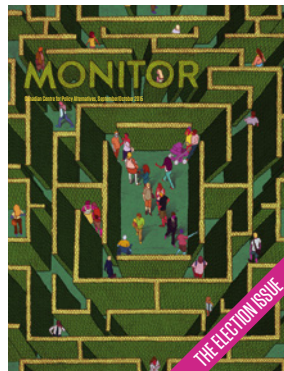


MISS AN ISSUE OF THE *MONITOR*? WANT EXTRA COPIES FOR YOUR FRIENDS? COLLECTING FOR POSTERITY?

Send requests for back issues to
monitor@policyalternatives.ca, or call us at
613-563-1341 ext. 312.



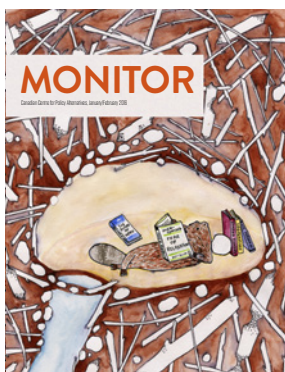
July-August 2015
STATE INVADERS



September-October 2015
THE ELECTION ISSUE



November-December 2015
**CANADA AND
CLIMATE CHANGE**



January-February 2016
**THE FUTURE
OF WORK**



March-April 2016
RECONCILIATION



May-June 2016
**NEW ECONOMIC
DIRECTIONS**



ON THE COVER

A democratic media is possible /16

A special feature on corporate media convergence and the news with articles by Marc Edge, Susan Delacourt, Ann Douglas, Dwayne Winseck, Fenwick McKelvey, Davis Carr, Nora Loreto, Andrew Biro, Jeremy Appel, Robert Hacket and Abigail Kidd.

JULY/AUGUST 2016

CONTENTS

BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Scotland's P3 schools are crumbling (so why would we build them here?)
Keith Reynolds /5

Where the NDP left Manitoba
Molly McCracken /6

U.S. doctors want Canadian-style medicare
Karen Palmer /7

The "Fight for \$15" in Nova Scotia
Christine Saulnier /8

ASK THE CCPA

David Macdonald on the pros and cons of buying provincial and municipal debt /12

FEATURES

Reviving the gun control debate /48
Paul Weinberg

The corruption of Brazil's anti-corruption investigation /51
Asad Ismi

ARTS

Book reviews /53

The Right to Die: The Courageous Canadians Who Gave Us the Right to a Dignified Death,
by Gary Bauslaugh /53

Awkward Politics: Technologies of Popfeminist Activism,
by Carrie Smith-Prei and Maria Stehle /54

A CCPA summer reading guide /55

NOTE FROM
THE EDITOR /3

LETTERS /4

NEW FROM THE CCPA /10

INDEX: EDUCATION
FUNDING /9

THE GOOD NEWS PAGE /15

MONITOR

Vol. 23, No. 2
ISSN 1198-497X
Canada Post Publication 40009942

CCPA *Monitor* is published six times a year by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The opinions expressed in the CCPA *Monitor* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CCPA.

Please send feedback to
monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

Editor: Stuart Trew
Senior Designer: Tim Scarth
Layout: Susan Purtell
Editorial Board: Peter Bleyer,
Kerri-Anne Finn, Seth Klein, Kate
McInturff, Erika Shaker, Emily Turk

CCPA National Office:
500-251 Bank St., Ottawa,
ON K2P 1X3
tel: 613-563-1341
fax: 613-233-1458
ccpa@policyalternatives.ca
www.policyalternatives.ca
Twitter: @ccpa
facebook.com/policyalternatives

CCPA BC Office:
1400-207 West Hastings St.,
Vancouver, BC V6B 1H7
tel: 604-801-5121
fax: 604-801-5122
ccpabc@policyalternatives.ca

CCPA Manitoba Office:
Unit 205-765 Main St., Winnipeg,
MB R2W 3N5
tel: 204-927-3200
fax: 204-927-3201
ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

CCPA Nova Scotia Office:
P.O. Box 8355, Halifax, NS B3K 5M1
tel: 902-240-0926
ccpans@policyalternatives.ca

CCPA Ontario Office:
10 Dundas Street East,
P.O. Box 47129, Toronto,
ON, M5B 0A1
tel: 416-598-5985
ccpaon@policyalternatives.ca

CCPA Saskatchewan Office:
2nd Floor, 2138 McIntyre Street
Regina, SK S4P 2R7
tel: 306-924-3372
fax: 306-586-5177
ccpasask@sasktel.net



CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
CENTRE CANADIEN
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

Contributors

Jeremy Appel

is a Toronto-based journalist with a focus on Canadian, U.S. and international politics. He has a masters degree in American Studies from Western University in London, Ontario.

Andrew Biro

holds a Canada Research Chair in Political Ecology and Environmental Political Theory, and is an associate professor in the department of political science at Acadia University. His current research examines the social construction of scarcity, and the role of culture and ideology in environmental politics, with a focus on water issues.

Davis Carr

is a communications assistant with the CCPA and the co-founder of JustChange, a micro-granting organization that gives \$1,000 every two months to a group or person effecting social, environmental or economic change in Ottawa.

Ann Douglas

is the author of numerous books about parenting including, most recently, *Parenting Through the Storm: How to Handle the Highs, the Lows, and Everything in Between* (HarperCollins Canada, January 2015).

Susan Delacourt

has covered federal politics for more than two decades as a reporter and bureau chief. A frequent political panellist on CBC Radio and CTV News, Susan is the author of four books including, most recently, *Shopping For Votes*. She teaches classes in journalism and political communication at Carleton University.

Asad Ismi

writes about international affairs in the *Monitor*, specializing in U.S. and Canadian imperialism, and resistance to it, in the Global South.

Abigail Kidd

is an Ottawa-based disability rights and anti-violence activist, and sexual health educator. She also works full time as a union education officer for CUPE 2204, which represents non-profit child care centres in Ottawa, and sits on the board of directors for the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women.

Nora Loreto

is a writer, musician and activist based in Quebec City. She is the author of *From Demonized to Organized, Building the New Union Movement*, and is the editor of the Canadian Association of Labour Media.

Fenwick McKelvey

is an assistant professor in the department of communication studies at Concordia University. He studies algorithmic media—the intensification of software within communication infrastructure—with a focus on advanced Internet traffic management software and campaign management software.

Rianka Singh

is a PhD student at the University of Toronto's faculty of information. Her doctoral research focuses on digital activism and cyber metaphor.

Kelley Tish Baker

is a freelance writer and editor living in Ottawa.

Paul Weinberg

is a Hamilton, Ontario-based freelance writer. His work appears in *NOW Toronto*, *rabble.ca* and the *Monitor*.

Dwayne Winseck

is a professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University with a cross appointment at the Institute of Political Economy. He is also Director of the Canadian Media Concentration Research Project and regularly participates in public policy and regulatory proceedings related to telecoms, Internet and media issues.

Guest editors

Marc Edge

is a professor of media and communication at University Canada West in Vancouver. His latest book, *Greatly Exaggerated: The Myth of the Death of Newspapers*, was published in 2014.

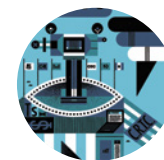
Robert A. Hackett

is a professor of communication at Simon Fraser University, a CCPA research associate, and a co-founder of NewsWatch Canada and the Media Democracy Project.



Book reviews

This issue's books section was curated by Octopus Books, an independent Ottawa bookseller (www.octopusbooks.ca).



Raymond Biesinger

Our cover artist lives in Montreal, Quebec. He likes concepts, making music, politics, Instagram, 19th century bird's eye panoramic maps, and a mix of minimalism and maximalism. He deploys physical things, electronic means, complex geometry and a BA in European and North American political history to make his images, and has been lucky to do so, since the year 2000, in over 1,000 projects on five continents.

Stuart Trew

Bad news and good ideas

WHEN MARC EDGE and Robert Hackett contacted me about guest editing an issue of the *Monitor* on the media, the plan was to focus on the state of the news. Postmedia had recently merged its duplicate newsrooms in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa—where the company owned both major dailies after purchasing the Sun chain in 2014—and canned another 90 journalists. Its reputation as an unbiased source of news was already in the pits after running nationwide cover-page ads and editorial endorsements for the Harper government days before the 2015 election. Now some Postmedia editors would be asked to spin the same story two ways (for branding purposes) in markets where the company owned both daily newspapers. On the layoffs in January, Postmedia CEO Paul Godfrey shrugged and blamed Google, and he's got half a point: new online news and social media players are gobbling up advertising revenue that has historically bankrolled print, radio and television news. But that's an excuse, not a solution to the failure of media convergence and consolidation that his predicament exposes. Corporate profits are the main purpose of this business model, with the ability to set the public agenda a nice concession prize for owners, and public interest journalism a distant afterthought to CEOs and shareholders.

Some countries recognize the importance of independent media to democratic society and have created regulatory and funding regimes to support it. Successive Canadian governments have sat back and watched the convergence happen. The current Liberal government in Ottawa seems at least open to reform: in February it announced a panel to explore the crisis in local news; in April it opened the door to rewriting the Broadcasting and Telecommunications acts for the Internet age, which could have spinoff impacts on news media (see Dwayne Winseck on page 25). But what policy responses are most appropriate in an era of technological change, the usurping of traditional media delivery by Silicon Valley-born multinationals, and high levels of vertical integration (ownership of media generation and transmission) among Canada's powerful telecoms-media conglomerates?

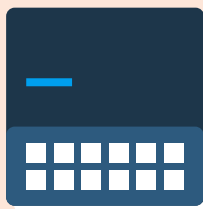
The contributors to this issue try to answer some of these questions, proving in the process that we cannot disentangle the challenges facing journalism from the technologies that deliver it, the ownership of the means of media production, the algorithms that increasingly determine what information we're exposed to (see Fenwick McKelvey and

Davis Carr on page 32), the trust and value we give to media workers (see Susan Delacourt on page 22), and the consequences, for those pushing for social change and climate action, of not reforming an institution that is currently built to perpetuate the status quo (see Robert Hackett on page 40).

In his lead article, "Can Canada's media be fixed?" (see page 16), Marc Edge contrasts the history of convergence with government apathy over the same period. "Canadian journalism was set on its course to banana republic status in large part by Conrad Black [who] brought a level of political partisanship to Canadian news media not seen since the 'party press' era of the 19th century," he writes. While web publishing was supposed to make media empires less important—democratizing news generation, turning people into citizen journalists—"except for giant platforms like Google and Facebook, online news media have found it hard to make money in the Darwinian world of the Internet." Edge looks at subsidy models (e.g., media charities, tax breaks for non-profit media organizations, directly employing mobile journalists to feed local CBC news) as possible ways forward.

The failure to develop a new media funding model in response to advertising flight (to Facebook, Google, etc.) will hit workers the hardest. Three articles—by Andrew Biro, Nora Loreto and Jeremy Appel—look at the results so far. Biro goes behind the strike at the Halifax *Chronicle-Herald*, now in its sixth month. Workers continue to resist pay cuts while management employs scabs to put out a daily paper you might wrap fish with but wouldn't want to read. "The situation at the *CH* thus represents, in particularly stark form, the tensions between running a newspaper business and producing a quality newspaper," writes Biro. Loreto, a member of the Canadian Freelance Union, sees no hope in the corporate media model, but also doubts government solutions. "Ultimately, saving journalism is a fight that journalists themselves must take on," she says, pointing to unionization drives at *Vice* and *Gawker* also explored by Appel in his article.

Our feature section on the media ends on a high note. Abigail Kidd interviews *Shameless* editor Sheila Sampath about the potential for independent media to transform society. The volunteer-run magazine has no capital backing and targets a specific demographic, meaning concentration in the mainstream media probably helps more than hinders *Shameless*. "Capitalism doesn't work in a way that's ever going to favour feminist media or an anti-capitalist project," says Sampath. "I think the pros that come from that outweigh the cons enough for us to keep going." **M**



Letters

Guaranteed to work

I was saddened to read the article “Against a basic income” in the May-June 2016 issue, since the Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI) was such a success in Dauphin, Manitoba in the 1974–79 period. True, mothers with newborns stayed home to care for their children, but this was only a 3% reduction in the workforce. Working members did not decrease at all and children stayed in school longer instead of pumping gas to supplement a family income.

The GAI advocated by progressive thinkers like Ed Schreyer and Pierre Trudeau reduced inequality in which the middle and upper income classes gather most of the wealth while the poor must exist with diminished necessities like food, water and transportation. This contemporary GAI is seen by many as attainable in the near future whereas increased paid employment is seen by fewer today as possible.

A positive GAI will increase democratic participation in society as well as encouraging greater equality and increasing the stay-in-school option without the myth of vastly

decreasing employment. Much of today’s labour is done on a volunteer basis, especially if we include stay-at-home mothers. Hence increasing the salaries of those now working will not change the vast gap between the rich and the poor while the GAI may alter this divide.

Paid work is said by many to be meaningless. Allowing people to choose more meaningful labour may reduce the number now complaining of meaningless work. A well-designed GAI, like the mincome in Dauphin, has a better chance of supporting greater equality and encouraging a more just society than the present regime of employment.

Barry Hammond,
Winnipeg, Man.

A BIG fan of basic income

There’s a lot to take issue with in the article “Against Basic Income” (What’s Left, May-June 2016). One can fully agree that work is valued for its role in “human development and personal fulfillment,” but for the author only jobs count as “work.” What of the unpaid but essential labour done in the domestic and public spheres? Millions of people, overwhelmingly women, raise children, manage households, care for elderly and ill family members, etc. In addition, untold as-yet-unpaid artists, writers, musicians, inventors and others work from home. Add in the volunteer work we all rely on in the social sphere,

the role of unpaid work in human development and fulfillment (equally in social, cultural and economic continuity and well being) is incontestable. It also contrasts sharply with the mindless, soul deadening jobs so many people are forced to undertake. Yet the author privileges such jobs over work that can be so much more fulfilling. Far from paying people “to stay home” or to live “a life of leisure,” basic income recognizes and values labour done in, for and from home.

In addition to ignoring unpaid labour, the author’s cavalier attitude about the effect on Canadian jobs of globalization, precarity and automation is dismaying. Government work projects are fine, but the sheer magnitude of the structural changes to the labour market can’t be counterbalanced so simply as the author would have us believe. Concern about these market developments is not “scare-mongering,” or “unrealistic” or a failure to “think big” about jobs. It’s simply sensible. Basic income offers protection against the most devastating effects of ongoing job market trends.

Further, even the most grandiose vision of government work projects leaves out people who don’t work, whether due to an ineradicable shortage of jobs, the lack of necessary skills or the inability to work (e.g., seniors, children, people with disabling illnesses or conditions). The author shows little concern for or interest in these people. Yet no one

denies that our current “social safety net” isn’t safe at all, but dysfunctional, inhumane, expensive and ineffective—denying autonomy and dignity, wasting talent, demolishing initiative. Basic income will replace the financial component of welfare programs with a reliable and respectful income floor for people who are jobless.

Finally, the author argues that basic income would displace “state mediated production and redistribution.” Well, no. Legislated livable wage levels will still be needed, as will workplace health and safety and other regulations. Infrastructure rebuilding and other job-creating public work projects will remain necessary. Nor is there anything about basic income that prevents the pursuit of progressive taxation or any other redistributive mechanism. Basic income is entirely compatible with the kinds of government initiatives favoured by the author.

Toni Pickard, co-ordinator,
Kingston Action Group
for a Basic Income Guarantee

Correction

In the May-June issue, former Mexican President Vicente Fox was misidentified as his successor, Felipe Calderón (“The chilling effects of ‘sunny’ diplomacy with the United States”). The *Monitor* thanks Karen Saenger of Abbotsford, B.C. for noticing the error.

Send us your feedback
and thoughts: [monitor@
policyalternatives.ca](mailto:monitor@policyalternatives.ca)

Behind the numbers

KEITH REYNOLDS

Walls are falling at Edinburgh's P3 schools

If 17 schools were closed in Vancouver or Edmonton or Regina, because parts of them were at risk of falling down and injuring children, do you think it might raise some questions about the way the schools were built?

That is exactly what is happening in Edinburgh, Scotland. It all began in January, when a wall of a primary school collapsed during a storm. The school was temporarily reopened but shut down again in March along with a growing number of schools with similar problems. By April, 17 Edinburgh schools had been closed for safety reasons, with thousands of students needing to be relocated for their studies.

Other than safety hazards, the schools had something else in common. As the *Guardian U.K.* reports, "three schools were only partly refurbished under the PFI contract, but the majority of the 10 primary schools, five secondaries and two additional needs schools affected were totally rebuilt by the PFI firm Edinburgh Schools Partnership." PFI is the United Kingdom term for public-private partnerships (P3s).

The U.K. led the world in the development of P3s. When British Columbia wanted to develop a model for its P3s it brought in British consultants to help. Under the U.K. P3 model, and the model in much of Canada, private companies design, build, finance and

operate public infrastructure in contracts that last for decades.

Donald Anderson, the man in charge of Edinburgh schools at the time the 17 schools were built or modernized in the 1990s, told the BBC they had been given no choice other than to go with public-private partnerships. But he defended the P3 process, saying the problem had to do with the use of subcontractors, and "how the construction industry operates at a deeper level." The BBC also reported that, "It emerged...that the contractor—not the council—signed off the completed buildings, although industry experts say such arrangements are now commonplace. However, some claim that, in general, this system of self-certification may be open to the risk of abuse."

This is not the first time issues have been raised about P3s in Scotland. The *Financial Times* quotes Malcolm Fraser, an architect who resigned from an advisory panel to the Scottish government in 2007 because of concerns

"Everyone realized that these buildings were shoddy."

about the use of private finance, as saying, "Everyone realized that these buildings were shoddy [and] financially they were expensive, they were unbelievably expensive." Theoretically, with a P3 the private contractor should pay for these failings. This may or may not work out. Edinburgh Council is preparing for a vigorous legal battle, according to the *Guardian*.

In Canada, Alberta was the first province to have a P3 school program. Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall says he intends to implement the school P3 program there as well. (*Editor's note:* In its Speech from the Throne in May, the Wall government announced it will "continue to move forward on many other important infrastructure projects underway throughout the province—schools, hospitals, long-term care facilities, the Regina Bypass—using both traditional funding models and public-private partnerships or P3s to ensure Saskatchewan residents receive the best possible value for their tax dollars.")

It is interesting that in B.C., perhaps Canada's biggest P3 booster among the provinces, the government rejected a broad P3 school program. Some high schools have been built with the more limited design/build model, which is not recognized by everyone as a public-private partnership.

The U.K. was among the first countries in the world to invest heavily in public-private partnerships and the first to question the model. When the P3-friendly Labour government was replaced by a coalition, the new government took action to claw back some of the profits considered unreasonable. To date, in Canada none of the provinces have been willing to take a more critical look at the whole P3 program despite a growing number of provincial auditors raising questions.

Perhaps before we get serious, walls will need to begin falling.

KEITH REYNOLDS IS THE FORMER NATIONAL RESEARCH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES (CUPE) AND SITS ON THE CCPA'S MEMBERS' COUNCIL. HE HAS DONE POLICY WORK FOR ALL THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. HIS AREAS OF EXPERTISE INCLUDE PRIVATIZATION, P3S, AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND FINANCE. FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER @KREYNOLDS118

MOLLY MCCRACKEN

Manitoba after 17 years of NDP government



Manitobans, some too young to remember a different governing party, are waking up to the reality of a Progressive Conservative government. As they adjust, it provides an opportunity to reflect on how the outgoing NDP government changed the political and economic climate in Manitoba.

Manitoba had among the highest economic and population growth rates in the country over the past decade. In response to the Great Recession, former premier Greg Selinger introduced stimulus spending that buffered Manitoba against the economic downturn. These interventions contributed to a GDP growth rate of 2% in 2015 (compared to 1.2% for Canada overall), and one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada at 5.9% in May 2016 (it was 6.9% in Canada as a whole). The federal Liberals adopted a similar fiscal policy approach when they ran on a platform of economic stimulus in 2015.

In their time in office, the NDP lowered business, income and property taxes substantially. When these low-

ered taxes are combined with Crown-run utilities and public car insurance, and a lower cost of housing, Manitoba has one of the lowest costs of living in the country. But all of this good economic news was not enough to re-elect the NDP. On April 19, the Progressive Conservatives swept into power with 40 seats in the legislature (up from 17), the Liberals gained two seats (to now hold three) and the NDP dropped from 37 to 14 seats.

The PCs rode the sentiment of change brought on by the high-profile divisions in the NDP related to the way the PST was increased, not necessarily the tax itself. In response to the 2011 flood, lower federal transfer payments and crumbling infrastructure, the Selinger government increased the PST in 2013 on short notice. The backlash led to infighting in the NDP, which culminated in a leadership contest that Selinger narrowly won. The opposition capitalized on the spectacle to continuously attack the NDP and win the election.

The Manitoba NDP governed through 10 years of Conservative rule

in Ottawa, and despite federal offloading made substantial investments in health care and public and post-secondary education. Manitoba has the lowest child care costs outside of Quebec thanks to provincial subsidies. When the federal government pulled out of social housing, Manitoba went ahead and built 2,000 units.

Collective agreements for public sector unions often provided less than inflation-level increases under the NDP, but labour did have a voice at the legislature, and legislation on workers' rights was improved. Unlike what has occurred in other provinces, public sector pensions were shored up and protected.

The NDP invested in inner city renewal and community economic development, creating ladders to employment for those struggling to get a toehold. The government introduced a shelter benefit called Rent Assist, which puts \$40 million more dollars in the hands of low-income renters. CCPA-Manitoba had a strong part in the research that made the case for these housing and income support programs.

But the NDP's social-democratic mandate was never completely ful-

Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister (right) and former Ontario premier Mike Harris at the 2014 Manning Centre conference.

PHOTO BY MARK BLEVIS



filled. Substantial tax cuts made earlier in their term meant Manitoba was less prepared for natural and economic setbacks, and left less money to cope with critical issues like poverty. Rent Assist was implemented too late in the government's mandate to bring down high poverty rates in time for the 2016 election.

The annual child poverty report card dogged the NDP. Compared to the national average, Manitoba does not fare well when using the Low-Income Measure. Manitoba's poverty rates are partially related to our lower-than-average income levels overall and the province is home to a high proportion of Indigenous people (16.7% compared to the Canadian average of 3.4%). Portions of Manitoba's Indigenous community struggle with the intergenerational cycle of poverty caused by colonization. Child poverty is still high and Indigenous and on-reserve poverty unacceptably so, as David Macdonald and Daniel Wilson expose in their new CCPA report, *Shameful Neglect*. The province could have done more, but was also left to pick up responsibilities the Harper government offloaded, including federal neglect of First Nation communities.

New Progressive Conservative Premier Brian Pallister aims to make Manitoba "most improved," which will be difficult in a province with an economy as diversified as the flat prairie landscape on which it sits. Pallister has come out with policies that act against unions. He is inheriting a strong economy and the enriched PST, which he's promised to bring back down to 7% by 2020. Manitoba certainly won't be "most improved" if the government implements the poverty reduction strategy the PCs advertised during the election campaign.

Pallister rode a wave of change, muted his party's ideological message and avoided making many specific promises related to social policy. He has committed to prioritizing fiscal policy goals, which will now reign supreme in Manitoba for the next four years. Progressives not accustomed to resistance will need to hone those skills again.

MOLLY MCCracken is Director of CCPA—Manitoba. Follow her on Twitter @MMMollyMCC.

KAREN PALMER

U.S. docs want Canadian-style medicare



In a dramatic show of physician support for deep health care reform in the U.S., more than 2,200 physician leaders have signed a "Physician's Proposal" calling for sweeping change. The proposal, published May 5, 2016 in the *American Journal of Public Health*, calls for the creation of a publicly financed, single-payer, national health program to cover all Americans for all medically necessary care.

If that sounds familiar, it should. These American doctors are calling for Canadian-style medicare. They want a decisive break from the expensive and inefficient private insurance industry at the heart of the U.S. health care system. How ironic that at the same time U.S. physicians are calling for a single-payer health system like ours, Canada is in the midst of a legal battle threatening to pave the way for a multi-payer system resembling what has failed Americans.

What's at stake? A trial about to begin in British Columbia threatens to make the Canada Health Act unenforceable.

The Canada Health Act is federal legislation that guides our health care system. It strongly discourages private payment for medically necessary hospital and physician services covered under our publicly funded medicare plans. This includes out-of-pocket payments in the form of extra billing or other user charges. Legisla-

tion in most provinces further prohibits private insurance that duplicates what is already covered under provincial plans.

If patients are billed for medically necessary hospital and physician care, the federal government is mandated to withhold an equivalent amount from federal cash transfers to provinces or territories violating the act. At least that's what supposed to happen. Unfortunately, the last decade saw a proliferation of extra billing in several provinces, and few instances of government clawing back fiscal transfers. Perhaps things will change. Health Minister Jane Philpott recently said the government will "absolutely uphold the Canada Health Act."

In B.C.'s upcoming trial, the plaintiffs—including two for-profit investor-owned facilities, Cambie Surgery Centre and the Specialist Referral Clinic—are attempting to have the court strike down limits on private payment. They support the creation of a constitutionally protected right for physicians to bill patients, either out-of-pocket or through private insurance, for medically necessary care, while also billing the public plan.

In other words, the plaintiffs want to undo our elegantly simple single-payer system for hospital and physician care, creating instead a multi-payer system like in the U.S. If their constitutional challenge is successful, the door will swing wide open in B.C.—and across Canada—for insurers to sell what will amount to "private queue-jumping insurance" for those who can afford it, potentially harming the rest of us who can't. The outcome of this trial could be that those who can pay for care would jump the queue, drawing doctors and other resources out of the public system. Those who can't pay would likely wait longer. Rather than a solution for wait times, private payment in the Canadian context would make them worse.

Global evidence shows that private insurance does not reduce public system wait times.

Global evidence shows that private insurance does not reduce public system wait times. The Achilles heel of health care in several European countries, such as Sweden, has been long waiting times for diagnosis and treatment in several areas despite some private insurance. After Australia introduced private insurance to save the government money, those with private insurance have faster access to elective surgery than those without it. Divisions in equitable access to care are one of the biggest challenges now facing countries that have adopted multi-payer systems.

Multi-payer systems are administratively complex and expensive, explaining why the U.S. health insurance industry spends about 18% of its health care dollars on billing and insurance-related administration for its many private plans, compared to just 2% in Canada for our streamlined single-payer insurance plans. Hospital administrative costs are lowest in Canada and Scotland, both single-payer systems, and highest in the U.S., the Netherlands and the U.K., all multi-payer systems.

