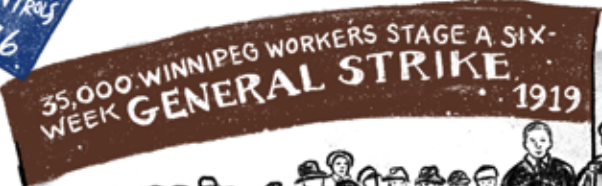
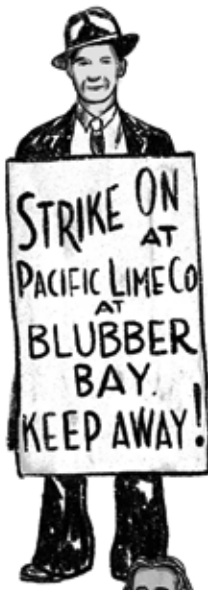
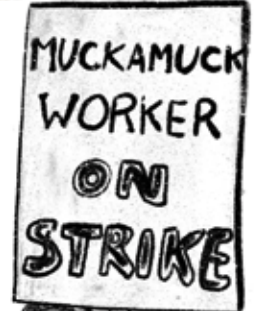


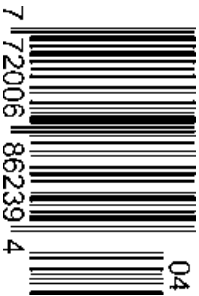
MONITOR



Telephone workers strike to protest long hours in Toronto. 1907



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The Graphic History Collective is a group of artists, researchers and writers interested in comics, history and social justice. Their comics show that you don't need a cape and a pair of tights to change the world. In January 2019, the collective released *Direct Action Gets the Goods: A Graphic History of the Strike in Canada and 1919: A Graphic History of the Winnipeg General Strike*, both published by Between the Lines.

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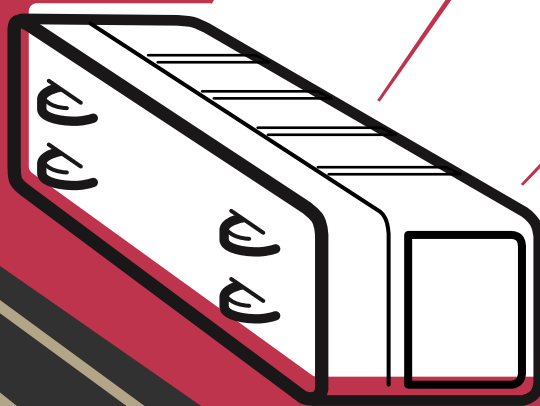
Book reviews in the *Monitor* are co-ordinated by Octopus Books, a community-owned anti-oppressive bookstore in Ottawa.



Kara Sievewright is an artist and writer who mainly creates poetic fiction comics and social justice-themed non-fiction comics and illustrations. She lives on Haida Gwaii as a settler on unceded Haida territory.

WINNIPEG 100 GENERAL YEARS STRIKE LATER

▼
*Perspectives on
direct action from
Paul Moist, Jon Weier,
Julie Guard,
Molly McCracken,
Kevin Rebeck,
Lynne Fernandez,
the Graphic History
Collective, Erika Shaker,
Bruno Dobrusin
and Zaez Deshpande.*
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STUART TREW

Direct action, then and now

IN JANUARY, TENS of thousands of Mexican factory workers in the north-eastern border town of Matamoros walked off the job to demand fair wages. The estimated 30,000 to 40,000 maquiladora workers (out of a total local workforce of 70,000) were incensed that their employers—foreign-owned, export-oriented auto parts firms and other manufacturers—had cancelled employee bonuses in response to a government-mandated doubling of the minimum wage in the border region effective January 1.

At 176.72 pesos (about \$12) per day, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's new minimum wage was close to what the maquiladora workers were already earning, but still far less than what those workers would have made in the 1980s. Factory owners' decision to cancel important wage top-ups was the last straw. Defying their union leadership, workers went on strike and in early February won a 20% wage increase and 32,000 pesos bonus (about \$2,200).

Inspired by the maquiladora victory, other unions at the border with the U.S. and across Mexico have organized wild-cat strikes to demand the same deal. "[T]he strike wave has spread beyond the factories to supermarkets and other employers, with all the workers demanding '20/32,'" notes the AFL-CIO, which is lending international support to the strikers. While the U.S. labour federation praised the wage hike as good news, they point out that the bosses are already striking back with help from the Confederation of Mexican Workers. In the first week of February, "as many as 2,000 strike leaders have been fired and blacklisted, despite legal prohibitions and non-reprisal agreements signed by the employers."

The Mexican workers' direct action and the response to it from the country's powerful offer about as good a prologue as any to this special issue of the *Monitor*. As you'll have guessed from the cover art by Kara Sievwright

of the Graphic History Collective, we spend a good part of the magazine talking about the strike—not only as a tool for improving wages and working conditions, but also for building social connections and solidarity, and achieving big-picture progressive change. "Workers can make great gains by withdrawing their labour power. But they also risk a lot," writes the collective in the intro to our cover feature. "The stakes in class struggle are high."

That is as true for Mexico's maquiladora workers today as it was for the 35,000 Winnipeg workers, only a third of them unionized, who walked off the job on May 15, 1919 in sympathy with the building trades and metal trade councils, launching the globally significant Winnipeg General Strike. As Paul Moist recounts in his reflections on the legacy of 1919 (page 14), "the general strike was a large and difficult defeat for the workers involved." Thousands were sacked or rehired under the same lousy conditions and pay; civic workers who joined the strike were only allowed to return to work after pledging their allegiance to the city and promising never to engage in sympathy action again.

But as Manitoba Federation of Labour President Kevin Rebeck points out (page 19), the direct action reverberated across the country. "Every existing government from Winnipeg outward changed after that strike, and we saw action that benefited workers," he says. Though strikers were labelled Bolsheviks by the business elite and press, or denounced as immigrants out to steal local jobs, public opinion stayed on the workers' side. Several union organizers were elected to office in Manitoba from their jail cells, others would take positions on city council and in the federal House of Commons.

The prominent role that women played in workers' struggles in Canada and globally in the late-19th and early-20th centuries cannot be overstated. Women were the last to leave the barricades during the short-lived and

brutally suppressed Paris Commune of March to May 1871, and they would be the first onto the street during the Winnipeg General Strike. CCPA-Manitoba Director Molly McCracken interviews Julie Guard, panellist at the "Building a Better World: 1919-2019" conference happening this May, about women's continued subordination in Canadian workplaces and how the #metoo movement and smart union organizing might fix that (page 22).

Perhaps no group of workers has done more for the current North American union movement than teachers. "The teachers' unions, I would say, have almost singlehandedly led to resurgent interest in unions," says Anchor Brewing worker Brace Belden, who is trying to organize a union at San Francisco's iconic craft beer factory, in a February interview with *Jacobin* magazine. "And the teachers' unions keep winning, which is encouraging. The teachers' unions are probably our biggest influence, honestly." Erika Shaker, who directs the CCPA's education project, wonders if Canada's education community can't also seize the moment to bring educators and education workers, parents and students together in a grand coalition for public education renewal (page 28).

As the One Big Union would say, direct action gets the goods, but it's not a guarantee of success. For every sympathetic honk for a striking teacher there is someone sharing a racist post on Facebook about immigrants or refugees. In that sense, and considering the gap between rich and poor is wider now than it was in 1919, the political and economic realities facing workers are remarkably similar to what they were leading up to, during and after the Winnipeg General Strike. A fully autonomous car is still a car, after all; a precarious retail job wouldn't pay the bills 40 years ago and certainly can't in 2019. Our duty, today as always, is to fight for fair pay and good jobs for everyone—or be prepared to live in a world where neither exists for anyone. **M**



Neocolonialism today

Colonialism is not dead. It has merely been transformed and reorganized by and for the super-wealthy of the world, who work together through multinational corporations to control people, society and their governments, using international trade agreements and regulations to maximize profit and wealth among people who will never be satisfied. This colonial capitalism is destroying society, democracy and our world's environment based on the neoliberal doctrine of Milton Friedman, who believed the only role of business is to maximize profit with no social responsibility for the public or society.

We must change our goal from maximizing profit to taking care of the planet, its environment and all the wonderful people, societies and life that depend on it. We must stop the mining and burning of fossil fuel and transition to the renewable green energy economy of the future. To start this transition, we must stop the building of the Trans Mountain pipeline project and the massive B.C. liquefied natural gas (LNG)

developments and use the public money saved to put people to work building our new green, clean economy.

Francis Blundell,
Victoria, B.C.

The *Monitor's* coverage of the Trans Mountain pipeline perhaps caused you to miss concerns about the liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline in northern B.C., which has split band councillors and traditional chiefs over the use of the land. The pipeline company negotiated the passage of the pipeline with the bands who claim they need to rid their reserves of poverty. Traditional chiefs, with their longer-range concerns for future generations, would prefer not to cut down the trees and dig the earth for the pipeline's path.

According to society's law the bands are right. But according to the hereditary chief's concern for the children, the berry pickers and the traditional medicine seekers, another law exists. It appears that resource development always impinges on traditional lands. We know that burning LNG anywhere in the world will increase global warming and, as *Monitor* articles have noted, emissions from the pipeline will use up to two-thirds of B.C.'s 2050 emissions limit. Can we wait this long to see if the use of fossil fuels will meet this limit? The traditional chiefs don't think so, yet the developers see no problem.

Barry Hammond,
Winnipeg, Manitoba

That's the ticket

As Canadian cities grow and sprawl, transportation and mobility become more and more vital and essential. The article by Michelle Perry in the January/February issue, "Is transit a right?", is a welcome, informed and thoughtful contribution to the discussion. Much attention is naturally focused on the financial aspects of free transit, but I feel there is still one very important consideration lacking: the total cost of the ticket collection process in public transportation.

The costs of vehicles, drivers, maintenance, fuel, etc. are obviously necessary and unavoidable in any transit system, but can the same be said for the sale, collection and enforcement of tickets? It would be very helpful if someone would do a totally separate accounting of ALL the costs involved, starting with the machinery and equipment: to produce tickets and passes; to collect and count them; to build the fences and gates necessary to protect the system from cheaters, along with the booths and offices devoted to ticket sales; and to hire the staff necessary to carry out all the necessary security, sales and other functions. Wouldn't it be surprising if ticket revenue barely covered the cost of the fare system?

All public transit systems depend on subsidies from the existing tax base for their operation. All citizens (and visitors) contribute to the revenue of the general civic financial base through many other ways. If it

turns out that the ticket system pays only for its own existence, the transit systems could continue to operate on the existing subsidies, without any ticket revenue or need for additional taxation. It's not a "free ride"; it's already paid for in different places.

Even if a little tax revenue was still required, most citizens would be quite pleasantly surprised to have an immediate, very useful, visible example of personal benefit from such a charge. Let's continue the discussion that could get people to their jobs, schools, hospitals, shops, families, etc. unburdened by the unnecessary cost of an antiquated transit fare system.

Donald L. Roberts,
Kitchener, Ontario

Correction

A graph on page 10 of the January/February issue showing household expenditures on prescription drug costs mistakenly listed out-of-pocket expenses as workplace drug plan expenses and vice versa. The graph has been corrected in the online version of the *Monitor*. Thank you to Mark Brown of Victoria, B.C. for pointing out the mistake.

Send all letters to monitor@policyalternatives.ca. We will contact you if we plan on running your letter in a future issue.

New from the CCPA

Child care: what goes up can come down

For the fifth year running, the CCPA has studiously gathered child care fees in 28 large Canadian cities to present a snapshot of the costs of raising children across the country. For most of those years our data showed that fees, already excessive for most families, were trending upward and rising faster than inflation. That is still mostly the case, as the graph here shows, but there is also evidence that policy can provide relief for parents.

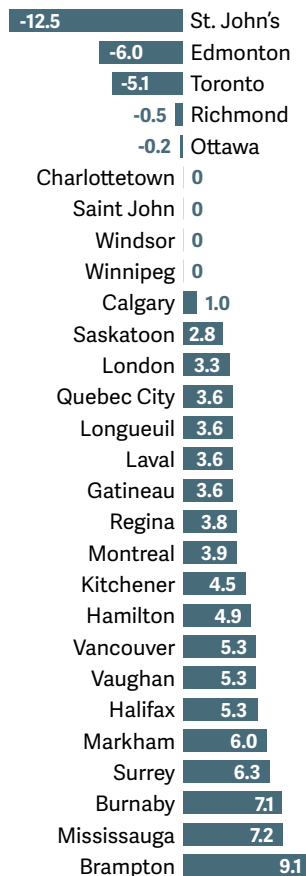
"More provinces are using public policy to make child care more affordable," notes **David Macdonald**, senior economist at the CCPA and a co-author, with **Martha Friendly**, of the new report **Developmental Milestones: Child Care Fees in Canada's Big Cities**. "But these bright spots are overshadowed by the fact that fees in Canada remain astronomical, outpacing inflation in most cities."

Child care remains most expensive in the General Toronto and Hamilton Area, where infant fees (children under the age of 3) can top \$1,600 a month, and least expensive in Quebec (less than \$200 a month) followed by Winnipeg, MB

and Charlottetown, PEI. Fees dropped by an average (median) 13% in St. John's, NL, reflecting a government move to cap and subsidize fees. They are also down in Edmonton for preschool spaces, according to the CCPA survey.

Two more CCPA reports out this winter narrow in on the child care situations in Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. In the first, **Saskatchewan's Failing Report Card on Child Care**, authors **Courtney Carlberg** and **Jen Budney** find the province's child care model: continues to be based on outdated and inaccurate views of the family; can accommodate only 18% of children aged 5 and under while 70% of Saskatchewan

% CHANGE IN MEDIAN PRESCHOOLER FEE BETWEEN 2017 AND 2018 (Inflation=3%)



mothers of children that age go to work, and; deprives low income families of subsidies based on eligibility rates frozen in the 1980s.

At the end of January, the CCPA's Nova Scotia office released the report **"Unappreciated and Underpaid": Early Childhood Educators in Nova Scotia**. Authors Christine Saulnier and Lesley Frank interviewed child care sector workers and their employers to find out what factors contribute to the latter's ability to recruit and retain ECEs. Inadequate government supports and a lack of replacement workers are leading to burnout, they find, but implementing higher wages within systemwide reforms focused on child health and well-being would go a long way to fixing the problem.

CCPA-BC welcomes Emira Mears!

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' B.C. Office is pleased to welcome Emira Mears as their new Associate Director. Emira is an accomplished communications professional and digital strategist who has, through her former company Raised Eyebrow, worked with many organizations in the progressive sector, including non-profits, unions and public institutions. A published author and a longtime feminist community leader, Emira will lead the CCPA-BC's stellar communications team, which includes Terra Poirier, Lindsey Bertrand and Jean Kavanagh, and provide organizational

support to B.C. Director Shannon Daub and Director of Operations and Finance Mariwan Jaaf.

Saving Canada's auto jobs

The announcement by GM that it would be shuttering its Oshawa, Ontario assembly plant this year hit hard. Not only is Canadian auto production productive and profitable for the companies involved, but it comes with considerable associated benefits for the Canadian economy. In a new report for the CCPA, **The Future of the Canadian Auto Industry**, authors **John Holmes** and **Charlotte Yates** make the case for much more co-operation between the federal and provincial governments, and between the provinces and U.S. states, in the development of an integrated industrial strategy to maintain the Great Lakes region as a major international auto-producing hub. As they explain in their detailed analysis, simply inducing international automakers to establish or maintain production in Ontario will not be enough to ensure the viability of Canadian auto R&D and manufacturing into the future given intense competitive pressures from other regions, including the southern United States and Mexico.

For more reports, commentary and infographics from the CCPA's national and provincial offices, visit www.policyalternatives.ca.

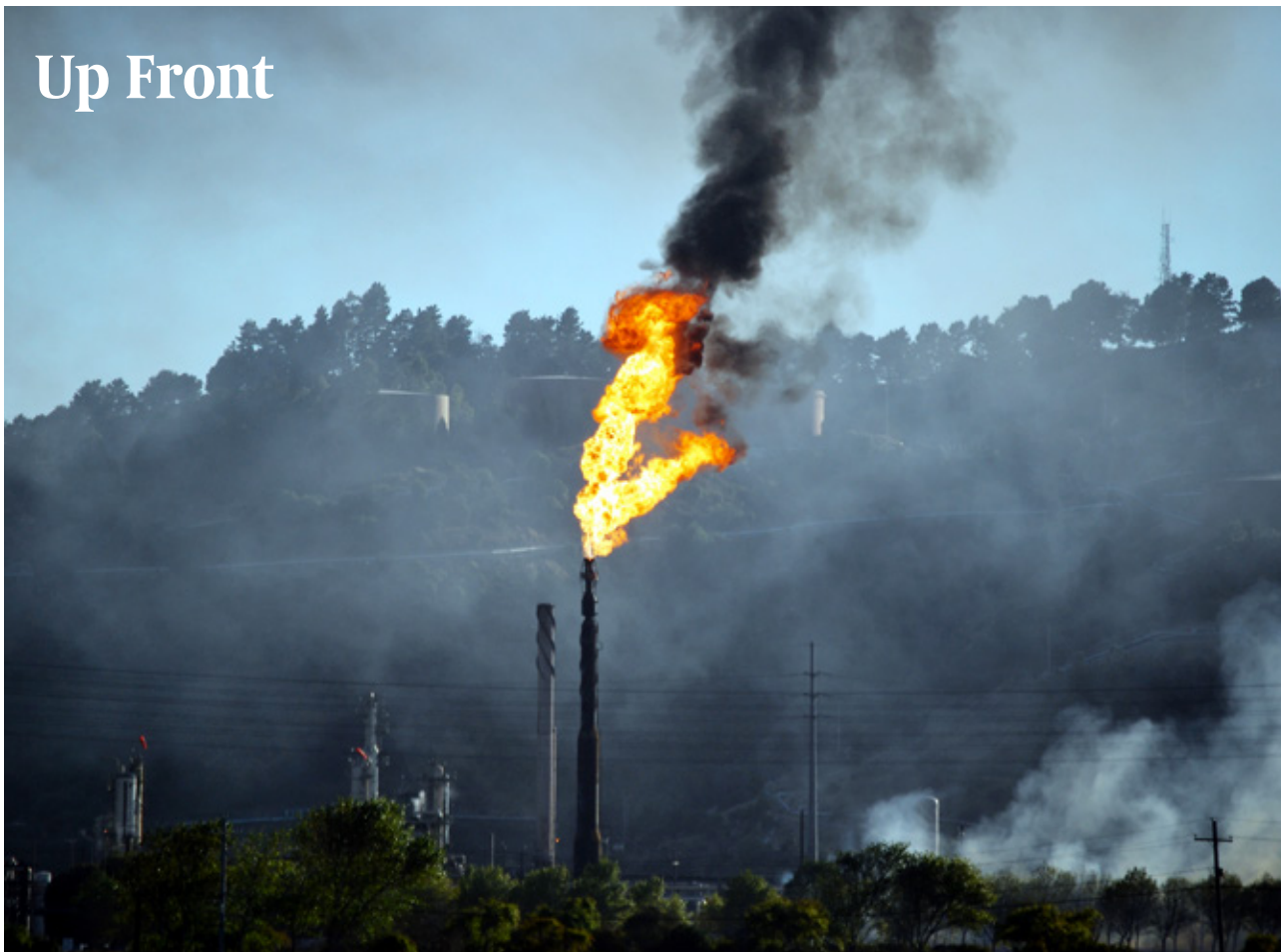


PHOTO BY NICK FULLERTON, FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS

MARC LEE | NATIONAL

Carbon pricing Prospects and protests

The federal government's plan to put a price on carbon is set to be a top issue heading into October's federal election. The carbon pricing backstop, which lets provinces and territories implement their own plans but imposes a minimum carbon tax on those who do not, has drawn the ire of provincial governments in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick.

Carbon pricing has become something of an obsession—to a degree unseen in any other area of public policy. Advocates, including most of Canada's environmental groups and many policy analysts and academics, have made it the litmus test of the

credibility of a government's climate plan. A price on carbon, no matter how small, is widely applauded for its efficient, market-friendly approach to reducing emissions.

Here's the problem: existing and near-term carbon taxes are too small to have much impact, while higher carbon prices that would actually make a dent in behaviour seem to be political non-starters. Even if there was no provincial opposition to the federal carbon pricing plan, Canada would still miss its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets by a wide margin.

To solve this conundrum we need to do two things. First, bring notions of equity and fairness back into the

conversation. Second, we need to back away from a narrow carbon pricing approach and reconsider more politically acceptable regulations, marketplace standards and public investments.

How did we get here?

The intuition for carbon pricing is that the pollution associated with producing goods and services causes damages that are not reflected in the sale price. In the jargon of economics, pollution is an external cost of production, or "externality." Carbon pricing aims to "internalize the externality" by adding a tax or fee to reflect those costs. In doing so, the theory goes, prices more fully reflect the real costs of production, products will be more expensive and markets will allocate resources more efficiently.

