

# MONITOR

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, January/February 2016



# New OS/OS Out Now



“This issue of *Our Schools/Our Selves* is an opportunity to explore much of what has resulted from the fallout of more than a decade of neglect, downloading and diminishment. Topics include: how communities are fighting back against attacks on public education; the use of arts to explore issues of social justice and labour history; the effects of misogyny in our society, legal systems and educational institutions; restorative justice; teaching students about sustainability, belonging and autonomy through a school garden; and the impact of neoliberalism (and how to resist it) on public schools and universities.”

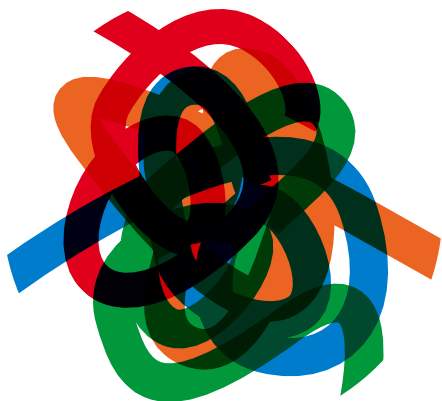
**Erika Shaker, Director of the Education Project at the CCPA and Executive Editor of *Our Schools/Our Selves***

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January/February 2016

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# MONITOR

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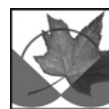
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### Maura Doyle

This month's cover illustration is by Maura Doyle, an Ottawa-based interdisciplinary artist with a focus on sculpture, ceramics, video, drawing, artists' books and multiples. Her work often explores the interactions between nature and culture and the independent life of objects.

Stuart Trew

# Not working

**N**EW YEAR, NEW government, same complicated problems. Capital investment in the petroleum industry was cut in half between 2014 and 2015—from \$81 billion to \$45 billion, according to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers—largely due to collapsing oil prices, which hit US\$22 per barrel for some Canadian producers by the end of the year. The resulting job losses are keeping unemployment above 7%, with especially harsh impacts in Alberta, where the bust may have contributed to a surge in suicides during the first half of 2015, according to Calgary social workers. Government forecasts are banking on improvement, though the executive director of the International Energy Agency says he sees “very few reasons” why things would pick up for the sector in 2016.

More than ever these are not localized problems for Canada. A recent study from Capital Economics warns job creation for those in the so-called prime working age cohort (between 25 and 54) is stagnant, and that the number of high-paying jobs shrank in 2015 for the first time since the Great Recession. “There’s also a slowdown in hiring professional, technical and scientific jobs,” the study’s author, David Madani, told CBC in November. “And while we’re watching an expected fallout in energy, we’re not seeing some positive offset from other sectors like manufacturing.” Canada’s economy is producing jobs, they are just frequently of the part-time variety, or otherwise not very well paid.

Ontarians are finding it relatively more difficult to find full-time work than other parts of the country, according to a 2015 report by the Ontario

Common Front that looks beyond the 2008 crisis to long-term structural failings in the economy. The share of the Ontario workforce earning minimum wage has grown more than fivefold since 1997, for example, while inequality—between rich and poor, and in the wages of men and women—remains stubbornly high (see Kate McInturff on page 42). We should probably not be surprised, then, that ride-sharing apps like Uber and other “gig economy” services are so popular in the province. It may be alienating, disruptive, low-paid work for those shuttling around or buying frozen yogurt for the relatively well-to-do, but it risks becoming the only gig in town (see Andrew Callaway’s feature on on page 18).

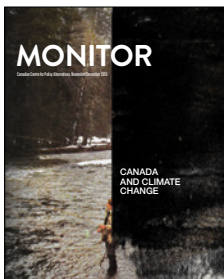
By some accounts, growth is expected to improve across Canada this year, even in Alberta. And there are signs the bottoming-out of the loonie as it tracks oil prices south may finally start to have a positive impact exports after a year of consecutively high monthly trade deficits. To the extent new manufacturing contracts are attached to future recovery in highly polluting tar sands extraction, we might reasonably ask if these are the type of good jobs we should be cheerleading. When 500 workers at Hamilton’s National Steel Car plant are laid off, as they were in December (due to low demand for oil-by-rail cars), should we be relieved when a tar sands or U.S. shale oil rebound brings them back to work? (Paul Weinberg writes about some of Hamilton’s other steel woes on page 35.) Like I said, complicated problems—and problems “sunny ways” or optimism or even “the market” won’t solve on their own.

Nor will there be a truly binding international treaty that might have forced our federal and provincial governments away from fossil-fuel dependence and down a more stable, low-emissions, high-employment path (see Marc Lee on page 6). Like most other countries, Canada has committed to developing a plan for reducing emissions that will help keep the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius. But the post-Paris line in Ottawa is much the same as it was over the past decade: responsible resource development. In an article headlined “Oil patch not terribly anxious about Paris Agreement,” CAPP CEO Tim McMillan told CBC he expects “that with the investments we’re seeing today on the technology side that we’ll be able to produce more energy with less greenhouse gases into the future.” That looks, at best, like an emissions standstill for Canada, while burning tar sands exports will register as a positive on the carbon balance sheets of importing countries. Surely there’s a way to direct the same innovative energy toward less destructive and more job-intensive ventures.

This issue of the Monitor presents a snapshot of how people are working—or not—in Canada today and where the right policy, regulation or social movement demands could improve lives. From rights for sex workers and new immigrants, to options for democratizing our workspaces, to grappling with the coming wave in automation, these articles explore some of the significant glitches in our economy, problems that won’t fix themselves by praying for higher oil prices.

**Feedback:** [monitor@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:monitor@policyalternatives.ca).

## Letters



### Agency and terror

In her review essay (“We are here because you were there,” November-December 2015), Clare Mian explains what responsibility we bear for the current mess in the Middle East and for anti-Western anger. We are now seeing the results of decades of wrong foreign and domestic policies. Yet Mian’s analysis is biased, if not prejudiced, because it takes away agency and responsibility from those who try to terrorize us.

Contemporary terrorism is not only political; it is also religious. And religious fanaticism is not just a product of colonialism; its bloody expression cannot be explained simply by a desire to take revenge. Ayatollah Khomeini was given refuge and protection in Paris for many years. After his return to Iran, when Salman Rushdie put a human face on the Prophet, he condemned

him to death. The execution, one can say, was carried out 26 years later in that same city of Paris, on other writers, in the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*.

What does Clare Mian mean when she writes that the executioners “were Muslims born in France of parents from French colonies”? That they were avenging the sins of French colonialism, or even that French colonialism can explain their blind hatred of free speech? There is only so much that our own faults can explain. It is important to examine what we did wrong and are doing wrong, and to practise what we preach. It is equally important, as we assume moral responsibility for our actions, that we assign it to others.

**Raphaël Fischler,**  
Montreal, Que.

### Cenotaph no military target

In your editorial in the November-December *Monitor* you write, “Following the attacks against military targets in Ottawa and Quebec...” I had to think, what is the editor writing about? Then I realized that you were referring to the cenotaph (National War Memorial) at Elgin and Wellington. Since when is it a “military” target?

The reason the two soldiers were on guard was to have a human presence at the cenotaph because, about five years ago, there were people urinating against the base of the statue—people in military uniforms would help to educate the general population who were not aware of the

meaning of the cenotaph. But to call it a military target—I question the use of that description.

**Vivien Hosteller,** Cobalt, Ont.

*Editor’s response: I agree with you the term was unfortunately ambiguous. I used “military targets” to refer to the military personnel who were apparently the initial targets of both attacks, not their locations, but that was not clear.*

### Rural Canada and infrastructure spending

Cities smell the possibility of federal help in rebuilding old and overworked infrastructure. I wish them well. However, most Canadian cities are richer than the surrounding rural regions. Cities are where capital lives. Much private capital has come from money-market risk-taking. The tangible goods undergirding the whole speculative structure, however, come out of countrysides either nearby or half a world away. Globally traded grains, petroleum, coal, timber, water, hydropower, and major tourism hot spots are examples. The flow of wealth for my entire 80+ years has been from rural places into cities. If cities haven’t been smart enough or gutsy enough to tax private wealth sufficiently to keep neighbourhoods and infrastructure in good shape, I’m sorry.