Abundant evidence shows private insurance is at the root of what ails the U.S. system. Dr. Marcia Angell, co-author of the “Physicians’ Proposal” and former editor-in-chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, sums it up: “We can no longer afford to waste the vast resources we do on the administrative costs, executive salaries, and profiteering of the private insurance system.” A Canadian-style single-payer financing system would save the U.S. about \$500 billion annually.

Meanwhile in Canada, abandoning our single-payer health care system for a U.S.-style multi-payer system would be the worst possible outcome. Let’s hope the evidence convinces the judge. The trial begins in September.

KAREN PALMER IS AN ADVISOR WITH EVIDENCENETWORK.CA, A HEALTH POLICY ANALYST, A RESEARCH ASSOCIATE AT THE CCPA-BC, AND AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR IN THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES AT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY. THIS PIECE FIRST APPEARED IN THE TORONTO STAR.

CHRISTINE SAULNIER

The “Fight for \$15” in Nova Scotia



In May, the Nova Scotia NDP introduced a private member’s bill that would have seen the provincial minimum wage increased to \$15 per hour for all workers by the year 2019. The bill was dismissed by the current government because of concerns about possible inflationary pressures, and the belief that raising the personal allowance (basic personal income tax exemption) is a more effective way to help those with low incomes. Though the bill never made it to a vote before the legislative session was called to a close, it’s worth unpacking the government’s logic for when the next opportunity for reform presents itself.

For the working poor, earning an additional \$5 per hour—or \$200 per week, after taxes and deductions, for those working full time—would definitely help make ends meet, and it is well past time these workers saw a real pay hike. At \$10.70 per hour, today’s minimum wage carries the same purchasing power it did nearly four decades ago. A package of goods that would have cost \$20 in 1977 now costs \$78 (adjusted for inflation), and it takes just as much time (9.1 hours) working for minimum wage to buy that package today as it did then. Though Canadian GDP per capita has roughly doubled in this time, minimum-wage workers are absolutely no better off today than they were in the 1970s.

While about 6% of workers earn the minimum wage in Nova Scotia, almost 35% of workers (just over 130,000 people) earn less than \$15 an hour, according to Statistics Canada’s 2014 Labour Force Survey. Bumping the minimum wage to \$15 per hour would therefore help a lot of people, with a slightly bigger gain for women, who make up 60% of low-wage workers in the province. Would a higher personal income tax exemption have the same effect? Nowhere close.

The taxation study (Brotten Report) commissioned by the Nova Scotia gov-

ernment recommends raising the personal allowance to \$11,000 from the current \$8,481. This relatively small increase in tax-exempt earnings would reduce government revenues by \$112 million annually while offering a miniscule \$43 rebate for those with incomes up to \$10,000, \$158 for those earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000, and a maximum of \$200 for everyone above that.

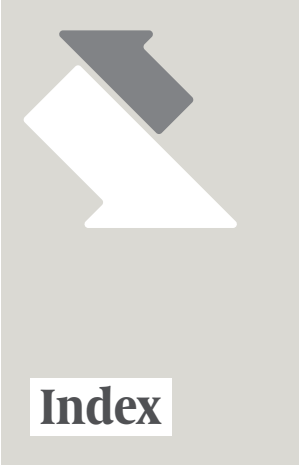
In other words, where a \$15 minimum wage would offer full-time minimum-wage workers an \$8,000+ raise (before taxes and deductions), the Nova Scotia government believes these workers would be better off with an extra \$200 at tax time.

Tax policy could be made more progressive in the province. No doubt about that. But let’s not let it deflect the discussion away from more effective solutions to poverty, including the \$15 minimum wage. Even if the government insists it will not go there, it would be more cost effective for Nova Scotia to keep the personal allowance where it is and to use the \$112 million on social programs instead: pharmacare, child care and affordable housing are all much more valuable to the working poor (and everyone for that matter) than a tiny tax break.

Let’s also not gloss over the complexity of the economy and the ability of businesses big and small to make smart choices about how much to pay their workers. As one small business owner in Halifax told *Metro News* recently, “starving your staff with the backing of your government doesn’t seem like the right answer.”

Raising the minimum wage would be a win-win-win—for the province, our businesses and workers. A year after Seattle chose to increase its minimum wage to \$15 per hour, the effect on prices and jobs has been minimal. There’s no reason it would be any different in Nova Scotia.

CHRISTINE SAULNIER IS DIRECTOR OF THE CCPA-NOVA SCOTIA. FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER @CMYSAUL.



Index

Distributional impact of federal education funding

Compiled by Erika Shaker

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's (PBO) May 5 report on federal post-secondary education spending is a treasure trove of information about funding trends, tuition fees, savings schemes and tax credits going back to 2004–05 and projecting forward to 2020. It is also vindication for those who have been pointing out for some time that the costs of higher education are a barrier for low-income students, that Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs) disproportionately benefit the wealthy, that most of the money allocated through these savings schemes is not going where it's needed, that debt loads are increasing and that tax credits are no solution.

The PBO report followed hot on the heels of an internal evaluation of the Canada Education Savings Program that also underscored how the public grant portion of education savings accounts was heavily skewed toward the wealthy. Incidentally, the same trends were noted in 2002 and 2008 by UBC economist Kevin Milligan, and have been thoroughly discussed by organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Students and the CCPA. More recently, the 2016 Alternative Federal Budget provides a plan for eliminating tuition fees by increasing and refocusing our currently inefficient federal funding mechanisms.

Let's break down the PBO report by the numbers.

\$12.3 billion

Total federal contribution to post-secondary education in 2013–14 (down from a high of \$12.8 billion in 2010–11).

\$917 million

Total federal contribution to Indigenous post-secondary education, student employment programs and merit-based grants in 2013–14 (down from \$1 billion in 2010–11).

\$3.3 billion

Total federal funding for post-secondary research in 2013–14 (down from a high of \$3.8 billion in 2010–11 as part of stimulus spending).

21.4%

Participation rate of Canadians aged 15–29 in post-secondary programs in 2013–14 (up from 18.9% in 2004–05).

2%

Average annual post-secondary enrolment growth rate from 2004–05 to 2013–14.

60%

Proportion of post-secondary students from higher-income families (from the two highest after-tax or disposable income quintiles).

1.7%

Average by which tuition fees increased each year above the rate of inflation from 2004–05 to 2013–14.

498,000

Number of students participating in the Canadian Student Loan Program in 2013–14 (up from 340,000 in 2004–05).

\$2.7 billion

Total amount in loans issued in 2013–14 (up from \$1.6 billion in 2004–05).

39%

Student loan uptake rate in 2013–14 (up from 34.3% in 2010–11).

35.7%

Proportion of students whose needs were at or in excess of amounts they could borrow in 2013–14 (up from 29% in 2010–11).

48.9%

Estimated proportion of students whose needs will be at or exceed the loan limit by 2020–21.

34%

Percentage by which families in the highest net worth quintile were more likely to have an RESP than those in lowest net worth quintile in 2012.

\$26,380

Average amount more that the richest families have in their RESP compared to the poorest.

37.7%

Proportion of all tax credits received by the top 20% of families (ranked by after-tax income in 2015).

17.2%

Proportion received by the lowest 20% of families (based on after-tax family income over the same period).

6

Estimated number of months between tuition fee due dates (late summer) and when a tax filer can reasonably expect to receive a tax refund (spring of the following year) for tuition tax credits.

\$1.4 billion

Total estimated value of the tuition tax credit in 2020, 39% of which will be allocated to the top 20% of families.

28%

Increase in the average amount of student debt held by unattached individuals (from 1999 to 2012).

\$22,276

Average student debt at graduation in 2013.



New from the CCPA

Keeping our climate commitments

Under the Paris Agreement, Canada pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. A new CCPA report by **David Hughes, *Can Canada Expand Oil and Gas Production, Build Pipelines, and Keep Its Climate Change Commitments?***, assesses by how much Canada's non-oil and gas sectors would need to reduce emissions to compensate for several energy expansion scenarios. It finds Canada cannot meet its global climate commitments while at the same time ramping up oil and gas extraction and building new export pipelines. This is the first study released as part of the **Corporate Mapping Project (CMP)**, a research and public engagement initiative investigating the power of the fossil fuel industry in Western Canada. The CMP is jointly led by the **University of Victoria**, the CCPA and the **Parkland Institute**.

Indigenous child poverty

Shameful Neglect: Indigenous Child Poverty in Canada,

by **David Macdonald** and **Daniel Wilson**, is a groundbreaking study that calculates child poverty rates in Canada, including the rates on reserves and in territories—something never before examined. The study identifies three tiers of poverty for children in Canada, with the worst levels experienced by status First Nation children (51%, rising to 60% for children on reserve). The second tier encompasses other Indigenous children and disadvantaged groups (ranging from 22%–32%), and the third tier consists of children who are non-Indigenous, non-racialized and non-immigrant, where the rate of 13% is similar to the OECD average.

Fixing Vancouver's living wage, housing market

Metro Vancouver's living wage was first calculated in 2008 by the CCPA, **First Call (B.C. Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition)** and **Victoria's Community Social Planning Council**, and it has been updated every year since to adjust for government taxes and transfers. In ***Working for a Living Wage: Making Paid Work Meet Basic Family Needs in Metro Vancouver***, **Iglia Ivanova** and **Seth Klein** of the CCPA-BC calculated the 2016 living wage to be \$20.64 an hour. This is the amount a family of four with two parents working full time would need to pay for necessities, support the healthy development of their children, escape financial stress and participate in the social, civic and cultural

lives of their communities. The housing market in Metro Vancouver is an important contributor to the region's high living wage. According to CCPA-BC economist **Marc Lee**, in his report ***Getting Serious About Affordable Housing: Towards a Plan for Metro Vancouver***, the government should be pursuing a more ambitious planning strategy that includes public re-investment in social and co-op housing, putting the brakes on absentee ownership, and progressive property taxation options.

Ontario's social assistance poverty gap

From the CCPA-Ontario, **Kaylie Tiessen** drills down on one key but complex policy file that is essential to the province meeting its poverty reduction targets and improving income security: social assistance. Her new report, ***Ontario's Social Assistance Poverty Gap***, finds that the poverty gap for single individuals who qualify for Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program has increased by almost 200% since 1993, and people receiving benefits from Ontario's social assistance programs are living in a greater depth of poverty now than a generation ago.

Social enterprises in Manitoba

Over the past decade, a strong network of social enterprises has grown in Manitoba to help individuals develop

the employment and life skills they need to enter and participate in the paid workforce. In ***Creating Pride Through Decent Work: Social Enterprises in Manitoba***, **Josh Brandon** and **Molly McCracken** of the CCPA-Manitoba set out to better understand the impact of social enterprise training and employment programs on the lives of participants. They find that social enterprises provide trainees and employees with needed skills in a holistic fashion, including life skills, budgeting, accessing identification and driver's licensing, workplace health and safety knowledge, and construction and employment search skills.

Gender inequality in Newfoundland and Labrador

In her new analysis for the CCPA-Nova Scotia, ***Through a Gender Lens: The 2016–17 Newfoundland and Labrador Budget's Impacts on Women***, **Cyndi Brannen** finds that this year's provincial budget will worsen gender inequalities by decreasing incomes among the most vulnerable women, laying off public sector workers and cutting education spending. The author makes several recommendations for improving the consultation process to account for gender impacts in upcoming provincial budgets.

All TPP, all the time!

The CCPA has released two more reports in its series on the TPP, **What's the Big Deal? Unpacking the Trans-Pacific Partnership**. The first, **The Impact of TPP Tariff Removal on Canadian Trade**, by **John Jacobs**, finds that the TPP would likely worsen Canada's growing trade deficit with the Asia-Pacific region, impair our ability to boost employment and activity in manufacturing and high-tech sectors, and impede efforts to diversify the Canadian economy beyond its current reliance on resource extraction and primary goods exports.

In the second report, **Foreign Investor Protections in the Trans-Pacific Partnership**, **Gus Van Harten** examines the special privileges given to foreign investors by the TPP, including the right to compensation where government policy is found to interfere with an investor's private interests.

Van Harten finds the expanded rights granted to foreign investors in the TPP carry major risks for citizens and taxpayers in signing countries. Watch out for reports in July on how the TPP affects labour, Canada's auto sector, copyright and Internet governance, and Canada Post.

The CCPA was invited to present on trade issues to the Senate and House of Commons in the past two months. On May 19, *CCPA Monitor* editor **Stuart Trew** appeared as a witness before the Senate foreign affairs committee to discuss the repercussions of Canada's recent trade agreements (TPP and CETA) for drug costs and public interest regulation. And on June 16, Scott Sinclair, director of the centre's Trade and Investment Research Project, presented on the TPP to the House of Commons trade committee as part of the government's nationwide

consultation on whether or not Canada should ratify the 12-country trade pact.

Same nerds, new look

The CCPA-BC recently unveiled its redesigned blog, **PolicyNote.ca**. The blog was first launched in the lead-up to the 2009 B.C. election. Between now and the next provincial election in 2017, you'll find regular posts on key issues facing the province, with a focus on climate change, fracking and LNG, poverty and inequality, the affordability crisis in housing and child care, and education.

Ed Finn makes a guest appearance on CCPA's national blog

Ed Finn, the 90-year-old former editor of the *Monitor*, came out of retirement to write a three-part essay on our national

blog that examines the ideology of neoliberalism and the enormous harm its implementation imposes on people and the planet. "Having recently become a nonagenarian, I spend a lot of time these days remembering the past, as most people in their 90s tend to do. But, more and more, I also think about the future I won't be around to see, and with mounting concern about the kind of world my grandchildren will be living in," starts Ed in the first of his three posts. Read Ed's essay, and much more, at www.behindthenumbers.ca.

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



Leave a legacy that reflects your lifelong convictions.

A legacy gift is a gift with lasting meaning. It's a way to share your passion for social, economic and environmental justice, and shape the lives of those who come after you.

Leaving a legacy gift is one of the most valuable ways to help the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives press for change.

If you'd like to learn more, our Development Officer Katie Loftus would be happy to assist you with your gift planning. Katie can be reached at 613-563-1341 ext. 318 or at katie@policyalternatives.ca.

Ask the CGPA

DAVID MACDONALD, SENIOR ECONOMIST

Q CAN THE BANK OF CANADA PROVIDE INTEREST-FREE LOANS?

A As *Monitor* readers may be aware, the Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform (COMER) is sponsoring a court case that argues the Bank of Canada should be providing interest-free loans to provincial and municipal governments. This case has had some major wins, but not being a lawyer I can't evaluate it from a legal perspective. What I can do is evaluate the economic proposal at the heart of the case.

First of all, governments don't take out loans like households do (e.g., through a mortgage or a line of credit). Rather, they raise money by selling bonds. Government debt is the sum of outstanding bonds that will have to be paid back when they come due. Bonds, like mortgages, have an interest rate. However, unlike mortgages, you don't save on interest payments by paying off bonds early—even if a lower interest rate is available.

The Bank of Canada already buys a portion of all federal government bonds (or debt). As of February 2016, the Bank of Canada held 14% of all federal bonds, but the amount fluctuates. In comparison, the chartered (private) banks held 10% of federal bonds at the end of 2015; the vast majority of bonds are held by the public through pension

plans, mutual funds, exchange traded funds (ETFs) and the like.

Through an interesting transaction the federal government basically pays no interest on the bonds held by the Bank of Canada. In 2015, since the bank held \$94-billion worth of federal debt, the government paid \$1.8 billion in interest. Since the Bank of Canada has expenses as well (for printing currency, paying staff, maintaining buildings, etc.), which totaled \$0.5 billion in 2015, at year's end the bank made a profit of \$1.2 billion—the sum of income minus expenses. That money was dutifully returned to the bank's owner, i.e., the federal government. In other words, the government is already benefiting from near-zero-interest loans from the Bank of Canada since it gets most of its debt payments back as profit.

Looking over the historical stats, the Bank of Canada has never held large amounts of provincial or municipal bonds, certainly not to maturity. While from an economic perspective there is nothing stopping the bank from buying provincial and municipal debt, there are five consequences to consider in such a policy, some positive and some negative.

► **It would reduce provincial and municipal interest rates:** Other levels of government pay higher interest rates

to borrow money than the feds. For example, the feds can borrow at 0.7% annually for five years where Ontario's rate is 1.4%; the City of Waterloo would pay 2.7% interest to borrow for the same term. Now, if the Bank of Canada started buying a portion of new provincial or municipal bonds, these interest rates would go down as you introduce a new big player. The more competition there is among bond buyers the lower the interest rate on the bond.

► **Loans could be effectively interest free:** The federal government could refund provincial or municipal bond payments made to the Bank of Canada (net of bank expenses) to the governments who paid them, basically along the lines of what the federal government does for itself. This would make those loans close to interest free, like they are for the federal government.

► **It wouldn't cause inflation:** A debate in the U.S. continues to question the logic of quantitative easing (QE) based on fears of causing hyper-inflation. A large part of the policy involves the Federal Reserve (their central bank) buying federal government bonds. What's amusing about this debate is that our Bank of Canada has been buying federal government bonds nearly every year since its public inception in 1938, with no tangible impact on inflation. If it were to start buying provincial or municipal bonds there would be similarly little to no impact on inflation.

► **It won't necessarily lead to more or better public spending:** Sometimes lowering the interest rate on debt is seen as the cure-all solution to improving health care, social services or building infrastructure. While lower interest payments can certainly save governments money (and they have been very low since 2008), that extra money can just as easily be spent on reducing taxes as improving health care. Alternately, taking out cheap debt to build productive infrastructure may make great economic sense, but that doesn't matter if governments are not willing to run larger deficits to do so. The federal government spends less today (as a share of the economy) than at any point since 1938 *despite* its access to the Bank of

Canada. On the other hand, municipalities that don't have this privilege are spending more than they ever have on things like infrastructure. In summary, just having access to the Bank of Canada doesn't necessarily mean you'll have higher program spending.

► **It will cost the federal government money:** This is perhaps the most critical and overlooked consequence of using the Bank of Canada to provide low-interest loans to other levels of government. Besides buying federal government debt, the bank plays another critical role in that it sets the so-called overnight rate on which most other interest rates, mortgage rates, prime rates and business rates are based. In fact, most of the daily work of bank staff involves making sure the actual rate is bang on their target overnight rate.

The Canadian banking system is structured in such a way that all transactions cancel out. For instance, if I bank at TD Canada Trust and you bank at Scotiabank, and I send you an e-transfer for \$100, at the end of the day TD is in a negative position for \$100 and Scotiabank is in positive position for the same amount: the positions added together net to zero. Now, the banks don't necessarily transfer that \$100 to each other at day's end, but often lend the money instead. So, in our case, imagine Scotiabank lends \$100 back to TD. The interest rate on that loan is what the Bank of Canada wants to match its overnight rate (presently 0.5%). The way it does this is by saying that any commercial bank can deposit money with it and make interest of 0.25% less than the overnight rate. The Bank of Canada also says that anyone can loan money from it at 0.25% more than the overnight rate.

So TD has a choice: it can get a loan from the Bank of Canada or from Scotiabank. Scotiabank has the inverse choice: it can deposit its \$100 at the Bank of Canada or it can make a loan to TD. TD's loan from the Bank of Canada would cost it 0.75% interest and Scotiabank's deposit at the Bank of Canada would earn it 0.25%. Alternatively, the two private banks can do the deal directly with each other and split the difference at 0.5%. Private banks

The Bank of Canada has never held large amounts of provincial or municipal bonds, certainly not to maturity.

almost always take this last choice, which is exactly what the Bank of Canada wants, since it is in line with its target overnight rate.

The system works as long as it nets to zero. But once governments and the Bank of Canada move money into or out of the banking system things get out of whack. By moving money into the private banking system (by buying, say, \$100 worth of bonds from someone at Scotiabank), the Bank of Canada creates an advantage for TD over Scotiabank, as Scotiabank has more cash to lend than TD needs. The 0.5% interest rate can be bid down to 0.4% in our example above, since TD knows that Scotiabank will otherwise get only 0.25% at the Bank of Canada. Due to the surplus of cash, the Bank of Canada doesn't hit its 0.5% target and the rate falls to 0.4%.

While this may sound dire, the Bank of Canada and governments put in and take out money from the banking system all the time as they pay public service salaries or collect taxes. But they offset these transactions by moving the deposits of the federal government between the commercial banks and the Bank of Canada. In the case above, the federal government would withdraw \$100 from its Scotiabank account and move it to the Bank of Canada, thus resetting the system to zero and maintaining the overnight rate.

The feds make money on their deposits at the commercial banks, just

like you and I. In 2015, the feds likely made about 0.6% interest on the \$23 billion they held in their commercial accounts. The feds technically also make interest on their deposits at the Bank of Canada, but that interest is paid out of bank profits that the feds would otherwise make. In effect, the feds don't make anything on their deposits at the Bank of Canada.

If the Bank of Canada bought more provincial or municipal bonds, the feds would have to transfer more of their money from the commercial banks (where they make interest) to the Bank of Canada (where they don't). This wouldn't be the end of the world: even if the federal government lost all its interest by shifting deposits to the Bank of Canada, it would still get that \$1.2 billion in profit from our central bank at the end of the year. However, there is a problem of scale here.

The provinces and municipalities combined have over \$800 billion in bonds while the federal government has over \$700 billion. But the feds only have about \$23 billion in deposits at the commercial banks. Once they've shifted that across to the Bank of Canada, the positive balances would build up in the private banking system, which would deposit the surplus cash at the Bank of Canada, which would have to pay interest on those deposits. Those interest payments would come out of the Bank of Canada's profit, and at a certain point the bank would start losing money as interest payments on deposits exceeded what it makes from federal bonds. As the bank's owner, the federal government would have to pay for that loss either as a direct transfer or as additional debt.

I have no idea where that point is, but it is certainly far less than 100% of provincial and municipal debt. On the other hand, the Bank of Canada could definitely buy a portion of that debt, rebate the interest and still make money. This would be a good deal for the provinces and municipalities, but it would cost the federal government money. **M**

Do you have any burning questions for the CCPA? Send them to us at monitor@policyalternatives and we'll find the right expert for the job.

Murray MacAdam

Hunger is no game

“**N**O MORE FOOD TODAY.” Four simple words. Four words to chill your heart.

I couldn't imagine what it's like to not have enough food. My fridge bursts with abundance, and sometimes overabundance in the form of half-rotten vegetables I end up tossing into the compost on cleaning day. So when I arrive at Peterborough's Lighthouse community centre on Tuesday mornings, to help serve a noonday meal to 100 or so people, I feel like I'm crossing a frontier. I enter a world where stretching a meagre income to meet your needs is no mean feat, and for some would be an impossible challenge without the help of programs like this.

The Lighthouse isn't just a free meal program for our poor, hungry neighbours. It's a gathering place, where joy can break through the grim reality of hunger. Staff, volunteers and community members often kid around with each other. Small groups huddle close to a card game or chat on its edges. People are getting their social needs fed here, not just their bellies.

Yet the bottom line remains: this is a survival program in an incredibly wealthy society. And that always gnaws at me while I'm chopping vegetables or dishing out salad to the people shuffling through the serving line.

Our country is full of such survival programs. The coalition Food Banks Canada says that over 850,000 people turned to a food bank to ward off hunger in March 2015, 26% more than in 2008, more than one-third of them children. One-sixth of food bank clients have jobs but don't earn enough to pay rent, buy food and meet other needs.

With rising food prices—they're expected to outpace inflation for the fourth year in a row—hunger threatens to afflict even more people. Already one Peterborough child in nine lives in a family without enough food.

Overall, I feel good about doing my bit to feed the need for food in Peterborough. I feel good that on cold days we can offer a hot cooked meal in a humane setting. I enjoy the ribbing our team of volunteers from local churches gives each other as we chop, stir, bake and assemble the day's meal.

And yet never do I get through my shift without tearing up at some point. It could be the sight of anxious-looking men, women and youth waiting in line for lunch half-an-hour ahead of schedule. I ask myself, "If these people are this worried about being fed first, when did they last eat?" It could be glimpsing the creased, careworn face of someone looking so beaten down and defeated by life, or that

pleading voice urging me to heap his plate high because "I'm really hungry."

One day I was sure I saw Rebecca, the lawyer who handled the legal work on our home purchase, walk into the Lighthouse. On closer inspection it wasn't her, and I sighed relief. Yet an hour later there was Rebecca in line for food. She'd had some bad breaks recently, she told me.

Poverty is like a cancer that limits life in so many ways. Often Lighthouse guests walk right by me in the food line. "Too bad so many people don't like salad," I remarked to Frances, another volunteer. She replied, "Some folks here have no teeth or only a few teeth. So it's hard to chew little bits of food."

Wearing another hat, I recently helped write a brief for an anti-poverty coalition that was submitted to the Ontario government as part of its 2016 budget process. The coalition urged the government to provide free public dental care for all low-income adults (right now only low-income children receive this service). When a trip to the dentist costs too much it doesn't happen, and your teeth pay the price. The budget didn't provide the dental care that we and others had called for. It also included a paltry 1.5% increase in social assistance rates (3% for single people on Ontario Works), well below the pace of rising food costs.

Thanks to the kindness of food stores, volunteers, the Canadian Mental Health Association, a local church and other community partners, the Lighthouse is able to brighten up the lives of people whose lives are hard enough as it is. Only rarely do we need to post our sign, "No More Food Today." But when we do, the looks on people's faces can be gut-wrenching.

When all is said and done, the Lighthouse is a stopgap measure, a bandage. It's a program that shouldn't have to exist, just as hundreds of similar programs all over the country should not exist. Other countries, such as Denmark and Sweden, have far lower poverty rates than Canada.

We can mobilize tens of thousands of volunteers, faith groups, settlement agencies and government resources on a massive scale to welcome to Canada newcomers fleeing war and persecution. What a wonderful display of compassion and commitment. Imagine what a similar mobilization could do to benefit people who can't buy their own food.

What's holding us back? **M**

MURRAY MACADAM VOLUNTEERS AT THE LIGHTHOUSE IN PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO, AND WITH THE ANTI-POVERTY ADVOCACY COALITION ISARC. THE NAMES ABOVE WERE CHANGED TO PROTECT PRIVACY.



The good news page

Compiled by
Elaine Hughes

Divestment campaigns gain steam

In April, the University of Ottawa became the first Canadian university to divest from fossil fuels and move that money into clean energy, ahead of pending decisions on whether to do the same at Dalhousie, Queen's, UBC, the University of Toronto, and McGill. Geoff Carter, an organizer with Fossil Free uOttawa, said the university "has made a smart financial and ethical decision that will make a real difference in the fight against climate change." Around the same time, Norway's sovereign wealth fund began divesting from coal in line with a 2015 decision to pull funding out of mining or energy groups that derive more than 30% of their sales or activities from the dirty fuel. The world's largest fund has excluded 52 coal-related companies from the U.S., China, India, Japan and several European countries. "Further exclusions will follow in 2016," claimed Norway's central bank, which manages the fund. On the flipside of divestment, the Ontario government announced

a new Climate Change Action Plan in June that will inject \$7 billion over four years into 80 different policies—from retrofitting buildings to incentives for electric vehicles to helping transition the energy grid away from all carbon—with the objective of lowering the province's carbon footprint by 2020. "It's a transformation that will forever change how we live, work, play and move," said the province.

