those same corrupt elites would sacrifice your economy and livelihood to satisfy the interests of pharmaceutical corporations based on what you believe to be equally spurious vaccine science.

Certainly, pains have been taken by industry and its allies to distinguish the "good" part of the movement from the "bad," with the idea that the movement was ultimately "hijacked" by extremist elements that are now commonplace. But it must be acknowledged that the industry's self-professed strategy from the outset was to mobilize its supporters to "take to the streets," providing the early organization, platforms, publicity, and messaging to accomplish just that.

Speaking on the development of Canada's Energy Citizens mobilization strategy back in 2015, CAPP's Jeff Gaulin claimed, "we're not trying to build an army of radicals." But that may just be what the oil industry has done. McLean argues that the industry ultimately lost control of its own creation—a veritable Frankenstein's monster that grew too large and too unruly for its handlers. **M**

A longer version of this article originally appeared in *Briarpatch* magazine.

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SUPRIYA DWIVEDI AND PHAEDRA DE SAINT-ROME

Canada can't be complacent about threats to our democracy

HERE IS NO doubt that compared to other peer jurisdictions Canada has remained resilient in the face of mis/disinformation in the past. However, declining trust in mainstream media, American mis-/disinformation actors inserting themselves into Canadian political narratives, and examples of foreign interference underscore why past resilience should not make us complacent in addressing these growing threats to our democracy.

During the last federal election, the Media Ecosystem Observatory (MEO) led the Canadian Election Monitoring Project to monitor and respond to serious cases of mis-/disinformation during the 2021 federal election, as well as study Canadian attitudes towards it. In its final report, MEO attributed Canada's resilience to mis-/disinformation to the country's "relatively high level of trust in mainstream media,

low disinformation production of broadcast media outlets, and its comparatively low levels of societal polarization and populist communication."

But this bedrock of resilience is shifting: levels of trust in mainstream media are falling, Canadians are increasingly getting their news from other sources, and populist political rhetoric is increasing.

A recent Reuters Institute report found that Canada has had one of the biggest drops in trust in public broadcasting in the last four years. As they shift away from traditional media, Canadians are increasingly turning to podcasts and social media for their news, which boast little, if any, of the journalistic standards of public broadcasting and mainstream media.

This makes Canadians more likely to come across mis-/disinformation and be susceptible to it. And while there is no Canadian equivalent to

Fox News, Canada has a thriving network of partisan right-wing media sites that masquerade as legitimate news sites. Failing to bolster the resiliency of our information ecosystem increases Canada's vulnerability to mis/disinformation.

Even more worrying, populist communication from mainstream political actors is becoming more commonplace and there seems to be an increasing willingness by the Conservative Party of Canada and its newly minted leader, Pierre Poilievre, to peddle misinformation. Poilievre has falsely accused Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of planning to tax pickup trucks as well as claiming that the Trudeau government would be banning nitrogen-based fertilizers for agricultural purposes.

These examples are important to highlight in the context of Canada's need to strengthen its misinformation resiliency, not least because MEO's research found that

misinformation that closely resembles the truth is likely to be widely seen and believed.

Poilievre is not alone in providing a platform to conspiracy theories. In a 30-minute live broadcast on Facebook earlier this spring, then-leadership candidate and now the Government Critic for Infrastructure and Communities, Leslyn Lewis, alleged that Prime Minister Trudeau was entering Canada into an international pandemic treaty governed by the World Health Organization (WHO) that would restrict Canadians' travel and medication choices, suspend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and would ultimately pave the way for a global government.

Additionally, both Poilievre and People's Party of Canada Leader Maxime Bernier have singled out journalists by name and journalistic outlet, further contributing to Canadians' growing distrust in the mainstream media.

But the problem is not only homegrown: people like Fox News' Tucker Carlson and Republican Congresswoman Lauren Boebert, as well as former American President Donald Trump, have inserted themselves into Canadian domestic narratives and fueled misinformation-driven right-wing populism in Canada, too.

In February, Boebert expressed her support for the Freedom Convoy by saying that Canada needed to be "liberated along with Ukraine."

Tucker Carlson covered the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge on his primetime show, calling it "a useful reminder to the entitled ruling class" and at a political rally in Texas, Trump said the convoy participants were "doing more to defend American freedom than our own leaders by far."

Beyond the overt messaging from the American right, there have also been foreign state-led efforts that have sought to influence the outcome of our federal elections.

Canadian intelligence agencies have uncovered efforts by Indian government agencies to use disinformation to "covertly influence" Canadian politicians.

More recently, in the 2021 federal election MEO found that Chinese officials and state media propagated "[m]isleading information and information critical of certain [Canadian] candidates," which was shared widely on Chinese-language social media platforms. MEO found that this was done, "with an apparent aim to convince Canadians of Chinese origin to vote against the Conservative Party."

Although MEO's research showed that these efforts did not impact the outcome of the election in 2021, Canada needs to be proactive in how it addresses these threats to our democracy posed by misinformation and the actors who capitalize on it.

There are a handful of possible policy solutions outlined in the 2021 MEO report that can help build and maintain Canadian resilience to mis-/disinformation. First, MEO proposes developing a community of

practice focused on tackling this problem in Canada. Such a body would be composed of researchers, government bodies, media organizations, and civil society organizations that can provide continuous analysis of the health of Canada's information ecosystem. Ideally, this community would also have connections to social media companies to maximize access to as-complete-as-possible data while still protecting the privacy of Canadians.

Second, MEO recommends strategically countering misinformation. Journalists and media organizations should develop and implement a set of standards that avoids inadvertent amplification of mis-/disinformation. MEO observed this phenomenon when a misleading tweet during the 2021 federal election by Chrystia Freeland was flagged by Twitter as "misleading content," which then fueled its own misinformation cycles among both Liberal and Conservative Party voters.

Third, we recommend increasing public resilience to misinformation, which can be done in multiple ways. Finland, for example, introduced a strategy in 2014 to improve its resilience to misinformation after being targeted with fake news by Russian state actors. The strategy included a multi-disciplinary curriculum taught as early as elementary school and focuses on building multi-platform information literacy and critical thinking skills. The government strategy also included providing training for civil servants, journalists, teachers and librarians.

Thanks to these efforts, Finland was ranked first out of 36 countries this year in a study on European resiliency against misinformation.

Another thing to consider is improving transparency in communications by government agencies, institutions and representatives. Mis-/disinformation thrives in an information vacuum or where transparent and reliable information is difficult to access. Similarly, toxic partisanship exhibited by any political leader contributes to the declining trust in authoritative sources of information.

Finally, we recommend extending initiatives that limit and counter misinformation beyond election periods. While there is increasingly intense focus on this issue during election cycles both by public broadcasters and social media platforms, this usually ends once the ballots are counted. As noted by the MEO Report authors, "[t]he threat to democracy may lie more in the slow and steady erosion of factual agreement, institutional trust, and social cohesion than in a flurry of election activity."

It's easy to take Canada's robust and healthy democracy for granted. But democracy takes work. Hopefully, our political leaders realize they need to start putting in the work to protect ours. **M**

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HEATHER M.

Bots, trolls, deception and the hacking of the human brain

WE ARE CURRENTLY living in a time of social engineering, unmatched in human history, thanks to social media. Manipulators and malign influence peddlers have been quick to move in and hack this global shift in interactions. They are relentless and constantly evolving to evade attempts to combat them.

Adversarial actors are effectively weaponizing social media platforms in order to rig the human mind. They interfere in elections, financial institutions, public health—in fact, there is almost no corner left untouched.

The ultimate goals may vary, whether sowing discord, using inauthentic manipulation to sway elections, economic or financial sabotage, or PR campaigns to sway public opinion about a person, company or country, the purpose is to get people to believe a particular narrative, regardless of how deceptive or destructive that narrative may be.

For the purposes of this article, the focus will be primarily on Twitter, although much of what is discussed here may apply to other platforms as well.

First, let's define a few terms:

Bots: Automated accounts where the frequency and content of tweets are controlled by software. Often used to act as accelerants of messaging. This can be malicious in the form of manipulation, i.e. spreading disinformation, amplifying divisive propaganda; or useful in the form of alerts about natural disasters; or benign in the form of tweeting out routine marketing of everyday products.

Trolls: Online false identities, assumed by individuals acting alone, or as part of an organized group (for example, a troll factory, where individuals are paid to be deception agents online). Their intent is to spread malicious content, attack individuals and be disruptive. The human handler of troll accounts can manage many accounts at once. (A distinction can be drawn between individuals acting on their own and paid trolls).

Cyborgs: Accounts that are partially automated combined with human handlers. For example, a factory troll can manage more accounts when the accounts are partially automated. Bots can take over and continue tweeting while the human handler is offline or engaged with other accounts in the roster. Software is used for the automated portion of these accounts.

Sock puppet account: Anonymous accounts with default profile image. The term has also come to mean the misleading use of an online identity, often used to bypass removal by a social media company like Twitter. Sock puppet accounts often post praise of their other account(s) while posing as an entirely separate third party individual.

Troll Factory, aka Troll Farms: Large numbers of inauthentic accounts handled by people hired to pose as authentic users for malign purposes. These can be state-backed operations of adversaries, such as the infamous Russian Internet Research Agency, or troll factories for hire that exist in multiple regions and countries around the world, for example, in India, Moldova, Gambia, the Philippines, even Arizona. PR companies can be

brokers for using for-hire troll factories, disguising who the real client is and what influence campaign they are mounting.

Backing: When large numbers of inauthentic accounts “back” the account of an authentic user, making them appear as though they are more influential and increasing the size of their megaphone. This, in turn, encourages legitimate users to follow and pushes the account higher in the ranking.

Boost: When bots and troll factory accounts are used to artificially amplify tweets. This can be done to help get a hashtag to trend or to promote a particular desired narrative. The boosted tweets will then become prioritized by Twitter's algorithms and receive higher ranking, thus becoming more visible to people exploring a hashtag, regardless of whether or not the person is following the account that put out the tweet. (Genuine users can also encourage followers to “boost” a message, but as this is authentic, it has different connotations than adversarial use of boosting, employing thousands of bots).