I feel a lot more empathy toward rural places. Their share of “development” is low-paying jobs while they last. The countryside is degraded ecologically,

the ripe resource plums whisked away, and rural towns are left high and dry, often with declining population and no tax base. Even today, city capital colonizes the countryside exactly as nations did in the days of empire. That’s just not fair. City and country need each other equally. The partnership should be equal. Venture capital that plans to profit by taking country resources should pay for rural communal and environmental degradation as part of the cost of business. Governments need to look carefully at their own policies to assure city/country equity.

Just as important, governments and corporations must transfer challenging, high-salary jobs into the country to make rural youngsters excited about staying home. It’s no good to tell them to compete with nomadic city workers for the skidder-operator and drill-rig jobs. Right now, many administrative and professional jobs associated with resource extraction are done by commuting or short-assignment city people. The world is due for a century of restoration of city and country alike. The restoration of the countryside and its communities depends on knowledge of rural places accumulated over years of residency by people who call them home. No such savvy builds up if young people have to leave to better themselves.

**Bob Weeden,** Salt Spring Island, B.C.

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STUART TREW AND SCOTT SINCLAIR

# TPP NEEDS REAL CHANGE

After his first formal meeting with Canada's new prime minister at the end of November, U.S. President Barack Obama made either a bold or banal observation about how Prime Minister Trudeau will handle the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership deal (TPP), concluded in early October, in the middle of an election campaign, by a party that now finds itself on the Opposition benches.

"We are both soon to be signatories to the TPP agreement," Obama told reporters in Manila. "I know Justin has to agree with what's happened, but we think that after that process has taken place, Canada, the United States and the other countries that are here can establish the high-standards agreement that protects labour, protects the environment, protects the kind of high value-added goods and services that we both excel in."

Obama's words were carefully chosen to reflect the values in the Liberal platform—good for the Earth, good for the middle class, good for workers—but also to counter solid opposition to the TPP among Democratic supporters (from U.S. labour and environmental movements) who know better.

In truth, the TPP cannot be called progressive in any universe. It is a regressive last-century free trade agreement that will entrench the market power of the largest investors, exporters, and patent and copyright holders at the expense of consumers and citizens. "Climate change" is not mentioned once in its 6,000+ pages. The environmental and labour chapters will be almost impossible to enforce.

As if there was any doubt who really benefits from the TPP, the United States Trade Representative has branded it a "Made in America" deal. Made, that is, by and for U.S. corporate interests. Even the outgoing Harper gov-

ernment admitted damage to Canadian interests by offering compensation packages for the auto and dairy sectors for the losses they are expected to suffer. We can also look forward to growth hormones in our milk thanks to a Canada-U.S. side-deal on the eventual mutual recognition of standards for dairy products.

Former Research in Motion CEO Jim Balsillie fears the TPP's intellectual property rights chapter will cost the Canadian economy billions, turning the country into a "permanent underclass" when it comes to tech innovation. Pharmacare and access-to-medicine advocates worry new patent rules will lock in already exorbitant prices paid for prescription drugs in Canada and make life-saving medicine unaffordable in other TPP countries like Vietnam and Malaysia.

Obviously, a public review is badly needed. The TPP was concluded in the dying days of a "caretaker" government desperate to shake up a faltering election campaign. Constitutional experts held that this maneuvering could only pass muster if a new federal government was genuinely able to reverse Conservatives death-bed com-

mitments. But history, and U.S. insistence the deal must be accepted "as negotiated," may force us to temper our expectations about whether a meaningful process is forthcoming.

For example, despite positive comments from Canada's new trade minister, Chrystia Freeland, that it is "not my job right now to convince anybody TPP is good," there has been no clear indication about what a public review might look like beyond parliamentary hearings. The government is running out of time to perform a meaningful consultation on the TPP given Obama's stated intention to sign the final deal in New Zealand at the beginning of February.

In the throne speech, the government was keen to portray itself as breaking from the Conservative regime's heavy-handed and closed approach. It would not bode well for the openness agenda if Canada bows to U.S. pressure and signs the TPP while the public consultation process has barely started. This would merely continue the Harper government's practice of tabling international agreements in Parliament prior to ratification, which remains the exclusive prerogative of cabinet.

**Obama wants Trudeau to trust him on the TPP.**

Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press



Typically, legislation is introduced in the House of Commons that would implement a specific trade agreement or investment treaty, followed by a second-reading debate where MPs have an opportunity to convince each other that it's a good or bad deal. The ratifying legislation then heads to trade committee where witnesses are called to testify on the specifics of the deal.

We have both appeared before parliamentary committees during this stage to challenge some of the worst aspects of Canada's recent trade agreements. Things like investor-state dispute settlement provisions, which create a private court system for investors to challenge public policy decisions, or the need to create allowances for public procurement as a job-creation and development tool for local and provincial governments.

During hearings into the Canada-EU trade deal, we urged the government to reject long protections for Big Pharma and copyright holders that result in higher costs for consumers, and to fully exclude public services from the reach of chapters in CETA designed to force open certain sectors or activities

to private profitmaking. Both of these concerns apply equally to the TPP.

In the Harper majority years, although opposition parties tried their best to get critical witnesses before the trade committee, their concerns would be purged from the official report. In the end, the record would show near unanimous support for a given trade deal, with high praise from a range of business lobbies. A final third-reading vote in Parliament, Senate endorsement and royal assent made the deal final for perpetuity.

Can we expect more from the newly elected Liberal government? It's still hard to tell. We should definitely ask for a better review process, especially for an agreement as imposing as the TPP. So what might that process look like?

An agreement that purports to set binding rules for regulating commerce in the 21st century deserves public hearings across the country. Showing his commitment to collaborative policy-making, Trudeau invited the provinces to join him in Paris for this year's international climate talks. He could equally invite them to help him co-ordinate national consultations on the

TPP. The two issues are even related, given the TPP may include unanticipated new restrictions on what the provinces and federal government can do to meet Canada's obligations to reduce carbon emissions, or to help us transition off fossil fuels.

Trudeau would not lose any stature internationally or domestically by informing TPP partner countries that Canada cannot sign or be bound by the agreement as negotiated until our domestic review is completed, and that public input could result in Canadian demands for changes. The Malaysian government has suggested ratification is not guaranteed, and members of the U.S. Congress continue to bicker about whether it goes far enough or too far in areas like patent protections for biologic drugs. Popular support for the TPP is not as high at home as the former government or business groups probably expected. A wrong step on this early test for the Trudeau regime could be damaging to the new government.

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MARC LEE

## REACTING TO THE PARIS AGREEMENT

From the outset, the Paris climate talks were never about "saving the planet." Our spinning hunk of rock has been around billions of years and will continue to support diverse life forms long after humans no longer roam it. The question is whether we have a planet that can support human life over the long term, in something close to the style with which we have become accustomed.

The answer is that *if* countries go back and deliver on their commitments, and *if* they table more ambitious policies in the coming years, then *may-*

*be* we can put a lid on global warming and keep the worst damage at bay. Time will tell.

The Paris Agreement on climate change is historic and an important step forward on this pressing collective action problem. After 21 years of meetings, all countries have now signed on and pledged to turn away from fossil fuels. There is some hard science baked in to the agreement that implies (but does not overtly state) decarbonization or 100% renewables by 2050. There is a ratcheting mechanism whereby countries must tighten up their commitments every five years.