/ rabble.ca / Agence France-Press / The Globe and Mail



Waving hello to clean energy

Undersea turbine arrays present significant advantages: the tides are predictable, the arrays are out of sight, they can produce four times more electricity than a wind turbine, the danger to birds is totally eliminated, and because the blades turn very slowly the damage to fish and marine animals is low. Canada is one of several coastal countries—including the U.K., China, South Korea, the U.S. and Australia—that are eyeballing the technology, with special interest in projects in the Bay of Fundy, with its record-setting tides. Two gigantic turbines will soon be submerged into a waiting "berth" at the Fundy Ocean Research Centre for Energy (FORCE) to test large-scale in-stream tidal

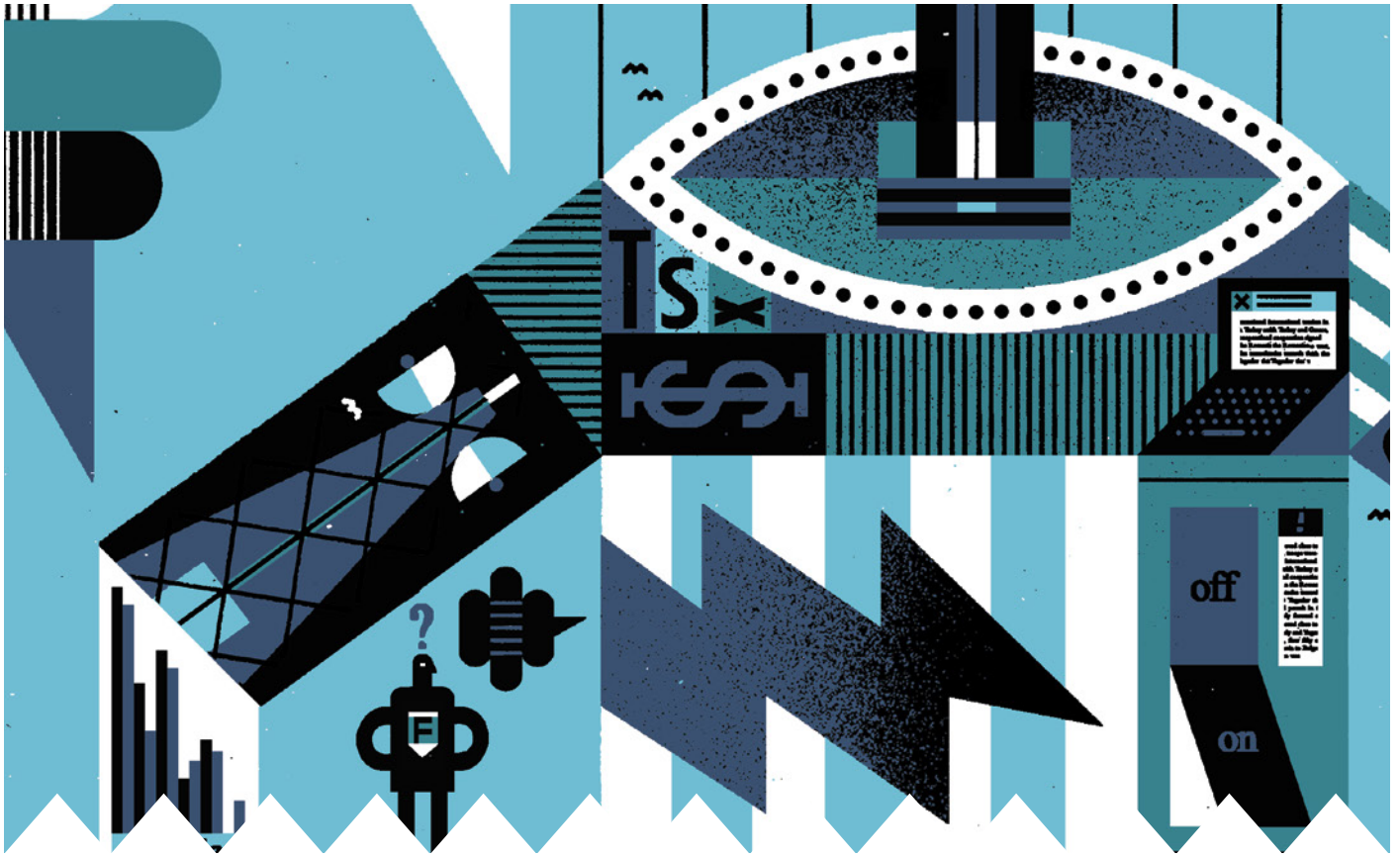
turbines, connect them to the power grid and bring emissions-free electricity to Nova Scotia. As further incentive for tidal development (and the jobs that come with it), the provincial government will pay a feed-in tariff for power generated by tidal turbines. According to a government source, FORCE will hire experts to measure noise and monitor the impact of turbines on fish, lobster, marine mammals and sea birds. The project is part of a global shift to clean energy. An International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) report in May indicated that clean energy jobs rose by about 5% in 2015 (to 8.1 million). China accounted for 3.5 million of those jobs, Brazil had 918,000 workers in the sector and the U.S. recorded 769,000 clean energy jobs. Canada was in 11th place in the IRENA study, with about 36,400 renewable-related jobs, well behind India, Japan, Germany and France. Clean Energy Canada blamed the "patchwork" of provincial policies and years of underwhelming federal support to this point.

/ EcoWatch / The Globe and Mail

Ethical food evolution

The European Union will ban, as of September 30, 2016, the use of two endocrine-disrupting herbicides, Amitrole and Isoproturon, which have been linked to cancer, infertility and birth defects. Unfortunately, it has come to light that U.S. trade officials used the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

(TTIP) negotiations to pressure the European Commission into illegally delaying (until later this year) the publication of criteria for identifying other endocrine-disrupting chemicals, which could have led to the ban of up to 31 pesticides. In better news for oceans, major food chains McDonald's, Tesco, Young's Seafood and Iglo have joined Norwegian, Russian and European members of the fish industry to take action against trawling and the expansion of cod fishing in the previously frozen Northern Barents Sea area. The area is twice the size of France and home to polar bears, bowhead whales and Greenland sharks—all threatened by large-scale fishing. The Greenpeace ship *Arctic Sunrise* will be monitoring the self-imposed moratorium this summer. A recent study valued the 2015 demand for certified sustainable seafood at \$US11 billion (C\$14.14 billion), which is 35% higher than it was 10 years ago, representing growth 10 times faster than conventional seafood production over the same period. "By giving fishermen an economic incentive to protect the environment, these initiatives have the potential to help link sustainable livelihoods to sustainable production practices," said lead author Jason Potts, a senior associate at the International Institute for Sustainable Development. / Guardian U.K. / Greenpeace / IISD



CAN CANADA'S MEDIA BE FIXED?

Story by Marc Edge / Illustration by Raymond Biesinger



REMEMBER THE nasty shooting war that broke out during the last recession between Canada's TV networks and cable companies? The networks threatened to shut down money-losing stations and bombarded viewers with commercials braying "Local TV Matters." They claimed to be in dire financial straits and asked Ottawa to force the carriage companies (Rogers, Shaw, Bell, etc.), which were making lush profits despite the economic downturn, to pay them 50 cents per subscriber to rebroadcast over-the-air programs the cable and satellite providers had always carried for free. The carriage companies fired back by threatening to pass along any retransmission fees to their subscribers and running their own commercials with the slogan "Stop the TV Tax."

When federal hearings looked into the supposed financial plight of the networks, however, it turned out they, too, were still making healthy profits, just not as healthy as before, and not nearly as plump as the unregulated cablecos. They were just looking for a bit of wealth redistribution. In the end, the networks got the right to negotiate what they called "fee for carriage." But by then, in a dramatic reversal of fortune, the networks had all been, or were about to be, gobbled up by those very same carriage companies. The Rogers cable conglomerate bought the City network in 2007, Shaw bought Global Television out of bankruptcy in 2010, and Bell Canada, which enjoys a monopoly on satellite TV, reacquired a controlling interest in CTV later that year.

These were the death throes of convergence, the media experiment that visited the world at the turn of the millennium and found its greatest foothold in Canada, because ours was one of the few countries without limits on television and newspaper companies going into business together. (The U.S. wisely maintains a ban to this day.) The theory was that all media were converging into one digital medium, but it didn't happen and almost certainly won't. Global TV's former owner, Canwest Global Communications, collapsed under the weight of debt it took on buy-

ing the country's largest newspaper chain and other media properties. Its television and newspaper assets were sold off separately out of bankruptcy. Quebecor retreated back to a provincial media empire in 2014 when it sold Sun Media, the country's second-largest newspaper chain. So hare-brained was the partnership between newspapers and television that CTV and the *Globe and Mail* voluntarily dissolved their 10-year marriage in 2010, joining a worldwide de-convergence trend.

We are now dealing with the consequences of convergence and picking up the pieces of a media system that has been battered by technological change, regulatory neglect (as a 2006 Senate report termed it) and no small amount of ownership connivance. As a result, we now have levels of ownership concentration and vertical integration—carriage companies owning television networks—that are among the highest in the world. The same few media conglomerates also own most of Canada's radio stations, mobile phone companies and lucrative Internet service providers (ISPs). The country's largest newspaper chain is mostly owned by U.S. hedge funds, which won the company for a song by buying up distressed Canwest debt for pennies on the dollar. The Harper government turned a blind eye to that flagrant end run around Canada's foreign ownership limits, then presided over the Competition Bureau's rubber-stamping of Postmedia's 2014 purchase of Sun Media.

In other words, we have a decimated news media in Canada. Much of the content found in newspapers and online news media nowadays is not journalism at all but "sponsored" content (also known as "native" advertising) disguised as news. Postmedia now owns 15 of the 21 largest English-language newspapers in Canada, including eight of the nine in the three westernmost provinces. Much of their content is thinly disguised propaganda for one cause or another. In 2013, a front-page ad disguised as a news story in Quebecor's Vancouver commuter tabloid, *24 Hours*, enthusiastically declared Premier Christy Clark the "Comeback Kid" for

performing well in a televised election debate. Two weeks later, rather surprisingly given her ratings at the time, Clark and her Liberal party were re-elected. Mere days before the federal election last fall, Postmedia ordered its editors to endorse the Harper Conservatives and subjected the readers of several of its dailies to wraparound cover ads warning that voting Liberal would "cost" them. In the end, such naked partisanship may have worked against Harper's re-election. It has certainly worked against Postmedia's reputation, which may never recover.

The remaining chickens of Canada's lax media ownership laws came home to roost earlier this year when Postmedia announced it would merge the newsrooms of its duplicate dailies in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa (despite its corporate ancestor promising never to do so in Vancouver). That prompted parliamentary hearings to seek a solution to the country's crisis in local news coverage, which has been ravaged by mergers, layoffs and cutbacks by media companies that are again pleading poverty due to plunging ad revenues and heavy debt. Can the country's broken media system be fixed? An old saying about a horse and a barn would seem to apply here. But with a bit of foresight the evolving media ecosystem could perhaps be nursed back to some semblance of health.

The tragedy of media ownership reform in Canada is that untimely changes in government have thwarted its best opportunities. In 1981, the Royal Commission on Newspapers urged limits on chain ownership, but these died on the vine because the ruling Liberals were soon replaced in government by the Progressive Conservatives of Brian Mulroney. The new government ditched even the lone restriction on cross-media ownership that had been hastily enacted before the election per the commission's warning. It opened the floodgates for the convergence decade. Amid that policy disaster, a Senate committee began examining Canada's news media, issuing a report in 2006 that includ-

ed a scathing indictment of federal regulatory failure. It recommended limiting media concentration the way some countries do, by applying a local news “diversity” test in deciding whether to allow a change in ownership. Bad timing again doomed that initiative, as the Conservatives had been elected with a minority government earlier that year.

This time is different, or it could be. The government is not about to fall but still settling in. The Liberals were elected with a strong mandate to reverse course from Harper’s deregulating tendencies; they now have an opportunity to re-landscape Canada’s media. In a sign the new government may seize the moment, Vancouver MP Hedy Fry promptly convened heritage ministry hearings on local news. “Our government has a strong will to deal with this now,” she said in February. “The thing about politics is that the time comes one day when stuff is facing you so hard that you have to do something about it. That time has come.”

But the horse is still out of the barn. Can it be reined back in, or would measures to boost the country’s emerging digital news media show more foresight? Wise policy moves now might help return Canada’s news media to something more resembling the public service journalism idealized in democratic theory. For that to happen, however, higher levels of competition and ownership diversity will somehow have to be arranged. And for that to happen, we have to avoid or even redress past mistakes.

As the 2006 Senate report pointed out, much of the blame for Canada’s media mess can be laid at the feet of two federal regulatory agencies. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), which regulates broadcasting, has for decades administered a program of “public benefits” payments that allows the country’s few big media conglomerates to basically bribe their way to ever greater corpulence. While ironically recognizing the perils of ownership concentration, the CRTC has nonetheless allowed big players like Rogers and Bell to grow bigger as long as they agree to compensatory payments amounting to 10% of the purchase price of a licensed TV broadcaster or 6% in the case of radio.

In Bell’s \$2.3-billion purchase of CTV in 2000, for example, the company had to promise to spend \$230 million on worthwhile projects before the CRTC would sign off on the deal. These public benefits payments, also known as “tangible” benefits, usually go to funding Canadian content, but increasingly they have found their way into higher education. One result of the CTV takeover in 2000 was \$3.5 million in funding for a Canadian Media Research Consortium set up by several journalism schools. It promised critical research into Canada’s media but mostly delivered marketing studies—despite the CRTC’s prescription against using public benefits funding for such purposes.

Ryerson University has several endowed chairs named after corporations such as Bell and Rogers as a result of their takeover payments, including, ironically, a Maclean-Hunter Chair for Communications Ethics.

Both Western University and the University of British Columbia (UBC) are stained by fellowships named after Canwest Global Communications, which also no longer even exists. UBC’s graduate school of journalism is housed in the Sing Tao Building, named after the Hong Kong newspaper company that founded it. (The initial Sing Tao School of Journalism was rendered generic in 2001 when its endowing corporation defaulted on funding commitments.) Perhaps not coincidentally, academics seemed to fall over each other during CRTC hearings in 2001 to testify to the benefits that corporate convergence would bring Canadian journalism.

The Competition Bureau has arguably been even more derelict than the CRTC in its duty to guard against media monopolies. The 2006 Senate report on news media deemed the Competition Bureau a failure when it came to media industry mergers and takeovers because it considers only advertising revenues, not the information needs of Canadians. “The Competition Bureau’s operating procedures may be well suited to analyzing most markets for goods and services in Canada, but not the news media market,” it concluded.

The report proposed changes to the Competition Act to deal with media transactions differently, but Harper’s election doomed any chance of reform. A measure of his government’s negligence is that the Competition Bureau failed to even hold hearings into Postmedia’s 2014 purchase of Sun Media, investigating it in secret instead and refusing to release its market analysis. (Believe me, I’ve asked.) The regulator absurdly concluded that Postmedia’s owning both dai-

CONVERGENCE CHRONOLOGY

1844

Toronto Globe founded

1892

Toronto Star founded by printers striking the Toronto News

1896

Southam newspaper chain founded when Hamilton Spectator owner William Southam buys the Ottawa Citizen

1908

Southam expands into Western Canada with purchase of the Calgary Herald; adds the Edmonton Journal in 1912, the Winnipeg Tribune in 1920 and the Vancouver Province in 1922

1929

Aird commission on broadcasting recommends establishment of government radio network

1932

Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission begins service; changes name to Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1936; also serves as broadcasting regulator

1936

Toronto Globe merges with the Mail and Empire to form the Toronto Globe and Mail

1952

CBC Television begins broadcasting with stations in Toronto, Montreal and Quebec; service extended coast to coast in 1958

ly newspapers in Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa wouldn't harm consumers or even advertisers there because those newspapers didn't compete.

It is hard to resist the conclusion that both the Competition Bureau and the CRTC have fallen victim to the well-documented phenomenon of regulatory "capture," acting not in the public interest but instead in the interests of the corporations they regulate.

Canadian journalism was set on its course to banana republic status in large part by Conrad Black. He engineered a hostile takeover of the historic family-owned Southam newspaper chain in the mid-1990s before renouncing his citizenship in 2000 to take a seat in the U.K. House of Lords. (Thence deliciously to trial for fraud in Chicago and to prison for five years in Florida.)

By then head of the third largest press empire in the world, Black brought a level of political partisanship to Canadian news media not seen since the "party press" era of the 19th century. He abhorred the "soft liberal" journalism he felt marked much of Canada's news media and sought to imbue it instead with the hard-headed neoconservatism he pushed in his newspapers in the U.S., the U.K., and Israel. Black founded the *National Post* in 1998 with the expressed intent, emblazoned on its first front page, to "Unite the Right" of Canada's fractured conservatives parties.

On cue, much of the country's news media turned rightward. Soon neoconservative politics and neoliberal economic prescriptions were filling the pages of other once progressive Southam dailies. The sea change

was perhaps most noticeable from the outside. "Your media are not representative of your people, your values," Lawrence Martin reported a European diplomat telling him in a 2003 *Globe and Mail* column. It was headlined "It's not Canadians who've gone to the right, just their media."

Black passed the Southam dailies to even more meddlesome owners on his way out the door. The Asper family of Winnipeg pushed their own personal hobby horses, including constant criticism of the CBC, which they saw as unfair government-subsidized competition for their Global Television network, and unstinting support for Israel against the Palestinians. But the Aspers were even less subtle in their wielding of power than was Black, ordering "national" editorials written at company headquarters to be printed over the objections of many Southam journalists who valued their local independence.

Columnists who didn't conform to the Asper family line soon found themselves out of work. *Ottawa Citizen* publisher Russell Mills was fired in 2002 for running an editorial contrary to company policy in one of the defining acts of a bleak chapter in Canadian journalism history. It all came down in the crash of 2008–09 after Canwest became over-extended with billions in debt from all its acquisitions. Bankruptcy promised better ownership because, well, it couldn't get much worse, could it? Not so fast.

The recent collapse of the newspaper industries in the U.S. and Canada has seen a new type of owner emerge. Faceless and secretive hedge funds, "vulture" capitalists whose only fealty is to the bot-

tom line, began buying up the debt of foundering newspaper companies across North America in the hope of taking them over on the cheap when they emerged from bankruptcy. In Canada, print media are supposedly subject to a de facto foreign ownership limit in the form of a tax provision that requires 75% Canadian ownership for a company to be able write off advertising expenses.

That should have discouraged the hedge funds, but instead they found a loophole by taking most of their ownership in the former Southam newspapers as limited-voting shares. Calling themselves Postmedia, hedge funds led by New York-based GoldenTree Asset Management and Silver Point Capital thus owned an estimated 58% of the company, but they claimed that other voting shareholders, who were Canadian, actually controlled it. Their neatest trick, however, was trading in only part of the secured Canwest debt they held for its newspaper division, retaining enough that they would be first in line with a claim on the company in the event it went bankrupt again (which now looks likely).

The Harper government turned a blind eye to all of this financial engineering and then watched as Postmedia bought the Sun Media chain for \$315 million in 2014. As a result, the hedge funds are now bleeding dry not one but two Canadian newspaper chains due to the hefty interest rates (up to 12.5%) on the debt they hold.

The Internet was supposed to make all of this irrelevant. Old media were said to be not long for this world once online media took hold. There was only one small problem with

1958

Board of Broadcast Governors replaces CBC as broadcasting regulator; renamed Canadian Radio and Television Commission in 1968 and Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in 1976

1961

CTV network launched

1965

Toronto Globe and Mail bought by Winnipeg-based FP Publications

1970

Senate report on mass media recommends Press Ownership Review Board to slow press ownership concentration

1971

Toronto Sun tabloid founded after closure of *Toronto Telegram* broadsheet

1974

Global Television network launched; bought by Winnipeg-based CanWest Capital Corp., re-named CanWest Global Communications

1978

Sun Publishing founded, adds *Edmonton Sun*; adds *Calgary Sun* in 1980, *Ottawa Sun* in 1988; renamed Sun Media in 1996

that notion: except for giant platforms like Google and Facebook, online news media have found it hard to make money in the Darwinian world of the Internet. In stark contrast to newspapers and television, where the preferred business model is monopoly, the Internet allows anyone to post a website and sell ads on it. Over-supply thus drives down online advertising rates to a fraction of what legacy media still command. Ironically, newspapers and television stations continue to post enviable profit margins, albeit on greatly reduced revenues. Their profits, however, are enabled only by constantly cutting costs, mostly to original journalism.

By contrast, the few digital startups that have emerged in Canada have had to seek funding beyond advertising. Online subscriptions have shown promise at some online publications such as *allNovaScotia* in Halifax, which started in 2004 and is said to be profitable with 10,000 subscribers, each paying \$30 a month. *The Tyee* in Vancouver has been providing a progressive slant on the opposite coast since 2003, but it is heavily subsidized by labour unions. If every town in Canada had a similar online news outlet to supplement its dwindling legacy media, the local news crisis would be eased considerably. The problem is, there remain significant barriers to digital news media succeeding in Canada compared to other countries.

Government subsidies have been proposed by some as an answer to both keeping old media alive and incubating new media. Most self-respecting journalists are leery of anything that smacks of gov-

ernment influence, but this ignores the fact that news media have historically benefited from subsidies ranging from low postal rates to government advertising to free broadcasting licences, which press baron Roy Thomson famously described as “like having a licence to print your own money.” Scandinavian countries have long subsidized their press to stave off the wasting disease that has afflicted the newspaper industries in North America. As a result, they continue to enjoy thriving press systems with diversity of both ownership and viewpoint, plus press freedom rankings that are among the highest in the world, unlike in the U.S. and Canada.

One model that has been employed to some effect in other countries is charitable not-for-profit news media companies. In the U.S., dozens of digital news startups have emerged since the recession due to laws that allow them to claim non-profit status and accept tax-deductible donations from foundations and individuals. These companies, designated under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. tax code, must re-invest any profits they make and may not pay dividends to investors. Online publications such as *MinnPost*, *Voice of San Diego*, *Pro-Publica*, and the *Texas Tribune* are thus able to perform valuable public affairs reporting and even investigative journalism that legacy media are now hard-pressed to afford.

According to a recent study by institutes at the University of Oxford and Yale University, however, Canada is one of the few English-speaking countries in which non-profit news media cannot claim charitable status. “The charitable system in Can-

ada is effectively in disarray,” the report observed, noting that jurisdiction over charitable status belongs to the provinces, yet Ottawa is in charge of defining charity. “Parliament has been so afraid to discuss the definition of charity that the one and only discussion, which took place in the 1930s, was truncated and left to the courts because of the difficult political nature of the discussion. (That is, no MP wanted to be seen as disparaging a ‘good cause’). The key question is why the provinces have decided to abdicate their jurisdiction in this area.” This is obviously one funding avenue in which federal policy leadership could work wonders.

One ambitious new prescription for saving the news media emanates from France and could not only secure funding for new media startups but would also make them considerably more democratic than today’s corporate media. Economist Julia Cagé proposes a model for news media that is halfway between a foundation and a stock issuing company. A nonprofit media organization (NMO) would be able to accept tax-deductible donations, in exchange for which it would issue shares of ownership to donors that would not trade publicly. Readers and employees could also buy shares with voting rights disproportionate to those of larger shareholders. Power would thus be diffused throughout the organization and not confined to those with the most shares.

“The question is not whether the media should be subsidized,” writes Cagé in her slim tome *Saving the Media*. “It is rather whether they should be granted a favourable legal and tax

1980

FP Publications taken over by Thomson Corp.

Globe and Mail rebranded as national daily, begins publishing across Canada using satellite technology

Thomson closes the *Ottawa Journal*, sells the *Vancouver Sun* to Southam, which closes its *Winnipeg Tribune*; Royal Commission on Newspapers called to investigate

1981

Royal Commission on Newspapers finds 59% of English-language dailies published by Thomson and Southam, recommends limits on chain ownership

1996

Conrad Black’s Hollinger Inc. takes over Southam; launches *National Post* 1998

1998

Sun Media bought by Quebecor; adds *Winnipeg Sun* 1999

2000

Bell Canada Enterprises buys CTV network

Canwest Global Communications buys Southam Newspapers from Hollinger

status in recognition of their contribution to democracy.” She points to the example of universities as organizations that are able to receive tax-deductible gifts because they play a similar societal role. “The news media provide a public good, just as universities and other contributors to the knowledge economy of the 21st century do,” argues Cagé. “For that reason they deserve special treatment by the government.”

Another possible alternative might be a national network of government-funded digital mojos (mobile journalists) covering local communities. But we already have a national network of government-funded journalists. It’s called the CBC. Restoring the funding cutbacks endured by “the Ceeb” during the Harper decade might provide an opportunity to reorient the government broadcaster away from broadcasting and more toward the online realm. Hyper-local mojos could feed into the national network via the CBC website and also provide basic audio and video for radio and TV. Local CBC news websites could offer a basic service free to all, but also provide access to longer-form journalism and special features to those willing to pay a subscription fee in the often successful “freemium” model.

Once a more diverse and democratic news ecosystem is thriving, all that would be left for government to do is police the worst excesses of what passes for journalism these days. The Federal Trade Commission in the U.S. has already taken publishers to task for potentially misleading readers by presenting advertising in a format that resembles news or feature content. It issued guidelines late last

year that require sponsored content to be clearly labeled as such. Websites or print publications that fail to adequately distinguish between advertising and journalism risk being prosecuted for deceptive practices. Ottawa needs to similarly protect consumers by drawing clear lines between journalism and hucksterism.

The Royal Commission on Newspapers was “born out of shock and trauma,” its report observed, after established dailies in Winnipeg and Ottawa were folded by their corporate owners on the same day in 1980, creating two more local monopolies. Its year-long investigation of the Canadian news media also examined the digital alternative then looming on the horizon.

“Canada is in a favored position to understand this new technology, to develop it, exploit it, and benefit from it,” the commission report noted. “We have a solid foundation of theoretical studies in modern communications, largely because of the work of the economic historian Harold Innis, who died in 1952, and Marshall McLuhan, the media philosopher, who died in 1980. McLuhan, strongly influenced by Innis, altered mankind’s appreciation of the influence of media.”

Today considered founders of the so-called Toronto School, after the university where they developed their ideas, Innis and McLuhan revolutionized thinking about media influence in the 1950s and ‘60s by focusing on their form rather than their content. As McLuhan famously put it, “the medium is the message.” Control of any society’s dominant medium, Innis realized by examining em-

pires dating back to ancient Egypt, inevitably results in control of its political and economic life. According to McLuhan, changes to the dominant medium in a society bring fundamental shifts in social organization and even sensory perception.