Getting from the textbook ideal to the real world, however, is more challenging. Putting a dollar value on

such damages is tricky. What's the value of a lost species? How do you translate adverse health impacts into dollars? How much damage is caused by one metre of sea level rise? Some observers scoff at the entire notion of putting dollar values on impacts that cannot inherently be measured. Those who attempt to make estimates are often restricted to measuring impacts in terms of use-value to humans.

Thus, we have no idea how high a carbon tax should be to "internalize the externality." Since we don't want to shock households and businesses with a sudden spike in prices, the policy answer has been to start with a small tax and then increase it annually.

Where fairness comes into play is that carbon taxes are regressive, meaning low income households pay a greater share of their income to the tax than higher income households. To address this regressive impact, a central design issue is to ensure a share of carbon tax revenues flows back to low and moderate income households in the form of credit.

In addition, most households have relatively little ability to change their behaviour in the short run. We live in a society structured around the use of fossil fuels—there are limits to how much we can realistically change, on our own, in our everyday lives. We might be able to control how much we drive (depending on the availability of public transit and how far we live from our place of work) or whether to turn down the thermostat (depending on where we live and how well-insulated our home is). Over a longer period of time, consumers make decisions about what type of car they will buy or what furnace they will install—but at the time a carbon tax is imposed they will feel burdened, particularly if there are no readily available alternatives.

Carbon tax proponents also tend to ignore another "price on carbon" in the form of fuel taxes. From a consumer perspective, fuel taxes amount to the same thing and they are larger than the fully phased-in \$50-per-tonne carbon price backstop. They range from 13 cents per litre of gas in Alberta to 19.2 cents per litre in Quebec at the provincial level (in carbon terms, \$55 to \$82 per tonne of CO₂), and another 10 cents per litre at

the federal level (\$43 per tonne of CO₂). Some urban areas like Metro Vancouver have an additional regional fuel tax (17 cents per litre or \$72 per tonne of CO₂).

Lessons from B.C.

These issues around fairness and effectiveness have played out for more than a decade in British Columbia, North America's poster child for carbon pricing. B.C.'s first phase of carbon pricing occurred between 2008 and 2012 under the Liberal government of Gordon Campbell; the current second phase was initiated by the NDP minority government (backed by the BC Greens) in conjunction with the federal carbon pricing plan.

B.C.'s carbon tax started out at \$10 per tonne of CO₂ emitted in July 2008 (2.3 cents per litre at the pump), and then rose to \$30 per tonne as of July 2012 (7 cents per litre). The carbon tax featured prominently in the 2009 provincial election, won by the BC Liberals in spite of a very negative "axe the tax" campaign from the opposition NDP. The BC Liberals later abandoned carbon pricing increases when the tax hit \$30 per tonne in 2012, and sidelined climate action altogether in favour of doubling down of fossil fuels by developing a liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry.

It would make a big difference if revenues collected are tied to actions Canadians can see, like building new infrastructure, building transit lines or retrofitting homes.

B.C.'s current government increased the carbon tax modestly in 2018 to \$35 per tonne, with three more annual (\$5) increases scheduled. These increases put B.C. only slightly ahead of the federal carbon price backstop, which will be \$50 per tonne (11.6 cents per litre) in 2022.

On the other hand, low levels of a carbon tax still generate a lot of revenue. At \$35 per tonne, B.C.'s carbon tax will pull in just shy of \$1.5 billion in 2018-19. The potential of that revenue stream to fund climate action investments is significant and may be more important than the "price signal" of the tax itself. Such revenues can also be used to compensate low and moderate income households to make the system more fair.

Instead, the previous government's policy was "revenue neutrality," with carbon tax revenue largely used to pay for corporate income tax cuts, plus smaller amounts to personal income tax cuts and a low income climate action credit. Endorsed by economists, revenue neutrality was supposed to make the carbon tax more palatable to the public, but for most households it is counterintuitive. People may not like paying taxes, but when they do, they want to see results for their money.

Importantly, the current B.C. government broke with the policy of revenue neutrality and has also increased the amount of the low-income credit. These are positive developments to improve the fairness of B.C.'s carbon tax regime.

Households vs. industry

Another challenge with carbon pricing in practice is that it tends to predominantly fall on households, not industry. Industrial emissions comprise the lion's share of emissions in Canada, but carbon pricing for industry has been watered down due to concerns about "competitiveness."

For large industrial emitters the federal government will only be charging a carbon price on the portion of their emissions above an "output-based emissions limit." And companies will also be able to buy credits from companies that beat their own thresholds or, much worse, use carbon offsets that have a poor track record due to accounting tricks.



Index Cheque this out

In its new CleanBC climate plan, the B.C. government has a slightly different take. It will rebate the incremental carbon tax paid (that above \$30 per tonne) to industrial performers who meet a GHG intensity benchmark. Some of the remaining carbon tax paid by industry will be used to support clean energy investments.

The upshot: the notion of a carbon price signal rippling through the economy and making markets work better has been abandoned. Simon Fraser University energy economist Mark Jaccard, once a proponent of carbon pricing, now argues instead for flexible regulations and marketplace standards.

If you look closely, B.C.'s new climate plan avoids being more aggressive on carbon pricing in favour of regulations and standards, such as mandating a certain percentage of passenger vehicles be zero-emission by a certain date and introducing tighter energy efficiency regulations for new buildings.

In terms of public opinion, people seem much more willing to embrace regulations on companies rather than a visible carbon tax. While regulations may also lead to higher prices, their advantage is being hidden from view. And in hindsight such regulations usually end up being much less costly than anticipated.

What's next?

The main takeaway from the federal-provincial skirmishes is that politics matter. The federal government's carbon price backstop includes another form of revenue neutrality by rebating any carbon tax it collects back to the originating province. Recently it has been proposed that these revenues would flow directly to households in the provinces that do not develop their own carbon pricing plans and instead pay the federal backstop price, but it's not clear whether this will improve the plan's popularity.

The politics of carbon pricing from a decade ago linger today. In the 2008 federal election campaign then-Liberal leader Stephan Dion proposed a tax shift modelled on B.C.'s carbon tax. It failed dismally. Then-prime minister Stephen Harper, for his part, derided the carbon tax as a "tax on everything." Perhaps he saw correctly where public opinion lay by calling instead for regulations on a sector-by-sector basis (although his government never got around to implementing them).

Carbon pricing can be one part of the solution on climate change, but it may well be more effective to lean on regulation and standards. It would also make a big difference if revenues collected are tied to actions Canadians can see, like building new infrastructure, building transit lines or retrofitting homes. Combined with a broad-based credit to address the regressive element of the tax, this could be a winning formula for Canada. **M**

MARC LEE IS A SENIOR ECONOMIST WITH THE CCPA-BC.

2010

Canada becomes first country to ban the use of bisphenol A (BPA) in the production of baby bottles. BPA and the closely related chemical bisphenol S (BPS) are known for their hormone or endocrine disrupting effects in animals; BPA has been linked to diabetes, obesity, ADHD in children and hormone-based cancers such as breast and prostate cancer.

8 million

Number of tonnes of BPA used globally in 2016 to make hard plastic, epoxy resins to line food cans, and thermal paper used globally in cash register receipts, train and airplane boarding passes, etc.

90%

Number of Canadians exposed to BPA every day.

0.042 µg/kg bw/day

Probabilistic dietary exposure to BPA (not counting exposure to receipts) for women in the general population in micrograms per kilogram of body weight per day, as estimated by Canadian regulators in 2012.

1000x

Factor by which BPA levels in receipts exceed the amount of the chemical in food can lining.

4 µg/kg bw/day

Tolerable daily intake of BPA as set by the European Food Safety Authority in 2015. The EFSA is currently re-evaluating BPA hazards.

6714x

Average spike in the amount of BPS in the bodies of four participants in an Environmental Defence experiment after handling cash receipts for 17 minutes, the average amount of time a cashier handles receipts over an eight-hour shift. Prior to the experiment, the four participants had gone on a BPA/BPS detox by avoiding all products and containers known to include the chemicals.

115x

Spike in the level of one participant who had used hand sanitizer before handling the receipts for 17 minutes.

250,000

Number of women who worked as cashiers in 2016. Pregnant women and children are more susceptible to the estrogen mimicking effects of both BPA and BPS.

2020

Year the European Union proposes to ban the use of BPA/BPS in all receipts.

SOURCES "The hidden cost of receipts: How BPA and BPS find their way into our bodies," Environmental Defence, February 2019; European Food Safety Authority webpage on bisphenol A (accessed February 13, 2019); Health Canada's Updated Assessment of Bisphenol A (BPA) Exposure from Food Sources, September 2018 (accessed February 13, 2019).

FOOD FACTS

In the largest prospective study of vegetarian diets, people following vegan, vegetarian, pescatarian or semi-vegetarian diets had a **12% lower overall mortality risk** than did omnivores; the lowest risk was among pescatarian (vegetarian plus fish) diets.

Reaching the Paris Agreement to **limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, while aiming for 1.5 degrees, is not possible** by only decarbonizing the global energy system; food systems that can provide negative emissions (i.e., function as a major carbon sink instead of a major carbon source) while protecting carbon sinks in natural ecosystems are both required to reach this goal.

Food production consumes more water than any other industrial sector: **70% of all global water withdrawals are used for irrigation.**

Water consumption for food production has more than **doubled between 1961 and 2000.**

Based on the International Union for Conservation of Nature, **80% of extinction threats** to mammal and bird species are due to agriculture.

Changes in food production practices could reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions in 2050 by about 10%, whereas increased **consumption of plant-based diets could reduce emissions by up to 80%.**

Currently, almost **two-thirds** of all soybeans, maize, barley and about a third of all grains are used as feed for animals.

LETISHA TOOP | NATIONAL

Sustainable eating

Food for thought from the EAT-Lancet Commission

A recent report published by the *Lancet* found that in order to create a sustainable planet there will need to be unprecedented collaboration on a global scale to transform how we produce and eat food. This “Great Food Transformation,” as the report calls it, is eminently achievable and should happen sooner rather than later.

The EAT-Lancet Commission is an independent scientific body made up of 19 commissioners and 18 co-authors of various backgrounds (e.g., health, agriculture, environmental sustainability) from 16 countries. Their goal: develop global scientific targets for healthy diets and food production practices that would allow countries to meet their UN Sustainable Development Goals while also respecting the Paris Agreement.

An important new reference diet in the report aims to encourage the consumption of a sustainable diet with adequate intakes of protein, carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables and fat. Protein should come mainly, if not exclusively, from plants, says the report. Not only is meat production taking up too much high-value agricultural land, but overconsumption of meat in western diets “is a significant contributor to poor health and increases a person’s risk of becoming overweight, obese or developing certain noncommunicable diseases.”

The EAT-Lancet reference diet recognizes that grains are the largest source of energy in most diets around the world. It is recommended that about 60% of daily energy should come from carbohydrates, though a focus on whole grains is strongly emphasized. Vegetables and fruits are an essential source of many micronutrients and eating five servings per day is recommended to achieve the most benefits, one of which is prevention of cardiovascular disease. Saturated fats should be replaced with unsaturated vegetable oils, especially those naturally high in omega-3 and omega-6. According to the report’s estimates, following the reference diet could avoid approximately 11.1 million deaths per year in 2030 and reduce premature mortality by 19%.

Our food systems and the environment are inextricably linked, the report finds. Food production contributes to climate change, biodiversity loss, overuse of freshwater,

interference with global nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, and land-system change. All of the EAT-Lancet Commission’s recommended strategies would address these dangerous and rapid environmental changes.

However, the report also makes it clear that while implementing these changes in food production practices would indeed have a positive environmental impact—reducing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions in 2050 by about 10%—the real key to reaching environmental goals lies in changing our diets. The increased consumption of plant-based diets could reduce emissions by up to 80%, says the report. Much of the power to create a sustainable future therefore lies with individuals, local communities and local governments whose environmental and health policy changes could have a huge impact globally.

There is some recent progress on sustainable food systems in Canada. The newly released portion of Canada’s Food Guide appears to follow much of the research from the *Lancet* report. As widely reported in the media in early 2019, the new guide suggests eating plant-based proteins more often and limiting meat consumption, especially processed meats, as well as dairy products. While the Canadian guide does not directly speak to the detrimental environmental impact of meat and dairy production (this could be included in the full version anticipated later this year), it does encourage Canadians to think of plants as a completely adequate source of protein.

Some parts of the new guide were modelled on Brazil’s 2014 national food guide, a groundbreaking policy that highlights the links between healthy diets and sustainable food systems while advising users to make naturally or minimally processed foods the basis of their diets. While Canada’s food guide does not explicitly make this link, its release this January has furthered the national conversation about the wider ramifications of how we eat. And that may just get us closer to the “Great Transformation” the world will need in the coming years. **M**

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HANNAH MUHAJARINE | NATIONAL

Canada needs a Green New Deal

First it was 44 million, then 66 million and now 78 million tonnes of CO₂. Every year, Environment and Climate Change Canada increases the amount by which Canada is projected to miss its Paris Agreement target. “Transitions to a cleaner future are hard,” said Environment Minister Catherine McKenna in a press conference in December. If the minister is in need of guidance, I would respectfully direct her southwards, to newly elected Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Green New Deal—legislation for which was released in early February.

The essence of the Green New Deal is a swift transition to renewables that ensures equitable access to fair wages, full benefits and unionized livelihoods for all Americans. It consists of seven goals that address historic inequalities based on poverty, race and gender. And like the original New Deal, the plan will be

completely government-funded and administered.

The idea of a Green New Deal is being championed by grassroots movements on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border. These movements for climate action are increasingly being led by young people, because it is our lives being discounted when politicians buy pipelines.

Back in December, young activists from the Sunrise Movement occupied the office of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representative, in support of Ocasio-Cortez, herself only 29. Sixteen-year-old Greta Thunberg of Sweden has inspired thousands of

U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) announce their Green New Deal at a news conference in February.

REUTERS/JONATHAN ERNST

students around the world to join her school strike for the climate. And in Ottawa this February, young Canadians gathered for Powershift, a conference spearheaded by 350.org and centred largely on building the movement for a Canadian Green New Deal.

Much groundwork has already been laid. In fact, a recent Fox News headline proclaims: “Green New Deal actually an old socialist plan from Canada.” That socialist plan in question is The Leap Manifesto, created in 2015 at a gathering of environmental, Indigenous, labour, faith, and social and food justice movements (and printed in the November/December 2015 issue of the *Monitor*—Editor). Similar plans to the Green New Deal have been put forward by Canadian organizations like Blue Green Canada, 350.org, the Canadian Labour Congress and Climate Action Network; these plans are supported by research and policy analysis from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Broadbent Institute and the Pembina Institute.

Meanwhile, the federal government’s current plan for tackling climate change is the Pan-Canadian Framework, which relies heavily on taxing carbon (see article in this section by Marc Lee—Editor). This reliance on market-based policy is like

WORTH REPEATING

I'm a big fan of Robert Kagan's newish book called *The Jungle Grows Back*. And he uses what I think is a brilliant metaphor for the rules-based international order. He says there was this kind of end of history moment...after the fall of the Berlin wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, when we all thought that liberal democracy in our own countries, and rules-based international order around the world—that was inevitable. We were all just moving towards it. And I will admit I was guilty of thinking that. I think that was sort of a sin of optimism and it was OK to think that.

But Kagan's point is there is nothing inevitable or natural about liberal democracy or the rules-based international order, and that what is natural, in fact, is the jungle, and that liberal democracy and the rules-based international order is like a garden. Now my dad is a farmer, so I very much understand how to keep your garden fertile and growing is a constant fight. It's a fight against the weeds. It's a fight against the pests. It's a fight against the animals of the forest. And I think we kind of got complacent and we thought the garden was inevitable. And I think now is a time that we, who prefer to live in a garden, rather than a jungle, need to start spending some time pulling up the weeds and seeding some crops for the fall.

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland discusses the end of history, U.S. exceptionalism and the delights of garden living at the January 2019 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

trying to bake a cake using only eggs. Under a Green New Deal, the government would exercise a much wider range of policy tools to steer the economy away from fossil fuels.

What would a Canadian Green New Deal look like?

Jobs

A Green New Deal would create green jobs within all sectors of the economy. The federal government has pledged to double investment in clean energy research, development and demonstration. But this focus on technology development, mainly for global export, is much too narrow.

In Alberta, the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee identifies value-adding opportunities for the oil and gas sector; we need such bodies for renewable energy, as well as strategies for developing entirely new sustainable industries. We need Canadian-manufactured electric vehicles (buses, trains and personal vehicles), solar panels and deep-cycle batteries. Expanding local value chains by greening the manufacturing sector will create more jobs for Canadians, as well as providing local supply chains to drive Canada's own transition.

This cannot happen without policy support, including the creation of new agencies and programs supported by significant government investment; legislated targets for renewable energy expansion and strict plans for the phase out of fossil fuels (beyond coal); new regulations and standards; and feed-in tariffs and public procurement systems that help create a market for the new goods and services. These kinds of policy tools have been exercised for years in support of the fossil fuel industry and the corporations that drive it.

A just transition

The concept of a "just transition" is being used to describe policy measures that protect workers whose livelihoods will be hurt in the transition to renewables. Examples of the concept at work include Alberta's Coal Community Transition Fund and the federal Just Transition Taskforce for Coal-workers. Common measures include funding

packages for community economic development, increased or easier access to employment insurance (EI), support for accessing education and apprenticeship opportunities, and early retirement options.

These are important considerations, but a Green New Deal would also include training opportunities in the renewable energy sector, building retrofitting and green infrastructure installation. It would include recruitment and training programs targeted at vulnerable groups such as people with low incomes, women, newcomers and Indigenous peoples. These jobs would be unionized and come with full benefits, a liveable wage and a minimum length of employment.

The Leap also calls for the expansion of opportunities in low-carbon sectors such as caregiving, health care, education and the arts—sectors that have suffered from a lack of government funding. A Green New Deal and the Leap both call for a basic income that could support the unpaid care work that is often done by women, as part of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. As a first step, Make Poverty History Manitoba is calling for a Liveable Basic Needs Benefit, to bring all of those on social assistance to Canada's official poverty line.

The American think-tank Data for Progress also suggests a "green job guarantee" as part of a Green New Deal. The idea is that all those who want and are able to work are guaranteed access to employment. This can be accomplished by the government, labour and industry together. As of yet we see little of this aspect of a just transition from our political leaders.

Public ownership

Federal investment is key to the Green New Deal. These days, the role of government is often conceptualized as balancing the budget; this is a false understanding of political leadership, even in times when we are not facing existential crisis.

In the U.S., Ocasio-Cortez proposes to finance the Green New Deal using a new public bank or system of banks as well as public venture funds, options also available to our federal government.

In the Pan-Canadian Framework, the government proposed the creation of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which could support provinces and municipalities building green infrastructure projects. However, the initial mandate of the bank to provide low-cost financing has been sidelined in favour of attracting private sector investors.

While governments can paint private investment as the cheaper financing option, private investors expect on average three times the rate of return compared to the federal government's borrowing rate, which makes projects much costlier to the public in the long run. A preoccupation with avoiding deficits also increases the likelihood that governments will end up privatizing public assets, again with long-term costs to the public. As an alternative, Toby Sanger, a CCPA research associate, suggests a public bank that is seeded by government funding and borrows on financial markets at the lower public borrowing rate, backed by a federal government guarantee.

Another obvious source of funding is carbon pricing, which could generate even more revenue by tightening

current exemptions (including for coal-fired power plants). Along the same lines, massive savings could be gained by cutting subsidies to the fossil fuel sector, which have been estimated at \$350 million from the federal government alone.

Finally, the quicker the transition is funded, the more likely this work would be effective in staving off some of the (more than economically) costly effects of extreme weather and increased natural disasters caused by a changing climate. A Green New Deal funded by federal investment, with a focus on the public good, will ensure greater public ownership, public benefits, and a widespread and rapid transition. The exact details of the plan can be sorted out as it moves forward, but the principles of public ownership and a just transition should be front and centre.

The only way we will solve the climate crisis is by creating an economy that is fair and just, in which everyone has access to a means of sustainable livelihood. The federal government has so far failed to produce the kind of actionable, far-reaching climate plan we need.

At the 2016 NDP convention there was significant support for the party to adopt the Leap Manifesto as its platform moving into the next election. But we will not get our Canadian Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez unless we create the space for her to emerge.

The Green New Deal is backed by a robust grassroots movement in the U.S.—and here in Canada the movement is growing rapidly. Now is the time to organize—nationally (through organizations like 350.org) and locally (e.g., through the Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition). Our politicians must know that this federal election, we will vote for a Green New Deal. **M**

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— CCPA'S SIXTH ANNUAL —

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WORKERS, STRIKES AND POLITICAL POWER

THE GRAPHIC HISTORY COLLECTIVE

FOR SIX WEEKS in May and June 1919, approximately 35,000 workers in Winnipeg walked off the job to voice their frustration with a range of issues, from a lack of collective bargaining rights and union recognition to increasing inequality. Indeed, the strike was part of a broader wave of worker revolts that swept across Canada and the world in 1919, as working people in numerous Canadian cities and countries used the strike—the withdrawal of labour power—to push for change.