Brigading: Coordinated abusive engagement. For example, coordinated mass reporting of a particular account with the goal of having the account silenced, sidelined or removed. It is similar to **swarming**, where large numbers of coordinated malicious accounts flood a target account with abusive replies and quote tweets in an effort to attract others to join in the swarming and overwhelm the user of the target account. Swarming has a few meanings, including “bot swarming” when large numbers of bots all

tweet versions of the same content in a coordinated fashion to give the impression that many people are agreeing and saying similar things.

CIB (Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour):

Facebook defines CIBs as such: “Influence operations as coordinated efforts to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal where fake accounts are central to the operation.”

Misinformation: False information, accidentally spread, where the person spreading the false information is unaware of its falsehood.

Disinformation: False information, deliberately spread with intent to deceive.

Malinformation: Factual information, spread with malicious context meant to mislead or inflict harm. Hacked emails or photos, “revenge porn”, doxxing, phishing, are all examples of malinformation.

Propaganda: Can be true or false. It can contain elements of disinformation and malinformation. But its ultimate purpose is to influence and manipulate.

Marc Owen Jones, an associate professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University and author of *Digital Authoritarianism in the Middle East & Political Repression in Bahrain*, prefers to use the term deception as a catchall to include elements of disinformation, malinformation and propaganda.

“I think [the term] ‘deception’ is important, because ‘deception’ carries the mode of delivery, as well as the content itself....Deception is more about the means of delivery, which can tell us a lot about the intent as well. If someone is spreading a message with a thousand fake accounts, their intention is not good. Or their intention is to do something that is not transparent.”

Troll networks

In the seven years that I have independently studied inauthentic activity on Twitter, I have seen a tremendous increase in complexity. I have paid particular attention to what I call troll networks, which I will define as follows: complex networks of authentic users, troll factory accounts, bots, cyborgs and trolls that particularly amplify and spread disinformation, malinformation, misinformation, and propaganda.

The authentic users (real people) in these networks are essential to the success of the network. The authentic users know they’re not bots and this increases

their belief that others in their network must therefore also be “real.” It ignores how the messaging within networks can be inauthentically shaped, amplified, and weaponized.

Bots can act as brokers between groups, amplifying strategic content in order to connect different groups, thereby creating increasingly large and complex echo chambers. The high engagement “star” accounts in these networks can be artificially raised up as opinion leaders whose views are then carried forward by other users as well as amplified by bots and troll accounts.

This gives the impression to other users, as well as influential media outlets, that many people hold these same views and thus becomes a way to legitimize and normalize increasingly extreme view points. It moves the Overton window, if you will. This can give the impression of a large movement that is, in reality, relatively small, but that encourages others to join in.

The high engagement accounts in these networks in 2016 could be entirely fake accounts, such as those seen from the Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg. Paid trolls in Russia posed as both Black activists as well as Trump supporters, creating division and polarization in order to dissuade voters on the left from voting for Hillary Clinton, while mobilizing voters on the right to vote for Trump. In other words, both left and right are targets of these operations.

However, in the past few years there has been a shift away from purely fake high engagement accounts, and instead what is most prevalent now is boosting legitimate users (a real person) and weaponizing their content. In other words, for the purposes of malign influence, it doesn’t really matter that the account is real—the content can be weaponized just as effectively. Even more so, in fact.

Adversaries will become followers of someone they wish to promote as an influencer and back them. This amplifies their content and makes Twitter’s algorithms see the account as more important. It also encourages the user to tweet more of the desired deception content, as those are the tweets that will (artificially, at first) receive the most engagement. Social media companies monetize engagement, making the problem an extremely complex one.

By weaponizing the content of actual people, it disguises a malign influence operation more effectively, making it more difficult to shut down or counter. Adversaries can weaponize these networks to respond to any news cycle within hours.

Adversaries can also repurpose tens of thousands of accounts to respond to current events in real time. The bot and troll factory accounts act as amplifiers shifting a narrative, which then encourages authentic users to engage and follow suit.

Bots play a significant role in recommending groups to each other, bridging these groups, creating cohesive messaging amongst different groups to form a larger

Bot and troll factory accounts amplify a narrative, encouraging others to follow suit

and more complex network while feeding links to deception media into the groups. For example, linking anti-vax groups with anti-mask groups and gun rights groups while feeding the idea that all of these areas are really about your individual rights. These groups, in turn, share links to propaganda media like Rebel News, Breitbart, True North Centre, InfoWars and so on, amplifying disinformation media amongst different groups. This becomes a feedback loop and increases the echo-chamber characteristic of these networks.

Bots can be used for the opposite purpose as well. They can be used to sow confusion and make groups less cohesive. For example, in the early days of COVID-19, during lockdown, the work of Dr. Kathleen M. Carley and her team at Carnegie Mellon University's Center for Informed Democracy and Social Cybersecurity showed that many thousands of new bot accounts were created to engage in a "reopen America" campaign. There were bots tweeting on the pro-lockdown side as well as the anti-lockdown side. But their purpose was to diffuse the pro side while making the anti-lockdown side much more cohesive.

Then the messaging took a rhetorical shift. It moved from anti-lockdown propaganda to being about convincing the bridged anti-lockdown groups that it was really about their rights—their right to not wear a mask or get a vaccine. The groups could then be steered towards marrying this with political ideology, politicizing public health measures meant to curb the spread of COVID-19. In essence, these groups could now be weaponized and aimed at real-world political action, such as what we witnessed in Canada with the so-called freedom convoy.

Dr. Carley and her team have done extensive research on social cybersecurity and the effects of malign inauthentic online behaviour. They found a "nexus of harm" in which bots are used to search keywords and phrases to "collect" haters and steer them towards hate groups in order to form networks and echo chambers. Disinformation is fed into these groups to provide extremists with a story (i.e. conspiracy theories).

Not all hate groups are extremist groups. But as a hate group or network becomes more of an entrenched echo chamber, the more bot-fed extremist disinformation can have an impact. This increases the risk that the group can "topple" into actions in the real world, including acts of ideologically, politically or religiously motivated violent extremism.

A hashtag like #TrudeauMustGo, for example, has been routinely amplified by adversarial actors and is meant to form an identity marker for an "in" group. But its use is also meant to form a subconscious cue in both the "us" group and the "them" groups, thus exploiting social cognition.

While bots may have been used to trend hashtags like this, getting authentic users to do the same is the goal. As the entrenchment of the echo chambers around

drivers of hashtags like #TrudeauMustGo increases, so, too, does the real-world hate and ultimately, the real-world death threats.

Adversarial actors both exploit and hack the social cognition that results from the messaging and feedback loops in these echo chambers.

The perpetuation of conspiracy theories is also a key aspect in how malicious actors cause harm. The belief in conspiracies, such as The Great Replacement, WEF conspiracies, 5G tracking people through the MRNA COVID-19 vaccines, and so on, go hand in hand with online extremism.

When purposeful malign narratives are being pushed online, research by Dr. Carley shows that 60 per cent of the accounts initially pushing these narratives are bots.

Fake news and propaganda websites play an important and dangerous role in spreading deception and in hacking our brain (the amygdala) as well. These sites are a primary source for the types of disinformation spread amongst networks. This is significant in terms of the real-world implications. All of these elements create a ratio of interplay between one another.

Based on the work of Robert Pape and the Chicago Project on Security and Threats (CPOST) at the University of Chicago, examining participants in the January 6 insurrection on the U.S. Capitol, they discovered that participants in the insurrection who held the most radicalized beliefs had as their primary news sources OANN and NewsMax, as well as right-wing online sites like 8Chan, InfoWars and others. That fuelled alarming beliefs that the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump and that Joe Biden is not the legitimate president—and that it was acceptable, even necessary, to remove Biden by force. Pape's findings at CPOST translates into 21 million American adults believing that using violence to remove the government and attack fellow Americans, is valid.

But access to disinformation alone doesn't accomplish what adversarial actors are looking to achieve. Rather, it is in the shaping and weaponizing of behaviour and beliefs—forming an echo chamber using bots to amplify and bridge groups together as well as using trolls, troll factories, and cyborgs to feed deception into the group, with propaganda media creating feedback loops—that combine to further adversarial goals.

By giving the impression that many others feel the same way and believe the same things, it has a powerful effect on human psychology. In other words, it's a system designed to hack human psychology and hijack the emotional response system of the brain, to give people a sense that they are right, they are supported and that they *belong*.

None of us is immune. **M**

Heather M., whose last name isn't being published for security reasons, is an independent researcher in online deception and malign influence operations. She has a background in theoretical mathematics as well as media studies.

JORDAN LEICHNITZ

The rise of far-right extremism

LAST SEPTEMBER, experts on hate from across Europe and North America gathered in Ottawa for a conference to share strategies and exchange intelligence on the growing threat of right-wing extremism. They sounded a clear warning about the threat that hate and disinformation pose to our democracies—and offered ideas to confront it.

Hate Among Us: Combatting Right-Wing Extremism in Canada, the U.S. and Europe was co-hosted by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Canadian Anti-Hate Network. The conference brought together international experts on countering the far-right, academics, activists and policy-makers to discuss emerging trends in hate groups, the role of the G7 in combatting disinformation, best practices and new tools for anti-hate education, and to examine empowering community responses that strengthen democracy.

Far-right extremism includes a spectrum of movements that range from old-style hate groups and neo-Nazi organizations to loosely affiliated anti-government, anti-feminist and anti-immigration networks. People inspired by these ideologies have been responsible for deadly attacks in Canada, from the Toronto van attack to the Quebec mosque shooting to growing harassment of journalists and other public figures, particularly racialized women.

Conspiracies and disinformation are firmly entrenched in Canada. An Abacus survey found that 44 per cent of Canadians believe in at least one conspiracy theory, and an Ekos poll found that a quarter of Canadians sympathize with the anti-vaccine sentiments that animated the trucker convoy.