Neil Postman, the American scholar who helped revive interest in what came to be called “medium theory” in the 1980s, pointed to the ability of a dominant medium to influence a society’s definition of fundamental concepts such as intelligence or even truth. Political discourse, he warned, had sunk to dangerous levels of absurdity under television compared to the more rational regime of the printing press. Few could have foreseen the changes wrought by online media, where search engines, blogs and social media now rule.

When the tsunami of convergence washed over Canada at the millennium, few could similarly have predicted how it would reshape the country’s media. Regulators who considered in 2001 whether to limit the merging of television and newspapers decided to let it run its course, which unfortunately went straight into the ground. “They prefer to get a good handle on how convergence will develop before trying to regulate it,” noted the *Globe and Mail*. “Technology is changing so quickly, they say, that there is no clear indication how cultural diversity will fare.”

Now that we have a better idea of some of the perils inherent in this brave new media world, it behooves government to finally act in the public interest. Fortunately, when it comes to Canadian news media, there is no shortage of good ideas for doing so. **M**

Thomson merges its *Globe and Mail* with Bell Canada Enterprises to create Bellglobemedia; renamed CTVglobemedia when Bell Canada divests majority ownership in 2005

Quebecor buys Groupe Videotron, including TVA network

2003

Lincoln report on broadcasting urges federal policy on media convergence

2006

Senate report on news media urges limits on media dominance of any market; federal government issues policy response endorsing convergence

2009

Canwest Global Communications declares bankruptcy; Global Television network bought by Shaw Communications; newspapers bought by Postmedia Network

2010

CTV network and *Globe and Mail* dissolve partnership

2014

Postmedia Network buys Sun Media from Quebecor; merges newsrooms in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa in 2016

2016

Heritage ministry hearings on news and local communities commenced

Susan Delacourt

Trust me, I'm a journalist

The public puts more faith in the media than most other institutions

THE BUSINESS model for Canadian journalism is widely agreed to be broken. Advertising revenues are bottoming out, subscriptions and paywalls aren't filling the gap and newsrooms are being radically downsized.

But journalism has never been just a business like any other. It also has a public service role—keeping citizens informed and giving them the information they need to be part of a functioning society. Businesses work largely around giving people what they want; public service is giving people what they need.

The problem, in a digital age, is that while we can measure what citizens want to consume in the media (counting clicks and likes and retweets) we are less adept at measuring what they need. So how do we measure whether journalism is fulfilling its public service function?

One new poll may help answer that question. It turns out the public needs information it can trust, and that the news media, despite the challenges on the business side, are still best placed to deliver that product.

Earlier this year, the Environics polling firm set out to measure the state of public trust in Canada in its inaugural CanTrust Index. The findings, somewhat surprisingly, turned into what Bruce MacLellan, CEO of Environics Communications, called a “good news story” for the traditional news media.

According to the survey, carried out between February 29 and March 7 with 1,001 people, journalism enjoys a lot more trust than all kinds of business in Canada—especially big business. In fact, the news media ranked

89% of Canadians favour editorial content over word of mouth and social media as their preferred news source for current events

69% in traditional media such as TV, radio or newspaper

52% in online news sites

29% in media mobile apps

SOURCE: ENVIRONICS CANTRUST INDEX 2016

second in terms of public trust, just behind not-for-profit organizations. While 59% of respondents said they trusted the not-for-profits to “do what is right for Canada,” the news media was close behind with 54%.

Moreover, the news media was rated higher on the trust index than small corporations (44%), large corporations (29%) or even government (40%). So even if journalism is a business, a sizeable chunk of the population does not think of it in the same way as it does other corporations, especially when it comes to trust. The public depends on journalism for trusted information on everything from current events to brands and products.

When Environics asked where people preferred to get current news, a clear majority (69%) said they would go to traditional editorial content in a newspaper, on TV or on the radio. A slimmer majority (52%) said they preferred online news sites. And when people do seek out information online, a full 82% of respondents said the most trusted content came from the traditional news media. Social media channels such as Facebook (31%) and Twitter (10%) were far less preferred as sources of news, even if they account for a growing source of clicks to news content (see article by Davis Carr in this section).

The CanTrust index also shows there may be doubts about what's become of one of the golden rules of the digital news universe—that faster is better. Respondents to this survey said that if they have to choose between speed and accuracy, they prefer to have the facts straight.

“We asked them to rank their preference between getting the information quickly, even if it might

be wrong, or getting it accurately... and 78% chose accuracy," MacLellan said. "So it's kind of a referendum on real journalism versus citizen journalism and 78% prefer accuracy over speed when it comes to breaking news events."

Once again, there's that distinction between wants and needs: media consumers may want their information to arrive quickly, but they also recognize they need it to be accurate.

Political leaders were also ranked in the CanTrust index, not by name but by job title. Mayors enjoyed slightly more trust than the prime minister (50% for municipal leaders compared to 46% for the PM) and premiers were much lower down with 34% trust.

"You know that saying, that all politics is local? In many ways, reputation is local too," MacLellan said.

That really is the overall theme of this poll: trust, like charity, begins close to home. Creating jobs in local communities is the best way for politicians and organizations to earn citizens' trust, and word-of-mouth recommendations are the most trusted form of endorsements. MacLellan suggests this all-politics-is-local angle may explain why the new Liberal government is devoting so much time and money to infrastructure projects. They are unsexy, as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said, but very connected with people's day-to-day lives.

Oddly, the index shows that people may trust their friends' word more than their own experience or judgment. Recommendations from friends and associates were deemed slightly more valuable as a source of information than direct, hands-on experience (75% to 73%). But here again, the media seems to have a role to play in the trust business.

More than half of the respondents (55%) also said that editorial coverage in the media had a big influence on their trust of products, services, brands and organizations. That editorial coverage, moreover, was most trusted when it came from traditional media such as "TV, radio or newspaper."

Jaded journalism veterans may see some dark humour in the way this poll puts the news media alongside non-profit organizations in terms of public trust. The journalism business didn't intend to be non-profit, but its failing fortunes over the past few years have plunged a lot of the media into the non-profitable category. Trust may be a precious commodity, but you can't deposit it in a bank.

Or can you?

Perhaps the CanTrust Index points to where journalism should be concentrating its efforts in the days and years ahead—to focus less on what the public wants and more on what it needs. Click-bait stories may be good for business, but do they feed the public's more serious need for trusted information?

If, as the Environics poll suggests, reputation is all about what's closest to home, the media with the best prospects may be local media, and precisely the type that has been getting some of the worst cuts during the downward business spirals. This new trust index could serve as a warning that the more cuts to local information, the greater peril to the trust that Canadians still seem to hold in the media.

Every journalist has tales of juggling the want-versus-need issue, sometimes on a day-to-day basis. Sure, they think, this story will draw a lot of eyeballs, but should I be concentrating instead on the more boring or complicated story that will affect more people's lives?

If you see journalism as a business like any other, the choice is clear. If trust is part of the calculation, though, journalists may want to slow down and take the time to tell the story the public needs to know.

This new poll may not give easy answers on fixing the business problems with the media industry. But it does point the way to how journalism can continue to fulfil its public service role. The public, or at least a large part of it in this survey, does not see journalism as just another business. **M**

Buried and forgotten



Newspaper articles are key sources of information about workplace injuries and fatalities. Yet research on Alberta newspaper articles published between 2009 and 2014 suggests a misleading picture is being presented. The results of

this research are contained in a new Parkland Institute report by Jason Foster and Bob Barnettson called *Buried and Forgotten: Newspaper Coverage of Workplace Injury and Death in Alberta*.

Specifically, the report finds:

- ▶ Women's experiences of workplace injury are almost entirely ignored. This reflects the over-reporting of injuries to men and injuries to workers in blue-collar occupations.
- ▶ The vast majority of workplace injuries are never reported. Instead, reporters focus almost exclusively on (relatively rare) occupational fatalities.
- ▶ Reporters rely heavily on government and employer sources in the stories. Workers and their advocates are rarely quoted about an incident or its causes.
- ▶ Reporters use three basic story templates that frame workplace injuries as under investigation, before the courts, or human tragedies.

Together, these three media frames create a meta-narrative wherein injuries are isolated events that happen to "others," and for which no one is responsible (except maybe the worker). This, in turn, suggests the public need not be concerned about workplace safety.

This inaccurate picture may skew public perceptions of workplace injury, with Alberta workers, members of the public and policy-makers potentially underestimating the risk of workplace injury, and dampening demand for effective occupational health and safety (OHS) enforcement, which Alberta currently lacks. The ultimate consequence is that workers continue to be needlessly injured and killed on the job.

To read the report:

www.parklandinstitute.ca/buried_and_forgotten
(Monitor staff)

Ann Douglas

Why the media loves to bash parents

HHEY, PARENTS, have you heard? We're doing it all wrong. In fact, we could be the worst generation of parents ever. At least that's the impression you get from reading the news.

We're too controlling

The media love this one. It's summed up in the myth of the helicopter parent—that today's parents are stunting their offspring's development by always hovering, ready to swoop down and rescue them from danger. It's a compelling narrative inevitably backed up by anecdotes. Like, there was that one time when a friend of a friend spotted a parent doing something that seemed a little over the top. Enough said.

But, as author and educator Alfie Kohn noted in a hard-hitting *Salon* article last September, only a handful of researchers have attempted to put helicopter parenting under the microscope, and the evidence they've uncovered reveals a minimal effect at best.

A more compelling body of research shows that good things happen when parents are actively involved in their children's lives, including improved academic performance in college-aged kids. That may be a good news story, but it's hardly a juicy headline.

We aren't controlling enough

Talk about mental whiplash! Not only are we *too controlling*—we're simultaneously *not controlling enough*.

According to Julia Gullis's January cover story in *Macleans* (one of the most-read articles in the magazine's history) we have abdicated our responsibilities as parents. Gullis zeroed in on the latest book by U.S. pediatrician and parenting pundit Leonard Sax, *The Collapse of Parenting How We Hurt Our Kids When We Treat Them Like Grown-Ups*, in which he

argues children are now essentially controlling their parents. The catastrophic result: "a collapse of parenting worldwide."

In step with Sax's book, the *Macleans*' article catalogues the supposed failings of the current generation of children: they're selfish and entitled, lazy and unfocused, and emotionally fragile. Who's to blame? Why, mom and dad, of course.

We're making them fat

Speaking of juicy headlines, last November, British broadcaster and columnist Julia Hartley-Brewer confidently proclaimed in *The Telegraph*, "If your child is fat then you are a bad parent." In case that was too subtle, a wordy subhead hammered the message home: "Lazy, selfish parents would rather let their child shovel sweets into their gob than take them to the park."

Never mind that there might not be a park within walking distance of your home—if your child is fat, it's your fault. Hartley-Brewer is unequivocal, again despite a lack of evidence to prove her point: "[L]et's stop all this namby-pamby, patronising rubbish about how these parents don't know any better and are just as much victims themselves. They're not victims. They are child abusers, in the same way that any parent who deliberately and knowingly harms the health of their child is an abuser."

We're making them unemployable

As a final point, it seems that when we're not damaging our kids' lives today, we're sabotaging their future. That's the view of consultant Kathy Caprino, who catalogued the "7 Crippling Parenting Behaviors That Keep Children From Growing into Leaders" in her January 2014 article for *Forbes*. She asks, "Are you sacrificing their long-term growth for short-term

comfort?," before directing readers to the website of a leadership training and development company that sells leadership curriculums to post-secondary schools, colleges and universities.

As any mom or dad can see, parent-blaming is back in vogue (if it ever went out of fashion). But what's behind the current media obsession with cataloguing our childrearing sins, real or imagined? Could it be that the mainstream media, and the power elites they represent, have a vested interest in promoting the "parents are doing it wrong" narrative?

I think they do. It feeds the idea we can privatize the problem of parenting, shift the responsibility for raising the next generation even further from the public to the private sphere. Forget that "it takes a village" nonsense. Society didn't decide you should become a parent—you did. Now deal with it (in this carefully designed, and often quite profitable, way) or be named and shamed.

When we over-personalize the act of parenting, we sidestep all the structural improvements that would make raising a child easier for everyone. Things like access to quality early learning programs, early intervention for children with mental health problems, and more generous income support to reduce inequality among young children, which can have long-term negative effects on a person's health, employment and, yes, their capacity to excel.

Of course, those things cost money and require a collective commitment to truly caring for children (as opposed to merely paying lip service to the idea). It's easier and cheaper to privatize the blame—to scorn the many types of "bad parents" we read about in the news—than it is to commit to doing what's best for children and their parents. **M**



Dwayne Winseck



A radical communication and cultural policy for Canada

PHOTO BY CHRIS MCVEIGH

THE MEDIA economy in Canada is large, complex and growing fast. Total revenue quadrupled, from \$19 billion to \$75.4 billion, between 1984 and 2014. Wholly new media have been added to the scene, beginning with pay TV and mobile wireless services in the 1980s, then Internet access and Internet advertising thereafter, while cable, satellite and IPTV (Internet protocol television) services grew greatly. These are now the core sectors of the broadband Internet and mobile wireless-centric media order. Today, if content is king, connectivity is emperor.

While some media are growing fast, the growth of the network media economy has generally been slug-

gish since the global financial crisis of 2008. Some media have stagnated, especially those that are advertising supported (e.g., broadcast TV, radio). Still others appear to be in decline, such as basic telephone service, newspapers and magazines. Newspaper revenue plunged from \$5.6 billion in 2006 to \$3.7 billion in 2014, with no end in sight to the trend, although some displaced journalists have planted the seeds of promising new journalistic ventures (think *iPolitics*, *Canadaland*, the *National Observer*, etc.). We must also keep in mind that several media recently thought to be at death's door—books, the music industry and postal services—have made a comeback. Oftentimes, “old

media” don't so much as die as get remade for new times.

These crosscutting trends have sparked an intense battle over the institutional arrangements that will define the network media economy in the decades ahead, and perhaps for much of the 21st century. While none of the political parties said much about such matters in their election platforms, the new Liberal government in Ottawa has put three parliamentary reviews into motion since taking office: one on the state of the media and journalism, headed by MP Hedy Fry; a top-to-bottom review of broadcasting, arts and culture policy spearheaded by Heritage Minister Melanie Joly; and a third, canvassing views on the future of Canada Post,

led by Public Services Minister Judy Foote.

On top of this, the CRTC came down with four landmark rulings last year that have roiled the industry, largely because the rulings stem from a common concern: high levels of concentration in certain broadband Internet, mobile wireless and TV markets. The commission also just wound up its comprehensive review of whether the idea of universal, affordable basic telecoms services available to *all* Canadians should be expanded to include broadband Internet access and, if so, at what standards of speed, quality and affordability. And it is currently examining whether mobile virtual network operators (MVNOs)—a type of competitor that doesn't own its own networks, but buys wholesale access from others to offer services in the retail mobile phone market—should be given a greater chance to enter the market. MVNOs like Ting, Freedom Pop, and many others in the U.S. and Europe, offer discount, no-frill cellphone service targeted at people who would otherwise probably not have a cellphone at all. They are non-existent in Canada.

Of final import, the CRTC has just launched a review of the future of common carriage, or as it is better known these days, net neutrality. The details of such things can make eyes glaze over, but the essence of the principle boils down to this: those who own the “pipes” should not be permitted to unjustly discriminate between or influence the meaning or content of the messages, apps and services that flow through them. All of these efforts offer enormous opportunities for good things to happen, but also for much mischief, especially if those lobbying the new government day and night get their way. (Bell alone lobbied MPs and departments 32 times—nearly twice a week—from the time the new Trudeau government assumed power in November until the end of March.)

A range of vested interests have grown up around the telecoms and broadcasting sys-

Given this vast “digital eco-system,” the “separate silos” approach set out in the Telecommunications Act and Broadcasting Act is out of sync with the lay of the land.

tems, and they are pressing hard to shape things in the direction they want. Creative and production-oriented groups in the broadcasting industries, such as the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) and the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, want content quotas and cross-subsidies kept, but also an update to the “cultural policy toolkit” so that it includes Internet service providers (ISPs), mobile phones, Netflix and other over-the-top (OTT) services like Rogers and Shaw’s co-owned shomi and Bell’s CraveTV.

The “Big 5” telecoms and media giants (Bell, Rogers, TELUS, Shaw and Quebecor), along with their hired guns and think-tank allies at the C.D. Howe, Fraser and Montreal Economic institutes, however, argue the days of the broadcasting system are done. All eyes must now be on the “digital eco-system,” they say; markets are fiercely competitive because everyone is being forced to compete vigorously across this system instead of within just a few media industries as in times past. More urgently, these groups assert that even the biggest companies in Canada are but lightweight thrown into battle with unregulated global Internet behemoths Apple, Google, Facebook and Netflix—a digital free-for-all of global proportions is playing out in our own backyard.

Yes, we live in an age of information abundance, not scarcity, and the regulatory regime must reflect this reality. A hundred hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute. Netflix had about four million subscribers in Canada in 2014; four-and-a-half times that number have a Facebook account, which they use to stay in touch with family and friends and to share the news.

Buzzfeed, the *Huffington Post* and *Vice* now produce original journalism. According to the most recent Statistics Canada data, there’s about the same number of journalists in Canada today as there were in 2000 (roughly 12,000), which is significantly more journalists than were working in the 1980s and 1990s. The proportion of freelancers to full-time reporters, however, is way up (see Nora Loreto’s story in this section). And whereas there were four people working for the “spin professions” (public relations, marketing, advertising) for every journalist in 1987, today the ratio is 8:1, and the pay gap between the two has grown greatly in favour of those with something to sell over those producing the news we need to know.

The sheer magnitude of the information environment can also be expressed in the number of outlets: in 2014, there were 695 licensed TV services operating in Canada, 1,107 radio stations and 92 paid daily newspapers. Most Canadians have a smartphone and a broadband Internet connection, and by global standards we use them a lot to communicate with one another and to access all manner of content.

Given this vast “digital eco-system,” the “separate silos” approach set out in the Telecommunications Act and Broadcasting Act is out of sync with the lay of the land. The C.D. Howe Institute argues the system should be brought under general competition law; funding and promoting Canadian content might remain the bailiwick of the CRTC and Department of Canadian Heritage, but the Competition Bureau should take over for everything else. Continue to fund the CBC, argues the institute and industry, but keep it on a short leash to stop

it from competing with commercial media in new Internet news and entertainment markets. Cancon funding should also be limited to what the market will not support and done out of the general public purse versus the Byzantine system of cross-subsidies that now exists.

Dig deeper into the weeds of this advocacy and vitally important new terrain emerges. The rules must change, say these groups, to reflect the baseline fact that all the major telephone companies (except TELUS) now own the country's biggest TV services (this is vertical integration). If these entities want to bundle TV services together in exclusive packages tied to Internet subscriptions, mobile wireless or cable services, so be it. Doing so will foster dynamic competition between well-resourced rivals (the "Big 5") and the global Internet giants. If mobile wireless operators and ISPs want to act like broadcasters (or publishers), exempting services like Bell's Mobile TV or Videotron's Music Unlimited from the data caps and expensive overage charges they apply to everything else sent through their pipes, why not? The practice is known as zero-rating, and its supporters argue that people benefit from the "free" or steeply discounted services on offer. Moreover, zero-rating can be used to subsidize poor people's access to the Internet and mobile phones, and to advance cultural policy goals by zero-rating Cancon while applying data caps to "foreign" content, for example.

On this last point the major players make common cause with the CMPA, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, WGC and so forth. All agree that zero-rating Cancon while applying data caps to "foreign" content is a great way to advance cultural policy goals. They also agree that the telcos and ISPs should put their thumbs on the scales in favour of the "national rights market" by blocking access to foreign content that Canadian companies have bought the rights to exploit *inside* our borders. This means Canadian Netflix subscribers who use VPNs (virtual private networks) to tap into Netflix's U.S. catalogue could find those con-

nections blocked, and indeed Netflix has begun to do just that. Pirate websites should also be blocked, say these groups. They may as well be asking to build higher walls around the nation, with fewer doors—a retrograde cultural nationalism for the 21st century.

The marriage of convenience between Canada's industry giants and culture warriors breaks down, however, over proposals to treat ISPs and mobile wireless operators as broadcasters under the Broadcasting Act. Cultural policy advocates like the idea because currently the largest source of funding for Cancon is the Canadian Media Fund (CMF). Most of this money comes from cable and satellite TV operators who pay 5% of their annual revenue—just under half a billion dollars—to support Canadian TV programming. Based on their relative size, turning ISPs and mobile wireless carriers into broadcasters would multiply the CMF fourfold. Presto! Whatever woes now afflict broadcast TV entertainment and journalism would vanish, apparently. Those pitching this idea say it's only fair because people use the Internet and smartphones to watch TV, and since some of the value of their Internet access and wireless subscriptions comes from such activities they should be tapped to support Canadian television.

The CRTC, Federal Court of Appeals and Supreme Court have rejected this idea for nearly two decades. The telcos and net neutrality advocates, mortal foes under most

Neither the media companies nor the cultural policy groups seem to give a damn that Canadians loathe data caps and the expensive overage charges they entail.

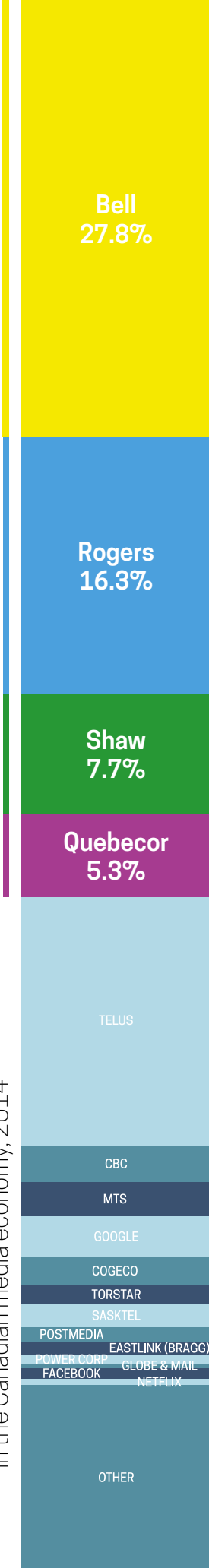
circumstances, also think that using broadband access and wireless carriers to prop up the "broadcasting system" is a bad idea. The assumption that, were it not for TV programs produced by the cultural industries, ISPs and wireless carriers offer little more than a connection between blank screens is also offensive. It rests on crude measures of Internet traffic that fail to distinguish completely between the *value* of a simple text sent between lovers, for example, and the huge bandwidth used to deliver the latest episode of *Orange is the New Black*.

Things might be fine if those pushing to update the "cultural policy toolkit" by dragging everything into it could just be left to their quixotic pursuits. Alas, the issues are more complicated because the telcos appear to only reject being defined as broadcasters to avoid funding Cancon. Otherwise they are pressing the CRTC and Federal Court of Appeals, and lobbying the government, to be permitted to be broadcasters in order to be able to bundle and discount services across the digital eco-system as they see fit. This would allow them to act as carriers in one moment, broadcasters the next, with the line between each known only to the "Big 5." Thus, if Bell and Videotron wanted to create mobile TV or streaming music services and to treat such activities as broadcasting (to evade charges of unfair discrimination under common carriage rules), all to boost their subscriber numbers and ARPU (average revenue per user), that would be fine. *That* choice should be left to "the market," not regulators, they say. Because in the all-encompassing "digital eco-system" there should be only one set of rules, and those rules should flow from competition law—not the values, laws or lessons of communication history.

Neither the media companies nor the cultural policy groups seem to give a damn that Canadians loathe data caps and the expensive overage charges they entail. Nor do they seem to care that using data caps along the lines they propose would constitute a thinly veiled way to regulate people's speech by economic means. Both

Vertical integration in the Canadian media economy, 2014

Vertically integrated companies' market share **57.2%**



groups want to use public policy to maintain *systems*—one cultural, one economic—and neither has any sense that we are talking about creating the information infrastructure and communications universe of the 21st century. Both turn a blind eye, or worse, sneer at the values and history that animate the common carrier (net neutrality) concept. Values like fairness, freedom of expression for those who subscribe to broadband access networks (versus those who own the pipes), privacy, creating common technical standards (so people can put together the networks, services, content and apps as they see fit, like a giant set of Lego building blocks), and competition.

Following either of the “systems maintenance” views would bury a new layer of controls into communication networks that collides with how people use and think about the Internet and their phones. Few other ideas would do more to turn people off—to delegitimize from the get-go—a renewed cultural policy agenda fit for the digital age. We need to fight these ideas with all our might.

From the “systems view” to “Lego-land”

We need to think about the broadband-centric media ecology differently. Instead of “systems,” I propose we look at things modularly, or as a big set of Lego building blocks whose parts can be unbundled and snapped together in many different combinations. As Ryerson professor Catherine Middleton observes, as the broadband Internet has evolved, it has become easier to separate the access network from the growing number of apps, content and services available over it. While it may have been desirable to bundle content and carriage together at one point, as with cable TV, those days are numbered as people “cut the cord” and turn to the Internet to get the content and services over broadband links from wherever they want. Adopting the “Lego-land” view is especially important because of the vertical integration mentioned above. The “Big 5” accounted for 63% of total revenue across the network media economy in 2000; fast-forward to now and their share of the vastly bigger pie has grown to nearly three-quarters of total revenue.

Of course, there are crucial exceptions to this general finding, such as radio, magazines and Internet news sources. Canadians now get their news from a wide plurality of outlets old (CBC, Postmedia, *The Toronto Star*, CTV) and new (*Huffington Post*, *Buzzfeed*), domestic and foreign (BBC, ABC-Yahoo!, *The Guardian U.K.*, *The New York Times*). Other core elements of the Internet, however, are highly concentrated, including mobile and wireline broadband networks, search engines, online advertising, browsers, operating systems and social networking sites (see the CMCR Project report, *Media and Internet Concentration in Canada, 1984–2014*, for the technical details).

Concentration levels in TV have soared in the past five years after three major deals transformed the TV landscape. In 2010, Shaw bought the Global TV network and a stable of specialty and pay channels from the bankrupt Canwest, giving the company 50 TV services as well as its concurrent ownership of Corus Entertainment. Bell’s acquisition of CTV and Astral Media, in 2011 and 2013 respectively, furthered the trend. Bell now accounts for more than a third of all revenues in the TV industry, with more than 70 TV channels including CTV, CTV News, TSN, RDS, HBO, the Discovery Channel and more, and 106 radio stations in 54 Canadian cities. Together, Bell and Shaw alone account for well over half the TV market. Add the CBC (19.6%), Rogers (10.2%) and Quebecor (5.4%), and the “Big 5” TV ownership groups account for 90% of all revenues.