But as the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We have a piece of paper that represents a statement of grand ambition, but it lacks the commitments from countries to make it happen, and is absent the enforcement teeth one would see in, say, a trade and investment agreement.

When it comes to commerce, for example, one government can challenge another to live up to its trade and investment commitments. In many bilateral and regional trade and investment agreements, corporations can sue governments directly for perceived injustices. Contrast that with the section in the Paris Agreement on the dilution of loss and damage, which excludes liability and compensation. Ditto for failure to include Indigenous rights, since it is Indigenous people around the world who are on the frontlines of battles against fossil fuel and mining extraction.

Many actors on this stage have a stake in claiming victory after Paris. Don't listen to them. The real test will be what happens in the financial mar-



kets. Will there be a sell-off of fossil fuel stocks because the world has now recognized the vast majority of reserves need to stay underground, and that, therefore, the business plans of the “carbon majors” are inconsistent with new international law? Or will it just be back to business as usual?

Another series of tests will be around whether new LNG terminals or bitumen pipelines get approved in 2016. The emphasis of the (largely voluntary) Paris Agreement is on reducing consumption of fossil fuels, but many jurisdictions have been seeking to push more fossil fuel reserves onto world markets even amid low commodity prices. This plays into “all of the above” political commitments—climate action on one hand, and boosting oil and gas production on the other.

While it is heartwarming that leaders recognized the need for greater ambition in the form of a 1.5-degree target for global temperature increases it is not clear that politicians and negotiators really get what that entails. Missing from the agreement is a coherent carbon budget framework stating the total amount of carbon we can “safely” use before exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius. Pre-Paris estimates put the commitments already on the table at being more consistent with three or more degrees. The negotiations themselves rendered the previous two-degree target near impossible, so there is no way we can even contemplate a 1.5-degree target without serious measures to keep carbon in the ground.

After two decades of dithering in five-star hotels in the capitals of the world, this appears to be the best that our political leaders are able to do. One wonders how much worse the agreement could have been had the Harper government still been in power.

What happens next will make all the difference. Prime Minister Trudeau committed to meeting with the premiers within 90 days of Paris to develop a pan-Canadian plan of action. It will be up to Canadians to ensure our country moves beyond vague commitments toward effective climate policies.

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EVE-LYNE COUTURIER

## BOARDROOM BUDDIES

If I say “economic elite in Quebec,” who comes to mind? Media mogul Pierre-Karl Péladeau, more commonly referred to as PKP? The Desmarais family at the head of Power Corporation? Maybe former Caisse de Dépôt CEO Michael Sabia? The names Robert Chevrier, André Bérard or Michel Labonté probably never crossed your mind. That’s perfectly normal: you’ve never heard of them.

Despite not being household names, they are very influential in Quebec. Their work is done in the shadows as board members for listed companies. A new IRIS report, *Interconnexions*, attempts to trace the contours of a tightly knit network in which the same people come up over and over again. So, who are the top board members in Quebec?

To draw up our ranking, we started with the top 30 listed companies in Quebec. We then found the names of all their board members and tried to figure out how these people were connected to one another through various companies and other connections. This allowed us to produce a list of 37 individuals who stood out as having the most influence. On average, these people currently serve on three listed-company boards as well as three other companies that are not listed.

This list leads us to a few conclusions. First, influential individuals are surprisingly alike. To everyone’s surprise (or not), they are mostly white men, aged 65 on average, and include a high concentration of accountants and lawyers. Diversity is hardly a top priority for this group.

Their trajectories are also rather similar. Nearly half of these people have held office in the public sector as a high-ranking official, member of an advisory committee, or elected representative. The revolving-door phenomenon can also be observed when examining the other companies to which these individuals are connected—as many as

13 over some careers, and not limited to a single industry.

Take Robert Chevrier, the most influential person in Quebec according to our ranking. He served on the boards of hardware chains Rona and Riche-lieu, tech firm CGI, the Bank of Montreal, and publishing company Transcontinental to name but a few. Even though these corporations cover very different areas, Chevrier has claimed “a bank is a distribution business [much like] a supermarket.”

Feeding people? Lending money? Creating journalistic content? It all comes down to the same old “business” of distribution. The same can be said of the public sector where directors are crossing over more and more from the private sector, or circulating from one institution to the other as if a mega-hospital, Hydro-Québec and a symphonic orchestra were all one and the same thing.

How are people picked to serve on these boards? For starters, it helps to be part of the network. Afterwards, it all depends on the company’s needs. Does it wish to make acquisitions? Does it need cash or credit? Someone from a bank could be an important asset. Does it want to expand its market, to be able to sell its products to other companies? Then it’s best to find new board members from these other companies to optimize market integration. Does the company need to lobby the government? A former senior official or elected official would be best suited in that case.

It’s plain to see: good company management comes down to cultivating the right friendships. As the head of the Institute on Governance of Private and Public Organizations (IGOPP), Michel Nadeau, himself puts it: “A board is a group of 15 people who talk straight, who speak frankly amongst friends, knowing that they will be making decisions.”

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## New from the CCPA

### Change B.C. labour laws for farm workers

Based on interviews with 200 farm workers, as well as representatives from industry, advocates and civil servants, a new study from the **CCPA-BC** finds that most British Columbia farm workers are subject to hazardous conditions including unsafe transportation, substandard living conditions, long work hours and dangerous equipment, while employment standards for the agricultural sector are only loosely enforced. **Citizenship and Precarious Labour in Canadian Agriculture**, by **Gerardo Otero** of Simon Fraser University and **Kerry Preibisch** at the University of Guelph, makes several recommendations for improving working conditions, including by: granting immigrant status to farm workers on arrival (workers would then have a path to citizenship after three years if they choose to apply); establishing an employment compliance team whose mandate would include random spot-checks at worksites to enforce employment standards; reforming B.C.'s Medical Services Plan so that agricultural workers receive health coverage

immediately upon arrival in Canada, as is already done in Ontario; and registering migrant employers and recruiters, as in Manitoba, so they can be held accountable if they violate workers' rights.

### A new CCPA podcast

The CCPA has a podcast! **Davis Carr** and **Alex Hemingway** conceived, produced and co-host the 20-minute program they're calling **alt.policy**, which is available from the Multimedia & Interactive section of the CCPA website or by subscribing to the podcast in iTunes



(search alt.policy). In each episode, the co-hosts demystify the big policy questions of the day, and share their interviews and discussion with the CCPA's intrepid research team. Episode 1 features an interview with CCPA Economist **Marc Lee** about the Paris climate talks, while Carr shares her thoughts on the "nannygate" scandal. Have questions for our policy experts you'd like answered on alt.policy? Send a message to [podcast@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:podcast@policyalternatives.ca).

### Stronger Together: Nova Scotia APB

The Nova Scotia office of the CCPA released its 2016 **Alternative Provincial Budget**, called **Stronger Together**, on December 7 during provincial budget consultations—to make sure the public had access to better information about the consequences of government budgetary decisions, and the full range of choices possible. "It is no longer tolerable for our government to make decisions as if economic prosperity, social justice and environmental protection cannot coexist," says **Christine Saulnier**, director of the CCPA-Nova Scotia and co-ordinator of the provincial APB, now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year. "This alternative budget shows how the province can get ahead of the wave by building a carbon price into its priorities," adds AFB working group member **Kate Ervine**, a professor at Saint Mary's University, since this would "provide additional income support for lower-income Nova Scotians that more than offsets the potential cost."