The weeks-long winter 2022 occupation of downtown Ottawa by the convoy lent new local urgency to understanding the way in which these movements organize and grow. Panelists discussed the convoy and underlined that it was led by members of known hate movements and networks, with the goal of mainstreaming far-right conspiracy and extremist views. The convoy occupation also highlighted the importance of collaborating to fight right-wing extremism with partners from Europe and the U.S., because modern hate is transnational and organizes—and fundraises—across borders.

A consistent theme that emerged from the discussions was the ways in which far-right groups try to reach new audiences by using mainstream platforms and movements. From flirting with mainstream conservative parties to setting up Nazi-themed spaces on the popular game Roblox, hate groups are insinuating themselves into ordinary spaces and using them as cover for their ideologies and activities.

Experts noted that the pandemic and isolation have ramped up the speed and volume of disinformation that people encounter, as we spend more time online. Heidi Beirich, co-founder of the U.S.-based non-profit Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, spoke about the radicalizing nature of online spaces. Once young men begin to consume softer types of conspiracy or far-right content online, which is readily available on all platforms, social media algorithms show them more and harder types of content, pulling them into a rabbit-hole of rage and polarization.

One troubling trend that has emerged across Canada, the U.S.

and Europe is a serious uptick in the amount of anti-feminist and anti-trans hate. Professor Stephanie Carvin of Carleton University noted that these ideologies are motivating new people to join far-right networks. The Canadian Anti-Hate Network has now documented numerous cases where hate groups are using hyper-local school board elections to push anti-trans individuals into mainstream spaces.

Experts from Hungary, currently governed by the far-right Viktor Orban, warned about the dangers of allowing hateful ideology a space in mainstream politics. They traced the way in which, over the past decade, the far-right in Hungary was able to slightly soften their ideology in order to bring it into the mainstream, where it has resulted in devastating anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation and anti-immigration policies.

Panelists agreed that while it was vital to share practical strategies to counter the threats posed by right-wing extremism, it's also essential to look at the root problems that feed its growth in our societies. From deepening inequality to the growth of disinformation, democracies need to take steps to regulate online spaces and address the feeling of alienation and institutional mistrust that have become increasingly common.

Through cross-border collaboration and the sharing of new strategies and insights, it's possible to confront far-right hate and root it out at the source—but only if we acknowledge it as the threat it is. **M**

Jordan Lechnitz currently serves as the program officer in Canada of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Washington office. Jordan has over 15 years of experience in progressive political strategy and policy development. She has worked in senior roles in the New Democratic Party of Canada for over a decade.

DIANE THERRIEN

They came to my city

WE LIVE IN the age of excess information. The dissemination of ideas occurs faster and easier than ever, and the result is not always positive. We also live in an age of misinformation and deliberate disinformation. This has become increasingly obvious, and toxic, over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The recent increase in alt-right narratives about health, government, and community safety should be extremely concerning to anyone who cares about democracy, community, and social well-being. While elected officials and public leaders have always been subject to abuse and vitriol, the normalization of violent rhetoric, false blame, and abuse of public servants (which disproportionately targets women and marginalized folks) has escalated over the last few years.

The election of Tr*mp in 2016 helped usher in this new era of intentional disinformation, declining public discourse, and mistrust of people in positions of power.

In my community of Peterborough, there have been ongoing protests since 2020. These protests ostensibly started in response to public health related “lockdowns” and “mandates” but have continued even after these government policies were lifted. In a discussion between members on a local anti-vaxx Facebook group, someone commented: “we want to keep protesting, but the mandates have been lifted, so what should we protest now lol” [sic]. Such comments indicate a rampant opposition to democratically elected governments and a proliferation of general misinformation.

In August 2022, a group led by a self-proclaimed alien descended on

Peterborough with the expressed intent of “arresting the Ptbo police and surrendering them to US marshals.” That people thought this was a good idea and legally possible indicates the depth of echo chamber brainwashing. It also demonstrates another disturbing trend—the bleeding into Canada of America’s worst attributes: hyper-individualism, vitriol towards scientists and medical professionals, and violent rhetoric directed at elected officials.

The impact on the community was significant. Our police and first responders were unable to respond to emergencies, such as domestic violence calls, break-ins, and overdoses. They were prevented from serving their own community because they had to deal with the fuckwads who invaded our town with the explicit purpose of causing chaos and harm.

It also cost the community through budgetary constraints—having to call in off-duty officers and pay extra for additional security adds to an already strained municipal budget. Unfortunately, the group of “protestors” fulfilled their stated purpose, creating disruption and violence, and faced few consequences for their actions.

There are myriad reasons why the convoy movement attracted such attention. While we live in the information age, we also live in an age of increasing wealth inequality, in which our senior levels of government continue to cater to the richest among us at the expense of the most marginalized. Tax cuts for the rich, service cuts for the poor.

In today’s political climate, there is an extreme polarization between the far right and the far left. It is not enough to simply examine the viewpoints of various groups regarding any set of issues or the fundamental

beliefs encompassed by either side of the political spectrum. Often, mass media and the individuals that promote extremism are far removed from the shared common values and concerns of the majority.

We should ponder the effect that this exposure and conditioning will have on communities in the future, where citizen involvement, faith in local government, and active community members will be key to high-functioning participation and healthy engagement.

The far-right nationalists behind the various “events” appear to be seeking notoriety and recognition, and nothing more. Misinformation through ignorance, and disinformation through malice, will continue to plague our communities and country until there are meaningful repercussions for the perpetrators. A lack of informed, educated, civil discourse in any society is a death knell to democracy and social cohesion. No longer can we ignore the deeply embedded problems in our society; the problematic behaviours—such as hurling abuse at elected officials and public servants—that continue to escalate.

I wonder, for the sake of our communities and future generations, who is watching, who is listening, and just what they are learning?

As a former mayor who saw what this type of incursion did to my community—and how powerless we were to stop it—I hope we learn these lessons before our democracy falls casualty to it. **M**

Diane Therrien was the mayor of Peterborough during and following the convoy protest; she gained national media attention for calling disruptive alt-right agitators in her community fuckwads.

SARA BIRRELL

Big business is hijacking the language of just transition

IN MARCH 2022, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC), Canada's fifth-largest bank, posted an episode to their podcast, the dubiously titled "Sustainability Agenda," called "Enabling a Just Transition."

Host Dominique Barker interviewed Deborah Zandstra and Janet Whitaker of Clifford Chance, a London-based law firm that ranks among the 10 largest law firms in the world. The topic was, as you may have guessed, how banks can "support [a just transition] through financing activities."

A just transition is a clearly defined idea—the Climate Justice Alliance calls it, "a principle, a process, and a practice"—that centres workers and communities, particularly racialized and low-income communities most impacted by economic and climate injustices. It was first conceived by workers, labour unions, and environmental justice organizations, and it is workers around the world who are fighting for a just transition to phase out polluting industries, protect the well-being of communities, and ensure pathways into new industries.

But the CIBC podcast, like other corporate-led initiatives that co-opt the term without the content, was devoid of any of the labour, race, class, and gender analysis that is foundational to a just transition. That is, it was hardly even a transition and certainly no justice.

At one point in the conversation, Zandstra said that one of the biggest concerns of not acting on a just transition is not, as one would think, an ecological collapse that far outstrips the ability of communities

and humanity to adapt, but "increased litigation." The dialogue is a combination of gruesome and absurd. The three spoke about the most urgent threat humanity has ever faced as though it is an intriguing business challenge and an opportunity to increase profits.

CIBC isn't the only corporation—or even the only bank—aiming to get ahead of worker- and community-led just transition with an agenda of their own. The Bank of Montreal, Canada's third-largest bank, has their own podcast episode about just transitions. Suncor, the Calgary-based energy company that operates in the ultra-high emissions environment of the oil sands, also uses the language of just transition on their site. So does the Canadian Energy Centre—former Alberta Premier Jason Kenney's so-called "Energy War Room"—which was established for the explicit purpose of challenging the principles that underlie a true just transition. More and more companies are latching onto the language of a just transition while discarding the content.

These companies aren't talking about a just transition for workers and communities. They're talking about a just transition for industry, a transition where those who hold wealth and power are able to hold onto wealth and power. The story they are telling is only possible within the cultural narrative of the fossil fuel industry, and the exploitative economic and social structures that megacorporations will continue to subject us to if we let them.

It is the kind of narrative that will, if it is allowed to take root and spread, undermine everything we have been fighting for and what a

majority of Canadians have said they want. If these companies are allowed to take control of the narrative, if they're allowed to restructure what a just transition is to suit their own needs, we'll lose the momentum we've gained in our push for a world that is equitable and fair for all workers, a world that respects and upholds Indigenous sovereignty and Indigenous knowledges, where communities are protected from extreme weather events, and we have invested public services, training, and transition supports to ensure the transition to a low-carbon economy puts people and communities—not corporations—first.

In contrast, when corporations are finally forced to make the aggressive adjustments we—and they—know are necessary to address the climate crisis, the land and water will be healthier, biodiversity will thrive, our infrastructure will be more sustainable, and our communities will be able to plan for generations without fear of massive climate upheavals.

Corporations devote an enormous amount of resources to analyzing trends and adapting their businesses to protect their profits from changing social dynamics. The fact that big banks and big business are starting to talk about a just transition means that they understand that a transition away from fossil fuels and an extractive economy isn't just possible—it's inevitable. **M**

Sara Birrell is a communications officer at the Council of Canadians. A longer version of this article appeared at canadians.org.

KOFI HOPE

Progressive politics and the age of misinformation

WHAT A TIME to be alive. It's hard to determine if you're in a moment of historical significance in real time. Such periods are only really established after the fact, when we can organize the messiness of reality into a narrative that helps us make sense of what has already transpired.

That being said, I think it's clear something significant is happening right now. We're living in an age of disruption, where once consistent trends in politics, economics and society are being challenged daily. For progressives it can be extremely disorienting at times, as old orthodoxies about how progressive politics operates and who is part of our movement are shifting.