These conditions are not unique, since media concentration around the world tends to be high. Where Canada does stand out, though, is in its extremely high levels of vertical integration. In 2014, the top four vertically integrated (VI) companies (Bell, Rogers, Shaw, QMI) held a 57% share of all telecom, Internet and media revenues, which is twice what it was a half decade earlier (see graph). This represents a significantly higher level of vertical integration than in the U.S., where the top four VI companies (AT&T/DirecTV, Comcast, Charter, including Time Warner and Bright House, and Cox) combined account for 40% of market revenue. The degree of vertical integration in Canada also topped the list of 30 countries studied by the Interna-

tional Media Concentration Research Project.

As for the idea that the fierce competition posed by the Internet goliaths offsets the market power of Canada's dominant players, Google, Facebook and Netflix's combined share of all media revenue in Canada was less than 4% in 2014.

So it's not just conjecture to point out that concentration and vertical integration levels are high in Canada. It is a conclusion of fact, based on the available data, and also reached in several CRTC rulings last year. The consequences of this state of affairs are significant. For example, mobile wireless markets in Canada are underdeveloped by comparable international standards, prices per gigabyte (GB) on wireless and wireline broadband networks are high and speeds are good for mobile wireless networks (but modest for wireline relative to comparable international peers). Adoption levels are moderate for the latter, but very low for the former (mobile phones), with Canada ranking 32nd out of 40 OECD and EU countries, alongside Mexico, Turkey and some Eastern European countries.

People in Canada are voracious users of the Internet and all kinds of media, and have been this way for some time. Still, they must carefully measure what they watch (and in what definition), and what they do with these vital tools of modern life, because of the high cost of a GB and the prevalence of relatively low data caps on wireless and wireline networks.

Restrictive data caps reflect the high levels of vertical integration in Canada and serve to protect the vertically integrated giants' broadcast operations from streaming services like Netflix. Just a few weeks ago, in contrast, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the U.S. approved the takeover of Time Warner Cable and Bright House by Charter, but on condition that it not use data caps for the next seven years in order to remove barriers to the further development of OTT video services like Netflix, Amazon Prime and

unbundled services from CBS, Viacom, HBO, the NLB and so on.

The CRTC provisionally blessed data caps in 2009, but since then they have gone from being used sparingly to manage Internet congestion to become a lucrative new stream of revenue for Bell, Rogers, TELUS and Videotron (Shaw advertises but does not apply data caps). Canadians loathe data caps and the expensive "overage charges" they entail. Data caps send the totally wrong message that somehow we are using "too much Internet."

While Shaw distinguished itself on this point before a recent CRTC examination of basic telecoms services that all Canadians should be entitled to at affordable prices, it was discouraging to hear Bell, TELUS, MTS, SaskTel, Eastlink, and the small telephone companies that still operate across Canada, talk about the need to scrimp on how much Internet people use and the speeds that should be available. Thus, while Europe and the U.S. forge ahead with ambitious targets in this regard, the vision of incumbent telecoms operators and ISPs in Canada is wholly uninspiring.

The heavy reliance on relatively low data caps in Canada constrains what and how people watch TV, listen to music, communicate with one another over the Internet and mobile devices, and work. As such communications become an ever-more important part of human experience, and a critical infrastructure for society and the economy writ large, this is a huge problem.

Return of the state and zombie free markets

Instead of standing idly by, regulators, led by the CRTC, have taken steps that aim to change the lay of the land in some fundamental ways. As I've written elsewhere, the CRTC, with some strong aiding and abetting by the Competition Bureau, and backstopped by policy wonks at the federal government, are:

Unbundling the Network:
Partially. Hesitantly.... Slowly
turning from a systems and

broadcast-centric view to a Lego-land, telecoms-Internet-mobile-wireless-centric view of the world—skinny basic, untied streaming TV services like shomi and CraveTV, and pick-and-pay TV are just the start.

The CRTC and the last government made the high levels of concentration in mobile wireless, broadcast distribution undertakings (DBUs) and television a centrepiece of their proceedings and policies, rediscovering market power, and took some forceful steps to do something about it. At a minimum, the new Trudeau government must do the same. Regulators have also rediscovered the crucial Section 27 of the Telecommunications Act, which bans unjust discrimination, applying it in three recent cases: the wholesale roaming investigation (2014-398), the wholesale mobile wireless decision (2015-177) and the mobile TV ruling (2015-26).

The first case found that wholesale mobile wireless roaming rates were "clear instances of unjust discrimination and undue preference," banished exclusivity provisions in wholesale roaming agreements, and opened a wider examination into wholesale mobile wireless services that fed directly into the second case. In that wholesale mobile wireless decision, the CRTC reasserted its authority to regulate wholesale mobile wireless facilities and rates, set temporary caps on rates, and set out follow-up steps that will lead to new rules for how these rates are determined. Finally, the mobile TV decision did four things:

- ▶ Found that Bell and Videotron were giving themselves "an undue and unreasonable preference" by "providing the data connectivity and transport required for consumers to access the mobile TV services at substantially lower costs...relative to other audiovisual content services";
- ▶ Concluded that this was bad for competition, the development and growth of new OTT services, and for consumer-citizens;
- ▶ Drew a sharp line between transmission (common carriage) and

broadcasting (content), thereby forcing Bell, Quebecor and Rogers to bring their mobile TV offerings into compliance with some of the common carrier principles flowing from Section 27 of the Telecommunications Act; and

▶ Acted on a meticulously researched complaint by Ben Klass, a citizen and PhD student at the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University.

That the previous federal government's actions, and ongoing regulatory interventions in the market, are substantial in Canada is beyond doubt. But they are also not unique. We have seen the "return of the state" in many countries. In the real world, the effective operation of "real markets" depends on the rule of law and the firm hand of independent regulators, back-stopped by, yet independent from, politicians, policy-makers and the ministers who want to see good things happen.

The recent direction of events runs counter to the vertically integrated firms' "walled garden" or "information control" models of operation. Having banked on such a model (and with the banks, especially RBC, holding significant ownership stakes in most of the key players), they are pushing back forcefully against efforts to change it. You can see it in Bell's recurring editorial interventions in the country's biggest TV and radio news media outlets; the legal appeals to recent CRTC rulings (e.g., mobile TV, wireless code, and Superbowl sim sub); a petition to cabinet to overturn the CRTC's forward-looking ruling on wholesale access to fibre-to-the-doorstep (recently rejected in a crucial test of the Liberal government's thinking on these matters); the threats of capital investment strikes; and a bevy of other efforts that aim to turn back the tide.

But while the CRTC has rediscovered the no-undue-preference clause of the Telecommunications Act (Section 27), that section is unfortunately immediately followed by Section 28, which says that exceptions to the rule are permitted when they advance the goals of the Broadcasting Act. This

puts the best bits of the telecoms act at war with itself and risks subordinating telecoms (broadband Internet) to broadcasting. This is precisely what the allied forces behind zero-rating Cancon think should happen. We need to drive a stake through the heart of such ideas.

The waffling at the CRTC related to these two sections runs counter to the common carriage principles upon which the open Internet and mobile phones are built—principles found in Section 36 of the Telecommunications Act that come to us from the days of Roman roads, Venetian canals, the Taxis family courier service in medieval Europe and common law traditions on both sides of the Atlantic. The act states, "Except where the Commission approves otherwise, a Canadian carrier shall not control the content or influence the meaning or purpose of telecommunications carried by it for the public."

While one might argue that Section 36 is the crown jewel of the act, regulatory hesitancy seems greatest on this point. This is evident in its almost complete lack of use during a time when those who own the "pipes" are inextricably intertwined with the ownership and control of messages. It is also evident in the exception carved out for overriding this principle if it meets some ill-defined objectives of the Broadcasting Act. It is time to wheel Section 36 out of storage and make it the central principal around which the entire Internet and mobile wireless-centric universe revolves.

Five moderate suggestions, one big idea and one radical reform

The CRTC decisions that kick new life into Section 27 of the Telecommunications Act are to be applauded. The same goes for the willingness to constrain the power of vertically integrated companies by loosening their grip on the basic building blocks of the network media ecology, including spectrum, wholesale wireless and fibre-to-the-doorstep access points and roaming rates, data transport and content. Movement toward strictly drawing the

line between carriage and content is also great. However, much more can be done.

Like what, you ask? Here are five modest suggestions.

1. Eliminate Section 28 of the Telecommunications Act, which states: "The Commission shall have regard to the broadcasting policy for Canada set out in subsection 3(1) of the Broadcasting Act in determining whether any discrimination is unjust or any preference or disadvantage is undue or unreasonable in relation to any transmission of programs."

2. Eliminate Section 4 in the Broadcasting and Telecommunications acts so that both pieces of legislation can talk to one another. We don't need new legislation, and any attempt to create it will only ensure interminable delay and special (corporate) interest pleading. Concepts such as the "digital eco-system" should be rejected out of hand as self-interested fabrications—of limited use as high-level metaphors, maybe, but not as a guide to analyzing media markets, or a model for how to think about needed policy, law and regulatory reforms.

3. Breathe new and vigorous life into Section 36 of the Telecommunications Act by firmly separating control over infrastructure from influence over the messages/content flowing through the "pipes." In other words, sharpen and harden the line between carriage and content. Any proposals to put a levy on ISPs and mobile phones to fund Cancon should be given a stillbirth. While the entrenched clients of the broadcasting system never miss a beat to promote "the ISP tax," their ideas are out of sync with the tastes of the people. They are anti-Internet and prolong a "systems" view of the world that conceals a murky labyrinth of cultural policy funds flowing from one pocket to another, often between divisions within the vertically integrated companies.

4. Impose vertical separation along functional lines between carriage and content, and between wholesale access to passive network infrastructure and network operators and retail telecoms service providers.

5. Transfer authority over spectrum from Industry Canada to the CRTC, take advantage of the CRTC's expertise in communications regulation and reject proposals to transfer jurisdiction to the Competition Bureau and all-purpose competition policy. (The CRTC and Competition Bureau should nonetheless continue to work closely together.)

And here's a bigger idea: we should eliminate the category of broadcast distribution undertakings (BDUs) upon which the cable, satellite and IPTV industry rests. It's all telecom-Internet access and carriage now. The equivalent amount of funds currently funneled into the Canadian Media Fund by the BDUs should be taken directly out of the general treasury, and perhaps topped up a bit.

More generally, we need to bring subsidies for broadband connectivity into line with funding for the CBC and Cancon. Currently, the CBC receives \$33 per person per year, with nearly three-quarters of that amount again for arts and culture at large. Broadband subsidies, by contrast, are a comparative pittance at roughly \$2.25 per person per year. I doubt the Canadian public would chafe at upping the broadband subsidy to somewhere between what Sweden spends (\$5 per person per year) and what the CBC receives.

Any bid to pare back the CBC and other arts and culture funding should be dismissed outright. People have never paid the full costs of news and culture, and this is why throughout modern history it has been sustained by subsidies from advertising, governments and wealthy patrons. We need to consider subsidizing independent journalism in ways that do not just put public money directly into the pockets of the existing newspaper groups that have driven the press into the ground through endless consolidation, inflated asset values and unsustainable debts. How this can be done effectively is hard to say. For starters, though, we can take some cues from a recent study by the Reuters Institute and Oxford and Yale universities, which finds Canada could be doing much more with tax law to mobilize philanthropic support for the press as in other countries.

As for my radical proposal, consider this: why not merge Canada Post with the CBC to create the Canadian Communication Corporation (CCC)? Just

think of what you could do with such a new Crown corporation:

- ▶ Operate as the fourth national mobile wireless carrier;
- ▶ Blanket cities with open access, lighting up the vast stock of underused and unused municipal dark fibre;
- ▶ Extend public Wi-Fi in cities across Canada, and broadband access to underused and unserved people in rural, remote and poor urban areas;
- ▶ Create, disseminate and make public art and culture as accessible and enjoyable as possible; and
- ▶ Fund all these activities from the general treasury, not the opaque intra- and inter-industry funds that now exist.

The original goal of the U.S. Post Office was to bring "general intelligence to every man's [sic] doorstep," while serving as a heavily subsidized vehicle for delivering newspapers to editors across the country free of charge. Canada took a more frugal view of things; correspondence at a distance and newspaper growth relative to the U.S. suffered as a result. Taking these lessons to heart, a CCC could be to the broadband Internet and mobile wireless-centric world of the 21st century what the U.S. Post Office was to the world of letters and print.

The CCC could repurpose some of the CBC's existing spectrum holdings and broadcast towers for mobile wireless service coast-to-coast-to-coast. Real estate could be combined and used to locate towers; local post offices used to sign up new mobile phone subscribers and sell devices. Postal workers are giving some thought to renewing the post office, but have not ventured into this territory—yet. Informal discussions with some Canada Post senior executives suggest they've heard similar ideas before—and are not inherently hostile to them.

With three official government proceedings underway to explore different aspects of Canada's media environment, could we broaden the terrain to include a fourth? Or perhaps roll them all into one big, countrywide conversation on the future of communication in the 21st century? Is it time we finally discussed #RadicalMediaPolicy4Canada? **M**

Time to Tax Netflix?

Netflix, Google (YouTube), and other mostly foreign-owned over-the-top service providers are not required to collect and remit value-added taxes and do not pay income taxes in Canada if they have no physical presence in the country. This creates an uneven playing field with Canadian competitors in the OTT field, while depriving the government of valuable tax revenues—money that could go toward supporting Canadian culture and media. A new study for the CCPA by John Anderson, ***An Over-the-Top Exemption***, suggests potential regulatory and taxation measures that would support Canadian cultural policy, and the production and distribution of Canadian content. After considering the growth of OTTs like Netflix over the past decade, the study looks at other countries that have recently begun taxing the broadcasting activities of these companies as they would any other broadcaster, and where measures have been taken to apply national cultural policies to the new foreign-owned media players. It then considers how Canada's unwillingness to regulate new media companies has resulted in a situation where the biggest OTTs do not contribute in any significant way to Canadian content or observe any Cancon quotas. Combined with the concentration of media industries, the decreased funding over the last three decades for the public networks of CBC and Radio-Canada, and the relatively low level of funding for Canadian media production, Anderson argues the increase of the unregulated new media is another blow to Canadian culture.

(Monitor staff)

Fenwick McKelvey

The new attention factory

Discoverability and Canadian cultural policy

WE CAN all relate to Charlie Chaplin in his classic film *Modern Times*. As the Little Tramp falls behind on the production line, the conveyor belt pulls him into the factory's cogs. We might laugh as he winds through the gears, but we too are working in a factory of sorts. It is a vast factory assembling our attention and its output affects how we produce and consume culture.

Canadian media regulators have begun using the term *discoverability* to describe these new conditions of cultural production, distribution and reception. A recent Discoverability Summit in Toronto, co-hosted by the National Film Board (NFB) and the CRTC, devoted two days of panels to the topic. The CRTC introduced discoverability as a defining feature of an Internet-enabled "world of choice" where "content is available everywhere, on so many platforms." Eighty-two per cent of Canadians watch or download TV and movies online using services like Netflix, itself a powerful part of the factory built to manage our attention and influence our cultural consumption.

How does Netflix influence what content we watch? Depending on the device, about 50% of the screen will be dedicated to advertising a specific show or movie (usually one of Netflix's own productions). Below Netflix's promoted content you'll likely find a few strips containing recommendations under the headings New to Netflix, Saved to Your List, Trending or Recommended for You. The Canadian Media Fund (CMF) calls these the *levers* of discoverability in a recent study. As regulators seek to un-



derstand this new factory, these levers and who pulls them demand more analysis.

Algorithms, suggested the CMF report, are an important lever. These computational functions use data to rank, sort and rate content or decide what's trending. Algorithms might use data from other customers to recommend a new show. Or they might use metadata to suggest other titles in one of Netflix's micro-genres, such as Independent Drama Featuring a Strong Female Lead.

We constantly interact with algorithms to discover content, often without being aware of the long-term effects of our feedback. This process has led to concerns about an overly personalized Internet as we unintentionally train algorithms to offer a limited set of recommendations.

While most of us pull levers unconsciously, clearly some people know the right ones to pull. Micro-celebrities, clickbait bards and viral video

editors are a new kind of elite in the discoverability factory. Their craft differs by platform. Reply Girls game YouTube's thumbnail system. Search Engine Optimization specialists (for a fee) will boost your website's ranking on Google. It is not exactly clear how they're operating the machine, but their success demonstrates the inequities of online attention.

All this talk of algorithms and social media celebrities might obscure the most important piece of the machine: the content discovery platforms themselves. In the attention factory, platforms remain a black box whose workings we don't really understand. Facebook for years claimed its trending news section was algorithmically curated until *Gizmodo* and the *Guardian U.K.* discovered that a team of journalists frequently injected stories into the list of trends (see article in this section by Davis Carr). We shouldn't be shocked that

Continued on page 34

Facebook: friend or foe?

DAVIS CARR

T WAS hard to escape news this spring of Facebook's "trending" feature. First we learned there were human curators behind what the social media company claimed to be an automated algorithm, then that these employees may be censoring conservative voices from users' feeds. Facebook denied the allegations, which were first reported by *Gizmodo*. But shortly after, the *Guardian U.K.* published leaked documents detailing Facebook's policy for both injecting and blacklisting stories.

Facebook worked hard to cultivate the belief it was delivering impartial, mathematically and algorithmically determined news to users. The official description of its "trending" feature does not mention a human element: "Trending shows you topics that have recently become popular on Facebook. The topics you see are based on a number of factors including engagement, timeliness, pages you've liked and your location." This results in what Upworthy co-founder Eli Pariser calls a "filter bubble," a situation where the content a user is exposed to reinforces their pre-existing beliefs and limits exposure to new and different ideas.

The backlash against Facebook for using people—with all their fallibility and personal bias—to filter the news reveals an important characteristic of the contemporary age: algorithms are considered more trustworthy than human beings. This perspective misses or ignores the reality that bias exists within the math itself. Code is written by people, and people carry explicit and implicit biases. These biases manifest in a myriad of ways, sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly.

Last year, research from Carnegie Mellon University and the International Computer Science Institute found that Google's ad-targeting algorithms would display higher-paying jobs to men visiting employment websites than to women. Bias might also show up in a lack of attention to detail. Early versions of Apple's health applica-

tion did not include a feature to track menstrual cycles, for example.

Algorithms prioritize some content over others, with high stakes. Facebook's algorithm favours video and photos over links and status updates—another preference built into the system by humans. In response, and as a sign of Facebook's tremendous impact, content creators and marketers have adapted to the algorithm, invest-



ing in more video content and graphic designers, altering how we experience the Internet in the process.

A 2015 study by analytics firm parse.ly showed that more than 40% of web traffic to news sites came from Facebook, beating Google by an inch and Twitter by a mile for redirects. Facebook therefore acts as a gatekeeper to content and is profiting from that role. Only a small fraction of a user's followers will see a given post organically, so Facebook charges users to reach a bigger or targeted audience.

This model has huge implications for news organizations. One Morgan Stanley analyst told the *New York Times*, "In the first quarter of 2016, 85 cents of every new dollar spent in online advertising will go to Google or Facebook." Content creators, publishers, businesses and organizations must use these platforms in order to

reach their audience. Facebook in particular, with its 1.5 billion active users, has enormous power. Publishers must work with the social media giant in order for their content to be seen.

Facebook Live is the latest example of the control the company exerts on news and cultural consumption. Facebook is paying publishers and celebrities to use the new service, which livestreams events to the Facebook app on mobile phones. "In practical terms," explained an article in *recode*, "that means Facebook's News Feed algorithm prioritizes live video while the broadcast is ongoing, meaning it will appear higher in people's feeds. It's also doing things like sending out push notifications when videos are live, and alerting people when they've missed a live video."

With digital and social platforms increasing the size of their audience, traditional media is struggling to adapt. As examined elsewhere in this issue of the *Monitor*, dissemination of news and journalism has been heavily impacted by the change of distribution models, and these changes will only increase as time goes on.

It's important to remember that Facebook is not a content creator—it is a platform. While independent publishers are able to use the platform to reach their audience, mainstream media outfits still dominate the field and largely determine what is considered newsworthy. Facebook is not in the business of creating the news—just sharing it.

Facebook's domination of media creates the risk of the continued homogenization of information with a very corporate bias. It is a private corporation with no obligation to anyone but its shareholders. As users of the platform, we must remain skeptical of any product that has so much power and so little oversight. And as our lives increasingly go digital, we must be critical of the unconscious, unseen and subtle biases that exist around us, especially in those mechanisms and tools that claim to be impartial. **M**

humans are involved, but we should debate the accountability of these platforms.

The front page of platforms—or what at the summit was called the First Impression Unit—remains a major lever of online attention. By managing these first impressions, platforms have an important influence on discoverability, not unlike a broadcaster's power to decide what content appears in prime time. Netflix, for example, uses its front page predominately to promote its own content. Platforms can also sell their influence. Your next smart TV might feature ads on your home screen as device manufacturers find ways to exploit this new revenue stream. That might be the only way independent or other studios can compete with Netflix for attention.

These levers play an important role in the new attention factory and they require continued regulatory oversight. The good news is that Canadian media regulators like the CRTC have a legacy that makes them well-suited to address discoverability as a major issue for broadcasting. While the attention factory might seem newfangled, old questions of media globalization, cultural policy and democratic oversight remain relevant.

Like Chaplin squeezed between two big gears, Canada is in a tough spot, facing significant domestic and global media concentration. If more digital concentration continues, the machine might be controlled by Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Netflix alone, putting a squeeze on local governance. Google and Netflix have publicly flaunted the CRTC's authority, thereby undermining Canadian democratic oversight. It could be Canada seeks to harmonize oversight of the factory so its global pieces are subject to the same oversight as local ones.

Another approach to discoverability in Canada would be to explore the viability of platform-focused regulations developed in Europe. The EU has called for Netflix and Amazon to ensure that at least 20% of their video libraries consist of European content. Their concern over on-

line media providers offering a new channel for American cultural dominance connects with growing worries about the unchecked economic power of Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon (or GAFA). The EU has investigated the monopoly power of Google, implemented a "right to be forgotten" so people can opt-out of the platform's data collection and questioned the privacy of social media data flows.

A broader first step would be to open up the machine to public oversight. The Discoverability Summit was an important opportunity for the CRTC to publicize these issues. Accountability is a matter of public concern as seen in the debate over Facebook's trending news, though the scandal seems to have rattled the machine less in Canada than in the U.S. Does the same team of young journalists also manage Canadian trends? The manual leaked by the *Guardian* suggests so with reference to an ability to change the scope of the trending data and a reference to the Toronto Football Club. Could there be a review of Facebook and other platforms' mechanisms that decide what's trending in Canada?

Canadian cultural institutions should continue to have an active role in promoting and supporting Canadian content in this attention factory. Many state-sponsored cultural institutions developed out of legitimate concerns that the economic might of the United States would hinder homegrown cultural industries. The CBC started in response to concerns about American cultural annexation. Could public service media play a meaningful part in this new attention factory?

We would do well to avoid nostalgia for traditional Canadian content in thinking of the new role for public service media. Diversity remains a real issue for the Canadian cultural industries overall, as seen in the lack of coverage for the #BlackLives-Matter movement in Toronto, as well as concerns about race and gender representation in newsrooms and television production. These issues abound online.

Taking up the issue of discoverability could encourage new voices, but emerging online platforms might not offer the best venue for them. Toxic cultures like GamerGate and the Red Pill movement have been effective in silencing and pressuring feminist voices. Wikipedia has recognized it has a problem with a lack of diversity among its editors, which negatively influences its content. Could Canadian cultural institutions play a positive role in user-generated discovery in the same way that feminists have led edit-a-thons to promote underrepresented histories and peoples on Wikipedia? No one can discover content if it is not there.

Simultaneously, the conditions of cultural production on these platforms can be economically exploitative, or what's been called platform capitalism. These necessary new voices might toil away for free in what Tamar Sheppard calls apprenticeship labour. Could a new generation of public service media be a big piece of a better attention factory? Could a better platform be created for Canadian content producers? Could Canada develop a platform that ensures artists receive a greater share of advertising revenue and offers more accountable management of content recommendation? Perhaps the CBC in its redesign of its shuttered comments might create a more supportive community for cultural production? A Canadian Reddit? Maybe an alternative platform might be too much domestically, but perhaps in collaboration with other international institutions?

Discoverability has reassembled the attention factory but not necessarily democratized it or made it more equitable. The worst case scenario would be a world where discoverability is both profoundly confusing and totally lacking in accountability or oversight. That's why the Discoverability Summit was a critical start. In looking ahead, the point to keep in mind, to remember my late colleague Martin Allor, is that "our task is to change the world, not merely to describe it." **M**

Nora Loreto

Rise of the freelancer

IN THE so-called sharing economy, new technological platforms are exploiting regulatory gaps under the banner of progress. Corporate heads are taking advantage of this and good jobs are disappearing. We've seen a version of this experiment in the recent past. Before Uber, there were unpaid internships, layoffs and downsizing, and start-up agencies vying for a piece of the traditional journalism pie. Together, they transformed the industry in a process that continues today.

In 2013, the Canadian Media Guild estimated that in the five years previous, 10,000 journalism jobs evaporated. Since then, more jobs have vanished and some newspapers have even ceased printing. Some of those jobs were replaced by freelancers or interns. Some are gone for good. The gaps have been filled by independent journalists, bloggers and new media start-ups.

For an industry that's been hit hard by an advertising revenue slump, it's easy to see why media owners and even journalists themselves have been so quick to jump on what has since been termed "the sharing economy" model. Crowdfunding and crowdsourcing have broadened who can do what under the banner of journalism. When a cell phone can take high-quality photos and record interviews, anyone with a desire to broadcast has the capacity to do so cheaply. According to a study from the American Freelancers Union and Upwork, nearly one out of every three Americans did freelance work of some kind in 2014.

While the technology can be liberating it is not without costs to media workers. Average wage increases in journalism have lagged behind overall wage increases, says Errol Salamon, a co-editor and contributor to the 2016 book, *Journalism in Crisis: Bridging Theory and Practice for Democratic Media Strategies in Canada*. "While journalism organizations

have remained profitable, they have exploited the labour of journalists by making them work for less than the standard market value that is generated from their labour," he says.

Many newspapers have outsourced layout and copy editing to Pagemasters, a corporation of The Canadian Press that is, in part, owned by several major Canadian news outlets. Writing for the Canadian Media Guild, Jan Wong spells it out: "the top union rate for an editor [at Pagemasters] is \$48,000, compared to about \$85,000 at the [Toronto] Star."

Is there a private sector solution to this race to the bottom? The corporate model of journalism has always been fraught. As Robert McChesney argues, a free press owned by powerful and rich corporate interests is hardly free. The corporate ownership model is more at fault for the state of things in journalism than is the emergence of new technologies.