Though bosses and government officials ultimately crushed the Winnipeg General Strike, it remains one of the largest and longest strikes in Canadian history and an impressive display of the power of the strike as a tool of working-class protest. For as long as people have worked for others, walking off the job—going on strike—has been one of the most effective and direct methods of winning better wages and working conditions, among other demands. Because employers and governments rely on workers to produce goods and services, when workers refuse to work employers and governments are pressured to address workers' grievances. This is why members of the radical labour union the Industrial Workers of the World often say "Direct Action Gets Satisfaction," or "Direct Action Gets the Goods!"

In recent years, we have come to view the strike narrowly, as a tool of last resort for unionized workers engaged in collective bargaining. But a closer look at the history of the strike shows us that for over 200 years, diverse workers in what is currently Canada have used the strike to fight for a better world.

In 1829, Cree boatmen in Oxford House, Manitoba refused to work for the Hudson Bay Company for only 10 pelts per season and demanded that they receive the same pay (40 pelts) as their counterparts at York Factory for the same work. In the 1840s, Irish canal workers in Ontario walked off the job for adequate housing, health services, and better pay. In 1872, a general strike for the nine-hour day and trade union recognition spread across southern Ontario and to Montreal and Halifax.

Workers continued to use strikes to address a range of issues throughout the 20th century. In 1902, members of the International Jewelry Workers' Union in Toronto struck for two and a half months after their union officers were fired. Meanwhile, in Winnipeg, bakers at Paulin Chambers walked off the job to protest the

company's refusal to recognize female workers as members of the union. In 1914, the Trades and Labour Council of Canada regularly passed resolutions for a general strike to pressure the federal government to oppose World War I. In 1938, in the midst of the Great Depression, relief camp workers stopped work to protest conditions in government camps.

The number of strikes increased dramatically during World War II, and workers continued to use strikes as a tool of protest in the post-war period, too. In 1957, more than 65,000 railway workers walked off the job to support CP Rail firefighters who were to be phased out due to technological change. In 1972, the Common Front (a group of unions bargaining together) staged a one-day general strike in Quebec as part of their dispute with the provincial government. That same year, miners in Ontario struck to protest unsafe working conditions and lax regulation of worker health and safety.

Since the 1970s, the number of strikes has decreased, but workers still use the strike to push for change. In 1981, postal workers struck for maternity leave. In 1987, the labour council in Elliot Lake, Ontario threatened a general strike if an anesthetist was not brought to the town. In the mid-1990s, workers across Ontario participated in a series of one-day demonstrations and general strikes known as the Days of Action to protest the austerity policies of the provincial government. In 2008, 2015 and 2018, graduate student workers and contract faculty employed by York University struck for better wages and working conditions.

Workers can make great gains by withdrawing their labour power. But they also risk a lot. The stakes in class struggle are high. History shows us that employers and government officials will not hesitate to use all of the tools at their disposal to end strikes, including violence. To be successful, then, working people need to have a clear understanding of how strikes work, how workers in the past have used the strike successfully as a tool of protest, and how solidarity—rather than division, infighting or indifference—is the key to building a better world. In these tough times, we need to remember: direct action gets the goods! **M**

THE GRAPHIC HISTORY COLLECTIVE IS A GROUP OF ARTISTS, RESEARCHERS AND WRITERS INTERESTED IN COMICS, HISTORY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. IN JANUARY 2019, THEY RELEASED TWO BOOKS WITH BETWEEN THE LINES: *DIRECT ACTION GETS THE GOODS* AND *1919: A GRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE*.

Direct Action Gets the Goods

A brief timeline of strikes in what is now known as Canada

Illustrations by Gord Hill, Kara Sievewright, David Lester, Orion Keresztesi, Sean Carleton, and Althea Balmes. Designed by Kara Sievewright.



1829

Oxford House, MB: Cree boatmen refuse to work for the Hudson Bay Company for only ten pelts per season and demand they receive the same pay, forty pelts, as their counterparts at York Factory for the same work.

1840s

Ontario: Irish canal workers walk off the job to demand adequate housing conditions, health services, and better pay. The government sends magistrates, police, and troops.

1872

Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia: A general strike for the nine-hour day and for the state to recognize trade unions as legal entities spreads across Southern Ontario and to Montreal and Halifax.



1868

Halifax, NS: Members of the Journeymen Bakers' Friendly Society strike for three weeks to reduce their working day from over sixteen hours to twelve.



1894

British Columbia: Indigenous fishermen strike on the Skeena River.

1898

Winnipeg, MB: American Railway Union members strike in sympathy with Pullman workers in the United States.

1907

Toronto, ON: Bell Telephone workers strike to protest long hours and to demand government regulation of work hours.

1901

Rosland, BC: Miners strike when employers try to dismantle the union and refuse to recognize it.

1917

Nova Scotia: Black workers organize the Order of Sleeping Car Porters to fight racist discrimination on the railway and to secure higher wages.

1911

British Columbia: Coal miners in Crow's Nest Pass and Vancouver Island shut down the industry to gain union recognition and the right to collective bargaining.

1904

British Columbia: 1,000 Indigenous fishermen strike on the Skeena River.

1918

Vancouver, BC: Longshore, street railway, metal trades, construction, and service workers walk out in a one-day general strike to respond to the death of union organizer Albert "Ginger" Goodwin.

1919

Winnipeg, MB: 35,000 workers stage a six-week general strike, one of the longest and largest strikes in Canadian history.

Canada: General sympathy strikes with Winnipeg workers break out across the country.

1920

Halifax, NS: Waitresses strike for a provincial minimum wage.

1925

New Waterford, NS: Company police shoot into a crowd of striking workers, killing William Davis.

1927

Glace Bay, NS: Miners organize a one-day protest against the impending execution of anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in the United States.

1937

Calgary, AB: Meat packers stop work and occupy the factory of United Packing to protest discrimination against the union, unfair treatment, and unsafe conditions.

1937-1938

Blubber Bay, BC: Lime workers strike for eleven months for union recognition and an end to discrimination against union members by employers and the state.

1966

Montreal, QC: Longshore workers strike to protest police ticketing their cars and Expo 67 wage levels.

1949

Quebec: Asbestos workers strike to protest, in part, the operation of foreign businesses in Quebec and to protest the lack of wage increases.

1946

Windsor, ON: Auto workers strike to maintain union security.

1938

Canada: Relief camp workers stop work to protest conditions in government camps and occupy a number of buildings.

1972

Quebec: Workers organize a general strike. Hundreds of thousands of people walk off the job, in part to defy the provincial government.

1978

Vancouver, BC: Indigenous workers at an "Indian" themed restaurant join the Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC), a grassroots feminist union, and begin a three-year strike.

1976

Canada: One million workers across the country walk out to protest the federal government's attempts to restrict wages.

1979

Clearbrook, BC: More than 200 farm workers refuse to work until back wages are paid. They win, and their success lays the foundation for the Canadian Farmworkers Union.

1981

Canada: Members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers strike to secure maternity leave.

1983

British Columbia: The Operation Solidarity movement organizes strikes to protest the provincial government's recession policies.

1986

Newfoundland and Labrador: Thousands of workers walk off the job to protest new limits on their right to strike.

2018

Montreal, QC: Google employees from around the world walk off the job to protest sexual harassment, gender inequality and systemic racism.

2016

Montreal, QC: When an IWW member is fired in a local poutine shop, several union members occupy the building, stopping business. The employee is rehired by the end of the day.

2014

British Columbia: Indigenous court workers—members of the British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union—strike to protest poor working conditions.

2012

Toronto, ON: Air Canada baggage handlers and ground staff stage a wildcat strike in solidarity with co-workers suspended for heckling the federal labour minister.

2004

British Columbia: 40,000 members of the Hospital Employees' Union strike to prevent the privatization of their jobs and health services. With calls for a general strike, 30,000 unionized workers in the public and private sectors take sympathetic action in support.

1995-1998

Ontario: Workers across the province participate in a series of one-day demonstrations and general strikes known as the Days of Action.



THE CENTENARY OF the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike offers a unique opportunity to revisit Canada's largest and most significant sympathy strike.

What was the context in which 35,000 workers, half of whom did not belong to a union, struck for six weeks in support of the collective bargaining goals of building and metal trades workers? What local, national and international events fueled this massive job action that saw one-half of Winnipeg's families stand together?

Much has been written about these questions and the confrontation itself in the century since it all took place. Understanding the Winnipeg General Strike requires understanding the labour-management dynamic in Winnipeg during the war years, and indeed in the period of significant population growth in the two decades preceding the general strike.

1901-1920

Winnipeg's status as a key hub-city was cemented through urban growth during the first two decades of the 20th century. The city's population more than quadrupled between 1901 and 1920 (from 40,000 to 179,000) and

Winnipeg moved from the country's sixth largest city to its third largest.

The preponderance of British-born immigrants plus a massive influx of Eastern European citizens combined to create a very diverse and dynamic city with a host of distinct ethnic communities, not to mention very clear lines between the rich and the poor.

During this period the number of local unions tripled and demand for a better life for workers grew steadily. So too did public support for labour's aims and for other social justice pursuits.

1906

Two disputes in 1906 illustrate the fierce contest over union recognition that came to define the acrimony that permeated labour relations in Winnipeg.

Both the Contract Shops dispute and the strike by employees of the Winnipeg Electric Street Railway Company saw employers resort to injunctions and lawsuits, hence Winnipeg's reputation as "injunction city." The vigor with which employers opposed unionization fuelled solidarity among workers.

Of interest in the streetcar workers dispute was the near total public

support as citizens refused to ride streetcars driven by replacement workers. The public support enabled a positive settlement for streetcar workers and it offered a glimpse of broad public support for labour's goals.

Throughout the first two decades of the century, beyond population growth, Winnipeg displayed an activist culture in the presence of the social gospel movement and an active suffragist moment that saw Manitoba become the first province to extend the vote to some women in 1916.

Labour and other progressive forces also united to support a progressive single tax system. Each of these endeavours revealed an engaged and activist citizenry.

1913-1915 RECESSION

The positive population and economic growth experienced by Winnipeg and the West in general came to an abrupt halt in 1913. An economic downturn quickly turned depression-like.

The most direct cause was a sharp decline in British investment due to power struggles centred in the Balkans. British investment in Canadian railways, towns, industries and grain

elevators was converted into domestic U.K. defence investments.

The depression hit Winnipeg hard and lasted two full years. All workers felt it, particularly those employed in the building trades. Wages fell and union membership declined as unemployment rose.

1914–1918 THE GREAT WAR

The Great War helped pull the country out of recession but the improved economy did not spark wage increases. The federal government, through order-in-council P.C. 1743, outlawed strikes for the duration of war in all industries engaged in war production. This ordinance impacted all industries.

In 1918, P.C. 2525 completely outlawed strikes or lockouts in industrial disputes; this too was by order-in-council. Two further ordinances outlawed immigrant organizations and other “alien” organizations including the International Workers of the World (IWW).

All of these moves by the federal government combined to fuel worker resentment and militancy. Real wages declined during this period of high inflation.

Union membership in Canada nearly tripled between 1915 and 1919, and strikes began occurring. In Winnipeg in 1917, more days were lost to strikes than in the previous four years combined. Estimates were that one in five workers walked picket lines in Canada and the United States during this period.

Three distinct events occurred in Winnipeg in 1918 that help explain the conditions which gave rise to the 1919 general strike.

In May that year, four civic unions struck over the issues of union recognition and wages. These included waterworks, power and light, and teamsters workers. A brokered tentative deal a few days into the dispute was surprisingly defeated by a narrow vote of city council, which sought a permanent no-strike clause for all civic agreements.

This move escalated things far beyond the four civic groups. City firemen struck in support of their civic coworkers. A week later, provincial telephone operators, railway and

streetcar workers and others struck in sympathy. Accounts vary, but at least 6,800 workers from outside of the civic service walked off the job.

Business interests formed the Committee of 100, and the federal government, fearing the spread of sympathy walkouts in five large Canadian cities, dispatched Senator Gideon Robertson to Winnipeg.

Robertson and representatives of the Committee of 100 commenced direct negotiations with the striking civic workers and a deal based upon the previously rejected agreement was reached. The deal provided for wage hikes, union recognition and a negotiated return to work protocol. It was a near total victory for the workers.

The second important event of 1918 was the growing militancy and prominence of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council. In May, the council supported the job action of civic workers. In July it again voted for another general sympathy strike, this time in support of Winnipeg metal trades workers. Senator Robertson was again sent to Winnipeg and he assisted in achieving a settlement and averting a strike.

The general strike option again surfaced within the Trades and Labour Council in October 1918, this time in support of striking Canadian Pacific freight handlers in Calgary. Specifically, government plans to prosecute five strike leaders for defying an anti-strike ordinance were shelved due to the outcry from labour. The utility of the general strike weapon was further entrenched.

Thirdly and finally, a series of key events took place in December 1918. First, the Trades and Labour Council passed a resolution providing that general strike votes would require a majority of the total membership to approve, thus shifting strike determining authority to the council and away from local unions. Also that month, the fiery Machinist Union leader R. B. Russell was defeated in his bid for the council presidency by moderate James Winning.

On December 22, at a meeting called jointly by the Trades and Labour Council and the Socialist Party of Canada, a packed house of 1,700 at the Walker Theatre passed three resolutions. The first

WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

A MANITOBA FEDERATION OF OF LABOUR TIMELINE

1918

DECEMBER 22

Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council (WTLC) meeting at Walker Theater protests the anti-labour War Measures Act.

1919

JANUARY 10

Socialist Party of Canada meeting at Majestic Theatre calls for end of capitalism.

MARCH 13

At the Western Labour Conference in Calgary, delegates vote to form the revolutionary One Big Union.

MAY 1

After months of negotiations, all unions belonging to the Building Trades Council go on strike.

MAY 2

Metal Trades Council workers call a strike.

MAY 6

In light of the refusal of employers to bargain with the Building Trades Council and the Metal Trades Council, the WTLC resolves to poll affiliates on a general sympathetic strike.

MAY 13

Results of the WTLC general strike vote were overwhelmingly supportive: 8,667 for, 645 against. A general strike committee is formed with representation from every union.

MAY 15

The Winnipeg General Strike begins. The first to walk out were the “Hello Girls”—Winnipeg’s telephone operators. By 11 a.m., 30,000 union and non-union workers had walked off the job.

MAY 16

Winnipeg’s business community forms the Citizens’ Committee of 1000 to oppose the strike.

MAY 17

The strike committee requests a meeting with the city to discuss maintenance of essential services. The strike committee goes on to issue authorization cards for essential services such as milk deliveries.

MAY 22

Arthur Meighen, acting minister of justice, and Senator Gideon Robertson, minister of labour, arrive in Winnipeg.

MAY 25

Senator Robertson orders postal employees to return to work. The province and city issue similar orders to their employees. A meeting of 5,000 strikers at Victoria Park rejects these ultimatums.

MAY 30

City police are ordered to sign an anti-union pledge. They refuse but promise to uphold law and order.

MAY 31, JUNE 1, AND JUNE 3

Thousands of returned soldiers take part in a march in solidarity with the strike.

JUNE 3

The Citizens’ Committee of 1000 calls for the deportation of “aliens,” claiming that the General Strike is the result of agitation from immigrants—ads are run in Winnipeg daily papers calling for “alien” deportation.

Sympathetic strikes are held in Brandon, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto and Amherst, Nova Scotia.

JUNE 4 AND 5

Anti-strike veterans parade.

denounced the federal government’s repeated recourse to orders-in-council. The Great War was over and labour and other progressives called for the repeal of all anti-labour legislation enacted during the war years.

The second resolution called for the release of all political prisoners incarcerated during the war years. Finally, the gathering called for the withdrawal of all allied forces from Russia, and Winnipeg workers offered congratulations to the revolutionaries who had seized control from the Russian Czar.

Federal authorities had undercover agents at the Walker Theatre that day and their reports on the meeting spoke of a militant labour movement, one that was questioning the established order.

JANUARY 10, 1919 THE MAJESTIC THEATRE MEETING

The New Year began with a second major public meeting, this one called by the Socialist Party of Canada and held at the Majestic Theatre. It picked up where the Walker Theatre meeting had left off.

Speakers denounced the press for not telling the truth about events in Russia. Union leader Bob Russell, a fiery speaker, rejected capitalism and the inequalities it produced, calling for a new system in which workers would have control. Again, undercover agents attending the meeting reported to their federal authorities on the growing militancy evident in Winnipeg.

The federal government and Winnipeg business leaders clearly felt that labour sought to replace capitalism and these beliefs governed their actions going forward.

FEBRUARY 6–11, 1919 THE SEATTLE GENERAL STRIKE

Workers throughout North America watched events unfold in Seattle that were driven by wage demands and labour’s efforts to secure wage increases for all workers, both skilled and unskilled. The dispute was massive in scope. Essential services were provided only as determined by the strike

committee, which produced signs authorizing fire and hospital laundry services, for example.

RETURNED SOLDIERS

One new reality not present during the 1918 civic workers strike was the large numbers of returned soldiers, home after the Great War. The soldiers returned to high levels of unemployment. They also returned to hear some senior labour leaders critical of the war itself and the wartime government in particular.

These forces combined to create a new tension in Winnipeg, one not previously present. Shortly after the Majestic Theatre meeting a group of veterans invaded the hall of the Socialist Party of Canada, trashing it and burning books. Some returned soldiers resented immigrants (aliens) who occupied what many believed to be the jobs they held prior to the war.

It is important to note that not all returned soldiers displayed such frustration or even held such beliefs. As it became clear, there were many returned soldiers who actively supported labour during the general strike. But we cannot overstate the role that returned soldiers played within the heated labour-management debates that existed in Winnipeg in early 1919.

MARCH 13, 1919 THE WESTERN LABOUR CONFERENCE, CALGARY

Western Canadian trade unionists had for some time been dissatisfied with the Eastern Canadian union leadership, a group they felt embraced craft unionism and was unwilling to challenge the system. Hence the Western Labour Conference held in Calgary, where delegates affirmed strong support for industrial unionism and workers organized industrywide, not by craft. The vehicle for this would be the One Big Union (OBU).

Delegates in debate denounced capitalism and supported resolutions calling for a five-day work week and the six-hour day. The mood in Calgary revealed a trade union leadership that was increasingly confident in the content of its new agenda and its

ability to realize this vision through collective action.

That spring, the Trades and Labour Council in Winnipeg sent a couple of clear messages to the two senior levels of government. Provincially, the council refused to nominate labour members to the government's proposed Industrial Disputes Commission. They also refused to testify before the Mathers Commission set up by the Borden government to investigate industrial relations in Canada.

Winnipeg labour leaders were in no mood to be told what the "rules of the game" were to be when it came to achieving the legitimate economic interests of workers.

THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE AND ITS AFTERMATH

As the preceding history makes clear, the six-week general strike that engulfed Winnipeg entirely, and was widely reported in the U.S. and throughout the Commonwealth, did not occur in a vacuum. Nor was it a spontaneous accident of sorts. The events leading up to the strike, both locally and beyond, all combined to make such a clash understandable if not predictable.

The events of the six-week struggle have been well documented and need not be recounted here in detail. What continues to spawn reflection and debate, however, are questions about the major lessons of the strike. What indeed is the legacy of this massive display of solidarity in Winnipeg? As a lifelong unionist myself, I venture to make five observations on this question.

First and foremost, the general strike was a large and difficult defeat for the workers involved. Thousands lost their jobs, thousands more returned to work and never did enjoy either trade union membership or the fruits of free collective bargaining.

Civic employees who were not dismissed had to sign their allegiance to the city and pledge to never engage in sympathy strike action upon pain of instant dismissal. Civic workers came to refer to this requirement as the "slave pact," which stayed on the city's books until 1931.

Second, while history has dismissed the charge that the general strike represented a Bolshevik uprising intent upon overthrowing the established order, it is important to understand how profoundly some held these views.

The Committee of 1,000 are on record stating that "some of the leaders of the strike were more concerned in setting up the Russian Soviet form of government in Canada than in settling any trades disputes, that an organized propaganda to incite Revolution in Canada was stalking under cover of this and other strikes."

Business, by way of private prosecutions funded, we now know, by the federal government (from funds earmarked for returned soldiers), silenced labour leadership by incarcerating them. The aggressiveness of the business community response and that of the federal government were designed to put labour in its place and to prevent further massive strikes. In that goal they largely succeeded. In deputizing hundreds of so-called special constables who assumed the authority of the state, business was also able to silence elected officials and the justice system, which both opted to conduct an aggressive prosecution of the strike's proponents.

My third observation is that labour did make achievements for all workers through the general strike. They won the hearts and minds of the vast majority of the general public and this support was not diminished by the manner in which the strike ended.