### Lessons on long-term care

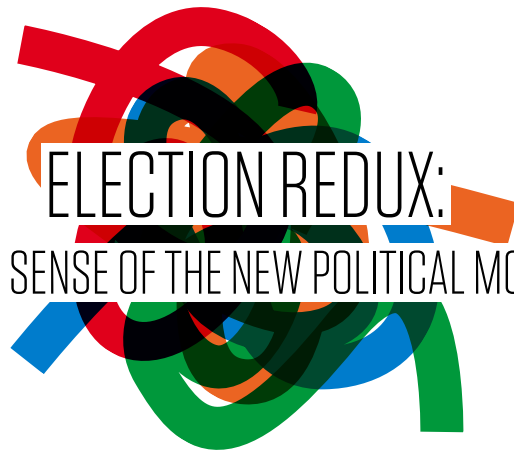
On December 1, the CCPA released a short book on long-term care in Canada edited by **Donna Baines** of the University of Sydney and **Pat Armstrong** of York University in Toronto. **Promising Practices in Long-Term Care: Ideas Worth Sharing** reports on the findings of an international team of 26 researchers and more than 50 graduate

students who went to six countries in a search for promising practices in long-term residential care for the elderly. It presents concrete examples of how long-term care might be organized and undertaken in ways that respect the needs of residents, families, workers and managers, based on statistical data that confirms Canada can afford better, more responsive long-term care. *Promising Practices in Long-Term Care* is available for free download at [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).

### Finding Canada's energy brokers

Who is behind the wheel of fossil fuel extraction in Western Canada and what influence do they wield? These are the central questions driving a six-year research and public engagement initiative, **Mapping the Power of the Carbon-Extractive Corporate Resource Sector**, funded by a \$2.5 million partnership grant awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The initiative, which is led by the University of Victoria, the CCPA's B.C. and Saskatchewan offices, and the Parkland Institute at the University of Alberta, was announced in mid-November.

For more reports, commentary and infographics from the CCPA's national and provincial offices, visit [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).



## ELECTION REDUX: MAKING SENSE OF THE NEW POLITICAL MOMENT

Erika Shaker

### Avoiding the trap of high hopes and low standards

**O**N OCTOBER 19, after the longest campaign in recent history, the Liberals under Justin Trudeau were elected to a majority government in a crimson haze of Trudeaumania 2.0, Jack-Layton-esque hope/change/optimism branding, and anti-Harper sentiment (or, perhaps more accurately, fear of what a re-elected Conservative government would mean). Lifelong Liberals, self-defined progressives, and first-time voters threw their support behind the party with the greatest momentum and who most unapologetically trumpeted the message “we’re the opposite of Harper.”

Two weeks later, Canadians were treated to the master-crafted swearing-in of the gender-balanced cabinet and new, youthful, highly photogenic prime minister against a backdrop of a perfect, blue-skied autumn day. Within hours, promises were being made about a new “tone” for government. Justin Trudeau practically body-surfed into crowds of onlookers, and journalists marvelled at their proximity to a real-life PM after years of being kept at a safe distance from his hermetically sealed predecessor.

The giddiness continued into December: the mandatory long-form census would be reinstated; the words “climate change” were added to the environment minister’s title; a First Nations woman was appointed federal justice minister; nice things are being said to a shell-shocked public service; the Canadian Labour Congress was addressed by a sitting PM for the first time since Diefenbaker; the National Press Theatre was opened up and aired-out for a press conference; government scientists are talking about their research to the media. And of course there are the selfies, selfies and more selfies.

“Canada is back!” announced Justin to the world. But are we? And back to what, exactly?

Don’t get me wrong. I think another four years of Conservative government would have been devastating to what remained of our political and social infrastructure. But I also think it’s a mistake for progressives, or anyone reeling from the reduction of the NDP to third-party status, to condemn or belittle those who are experiencing a sense of relief or warm familiarity.

For the foreseeable future, the Liberal government has at its disposal a deep well of desire on the part of Canadians to feel better (let alone good) about this country after nearly a decade of just feeling embarrassed, if not depressed. As a friend in the public service explained, “We don’t expect this to be perfect, and of course it’s not going to last forever. But it feels so good to just not feel so bad about ourselves and the work we do.”

I’ve talked to a number of public servants who have echoed that sentiment.

They’re not naïve. Many of them went through the earlier rounds of austerity under the Chrétien-Martin Liberals, and they’re fully aware that this is a temporary state of euphoria. But they’re also realizing how deeply they had internalized a negative sense of self-worth and, more disturbingly, how so much of this happened without our realizing it, or even with our tacit acceptance. We were the proverbial frogs in boiling water.

This is the space the new Liberal government inhabits—the space between extremely high hopes for what a new administration can bring and exceedingly low standards that were forcibly downgraded over the past nine years. It’s a dangerous combination, making basic civility and common courtesy look groundbreaking when what we truly need are groundbreaking *new* policies for new challenges.

We are emerging from what’s been referred to as a “lost decade.” But it’s a mistake to think that merely “undoing the damage” of the Harper Conservatives is all that’s required to return Canada to its honourable reputation, assuming such a thing ever really existed. Because let’s be honest: 10 years ago, we were already disappointing, coasting on the fumes of a romanticized and whitewashed Pearsonian/Trudeau Sr.-esque vision of a country that had by then been completely transformed by neoliberalism. By 2015, however, we had become embarrassing to boot.

We are certainly dealing with the fallout of a decade-long concerted and unapologetic attack on Charter rights, equality, people living in poverty, racial-

ized people and First Nations, women, the environment, science and data, food security, basic safety regulations, the public service and our social programs. But as our 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament gets started, let's not pretend the decade prior to this one—replete with tax cuts, slashed spending and the loosening of funding requirements—did not have much the same effect.

The stakes are so much higher now—locally, nationally, and globally. Let's hope we don't truly think that a return to our pre-Harper state of disappointment is anywhere near enough. Let's hope that the rhetoric (or theatre) of change isn't seen as a convenient, feel-good substitute for the measurable, targeted, enforceable actions required to address the inconvenient truths of our time.

Let's hope—no, let's *prove* that our standards haven't fallen that far. **M**



Fiona Jeffries

## It will take more than one election to defeat the politics of fear

**T**HERE IS AN old French aphorism that continues to resonate in our time: "Fear is the deadliest assassin; it does not kill but it keeps you from living." Pervasive fear corrodes our most precious capacities—our sociality, our ability to think, and our disposition to

act on our own behalf and in solidarity with others.

This is partly why relief was palpable across the country in October when the "politics of fear" appeared to suffer a major blow at the polls. Leading up to the federal election, the Conservative government had engaged in toxic efforts to designate Muslims, socialists, environmentalists, unionists, Indigenous land defenders, political nonconformists, the poor, refugees and others as threats to security and prosperity. During the long fall campaign, party strategists hoped the same messaging would distract, cow and marginalize opposition, thus assuring another majority Conservative government in Ottawa.

The turn to a politics of fear was not original or surprising. Recall the chilling effects of George W. Bush's bellicose threat, "You are either with us or you are with the terrorists," issued immediately after the 2001 attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. Coinciding as it did with the peak of the global justice movement, 9/11 provided the Bush administration the perfect pretext to demonize any sort of opposition to its neoconservative program of free trade and war. Many people understandably became reluctant to participate in protests for fear of being targeted by sweeping new anti-terror laws. Several marches and political events were called off by organizers.

General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile provides another infamous example of the deployment of political fear in an effort to hold onto power. After violently overthrowing a democratically elected government in 1973, Pinochet's U.S.-backed regime engaged in widespread scapegoating and violent persecution of dissent, undermining any opposition to its brutal rule and weaving panic deep into the fabric of everyday life. This strategy of fear helped Pinochet stay in power for 16 years and turn Chile into the world's first laboratory for neoliberalism.

These and countless other examples illustrate how those in power can sometimes successfully use fear as a tool to obtain support or at least passive consent from the public. But such manip-

ulative uses of fear represent a form of political opportunism: a politics of fear can only stand a chance if it is deployed on a social order that has already been rendered amenable to it.