Prime examples are articles from right-leaning commentators gleefully claiming Jagmeet Singh is losing the battle for the hearts and minds of Generation Z to Pierre Poilievre (and polls seem to show that *perhaps* a shift is taking place).

Similar voices go so far to even claim the new counter-culture, anti-establishment position is no longer situated in the political left, but instead in the ideas of the radical right. I'm not sure this is the case, but even in my own life I've seen many individuals who are angry at 'the system' start to look to the answers provided by right-wing populism over left-wing perspectives.

In the 2022 Ontario election, we saw Doug Ford attract an unusually high number of endorsements from organized labour, specifically from the building trades. This despite his scrapping of pro-worker legislation like Bill 148 (*Fair Workplaces and*

Better Jobs Act) and resisting paid sick days during the height of a global pandemic.

Then there is the reality that across Canada right-wing populist groups continue to find success in using COVID-vaccinations to wrap their causes in the language of human rights, freedom and protecting minorities.

Overseas, Sweden, long seen as the quintessential 'Nordic socialist utopia,' now has the balance of power resting squarely in the hands of a far-right party.

Even in popular culture things are upside down. Dave Chapelle and Kanye West, two of my favourite artists in the 2000s, whose early work included poignant critiques of racism and inequality in America, have now been transformed into culture war martyrs for political conservatives.

So many things about politics today seem to be out of place.

And it's very hard to pin down what's driving this. Polarization in our society, our dividing into opposing political tribes, where people's social values, lifestyles, beliefs and geographies all cluster around their politics is part of this.

The algorithmically curated echo chambers we inhabit in social media is also an important factor. And a major trend connected to both factors is the widespread prevalence of misinformation. The fact we now live in a post-fact world.

For those of us interested in creating a 21st century political agenda that can speak to pressing issues like the transition to a green economy, social inequality, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and expanding the reach and effectiveness of our

social safety net—this post-truth era is a real problem.

It's already hard to build a political coalition when a third of the population won't give your ideas consideration due to cultural divisions. It's even harder when your movement has built a lot of its branding around being evidence based, but the concept of 'objective' facts is disappearing.

In order to find answers to how we can move past this impasse, it is helpful to reflect a little on how we got here. Because the reality is the flipside to the rise of misinformation is the decline in the legitimacy of the mainstream media.

Full disclosure, I write semi-regularly for a mainstream media company, the *Toronto Star*. And actually it's from the experience of writing op-eds over the last two years that I've gotten a new perspective on the divides over basic facts that exist in Canadian society.

Shifting through Twitter comments and occasional 'hate emails' that my articles generate, I've been struck by an irony in the venom my right-wing detractors express towards the mainstream media. The irony being that these contemporary critiques are strikingly similar to the left-wing critiques of the media from when I came of age in the early-2000s.

As a young man whose political awakening coincided with September 11th (the first political rally I attended was against the Iraq invasion), critiques and distrust of the media were a given. As a 'hip-hop head,' I consumed lots of conscious rap music at the time, which was scathing in its attacks on the media.

One of the defining albums of that genre, Dead Prez's seminal *Let's Get Free* album, a gritty ode to Black power and socialist politics, included an entire song, *Propaganda*, dedicated to skewering the media for 'telling lies to our children.' Such work fit within a larger discourse across progressive spaces that the mainstream media was systematically racist and Islamophobic, had cheerleaded an Iraq invasion on false pretenses and was promoting an unbridled consumerism that was destroying the planet.

It's almost funny how the wheels of history and society turn.

Over the 20 years following the turn of the millennium, some major social shifts took place.

Widening income inequality in our post-industrial societies led to a clustering of highly educated, economically flourishing, cosmopolitan professionals in urban centres. The rise of the so-called creative class (though managerial-professional class is a more apt description). Journalists and other media professionals were squarely part of this new club.

And over this same period, the tone and content of mainstream media did shift, with more focus on issues of social equity and representation. This was driven in part by a new generation of employees, in part by simple economic calculation of 'catering to your audience' and by the reality that those employed in the news media faced social pressure to be reflective of the mainline views of their social group.

This is not to say mainstream media has become as overwhelmingly progressive as some claim, or that left critiques of the media have disappeared. But there has been a shift and now many of the biggest and most vocal critics of the mainstream media are those who are socially or politically offside of contemporary liberal worldviews.

Obviously there were conservative critiques of the media in the past, but most were socially conservative critiques about sexual and violent content. Today, there is a wholesale delegitimization of mainstream media that has taken hold in the political right, which is a new trend.

And clearly, there are many other parts to this story, including the mass dissemination of fake news by corporate interests (i.e. supporters of the fossil fuel industry) and foreign governments and the reality that financial pressures have led news companies to invest less in investigative journalism and more in opinion pieces. All of these factors brought us to a place where faith in 'the news' has dropped substantially. And where misinformation, curated to your specific biases and beliefs, has flourished.

So what does this mean for progressive policies and politics? The irony is in an age of misinformation, compelling political narratives and emotional appeals become even more important to galvanizing political support. Yet for many issues progressives need to

present a nuanced position that can appeal both to the educated urban dwellers, while also appealing to those who feel left out and underrepresented by mainstream systems of all kinds.

Progressive leaders must now craft narratives that say, "yes we recognize the way mainstream institutions, whether government or the media are failing you, but we also still need these things, so here is our plan for how to revitalize them."

Balancing a righteous anger at the imperfections of our system with a hopeful call to still engage is not an easy feat, but it has to be done.

But what does that mean when it comes to the media itself? Clearly our very democracy's survival is contingent on dealing with the threat of misinformation, but answers are not simple. Part of the answer has to do with deeper regulation of social media companies, but the challenge is to do this and not be labelled as attacking free speech.

Another part is about using public dollars to support strong local journalism, but there are real limits to the public appetite for this. Individuals putting their own money behind quality news coverage is the easiest response, but probably the hardest way to produce systemic change.

My inclination is we may need even more unorthodox thinking to face these issues. Maybe we need to create expansive, independent, politically neutral, fact-checking organizations? But could such a thing really work?

Or, is the response a greater focus on new forms of adult education, so that the general public's ability to discern what's real and fake news can be increased? That approach would help, but will take time to reap results.

Probably it's fair to say that in the face of uncertainty the best thing to do is to try and test as many approaches as possible. The work won't be easy. But the alternative is accepting a 'post-Truth' society. A new age of misinformation where rage and polarization will only increase. An age where building cross-sectoral coalitions that can deliver meaningful progressive change will become increasingly elusive.

To avoid that, there is no option but to tackle the rise and origins of misinformation head on. **M**

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Mutual online aid

A response to systemic failure

THE PANDEMIC EXACERBATED

already existing social problems. For many people who lived in precarity before, it was the last straw.

COVID-19 brought about a rise in evictions as people lost their job or worked greatly reduced hours. Major cities in Canada are struggling to cope with a growing number of homeless encampments. Food banks experienced a surge in demand that they could not meet. The demand for food banks has increased significantly, while their ability to meet it lagged.

While the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) helped many avoid the worst of poverty, the most financially precarious people—such as those who were unemployed pre-pandemic and those who are disabled—were not eligible for the program. Many who were eligible for CERB and the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) faced an uncertain financial future after these benefits were phased out in 2021 amid rising costs of living.

In the face of these systemic failures, many of Canada's most marginalized communities turned to online mutual aid. Queer people, disabled people, low-income people, racialized people, and Indigenous Peoples turned to raising funds online to survive.

Community members would post links where others could send them money. They would also share each other's links over social media and direct their own social network's attention to the campaigns run by those who were in the most dire straits—such as people who were unhoused, people who needed urgent medical care, or people who were in danger of being incarcerated.

Over time, many sophisticated webs of support networks developed online in various marginalized communities where community members took care of each other because the state had failed.

“Two years ago, I was in a last-minute apartment in Toronto. This place was really bad—black mold, abusive landlord, abusive roommates. The police were baiting us,” says Mitchell Tremblay, a disabled man, about his living situation at the beginning of the pandemic.

He left and became unhoused. At that time, he did not want to go to a shelter because there were too many COVID-19 deaths there. So he started his first GoFundMe campaign with the goal of raising enough money to pay for the first and last month's rent on a new

apartment. He posted the campaign on Facebook and was able to raise \$2,930. He used the money to get housing and buy essentials.

“I had no clothes. All I packed was a big green Tupperware container with all my paperwork from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and all of my case for medical assistance in dying (MAID). It's 23 years of hospitalizations and systemic failures across the board,” he said. “I needed a winter jacket and sweaters. So all of the money was gone within a month.”

Tremblay started another GoFundMe last August for the occasion of his 40th birthday. His initial aim was to collect \$1,000 to ensure he had five months of food security until he would be eligible for MAID in March 2023. He was quickly able to reach his goal the day after his September 9 birthday.

Tremblay credits his current Twitter account, which he started in March 2022 to advocate for better social services for people like himself, for the success of that campaign.

“A lot of people shared and retweeted it. They came in waves over two weeks. I was telling others that it's my 40th birthday soon and I'm doing absolutely nothing. I can't afford anything,” he says.

Food security was the gift Tremblay wanted to give to himself for his milestone birthday. And with the money he raised, he was able to eat bacon and eggs and a cheese English muffin for breakfast—something he normally cannot afford.

The last time Tremblay held a job was 12 years ago. He was working as a tutor for students with disabilities at George Brown College. But he

“The organizing principle is about who you go to for support when things go wrong.”

had to quit because his multiple disabilities and his bad housing situation at the time were too much to manage.

“I don’t leave my house, unless it’s for food. I hate being outside. So that affects the work thing,” he says of the barriers that prevent him from having stable income. “The terror of having to wake up in the morning controls the whole night, makes me extremely exhausted, with the anxiety almost two or three times stronger. By day three or four of that, I just don’t show up to work.”

Tremblay’s situation does not surprise Jennifer Evans, an advocate for disabled people and a person with disabilities herself.

“Disabled people are much more susceptible to the impacts of COVID-19. Many couldn’t leave their homes. They were already struggling financially, because the Ford government had cut some planned increases to ODSP,” she says.