Notwithstanding the vitriolic bashing by mainstream media, the public respected those who led the general strike. Three leaders were elected in the 1920 provincial election from their jail cells. The public did not view them as criminals. Labour candidates in Winnipeg enjoyed similar electoral success at the federal and civic levels.

Labour's successful participation in the political process achieved two important outcomes. Firstly, it put the lie to any notion that the leaders of the general strike were out to overthrow the system. People don't run for office in systems they want to destroy.

The leaders of the 1919 general strike also established a political constant that has survived for a century in

JUNE 6

The federal government amends the Immigration Act to allow for the deportation, without trial, of anyone not born in Canada accused of sedition.

JUNE 8

J.S. Woodsworth returns to Winnipeg and addresses 10,000 workers.

JUNE 9

Winnipeg Mayor Charles Gray fires the entire city police force for refusing the city's demand to renounce the union and strike, and hires "Specials" to replace them. The "Specials" were recruited and paid for by the Citizens' Committee of 1000 and were armed with baseball bats.

JUNE 16-17

Metal trades employers propose a settlement to the strike. At the same time, the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) raid labour halls and strike leaders' homes, arresting 10 leaders of the central strike committee.

JUNE 18

It's announced that arrested strike leaders will be held for deportation proceedings and will also be denied bail.

JUNE 21

In what would come to be known as "Bloody Saturday," a silent protest of the arrest of the strike leaders is attacked by Mounted Police and "Specials", resulting in the wounding of 34 people, two deaths, and 84 arrests.

JUNE 25

The strike committee announces the end of strike and calls upon workers to continue the struggle in the political arena.

JUNE 26

The Winnipeg General Strike ends at 11 a.m.

JULY AND AUGUST

The strike committee reorganizes as the defence committee to support the strike leaders facing trial.

SEPTEMBER 2

A parade of 8,000 workers walks in support of the arrested strike leaders. A national campaign is launched to raise funds for their defence.

DECEMBER 23

R.B. Russell is sentenced to two years at Stony Mountain Penitentiary for seditious conspiracy.

1920

JANUARY– FEBRUARY

Strike leader Fred Dixon is acquitted.

JANUARY– APRIL

Strike leader A.A. Heaps is acquitted but leader R.E. Bray is sentenced to six months in prison. Leaders John Queen, Bill Pritchard, William Ivens, Richard Johns and George Armstrong all receive one-year jail terms.

SEPTEMBER

One Big Union headquarters moved to Winnipeg from Vancouver, under attack from governments, businesses and conservative trade unionists.

OCTOBER 5

In the Manitoba provincial election, Fred Dixon, John Queen, George Armstrong and William Ivens are elected to seats in the legislature on a united slate of Independent Labour Party and Socialist Party candidates.

NOVEMBER 20

Winnipeg Civic Election: Three Independent Labor Party members elected to city council and three to school board.

1921

J.S. Woodsworth is elected to the House of Commons as a member of the Independent Labour Party.

1925

A.A. Heaps is elected to the House of Commons as a member of the Independent Labour Party.

Manitoba: labour is still a force politically, and its vision for a more caring and sharing society enjoys widespread public support in the province.

A fourth observation about the strike's legacy has to do with how we organize as workers. Labour in 1919 Winnipeg had its own daily newspaper. It had open air meetings attended by thousands. The result was a citizenry that was conscious of its class and aware of the issues of the day. In today's digital age of unlimited information, one is left to wonder how it is that labour's view of the world has so much less currency with the general public than it did 100 years ago.

Finally, there is something to be gleaned from how we have commemorated the strike at different points over the past century. In 1969, Winnipeg city council debated a motion to recognize the general strike on its 50th anniversary. It was an acrimonious debate and a small plaque ended up being placed in low-profile location at city hall.

The events of 1919 were still too raw, even a half-century after the fact. Winnipeg was still too divided a city, at the family level and within the broader community itself, for any widespread discussion of this key event in the history of Manitoba.

By 1994, on the 75th anniversary of the general strike, all the participants were gone, which allowed for both celebration of the event and, more importantly, public discussion on this most significant of events in the history of Winnipeg, and indeed of the Canadian labour movement. Another plaque was erected in the Manitoba legislature that captures the difficult challenge of summarizing just what the general strike meant and means. That plaque reads as follows:

On May 15, 1919 some 30,000 workers in the City of Winnipeg went on strike in support of building and metal trades workers, who had walked out seeking union recognition, collective bargaining, higher wages and a shorter working week.

The Winnipeg General Strike was widely reported throughout North America and the British Empire, and was a watershed event in Canadian labour history. The general strike

concluded at 11:00 a.m. on June 26, 1919.

In the years since the strike, the province of Manitoba has enacted legislation which recognizes workers' rights to participate in free collective bargaining, to organize and to healthy and safe workplaces.

This plaque commemorates the 75th anniversary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. A landmark in Canadian History.

Today, a century on from the general strike, the issues that gave rise to it remain both unresolved and arguably more pressing than ever.

The right to form unions and to engage in free collective bargaining remains contested terrain in much of the world, including Canada. There continue to be many disputes centered around union recognition.

Inequality—locally, nationally and globally—is a dominant issue and the gap between the rich and the poor has never been wider.

As was the case in the Winnipeg of 1919, the backlash against immigrants and refugees is a global phenomena and these divisions hurt both communities and economies.

Many governments in many countries continue to spend more on weapons and defence than on services for people such as health care and education.

In terms of class consciousness, how we can better educate workers and equip them to distinguish between false or inaccurate reporting and valid, fact-based information remains a key challenge.

And fundamentally, what has come of the belief that true freedom and fairness means that none can truly be free if even one is not?

Winnipeg General Strike leader Bill Pritchard, in his famous address to the jury, spoke to the workers he served, challenging them as follows:

"The great appear great to us because we are on our knees. Let us rise!"

It is a message worth remembering, and repeating. **M**



Workers' rights at the crossroads

Winnipeg is hosting dozens of 1919 strike commemorations

this year. From organizing parades, concerts and lunch-hour history lessons, to attending academic conferences and funding a new feature-length docudrama, organized labour has been busy making sure the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike is a learning opportunity for a new generation. *Monitor* editor **Stuart Trew** spoke to Manitoba Federation of Labour President **Kevin Rebeck** about the lead-up to May 1919 (and 2019), the importance of solidarity then and now, and the need to push back against right-wing propaganda that is sowing hatred to divide workers.

Stuart Trew: The commemorative MFL literature uses the word “catalyst” a lot to describe the Winnipeg General Strike. What were some of the ways that was true?

Kevin Rebeck: Over two-thirds of the people who went out on strike didn't belong to a union. We had a point that people were fed up with the inequality, lack of a living wage, lack of respect in the workplace. Union members certainly were the ones who started that strike, but it supported and was part of a community that said, “Enough is enough.”

People seized political power and exercised what little of it they had by withdrawing their labour to deliver a message to those who had power. We think that was an incredible piece of history, and what it led to was the defeat of governments at the federal, at the provincial and at the civic

levels. Every existing government from Winnipeg outward changed after that strike, and we saw action that benefited workers.

[Workers] saw the establishment of a first minimum wage in Canada. They saw a national inquiry into living and working conditions for workers.... It was the beginning of greater recognition for unions and voices in the workplace, for improvements to health and safety, WCB (Workers Compensation Boards), health care and other things. So it really was a turning point, and we haven't had a breakdown between employers and labour to that extent since.

MFL President Kevin Rebeck speaks at a rally for public services in Winnipeg, May 2018.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MFL

ST: That breakdown was fairly severe in 1919, which isn't really that long ago when you think about it. The employers took extreme action to stifle the demonstrations.

KR: The business elite had government doing what they wanted them to do. At one point, the [Winnipeg] police force was fired because they wouldn't sign a pledge that they wouldn't ever go on strike. In fact, they wanted to be on strike and the striking committee asked them to continue to work because they thought we needed a police force. Then the business community said, “We'll provide one.”

The Committee of 1,000 hired “the specials,” [a private police force] they armed with arm bands, bats or wagon spokes, and put them into the streets to enforce what they were describing as law: breaking up public gatherings, breaking up peaceful demonstrations.

In fact, they started changing the law to deport people that they thought were causing trouble by speaking up about rights; [they] considered that an affront and a challenge to the elite and government and status quo.

And certainly it was..., as things needed to change. But it was legally done, it was peacefully done, and it was people exercising their rights.

ST: Workers' rights have come a long way since then. But we're also refighting a lot the same battles, like back-to-work legislation at the federal level and Manitoba legislation taking away public sector workers' right to bargain their salaries.

KR: What we've been seeing in the last decade is that people who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Here in Canada, despite a Harper government that legislated people's right to strike away losing that fight in court several years later, now we've got a Liberal government doing the exact same thing by taking away postal workers' right to strike, giving the benefit to a corporation, a profit-making corporation, because they said they needed the help of government.

We in Manitoba have a legal challenge against the Public Services Sustainability Act that legislates you cannot bargain any kind of cost item, whether that be wages or benefits.... We believe that violates our Charter rights and have gone to court over that issue. It's a sad statement that governments are exercising this authoritarian point of view, ignoring law, ignoring our history, and people are getting fed up.

ST: Labour's fights in the courts are producing results. But are there other avenues at our disposal, besides the courts, to push back?

KR: Well, we need to mobilize in larger ways. We need to exercise our political strength and will and not be afraid to talk about politics. There's a message out there saying leave politics alone, but the reality is politics don't leave workers alone. Politics and laws change on a regular basis that impact the minimum wage, that impact your health and safety, that impact

regulations that are all too often being stripped away in the name of being competitive.... But what that's really code for is to maximize profits on the backs of workers.

We want businesses to succeed as a labour movement. If they don't, there's no good jobs. But there also needs to be good jobs, and there needs to be some fairness. People don't need to make billions of dollars while others don't make a living wage. In the last 100 years, the inequities have grown greater than they have ever been in our history. That's something that needs to change, and people shouldn't be afraid to talk about it.

I'm hopeful with social media, and the way people connect now, that dialogue can grow rather than shrink. I'm fearful, though, that the far-right are good at delivering a short, snappy message that feels like it's targeted to you, and that they're making things better for you when they aren't. That's something we need to wrestle with.... People from the progressive movement who want some more balance, more fairness, need to find ways to generate that discussion and have it more often.

ST: At the time of the Winnipeg strike, it was normal for workers to talk about mutual aid, as in the need to build our collective social capacity outside or beyond the state. Are those ideas or values worth rekindling today?

KR: I would put forward that it (that spirit of mutual aid) does exist today in our values, but not in our actions. I think, as Canadians, we believe in our core that we deserve an equal health care system that's affordable and accessible and treats everyone

fairly. Certainly, being a Winnipegger, there hasn't been a winter when you don't drive by someone who's pulled into a ditch and you pull over and give them a boost. We help one another out. I think that's part of our values.

But I think the right have done a better job in the media of saying look, if there were only less taxes that's more money in your pocket. They ignore the fact that taxes pay for important services that we rely on; that pay for our roads to be cleared and paved; that pay for our health care. They've (the right) done a good job of turning "tax" into a dirty word.

And I think they've been good at selling the pipe dream that you, too, can be a millionaire if you just worked harder, and that if someone gets an increase it takes away from what you're getting. That if we gave a minimum wage earner more and you only made a dollar more than minimum wage that means you're worth less.

That's not true, but it resonates with people who buy into it all too quickly.

It's time to challenge those ideas we know are wrong. The reason government exists is because the free market alone, without any regulation, is not fair and equitable but a survival-of-the-fittest model. Canadian values don't align with that model.

Certainly we want businesses to succeed. Certainly there's room for some free-market aspects in our economy. But there also needs to be a socialist aspect that says let's support one another, let's pay our fair share of taxes, let's build a healthy education system and provide healthy funds for our government to deliver the services that we want.

ST: You mentioned earlier how many of the striking workers didn't belong to a union. Tell us more about some of the organizing that went into the strike and the conditions that made it a successful mobilization.

KR: Sure, and maybe I'll roll things back to 1918. The First World War is starting to come to a close, people have seen the cost of living go up, I think in Winnipeg, by 67% in the six years leading up to the strike. And wages hadn't kept pace. People were...being told by the state and the elite that we

We need to exercise our political strength and will and not be afraid to talk about politics.

all have sacrifices to make, but they certainly weren't the ones making those sacrifices.

People were struggling to get by, were having a really tough time feeding their families and paying their rent. And then in 1919, soldiers are coming back to go back to the jobs they had when they went away, and those jobs have been filled as new immigrants and others have taken those roles on. So, there's high unemployment rates going on, people weren't sure what to do and they were frustrated.

Those who had made fast profits weren't willing to lessen the profits they were making. They were giving unions a hard time and not willing to recognize them. There wasn't a legal way to sign cards and belong to a union. If you wanted a union you either got recognized by it or you went on strike for that right.

So, the metal workers, and building and trade workers were trying to do some co-ordinated bargaining, to be stronger by standing together. They'd seen from 1918 and previous years that if it was just them alone they were likely to lose. So, they went to the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council and asked, would others come and stand with us. Would others strike and walk off the job to join us and fight for fairness, respect and union recognition.

Labour council took a couple of weeks to conduct a vote. As you can imagine, that would have been tougher to do back then. But everyone voted. There were 11,500 union members in Winnipeg at the time and 11,000 people voted yes—we would go on strike with you.

And on May 15, that famous day, one of the first groups on the street (as often in the labour movement) were sisters: the women of at MTS (Manitoba Telecom Services), the "Hello Girls," unplugged their last phone call and walked off the job, and they found the streets were crowded....

Over 30,000 people walked off the job that day—three times the number of unionized workers in the city. People left their jobs not knowing if they would have a job to come back to. In fact, employers told them they might not have a job to come back to. They left because the message of fairness, respect and a living wage resonated with them. It was something they'd seen and experienced themselves, or their family members, and they had enough, something needs to change.

There were divides and lines being pushed. The business elites were certainly trying to point and say look, it's these immigrants who have come and are stealing your jobs—that's who you should be mad at—and there were efforts to draw huge racial divides. And some of them worked, as these kinds of things do, even though the message is a lie.

Really, what mattered here was that those who had power, that those in government who made the rules, weren't making rules that were fair, weren't creating the job opportunities people needed, weren't paying a living wage.

They were trying to turn workers on workers, but it didn't work in a big way and workers stayed solid with each other. They created networks of solidarity to help each other out. They created their own paper to let each other know that we've got your back—we're in this together and we're fighting for something bigger than all of us. And that kept the line very strong and kept the strike going for a long period of time until Bloody Saturday.

Every existing government from Winnipeg outward changed after that strike, and we saw action that benefited workers.

ST: The MFL frequently lends its strength to local and provincial fights for fairness and justice. We featured some of those Manitoba fights for housing, migrant rights and better social programs in our January-February issue on the Right to the City. Can you give us some examples of where these fights have enhanced worker protections?

KR: We had some recent victories that changed the dialogue on a few fronts. As our last [NDP] government had their final days, we passed a first-of-its-kind domestic violence leave—first of its kind in North America—that has been copied in several provinces and at the federal level.

That leave allows people who are suffering domestic violence to take paid days off to get a restraining order or find new child care arrangements or be safe, and if they need it, a longer time frame they can be away from work and not lose their job. [These workers] may not get paid when they're off, but if they have to leave to go somewhere else to get their lives back in line then come back, they don't suffer a loss.

Similarly, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is another serious workplace issue related to mental health. In some regions of the country they provide [workers compensation] support to first responders on a presumptive basis. They agree it's likely these people will be exposed to horrific circumstances, and that the default should be that we will cover them on these kinds of [PTSD] injuries.

In Manitoba we were successful to say absolutely those workers are going to be experiencing tough situations, but so are the survivors of horrific situations in a workplace where someone dies. Yes, when the paramedic shows up they're going to be on a scene that is awful, but the person who went to work and stood beside their co-worker when something terrible happened, who didn't have a clue their job would expose them to that, they deserve to be covered. And in Manitoba today there is presumptive coverage for PTSD.

So there are gains being made. Change can happen, but it requires people talking to one another, supporting each other and learning about each other's issues, and not being afraid to speak up. **M**

For a full lineup of strike events organized by MFL, visit mfl.ca/1919. Information on the Winnipeg General Strike Centenary Conference, "Building a Better World (1919-2019)," can be found here: 1919-2019.com.



MOLLY MCCRACKEN

THE "HELLO GIRLS"

Women, rights and work— from 1919 to the #MeToo movement

WOMEN WORKERS HAVE always been integral to the labour movement. On May 15, 1919, it was the telephone operators, the "Hello Girls" (pictured), who were the first to walk off the job, starting the Winnipeg General Strike. A workers' kitchen operated by Helen Jury Armstrong of the Women's Labour League, who had led Woolworth's clerks on strike two years earlier, kept 1,500 strikers, most of them women, from starving.

Yet 100 years after the Winnipeg General Strike, women workers still struggle to be recognized as equal to men. Workplace harassment remains prevalent, in particular in the restaurant and hospitality sector among other services industries. So are gender pay gaps and other forms of discrimination that are experienced at double or triple strength by women of colour, differently abled women, young and older women, not to mention those who do not conform to the gender binary or are trans.

I sat down at the end of January to discuss these and other realities faced by women with Julie Guard, labour history professor at the University of Manitoba and a CCPA Manitoba research associate. Guard is one of more

than 50 panellists at a May 8–11 strike conference in Winnipeg called "Building a Better World: 1919–2019." She is also one of the conference organizers, who collectively note in the program how they "can't help but be struck by continuities" between then and now: "so many of the themes of 1919 continue to confront us today."

meet Guard at the Tallest Poppy, an artsy restaurant dedicated to a \$15 minimum wage, rare in the restaurant industry. The Tallest Poppy is directly across the street from Stella's, a popular local restaurant chain where workers, most of them women, recently organized a union drive in response to sexual harassment and rights violations. The #notmystellas campaign is using social media to draw attention to a toxic workplace culture.

The pressure is working. In December, workers at two of the Stella's nine locations voted to become certified by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union's (UFCW) local 832. In response to the allegations, two managers were fired, though it was unclear, as the *Monitor* went to print, how restaurant

owners would respond to the forthcoming collective bargaining process.

Unfortunately, as Guard comments, Stella's is the tip of the iceberg. "Sexual harassment is endemic in the hospitality and restaurant industry," she tells me. Thankfully, the #MeToo movement is changing this.

"The #MeToo 'eruption' is probably the most amazing thing that's happened in the last century for women since the vote. It gives women new permission to object to being treated as sexual objects," says Guard. "I don't think the #MeToo movement has solved the problem of sexual harassment, but there's a new legitimacy for women to be able to object—and to get some credibility for saying things that have been happening for decades or years or weeks at their workplace."

Guard and I discuss what justice looks like for the #MeToo movement. Obviously, it would mean an end to sexual assault and sexual harassment, and to workplaces and a wider culture that are frequently toxic to women. But this requires consequences for perpetrators who would be brought to account. And for that to happen our laws and human resources policies need to catch up.

“There are going to be a lot of cases [of harassment against women]. Some are going to be pursued in court. So there are going to be cases that fall apart because nobody can really decide what was unwanted and what was considered acceptable. Nonetheless, I think that better legislation, penalties and policies would be a huge improvement in most of our working lives.”

The recent unionization at Stella's shows how organized labour must play a key role in answering the call of the #MeToo movement. For example, the pay gap is smaller where unionization rates are higher and there are more women workers. That gap is smallest in the highly unionized public sector, where female university-educated workers make 82 cents for every dollar their male co-workers make, according to the CCPAs 2014 report, *Canada's Pay Gap*.

“The pay gap is definitely smaller for almost all workers who are unionized regardless of whether they are in the public or private sector,” explains Guard. “By law, pay has to be covered in the collective agreement. So it's very unusual to have different categories of workers who are doing the same work as other workers within a unionized workplace who are making different rates of pay.

“That automatically eliminates the possibility of employers paying workers of colour, women, disabled workers, aging workers or LGBTQ workers different rates of pay than fully-abled white male workers. Right off the bat just being unionized helps.”

But across North America, labour legislation is under attack. Manitoba recently amended the Labour Relations Act to eliminate the card-check certification system, requiring instead that workers hold a secret ballot to unionize. Guard says this is bound to lower unionization rates, which is almost certainly why the current government proposed it.

“Statistically, union certification rates go down when secret ballot votes are required. The suggestion here is that employers have an opportunity, despite the illegality of it, to intimidate workers or at least to suggest, even without intimidation, that if there's a union in this workplace it will be a worse place to work.”

Guard adds that governments across North America are doing this in violation of International Labour Organization agreements and despite the fact that unionization shrinks the pay gap.

“It's a little-known fact that our government, in 1949, signed on to the ILO Convention to promote free collective bargaining, and the only way you can bargain collectively effectively is in a union. So they basically agreed to encourage, not just be neutral about, but encourage unionization,” she tells me.

What is so infuriating about the Manitoba government's about-face is that not only will it put downward pressure on wages and likely increase the gender pay gap, but it backs popular opinion about the good that unions do.