The last decades of neoliberal economic restructuring have arguably ushered into Canada a social order that is highly susceptible to a politics of fear. Drastic cuts to social assistance, health care, education, housing, public broadcasting and social services have made more and more people increasingly vulnerable to the vagaries of life. At the same time, there has been a powerful pull toward an increasingly authoritarian, punitive politics of law and order, which has caused a sharp uptick in prison populations and the number of people entangled in the criminal justice system, as legal aid programs are subjected to drastic budget cuts.

In short, the Canadian state's pursuit of neoliberal dogma has created a situation where aspirations to social security are eclipsed by ever-more punitive notions of security—a process that has been described as a transition from the welfare state to a penal or even warfare state. Nearly 100,000 migrants to Canada were jailed without charge between 2006 and 2014, a period that also saw a significant increase in the use by Canadian employers of temporary migrant workers with far fewer rights than citizens or permanent residents.

At the level of the individual, the effect of all these changes is experienced as a spike in depression, anxiety and the incidence of suicide. Researchers studying the psychosocial effects of austerity have found dramatic increases in physical and social suffering everywhere neoliberal structural adjustment is applied. Making matters worse, the endless celebration of acquisitive individualism, competition and meritocratic success means not only that people experience sometimes radically diminished material security, but also that they are made to feel singularly responsible for their situation and their fate.

We know how dangerous fear is. It causes people to turn inward, and ignites irrational passions like xenophobia

and the endless designation of new enemies. Such negative emotions are recognizable in the burning down of mosques, or amplified calls for closed borders and preventative detention in the aftermath of terror attacks.

During times of economic precariousness, we recognize a similar pattern in the impulse to dispense love and care in exclusively privatized and thus politically corrosive ways. Making fear pervasive induces feelings of isolation, helplessness and vulnerability to forces that are manifestly outside our personal control. For these reasons, it is important to pay attention to people's concerted efforts to resist such politics.

It was heartening to see the many assertive and often hilarious critiques of Conservative fear mongering during this past electoral campaign. Grass-roots responses to the government's regressively opportunistic "Barbaric Practices Tip Line," for example, were politically astute and brave. Critics urged people to call the phone line and condemn the dangerous effects of the government's neoliberal policies and its disregard for the fate of Indigenous women in Canada. The line was flooded with reports of the barbaric "cultural practices" of policy-makers that facilitated rising homelessness, endemic violence against women, ecological destruction and mounting inequality.

The suspension of federal government scientist Tony Turner for his anti-Harper government folk song "Harperman" brought the more subtle and insidious effects of the politics of fear into sharp relief. Turner posted a performance of "Harperman" to YouTube in the summer of 2015. It went viral as the election campaign heated up, drawing government backlash (and large numbers of fans) for lyrics like "the smarmy smile is a thin veneer/ for who preaches the politics of fear." Eventually, Turner was suspended for allegedly breaching the government's values and ethics code for public servants.

Being a few months away from retirement, Turner opted to leave his job at Environment Canada early rather than wait out the investigation into his suspension. But the case sparked me-

## Fear induces feelings of isolation, helplessness and vulnerability to forces that are manifestly outside our personal control.

dia attention and public debate about what the disciplinary action might say about the Conservative government's strangulation of free speech and dissent. Turner's case resonated because people could see in it a disturbing pattern of intimidation within the public sector emanating from the Prime Minister's Office.

Symbolic acts of resistance like the "Harperman" performance and the *de-tournement* of the "Barbaric Practices Tip Line" are examples of vital efforts to resist harmful political manipulation of our democratic process. But the Harper government's ability to stay in power for almost 10 years shows that resistance needs to focus not only on those deploying such strategies, but also on the material conditions that enable political fear to flourish.

When I interviewed the feminist political philosopher Silvia Federici for my book, *Nothing to Lose but Our Fear*, she talked about growing up in Italy during the Second World War in a region known for its concentrated resistance to the fascist movement and Benito Mussolini's dictatorship. Federici told me how she learned about the importance of creating a collective politics of resistance to fear, one that is built around networks of mutual support and a sense that a life of struggle against fascism was a collective effort that transcended the individual.

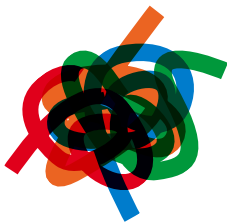
"Ultimately," she said, "the power of [anti-fascist] movements allowed people in them to overcome their fear of being part of a struggle. They formed a collective identity, a history that went beyond them. This meant that the always-looming possibility of their destruction was not devastating or paralyzing in the sense that one may think it would be."

What enables people to carry on despite their fear, according to Federici, is the political act of building up social relationships and dense solidarities. And perhaps one of the reasons North American publics are so vulnerable to political fear is that we have not taken that alternative project as seriously as we should.

The political organizing that led to the rejection of four more years of Harper government was a good start. But we should keep in mind that the decisive turn to neoliberalism in Canada came at the hands of a previous Liberal government elected on a platform of state intervention toward job creation and poverty reduction.

Reneging on campaign promises, former prime minister Jean Chrétien and his finance minister, Paul Martin, bent to Bay Street pressure by granting massive tax cuts while retaining the regressive GST, introducing drastic reforms to the unemployment insurance system, and slashing government spending for federal programs and transfer payments to the provinces for health care, education and social assistance. It was these policies that created the context in which a politics of fear could be so brazenly deployed.

Supporting the organizing efforts of marginalized communities and those bearing the biggest brunt of austerity, defending workers' rights, creating effective means to voice opposition to regressive policies, resisting militarization and repression, and building long-term networks of solidarity and mutual aid should become urgent priorities under a new Liberal government. It is the one necessary ingredient for opposing the reproduction of a social order that turns fear into an effective tool of domination. **M**



Richard Nimijean

## Electoral reform will test Trudeau's leadership, and his values

**I**N THE MAY-JUNE 2015 issue of the *Monitor* I argued that because the three major parties were so similar on economic issues, values politics would be a key factor in deciding the outcome of the federal election. I predicted the main question would be whether "Harper's campaign of fear, flag-waving and defending Canadian interests and values" would win out over the mainstream or pragmatic policies of the NDP and Liberals.

And so it was. Conservative actions and the election results speak for themselves. Their inability to rise in the polls despite an extended campaign—from all accounts designed to drain opposition bank accounts—distracted the party's messaging away from supposed strong points: prime ministerial leadership, the economy and security. A lengthy campaign also risked destabilization by unforeseen "events." For example, when the Canadian public burst with compassion for three-year-old refugee Alan Kurdi, found dead on a Turkish beach, the Conservative campaign responded with bilious talk of banning the niqab and opening snitch lines for "barbaric" cultural practices. It was at that point we knew the election was up for grabs.

In the end, the Conservative base remained loyal, comfortable in its conviction only one party is really interested in protecting Canada and Canadians. But the vagaries of the first-past-the-post system were always going to condemn the Conservatives to minority status at best. By mid-campaign, it became apparent the anti-Harper vote was firm.

On election day, enough new voters came out to dislodge the Conservatives—voters who rejected the divisive and mean-spirited thrust of Harper's campaign and governing style. So why did the Liberals—and not the NDP, who were leading in the polls for some time—benefit from this surge?

The campaign slogans of the Liberals ("Real Change") and the NDP ("Ready for Change") both identified the desire of a majority of Canadians for a new government. The proliferation of strategic voting websites and discussions on social media about the fear of splitting the vote showed how serious people were in this conviction: if they had to compromise on a candidate, they did not want their change vote to be for naught.

Clearly, the Liberals profited from their energetic and (let's be honest) young leader. Unlike the other guys, Trudeau seemed to enjoy campaigning; he connected better with voters, and appeared to embody the progressive platform the Liberals were selling. This, combined with a clear vision of Canadianism ("A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian"), secured the values debate for Trudeau.