“I was getting messages from people in need from all over the province, so I started raising money for people on Twitter and going to my network.”

Evans now raises a few hundred to a few thousand dollars a day for many disabled people across Ontario. These funds have saved many people from homelessness, helped get others housed, and helped many parents feed their children. But Evans is reluctant to call that a success.

“Individuals should not be tasked with the responsibility of sustaining life at a very basic level. That’s a government responsibility,” she says, adding that many disabled people live so far below the poverty line, even with government benefits, that they live in deep poverty.

“People are making a choice between rent, food and medication—which is inhuman. In Canada, we treat disabled benefits not as something people are entitled to, but as social assistance. That should not be how it is. Because being disabled is incredibly expensive—you have additional needs, like additional medication and support.”

To help bring disabled people together, Brent Frain, a person with disabilities, created a Twitter space in 2021 for disabled people and their allies to share their experiences and use mutual aid. Participants share Amazon wish lists of items they need.

“They’ll put their name on the list or stay anonymous, and the items get shipped right to their address confidentially,” says Frain.

His initiative has helped people access further education. But, just like Evans, Frain thinks mutual aid is a sad reality enabled by systemic failures.

“People are pleading for help. It’s sad, because people shouldn’t have to reach out for mutual aid. The government has a legal responsibility to take care of its citizens but unfortunately, it falls short.”

Agent NDN, an anonymous Listuguj Mi’gmaq Twitter user who currently lives in Montreal, goes

even further. He states that, in stark contrast to settler society, mutual aid is the traditional form of social organization in many Indigenous communities, including his own.

“Whenever a crisis happens, people organize. The inherent structure of the Mi’gmaq nation comes out when people try to help each other during an emergency. The social order is not the colonial one, it is not run by chiefs,” he explains.

“The organizing principle is about who you go to for support when things go wrong. So whenever there is a conflict, for instance with the government, the impulse is mutual aid. It’s the most robust way of organizing by building on the relationships you already have and making them stronger.”

Agent NDN uses his account to share a monthly thread of Indigenous mutual aid links. He also participates in #SettlerSaturday, an initiative where every Saturday Indigenous folks post their links online for settlers to pay reparations. He thinks many Indigenous people seek mutual aid for unexpected expenses, such as a flat tire, as many don’t have a rainy day fund.

“Indigenous poverty is just so central to the Canadian settler colonial project. There are different layers of dispossession that create so many cracks for Indigenous people to fall through. And it’s not just individual people, but communities who are impacted by things such as climate change,” he explains.

“Indigenous nations have access to 0.2% of our land. Take any nation and reduce their GDP to 0.2% of what it is now, and you’ll get a good sense of why people are poor. It’s not that they’re poor, it’s that they’re overexploited. This is why so many Indigenous people don’t have emergency funds. We’re just scraping by.”

Agent NDN believes that land back is part of the solution to allow Indigenous Peoples to build wealth. He emphasizes that land back does not mean evicting settlers, which is a common misconception, but rather returning Crown lands to an Indigenous jurisdiction.

He also believes that honouring treaties and updating them to the current reality is another necessary step.

“I also think universal basic income would help a lot of Indigenous people and others. If we made housing a right, instead of a commodity, it would contribute to reducing rates of Indigenous homelessness. In many cases they are survivors or descendants of survivors of residential schools. A lot of these problems have economic and social solutions,” he says. **M**

Diamond is an independent writer/journalist who focuses on contemporary social and environmental issues. Based in Montreal/Tio’tia:ke, she aims to bring underreported stories and perspectives into the open to add to important conversations. Much of her work focuses on marginalized voices, intersectionality, diaspora, sustainability and social justice.



Colour-coded Justice

ANTHONY N. MORGAN

Black Lives Matter

Two years later, the struggle continues

ALTHOUGH THE GLOBAL resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement had its moment, a *lutta continua*.

The struggle continues, not just because anti-Black racism in policing and the penal system persist, but because the latter months of 2022 featured critically important legal and policy developments that will have strong reverberations well into 2023 and beyond.

In October 2022, Quebec's Superior Court released a landmark decision in *Luamba v. Attorney General of Quebec*, wherein the court dealt a devastating blow to the police practice of racial profiling by declaring it unconstitutional for police to stop any driver without cause, which the law previously permitted.

For decades, lawyers, advocates, and community members have been fighting for the courts to recognize that this flawed law has enabled police to unlawfully exercise their authority to covertly stop civilians for the invented infraction of 'driving while Black.'

Even as we wait to see how appellate courts treat the *Luamba* decision in future decisions, this is still a game-changing ruling that recognizes and affirms that anti-Black racism in Canadian policing is an all too prevalent phenomenon that should no longer be tolerated.

Another major development from the closing months of 2022 was the release of the Office of the Correctional Investigator's report on Black experiences in Canada's federal prisons. This report revisited issues documented in a previous report that the office released on the same issue nearly 10 years earlier.

Finding continually alarming rates of over-representation, discrimination, harsh punishment and violence faced by Black people in Canada's prisons, the Correctional Investigator, Dr. Ivan Zinger, stated the following upon release of the latest report:

I am very disappointed to report that the same systemic concerns and barriers identified nearly a decade ago, including discrimination, stereotyping, racial bias and labeling of Black prisoners, remain as pervasive and persistent as before. In fact, the situation for Black

people behind bars in Canada today is as bad, and, in some respects, worse than it was in 2013.

This report is significant because it empirically disrupts the mythology of Canadian racial exceptionalism by showing that systemic anti-Black racism is not just real in Canada, but insofar as the criminal justice system is concerned, it's chronic and getting worse.

Another watershed development that sets the stage for anti-Black racism justice struggles in 2023 and beyond is the government of Canada's passing of Bill C-5, which repeals mandatory minimums for drug and tobacco offences and some firearm offences, many of which have fueled the over-representation of Black people in prison.

The government's actions to finally move on a Black Justice Strategy must also be mentioned here. This strategy has the real potential to create a paradigmatic shift in Canadian justice policy-making and services. To advance this new and developing strategy, for the first time in Canada's history, tens of millions of dollars are being committed to divert Black people out of the criminal justice system (through access to justice and culturally responsive reintegration programs, for example). This is especially notable because the last few decades of justice policy in Canada has had the effect of doing just the opposite.

The strategy is still in development, through consultation with Black community stakeholders (of which I've been included, full disclosure), but the progress already made is miles ahead of what any previous government has initiated to date.

Despite the interventions above, it's tempting to half-jokingly and half-cynically refer to the current reality as the era of "Black Lives Matter-ed." This is because not too long ago it seemed that every organization and its leadership were falling over themselves to offer some

Much of this is now a foggy flashback, as if we've all awoken from a shared hazy dream where we watched a white cop heartlessly murder George Floyd.

words of recognition and condemnation of anti-Black racism and a commitment to address it.

Much of this is now a foggy flashback, as if we've all awoken from a shared hazy dream where we watched a white cop heartlessly murder George Floyd over the course of an excruciating eight minutes and forty six seconds.

Since the global uprising for Black lives emerged in late-spring 2020, there have been massive local and global shifts and challenges that make it understandable that most have moved on from being fully seized and interested in the matter of Black lives.

There's Russia's illegal war of aggression on Ukraine; incessant waves of the COVID-19 pandemic—now flanked with the force of spiking flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV); recurring catastrophic weather events across every continent as a result of the climate crisis; ever-increasing inflation that is punishing all of our pocketbooks; and recurring spurts of anti-Asian, Islamophobic, patriarchal, homophobic and transphobic, and anti-Semitic murder, violence, and hate that have resulted in revolving cycles of tragedy.

But even as public attention and interest in struggles for Black life have waned, anti-Blackness persists, and thankfully, so do interventions and development to address it. It may be said that where the protests and individual pronouncements have trailed off, law and policy have picked up.

Indeed, the black squares have faded. The corporate statements have stopped. The media has moved on and public attention has tapered off. But the work continues. The struggle continues and gains are being made. It just looks different. And that's progress. **M**

Anthony Morgan is a Toronto-based human-rights lawyer, policy consultant and community educator.



Inside Trade

STUART TREW

From containment to Cold War 2.0

READING THE 2022 U.S. security strategy is like jumping through the proverbial looking glass. To combat the allegedly two-faced but united threat of Chinese economic dominance and Russian imperialism, America must work co-operatively with its friends, it reads.

“This means that the foundational principles of self-determination, territorial integrity, and political independence must be respected, international institutions must be strengthened, countries must be free to determine their own foreign policy choices.”

If legit, it could represent a big shift after a half-century of U.S. military adventurism, trade bullying, and structural adjustment programs. If the catch is a terrifying new Cold War with China, the cost may be higher than the payout for all countries involved.

U.S. President Biden has essentially declared a “tech war” on China, following Trump’s tariff war, so that America can “own the 21st century.” The implications for the thousands of Chinese engineers, scientists and academics working in universities and labs across the United States and Canada will be severe.

More than 1,400 U.S.-trained Chinese scientists left the country in 2021 alone to avoid persecution or stigmatization. Canada’s severe espionage charges against Hydro Quebec employee Yuesheng Wang for what might be simply intellectual property rights or even academic administrative practice issues is disturbing.

Anti-Asian racism—the “white elephant in the room,” according to UBC historian Henry Yu—is becoming more overt and violent. Risk assessments of Canadian university research grants are creating a chill. Biased coverage of China in Canada’s two main newspapers fuels resentment and feeds into a new McCarthyism on campuses and in the halls of government.

This is a bit of a Sputnik moment for the U.S. Greatly exaggerated fears of a shrinking military gap with China pervade on both sides of the partisan divide even as Pentagon spending leaps upward. China is, however, becoming competitive in limited areas of importance to U.S. capital, including artificial intelligence, 5G, electric cars, and renewable power. This feeds U.S. paranoia

but conveniently unites Democrats and Republicans behind Biden's industrial policies and massive subsidies for battery and silicon chip manufacturers.