“About 70% of people in a recent study indicated they thought unions make things fair and workplace unions make things better,” Guard says. “Yet only about 30% of people in Canada are in a union, so this suggests that if it was easier to join a union, more people would do it.”

Helping people join a union is still almost exclusively the job of the labour movement in Canada. It's a job made much more difficult by the changing nature of the workforce.

“Private sector union density has declined significantly and that's like the death knell being sounded for the labour movement,” says Guard, who points out that the growth in the labor force is in retail, hospitality and other service sectors where women dominate. “Unions are really struggling to organizing those workers. Stella's restaurant's two locations in Winnipeg are the exception.”

The workers at Stella's epitomize the kinds of jobs that need unionization today: part-time, temporary, and precarious in the sense that people usually need to hold down more than one job to make ends meet. These workers do not have time to get involved in unionization drives that could just as easily result in a pink slip as a more stable work environment.

“Unions need to become relevant to those workers,” says Guard. “So when you're negotiating for whatever you're going to confront the employer with, you need to think about more than just wages and benefits. You need to think about things that are really important to those workers. Things like flexible job schedules or advance notice of your work schedule, or time off to care for sick children.”

It's not that unions aren't already doing this, Guard adds. They are just not always responding effectively to the needs of this “new precarious, very female, very ethnically and racially diverse workforce.” Some union efforts to put more women into leadership positions look like tokenism, she says.

“Women's committees...that have been pushing for [their] unions to diversify, to recognize women's qualifications... seem to meet a lot of resistance. Unions really need to take this more seriously and some leaders need to be prepared to give up control,” Guard says.

“It's not that all women are feminists or progressive. But if you are still dominated by ‘the man’ and you don't create mechanisms to have gender equity on all bodies, then it's pretty clear that you're sending a message to your membership that gender equity is not really a priority.”

I agree with Guard that, especially in light of the #MeToo moment and the prevalence of precarious forms of work, women's leadership is needed more than ever in the labour movement. So how do we make that happen?

“Women could definitely be groomed for success in unions more actively,” she says. “There should be more mentorship programs. That's really how unions cultivate new activists.”

“One of the problems, perhaps, is that the process is always informal. One solution might be a formalized mentorship program where women were actively promoted, and the union was accountable to its membership. Mentorship, in other words, would be more visible.”

Today in Winnipeg, as it was 100 years ago, women are on the frontlines of organizing to improve working conditions, expand rights and demand respect. As capitalism changes, so to do their efforts to respond to the needs of workers and those most often left behind. Women are leading in movements like #MeToo and #notmystellas that have potential to grow and inspire others to action. **M**



JONATHAN WEIER

The year we make history

Labour's victories and losses have enriched Canada's social democracy. We should remember and learn from them in 2019.

OVER THE PAST seven years Canadians have been bombarded with a steady stream of nationalist commemorative projects. In 2012, the Conservative Harper government did its best to convince us that the War of 1812 was a proto-national conflict in which a Canadian identity was forged on the field of battle. Commemorations of the centenary of the First World War followed the same format—the war was all bravery and nation building without any of the futility, let alone class conflict, which defined public debate at the time. This continued even after the Liberals took office in 2015. Two years later, in the Trudeau government's handling of Canada 150, we were mostly encouraged to celebrate John A. MacDonald and other settler statesmen; stories of colonization, genocide and repression were treated as footnotes to official history.

Canada's sesquicentennial year also saw numerous radical commemorative projects that sought to disrupt and undermine the colonialist narrative. The Graphic History Collective distributed posters telling stories of resistance—opposition to the Ukrainian internment in the First World War, Chloe Cooley's anti-slavery activism and the Tsilhqot'in War of 1864, for example—as part of their Remember, Resist, Redraw project. Historians Crystal Fraser and Sarah Komarnisky launched a call for 150 Acts of Reconciliation, exposing the seeming reluctance of the federal government and others to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Colonialism 150 meme, which visually subverted the Canada 150 brand, appeared on t-shirts, posters and social media.

In 2019, we workers, radicals and progressives of all backgrounds have an

opportunity to build on this resistance and begin constructing new historical narratives. This will be a momentous year for reminding Canadians of our common history of struggle and activism. From May to June we will mark the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike, in many ways the birth of the modern labour union movement in Canada and one of the most important moments in the political awakening of the Canadian working class. A conference and meeting in Winnipeg organized by labour historians Rhonda Hinthor and Jim Naylor will celebrate the militancy and solidarity behind the strike, and there are plans to create a monument in honour of the strikers.

The summer of 2019 will also mark the 75th anniversary of the election of Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan as leader of Canada's first Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) provincial government, and the 50th anniversary of the election of Ed Schreyer as Manitoba's first NDP

Successful union drives and mobilizations along with political pressure from CCF politicians...resulted in the creation of a new labour regime that would come to define the postwar labour-employer social contract.

premier. While the NDP and the labour movement have experienced great success in the past few years, notably forming governments in British Columbia and Alberta, workers are also stuck in too many rearguard battles to protect their rights, refighting battles won long ago.

The social contract between labour and employers that was established in much of the western world, including Canada, after the Second World War has been gradually chipped away at over the last 20 years by austerity-driven governments and their business backers. Since his election last year, Ontario Premier Doug Ford has rolled back important, if modest, labour reforms introduced by the previous government. Federally, the Trudeau government has shown itself just as committed as the Conservatives were to corporate tax cuts, private sector-financed infrastructure and back-to-work legislation.

Commemorating and embracing the bright spots in radical labour history, while reflecting on our failures, can give us hope and provide lessons for how we might renew the movement for worker protections and social democracy at this critical moment. Sometimes these lessons are direct and unfortunately repetitive, as mine workers in Kirkland Lake, Ontario have discovered over long years of struggle. In the spirit of reflection and renewal, we consider that struggle here.

Between 1941 and 1942, workers at the Macassa goldmine in Kirkland Lake fought a long, drawn-out strike over the right to organize with the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Their struggle would eventually force the Liberal government of Mackenzie King to pass an order-in-council (P.C. 1003) protecting the right of workers to

organize and requiring employers to respect that choice. But at that point Macassa held all the cards and chose to ignore the wishes of its workers, who were not able to unionize.

Laurel Sefton MacDowell describes the lead-up, events and aftermath of the strike in her seminal 1983 monograph, *Remembering Kirkland Lake: The Gold Miners Strike of 1941-1942*. Even at that point, she writes, Eastern Ontario miners were not strangers to workplace resistance. For as long as mining and exploration had occurred in the province, workers had resisted unfair working conditions. The big departure for Kirkland Lake gold miners in the 1940s was their embrace of industrial unionism. The Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers were affiliated to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), an international workers organization that aimed to unite all workers across industries. For miners attuned to craft unionism, this was a radical new idea.

But it was exceedingly difficult for workers to form this new kind of association. Single-industry towns offered little social mobility and it was a very real struggle for workers and their children to gather the resources they needed to educate themselves so they could leave the mines. With the local economy beholden to the price of gold, families experienced constant insecurity over whether the mine would remain open. Mine operators were coercive, spread rumours about imminent shutdowns and layoffs, and deployed public or private police forces against unionists. Above all, without adequate labour regulations, employers were not compelled to recognize a union even after a majority of membership cards were collected.

In the 1940s, Canada's labour legislation was outdated, failed to respond to industrial unionism and was tilted heavily in favour of employers. Unfair labour laws coupled with worker insecurity undermined the strength of unionization campaigns. In 1941, over 4,000 workers walked off the job in their fight to have their union recognized. They fell short. The Kirkland Lake gold miners were forced to return to work, and many of the leaders of the unionization movement were not hired back. Bitter defeat was a typical result for the labour movement at the time. Laws and economic conditions made unionization a virtual impossibility.

The big push for labour law reform in the 1930s and 1940s focused on the need for recognizing industrial unionism. The struggle was about building worker power to rectify an existing imbalance that favoured industrial capitalism. Each major union recognition loss validated the labour movement's campaign to call for labour law reform. Unionists made their efforts very public, inviting reporters and CCF politicians to become involved in union recognition drives, which were successful as often as they failed. "Remember Kirkland Lake" became a rallying cry among trade unionists. Successful union drives and mobilizations along with political pressure from CCF politicians in the federal and provincial governments resulted in the creation of a new labour regime that would come to define the postwar labour-employer social contract.

But even with the passing of updated labour laws in the last 70 years, unionization remains exceedingly difficult. In 2002, Kirkland Lake Gold reopened the Macassa mine.

Frosting over Canadian history: Some of dozens of tacky Canada 150 consumables collected by the Twitter account @Canada1504sale.

In a repeat of past history, gold miners again fought to organize with the United Steelworkers, with whom the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union had merged in 1967. The issues—the precariousness of mine employment, decent pay, safety, and the nature of the company town in the neoliberal era—are strikingly similar to those which characterized the early-1940s struggle. The outcome of the drive, however, was a huge disappointment: on May 25, 2018, mine workers found out their vote to unionize with the Steelworkers was defeated.

The result was not so surprising when we account for the significant financial and social resources mobilized by Kirkland Lake Gold to counter the unionization drive. Workers at Kirkland Lake Gold sought to join a union for the same reason most people today look to unionize: they felt they were being treated unfairly by their employer. Online, workers shared stories of favouritism, health and safety concerns, and expressed fears of unannounced cutbacks to earnings and benefits. Using tactics pulled straight from the 1941-42 battle, employer-friendly disinformation spread quickly in the two weeks before the vote. Workers feared disciplinary action, job losses and mine closure, and the fierce debate undermined the social bonds of the community.

We should look with pride on a history characterized by resilience, struggle and hope, often in the face of seemingly insurmountable barriers.

The effects of the employer's interventions were obvious when the ballots were counted. Organizers witnessed a drop in support for unionization consistent with what unions have seen elsewhere after similar hard-nosed campaigns by employers. These kinds of anti-union campaigns are currently legal in Ontario and across Canada, and the structure as it exists favours employers and their ability to mobilize resources in order to combat union certification campaigns. At a time when unions should be focused on extending rights and protections to all workers, they are stuck fighting laws designed to allow employers to spend an unlimited amount of money in efforts to prevent unionization.

The struggle at Kirkland Lake in 2018 did not make many newspaper headlines outside the region or lead

to radical changes in labour laws. Nor is it likely to move public opinion in support of pro-worker legislative reforms, at least not on its own. So what then are we building toward?

We need to remember that throughout labour's long history of organizing there are far more failures to record than successes. For every successful union drive or political victory there are multiple Kirkland Lakes or Winnipeg general strikes. But we need to remember that those failures also contribute to the strengthening of a movement that will continue to build toward the changes that will make true worker democracy possible.

These wins, though they may not always be apparent, continue to happen. Progressive governments are elected fairly regularly in Canada, at least provincially and always with labour support, and they continue to make positive changes to labour laws and other worker protections. Workers continue to organize, negotiate and strike when needed.

And as we go back and remember over 100 years of labour political activism in Canada, as we remember the tens of thousands of workers who went on strike in Winnipeg hoping to create a better world, we should look with pride on a history characterized by resilience, struggle and hope, often in the face of seemingly insurmountable barriers. **M**



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Work Life

LYNNE FERNANDEZ

Canada's "yellow vest" movement needs more *gilets jaunes*

SINCE LATE LAST year, tens of thousands of French have hit the streets in protest of the country's rising cost of living and shrinking opportunities. Many of these *gilets jaunes* protesters, named after the yellow safety jackets they wear in public, rely on their vehicles to get to work, or to do their work. President Emmanuel Macron's proposed carbon tax, which would have added painfully to the cost of working in France, was the final straw.

But the *gilets jaunes* are also sick of the French president's neoliberal austerity measures: cuts to public services, higher taxes on ordinary citizens, lower taxes for the rich and for corporations. These injustices, combined with Macron's arrogance, pushed workers to don their vests and hit the streets *en masse*.

The movement was quickly appropriated by right-wing groups in other parts of Europe and even Canada. However, these groups have focused their anger on different issues from the *gilets jaunes*. In Canada people are protesting everything from immigration to the lack of action on building the Trans Mountain pipeline. These grievances are very different in spirit from those of the *gilets jaunes*.

As reported by Richard Greeman in *The Bullet*, the French movement's demands include that no one be left homeless; the end of austerity; no taxation on the poor; a better integration policy for immigrants; a minimum salary of 1,500 euros/month (about \$2,250); and more progressive income taxes that would force big corporations and the rich to pay their fair share.

Yellow jackets in Canada also want the Liberal government to reverse the carbon tax, but their complaint is based on kneejerk anti-tax sentiment and not increases to the cost of living, which will be mitigated and in most cases fully rebated under the federal plan. In contrast, the French *gilets jaunes* are demanding *fair* taxation and decent wages for ordinary workers. And they have had a modest degree of success.

Macron has agreed to rescind some of the new taxes and raise wages for some workers. Even if Greeman is right that these claims are mainly "smoke and mirrors," Macron's public acknowledgment that many French are suffering is an accomplishment in itself. Especially considering that the movement has been misrepresented by mainstream

media as fuelled by "typical black block anarchists." In fact, as Sylvain Cypel wrote in the *New York Review of Books* late last year, most of the 2,000 *gilets jaunes* arrested to that point were older than your typical anarchist or far-right provocateur and had come out to protest for the first time in their lives.

The French have a long history of shaking up the status quo by literally taking control of the streets. The inspiring Quebec student protests of 2012 probably provide the closest contemporary Canadian parallel, but there was a time when our mass protests made international news as well.

In a *Canadian Dimension* article in October, H.C. Pentland referred to the Winnipeg General Strike as "among the great class-confrontations of capitalist history." It inspired similar strikes in other Canadian cities, and the eventual defeat of the strikers spurred the formation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Although the 35,000 strikers were overpowered by Winnipeg's capitalist class, the action left an important legacy for Manitoba's labour movement.

As with the *gilets jaunes*, 1919 strikers were characterized as dangerous and radical. They were referred to (even by the *New York Times*) as Bolshevik revolutionaries who were hell bent on bringing a soviet-style economy to Canada. Pentland writes that there "was much calculated deceit in this image." Nonetheless, 35,000 strikers—a huge part of Winnipeg's working population—continued fighting for their rights.

The atmosphere in 1919 was much more volatile than today. The Bolsheviks' success in overturning the despotic Russian tsar inspired Canadian workers who had returned from the horrors of the First World War only to face high unemployment, falling wages and a highly precarious labour market. There were no employment standards in Canada at that time; no labour legislation; no public health care; no Canada Pension Plan.

Many of the worker protections and social services we take for granted today exist because workers took to the streets in Winnipeg and elsewhere to demand fair wages and better working conditions. Unfortunately, in a case of history repeating itself, a lot of the 1919 grievances have arisen a century later under the cloak of an intensified, mature capitalism. Western societies are more unequal today than they were 100 years ago. Productivity continues to increase while wages stagnate. Employment is precarious. How do we respond?

French protesters have peered under the cloak; they see where to focus their anger. Most wear their *gilets jaunes* in the spirit of worker solidarity, decent wages, immigrant rights and fair taxation. Likewise, Winnipeg strikers 100 years ago responded by banding together, locally and in league with workers around the world, against an unfair system.

If Canada's "yellow vests" can't see the value in that kind of solidarity, they shouldn't be appropriating the symbol of the French movement. Hopefully Canadians can distinguish between their message and that of the *gilets jaunes*. **M**



ERIKA SHAKER

Frontlines of the class

We all win when teachers strike, but parents, children and communities need to see themselves in the struggle.

ONTARIO'S BACK-TO-SCHOOL SEASON is going to be especially disruptive for families later this year. Those of us with an interest in the state of our schools, and the well-being of children and the people who help support them, need to get ready—and get to work.

Doug Ford's government has given us some sense of what to expect, though the plans are strategically vague. For example, teachers have been threatened with discipline if they stray too far from the 1998 sex-ed curriculum, but a provincial lawyer has suggested the lauded 2015 revision was fine as a "supplemental" resource. The message: teach the new stuff, if you dare.

Other Conservative changes have been easier to tabulate. Cancelling the province's cap-and-trade program created a \$100-million hole in the budget for fixing school infrastructure. Further "strategic" cuts have been made to funding for rewriting the curriculum to accommodate Indigenous education, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and American sign language, as well as for additional math training for teachers. Parents Reaching Out grants, which helped school boards engage more effectively with parents from marginalized communities, were also cut.

Collectively, these decisions represent fairly small sums of money. But they will have a disproportionate impact on how classroom content and the institutional structures of education can respond to and reflect the educational, societal and socio-economic needs of kids, families and communities.

More recently, Education Minister Lisa Thompson has floated the idea of "revisiting" the class-size cap for kindergarten and grades 1–3 as part

of the government's goal to cut 4% from the cost of public education. Thompson has refused to commit to full-day kindergarten past the next school year, out of respect for the "consultation process," though she adds, again quite vaguely, the government will be maintaining "full day learning."

Thompson's government is also talking about revisiting the process by which school boards deal with staffing and seniority for occasional teachers. Rather than directly funding services for children with autism—let alone increasing the inadequate funding currently provided—the government will simply give money to parents in what resembles a "vouchers by stealth" initiative.

And last fall, after a meeting of provincial education ministers, Alberta's David Eggen claimed he heard his Nova Scotia counterpart, Zach Churchill, "bragging" about "how he was taking it to school boards and

dissolving them and centralizing the power." Nova Scotia is not alone in this regard. Quebec has committed to abolishing school boards and replacing them with service centres (the Nova Scotia model in the English system). Manitoba is also looking at reducing or eliminating boards in the province.

Placing limits on local democracy isn't new to Doug Ford. Fresh into his current mandate, the premier promised he would use the Charter's notwithstanding clause if needed, in the middle of a municipal election campaign, to forcibly reduce the number of wards in Toronto from 47 to 25—a decision that impacted both the public and Catholic Toronto school boards even if it didn't reduce the number of trustees in either system.

What's been laid out for public education in Ontario is a roadmap to social and economic regression. The best, and I would argue only option—if our goal is not just to brace for impact, but to demand long-term improvements to the provincial education system—is massive and sustained mobilization. That's going to take a lot of work, outreach, listening, and the ability to suspend our understandable defensiveness after being under attack for so long.

Teachers and education workers are a perennial and predictable target of those in positions of power—in Ontario, B.C., Quebec, Nova Scotia and everywhere in between. Education workers are invariably right there on the frontlines, or rather their unions are, defending their collective rights and the quality of our provincial school systems.

In Ontario, that fight will be waged fiercely at the bargaining table in the lead-up to the expiration of collective

Parents and education workers have one very important thing in common: the desire to help care for and support kids.

agreements on August 31. But in addition to this work, alliances need to be forged with other groups whose support undercuts the government's narrative instead of reinforcing it. These alliances must be ready, well in advance, for picket lines, work to rule, preemptive back-to-work legislation and whatever else the government might throw at our teachers after the start of bargaining.

By "other groups" I mean high school and middle school students, who showed their impressive mobilization skills in cross-province rallies protesting the rollback of the sex-ed curriculum. But I'm also talking about parents, even grandparents, given that these are the people the Ford government keeps saying it's out to protect and support.

Within these two groups, though, we need more than just the usual public education advocates coming out.

Single parents and parents who work shifts. Parents of colour and Indigenous parents. LGBTQ2 parents and ESL parents. If we don't know how to listen to each other and work together, particularly with those who have been traditionally marginalized or left out of the debate—by design or by neglect—people run the risk of feeling increasingly isolated. Our numbers suffer and those in power win.

Recent events show us that isolation can make people particularly susceptible to arguments that bureaucracies can't be trusted; that schools don't listen to parents, taxes are too high and money is wasted. The powers that be want people to feel they can go it alone because, they claim, public sector workers including educators have their own agenda and it has something to do with more money and more benefits.

This is the narrative we need to push back against if we're to reverse the damage being done every day. That task is all the more difficult with the Ford government tapping into real populist disillusionment and anger at the nameless, faceless elites allegedly ruining this province.

The good news is that when it comes to cutting through the isolation and the disillusionment, educators have a huge advantage over a lot of other workers in a lot of other sectors.

Parents and education workers have one very important thing in common: the desire to help care for and support kids. It's a powerful shared goal that's hard to argue against. It provides a ready-made starting point to connect to a wider circle of advocates for our kids, our communities, our schools, our most vulnerable, and a system that provides equitably for all of us.

To directly confront the all too effective divide-and-conquer strategy governments roll out to fight teachers, we need to build a movement that emphasizes what we can all do to help each other out. Where the government focuses on wages and benefits to reinforce the narrative of entitled union members, educators need to talk to and with parents, children and the public about what would be best for the kids, their families and the community.

In 2012, members of the Chicago Teachers Union used their visibility and privilege where they worked and lived to support those who needed their help in making their communities better for themselves and their families. And those communities supported them in return. That's the

solidarity we need to create the conditions for sustained momentum.

In Ontario in the lead up to August 31, self-declared progressives need to reach out to and enlist an increasingly fractured populace in ways we haven't had to do in decades. This involves the tried and tested method of talking to people—communicating with each other face to face rather than, or as well as, through the screen of a computer or mobile.