So why did the NDP drop so suddenly in the polls? One media narrative suggested a key to Trudeau's victory was a public rejection of the austerity policies inherent in NDP and Conservative vows to balance the budget. Media questioning of the NDP economic platform intensified: how could a party that promised to balance the books afford an expansive program? Meanwhile, Trudeau's mid-campaign promise that a Liberal government would incur a series of deficits to pay for strategic investments, announced when the NDP doubled down on its balanced-budget pledge, was seen, in

this version of events, as a break from the economic orthodoxy of the other parties. I'm not so sure.

Trudeau's promise to spend the Canadian economy into shape was popular, but he was careful not to propose a bigger or more activist government. Contrary to how it was framed in the media, this was not an attempt to out-flank Mulcair on the left. For years, many mainstream economists have been urging governments toward deficit-backed stimulus spending. And the NDP offered arguably the more progressive platform on daycare and a number of other issues.

It was more the case that the NDP, by playing the "credible economic managers" card to combat the usual attacks that they were tax-and-spend-socialists, only fed a new media narrative that equated balanced budgets with austerity economics, which in turn contributed to Mulcair losing the change vote. The vision associated with Trudeau was where many voters wanted Canada to be: more socially liberal with a mildly activist government.

Another explanation of what happened to the NDP focused on Mulcair's strong position in support of a woman's right to wear the niqab during citizenship ceremonies when the province his party swept in 2011 (Quebec) seemed to hold the opposite view. Here, again, I'm not convinced.

As a Québécois, I've never felt the NDP had deep roots in the province. Let's not forget that Quebec has a long history of switching parties suddenly and in droves: Diefenbaker in '58, Mulroney in '84, Bouchard in '93, and Layton in '11. As for the niqab, it might have stimulated Conservative voters, and the Bloc played it up in disturbing ways, but Trudeau was as clear as Mulcair on the issue, notably in his March 2015 speech on liberty to the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada.

I think many Québécois voters were looking for a winner to defeat Harper; issues of policy, whether economic or security-related (e.g., the C-51 anti-terrorism legislation), were secondary. As Greg Lyle argued on TVO's *The Agenda*, the NDP's support was drop-

ping in the province before the niqab became such a political hot potato. If that support moved to the Liberals and not the Bloc it was because of the apparent Liberal concern with real economic change, suggested the pollster.

Others polls point to this being a countrywide feeling. EKOS asked Canadians between October 8 and 12 what the most important factor was in deciding their vote: 47% said they would vote for the party that reflected their values; 63% valued an active government. "It was pretty clear that the values vision that Justin Trudeau and the Liberals were offering up, backed up with an accounting framework that says we actually are going to find the money to do this, is what won this election for them," said EKOS President Frank Graves in November.

So in the end, the two change slogans were not simply twists on words: they signalled to Canadians how the parties read the mood of the electorate. The NDP wanted to present an image of a competent government that was progressive. The Liberals gambled that Canadians wanted something more than a nice version of the Harper government. With their new majority, the question now becomes how committed the Liberals actually are to "real change."

On election night, several observers said Justin Trudeau's victory, and all the talk of "sunny ways," reminded them of father Pierre's comeback victory in the 1980 election. To me it looked more like 1993, when centrists and the centre-left felt a similar euphoria at having wiped the Progressive Conservatives off the electoral map. Things will be better, a friend told me back then. Justin Trudeau's "sunny ways" was an updated version of Jean Chrétien's "Vive le Canada."

There are other interesting parallels: Chrétien said he'd cancel the "Cadillac helicopters," Trudeau won't buy F-35s. Both promised strategic investment in infrastructure to address structural weakness in the economy and fight stagnation. In 1993, the Liberal "red book" laid out a vision of a more progressive Canada. In 2015, Paul Martin Jr. reassured Canadians the new Liber-

al plan made sense economically and socially. So while Trudeau couldn't beat Harper on perceptions of being a good economic manager, Martin could—an asset the Liberals used to their full advantage.

However, remember that less than two years after the 1993 election we were hearing about debt walls and New Zealand, with the *Wall Street Journal* referring to Canada as an "an honorary member of the Third World." This led to the full-blown implementation of a neoliberal agenda and some of the harshest austerity budgets we have ever seen. Despite a much different economic situation, with much lower levels of national debt, is it too extreme or too soon to predict that something similar could take place under a Trudeau majority?

The backtracking has already started. In its first month in power, the Liberals lowered expectations about Canada's climate change targets and then largely adopted the Harper government's strategy of fronting provincial efforts to lower emissions, while improving Canada's reputation, during the Paris climate talks. On November 20, Finance Minister Bill Morneau announced he'd looked at the books and—surprise, surprise—there is less money available than the previous gang let on.

Following the election, *Rabble.ca* columnist Duncan Cameron cogently argued the Liberals are as committed to balancing the budget and restricted borrowing as the parties they beat at the polls, meaning "the Trudeau government has adopted a conservative vision that limits, voluntarily, the ability of government to help out, when what is needed is bold policies that create good jobs."

This should all be a reminder that economic ideology matters; it still informs what governments do. But in our era of branded politics, the communication of what that ideology means is just as critical. For the Liberals, a successful campaign based on "real change" will lead to disillusionment if their policies ultimately reflect the neoliberal status quo.

For the NDP, it is not enough to claim to be progressive. The party needs to square its genuine belief in a more progressive society with the economics required to get Canada there. Values matter to voters, but these too emerge from policy, which are a reflection of ideology. Mulcair discovered this the hard way. The party's debate over campaign strategy and the way forward will determine if the NDP can again become a major force in federal politics.

Trudeau, on the other hand, needs to learn from Obama's mistakes. To be fair, a Canadian prime minister can move things forward more easily than the U.S. president. But Obama lost much of his base by not even signalling that key issues, climate change high among them, were important to him. Only now, late into his second and last term, has the president become more aggressive and progressive. Trudeau will have to decide how much of a progressive he wants to be—in his policy choices and how he communicates them.

As for the Conservatives, while many sympathizers have suggested the party's message was right but the tone was not, others criticized the Harper government for its preoccupation with strategy and hyper-partisanship over advancing a small-c conservative agenda. It was always going to be a fine line for the Conservatives, since moving too far in either direction—too focused on winning, too conservative—could put an end to the dream of replacing the Liberals as Canada's dominant political party.

In fact, in the current electoral system, there is little incentive for any party to adopt a more ideological position. How Trudeau handles electoral reform—he stated this would be the last election held under the first-past-the-post system—will therefore be key. Will he use majority government to advance his preferred option of a ranked-ballot system? (According to University of Calgary political scientist Paul Fairie, this would have produced an even larger Liberal majority in October.) Or will Trudeau compromise and go with the NDP's preference for proportional representation?

Canada needs a new way to vote, an added benefit of which would be to put an end to punditry's calls for a united left (preceded, as these were, by calls to unite the right). Such calls are byproducts of an electoral system that favours concentrated vote-targeting and the dilution of coherent ideological stands. Under either of the electoral systems on the table, it is reasonable to assume clear ideological positions geared to attracting supporters will become more important in future elections than strategic considerations played out over hundreds of ridings.

Just as with economic ideology and how it is communicated, Trudeau's decision on electoral reform will speak volumes about what type of leader he really is and wants to be. **M**



John Akpata

## There are just and unjust ways to legalize marijuana

**“BECAUSE IT’S 2015.”** The definitive mic-drop political punctuation. So easy to execute when perfectly placed. I have finished speaking, and no one else shall speak after me. The new “Just Watch Me.” I love it.

For the past two years, in my political world, marijuana activists have endorsed Justin Trudeau as the way to legalize marijuana in Canada. Vote Liberal, no matter what, and they are going to legalize. That was the message, loud and clear. Only the Conservatives were against marijuana. All other parties said

“legalize” or “decriminalize.” Running as a candidate for the Marijuana Party, as I did again in 2015 in Ottawa Centre, seemed a moot point to others. During the campaign the only question people had for me was “Why run at all?”