While Biden's domestic manufacturing renewal will have spinoff benefits for Canada, legal restrictions on sharing chip-making materials and knowhow, and possibly other high technologies, with China are needlessly and dangerously punitive and potentially highly disruptive to other Asia-Pacific nations.

As dangerous as Biden's new Cold War policy is, if we step through another looking glass, it's possible to see potentially useful developments in his administration's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), which Canada has just requested to join.

What's to like? Well, more flexible economic cooperation commitments whose negotiation may lend itself to mutual appreciation of regional conditions, for one thing. It's not an antidote to neoliberal dogma, but it's also not the legal codification of that dogma preferred by Canada via free trade negotiations with India, Indonesia, and ASEAN.

The Biden strategy is also more overtly worker-centric, at least on the surface and to a point. The U.S. seems legitimately to want to remove labour arbitrage from corporate sourcing decisions—to create a floor of sorts for wages and working conditions. On the other hand, supply chain transparency demands are again aimed exclusively at expunging Chinese factories and materials from Asian exports to the U.S. (i.e., more containment).

Working conditions, labour laws and wages are extremely poor across the region, including in new manufacturing powerhouse India. What makes some countries friends and others enemies? Currently the answer seems to be that the enemies are the more competitive ones.

Which brings us to what's not to like in the U.S. strategy: a continued emphasis on digital trade rules favouring U.S. monopolist tech giants and banks; continued pressure

on Asian nations to import more high-carbon and GMO agricultural exports; the obvious imperialist thrust; and significant risk of provoking war.

Canada is making efforts to endear itself to Asia-Pacific powers. The prime minister returned from the recent APEC and G20 meetings with a dozen new spending announcements related to trade and security cooperation. We appear to be paying to play the geopolitical game in Asia, while playing as cheerleader for U.S. hegemony closer to home.

Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Jolie position Canada as a world-making power. In reality, our influence with either China or the United States is limited and on par with many Asia-Pacific nations.

We should acknowledge these similarities and consider non-aligned options for international cooperation focused on decarbonization and climate change, migration, public health, and labour standard across international supply chains.

And we should take both Freeland and the U.S. security strategy seriously—more seriously than either, I suspect—that the world's liberal democracies should lead by example, not through force or, more often for Canada, hyperbole. **M**

Stuart Trew is director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Trade and Investment Research Project.



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ASAD ISMI

Brazil: Lula returns in triumph

IN WHAT *Time* magazine called “the comeback of the century,” leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil’s most popular president (2003-2010), returned to power by winning the October 30, 2022 elections.

Lula takes office this January. He defeated his neofascist opponent, incumbent Jair Bolsonaro, by more than two million votes (50.9 per cent compared to 49.1 per cent), a narrow margin.

Lula’s victory is crucial not only for Brazilians but for the whole world, which stands on the brink of climate catastrophe. Brazil contains most of the Amazon rainforest, known as “the world’s lungs” because it produces 20 per cent of the Earth’s oxygen.

For four years, Bolsonaro has been burning down the rainforest, causing an unprecedented environmental disaster. Deforestation in the Amazon reached its highest level (since 2012) in 2021, an increase of 57 per cent over 2020. This has dangerously sped up global warming. In contrast, during Lula’s two tenures as president, deforestation was reduced by 80 per cent.

Bolsonaro has also caused the deaths of close to 700,000 Brazilians who died from COVID-19 because of his refusal to take measures to counter the pandemic. Brazil’s COVID-19 death rate is second only to that of the U.S. and is actually higher on a per capita basis. Bolsonaro equated COVID-19 with the flu, connected it to AIDS, told Brazilians to “stop whining” and spread misinformation about the virus on social media. In October 2021, the Brazilian Senate voted to charge Bolsonaro with “crimes against humanity” for his mishandling of the pandemic.”

A fount of hatred, Bolsonaro constantly attacked women, Indigenous Peoples, Black and 2SLGBTQIA+ residents while militarizing the government and freeing the police to carry out extrajudicial executions in marginalized communities. Bolsonaro’s shocking and disastrous record as president caused Mark Weisbrot to call him “a monster.” Weisbrot is co-director of the Washington D.C.-based Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).

So why did this monster get 49.2 per cent of the vote? (A rather alarming situation). Bolsonaro’s Liberal Party also won the most seats in the Brazilian Congress. Does this mean that Brazil is now a deeply divided society with a very big neofascist bloc of voters who can prevent Lula’s progressive policies from being carried out?

Helder Ferreira Do Vale is visiting professor at the Federal University of Bahia’s (UFBA) graduate program of international relations. Bahia is a state in the northeast of Brazil. Do Vale explained to me that Bolsonaro got a high number of votes partly because he “has been able to fill the lack of leadership amongst right-wing politicians. Since the end of Brazil’s military dictatorship in 1995 and before Bolsonaro’s rise to power, right-wing voters were not politically ‘represented.’

“Political analysts in Brazil have identified this phenomenon as being part of the existence of an ‘ashamed right-wing’, which was the result of right-wing parties’ attempt to dissociate themselves from the dictatorship and hide their conservative political preferences. This phenomenon had a demobilization effect on right-wing voters. Bolsonaro activated this dormant right-wing electoral base, which identified with his authoritarian leadership style.

This activation gained traction and these right-wing voters remain very active.”

Marcos Napolitano agrees with Do Vale. Napolitano is professor of history at the University of São Paulo. He told me that “Bolsonaro brought together a large part of conservative voters (right and centre-right), in addition to his loyal political supporters of the far-right (10 to 15 per cent of the Brazilian electorate). He captured the feeling of ‘antipetismo’, which is very strong in the Brazilian lower- and upper-middle classes (that make up almost 50 per cent of the electorate). In addition, Bolsonaro had extensive support from evangelical (Pentecostal) leaders who have a lot of influence in the lower-middle classes.” Antipetismo refers to those Brazilians who oppose Lula’s Workers’ Party (PT).

Evangelical voters make up more than 30 per cent of Brazil’s electorate, according to Alexander Main, who went to Brazil as an election observer. Main is director of international policy at CEPR. He told me that a large majority of evangelicals voted for Bolsonaro this time because their leaders (many of whom had supported Lula in the past) urged them to do so. “It is believed that Bolsonaro helped channel state funds to key evangelical churches before the election,” explained Main.

This was only one part of Bolsonaro’s use of the state to influence the vote result. As Do Vale points out, “in recent months, the ministry of economy increased social benefits, granted special credit for the beneficiaries of social assistance and decreased taxes to reduce the price of gasoline and electricity. Bolsonaro has used public funds, approximately 41 billion reais [the

Brazilian currency—this amount equals about Can\$10.2 billion], and state institutions such as the police to support his campaign and gain votes.”

Then there is the rich and powerful agribusiness lobby, a strong backer of Bolsonaro and for whose benefit he has been torching the Amazon. According to Do Vale, “most businesses related to the agribusiness sector, whose chain production accounts for 27 per cent of the Brazilian GDP as of 2021, openly supported Bolsonaro. In effect, in the states in which this sector is strong, such as in Goiás, Paraná and Mato Grosso, Bolsonaro, won by many votes.”

The fifth reason for the large voter turnout for Bolsonaro was his “well-funded fake news campaign that primarily targeted Lula,” says Main. “Among the many lies that appear to have taken hold in the electorate was that Lula was a satanist and was planning on closing churches and imposing unisex bathrooms—blatant falsehoods that were frequently repeated on social media and that generated widespread fears in Brazilian society, much of which is quite socially conservative.”

Do Vale adds that “Bolsonaro’s fake news machine has proven to be highly effective in deconstructing his political opponents.” Bolsonaro used Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Kway and Gettr to spread fake news “criminalizing Lula.”

Given the closeness of the election result, Napolitano agrees that now Brazil is a deeply divided society, with a very big neofascist bloc of voters who can prevent Lula’s progressive policies from being carried out. However, he emphasizes that “Lula is very skillful at negotiating with the Brazilian Congress, in addition to having great support (at least at the beginning of his government) from centrist parties and the liberal press (which was heavily attacked by Bolsonaro).”

Napolitano explains that Bolsonaro’s Liberal Party is not neofascist but, rather, a “venal” party and the link between the two is “just a marriage of convenience.” This is one of the weaknesses of Bolsonarism: “The absence of qualified political cadres and an organized party with clear ideological foundations. His supporters are fanatics and extremists,” adds Napolitano.

Do Vale agrees, saying “The Liberal Party and several other parties, known as *centrão* (the big centre), are pragmatic office-seeking parties that are likely to grant support to Lula’s government if the new president offers them some political benefits (such as appointments to public offices) and/or distributes annual budget funds to projects located in the electoral base of the relevant members of congress.”

Going forward, the priority for the new Lula government should be the cash-transfer program known as *Bolsa Família*, believes Do Vale. Lula started this program in his first presidential tenure and it proved very popular and highly effective, lifting more than 40 million Brazilians out of poverty. Do Vale argues that emphasizing *Bolsa Família* “will have positive side effects



in different areas: the fight against hunger, improved public access to health and education, the defence of minorities, and stimulating economic growth.”

Do Vale explains that “the fight against hunger is urgent in a country where there is an increase in child malnutrition and 33 million Brazilians are food insecure.” Lula’s first priority after his election has actually been to expand the cash transfer program. In November 2022, he started negotiating with other parties in Congress for the approval of a constitutional amendment that would let his administration increase the money given by *Bolsa Família* and allow him to exceed the legal limit of the annual budget.

Lula made his next priority clear at his first international speech in Egypt on November 16 at the Conference of Parties (COP) 27 summit for the environment. The president-elect declared: “There is no planetary security without a protected Amazon. We will do whatever it takes to have zero deforestation and degradations of our biomes. For this reason, I would like to announce that efforts to fight climate change will have the highest priority in my next government. We will prioritize the fight against deforestation of all of our biomes and reverse damage done in recent years by the previous government.”