Organizing ourselves will also require physical spaces for people to gather. While austerity has severely undermined much of the remaining community-based infrastructure from which to (as my dad would say) plan the revolution, we do have schools. And this is where this fall's teacher bargaining bonanza could have benefits far beyond the securing of another collective agreement.

Organizing around schools can help us build communities that are immunized from political campaigns that keep us divided by amplifying our anxieties and emphasizing what separates us from each other (without, of course, identifying the systemic forces behind these divisions). Local organizing puts kids and communities at the heart of the conversation, but this can and should also be a segue to discussions about taxation, inequality, spending, justice, racism, colonialism, health and well-being, food security, housing, etc. All topics that some people don't feel equipped to jump right into, but who might be able to *find their way into* through discussions about the local school.

Most parents, students, and pretty much anyone you run into on the street will tell you it makes obvious sense to cap class sizes so that kids get the best education they can. As the Ford government threatens to lift those caps yet again, we all need to remember that they were not put in place out of kindness. Classroom caps were won by educators and their unions through the collective bargaining process. They fought for the caps not because it made their lives easier, but because teaching conditions affect learning conditions.

So when collective agreements expire on August 31, and educators are in a strike position, or are rejecting concessions demanded by the province, or are being threatened with (possibly pre-emptive) back-to-work legislation, remember what's at stake where our kids' education is concerned, and what education unions have been fighting for.

And be prepared to fight—not just for them, but for the gains they've made on our behalf, and the gains we need to continue to collectively make for the next generation. **M**



BRUNO DOBRUSIN

Striking for survival

The right to strike in Canada is under attack. Back-to-work legislation has become commonplace. In order to defeat these threats, workers and unions should seize upon the strike, both legal and illegal, as a tool for social change.

GREW UP ON constant strike. And I am not saying this metaphorically. During my childhood in Argentina, public sector workers, including both my parents, were literally on strike for days, and sometimes weeks, every single year. Teachers went on strike every March (the beginning of the school year) and usually one more time before the year was out, as new austerity measures were announced by the provincial or national governments of the time.

Budget deficits, the need to cut “red tape,” and a permanent state of austerity were the rule in Argentina during the 1990s. We were the poster child of neoliberalism. But then we became a poster child of resistance, with a social explosion that included blockades in major cities, general strikes and factory occupations. (Canadians might remember some of this in Avi Lewis’s documentary with Naomi Klein, *The Take*.)

Even as a kid I was somewhat aware that the majority of these strike actions would be defeated. But sometimes you win. And that feeling of power, of victory, of knowing you finally broke the back of the bosses and they have to give in.... That feeling feels pretty good.

Fast-forward to December 2016. I found myself sleeping inside the building that houses Argentina’s Ministry of Technology. The strike and occupation went on for a week, to fight back against layoffs and a reduction in the budget dedicated to research. I was a researcher at the time and an active member of the public sector union. Researchers and scientists did not historically identify as “workers”;

they belonged to a different category called “scientists.” To make any kind of strike happen, we would need to make sure our colleagues identified as both.

We spent the entire year leading up to that December organizing workplace after workplace. The budgetary adjustment was so brutal that even the most renowned “scientists” came out in support of the strike. I had never before participated in a 1,000-person assembly to decide a strike vote. That was remarkable.

The strike and the occupation were not legal, but they were massive and successful and the government caved in. Adjustments for that year were cancelled, so were the layoffs. Did we get everything we wanted? No. Did it feel for a moment like we could topple a government? Yes.

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE IN CANADA

Since moving to Canada almost two years ago, I have noticed similarities between the current advance of the right against unions and what I witnessed in Argentina during the 1990s. I was surprised that aggressive government policies against unions did not trigger general or large strikes, until I learned that legal restriction on “political strikes” has become an ingrained feature of labour disputes in Canada.

I also learned about the Rand formula and the system it created of strong collective bargaining, allowing for improvements in wages and working conditions; a system that has also maintained an overall high union density, especially in the public sector.

A similar system of labour relations in Argentina led to over 60% unionization toward the end of the 1980s.

However, as was the case in Argentina during the harshest neoliberal period, right-wing governments do not care for the limits imposed by legislation when attacking unions. In the last few years in Canada we have seen the right to strike under attack, affecting especially public sector unions, reinforcing restrictions that already exist for labour action in the private sector.

Governments of different political stripes have clearly stated that the right to strike in Canada is limited to strikes that do not seriously affect the functioning of society and the economy. Every time a strike starts to noticeably disrupt people’s lives—the lives of business owners perhaps most importantly—back-to-work legislation is brought in, only to be challenged in the courts years later. Canada has witnessed hundreds of small strikes in the private sector that do not necessarily affect the overall economy. But the moment a strike, even a legal strike, threatens economic or political interests, back-to-work is the answer.

We witnessed it in Ontario with the college faculty strike, in which thousands of precarious workers around the province were forced back to work by the previous Wynne government. Similarly, the still new Ford government legislated York University workers back to work as one of its first actions after being sworn in. The federal government under Prime Minister Trudeau sent postal workers back to work once the strike seemed to be heading in the direction of a total stoppage around Christmas.

Arguably the most problematic recent example of back-to-workism was against the power workers in Ontario at the end of 2018. With a negotiating deadline approaching and no solution in sight, the Ford Conservatives, with support from the lone Green MPP and the Ontario Liberals, voted pre-emptively to forbid any strike in the power sector.

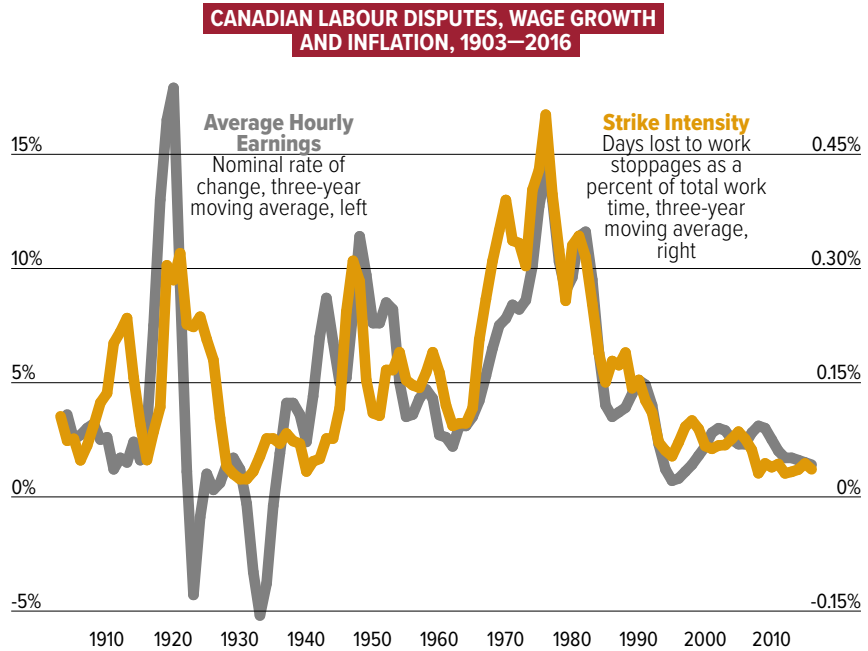
What incentive does a company have to negotiate in good faith with its workers, to bring positions closer, if it knows that at the end of the day, back-to-work legislation will tilt the scales in its favour?

These attacks on unions and especially on union strongholds like the public sector have hampered the capacity to take strike action, which is already comparatively weaker in the private sector. Despite some high-visibility strikes in the last two decades, the total number of hours lost due to work stoppages has declined significantly since the 1970s (see the chart here from Jordan Brennan, part of *Maclean's* "91 most important charts to watch in 2018"), to the point Canadians now strike about as much as they did during the Great Depression.

DEFENDING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BY STRIKING

Collective bargaining is under attack and employers are increasingly hostile to the notion of negotiations. Gains for unionized workers are still made in collective bargaining agreements, but decreasing union membership, especially in the private sector, implies that those gains represent a smaller portion of the working class. In the context of "competitive pressures," why would an employer negotiate better conditions? They wouldn't—unless there were the chance of workers withholding their labour power, the source of all company profits. A company can declare a lockout or shutdown, avoiding negotiations altogether. So should workers consider this as one of their options.

The Rand formula system has produced significant improvements to workers' lives, allowing unions to grow and take care of their members. But it assumes collective bargaining takes places within a political context in which labour rights are respected.



That is not the context at the moment, and the challenges to the system itself require a more direct confrontation with employers. The system can only be strengthened in labour's favour by direct action.

The recent teachers' strikes in the U.S. demonstrate the need to return to a strike cycle that actually disrupts a sector, or even an entire society. Teachers in West Virginia were not allowed to strike, but they went ahead anyway with a massive rank-and-file strike that was formally deemed illegal. It nevertheless gathered enough momentum to force the political class to sit down and negotiate.

The government shutdown used by U.S. President Donald Trump to push his administration's conservative agenda extended for more than 30 days and was only cancelled when air traffic controllers threatened to strike due to unsafe working and flying conditions. That strike would have been considered illegal, too.

The recent Canadian postal workers' strike was a threat because of the massive disruptions it would have created so close to the holidays. An Ontario power workers' strike carried the same potential. A sustained challenge to the restrictions on strike action, going beyond the courts, may be a necessary step to actually defeat anti-union/right-to-work schemes.

A ROAD AHEAD

If there is anything to learn from workers' experience in Argentina, it's that if you don't get directly in the way of anti-worker plans, you will have little to no chance of stopping them.

Premier Ford and the Progressive Conservative government in Ontario typify this attitude: going after student unions (even accusing them, in another throwback to the Winnipeg General Strike, of "crazy Marxist nonsense"), scrapping labour rights, freezing the minimum wage and floating the privatization of key public services like transport and health care. Unions and social movements have many fights ahead.

Strikes build power even if they settle for less than expected. The workers who filled the streets of Winnipeg 100 years ago recognized this core truth. That work stoppage did not take place in a vacuum, but rather at a time of high labour militancy throughout different industries.

Corporations hold about as much relative wealth and political power today as they did in the early 20th century. If workers had to strike then to correct the imbalance, it's hard to see how we will level the playing field again now without doing the same—and on as large a scale. What better way to honour their actions than to emulate them? **M**



ZAEE DESHPANDE

Lessons in protest culture

The case of South Korea

IN NOVEMBER 2018, over 150,000 South Korean workers walked out of factories to remind the country's president, Moon Jae-in, of his pledges to improve working conditions. Two months later, two Korean taxi drivers set themselves on fire in protest of plans by a large national mobile messaging company to introduce an Uber-like ride-sharing app. Then this February, labour groups joined in solidarity with Buddhist monks to march against South Korea's lack of basic labour protections for irregular workers.

These demonstrations are not isolated events in the South Korean landscape. The nation boasts a vibrant and often militant protest culture that continues to discover new ways to take

to the streets. In recent years, South Korea has seen everything from a year-long sit-in on top of a smokestack to a "ghost rally" that displayed life-sized hologram protesters instead of actual people.

The recent mass demonstrations have largely been a response to President Moon's faltering support for labour and his lack of *chaebol* reform. The two concerns go hand in hand.

A portrait of a taxi driver who died by setting himself on fire is seen as tens of thousands of taxi drivers take part in a protest against a carpool service application launched by Kakao Corp. in Seoul, December 20, 2018.

REUTERS/KIM HONG-JI

South Korea's large family-owned conglomerates—Samsung, Hyundai, LG and other household names known collectively as *chaebol*—embody the classic "too big to fail problem." Although these companies are involved in numerous corruption scandals and have been resistant to progressive, pro-worker reform, the export-driven economy's dependence on the *chaebol* have made governments hesitant to place restrictions on them.

For decades, labour has paid the cost of the state's inability—and lack of desire—to dismantle the *chaebol* system. In the second half of the 20th century, workers were made to endure insufferable working conditions in order to foster *chaebol* growth.

At an institutional level, little has changed in the present day. Recent administrations have continued to let the *chaebol* influence labour legislation and frequently let labour violations slide. In a tale that is all too familiar around the world, labour policy in South Korea has therefore continued to serve the interests of big business.

President Moon was supposed to break the status quo and transform South Korea. Not necessarily because of his own election promises, but rather because Moon entered office in 2017, on the heels of a massive revolution that left South Koreans feeling inspired and energized.

Beginning in October 2016, protestors filled the streets of Seoul and other major cities in South Korea to rally against the corrupt rule of then president Park Geun-hye. The protests were sparked by allegations that President Park was offering multi-million-dollar favours to South Korea's largest *chaebol*, Samsung.

Unlike the more violent South Korean social movements of the 20th century—in which protestors used stones, firebombs and steel pipes—this movement employed different tactics.

Demonstrators came out every Saturday night of the fall and winter of 2016, carrying candles, singing, dancing and wearing costumes to create a visceral image of joyousness and collectivity. The protests thus earned the name the *Candlelight Revolution*. At its height, over 2.3 million participants flooded the streets carrying candles, showing the world what democracy looks like.

Ultimately the protestors succeeded. In 2017, Park Geun-hye was impeached from office. This was a victory for labour unions such the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and its affiliates, who had been protesting Park's right-wing neoliberal labour policies since her election.

The revolution depended on coalition-based mobilization to weave together labour, hundreds of civil society organizations, and individuals across the political spectrum to face the age-old problems of *chaebol* corruption and the repression of workers. Admittedly, South Korean civil society has not been as cohesive since, but the *Candlelight Revolution* set a precedent for what collectivization could be.

Elected in the aftermath of this monumental movement, President Moon distinguished himself as an alternative to the previous government. The Moon administration's five-year plan prioritized limiting irregular employment, raising the minimum wage and reducing the maximum work week. These changes were long overdue in South Korea, where in 2017 the average worker was clocking nearly 14% more hours than the average OECD worker.

Moon upheld his promises, at least initially. In 2018, his government hiked the minimum wage and slashed maximum weekly working hours from 68 to 52. Both law-makers and big business quickly blamed South Korea's sluggish economy on Moon's new labour-friendly legislation.

While it's true that the Korean economy is decelerating, the slowdown can be better explained by a range of structural challenges currently facing the country. Near the top

Korean unions are demanding the “dismantlement of the chaebol-controlled economic regime in order to pave the way to true economic democratization.”

of the list is increasing trade friction with China, which put in place a number of restrictions on Korean imports in retaliation for the latter's installation of a U.S.-made missile defence system.

Nonetheless, Moon appears to have caved in to the demands of his critics. In November, his administration announced that it was considering expanding its flexible work-hour system. Labour unions see the government's move to introduce greater flexibility to the workplace as the president backpedaling on his commitment to reducing working hours and limiting precarious work.

A flexible work-time system would “allow companies to make their employees work 80-hour weeks without overtime penalty rates,” says Hyewon Chong, a representative of the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU) in a recent Facebook post. Chong adds that both the KMWU and KCTU are calling for the complete “dismantlement of the *chaebol*-controlled economic regime in order to pave the way to true economic democratization.”

While the unions continue to take to the streets, looming trade consultations with the EU are adding additional fuel to the fire. In July 2011, South Korea entered a free trade agreement with the EU that required both parties to agree to a comprehensive list of labour commitments. Now the EU asserts that South Korea has not held up its end of the bargain, especially when it comes to labour rights.

In January 2019, the EU began consultations with the government of South Korea to push the nation into ratifying core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). South Korea has yet to ratify ILO clauses concerning the freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and the abolition of forced labor. The EU has also expressed concerns around South Korea's treatment of irregular workers. (Canada, it's worth noting, does not seem to share the European concerns, even though its own free trade agreement with Korea, in force since 2015, also requires both sides to recognize these ILO rights.)

As he faces heat from labour, big business and the EU alike, President Moon will have to confront the issue of labour protection and its companion, *chaebol* reform, in the upcoming months. And while a wishy-washy president attempts a balancing act, one thing seems certain: whether they bring stones or come carrying candlelight, South Koreans will march on. **M**

ASAD ISMI

South Africa's new revolutionary party takes on a corrupt system

WHEN SOUTH AFRICANS go to the polls in May, they will have a radical new choice on the ballot. The Socialist Revolutionary Workers' Party (SRWP) of South Africa, which announced itself in December, will formally launch its election bid this March. Created by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the country's biggest labour union with 400,000 members, the party aims to unite the working class to fight capitalism and create a socialist South Africa free of mass poverty, unemployment and corruption.

"We are the only ones fighting for the total destruction of capitalism," SRWP and NUMSA spokesperson Phakamile Hlubi-Majola told Theto Mahlakoana of the *Financial Mail* in December. "We want a socialist [South Africa], where the interests of the working class will be primary and the wealth of the country will be used for the benefit of all."

According to Irvin Jim, NUMSA's general secretary, the party is growing rapidly and has a presence in all nine provinces of South Africa. That presence includes "a sizeable number of national leadership and branches," he told Mahlakoana. But the party's main emphasis is not on winning elections. "As communists," Jim explained, "we have an old view that elections are not necessarily a solution, however, they are a tactic that can be explored to test if we have the support of the working class."

Shaheen Khan, who serves on the national core and national working committee of the SRWP, tells me the party "grew out of two important historical moments." One was the Marikana massacre of 34 miners (at least 78 others were wounded) by state forces in 2012; the other was NUMSA's

"conscious rejection" of the Tri-Partite Alliance [between the ruling African National Congress party, South African Communist Party and Congress of South African Trade Unions] in its resolutions taken in 2013.

"The 'NUMSA Moment' squarely raises the question of the creation of a vanguard working class party gaining a mass following in South Africa," says Khan. "This fundamentally changes the political landscape in the country."

Rather than pursuing votes, Khan says, the SRWP is "focused on using every opportunity to raise the consciousness of the working class on the nature of the capitalist system and our need to organize independently outside of parliament and against it." The party's aim is "merely to secure a presence in parliament from which we can raise the working class voice and expose the capitalist nature of parliament itself."

There have been other attempts to start radical leftist parties in South Africa, but none of them were backed by NUMSA, the country's most powerful union. Professor Patrick Bond, who teaches political economy at Witwatersrand (Wits) University in Johannesburg, tells me he's encouraged by this historic development, but also cautions that it may not be enough.

"I'm an independent ecosocialist so my bias is towards the kinds of social struggles that address concrete problems caused by capitalism at their root, in the commodity form, and in strengthening the power of labour in production and especially women's labour in social reproduction," he tells me.

"That means the main long-term agenda is transition to ecologically sound, decommodified, worker self-managed,

community-controlled co-operative production and feminist systems of reproduction. I think the standard vehicles are appropriate: radical social movements allied with trade unions, together creating a socialist political party and eventually taking state power."

According to Bond, the closest the left in South Africa came to creating the kind of organization he favours was the United Front in 2014, in which NUMSA attempted to bring together labour, women, youth, the elderly, environmentalists, the LGBTQ+ rights movement and other progressives. The United Front fell apart, in Bond's opinion, partly because NUMSA "lost interest" in the project.

Khan disagrees with that outlook. He tells me the United Front, "was designed to unite the working class in struggle, irrespective of party affiliation. This meant that within its ranks the United Front was always going to be facing different views and perspectives on the meaning and character of the struggle.

"There were very few real Communists in the UF to fight for a revolutionary perspective and transform the UF into a revolutionary, working class front," Khans says. "In this sense, while pockets of the UF still remain, it will fall to the SRWP to resurrect a militant and fighting UF in the country."

While forming a united front out of such diverse groups is a tall order for any organization, Imraan Buccus says the time is right in South Africa for the SRWP's formation. Buccus, a senior researcher at the Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute (ASRI) based in Johannesburg, points out that "the road is open" for NUMSA to capture a currently vacant political space on the left.

“They have a charismatic leader in Jim, an impressive organizational infrastructure, an equally impressive international network and a dues-paying base of 400,000 workers. There has never been a better foundation for anyone to start a new party in post-apartheid South Africa.”

SRWP's two main competitor parties on the left are both discredited, says Buccus. These are the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). The former has lost “its claim to being a party of the left,” he says, due to the Communists' alliance with the corrupt African National Congress (ANC) and especially its former leader Jacob Zuma, who had to be removed by his own party in February 2018.

The EFF, which often employs leftist and anti-corruption rhetoric and wins about 10% of the vote, has been embroiled in its own corruption scandals. The party allegedly benefited financially from the scandalous collapse of VBS Mutual Bank, with deputy leader Floyd Shivambu allegedly getting 10 million rand (just under \$1 million) from VBS. He, in turn, tried to suppress the official investigation into VBS by questioning the integrity of officials in the National Treasury and the Reserve Bank.

Buccus calls the SRWP's formation “a thrilling moment.” He acknowledges that the party does not have much time to build public support for the election, but he maintains that “the presence of an explicitly left-wing party in the fray will shift the political discourse.” The SRWP's emergence, for Buccus, is “an important step towards the normalization of our politics, and towards offering real choices to the electorate.”