Marijuana prohibition is the political football in that much-loved Peanuts sketch. Charlie Brown is at the ready, with Justin Trudeau teeing up his life affirming kick. The ball has been pulled away before by prime ministers John Turner, Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin. Stephen Harper brought in mandatory minimums at the criminal end, and tried to sabotage Health Canada's licensing system at the medicinal end. The Harper regime was out of step with what is going on in the rest of the world.

In 2001, Portugal decriminalized heroin, cocaine and cannabis. It remains a crime to profit from the sale or distribution of illegal drugs, but the user was not criminalized for possession. If a person is found with less than a 10-day supply, they must meet a three-person Commission for the Dissuasion of Drug Addiction, usually made up of a lawyer, a doctor and a social worker. The commission will recommend treatment, a minor fine or, as in most cases, no penalty at all.

In 1990, 1% of the Portuguese population was addicted to heroin. Portugal now has the lowest addiction rate of illegal drugs in all of Europe. After 14 decriminalized years, overall rates of drug use, drug addiction, drug overdose, HIV and accidental death have all gone down. Following Portugal's lead, the governments of Spain and Italy have also decriminalized. Copenhagen's city government announced in 2014 the beginning of a three-year pilot project to test whether municipalities could take over the growing and distribution of cannabis. In 2015, Ireland also announced it would decriminalize based on the Portugal model.

In December of 2013, Uruguay became the first country to legalize marijuana. Citizens there are allowed to grow six plants at home, and can participate in private grow clubs if they want to grow more. All sales must go through government-run dispensaries, while consumers, who are restricted to purchas-

ing 40 grams per month, must register with a health ministry database. In order to undercut organized crime, the price of marijuana is kept at the equivalent of \$1 per gram.

On February 6, 2015, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Nesta Robert Marley, Jamaica decriminalized ganja. Possession of 56 grams (two ounces) can result in a fine of \$5, but no arrest or criminal record. Citizens may grow five plants at home, and adult Rastafarians may use ganja for sacramental purposes for the first time in history. Foreigners that have a prescription or licence for medicinal marijuana will be able to get a permit that allows them to purchase two ounces of local medicinal marijuana to be used during their stay. Although the infrastructure and policies in Jamaica are unclear, there is a Cannabis Commercial and Medicinal Task Force hammering out the details.

And of course there is the United States of America. Already 17 states have medicinal marijuana. Oregon, Alaska, Washington, D.C. and Colorado have all embraced recreational marijuana at the state level. Let's thank Washington first.

In 2013, D.C. police arrested 1,215 people for marijuana possession, more than 90% of them black even though Blacks use marijuana at the same rate as anybody else. It became a civil rights issue, with activists pushing for decriminalization in July of 2014 before switching their demands to legalization. In 2014, D.C. Police arrested seven people for drug possession.

Colorado followed this example and fully embraced recreational marijuana. In 2014, Colorado, a state with a population of just under 5.5 million, collected US\$44 million in tax revenue from marijuana. As of 2015, Colorado brings in roughly US\$10 million per month from a marijuana tax—more than comes in from alcohol sales.

Canada's illegal marijuana industry has been valued at over \$7 billion annually, with some estimating \$21 billion. Twenty per cent of Canadians admit they have used marijuana in the past year; more than 30% say they would use it if legalized. Police in Canada re-



port a marijuana possession incident every nine minutes in 2014—a 30% increase since Stephen Harper came to power in 2006.

The war on drugs has been an abject failure. It has cost human lives, millions of hours of police and court time, millions of years of jail and prison time, and billions of tax dollars. There is no reefer madness, only organized systems of violence and oppression—some of it criminal, some government-based—to prevent people from using plants.

There are now dozens of models of legalization and decriminalization we could follow. They would all reduce harm and be incredibly lucrative, not just as tax revenue, but by encouraging an industry of recreational and tourist marijuana that would put even more money into the economy. Justin Trudeau's mandate letter to Jody Wilson-Raybould directed Canada's new justice minister and attorney general to "create a federal-provincial-territorial process that will lead to the legalization and regulation of marijuana," just as his party platform had promised.

"So why run?" asked a group of Carleton University students during a candidates debate. Though I was not invited to join the panel, which included Canada's future environment minister, the moderators permitted me to ask one question from the floor.

"In order to legalize or decriminalize, are you prepared to let people out of jail, expunge their criminal record, end all police action for marijuana, end all court action against marijuana, and when all is said and done, how many plants can I grow?" I asked.

There were cheers, laughter and applause, but also shock from the panel. No candidate had ever been asked that before. It doesn't matter what their answers were. The policy has yet to be written.

The day after the election, medicinal marijuana companies did well on the TSX. Canopy Growth Corp. (Tweed Marijuana) saw stocks increase 9%, Metrum's jumped 8%, and Aphria Inc. added 5% to the value of its stock. The medicinal marijuana industry is estimated to reach \$100 million annually; a recre-

ational market of \$2 billion is waiting. Legalize. Make it rain. But do it right.

After the election, building on my question at the Carleton debate, I updated my Facebook status with six points I believe must be part of any legislation or policy to legalize marijuana. They were:

1. First Nations people shall not be interfered with by any police force or government agent in their nations or within their territory;

2. Police must immediately cease and desist all actions, including fines, fees, penalties and charges, against marijuana growers and users of marijuana;

3. Any person in prison or under house arrest for a marijuana-related offence must be released immediately, and they must be compensated;

4. All criminal records for marijuana-related offences must be expunged immediately;

5. Any and all cases currently before the court for cultivation or possession will be dismissed immediately; and

6. No Canadian citizen will be treated with any less consideration than Justin Trudeau himself, who was not fired or forced to resign, not charged, arrested or subject to a raid, did not have his children taken away, kept his passport and was allowed to travel to the U.S. and back despite admitting he had smoked marijuana recreationally.

On writing this article, I realized this list was missing one item, which shall be the capstone:

7. Home cultivation of plants for personal, medicinal and recreational use must be included in the new legislation. This would include private clubs

for growers, and compassion clubs to augment the medicinal system.

I believe marijuana prohibition to be a racist, "old stock," biased and prejudiced war on non-violent people, targeting and most adversely affecting people of low income. I do not know how to write policy or legislation for international, TSX-listed corporations so they can operate their multi-million-dollar grow operations and grow their stock. And it seems problematic to me that businessmen among Canada's 1% will be the ones to profit from growing, cultivating and selling marijuana for profit, while hundreds of people that I have met, and who voted for me in this and past elections, have had their lives ruined by the same system.

To decriminalize usually means leaving the end user alone and going after the importer, manufacturer or distributor. To legalize usually means creating a system that is regulated for health and safety standards, and taxed. But legalizing also means tough restrictions on anybody that does not follow the policy.

Canada is a marijuana exporting country and has some of the highest rates of consumption of marijuana on earth. It is possible to have a system that accommodates the ethical growing of marijuana and empowers the citizen to be able to use this plant to the fullest potential. Medicinal, yes. Recreational, of course. And don't forget industrial: using hemp for fuel, textiles and construction could help rejuvenate or replace Canada's weakening forestry industry.

As a political candidate since 2004, I have had many meetings with Elections Canada officials prior to and after the election as part of an advisory committee. We fight, we bicker, we argue, we compare notes. At the last one there was much less hostility. Many told me marijuana activists should declare victory. When I raised my vision for a just legalization, one that would not let the corporate players crowd everyone else, one committee member suggested I make an appointment with the prime minister himself, to sit down, break bread, have a real tête-à-tête. "Don't take no for an answer" they said. "Because it's 2015." **M**

**Canada is a marijuana exporting country and has some of the highest rates of consumption of marijuana on earth.**

Gerardo Otero and Efe Can Gürçan

# The Arab Spring and the Syrian refugee crisis

**THE SYRIAN REFUGEE** crisis was one of the most heated debates in 2015 with no sign of cooling down in the new year. In Paris, the November attacks, which killed more than 100 people, triggered an official state of emergency; in the north of France, refugee camps were burned in retaliation. These events have produced a worldwide escalation in responses to the Syrian civil war, with myriad perspectives on how to handle the continued exodus of refugees to Europe and elsewhere.