Lula emphasized that his government “would go further than ever before on the environment by cracking down on illegal gold mining, logging and agricultural expansion and restoring climate-critical ecosystems.” To be a significant agricultural producer, “Brazil did not need to clear another hectare of rainforest,” Lula said. He also demanded that rich countries deliver the \$100 billion in climate money they pledged to developing nations in 2009 and set up a fund for loss and damage caused by the climate crisis. **M**

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Get to know Anskia Gingras

OFFICE: **NATIONAL**

POSITION: **SENIOR DATABASE ADMINISTRATOR**

YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **22**

Tell us about someone you find particularly inspiring right now.

A young woman I have known for about a year. She overcame a very dark place battling drug addiction, has secured her own housing and is now thriving and raising her children as a solo mom.

Can you give us one example of how COVID-19 has forced you to think outside the box?

I've had to be resourceful when thinking ahead to find more affordable housing. The idea of a roommate or moving provinces had not occurred to me before. COVID-19 has opened up the need for those ideas as inventory/demand and housing prices increase as well as work from home options that were not available prior to COVID-19.

Tell us about someone who was a big influence on you early in life and how you became a CCPA supporter.

As cliché as it may sound, my mother was the biggest influence in my life. She had a strong faith life which was demonstrated outwardly in many ways. Living humbly to afford to help others, there was always a stack of direct mail on the table and she gave donations to many different charities, international disaster relief, child welfare, prison ministries, local initiatives, the list goes on and on. Her value of loving others first never wavered and she remains my biggest supporter to this day. My sense of love for others and social justice started at an early age



and raising a son with special abilities as well started me on a path to champion and advocate for others.

What have you read or watched to keep your mind busy and your soul fed as we all stay home as much as possible. Have you read any good books lately or articles? Favourite reading material, magazine, TV show, etc.

Honestly, Netflix kept my toddler and I entertained during the pandemic. I have also enjoyed reading a number of books lately, but two that stand out are *From the Ashes* by Jesse Thistle and *Life in the City of Dirty Water* by Clayton Thomas-Muller.

What has the CCPA done lately that's made you feel proud to be a supporter/work for the CCPA?

Broadly, I am proud of the work

that CCPA has done on living wages and homelessness, which are both huge concerns, especially given the inflation we have seen in the past few years.

In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special? Hands down, the staff at CCPA. It is rare to find such a dedicated and hardworking group that sincerely wants to make a difference and believes that change is possible.

Can you tell us about why you switched over to being a monthly donor? I have watched our monthly donor base grow at CCPA over the past many years and know that monthly donations give a steady and stable funding source to ensure our work can continue. As a monthly donor of other organizations, one for 25 years, I am happy to have added CCPA to that list so I can consistently support the important work we do here.

What is your hope for the future? Name one policy the government should adopt today that would make people's lives better. A living wage for all but specifically for those living on disability supports.

Greg and Joanne Richards

Joanne and Greg Richards live in Castlegar, British Columbia and have been CCPA supporters for 23 years.

Tell us about someone you find particularly inspiring right now. We are very inspired by the resolve shown by the women who are stepping forward at all levels of community leadership. We acknowledge women from the federal cabinet with the courage to take a stand on matters of principle, for the sake of the principle. The leader of the B.C. Green Party is working hard to change the dynamics of provincial politics. And our own daughter, who ran for a seat on city council. Those reaching for opportunities like this are setting a good example to the rest of us to make an additional effort to contribute to social change.

Tell us about someone who was a big influence on you early in life and how your ideals and those of the CCPA align. I need to look no further than my parents as the catalyst for my worldview. So many of our assumptions about the world and unconscious behaviour patterns are set as we fit ourselves into what we come to know as our family. I had the great fortune of four siblings, and wise and devoted parents. I found compassion, humility, an energy for life and a passion for social justice. It was particularly inspiring because I saw it grow over time, starting with memberships in Amnesty International, evolving into their own non-profit third-world craft import and sales business.

What has the CCPA done lately that's made you feel proud to be a supporter/work for the CCPA? In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special? In an age where invective corrupts our public dialogue and people seek to hide in social media, it is important that there are voices of impassioned reason. I see the CCPA constantly striving to be in that place, persevering to bring others into those very important conversations; conversations that represent one of our best hopes for shining a light on the future, dialogues that are part of an antidote to ideologies that too often seek to blind us to the truth.

It's become increasingly difficult to ignore past foolishness that persuaded us that we could untangle, separate, and sort the world into little boxes. Connection is so much more than the internet. It takes a special effort to project those relationships through a human lens that acknowledges the uncomfortable currents in which we swim. The CCPA is a little bit coach, a little bit of a social mentor in this regard.

It is so important to accept that our individualism is a product of a social existence. Maybe COVID-19 has opened our eyes to this in a new way and reminded us that our connections are more than "likes" and "tweets". We need to respond to this through our own participation in solutions and by supporting individuals or organizations that have chosen to take on leadership roles.

Could you tell us why you switched to monthly giving four years ago? Supporting the CCPA on a monthly basis has become an important way for Joanne and I to become engaged and help work toward a progressive future. When the fabric of our society is in upheaval, we feel that participation toward a better future needs to be a commitment, not something done at convenience. So much ground can be lost in trying times when we become distracted by the day to day. Donation reminders that seemed to find their moment now languish in piles of mail or unread email, overwhelmed by the flow of data we have come to call information. Shifting to a monthly giving option was a small, but simple statement of engagement and constructive action.

What is your hope for the future? Name one policy the government should adopt today that would make people's lives better. There are so many reasons to have faith for a better future. The times need compassionate engagement to meet the imposing challenges we are facing. Our hope is that this will come from the increasing awareness that we must share to survive. And this can only flourish with a government that has a mandate rooted in diverse and inclusive voices. We find promise in the recurring election of minority governments and believe that this is the will of the people seeking a change to proportional representation.

A legacy gift is a charitable donation that you arrange now that will benefit the CCPA in the future. Making a gift to the CCPA in your will is not just for the wealthy or the elderly. And a legacy gift makes a special impact—it is often the largest gift that anyone can give. To ask about how you can leave a legacy gift to the CCPA, or to let us know you have already arranged it, please call or write Katie Loftus, Development Officer (National Office), at 613-563-1341 ext. 318 (toll free: 1-844-563-1341) or katie@policyalternatives.ca.

JON MILTON

Pat Armstrong's vision for the care economy

A look at the career of a movement-powered academic

ONE DAY IN the early 1980s, Pat Armstrong walked into a hospital.

Her daughter had broken a leg—“very badly,” she says—and she was coming to visit. “The first interaction in the hospital,” she says, “the first thing they did was show me—her mother—where I could get the bedpan, where I could change her, where I could do things for her. Her father was standing right there, and they didn’t show him any of these things.”

Armstrong had been working as an academic at this point for a number of years, focusing on issues of women’s work and pay equity. After organizing in the student movement in the 1960s, she had co-authored a book called *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work*, a pathbreaking 1978 study of the ways in which “women’s work,” both paid and unpaid, was devalued compared to men’s. Armstrong identified the fact that, despite women’s equal participation in the labour force—and greater rates of postsecondary graduation—that the world of work was deeply segregated along gender lines, and the fields that women work in were underpaid. The ideas Armstrong helped to develop in that vital work continue to inform the feminist movement today.

So when the hospital staffer assumed that she would be the one caring for her daughter, a light went off in Armstrong’s mind. “I realized that the hospital was a sort of microcosm of women’s work—paid and unpaid—in every kind of category, from the support staff through to the managers.

“So I thought that this is a great place to study—hospital care and women’s work. Very quickly, it became obvious that, as political economists, we would have to know a lot more about health care and the way health care works.”

Armstrong has since become one of the foremost experts on health care in Canada, publishing dozens of books and edited volumes, and countless academic articles. Not just an expert, she has been a tireless advocate for quality public health care at all levels, from hospitals and clinics to long-term care homes. She was on the front lines of studying the waves of neoliberal attacks on health care during the 1980s and 1990s, when governments at all

levels began waves of austerity, privatization, and attacks on working conditions.

Those years were the beginning of a long-term government divestment from the care economy, Armstrong says. As an example, she points to the creation of publicly owned long-term care facilities in Ontario during the 1960s, followed by Mike Harris’ “affirmative action program for corporations” in the 1990s, which saw the government of Ontario open up the sector to the for-profit corporations which now dominate the market in the province.

“There’s no question, from the research, that public homes—while far from perfect—provide better care on a whole lot of indicators,” Armstrong says. “It’s a clear pattern. It’s not absolute, of course, but there’s a clear pattern that the public ones are higher staffed, with better pay. And they provide, for the most part, better care.”

That connection—between working conditions and quality of care—is something that Armstrong has consistently emphasized throughout her career. “The whole question, in health care and child care, is recognizing the skills that these jobs take—they’re viewed as something women do naturally, so you don’t need high pay for it because it’s something anyone can do. So there’s a struggle to recognize those skills as skills.”

Armstrong’s position as an expert on Canadian health care put her in a unique position in 2020, when COVID-19 emerged as a global pandemic. In those days, she saw



not just a frightening new problem, but also a chance to fix past mistakes.

“Initially, we saw a lot of attention paid to aspects of the care economy— school and social workers, people who work in the health care system,” she says. “There was a lot of attention paid to these heroes in health care. So it looked like, maybe, this would be an important opportunity to bring around fundamental change—especially in terms of the conditions of work in the sector.

“It would be really nice if we came out of COVID the way we came out of the Second World War, where we expanded an enormous amount of social programs and expanded the care economy on the basis of our collective and shared responsibility. I think we really need to go in that direction again, or I hate to think of what’s going to happen.”

That sense of optimism, and expanding what is possible, didn’t last. Armstrong says that as pandemic fatigue became widespread, momentum towards fixing the system slowed, and governments began relying on their standard toolboxes—moving back towards austerity and privatization.

Long-term care, in particular, has been the subject of public debate in the years since COVID first emerged. Those institutions, which were the sites of a massive proportion of the pandemic’s deaths, have been subject to a wide range of criticism. Some governments, such as Alberta, are attempting to move away from the institutional model by ramping up funding for home care as an alternative.