After 25 years of ANC rule, 65% of South Africans still live in poverty, 40% are unemployed, and voters are disillusioned from the unending corruption scandals stemming from the looting of public resources by ANC leaders and officials. Not surprisingly, the World Bank declared South Africa the most unequal country in the world (in terms of income) in an April 2018 report.

Adding to these disasters on the eve of the election is the country's

“stagnant economy,” according to Azar Jammine, director of Econometrix, a South African economic consultancy firm. The South African economy went into recession in the second quarter of 2018 and emerged from it in the third quarter, leaving overall GDP growth weak (expected to be below 1%) for the previous year. The rand currency fell by 18% in less than a month in June 2018 and South Africa's debt has become junk-rated, making it harder for the government to borrow money.

The ANC's current leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, cannot be untangled from his party's record, though he promised in January that the ANC is “getting out of that. We're cleansing ourselves.” Ramaphosa is worth about \$450 million, making him the 42nd richest person in Africa. He is implicated in the Marikana massacre. As a non-executive director of Lonmin (the British mining company the workers were striking against), Ramaphosa urged the authorities to take “concomitant action” against the miners before the massacre.

Bond calls Ramaphosa the “ideal Johannesburg branch-plant comprador partner to multinational corporations.” He points to the politician's “aiding” of both mining company Lonmin in “brazen illicit financial flow profit transfers to Bermuda,” and MTN, the largest African cellphone firm (which Ramaphosa chaired), “in its prolific profit outflows to Mauritius.” The current ANC leader should also be remembered, asserts

Bond, for abusing tax havens via his main holding company, Shanduka coal, as exposed in the Paradise Papers leak in late 2017.

MTN transferred billions of rands earned in Africa to offshore tax havens while Ramaphosa was its chairman between 2001 and 2013. This was exposed in a joint investigation by amaBhungane (Centre for Investigative Journalism) and Finance Uncovered, a global investigative journalism network. After Ramaphosa left MTN to become South Africa's deputy president in 2014 he criticized corporations “that make profits ‘disappear’ by shifting them ‘to low-tax operations where there is little or no genuine activity,’” as reported in the *Mail & Guardian* in October 2015.

Ramaphosa has been compelled by these factors to launch an official anti-corruption drive, but this is hamstrung by his own history and that of other ANC leaders whose support he depends upon. Jacob Zuma's supporters are still powerful within the ANC and, as Bond explains, “Ramaphosa's agenda is extremely complicated, because in order to keep the ANC from fracturing, he had to continually re-appoint corrupt officials.”

Khan pledges that the if any SRWP candidates win legislative seats in the upcoming election they will be subject to instant recall by the party and will not be paid more than the wage of an “average skilled worker,” with the rest of their salary going to the SRWP to “advance working class struggle.” **M**



PHOTO FROM THE SRWP'S TWITTER ACCOUNT.

KATHLEEN RUFF

How we beat asbestos

ASBESTOS IS THE biggest killer of Canadian workers. As well as the human tragedy, asbestos continues to be an economic disaster for Canada and other countries who put millions of tonnes of the carcinogenic material in their homes, schools, government buildings and infrastructure. Billions of dollars are now being spent on health care costs for asbestos victims and to deal with deteriorating asbestos-containing materials in our built environment.

The scientific evidence that all asbestos is deadly has been well established for decades. Other industrialized countries banned asbestos years ago. Yet just a few short years ago—in 2012—the Canadian and the Quebec governments denied the scientific evidence and supported the opening of an underground asbestos mine in Quebec to massively increase mining and export of asbestos. Only four other countries were still mining and selling asbestos: Russia, China, Kazakhstan and Brazil.

While the scientific battle had been won, the political battle had not. Public policy at the federal, Quebec and regional level had been captured by asbestos interests. The facts did not matter. The health of workers in Canada and especially overseas (where all the asbestos from the new mine was to be shipped and where safety measures are virtually non-existent) did not matter.

When the Parti Québécois was elected in September 2012, it cancelled a \$58 million government loan that former premier Jean Charest had approved to open the asbestos mine. Asbestos mining in Quebec and Canada then finally ceased. With asbestos mining ended, the Trudeau government banned asbestos as of December 30, 2018.

How did this human and political catastrophe happen? What can we learn so that we might stop other disastrous policies that betray science and democracy?

An important factor in the asbestos story is concern felt for the plight of the asbestos workers and the fact that we as a country do not provide decent economic security and training to workers who need to transition when an industry retracts or closes down. The heroic strike back in 1949 by Quebec asbestos miners against appalling exploitation by the U.S. and English-Canadian mine owners created an indelible legacy of respect and pride in Quebec, which increased the sense of solidarity with the workers now facing the shutdown of the industry.

As is often the case with extractive industries, towns where asbestos was mined tended to be single-industry towns. In some cases, such as Asbestos in Quebec and Cassiar in British Columbia, the mine came first and the town was built around the mine. The power dynamics were clear: the mine ruled the town, not vice versa. If the mine closed down, the town risked disappearing, as happened after the Cassiar mine closed.

Just as it is ecologically unhealthy to create monocultures, similarly it is socially unhealthy and dangerous to create single-industry towns. The community is at the mercy of the vagaries of the marketplace and industry decisions. If the company shuts down, workers not only lose their jobs, but house prices plummet, schools and community amenities close and the younger generation leaves.

Workers, their families and their communities are held hostage in single-industry towns. The workers at the Jeffrey mine in Asbestos owned 35% of the company's shares. They were fighting to save their jobs, their financial investment and their community. The failure of the government to offer a transition strategy meant that the workers and their community were trapped in a desperate crisis with no alternative option but to keep mining asbestos.

Another characteristic of single-industry towns is that they have some political influence. The voters are concentrated in one area and determine who gets elected there. Political parties, motivated by human compassion or cynical self-interest, generally seek to woo single-industry towns by adopting policies that favour the industry. Until just over a decade ago, all federal and Quebec political parties unquestioningly supported the Quebec asbestos mines.

The asbestos companies, the Canadian and Quebec governments and Quebec unions jointly formed an organization, the Asbestos Institute (later renamed the Chrysotile Institute), that for decades marketed asbestos overseas and lobbied against any restriction on asbestos use.

The tobacco industry is notorious for its tactic of funding scientists to deny or create doubt about tobacco harm. The asbestos industry employed the same strategy.

The Quebec Asbestos Mining Association (QAMA) decided in 1965 to seek an "alliance with some university such as McGill, for example, so that authoritative background for publicity can be had." QAMA gave \$1 million to McGill professor John McDonald to fund his studies of Quebec asbestos miners. These funds enabled McGill University to create a department of epidemiology with McDonald as its chair.

McDonald's studies concluded that chrysotile asbestos is "essentially innocuous." No other scientist—except scientists with financial ties to the asbestos industry—has duplicated McDonald's findings. McDonald and McGill refused to make available the data on which McDonald based his findings. Chrysotile asbestos represents 95% of all asbestos ever sold.

McDonald assisted the asbestos industry by opposing stricter occupational exposure standards, stating, falsely, that he had no ties to the

asbestos industry. In 1986, McDonald collaborated with the Asbestos Institute to oppose plans by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to ban asbestos. In 1998, McDonald argued before a World Trade Organization tribunal that countries should not have the right to ban chrysotile asbestos. In 1999, McDonald went to Brazil to argue against a proposed asbestos ban.

McGill is influential and provided the asbestos industry with academic cover. McDonald's work promoting use of chrysotile asbestos in developing countries is still cited today by the asbestos industry.

Both the Quebec and Canadian governments refused to heed their own scientific experts. The mandate of the Quebec National Public Health Institute (INSPQ) is to provide expert health advice to the government. It had carried out extensive research and published numerous reports on asbestos. Its recommendations opposed the government's asbestos policy and were disregarded.

The government's 16 directors of public health for every region of Quebec, including the asbestos mining region, publicly challenged their government's policy. They put a media release up on the government's website stating that the government's "safe use" policy was a failure in Quebec and that the government's planned expansion of the asbestos mine would result in an increase in asbestos-related diseases among workers and the general population, creating social and financial costs.

At the federal level, politics overrode science. Former prime minister Stephen Harper was ideologically opposed to any government action that would interfere with the mining industry and vowed he would not allow the asbestos industry to be "discriminated against." Successive Canadian health ministers rejected appeals to fulfil their duty and stop supporting asbestos.

Challenging governments to respect scientific evidence is critical, but it is not enough. In order to mobilize the force of public opinion it is essential to convey the real-life and human dimension of an issue—wherever the impacts are being felt.

Thanks to collaboration between activists in Canada and India, former premier Charest was challenged by asbestos victims while on a trade mission to India in 2010. India was Canada's biggest asbestos customer and the premier was accompanied on that trip by Quebec's leading asbestos exporter. While Charest refused a meeting with the activists, the Quebec journalists on his plane interviewed the premier about it and filmed the Indian workers suffering from asbestos-caused diseases.

The human face of Quebec's export of asbestos became real instead of theoretical. This had a strong impact on Quebec public opinion.

Then in December 2010, again through international collaboration, the Asia-Quebec Solidarity Delegation—composed of asbestos victims, a trade unionist and activists from Asia—came to Quebec to appeal directly to the provincial government, unions and the people of Quebec. They asked the government not to finance the asbestos



Rachel Lee, who died in December 2011 from mesothelioma as a result of exposure to asbestos, is shown demonstrating outside the Quebec premier's office in 2010 with the Asia-Quebec Solidarity Delegation.

RIGHTONCANADA

mine and not to export millions of tonnes of asbestos to India and elsewhere.

The delegation was accompanied and supported by Quebec health professionals. Amir Khadir, then leader of Québec Solidaire, presented the Solidarity delegation in Quebec's national assembly and introduced a bill to ban asbestos. Together they sent a powerful message of scientific integrity, international solidarity and political leadership.

It was no easy matter to defeat the asbestos industry. The asbestos lobby had political and social power, received millions of dollars in government funding and employed public relations professionals, lawyers and others to advance its cause. The campaign against the asbestos industry was run with no funds, no staff and no big organization behind it. Still, the asbestos lobby accused the campaign of being funded by powerful, hidden interests and attacked the scientists at the INSPQ as being "a little gang of Taliban."

Government ministers threatened retaliation against the INSPQ. One of the directors of the International Chrysotile Association (still based in Quebec) who works for the Kazakhstan asbestos industry hired a spy who infiltrated the global movement to ban asbestos, including the Canadian campaign, for four years at a cost of more than \$1 million.

Yet in spite of its money, power and dirty tactics, the asbestos lobby was defeated in Quebec. International solidarity involving activists, scientists and asbestos victims played a key role in winning this victory. The willingness of the Quebec health professionals to challenge their government and advocate for public health policy based on scientific evidence and human solidarity provides an inspiring example of what can be achieved when scientific experts are willing to speak truth to power. **M**

KATHLEEN RUFF WAS AWARDED THE MEDAL OF THE QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 2016 FOR HER WORK TO STOP THE MINING AND USE OF ASBESTOS. SOME OF THE CONTENT OF THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE EDITED COLLECTION *SICK AND TIRED: HEALTH AND SAFETY INEQUALITIES* (FERNWOOD PUBLISHING, OCTOBER 2018).

JIM HODGSON

Fighting the tide in Nicaragua

The Sandinista government faces strong pressure to change — from allies and enemies alike

After the eruption of social conflict in Nicaragua between May and June 2018, the World Council of Churches (WCC) sent a team of observers to the Central American country. Among them was Jim Hodgson, Latin America partnerships co-ordinator at the United Church of Canada. Hodgson first visited Nicaragua in 1984, five years after the Sandinista Revolution, and his current work has taken him back at least once each year since 2000. Almost immediately after the triumph of the revolution, the United States began to fund a “contra” war as well as legal opposition parties. After a decade of war, and just weeks after the United States invaded Panama, an opposition alliance defeated the Sandinistas in an election in 1990. They returned to power in the 2006 election, part of the “pink wave” that was sweeping Latin America. Now, as the tide ebbs, Sandinista leaders face strong pressure for change.

DESPITE MORE THAN three decades of connecting with people in Nicaragua, I did not expect the upheavals that tore families and communities apart between April and June last year. A proposed reform to the national pension plan drew strong opposition, and even when the government dropped the plan, protests continued. Opposition forces demanded the resignations of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo, the vice-president. The government acknowledges that 269 people were killed in protests or at road barricades; the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights put the number at 325.

Ortega has been at the forefront of Nicaraguan politics since before the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution on July 19, 1979. After serving

as co-ordinator of the reconstruction government, and with Sandinista fighters converted into a political party, he was elected president in 1984. He lost elections in 1990, 1996 and 2001, but then won in 2006, 2011 and 2016. Part of the opposition boycotted that last election, but there was a 68% voter turnout, and Ortega won with 72% of the vote.

At least until early last year, education and health indicators continued to improve, as did employment and economic growth. Nicaragua’s GDP grew by 38% over the past 11 years (ahead of its neighbours). The World Bank said in 2018 that poverty had been cut nearly in half, from 48% to 25%. Nicaragua has largely avoided the violence related to drug trafficking that afflicts its neighbours in Central America. Some people leave to work in Panama or Costa Rica, but you don’t see the large outflow that occurs from Honduras, Guatemala or El Salvador.

But the Sandinista party has been in power for a dozen years now. The

leaders are getting old and there is more than a whiff of corruption. Better-educated young people in particular feel a need for change; older Nicaraguans who have always opposed the Sandinistas have their Republican allies back in power in Washington. (Earlier this year, Elliott Abrams, who organized the covert funding of Contra rebels against the Nicaraguan government, was made U.S. Special Envoy for Venezuela.)

During two visits in August, I had many good, uncomfortable conversations with friends and others who sought to persuade me to different points of view. At the beginning of the month, I visited United Church of Canada partners: a school in the San Judas neighbourhood in Managua, and Nicaragua’s Moravian Church—the largest Protestant church in Central America with a 170-year history of ministry among the Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean people of the Atlantic coast.

Later in August, I joined a small World Council of Churches (WCC) delegation. We visited church, government, opposition and civil society organizations. At the end of our trip, we called for dialogue as a means to resolve differences. We supported calls for justice and peace, including respect for the human rights of all people and respect for diverse ways of thinking in contemporary societies. In months since then, several of us have also defended the right of human rights organizations to do their work.

I know that some people reading my words would rather see more than dialogue—either a resounding call for the president’s resignation or a strident defence of his record. After my August visits, I am more convinced than ever that neither of

One person’s “social populism” or “clientelism” or “package of crumbs” is another person’s right to access health care and education.

those positions is realistic or useful: both reflect only the extremes of a polarization that is again wounding the people of Nicaragua and their social fabric, still unhealed after the civil wars of past decades.

Instead, we will continue to support calls for dialogue and efforts to open space for collaboration across divisions. I would say the same today about Venezuela, where the Canadian government, in lockstep with the Trump administration, is calling aggressively for regime change. And also about Colombia, where the government has abandoned what was a difficult but fruitful peace process.

In Nicaragua our WCC delegation met with the Civic Alliance and with other government opponents. I asked questions about matters that have troubled me since the crisis began. Beyond being rid of the presidential couple, what do you want? How will you preserve free education and health care? Why don't "progressive" voices distinguish themselves from the right-wing groups that look for support in the United States?

"We think we're strong enough to talk with everyone," was one response. "Everybody talks to us now. We have unity now. If we put forward specific interests, then we divide."

Another person said, "In these conditions, I will talk with the extreme right."

Another voice: "In the next moment, there will be other confrontations, but not death. We will be adversaries, but without violence. But we are not thinking about the next moment yet. At the moment, we need national unity."

A student leader said, "I trust that the future of Nicaragua is inclusive: students, environmentalists, feminists—we all have room. What the government does is clientelism" (referring to social programs that benefit impoverished people).

A university administrator said you can't look at this moment with traditional labels. "We're talking about truth against lies." He said the government's social programs were rife with corruption and handed out only "packages of crumbs."

Another member of our delegation pressed again on the absence of a



political platform. "There is a risk in calling for an early election," he said. "You need a political platform to win an election."

"The left in Latin America is playing with its own credibility," responded one person. "In various countries, social movement and environmental leaders have had troubles with governments of the left." Before elections, they would talk about citizen participation and municipal autonomy, but not once they were in power, she said. "Human rights should not have a [political] colour," she added.

Another person said "the left thinks it can win with social populism."

I was grateful for the opportunity to test my impressions with people who quite clearly see things in a different way. To me, one person's "social populism" or "clientelism" or "package of crumbs" is another person's right to access health care and education. To me, those views belie contempt for the poor, and for the goal of universality in social programs (still an incomplete project in Nicaragua).

But they also show the need for dialogue. These are policy choices,

A truck containing a mobile clinic is adorned with an image of Nicaragua's presidential couple.

AUTHOR'S PHOTO

options that face every society. And they are about good public administration: overcoming corruption; proposing better ways to do things; a better-run and fairer electoral system.

A new dialogue—with or without the Catholic bishops, with or without the WCC, with or without accompaniment by foreign governments—could produce better government for all Nicaraguans. The alternative to dialogue is not "more of the same," but rather a descent into chaos where the only winners are those who profit from weapons sales and access to new routes for illegal drugs. **M**

ECONOMIC DATA IN THIS ARTICLE COMES FROM JAKE JOHNSTON, "SOCIAL SECURITY PROTESTS IN NICARAGUA? HOLD ON A SECOND...", CENTER FOR ECONOMIC POLICY AND RESEARCH, APRIL 27, 2018. THE AUGUST 2018 MESSAGE FROM THE DELEGATION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND ACT ALLIANCE TO THE CHURCHES AND PEOPLE OF NICARAGUA CAN BE READ AT WWW.OIKOUMENE.ORG.



The good news page

Compiled by
Elaine Hughes

To more effectively use their limited arable land, some Tajikistan farmers are adopting the agroforestry practice of “alley cropping,” or growing vegetables or forage crops between rows of fruit trees, resulting in doubled harvests, better use of scarce water and decreased soil erosion. / Following 17 years of diplomatic work led by the international peasant alliance La Via Campesina, the United Nations has approved the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, which extends human rights protection to farmers whose “seed sovereignty” is threatened by government and corporate practices. / A French court slapped an immediate ban on use of Monsanto’s glyphosate-based weed-killer, Roundup Pro 360, citing a 2015 World Health Organization assessment that the product was probably carcinogenic. Meanwhile, Germany’s Bayer, which bought Monsanto for US\$63 billion (about \$83 billion) in 2018, faces thousands of U.S. lawsuits from people who say its Roundup and Ranger Pro products caused their cancers—a claim recently made successfully in court

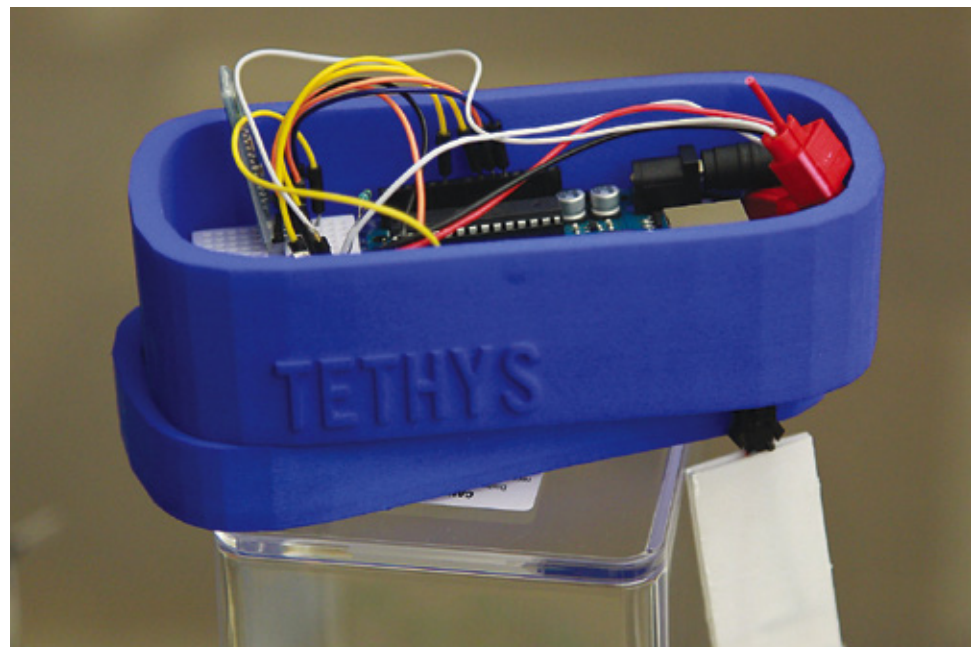
by a California school groundskeeper. / A 13-year-old girl from Lone Tree, Colorado by the name of Gitanjali Rao, named North America’s top scientist in 2017 for designing a small mobile device that tests for lead in drinking water, is now working with a lab manager at Denver Water on a prototype of the device, named Tethys (pictured), with the aim of getting it to market in the next two years. / Mongabay / GreenBiz / Reuters / NPR

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has begun testing an electric vehicle that might one day replace all 300 of the port’s gas-powered straddle carriers, which lift 30-tonne cargo containers and place them on trucks for ground transport. / By as early as 2022, the U.K.’s Class 321 commuter trains will be replaced by newer models, called “Breeze” trains, that run on hydrogen power, creating engineering jobs, increasing passenger capacity and emitting zero

harmful emissions. / Oslo was named European Green Capital for 2019 for its plans to employ fossil fuel-free construction methods and meet energy efficiency standards on all new buildings, lower citywide emissions by 36% from 1990 levels by end of 2020 and put a heat-recovery-based power plant in the basement of city hall. / Norway, already a leader in electric car sales, is now exempting battery-driven vehicles from taxes and providing free parking to their drivers. / Spain’s paradores, a chain of state-owned hotels founded in 1928 that today employ more than 4,000 people, is converting all of its 97 establishments to renewable power. / Associated Press / Good News Network / Deutsche Welle / Reuters / Guardian (U.K.)