But looking to government to fix journalism is a different kind of bad. While governments should be pressed to enforce workplace standards within media industries, government intervention into corporate media isn't likely to fix the most fundamental issues, or be popular with anybody. Ultimately, saving journalism is a fight that journalists themselves must take on.

Most journalists at mainstream outlets are unionized and there is a long tradition of unionization in Canadian newsrooms. Unions provide a formal mechanism for journalists to work together, though they have sometimes reinforced inequality. "Labour unions have enshrined exploitative and underpaid internships by writing them into collective agreements," writes Salamon. "Nevertheless, various union locals have fought to establish paid internship programs and collective agreements that have also guaranteed interns entry-level salaries."

There is an increase in union efforts at other non-traditional news organizations, like *Huffington Post U.S.* and *Gawker*. Journalists at *Vice Canada* have filed for representation with the Canadian Media Guild (see the article in this section by Jeremy Appel). Journalists who are locked out/on strike at the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* have launched *Local Xpress*, a news website that could very likely live past the labour dispute (see Andrew Biro in this section).

There is also my union, the Canadian Freelance Union, a community chapter of Unifor. While we have no legal recourse to protect our members, we offer some basics such as opt-in insurance programs, a press card and various other kinds of support. In the past three months, we've compelled two contractors to pay up. In both cases the member wasn't able to get a reply before the union got involved.

Perhaps most importantly, though, we monitor freelancer life—from changes in government policy to gathering research about average wages to advocating for freelancers and advertising union freelancers. We can loop our advocacy into the broader campaigning work of Unifor's Media Council, a division that represents 12,000 communications workers in Canada. The CFU isn't alone; the Canadian Media Guild has a robust freelance wing as well. Thanks to the size of the membership at the CBC, the guild has managed to secure some freelancer protections in collective agreements.

Halifax-based CFU members issued statements compelling freelancers to not scab for the *Chronicle Herald*, messaging that was broadly seen as supportive of striking workers but also freelancers who are most hurt by the race to the bottom. It was an example of the power and importance of bridging the divide between the old and new worlds of journalism. **M**

Andrew Biro

Responsible journalism, democracy and the newspaper crisis

The Chronicle-Herald strike in political context

NEWSPROOM workers at the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* (hereafter CH) have been on strike since January 23. In print since 1874 as the *Morning Herald* (*Chronicle-Herald* since 1949), the CH is the largest-circulation daily newspaper in Atlantic Canada and the largest “independent” (not owned by a media conglomerate) paper in Canada. It is the newspaper of record in Nova Scotia. The strike has shown how labour disputes are often as much about struggles over whose expertise within, and authority over, the work process is recognized, as they are about pocketbook issues like wages and pensions. And it shows the importance of responsible journalism for a functional mass democracy.

One incident in particular highlights these issues. In the April 9 (weekend) edition, the CH put out a particularly inflammatory story that claimed Syrian refugee children at a Halifax elementary school were “choking, pushing, slapping and verbally abusing their fellow classmates,” and that school staff appeared to be doing little, if anything, about it. Over the weekend, the CH first (without explanation) edited the story, taking out some of the details, and then deleted the story entirely from their website with a terse apology. The story presumably remains in its original form in the paper edition.

The Halifax Typographical Union (HTU), which represents striking CH workers, issued a strongly critical public statement about the story. The superintendent of the Halifax Regional School Board also took the unusual step of issuing a public statement, addressed to all school board staff, saying he “was deeply offended

to see the school represented so inaccurately.” Tim Bousquet at the online daily *Halifax Examiner* took it apart in a post that focused on factual inaccuracies and the failure to adhere to professional and ethical standards. Bousquet listed a failure to verify claims, lack of balance, lack of context for granting interviewees anonymity, and unethical treatment of the children who were at the center of the story.

As both Bousquet’s post and the HTU statement make clear, these failures have to be put in the context of the CH labour dispute. The HTU statement puts it plainly: “Both [the story writer and editor] were hired and assigned according to the skills and abilities that management deems appropriate for the job.” This gets to the heart of the point about expertise and authority. Unions, by definition, are comprised of people who have a kind of work in common. What they share is not just an interest in getting paid decently by a common employer, but also inside knowledge about how the work process actually functions. Unions claim a particular kind of knowledge or expertise and, through collective bargaining over working conditions, try to gain some authority over how their members’ work is done.

If it wasn’t clear before the school story it is now: the professional judgment of reporters and editors—the authorization of their expertise—is essential to producing a reliable, high-quality newspaper. But well after this story was published, HTU members are still on strike, CH owners are still insisting over 1,000 contract changes are non-negotiable demands, and the CH continues to publish by relying on scab labour and

advertorial content. What are we to make of this?

At one level, this points to the issue of expertise and authority within this particular workplace, as mentioned above. Talking to HTU members on the picket line, it was clear one of the things that aggrieved them most were the bad journalistic decisions being made by replacement workers, and by managers interested in things other than journalistic integrity and quality. At the same time, even with the skilled professionals on the picket line, the paper is still being published.

Because the CH is privately owned, we don’t know the overall financial impact of the strike on the company’s bottom line. Striking workers aren’t getting paid, but to what extent these savings offset declines in circulation and advertising revenue can’t be ascertained from the outside. Meanwhile, the CH is faced with the same pressures affecting the newspaper business globally with the information technology revolutions of the last decade or more, particularly the rise of social media. These pressures include fewer people willing to pay to access newspaper information online, and web-based competition slashing revenue from both classified and commercial advertising. To be sure, running a profitable newspaper is an increasingly difficult proposition.

The result of this cost pressure has been a dramatic industry shake-out. In Canada, only a handful of cities have more than one daily newspaper, and an increasing number of mid-sized cities don’t have any. Canadian newspaper ownership is highly concentrated: most major English-language dailies are owned by

Postmedia or Torstar. As noted, the CH is an exception, but this means it lacks the deep pockets or opportunities for cross-subsidies that might be available to the bigger firms; the financial pressures of the newspaper business bite more sharply. The situation at the CH thus represents, in particularly stark form, the tensions between running a newspaper business and producing a quality newspaper.

These tensions also relate to the role that journalism plays in a mass democracy. If we want “government by the people” to be effective, then the people should be reasonably well informed about how the system (society) operates. That a functional mass democracy requires a free press is obvious. If reporters are censored or otherwise constrained, or unduly influenced by state officials, then the people (their audience) will not have a clear sense of what is really happening and are more likely to make bad decisions based on that misinformation. But a functional mass democracy also requires responsible journalism. Reporting that is sensationalist, coloured by partisanship or other axes to grind, or not fact-checked, can similarly lead people to make bad decisions. The ways in which the school story seems to have inflamed anti-immigrant sentiment is a case in point.

Professional reporters understand that responsible journalism is ultimately a public trust. A desire to protect that public trust is intimately tied to the HTU’s commitment to maintaining working conditions that will allow them to do their jobs properly. And if this kind of journalism can’t be sustained at the CH, there are serious implications for democracy and good governance in Nova Scotia.

Despite an impressive array of more critical/adversarial/alternative outlets, and with the possible exception of the CBC, only the CH has the depth of resources to provide a more or less authoritative account of provincial happenings. Having such a newspaper of record provides an accurate reflection of what is happening in the province—essential for an informed citizenry, not to mention future historians. It is an important reference point that allows



“Nova Scotians” to be constituted as a distinctive community and identity. Part of how we know who “we” are is by having a common set of stories by, about, and for ourselves.

Another recent attempt to shape a distinctive provincial identity, the influential oneNS Commission Report (aka Ivany Report) proclaims in a bold subhead that “IMMIGRATION IS ESSENTIAL” for the future of the province. The report frets about the number of Nova Scotians who “do not see immigration as the preferred route to population growth.” Its default mode is to scold those Nova Scotians who hold such bad attitudes. But attitudes are cultivated. They flourish, or not, in particular cultural environments. Thus, one ironic outcome of the unprofessional reporting the strike spawned is it shows how business elites’ relentless focus on improving the bottom line can produce just the kind of attitude that the report laments.

In his post on the school story, Bousquet speculates, “The point of publishing the article seems to have been to get content out, possibly content that generates wide discussion, and never mind the ethical considerations.” Attracting eyeballs to advertisers, without regard to broader or longer-term consequences, may be a way to run a profitable content-providing business. But it isn’t a way to run a reputable newspaper.

Sports Reporter Monty Mosher walks the picket line outside the *Chronicle-Herald* building.

PHOTO BY MEL HATTIE

It is true that turning a profit by printing newspapers today seems like trying to fit a square peg into an ever-shrinking round hole. If journalism is a public trust, then the flip side may be that we need a public commitment to sustain journalism. Indeed, Postmedia CEO Paul Godfrey (annual salary: nearly \$2 million) recently suggested to a parliamentary committee that government advertising in newspapers needs to be substantially increased to maintain the viability of the medium. Others have argued more directly that government subsidies are necessary for privately owned newspaper companies to remain profitable.

But there are also alternatives that would allow us to collectively support journalism without further enriching wealthy executives and shareholders in the process. In the ongoing disruption of the newspaper industry we need to keep our eye on the ball. It is responsible, professional journalism—reporters who are insulated from the profit imperative and allowed to do their job with integrity—that is essential to our democracy and needs to be sustained, not corporate profits. **M**

Jeremy Appel

Can unions help Vice stay virtuous?

AT LEAST ostensibly, *Vice* has been an unmitigated success story. What began as the independent *Voice of Montreal* magazine has expanded into a multinational media empire with documentaries, extensive web content, an award-winning HBO series and now a 24-hour news network, *Vice-land*. More recently (and controversially), the PMO gave *Vice News* exclusive access to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's visit to Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, shutting out the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

Heritage Minister Melanie Joly praised *Vice* on CBC's *q*, telling host Shad that the struggling public broadcaster could learn from *Vice*'s "risk taking" approach. Many viewers first became familiar with *Vice* through documentaries such as *Cannibal Warlords of Liberia* and *Ghosts of Aleppo*, where the network sent reporters into conflict zones to cover stories and assume risks that traditional broadcasters weren't taking.

Perhaps nowhere is the vitality of *Vice*'s journalism more on display, in Canada at least, than the ongoing standoff between *Vice News* reporter Ben Makuch and the RCMP, who are demanding he hand over the transcripts of his interview with a suspected ISIS militant. Makuch has stood his ground, risking jail time, based on basic journalistic ethics, and to their credit *Vice News* has stood behind him fully. Forcing a journalist to reveal their sources to law enforcement, they reason, sets a frightening precedent.

At the same time, *Vice* is a lot like its competition—backed by large corporate donors and advertising. *Vice-land* was set up with a \$100-million investment from Rogers Media in Canada, and in the United States *Vice* is partially owned by the likes of Time Warner and Rupert Murdoch's News

Corp. Does this vast corporate sponsorship impact content? At a panel on the future of investigative television at Ryerson University in Toronto, *Vice Canada*'s head of content, Patrick McGuire, flatly denied it does.

"We've never done a deal that would give Rogers a final cut," he said. "They don't even own the content.... They don't have anything to do with our editorial department. I've truthfully never had a story that's been shut down or blocked." McGuire did, however, concede that corporate sponsorship is a "tricky dance."

Charles Davis, a former *Vice* freelancer who currently lives in Quito, Ecuador and writes for *teleSUR*, *The Intercept*, *Al-Jazeera* and other outlets, says the notion that *Vice*'s content is largely unaffected by corporate sponsorship is false.

"A broad range of prose style was allowable," he says in praise of *Vice*'s editorial style. "I could write something serious then not so serious. And you can say things that you couldn't necessarily say at other outlets, like 'U.S. cops are killing people' and 'Israel is doing bad things.'"

On a large number of topics, then, *Vice* contributors appear to have more liberty in their reportage than they would at CNN, for instance. Davis claims he hit the limits of the *Vice* model while pursuing a story on the use of unpaid labour at the 2014 South By Southwest media conference in Austin, Texas.

Vice contributors appear to have more liberty in their reportage than they would at CNN.

"I was in Austin visiting some friends and I noticed in the newspaper that they were advertising for 'volunteer professional photographers,'" he says. "That caught my interest because one of the first pieces I wrote for *Vice* that became a big hit was about unpaid labour in the so-called liberal media."

Davis says that earlier article on the exploitation of volunteer workers made him a sort of go-to-guy for unpaid labour issues, and the story about South by Southwest seemed an ideal fit. "It's a for-profit conference that makes a lot of money, but it's run on the ground by volunteers, people who they sucker in by saying 'don't you want to be a part of this artsy, cultural experience?'" he says. "They kind of play on the idea that if you want money for this, you're being uncool."

But the story hit a snag at the fact-checking stage, says Davis. "He (my editor) told me that the marketing department was not cool with this," he recalls. "*Vice* was putting on a sideshow at South by Southwest where they were partnering with AT&T and Kendrick Lamar was there. The same unpaid workers I was complaining about were working at the *Vice* event."

Davis says *Vice*'s marketing department put the kibosh on the story out of fear of alienating advertisers. "That was my first experience where it wasn't an editorial decision," he says, "but a decision imposed on the editor-in-chief by advertisers." For the record, *Vice*'s New York office told *Capital* the story was killed for "editorial reasons that had nothing to do with AT&T." But Davis says he experienced similar censorship three more times before being shown the door.

Another criticism of *Vice* is its advertorial style, whereby certain content is sponsored by advertisers but appears on the surface to be regular editorial content. Company log-

os were blurred on T-shirts worn in a documentary about the KKK, and in 2014 Vice made a promotional video for the video game *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* that featured an interview with an unsuspecting *New York Times* journalist, David Sanger, who was not told he would be appearing in an ad. While there is meant to be a fairly clear demarcation “between the marketing and advertising department and editorial,” Davis says, “at Vice, part of our 21st century hit media, that line isn’t just blurred but nonexistent.”

Vice is by no means unique in this regard. With the drying up of advertising revenues, many publications and networks are looking at less conventional ways to attract advertisers, including sponsored content. *Politico*, for instance, has come under criticism for its use of advertorial content in its daily “Playbook” newsletter, while Britain’s prestigious *Guardian* newspaper regularly runs “supported” content funded by private entities. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funds the *Guardian’s* global development section, for example.

This blurring of the line between advertising and news is one reason why the Canadian Media Guild (CMG) is in the process of trying to establish a union for Canadian Vice employees.

“We aren’t writing ads, we’re reporting on current events and people expect a certain non-biased viewpoint,” says Carmel Smyth, president of the CMG. “Sometimes things seem to cross that line and having a union gives workers a collective voice to negotiate with a company and to have some kind of journalistic standards in place...where it’s clear what’s journalism and what’s advertising.”

Smyth says the CMG’s unionization efforts are part of a broader trend in the global digital media atmosphere.

“We’re seeing that these online communications organizations are profitable,” she says. “Initially, when it wasn’t clear that these companies were going to be around for a long time, people were working for lower wages and happy to do that. Now that that isn’t the case, they want to have discussions about fairness—



about living an earning wage, about overtime, about control or input into questions regarding journalistic integrity.”

That’s precisely what the Writers’ Guild of America–East (WGAE) accomplished with its successful drive to unionize U.S. Vice employees shortly after its unionization of *Gawker*. In addition to achieving a 29% raise for the 80 Vice employees they represent, WGAE has addressed many workers’ misgivings with advertorial content.

“We’ve inspired the company to issue an editorial policy statement that creates a wall between the business side and the editorial side,” says WGAE President Lowell Peterson. Thanks to the WGAE’s intervention employees cannot be compelled to work on advertorial (or “branded” in the contract’s wording) content if they don’t desire to.

“These were specific gains that people on the bargaining committee felt were important,” Peterson says. “Maybe partly because of its reputation, but also because people feel that for the long-term health of Vice, it’s important to reassure readers that this content is meaningful. Every digital outlet draws the line differently, but our sense is that Vice is drawing the line more carefully now.”

“There are certainly a lot of digital companies that are less transparent about the monetization side than Vice,” says Peterson, adding there was no significant pushback from Vice management on unionization or the guild’s demands. The

Screenshot from the *Vice News* documentary, *The Other Side of Brazil’s World Cup*.

WGAE doesn’t represent workers on *Viceland* or the HBO documentary series, so policies could be quite different on that side.

Davis emphasizes that not all Vice content is affected by its advertorial model. “Vice News is insulated from some of the stuff I had to deal with,” he says. “That partly has to do with the fact that it’s a prestige project. It’s real journalism and so they don’t want to have the meddling there that may compromise that perception. It also doesn’t get as much traffic as vice.com, which is their big advertising platform.”

Vice continues to prove its place in the world of so-called serious journalism through its willingness to challenge powerful interests and stand up for journalistic integrity, as the Makuch affair demonstrates. On the other hand, its reputation is greatly diminished when stories are cancelled or altered to impress advertisers and promote branded content. Requests for comment on this article from Vice’s director of communications, Jake Goldman, went unanswered. Goldman told the *Washington Post* in March that criticism of Vice’s alleged coziness with advertisers is based on “old or inaccurate (information with) absolutely no bearing on how we operate today.” He declined the *Post’s* request to elaborate. **M**



Robert Hackett

ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA FORTNER

Media reform and climate action

Why the two causes need each other and deserve public policy support

FOR ACTIVE citizens concerned about the climate crisis, democratic media reform may not seem like a priority. Likewise, media reformers might not think of climate activists as their most obvious allies. In fact both campaigns would be strengthened by working together. Because research shows that how climate change is reported determines how the public responds to calls for change. To the extent that change will require challenging powerful entrenched interests, for example by keeping some of Canada's carbon-intensive fuels in the ground, it will be even harder to achieve if control of the agenda-setting media remains tied to commercial imperatives and concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

These conclusions are reinforced by a study for the CCPA's Climate Justice Project in which I was a co-investigator. An initial report of our findings is available on the CCPA website as *News Media and Climate Politics: Civic Engagement and Political Efficacy in a Climate of Reluctant Cynicism* (September 2015). Members of the research team, which included Kathleen Cross, Shane Gunster, Marcelina Piotrowski and Shannon Daub, conducted focus groups with randomly selected individuals who claim to be worried about human-caused climate change but are not yet politically engaged. As expressed in the report's introduction:

The overwhelming initial response of our participants to news about climate

politics was cynicism. While there was a strong desire for more aggressive political action to address climate change, virtually all expressed considerable skepticism that governments, corporations or their fellow citizens could be convinced of the need to address the problem. Even more troubling was the tendency of many participants to dismiss collective action and political engagement as irrelevant.

These findings are similar to recent U.S. research by Anthony Leiserowitz and his colleagues at the Yale Centre for Climate Change Communication and George Mason University. Their 2014 study suggested that pub-

lic opinion in the U.S. is divided into “Six Americas.” A substantial number (43%) fall into the two groups of people who say they are “alarmed” and “concerned” about climate change, and yet they are less vocal—in the news and in public engagement—than the much smaller group (27%) of Americans who are “doubtful” or “dismissive.” The political engagement of climate-concerned citizens could make all the difference. So what’s the blockage?

In part, coverage of climate change may be helping to breed apathy, cynicism and pessimism. Our focus group participants did not react well to most mainstream news on this issue, which in Canada typically focused on the failures of conventional climate politics. (A Rutgers study of four major U.S. newspapers similarly found that pro-climate action tended to be portrayed as unsuccessful or costly.)

For example, Gunster’s 2011 study, published in the *Canadian Journal of Communication*, points out how daily coverage in Vancouver’s mainstream media of the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit highlights some of the characteristics that turn people off climate politics. Arguments in favour of political solutions were framed by the news as means to avoiding climate change’s damaging effects; little attention was paid to the positive impacts of environmental initiatives (e.g., green jobs). Most of the time, jobs were pitted against environmental protection, as if one sacrificed the other.

Abstract calls for pro-climate policies were counterbalanced in news stories with pessimistic and specific accounts of governments’ failures to enact them, and these failures were framed as the largely inevitable outcome of selfish and narrow political interest among governments and middle-class voters. Climate denialism wasn’t the problem—a cynical and pessimistic framing of the potential for political action was.

In interviews with the Climate Justice Project, Vancouver-area environmental communicators in advocacy groups and independent media expanded on these themes. They found

news to be compartmentalized, episodic and fragmented, failing to connect the dots between, for example, Canada’s breakneck exploitation of fossil fuels and global warming. Media rely on too narrow a range of institutionally located sources. Environmental conflicts are presented in disempowering ways, as a two-sided tug of war between competing elites in which average citizens are sidelined as spectators.

News focuses on disasters rather than positive change agents and creative solutions. When solutions are addressed it’s more about technology and voluntaristic green consumerism than collective approaches and policy options. There’s little attention to who bears responsibility for climate change, and critical analysis of the fossil fuel industries is in short supply. Overall our respondents said the editorial environment favours economic growth, consumerism and private sector interests.

What does better news look like?

What kind of news would be more likely to engage people who are concerned about climate change, and to motivate them to take action? As summarized in the *News Media and Climate Politics* report, the focus groups offered important clues.

Pro-climate news would celebrate political action by ordinary citizens. Stories of entrepreneurial activism and everyday heroism provide concrete examples of the connection between individual and collective political action. News articles would tell success stories about climate politics—from citizen action to public policies that have worked in other jurisdictions—to counteract cynicism and counterbalance reports of the failures of conventional politics.

The focus of these stories would be strongly local. They might ask: how is our community connected with the causes, impacts and solutions associated with climate change? Political engagement would be normalized, treated as something that ordi-

nary people do. Descriptive stories of neighbours doing climate politics provide an easier point of entry to political engagement than prescriptive injunctions that induce guilt or cynicism. And news could provide more concrete “procedural knowledge” about how to take political action.

Interviews with experienced environmental advocates and journalists in Vancouver add further nuances. Conflict can be presented in ways that evoke outrage and mobilization rather than paralysis and cynicism, for example by using the classic movement-building tactics of identifying grievances, enemies, allies and solutions. U.S. environmentalist Bill McKibben has used this strategy effectively, identifying the fossil fuel industry as the prime target for change, and launching 350.org, which has spearheaded the international divestment campaign.

The concept of climate justice could provide a meta-frame that connects the dots for climate crisis reporting. It is based on the premise that those who have benefited the most from (or contributed the most to) atmospheric dumping should shoulder the responsibility for redressing the climate crisis—especially since those most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change had the least responsibility for creating them.

Applied to journalism, climate justice suggests a reflexive and critical monitoring of climate policies and impacts. It invokes greater attention to climate disruption in the most vulnerable parts of the world, and raises the question of who benefits or suffers from high-emission economic development. It inspires linkage between events that conventional news often compartmentalizes, like free trade agreements and locally sustainable economies. And it posits climate crisis as an ethical question, not just another political controversy.

Again, the key problem is not climate science denialism or a lack of information about climate change. Simply shovelling more data at people won’t inspire them to act. Rather, the main blockage is a “hope gap,”

a discrepancy between the scale of the challenge and the sense of efficacy that ordinary people need as a basis for real engagement. With these findings in mind, let's now turn to the connections between climate activism and democratic media reform.

Why corporate media tend to be anti-climate

The contradiction between media commercialism and such democratic values as equality and informed participation has motivated media reform organizations in a number of countries. Prominent examples include Free Press and Media Alliance in the U.S., the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and the Media Reform Coalition in the U.K., New Zealand's Coalition for Better Broadcasting, and OpenMedia here in Canada. Many of the factors that make for "bad news" on the environment reflect longstanding critiques brought forward by these groups and others.

Consumer sovereignty, the idea that media give people what they want, is a key rationalization for a commercial media system. But while good work is done in some corners of the corporate media world, mainstream news outlets generally embed biases that are inimical to environmental communication. Their primary market is traditionally advertisers, not media consumers. This generates pressure for content to be compatible with consumerism, and to appeal to appropriate demographics, privileging affluent consumers over the less well-heeled who are disproportionately the victims of ecological degradation. Market-driven media are not likely to give the latter group a prominent voice.

The evolving mediascape of online commercial journalism does not promise much better, despite the technical potential of the Internet for explanatory and solutions-oriented journalism. Editorial decision-makers can now instantly determine what type of stories attract the most "click-throughs" (unique visitors). Future content is influenced by running

stories that will maximize "clicks," typically celebrity gossip and sensational statements rather than more substantial news relevant to democracy and political efficacy.

Given its complex and sometimes disquieting nature, climate policy journalism may be a "merit good," somewhat like organic vegetables in that people may not be prepared to pay enough to finance its production even though they understand the long-term benefits. To be sure, crowdfunding through the Internet can help support individual bloggers and small-scale journalism organizations. But it is not clear that donations from already supportive individuals can expand climate journalism with the speed and scale needed. Besides, fundraising already occupies too much of independent media's energies, according to Robert McChesney and John Nichols, coauthors of *The Death and Life of American Journalism*.

Scholars are increasingly arguing that news produced by the media has some of the characteristics of a *public good*—a good that is difficult to commodify because it is non-rivalrous (one person's consumption of the news does not detract from another's) and non-excludable (it is difficult to deny access to "free riders" who have not paid for it). Public goods are thus notably difficult to produce through market mecha-

nisms. Textbook examples are roads, streetlamps and national defence. Consumers can obtain a great deal of news (from environmental blogs to advertising-supported commuter dailies and urban weeklies to word of mouth) without direct charge.

Moreover, quality journalism provides *positive externalities*—benefits that accrue to people and society beyond the buyers and sellers directly involved in the transaction. Suggestively, comparative research by Toril Aalberg, James Curran and their colleagues (*How Media Inform Democracy*) has demonstrated a positive relationship between the strength of a country's public service (as distinct from commercial) broadcasting system, and the population's level of political knowledge and participation. And yet, although society benefits from such engagement, there are no obvious marketplace purchases whereby individuals can help pay for the costs of producing it.

Like other public goods generating positive externalities, journalism has never been fully financed by direct market transactions. In Canada and the U.S., the news has been subsidized by advertising for much of the past century. Unfortunately, however, advertising helps create "a set of cultural conditions that makes us less inclined to deal with climate change," so that "a media and telecommunications industry fuelled by advertising and profit maximization is, at the moment, part of the problem rather than part of the solution," according to Tammy Boyce and Justin Lewis in *Climate Change and the Media*.

Moreover, that business model is in serious trouble as advertising and audiences migrate to the Internet. Marketers no longer need to subsidize journalism as a "free lunch" to attract audiences. Journalism is arguably becoming a case of "market failure," a concept deriving from conventional neoclassical economics to describe a scenario, as Victor Pickard puts it in *America's Battle for Media Democracy*, "in which the market is unable to efficiently produce and allocate resources, especially public goods. This often occurs when pri-

Again, the key problem is not climate science denialism or a lack of information about climate change. Simply shovelling more data at people won't inspire them to act.

vate enterprise withholds investments in critical social services because it cannot extract the returns that would justify the necessary expenditures, or when consumers fail to pay for such services' full societal benefit."