“There’s a kind of mixed message we’re seeing in terms of COVID,” Armstrong says of the care economy. “In terms of long-term care, a lot of the reaction seems to be ‘blow them up.’ It’s similar to what we heard about psychiatric hospitals for a long time [before ‘deinstitutionalization’ shut down many of those facilities]. And what that did was leave people without care.”

For Armstrong, the answer isn’t to abolish long-term care, but to transform it. “We definitely need nursing homes, but what we need to do is make them better—better as places of work, and better places to live.”

That is more than a general principle for Armstrong. In 2011, she co-authored a study called *Reimagining Long-Term Residential Care in Canada: An International Study of Promising Practices*. The project, which was funded by a grant from the prestigious Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), looked at specific practices that could be implemented in long-term care homes to improve the quality of life and work.

The project began, she says, with a realization about walking. In Sweden, a country Armstrong and her fellow researchers studied, workers in care facilities will often take the time to leave the facility and go for a walk with residents. In Canadian facilities, ‘going for

a walk’ often means walking from a resident’s room to the lunch hall.

There is a lot happening in the background of that example, Armstrong says. “These things happen on many different levels. First of all, in Sweden and Norway, they have more than twice as many staff per resident as we have here. Norway also reversed their trend of moving towards for-profit care.” Those background dynamics allow for workers to go on real walks with residents.

For Armstrong, a reimagined long-term care system means finding ways to keep seniors as active members of their communities.

“One of the most impressive things was a nursing home that was physically part of a huge complex that had the town swimming pool, the town cinema, a rock climbing wall, a spa, child care—all of this in one huge shared physical space that made the nursing home part of the community... Another example was a long-term care home that had university residents as part of its structure. So there were young people moving in and out, sitting down and having coffee with residents in the coffee shop that were part of the building.

“It’s about integrating the nursing home into the community, and not segregating it. Those are some of the most important things that we saw.”

In order to do any of this, Armstrong says, policy-makers need to reverse the decades-long permissive attitude toward for-profit care. When care providers are focused on their bottom line, they cut corners.

It’s expensive to build a facility like the ones she saw in Sweden and Norway—it’s cheaper to buy land on the outskirts of town and build a care home that’s disconnected from the community. It’s expensive to maintain high staffing levels, and cheaper to run workers ragged. It’s expensive to cook good quality food on-site, and cheap to warm up cheap mass-produced meals in a microwave. Quality care, Armstrong stresses, is incompatible with the profit motive.

Today, Pat Armstrong is retired. She recently wrapped up her career as a faculty member at York University in Toronto. Her day-to-day routine hasn’t changed much. She just put in two book manuscripts with co-authors and has a new research project on the labour force in long-term care.

Most importantly, Armstrong says, her work continues to be informed by social movements—her “partners.”

“That’s one of the most important things about my research—all of it has been done in teams. All of it has been done in partnership. Virtually all of it in partnership with unions, community organizations, and occasionally with governments. It’s something I’ve been doing ever since university and the student movement—working together with others, and focusing on research that was intended to be the basis for advocacy.” **M**



The good news page

ELAINE HUGHES

Bingo-calling Wolastoqey teen proud to speak his language

Wyatt Moulton, 17, of Neqotkuk (Tobique First Nation) in New Brunswick, learned to speak Wolastoqey from his mother and grandparents, a rarity as he is one of very few young people in his community who can speak the language. He's currently putting his language skills to use calling bingo games in Wolastoqey and English in his community.

[/ CBC NEWS](#)

Happy birthday to the man who explained why the sea looks blue

Born in Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu on November 7, 1888, Chandrashekhara Venkata Raman was one of the foremost physicists India ever produced. His path-breaking studies led to a revolution in the world of physics and none so intriguing as the one that explained why the sea appears blue. Professor CV Raman was awarded the 1930 Nobel Prize in Physics for his discovery and was the first person of Asian descent to win

the prestigious medal. The Nobel was awarded for his work on the scattering of light and for the discovery of the effect named after him—the Raman effect.

[/ India Today](#)

Fibbie Tatti, 2022 Concordia honorary doctorate

Born to the Sahtúgot'ıne First Nation on Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories (NWT), Fibbie Tatti is a fluent speaker, writer and storyteller of the North Slavey Language. During her 23 years at the NWT Department of Education, she brought together Dene Elders, teachers and language specialists in her work to preserve and promote Indigenous languages and culture. She was involved in organizing the Dene Nation, which led to both the Sahtu People's land claim settlement with the Government of Canada in 1993 and the community of Deline's 2016 self-government agreement with the governments of Canada and the NWT. Tatti also hosted a CBC North TV current affairs program, becoming one of the first Indigenous people to work with NWT media.

[/ NationTalk](#)

A 2,000-year-old map of the stars

Missing for centuries, a map of the stars created by Greek astronomer Hipparchus has possibly been recovered. Hipparchus lived from 190 to 120 BCE and is considered to be the father of trigonometry. He also discovered the

precession of the equinoxes, or when the Earth wobbles on axis of rotation due to the gravitational influence of the moon and the sun on Earth's equatorial bulge. It is also widely believed that he mapped the entire night sky—all without a telescope.

[/ Popular Science](#)

Startup is recycling solar panels

An American firm, Solar Cycle, recovers valuable raw materials such as copper, aluminum, silver and silicon from broken solar panels found in landfill waste and reduces them to two per cent of their material weight, ready for making more solar panels. A 2016 report by the International Renewable Energy Agency found that likely by the mid-2030s, millions of metric tons of solar panels will be decommissioned, and if a method wasn't found to economically recycle them, they would probably end up in the landfill.

[/ Good News Network](#)

Germany's Solar Valley could shine again as Europe strives to close energy gap

As Germany and the rest of Europe seek alternative sources of energy—partly to compensate for missing Russian supplies and partly to meet climate goals—interest has surged in rebuilding an industry that, in 2007, produced every fourth solar cell worldwide. Data from the country's solar power association (BSW) showed that Germany's

new registered residential photovoltaic systems rose by 42 per cent in the first seven months of the year.

[/ Reuters](#)

India's first fully solar village lights up the lives of poor residents

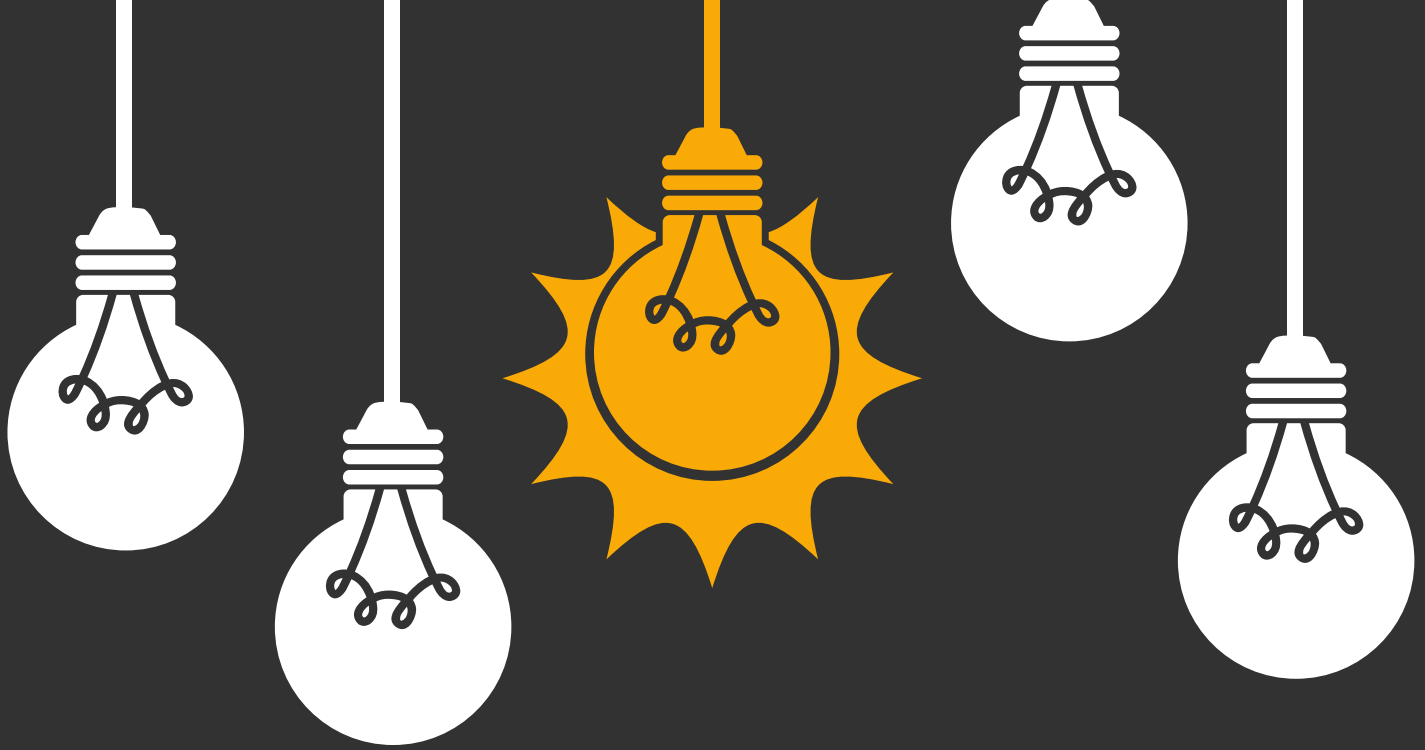
India, the world's third-largest carbon dioxide emitter, aims to meet half of its energy demands from renewable sources, such as solar and wind, by 2030, a boost over its previous target of 40 per cent, which the government said it achieved in December 2021.

[/ Reuters](#)

Swarming honeybees produce as much electricity as a thunderstorm

In a recent study to determine how different organisms use the static electric fields that are everywhere in the environment, researchers from the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom discovered that swarms of honeybees can generate as much electrical charge as a thunderstorm. Atmospheric electricity has a variety of functions, mainly in shaping weather events and helping organisms in finding food.

[/ CNN](#)



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