The world’s first plastic-free flight, an Airbus A340, took 700 passengers from Lisbon to Brazil on Boxing Day. Airline passengers generated over

5.7 million tonnes of cabin waste in 2017, according to the Air Transport Association. / European home improvement company Kingfisher, which owns 1,300 branches across Europe, Russia and Turkey, is phasing out phthalates, perfluorinated and polyfluorinated chemicals, and halogenated flame retardants from its own-brand products. / The European Chemicals Agency is proposing to ban microplastics, which are overwhelming oceans and other marine ecosystems, in products such as cosmetics, detergents and agricultural fertilizers by the year 2020. / Since 2014, 70 New York City restaurants have been sending their cleaned, discarded oyster shells to some 75 public schools where students attach baby oysters; the young bivalves, natural water purifiers, are then added to strategically placed reefs off the coast. / The Telegraph (U.K.) / Chemical Watch / Reuters / CNN



REVIEWED BY TOM SANDBORN

Sustainable living

(if you ignore the scary risk of a firestorm)

BUILDING COMMUNITY

GORDON HARRIS
WITH RICHARD LITTLEMORE

Ecotone Publishing, paperback, November 2018, \$34.95

IN 1995, Simon Fraser University and the City of Burnaby signed a memorandum of agreement about creating a dense new urban village next to the campus, a planned community later branded, with unfortunate cuteness, UniverCity. The first buildings in this ambitious project were finished in 2001, and when the project is built out to its projected maximum in 2020 it will house 10,000 residents.

Building Community can best be read as a fan's notes on this ambitious project. Lead author Gordon Harris has served as President and CEO of the SFU Community Trust, the body that administers UniverCity. It is hardly surprising, then, that the book's tone is celebratory. And there is much to celebrate: UniverCity has been designed to be ecofriendly, good for pedestrians and cyclists, and slightly difficult for automobiles to navigate. (This focus on promoting sustainable travel will advance further if the proposed gondola between a Skytrain station at the bottom of the mountain and the school and village at the top is completed.)

In contrast, another Canadian planned community, Quayside, the Google/Sidewalk Labs development proposed for the Toronto waterfront, is committed to being "the world's first neighborhood built from the internet up," and seems particularly interested in incorporating driverless cars into its transportation mix. Quayside will be a smaller community than the one at SFU, with the Toronto project maxing out at around 3,000 residents,

but longer-term plans suggest that if successful, the Sidewalk Labs model may be extended for use in developing the entire 324 hectare plot along Toronto's eastern lakeshore.

Buildings at UniverCity are built to a high standard of sustainability and the community design includes many green features, although the SFU project does not include the heated road sections and extremely tall wooden buildings planned for the Toronto project. Nonetheless, the focus on creating a walkable community will pay off in quality of life for UniverCity residents. Burnaby's director of planning and building, Lou Pelletier, speaks highly of the way UniverCity has been developed. "The UniverCity Trust has adhered to the community plan well and paid lots of attention to amenities like day care and parks," he told me in November.

Some fairly significant concerns are not addressed by this sumptuously illustrated and enthusiastic homage to UniverCity. While Harris assures the reader that parking atop the mountain

is not a big problem, for instance, I have spoken to student commuters at SFU who adamantly disagree. And while a shortage of parking spaces might annoy, both the university and the village are facing a much more serious danger not mentioned in *Building Community*.

The storage tank farm for the controversial Trans Mountain pipeline squats like a cluster of flammable toads downslope from SFU and UniverCity. Burnaby's deputy fire chief, Chris Bocock, warned in a 2015 report that the proposed expansion of the tank farm would make it impossible for firefighters to respond adequately to a fire in the storage area, creating the real danger of a firestorm and fallout of toxic chemicals over the mountain, making an evacuation from the campus and UniverCity very difficult.

Given UniverCity's focus on marketing itself as a sustainable community in tune with its environment, the book's silence about this danger is troubling. **M**



PHOTO FROM THE UNIVERCITY WEBSITE

REVIEWED BY GERRARD DRAGON

Memories of a different future

BLACK WRITING MATTERS

WHITNEY FRENCH (EDITOR)

University of Regina Press, paperback,
February 2019, \$27.95

WHITNEY FRENCH IS to be commended for the vital work of gathering and sharing the voices of these Black Canadian writers. In this anthology we hear from academics, community workers, high school and university students, poets, journalists, essayists, activists and many others. Each one of the essays, stories and interviews is grounded in experiences of what it means to be Black in Canada right now. They tell of resilience to overcome challenges, resistance against oppressive systems and ideas, but most of all they affirm Blackness.

The book is divided into three sections: Everyday People, Letters to

Community, and Black Writing Matters. Family histories, such as those from Simone Makeba Dalton, Mary Louise McCarthy and Rachel Zellers, remind us of our hereditary bonds to both the living and those who have gone before us. We take a cross-country bicycle trip with Phillip Dwight Morgan as he navigates through spaces usually reserved for whites. And we experience the all too familiar occurrence of anti-Black racism in schools through the telling of Meshama Rose Eyob-Austin, who finds her voice to confront her school teacher.

Christina Brobby and anthology editor Whitney French offer their variations of the immigrant experience. Scott Fraser's James Baldwin-tinged work reminds us that the invention of whiteness and its unforgiving result—racism—is actually a problem for white people. And from Brandon Wint, a moving introspective glimpse

of what it means to be Black and disabled.

I found parts of my own of my life story written in these pages, reminding me of the seething anger that lay dormant during my teen years only to become fire. Not the combustible variety, which consumes and destroys all in its path, but the fire that nurtures and warms our souls, incubating within the true self until such a time that we are ready for the explosion, a fiery stream of Black consciousness.

These stories capture firsthand the essence of Black Canadian experiences be they black/queer, black/Indigenous, black/white or black/disabled. They have been brought forth as declarations of truth contradicting the typical narrative of Canada as a place free from the burden of racism. Each one of these authors has in their own way added their voice to the multitude calling for a different path forward. **M**

REVIEWED BY RICHARD GIRARD

Real life superheroes

1919, A GRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE WINNIPEG STRIKE

THE GRAPHIC HISTORY COLLECTIVE AND DAVID LESTER

Between the Lines, January 2019, paperback, \$19.19

PAULO FREIRE ONCE wrote that “washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.” Freire’s words rang through my mind as I read David Lester and the Graphic History Collective’s (GHC) astounding publication, *1919, A Graphic History of the Winnipeg Strike*.

This is the third comic book from the collective, following *May Day: A Graphic History of Protest* (2012) and *Drawn to Change: Graphic Histories of*

Working-Class Struggle (2016). Here we get a complete historical presentation of the Winnipeg General Strike from its roots in the bitter class conflict of late-19th century Winnipeg to its bloody climax on June 21, 1919. The detailed preface, combined with Brandon University Professor James Naylor’s clear introduction, provide the layperson with an essential background that is brought to life in Lester’s stunning illustrations, maps, newspaper clippings, actual strike voting data, and profiles of strike leaders and political and economic actors.

The conflict between the powerful and powerless runs through and literally jumps off the pages of *1919*. In particular, the notion that people working collectively can create true and lasting social change is front and

centre here. Importantly, though, the book goes beyond the events leading up to and during the strike, presenting readers with an analysis of the legacy of the strike and how it has influenced the labour movement and social action in Canada over the past 100 years.

As a teacher, I can see the potential of this book to supplement school curricula that usually spend only a short time on the Winnipeg General Strike; the book’s wonderful bibliography might be the best clearinghouse of titles on the subject that I’ve come across. But beyond the classroom, this latest offering from the collective should quickly become essential reading for those who might want to learn more about a seminal moment in the history of the labour movement in this country called Canada. **M**

Climate action tied up in pipeline politics

Two books explore the international and local violence of carbon power

FROM VARIOUS WARS in the Middle East to OPEC's conflict with the U.S. and Russia over oil prices to Canada's internal battle over pipelines and its support for regime change in Venezuela, petroleum's influence on geopolitics shows no sign of waning. In *Oil and World Politics* (Lorimer, September 2018), energy economist John Foster argues that efforts to control oil and energy resources, whether covert or overt, are in fact essential to explaining developments in the international sphere.

"Power, politics and petroleum all go together," says Foster early on in the book, which to some extent may be a victim of its own ambition. There are chapters for several global hotspots—Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Afghanistan and Ukraine—each of which could be the topic of its own volume. But the broader treatments on maritime trade and economic warfare, and Foster's solid analysis of how the geopolitics of energy resources impact international events, take us well beyond mainstream discussions, which tend to cast these and other conflicts in terms of ideology and national security.

"Coveting the petroleum of another country is against the rules of international law—yet if it can be accomplished surreptitiously, under the cover of some laudable action, it's a bonanza," Foster explains. The motivations are the same whether we're talking about the United States, Russia, China and frequently Canada, too. While the U.S. works with the Gulf states to invest their oil surpluses in U.S. bonds and weapons, China and Russia have similar arrangements with countries like Iran and Turkmenistan. The latter pose a clear threat to the petrodollar, and with it, American global dominance.

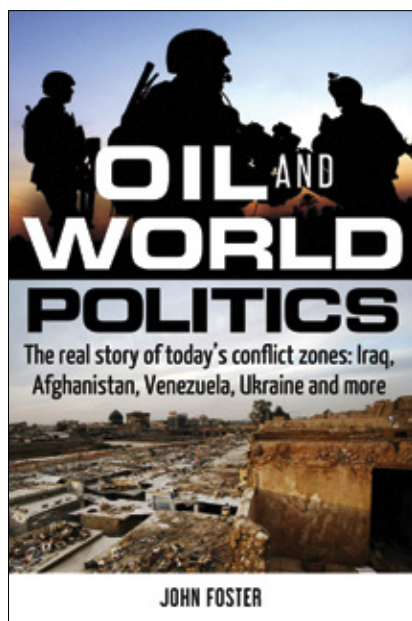
Each side and its corporate subsidiaries seek to build pipelines bypassing the other's allies to ensure they retain the upper hand. These efforts often lead to brutal conflict and proxy wars, if not outright superpower-to-superpower conflict as we are seeing in Syria's civil war, now entering its eighth year.

Foster sees the Syrian war as a battle of competing pipelines: one supported by Russia and the Assad regime, to bring oil from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Europe; the other backed by the U.S. and its Gulf state allies, which would take oil from Qatar to Turkey via Saudi Arabia and Jordan. It is a somewhat limited frame of analysis given the roots of the Syrian conflict in the Arab Spring rebellions against the region's autocracies. But as a justification for international intervention in that country over many conflagrations, it makes sense.

Throughout the book, Foster includes useful maps plotting the routes of the Middle Eastern and other pipelines against the locations of energy resources. The Russia-backed Iran-Syria pipeline would bypass Turkey, a major sponsor of the Syrian anti-government rebels, for example, while the U.S.-favoured Qatar-Turkey pipeline would bypass Russia. The author suggests the Gulf states' and the West's support of the Syrian rebels has more to do with installing a pliable government that would support their preferred pipeline than it does with holding the Syrian government accountable for its atrocities.

There are few saints among Syria's multiple competing rebel sects, with the most brutal fighters arguably those, like ISIS, funded by Gulf state theocracies to promote their interests in the civil war. But Foster appears to gloss over the myriad human rights abuses of the Syrian government. There is not a mention of Assad's barrel bombs, for instance, that potent symbol of the war's lopsided nature in favour of the government. One can acknowledge the geopolitics at stake in the Syrian civil war and oppose western military intervention without ignoring the reality that the majority of deaths—and vast majority of civilian deaths—have been caused by the Assad regime.

References to Canadian foreign policy are made in passing throughout the book, but always as an appendage of U.S. power. Foster discusses Canada's own powerful oil industry for only a few pages in a chapter that focuses mostly on Russia and Latin America. For a more uniquely Canadian perspective, we can turn to another recent title from Lorimer by Donald Gutstein.



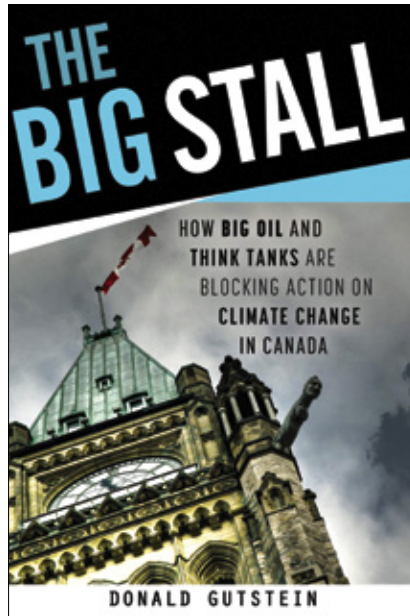
Gutstein begins his new book, *The Big Stall: How Big Oil and Think Tanks are Blocking Action on Climate Change in Canada* (Lorimer, October 2018), by contrasting Pierre Elliot and Justin Trudeau's approaches to energy issues. While PET at one time took on private oil interests by creating Petro-Canada and the ill-fated National Energy Program, son Justin has for the most part sought to work with private industry, pushing for increased pipeline capacity to accompany his carbon taxation plan.

Gutstein places this shift from one Trudeau to another in the context of neoliberalism, which he describes as the notion that "all problems must be solved by the market," and the enhancement of corporate power through the '80s, '90s and oughties.

The stated goal of Pierre Trudeau's NEP was to keep oil profits in Canada. This was a response to the spike in oil prices as a result of the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution. Although the program ran roughshod over Indigenous land rights, international oil companies aimed their ire at the limits the NEP placed on their access to Canadian oil and their ability set prices. Fortunately for the corporations, Brian Mulroney, whom Gutstein describes as "Canada's first neoliberal prime minister," moved to dismantle the NEP and began the process of privatizing Petro-Canada.

As Gutstein emphasizes, this didn't occur overnight. "Neoliberalism didn't start in Ottawa the day Brian Mulroney

Gutstein argues that only direct government intervention (e.g., mandated emission caps) will get us where we need to be.



walked in the door; it had already been making its way into official circles," he writes. The Macdonald Commission, which presented a report to Mulroney promoting deregulation and removing barriers to international investors, was established by Pierre Trudeau in 1982.

Gutstein spends much of the book focused on the tension between environmentalism, with its acknowledgement of the limits to market expansion, and neoliberalism, which seeks to put a price on everything. But with increases in awareness of climate change, which energy companies like Exxon knew about as early as 1978, the industry has been on the defensive.

After years of helping sow doubt about human-caused climate change through neoliberal think-tanks such as the Frasier Institute, much of the industry now seeks market-based solutions of the kind represented by carbon pricing, writes Gutstein. As long as they get their treasured pipelines built, oil companies, and apparently the Trudeau government, are happy to acquiesce.

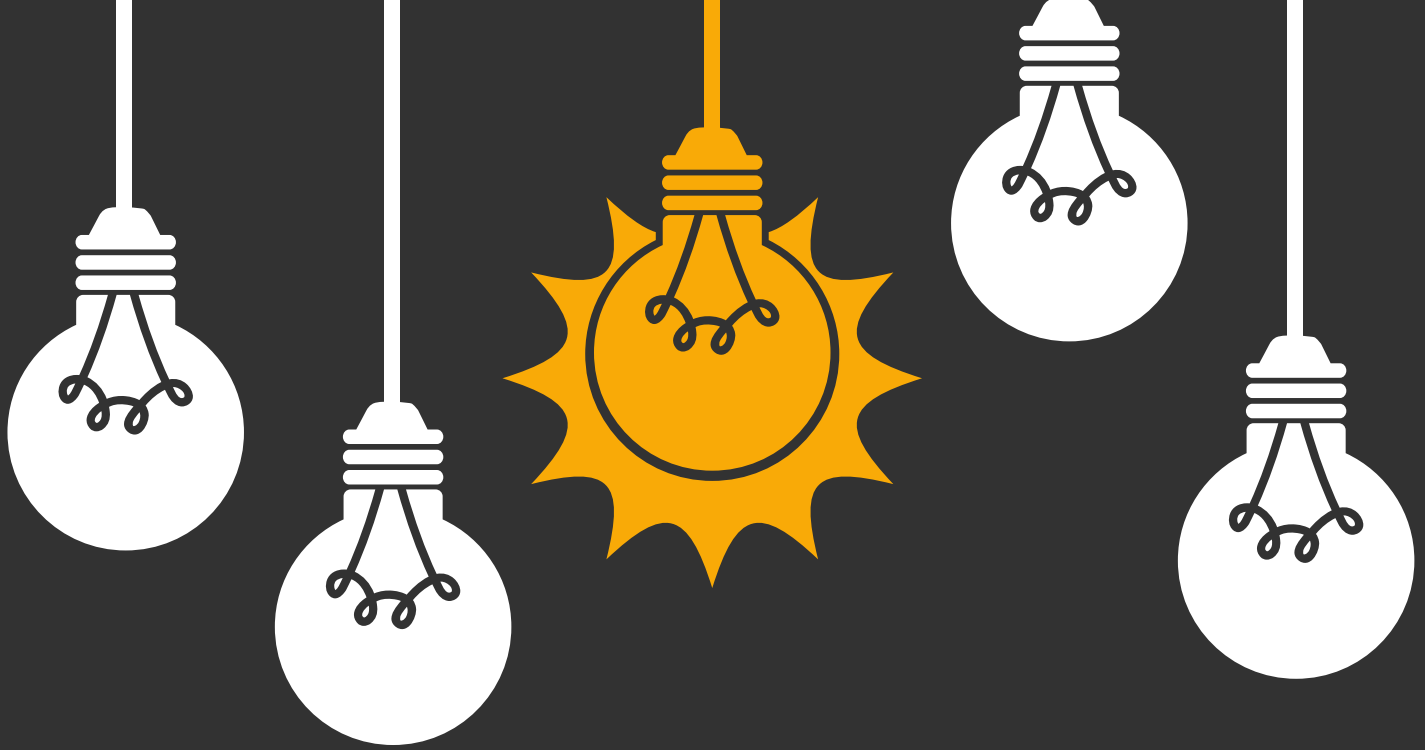
Progressives often defend carbon taxation from attacks by conservatives who prefer no action on climate change. Gutstein argues that only direct government intervention (e.g., mandated emission caps) will get us where we need to be. He sees hope in talk of a Green New Deal becoming

increasingly prominent thanks to high-profile politicians including Bernie Sanders and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez taking it up in the U.S.

The reason the Green New Deal hasn't become a reality yet, Gutstein argues, is because the green economy is still regarded as a market opportunity, not a necessity. "In cost-benefit analysis, there's no room for moral judgment," he writes. "Once numbers have been attached to recreation benefits and life costs, the solution is clear—more golfing in the U.S. and more dead people in the global south."

Although carbon taxes aren't his preferred method of greenhouse gas reduction, Gutstein suggests they're preferable to inaction. He approvingly cites the CCPA economist Marc Lee, who said, "even if carbon taxes don't do much to lower emissions, they can service another important purpose: financing measures that help offset negative impacts of increased atmospheric CO₂ levels." Revenue-neutral carbon taxes like the one in British Columbia, which offset any increases with tax cuts, greenwash the shrinking of the state while providing no revenue to fund a genuine green transition.

Gutstein concludes by offering readers some advice on how to secure a green future: question unlimited growth, question economists, listen to Indigenous voices and listen to nature. At the very least, he claims, this will help put humanity on track to enact transformative changes that will not only save the planet but facilitate a more just, equitable future for all. **M**



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1917



Meat packers in Calgary occupy
the factory to protest unfair and
unsafe conditions. 1937

BAKERS
IN HALIFAX
STRIKE
TO
REDUCE
THEIR
HOURS.

1868



RELIEF CAMP WORKERS
STOP WORK TO PROTEST
CONDITIONS IN WORK
CAMPS. 1938



GOOGLE
employees walk
out to protest
sexual harass-
ment gender
discrimination
and racism.
2018

Walkout
FOR REAL CHANGE



FARM WORKERS
WALK OFF THE
JOB FOR BACK
PAY. 1979

FARM WORKERS
ORGANIZING
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OPERATION
SOLIDARITY
SPEAK
OUT

UNIONS & ACTIVISTS COME
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ATTACKS ON WORKERS &
HUMAN RIGHTS. 1983