Beyond the crisis of journalism's business model, however, climate crisis journalism faces additional barriers of institutional structure, class power and ideology that go well beyond conventional economic notions of market failure. As Naomi Klein argues in *This Changes Everything*, taking global warming seriously requires a positive role for government, a strengthened public sector and collective action, all of which is precisely why the neoliberal right-wing (especially in the U.S.) prefers not to take it seriously.

A similar ideological animus might apply to dominant media. After all, ecologically destructive capital logic fuels the need for the media to attract profitable upscale audiences, the commercial media's symbiotic relationship with the growth of middle-class urban consumerism in global capitalism's "emerging economies" like China and India, and the project of colonizing popular imagination with consumerist lifestyles. Sustained critical attention to over-consumption, especially from a climate justice perspective, is not exactly compatible with those logics.

In her book, *Journalism in Crisis*, Nuria Almiron sees a qualitative leap in the recent integration of news media with contemporary capitalism. As finance capital comes to dominate the industrial sphere, corporate media prioritize financial information and services at the expense of journalism, and become speculative actors themselves, desperate to increase profits and revenues. The growing concentration and globalization of news media ownership, and the expansion of a global public relations industry with sophisticated media strategies, are further structural barriers, yielding an emphasis on human interest, celebrity and entertainment-oriented reporting at the expense of complex issues like climate crisis, according to environ-

mental communication scholar Alison Anderson (*Sociology Compass*).

Sociologist Wallace Clement's landmark 1975 study of power in Canada suggested multi-level links between the economic elite (senior executives and directors of major corporations) and media executives and owners. Through old-boy networks, interlocking directorships, corporate-dependent media revenue streams, and shared political perspectives, social backgrounds and career patterns, media and economic elites are fused into a cohesive corporate elite that wields financial and ideological power. (Forty years on, the "corporate mapping project," led by the University of Victoria, the CCPA and the Parkland Institute, is updating and expanding an important aspect of this work—the impact of fossil fuel corporations on Canada's economy, democracy and culture.)

One relevant example of such influence is the reported backroom deal in 2014 between Postmedia, Canada's largest newspaper chain, and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP). Under the heading "Thought Leadership," the plan was to yield advertorials focussing on fossil fuel energy. Topics were to be directed by CAPP but written by Postmedia staff, with 12 single-page "Joint Ventures" in 13 major Canadian newspapers. Tellingly, Postmedia readers found out about the proposed deal in the small but groundbreaking independent *Vancouver Observer*.

Does such collusion between Big Media and Big Carbon really matter? Occasionally, social justice activists dismiss Canada's major media corporations as irrelevant "legacy" media, believing everything to be fine because they have their own websites and digital networks. Would that it were so. Dwayne Winseck's research on this issue demonstrates the continued reach and concentrated ownership of the major media (see his article in this section). They may now share news dissemination with corporate-owned "social media" (better termed "digital connective networks"), but the corporate press continues to influence public policy

discourse and agendas. Traditional media corporations have extended their presence onto the Internet, and they supply much of the information that is the basis for the blogosphere's opinion merchants.

Conversely, the dependence of social justice groups on digital media makes communication policy principles (such as affordable, uncensored Internet access, as advocated by OpenMedia) directly relevant to their work. According to research by Thomas Poell and Jose van Dijck in the *Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media*, excessive dependence on social media leads social movements to reproduce some of the most problematic aspects of traditional media politics. Spectacle and event orientation take precedent over elaborated explanations, solution building and other aspects of pro-climate journalism as discussed above.

Alternative media for progressive climate politics

There are good examples of engaging pro-climate reporting in the for-profit media. For instance, in the city of Burnaby, British Columbia, the community paper *Burnaby Now* has provided fair and detailed coverage of the controversy surrounding the proposed expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline, storage facilities and tanker traffic, a project connected with the expansion of the Alberta tar sands. The community's active engagement against the proposal was normalized and portrayed respectfully. (Disclosure: a neighbour and I were featured in a front page photo showing the beautiful landscape we considered to be at risk.)

But on the whole, journalism subordinated to corporate imperatives will generally be muted on an issue that implicitly evokes the need for collective action beyond the constraints of market relations, consumerism and property rights. Instead, effective climate justice communication is more likely to be nurtured in independent/alternative media. In

addition to shared grievances, alternative media are a second point of connection between climate activism and media reform because they struggle at the margins of the mediascape. They would benefit from public policy that offset the systemic biases of market-driven media. And they can provide models of journalism that can influence larger media.

Fortunately, there are living examples of such media in Canada, particularly online. Nationally, *rabble.ca* has been offering moderately left-of-centre views since 2001. Vancouver is home to several outlets that emphasize pro-environment news. For example, *The Tyee* has offered investigative, analytical and solutions-oriented reportage on energy issues and much else since 2003, and competes well with the lacklustre corporate Vancouver dailies for readership. The *Vancouver Observer*, founded in 2006, provides bloggers and reporters with a platform on the environment and other issues, often telling stories from human interest and women's perspectives, such as its series on life in the tar sands epicentre of Fort McMurray. *DeSmog.ca* is an online news magazine "dedicated to cutting through the spin clouding the debate on energy and environment," challenging climate science denialism and Big Carbon's public relations machinery.

There's much debate about boundaries, purposes and even the label "alternative" media. Many journalists in non-corporate media prefer the term "independent," with their role being not to promote social change as such, but to do better citizen-oriented journalism than is typically offered in conventional media. Whatever term you prefer, the research literature suggests that quintessential "alternative" media would have some of the following characteristics:

- ▶ **Oppositional or counter-hegemonic content**, including alternative frames; coverage of issues, events, and perspectives that are marginalized or ignored by conventional media; and criteria of newsworthiness that emphasize the threats that the

Journalism subordinated to corporate imperatives will generally be muted on an issue that implicitly evokes the need for collective action beyond the constraints of market relations, consumerism and property rights.

established order poses to subaltern groups (rather than vice versa);

- ▶ **Participatory production processes**, such as horizontal communication (both within news organizations, and with readers and audiences); and communicative relationships that both reduce the gap between producers and users, and empower ordinary people to engage in public discourse;

- ▶ **Mobilization-orientation**, or a positive orientation toward progressive social change, and productive connections with (but not subordination to) social movements;

- ▶ **Localism and engagement with communities** whether defined in terms of shared locale or shared interests;

- ▶ **Independence from state and corporate control**, and from commercial imperatives; and often under individual or co-operative ownership; and

- ▶ **Low degree of capitalization**, i.e., entry costs are low enough to enable under-resourced communities to gain a public voice.

These characteristics mesh well with climate crisis journalism that would seek to inform and mobilize counter-publics, engage local communities and challenge entrenched power. While surprisingly little scholarship discusses the role of alternative media in climate change communication, some of the most relevant research has been conducted in Canada by Shane Gunster.

In his above-mentioned analysis of how mainstream and alternative media in British Columbia reported the 2009 Copenhagen climate negotiations, Gunster concluded that alternative media offered more optimistic and engaged visions of climate politics than the cynical, pessimistic and largely spectatorial accounts that dominated conventional news. While alternative media were deeply critical of the spectacular failure of "politics as usual" at that summit, they invited the public to respond with outrage and (collective) action rather than (individualized) despair and hopelessness. Informed by a deeper, more sophisticated and broadly sympathetic exploration of the multiplicity of climate activisms, alternative media (re)positioned political action as a meaningful and accessible response to climate change.

In a companion study of a year's worth of climate change coverage in alternative media, *Climate Change Politics: Communication and Public Engagement*, Gunster argued that their more optimistic framing was largely due to consistent attention to inspirational stories and concrete examples of civic activism and engagement, political struggle, innovative and effective public policy, and transformative change in communities, institutions and governments. In short, alternative media ran stories of political success that can sustain and invigorate feelings of hope.

Policy support for democratic media

The challenge is how to scale up the best practices and frames of such independent media to

the point where they can influence “mainstream” public discourse, given that the economic forces noted above not only favour commercialized media, but also make sustainability difficult for independent, non-commercial, alternative media.

Neither the content nor the demographics of independents are attractive to advertisers. Politicians and other newsmakers often deny these media quotes or access to news events. Alternative magazines don't enjoy much access to the semi-monopolistic distribution networks (you won't often see *Canadian Dimension* at supermarket checkout counters). They don't have the cross-media resources to promote their websites competitively with corporate media. They typically rely on volunteer labour, grants and donations, and de facto subsidization from institutional sponsors including foundations and trade unions. As York University's David Skinner notes, even *The Tyee*, one of Canada's most successful alternative independent news organizations, “still struggles financially.”

While alternative media are economically precarious, they add diversity to the media system, fill the growing gaps in local news and provide public voice for groups, topics and perspectives marginalized in dominant media. There is thus a strong democratic rationale for pub-

lic policy support for alternative and independent media. What might this support look like in Canada?

How about charitable status for non-profit news organizations? Or a Citizenship News Voucher, as proposed by U.S. economist Dean Baker, whereby taxpayers can contribute \$200 toward the non-profit news outlet of their choice? International examples offer more inspiration for policy reform:

- ▶ Facilitate the formation of trusts, like the one that publishes the *Guardian* in the U.K., a global leader in campaigning for climate action.
- ▶ Achieve cross-subsidization within the media system to support non-profit public service media through small taxes on profit-oriented sectors like telecommunications services, cable television subscriptions or media advertising.
- ▶ Charge commercial broadcasters for their licensed use of the public spectrum.
- ▶ Revitalize public service broadcasting, as the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting advocate.
- ▶ Remove community access television from the grip of the cable monopolies and instead require them to fund multimedia community access centres, as the Canadian Association

of Community Television Users and Stations (CACTUS) recommends.

Such policies revolve around subsidies, incentives and infrastructure support. They need to be operated at arms' length from government to avoid political interference. Canada, after all, has ample experience in supporting public broadcasting, magazines, the arts, and television and film production through public institutions or programs.

In the past decade, despite the bitter winds of a neoliberal political environment, media reform organizations in the U.S. and Canada have been able to mobilize people and win some regulatory victories, particularly in telecommunications. Starting almost from scratch, OpenMedia and Free Press have each attracted hundreds of thousands of supporters. A corporate-dominated media system is not inevitable or immutable.

But I'm not advocating for particular policies or organizations. Rather, the point is that media reformers and environmentalists could find common ground in favouring public policy support of alternative media and independent journalism as important pillars of democracy and climate communication. Through greener media, a greener planet. **M**

We're calling on you! Literally.

From July 18 until September 16, you'll have the chance to boost the impact of your CCPA donation.

How? We'll be reaching out by phone to give you the chance to optimize your gift.

**Answer the call.
Make your donation go further.**

For more information, please contact Jason Moores at 613-563-1341 ext. 312.



Shamelessly independent

Abigail Kidd talks to Sheila Sampath about her magazine's place in the media universe

S **HAMELESS** magazine's total independence from the mainstream, and importantly from capital, has been key to its survival in an increasingly concentrated, homogenous media environment. Feminist, anti-capitalist, activist—*Shameless* speaks to the next generation, guided by principles of anti-oppression and social justice. Sheila Sampath joined *Shameless* a decade ago and has been the magazine's editorial and art director since 2010. Abigail Kidd connected with her recently to talk about the evolution of the project and the power of volunteer journalism.

Abigail: So, what is *Shameless* and how has it changed over time?

Sheila: *Shameless* started as an alternative magazine in the wake of magazines like *Sassy*. There was a politic to it, but it wasn't necessarily activist. Then one editor stepped back and we got a new one and for a time it was pretty feminist, but a type of feminism that I didn't always feel super comfortable with. A very white-cis feminism. So in 2010 we rewrote the mandate of *Shameless* and decided that if we were going to be a feminist magazine, let's be a feminist magazine. A part of that means being anti-capitalist, having a de-colonial approach, centring voices of colour, centring queer voices, being trans-inclusive.... And then engaging in ongoing processes of reflection. I think in that moment, more than being an editorial project it really became an activist project. Editorial was how we did our activism, but doing *Shameless* became a form of doing activism in itself. And I think the attitude shifted a lot.



"Doing *Shameless* became a form of doing activism in itself," says editor Sheila Sampath.

Abigail: I see *Shameless* as particularly good at exposing young people to perspectives they aren't likely to access in mainstream media, to validate their experiences...

Sheila: A lot of us remember what it's like to be a teenager facing multiple forms of oppression. I think everyone at *Shameless* falls into this category. We remember what it's like to be alienated by media. Being a teen is really hard. And it's a phase of life when you're navigating huge systemic issues. You're navigating them in ways that are really deeply personal, and you don't necessarily have access to the language, the resources, the knowledge to know that what you're dealing with isn't about you. So when we talk about things like body image in teens, you're actually navigating issues of patriarchy, racism, fatphobia and all this stuff, but the way you experience it when you're 13 or 14 years old is you feel like there's something wrong with you, you feel unhappy.... I think all of us having faced multiple oppressions really remember that. To

us there are a lot of forms of activism that are really important, but meeting folks where they are at and providing those entry points to knowledge about those systems is why we exist.

Abigail: Would you say, then, that *Shameless* is partially a response to a lack of diversity in media?

Sheila: I think that when we see diversity in the media normally it comes from a place of tokenization. A newspaper or magazine might have one black columnist, or say we have a staff POC (person of colour) writer, or staff queer person that writes about queer issues. But the ownership and the agency is still in the hands of dominant groups. So *Shameless* is in part a response to representation, but also to this idea of ownership and the centring of voices. Moving beyond tokenistic inclusion toward meaningful inclusion.



Abigail: So who owns *Shameless*?

Sheila: Well, we have no capital, so there's no actual material ownership. It's a 100% volunteer-run organization, primarily led by queer folks of colour. All of us have very intersecting identities and are working from places of those experiences. We also last year founded a youth advisory board and so a part of our longer-term mandate is to shift ownership, in terms of production of the magazine, from adults to youth. So the only paid positions at *Shameless* are our youth advisory board positions, which pay a very small amount.... This is our first year doing the youth advisory board, but we do skill shares with them and develop editorial skill sets and arts-based skills sets with them, and they also contribute to the leadership of the magazine.

Abigail: This issue of the *Monitor* tackles the state of Canada's news and cultural media. Canada currently has one of the most concentrated media environments in the world—that has had an impact on *Shameless*?

Sheila: *Shameless* started off as a response to media in a lot of ways, to that concentration. Actually, it was founded as an alternative magazine in direct opposition to mass media that was targeted specifically at young women at the time. I think we've moved past that in a lot of ways. We're less of a response to

mass media then we were 10 years ago. Now we're more of a speculative project on its own. Rather than trying to respond to something we're an alternative to it.

Our demographic is really specific. We're not actually competing for the masses. So it's not so much of a market-based approach for us as much as it is a political project. So that concentration, it makes us relevant in a lot of ways. Because the more concentration you have, the fewer voices you have. A lot of what we're trying to do is...actually centre marginalized voices. I think ideally it would be great to live in a world where *Shameless* doesn't have to exist as an activist project.

I think sometimes when we talk about media, we talk about the number of hits on a website, or the number of readers. And I think for *Shameless*, and a part of why this project continued, is our metrics are quite different. We're really small and

We're not actually competing for the masses. So it's not so much of a market-based approach for us as much as it is a political project.

we're fine being small, and I think we don't necessarily need or want to be the dominant mainstream voice. We want to speak to that youth that is feeling like shit.... Our scales are a lot smaller because for us it's deeply personal and we can all relate to that feeling of seeing yourself erased through mainstream media.

Abigail: You've talked about the freedom of being independent. What about the challenges?

Sheila: I think the challenge is that we don't have money, which does limit who can access the project. I think that we represent a lot of neglected diversities of people amongst our staff, but we are also all people who can afford to work for free.... The opportunities that come from that are independence. We're accountable to our community, but we're not accountable to a funder.

I think being independent has been part of what has allowed *Shameless* to be really strong, because we're guided by a politic and a feminist process, and we're not so much guided by being accountable to a body that doesn't necessarily share those politics. We have a mandate that guides our editorial and our advertisers. Capitalism doesn't work in a way that's ever going to favour feminist media or an anti-capitalist project. I think the pros that come from that outweigh the cons enough for us to keep going. **M**

Paul Weinberg

Out of control

The Harper government set gun control back a decade. Will the Liberals put Canada back on track?

ON JULY 17, 2010, a squad of Mounties was called to a home in Okotoks, Alberta, just south of Calgary, where 39-year-old Corey Lewis had barricaded himself in. Earlier, Lewis had knocked down his wife, Naydene, and punched a teenaged stepson in the face, causing both to flee with the couple's younger daughter. After a six-hour standoff, Lewis was eventually shot and killed on his doorstep early Sunday morning. The police officers thought he was carrying one of five long-barreled guns they had seen earlier inside the home. In a strange twist, it turned out Lewis was holding a black umbrella he'd taped to his hands before stepping outside.

In her public fatality report about the incident, released in January this year, Alberta judge Marlene Graham said, "I do find that Mr. Lewis's possession of the five long-barreled guns was an integral part of the event leading to his death." Graham's summary highlighted a loosey-goosey gun regulation regime in Canada where even the police seem unclear about how to enforce existing laws.

Lewis's primary hobby involved guns, which he kept unloaded (without ammunition) and "secured properly" in the master bedroom. He also had a history of mental illness, including one attempted suicide. In 2007, Lewis was temporarily removed from the family home by a court's emergency protection order (EPO) in response to domestic abuse allegations that included an assault on another stepson. Graham wrote that Lewis had been licensed for the guns by the Chief Firearms Officer of Alberta, the official ultimately responsible for carrying out the federal Firearms Act in the province. A CFO can

deny a license on the grounds that a person is a threat to themselves or to others.

Annie Delisle, a spokesperson for the RCMP-administered Canadian Firearms Program, declined to comment directly on the Lewis case, but she maintains that gun licence applicants are asked about past criminal convictions, behavioral problems and court orders. "Since 2007, enhanced security screening has been in place to assist chief firearms officers (CFOs) in determining the eligibility of firearms licence applicants," she says. Graham's report, however, sheds doubt on whether the reforms have been sufficient.

"I find that the screening process used to grant the gun licenses to Mr. Lewis lacked diligence and common sense and gives me no sense of assurance that public safety, which is the purpose of the Firearms Act, was being sufficiently emphasized throughout the process," she stated. Will a new government in Ottawa heed the lesson?

Incrementalism, deregulation and confusion

Gun control was strengthened incrementally in Canada through legislation introduced between the 1970s and 1990s by previous Liberal governments. From licensing rules and gun classification to the long-gun registry, the aim was to assist the police in their criminal investigations where weapons were involved. Then came the Harper government, which dismantled key elements of the regime during its 10 years in power.

There is a chance this legacy of deregulation will endure. Justin Trudeau's Liberal government has



firmly stated the national long-gun registry is not coming back. Both opposition parties are more or less in agreement on that point. The use of illegal handguns in gang killings in major cities like Toronto may be a major concern to local police departments. And the office of Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale says it wants “to get handguns and assault weapons off our streets.” But with only 156 gun-related homicides in Canada in 2014 (about a third of all homicides; nowhere near the scale of the problem in the United States), this is not high on the federal political radar.

Gun control advocates like Wendy Cukier say it should be because of the everyday presence of millions of ordinary unrestricted rifles and shotguns (long guns) in Canadian homes that can be used to kill, injure or threaten in situations involving domestic violence, suicides or the shooting of police officers. In a recent Shelter Voices survey of 1,760 women in 234 Canadian shelters and transition houses, 110 had fled male partners after being threatened with a gun.

Police investigations into gun-related crime got a boost in 1995 with the passage of legislation to create a digital, Canada-wide unrestricted long-gun registry. Essentially it was a searchable database for tracking weapons found at crime scenes, like the system that has existed for restricted handguns and semi-automatic long guns since the 1930s.

In 2011, the long-gun registry was eliminated, its 7.1 million records destroyed by the Harper government, all to fulfil a promise to gun enthusiasts in rural and western ridings who chafed at the perceived bureaucratic intrusion. During a March 2015 interview with the *National Post*, Harper argued it was also about self-defence. “My wife’s from a rural area,” he said. “Gun ownership wasn’t just for the farm. It was also for a certain level of security when you’re a ways from immediate police assistance.”

Tipping the public attitude against the gun registry, at least in English-speaking Canada, was its original price tag: Jean Chretien’s Liberal government spent \$1 billion to set it up. Blake Brown, historian and au-

thor of *Arming and Disarming: A History of Gun Control in Canada* (2012), says from that point on, gun control and the long-gun registry were associated, unfairly, with the word “boondoggle” in the Canadian public’s mind.

Yet there is evidence the long-gun registry functioned well, says Étienne Blais, a University of Montreal criminologist. “There was a 5–10% drop in long-gun homicides because of the gun registry across Canada and it was more pronounced in Western Canada where there is a higher homicide rate,” he says.

Blais argues that measures such as registration and background checks can reduce gun deaths and keep firearms out of the hands of troubled people who may, on impulse, resort to shooting themselves if there is a gun close at hand. Within the 10% of people who kill themselves using guns, 85% of the time it is with a long gun, he explains.

Blais supported a bill that passed in June in Quebec’s national assembly to resurrect a long-gun registry for that province. This spring, Quebec’s Liberal majority government held legislative hearings that saw pro-gun and gun-control groups butting heads. The new registry is potentially costly because it has to be built from the ground up after the province failed in its legal appeal to preserve the Quebec population’s portion of the national registry records. Still, Blais is confident there is widespread support for the bill in Quebec where he says gun ownership is low.

Cukier, president of the Coalition for Gun Control, was at the hearings in Quebec City to support the provincial registry. She describes the Harper government’s actions on the national long-gun registry as “vindictive” and “painful,” but is unwilling to give up on the cause. “After 25 years, those who have spoken of gun control are pretty worn out and it’s been difficult to remobilize the next generation,” she says.

Gun control advocates, especially in the women’s movement, were spurned to action by the massacre, in December 1989, of 14 women at Montreal’s École Polytechnique. Marc Lépine used a precision hunting rifle, the Ruger Mini-14 (pictured), which is today classified as a legal unrestricted weapon, easy to access in Quebec.

“We’ve had to basically start from scratch because the journalists have changed and the politicians have changed,” Cukier says.

Another point of contention is the RCMP’s ability to restrict or prohibit guns through orders-in-council. It was Pierre Trudeau’s government that first classified guns as unrestricted, restricted and prohibited (see box), which annoyed wealthy gun collectors, says A.J. Somerset, the London, Ontario-based author of *Arms: The Culture and the Credo of the Gun* (2015), and the owner of three guns.

“Major collectors tend to support the gun lobby groups for the simple reason that their collections are of

Weapon Classification

Almost two million Canadians are licensed to buy and own guns, according to the RCMP. There are three categories of weapons under the Firearms Act:

- ▶ Unrestricted guns such as rifles and shotguns are commonly used by most licensed gun owners in Canada for hunting and sports shooting.
- ▶ Restricted guns include semi-automatic weapons and certain handguns, which carry stronger requirements for a demonstrated need. They are used by a smaller number of licensed gun owners for target shooting or for the purpose of collecting. People in jobs requiring personal protection, such as policing, are permitted to use restricted guns.
- ▶ A prohibited category includes handguns and automatic-firing long guns.

great financial value and they fear losing that investment,” he says. “If the government bans a specific group of guns, as they did in the ‘90s with pistols having barrels less than four inches, then the collector stands to lose a lot of money.”

Under pressure from the gun lobby, the Harper government shifted responsibility for firearm classification from the police to the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee. It was one of several controversial provisions in the Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act. The new committee ended up embarrassing the Harper government when it came out for the abolition of the Firearms Act, says Somerset. Sensing public outrage, Harper removed some of the pro-gun activists from the committee and replaced them with police representatives.

Two months after its electoral victory in October, the Liberal government had the advisory committee disbanded, vowing to broaden its membership to include women’s groups, public health experts and lawyers. In addition, spokespersons for Public Safety Minister Goodale claimed the government will “put decision-making about weapons classifications back in the hands of police, who are the experts in these matters.”

The reforms, if and when they happen, would come amid some alarming trends, as Cukier points out. In February, *iPolitics* reported a sharp increase in the number of restricted weapons in the hands of licensed gun owners, from about 400,000 in 2005 to about 726,000 in 2014, as documented in this year’s report of the federal Commissioner of Firearms. (Judge Graham wrote that Corey Lewis had restricted firearms in his possession.)

Cukier wants gun classifications brought up to date. Fifty calibre sniper rifles, which can fire on a two-kilometre range, and certain semi-automatics have ended up in the unrestricted classification, she says. “So while [the unrestricted category] is intended to be primarily rifles and shotguns [it] has not been rigorously applied.”

The litmus test for the Trudeau government’s commitment to gun regulation, she says, will be whether gun stores are required to record

sales of unrestricted long guns as they must for restricted firearms. (Since the abolition of the long-gun registry, there is no obligation for stores to take down details of their transactions beyond warranty information for new guns.) Cukier’s preferred solution is quite modest.

“The volumes in a point-of-sale tracking system are very different. Registering all guns requires about seven million transactions. Tracking sales is probably less than 500,000 per year.”

Answering the gun lobby

Whatever the Liberals choose to do on the gun issue they will have to contend with the Canadian Shooting Sports Association (CSSA), this country’s version of the National Rifle Association. They are the one group in a fractured Canadian gun movement that engages regularly with politicians in Ottawa, observes Somerset.

When reached on the telephone, CSSA President Tony Bernardo expresses strong opposition to the police having any veto powers on gun usage. He is concerned about what he calls the “absolute God-power” of the CFO to close down target gun ranges. And he defends the sniper rifle: “People have been buying them in the stores for 120 years. There is nothing new; this is just a bolt-action rifle that shoots real good. This is exactly the same as a deer rifle, there is no difference.”

Over the past decade, Bernardo has advised both the Liberals and Conservatives on gun regulation, including the controversial Bill 42. He sat on the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee until it was disbanded in December 2015. Bernardo calls Cukier’s gun sales tracking proposal “half-assed” and a “backdoor” registry. Today’s minimal gun regulatory regime is sufficient for the police to do their job, he maintains.

If the police officers want to trace a weapon in a crime scene, argues Bernardo, they can use the serial number markings to contact the gun’s original manufacturer, which can lead them ultimately to the gun shop, which can be subpoenaed to pro-

duce the names of the person who owns the gun in question. “There isn’t a single [gun] seller that I know that doesn’t record the information.”

But there are plenty of holes in Bernardo’s argument, say supporters of gun control. For one thing, as Blais notes, the absence of a gun registry makes it easier for lawful gun owners to sell their weapons to people, especially criminals, who are not licensed to carry weapons. The gun lobbyist is just creating barriers to police investigations.

“The gun registry can be consulted in a preventive way. You can consult the registry to make sure you [are restricting] all guns [to certain individuals] and make sure that gun transfers involve persons allowed to own guns,” says Blais. “I would also say that the registry makes things easier. You do not need to go through all the steps mentioned by Bernardo.”

Surprisingly, for a gun owner, Somerset also criticizes Bernardo’s proposition. “The irony here is that in the United States, federal firearms licence holders (the equivalent of our licensed firearms businesses) are required by law to keep records of their sales. So the U.S. now tracks sales of firearms more effectively than does Canada.” Somerset also expresses some doubts about the current classification of the .50 calibre sniper rifle, which he says has “no reasonable hunting application.

“They do have legitimate application in long-range target shooting but there is concern over potential misuse, given that they can easily go through light armor. Whether these rifles ought to be restricted is a thorny question. They are extremely expensive, and none has been used in a crime in this country to my knowledge, but it is a legitimate debate.”

Minister Goodale declined to be interviewed for this article, and at press time the Department of Public Safety had provided no legislative timeline for new gun control bills or regulations. **M**

Asad Ismi

Amid crisis, a coup in Brazil

Right-wing parties force out president to force in austerity

THE BRAZILIAN SENATE voted May 13 to suspend the country's leftist president, Dilma Rousseff, pending the conclusion of her trial this summer on charges of financial illegality. Specifically Rousseff is accused of using money from state banks to obscure a budget deficit during her 2014 re-election campaign, a common tactic used by previous Brazilian governments and even U.S. administrations. If eventually found guilty by at least two-thirds of senators—the impeachment trial is expected to wrap up in early August so as not to interfere with the Olympics—she will be permanently removed from office.

The impeachment proceedings against Rousseff were triggered by a majority vote in the Chamber of Deputies (Brazil's lower house) on April 17. After the senate vote in May, she was replaced by vice-president Michel Temer of the right-wing Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB). One of Temer's first moves as interim president was to appoint a new conservative, all-white, all-male cabinet (close to 51% of Brazilians are non-white) and announce a severe neoliberal austerity program.

Not only is Temer widely hated by Brazilians, his cabinet has been rocked by scandal, notably the sacking of two ministers following the release of damning evidence of their corruption. Temer's own credibility was destroyed when a regional elections court in his home town of São Paulo convicted him on June 3 of violating election laws. The court declared that Temer had a "dirty record," found him guilty of spending more money on his campaign than legally permitted, and banned him from running again for eight years.



Temer's own impeachment is already being considered by the lower house, as he signed the same sort of budget directives that were the alleged trigger for removing Rousseff. Additionally, the acting president is being investigated for receiving \$1.5 million from a construction company that had dealings with Petrobras, and is accused of bribery linked to ethanol deals done through the state-owned oil company. Seven of Temer's ministers are implicated in the massive Petrobras corruption investigation known as Operation Car Wash.

Rousseff is head of the leftist Workers' Party (PT) that has ruled Brazil for the last 14 years, and only its second leader since her predecessor, the popular Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva, first took office on January 1, 2003. Rousseff has denounced her suspension as a coup by a corrupt

Suspended Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff criticized the lack of women in the cabinet of Interim President Michel Temer during a "Women for Democracy" rally in Rio de Janeiro on June 2.

EPA/ANTONIO LACERDA

Brazilian elite that wants to stop Operation Car Wash in its tracks. The investigation has implicated politicians of all stripes, from across the senate and lower house, in a variety of crimes involving bribes and kickbacks stemming from contracts between Petrobras and nine construction companies.

Recent leaks support Rousseff's position. Most damning so far is the release, by *Folha de São Paulo* (Brazil's largest newspaper), of the transcript of a 75-minute phone conversation in March between Temer's plan-

ning minister, Romero Jucá (a senator at the time), and Sergio Machado, the former head of the transport subsidiary of Petrobras. According to an article in *The Intercept*, “The crux of this plot is what Jucá calls ‘a national pact’—involving all of Brazil’s most powerful institutions—to leave Temer in place as president and to kill the corruption investigation once Dilma is removed. In the words of *Folha*, Jucá made clear that impeachment will ‘end the pressure from the media and other sectors to continue the Car Wash investigation.’”

As recounted by *The Intercept*, Jucá also tells Machado the Brazilian military is supporting the plot to remove Rousseff: “I am talking to the generals, the military commanders. They are fine with this, they said they will guarantee it.” He adds that the military is “monitoring the Landless Workers Movement (MST),” which opposes Rousseff’s impeachment and has supported the PT’s rural land reforms, and that he has the backing of several Supreme Court judges. If Brazil’s top court cannot be trusted, the plotters’ impeachment case will be substantially weakened in the public eye. The leak forced Jucá’s resignation as planning minister.

Following him out the door, on May 30, was Fabiano Silveira, Temer’s transparency minister, after other recordings showed he had attempted to obstruct Operation Car Wash while serving as a counsellor on the National Justice Council, a judicial watchdog agency. A third leaked conversation implicated conservative Senate President Renan Calheiros, who is next in line to replace Temer but also the target of seven investigations in the Petrobras scandal. In it, Calheiros tells Machado he wants legal changes that would end the use of plea bargains for those arrested as part of the corruption probe. (Offers of lighter sentences encourage suspects to snitch.) He also offers to “negotiate” a legal “transition” from Rousseff to Temer. One lobbyist claims Calheiros was paid \$600,000 to end a senate probe of corruption at Petrobras; a director of the energy company has accused him of taking another \$1.7 million related to drill ship contracts.

While Rousseff is not herself accused of corruption or enriching herself, 60% of her 594 colleagues in the Chamber of Deputies face charges for crimes ranging from money laundering, bribery and electoral fraud to illegal deforestation, kidnapping and homicide. Impeachment hawk Eduardo Cunha, himself accused of taking \$40 million in bribes, has been removed from his position as speaker of the lower house by the Supreme Court. In Brazil’s upper house, 37 of 65 senators face charges of corruption. Given the mindboggling dirt on the Brazilian political class, Rousseff’s suspension begins to look ridiculous. As Noam Chomsky put it, “we have the one leading politician who hasn’t stolen to enrich herself, who’s being impeached by a gang of thieves, who have done so. That does count as a kind of soft coup.”

“Rouseff’s suspension from the presidency is certainly a ‘parliamentary’ coup,” says Sean Purdy, a professor of history at the University of São Paulo. “Unable to win the presidential elections democratically, Brazil’s right-wing opposition parties, which control the Chamber of Deputies and the senate, have very hypocritically used the Petrobras scandal to piggyback impeachment proceedings against Rousseff.” Impeachment of a president in Brazil requires a “crime of responsibility,” which most legal commentators argue is simply not there, he adds.

Purdy explains that the conservative opposition parties, the corporate media and key sections of the judiciary have never liked the PT’s progressive economic agenda and are using the current crisis—Brazil’s economy contracted 3.8% last year due to falling oil and commodity prices—to shift direction.

Since 2002, Workers’ Party–led governments have implemented policies to transfer the country’s wealth from the rich to the poor. In 2014, the U.S. journal *Foreign Affairs* noted admirably how, “In the first decade of the new century, some 40 million Brazilians moved from poverty into the middle class, per capita household income shot up by 27%, and inequality dropped dramatically.... Today, Bra-

zil still faces many challenges, from an economic downturn to corruption scandals to the end of the commodity boom. But the country’s incredible success in reducing poverty and inequality can and should light the way for further progress, both there and abroad.”

“[T]he opposition wants to roll back the key social programs and workers’ rights won in the last decades both before and during the PT governments of 2002–2012,” says Purdy. “While many of the opposition parties remained allies to the PT governments during [this] era of economic prosperity, they now want all their privileges and power back and are willing to use dubious means to achieve this.”

Elite influence has also corrupted the corruption investigations. Judge Sergio Moro, the official in charge of Operation Car Wash, “has hand-picked which cases he will pursue and they usually involve PT members, which indicates the selectivity of the investigation, even though names from almost every political party in Brazil (there are more than 30) showed up in testimonies,” says Sabrina Fernandes, a researcher at the University of Brasília studying political fragmentation.

Fernandes adds that Moro has collaborated with the right-wing media and conservative social movements to pressure Lula to testify, including through the use of coercion, a process deemed illegal by law experts. In contrast, Cunha refused to testify many times, yet no force was used against him. Fernandes concludes from this that the “Car Wash” investigation has been “appropriated for partisan interests.”

Given such massive corruption and the considerable evidence of a planned coup against Rousseff, her impeachment is less certain now than it seemed to be in May. As reported in *Folha*, several senators who previously supported impeachment are now reconsidering due to the leaks, and public demonstrations against Temer are growing larger. **M**

Reviewed by Kelley Tish Baker

A measure of compassion

THE RIGHT TO DIE: THE COURAGEOUS CANADIANS WHO GAVE US THE RIGHT TO A DIGNIFIED DEATH

GARY BAUSLAUGH

James Lorimer & Company, 2016, 290 pages, \$29.95

AS THE *MONITOR* went to print, the Liberal government was dueling with the Senate over the details of Bill C-14, proposed legislation on assisted dying. The outcome will likely be known by the time you read this. No matter the form Canada's historic legislation takes, Gary Bauslaugh's rich work provides the deep context for how we got here.

The Right to Die profiles the key figures and moments in this long struggle, climaxing in the Supreme Court's landmark unanimous decision in 2015 to strike down the Criminal Code's blanket prohibition on assisted death. The court ruled the law violated Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees the right to "life, liberty and security of the person." Consequently, the federal government was given a year (since extended) to develop legislation allowing physician-assisted dying in specific circumstances.

Some of the people featured in Bauslaugh's book will be familiar to anyone who follows the news: Sue Rodriguez, afflicted with ALS, who fought for and lost at the Supreme Court the right to end her life; Robert Latimer, who was harshly punished for the mercy killing of his severely disabled and suffering daughter; and Dr. Donald Low, the public figure of the SARS response, who recorded a video pleading for more humane laws on assisted death eight days before dying of a brain tumour. Other figures are less well known, such as Eerkiyoot, a young Inuit man who became the first person prosecuted in Canada for assisted suicide. (Because he was complying with his ill mother's request, and because mercy killings are part of Inuit culture, he was given a light sentence.)

The most intriguing profile is surely that of John Hofsess. The former journalist, who counted artists and intellectuals such as Margaret Atwood among his friends, founded the Right to Die Society of Canada. After being disappointed by a Senate report on

John Hofsess, former journalist and founder of the Right to Die Society of Canada, died earlier this year in a Swiss clinic that offers assisted suicide. PHOTO BY TROY MOTH



the matter, not to mention the outcome of the Rodriguez case, he gave up seeking legal or judicial change and turned to providing direct support to ailing individuals wanting to end their own lives. He did so with his assistant, Evelyn Martens, operating a highly risky secret euthanasia service across the country from 1999–2001, and likening it to the underground railroad in slave-era America. The two went undetected for a long time, largely thanks to their elaborate safety precautions.

But when Martens started operating on her own, and flouting those protocols, she got found out, leading to a pivotal trial that found her not guilty and to Hofsess ceasing the service. He died earlier this year in a Swiss clinic, aptly choosing assisted death in the face of mounting seri-

ous health issues. Moments after his death, *Toronto Life* magazine published a piece he'd written about having helped end the lives of eight people, including that of poet Al Purdy.

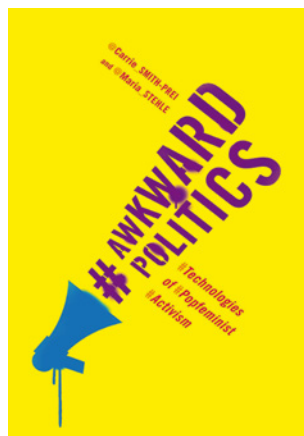
Bauslaugh, past president of the Humanist Association and editor of its journal, doesn't pretend to be neutral on the debate around assisted death, though he does allow for a considered airing of opposing views. Unfortunately, as this appears late in the book, its power is somewhat diminished. Readers would have been more fairly engaged had they been able to think about all aspects of the debate as they made their way through the book.

But that is a small quibble, for on the whole this is an extremely strong book. Bauslaugh's research is thorough, extending to attending some

of the key trials and interviewing many of the principals. And his ability to deftly render complex policy and legal matters intelligible to the lay reader is commendable. Similarly, his sheer storytelling ability is admirable: somehow he was even able to create suspense in his account of the pivotal 2014 Supreme Court hearing even though the outcome is already well known.

We will all lose people we love, and we all will die. This book ably provides a much-needed chronicle of how we arrived at this new era of end-of-life care in Canada. It celebrates the fact that when it comes to the ultimate question of timeliness—when we shuffle off this mortal coil—we will now have a measure of compassionate choice.

Reviewed by Rianka Singh



AWKWARD POLITICS: TECHNOLOGIES OF POPFEMINIST ACTIVISM

CARRIE SMITH-PREI AND MARIA STEHLE

McGill-Queen's University Press (May 2016),
280 pages, \$34.95

N *AWKWARD POLITICS* Carrie Smith-Prei and Maria Stehle engage the ongoing debate about the effectiveness of digital feminist activism. The authors ask us to rethink how it is we evaluate the meaning of various activist projects. While raising questions about the efficacious nature of activism is not unique, especially after

Occupy's confused outcomes, and ongoing scholarly and policy discussions about whether digital activism should be better understood as slacktivism, their premise that awkwardness can be a theoretical tool for reading feminist activism is a welcome new perspective on the topic.

Awkward Politics shifts our attention from the goals of feminist activism, and its ability to achieve social change, arguing instead that the messiness, or awkwardness, inherent in such movements is itself a political tool. Smith-Prei and Stehle thus ask us to embrace awkward activist events rather than criticize their lack of clarity. Their book draws from a diverse range of popfeminist performance-based activism that employs digital tools for dissemination, pop literature and their own experiences as feminist activists. Events like SlutWalks—a protest march calling for an end to rape culture—viral hashtagging that brings light to the abuse of women, flashmobs and artistic performances are discussed as examples of instances of activism that are at once awkward in their articulation of political outcomes and which attract widespread public attention.

Smith-Prei and Stehle argue that to understand activism as awkward is to see it “in constant movement, circulat-

ing and slipping from view...in a constant mode of becoming, forever developing a meaning that it does not yet know.” Certainly, the argument that digital feminist activism is always in a state of “becoming” might help us read movements still in flux, including those not specifically feminist in nature. For instance, Black Lives Matter recently became active in Toronto. While the movement gained traction as members occupied space in front of Toronto's police headquarters, their tents have since been packed up and activists have moved on to new tactics. Rather than focus on a perceived lack of identity of the U.S. Black Lives Matter movement, and the difficulty of articulating how it is meeting its goals, by adopting the arguments in *Awkward Politics* we can accept that Toronto's Black Lives Matter movement is still developing.

Perhaps the most significant contribution this book makes to an ongoing conversation about digital activism and feminist engagement is its unwavering optimism about contemporary feminist movements. Smith-Prei and Stehle argue that despite often unclear goals and criticized tactics, we need to recognize how feminists take part in and enjoy these activist campaigns as they collectively work toward making the world better.

A CCPA summer reading guide

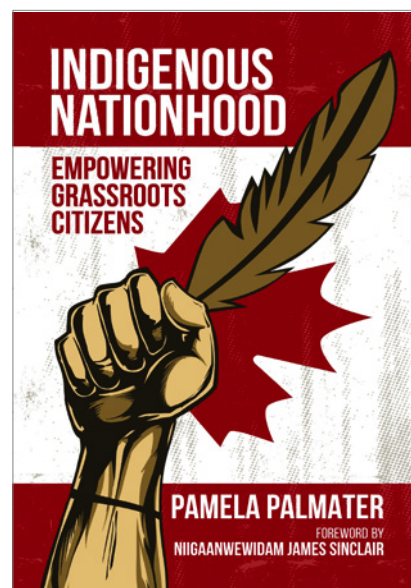
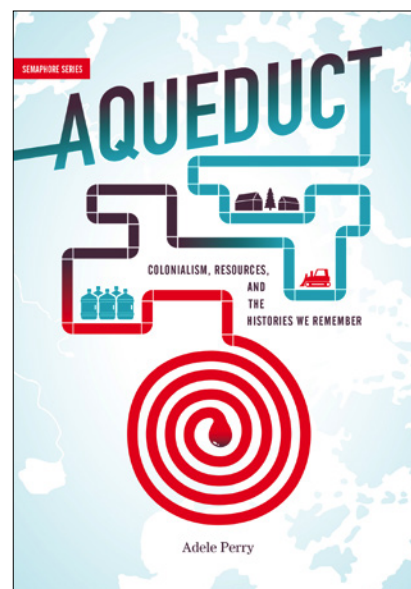
Socialism in colour

The Verso Books–*Jacobin* magazine collaboration, ***The ABCs of Socialism***, landed on my desk as I was editing this very section and looks as good as they promised. It’s purposefully timely, though mostly for a U.S. audience. The introduction suggests, hopefully, “The events of this year all point to the emergence of ‘Sanders Democrats,’ a group that is disproportionately young and calling for massive redistribution of wealth and power.” A dozen contributors try to answer questions like “Is socialism a Western concept?” (to address the critique Marx is just one of many Eurocentric thinkers we should leave on the shelf), how does it relate to feminism, will it be bad for the environment and, importantly for a lot of people, will it “be boring?” A four-by-ten-inch hardcopy will cost you \$19.50 on the *Jacobin* website, but they have made the whole thing free online, with the added benefit of being able to click your way to further reading. Impressive.

Also on my list is the slim Semaphore Series paperback ***Aqueduct: Colonialism, Resources and the Histories We Remember*** (ARP Books) by Adele Perry. The self-styled “Feminist killjoy” at the University of Manitoba attacks the historical roots of the water crisis in the Shoal Lake 40 Anishinaabe community (visited by Prime Minister Trudeau in April), in particular how Winnipeg was able to grow as it did after 1919 by dispossessing an Indigenous people, their land and their water. (Stuart Trew, Editor, the *Monitor*)

Activist lives, personal and political

Indigenous Nationhood: Empowering Grassroots Citizens (Fernwood) is a powerful collection of Mi’kmaq lawyer Pam Palmater’s blogs that sets the record straight on Indigenous rights and sovereignty in Canada after 2010. Palmater takes on racist stereotypes and calls out colonialist policies. As a settler I always learnt a great deal from Palmater’s strong, intelligent and clear voice. This summer I’ll also be reading ***Inside the Now: Meditations on Time*** (Parallax Press). In Thich Nhat Hanh’s latest book, the Vietnamese peace activist and monk reflects on his past as a community-builder in war-torn Vietnam, developing a practice relevant to our time and seizing the moment. *Inside the Now* includes art and poetry; reading Thich Nhat Hanh is like drinking a cool glass of water: refreshing, grounding and energizing. (Molly McCracken, Director, CCPA-Manitoba)



Following the money

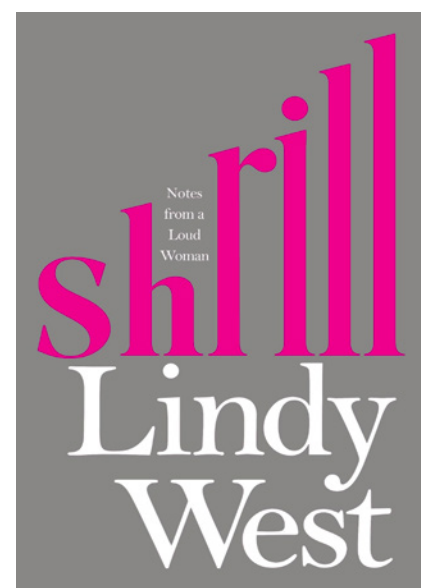
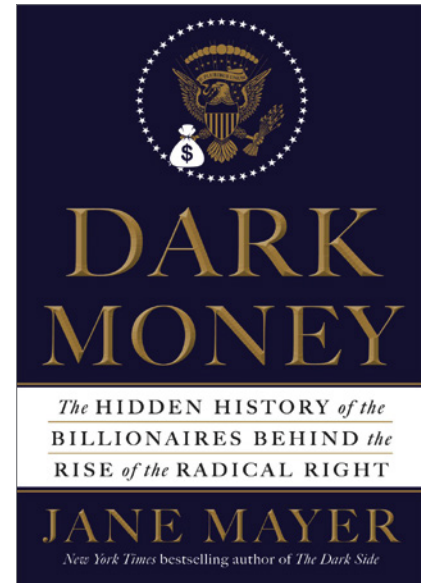
Back in 2011, Joseph E. Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize-winning former chief economist of the World Bank, published the best piece I've ever read on inequality in the peer-reviewed journal *Vanity Fair*. Entitled "Of the 1%, For the 1%, By The 1%," it explained why inequality is tolerated even as we are buried in evidence of the many ways its unchecked growth hurts everyone (including the rich) and is unsustainable over the long run. Inequality, Stiglitz explained, is not just another dirty emission of the free market. It is a planned part of the game, and creates a self-propelling machine in politics. What Stiglitz started, Jane Mayer finishes with the book *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (Doubleday), an exploration of the birth and grooming of The Republic of Spin that traces history and names names. I can't wait to read it (because you just know the reshaping of the politics we are now being force-fed had to come from somewhere). It is a perfect backgrounder, too, for understanding how the U.S. presidential elections of the (still) biggest superpower in the world took on this hallucinatory form in 2016. (**Armine Yalnizyan**, Economist, CCPA)

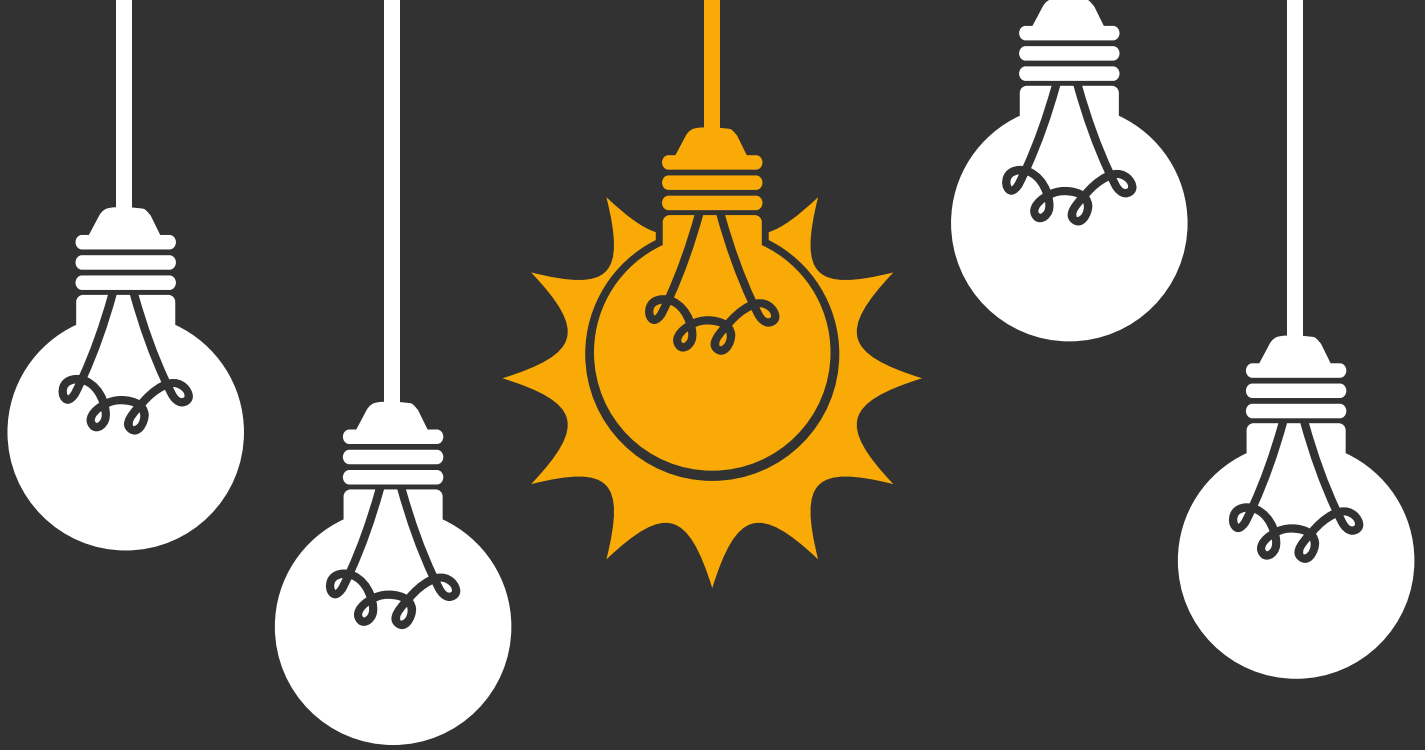
Sharing or theft?

Everyone and their Uber-taking aunt are talking about the sharing economy. Top of my summer reading list: Tom Slee's new book on the subject, *What's Yours is Mine: Against the Sharing Economy* (OR Books). Slee, who is based in Waterloo, "argues the so-called sharing economy damages development, extends harsh free-market practices into previously protected areas of our lives, and presents the opportunity for a few people to make fortunes by damaging communities and pushing vulnerable individuals to take on unsustainable risk." (**Trish Hennessy**, Director, CCPA-Ontario)

Taking on her haters

This summer I will be curling up with Lindy West's *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman* (Hachette Books). I have been following West's work for years, and she has quickly become one of my favourite feminist writers (I still think about her piece for *This American Life* about confronting her online abuser). *Shrill* is a collection of essays about taking up space in a society that is hostile to women, particularly fat women. It is funny, honest, vulnerable and important, and I highly recommend everybody read it. (**Davis Carr**, Communications Assistant, CCPA)





HELP US SHED LIGHT ON THE ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOU.

(we've got some bright ideas)

MAKE A DONATION

Tax receipts are issued for contributions of \$15 or more.

I would like to make a monthly contribution of:

\$25 \$15 \$10 Other _____

OR

I would like to make a one-time donation of:

\$300 \$100 \$75 Other _____

PAYMENT TYPE:

I've enclosed a cheque (made payable to CCPA, or void cheque for monthly donation)

I'd like to make my contribution by: VISA MASTERCARD

CREDIT CARD NUMBER: _____

EXPIRY DATE: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

I would like to receive my subscription to *The Monitor*:

- By e-mail
- Mailed to my address
- No Monitor, thanks

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone *(Required)* _____ Email _____

Yes, I prefer to receive my tax receipt and updates by email.

Please do not trade my name with other organizations.

Return this form to:
**500-251 BANK ST.
OTTAWA, ON K2P 1X3**
Or donate online at:
WWW.POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA

**FREEDOM OF THE
PRESS IS NOT A
PROPERTY RIGHT OF
OWNERS. IT IS A RIGHT
OF THE PEOPLE. IT IS
PART OF THEIR RIGHT
TO FREE EXPRESSION,
INSEPARABLE FROM
THEIR RIGHT TO
INFORM THEMSELVES.**

Royal Commission
on Newspapers,
1981