It is essential to understand that the Syrian crisis is not only about Syria, and that the Syria-related conflicts are not reducible to mere religious conflicts and humanitarian concerns. We are observing a violent contest for state power that has resulted in grave human tragedy. Ultimately, Canada's position on this crisis will be viable only if we can accommodate the recent history of the Arab Spring and its sequels, and accept that Western intervention is a major cause of current troubles more than a path to de-escalation.

The Arab Spring was initially a hopeful phenomenon of social mobilization against authoritarian regimes in a number of North African and Middle Eastern countries. In December 2010, Tunisian working class and civic organizations massed after the self-immolation of a street vendor who had been repressed by police forces. Social mobilization was so vigorous and united in its aims that the president was forced to resign after three weeks. Inspired by this success, similar mobilizations began in Egypt, Libya, Syria and elsewhere. They differed importantly in their degree of civil society organi-

zation and the extent of meddling by Western powers.

In Egypt the most mobilized sectors of civil society were not the best organized. The Muslim Brotherhood, a latecomer to the protests, effectively capitalized on the mass gatherings in Cairo's Tahrir Square that would ultimately topple Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian military, a very strong institution with deep-seated economic interests, played an important role. Mubarak became a sacrificial lamb in lieu of pacification.

The negotiated transition to electoral democracy was a triumph not for the mobilized liberal and socialist elements of Egypt's Arab Spring, but—at least at first—for the Muslim Brotherhood, whose candidate was elected president. Mohamed Morsi's new government faced serious economic adversity, which added fuel to

widespread anger about the perceived Islamization of society embedded in proposed constitutional reforms. The new government soon faced more protests attended by millions.

Eventually, the Muslim Brotherhood experience ended in tragedy as the military decided to forcibly remove Morsi less than a year after his election as president. With considerable popular support, the July 2013 coup d'état restored military rule to Egypt, and with more authoritarian undertones than even during Mubarak's time. The new regime's geopolitical strategy has put it somewhere between Russia and the United States on foreign policy questions. Despite its friendly relationship with the former, Egypt's military involvement next to Saudi Arabia in Yemen would certainly contribute to the further destabilization of the region.

Libya's Arab Spring was very different from both the Tunisian and Egyptian experiences after the first social mobilizations. For one thing, there were no significant groups organized in urban centres that could sustain mass gatherings, and much of the country's sparse rural population is structured along tribal lines. When elements from Moammar Gadhafi's army presumably joined the protests, it became an excuse for his regime to respond with violent repression.

Western powers became heavily involved at this point, imposing and enforcing a no-fly zone and otherwise providing military support that would ultimately result in the killing of Gadhafi. (Many Western-backed mercenaries in Libya would eventually move on to the Syria campaign.) The country remains mired in a civil war that has produced tens of thousands of casualties.

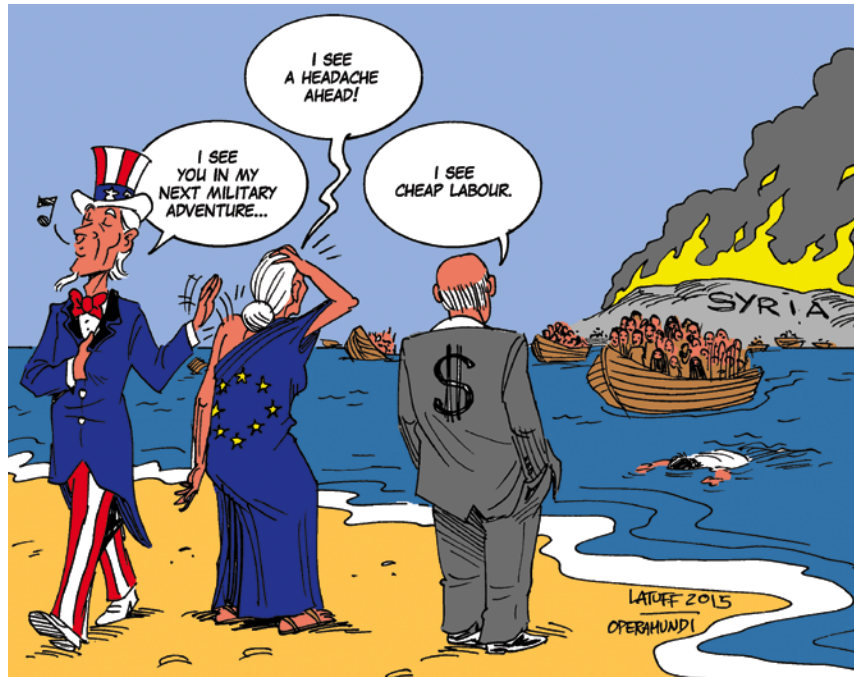
**The Harper government was oddly concerned with whether the Syrian refugees headed to Canada owned a business prior to fleeing—more a utilitarian than humanitarian criterion.**

Likewise, Syria's uprising turned into a violent civil war in 2011, facilitated by the authoritarian nature of the Syrian state and its brutal response to peaceful protests. But being more complex and capitalistically developed than Libya, Syria has international allegiances with Iran, Russia and China. The persistent support of these allies has prevented an all-out intervention by Western powers led by the United States, the United Kingdom and France, which are involved in a proxy war, supporting "moderate" opponents of the Bashar al-Assad regime.

Non-Syrian radical Islamists, much bolder since the U.S. invasion of and war against Iraq, now dominate resistance movements in Syria. The Western-supported proxy war, on the other hand, was met by Iran and Russia at the request of the Assad government, which further escalated the conflict situation. The three-way stalemate after four-and-a-half years of civil war has caused the displacement, both internal and international, of about 11 million Syrians representing more than half the total population. About 250,000 people have lost their lives.

Most of Syria's refugees have moved into surrounding countries including Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. But a growing number are travelling to the European Union, dividing its constituent governments and popular opinion on how to deal with an exceptionally high (and high-profile) level of migration. The public discussion is framed as a question of the most appropriate response to a humanitarian crisis, as if the exodus were a natural disaster, which ignores geopolitical causes. Political dialogue also concerns itself mainly with economic matters: are the refugees good or bad for growth?

For example, European governments ask whether the incoming Syrians should be treated like economic migrants or political refugees. The underlying assumption of this question is that the second group is more legitimate than the first when the fact is almost everyone who chooses to leave their country does so because their livelihoods are at stake.



Granted, there are differing degrees of urgency, but how are destination countries to judge such nuance in an emergency?

The Harper government was oddly concerned with whether the Syrian refugees headed to Canada owned a business prior to fleeing—more a utilitarian than humanitarian criterion. This was consistent with migration debates in advanced capitalist countries preoccupied with the utility of supplementing low birth rates with immigration to sustain economic growth. The incoming Liberal government appears to have removed some of the problematic criteria on refugee selection from Syria, but the underlying assumptions about the economic usefulness of migration are still there.

The nativist or xenophobic position opposes new immigrants, as is currently the case with Poland, accepting only Christian refugees from Syria. More to the left of the political spectrum, migrants are welcome as long as they are guaranteed to enjoy the same labour rights as the rest of the labour force in the receiving nation. For the countries of origin, there are real challenges associated with population flight, namely the draining away of a source of sustainable devel-

opment—young, educated, entrepreneurial members of society.

Canadian public opinion has been bombarded with messages that encourage donations and sponsorship of Syrian refugees. Such charity-centred and individualistic solutions, while well-meaning, distract from the root causes of the problem: U.S. intervention and the imposition of “democracy” by force in the Middle East and North Africa since 2003, with no regard for sovereignty, whether national or popular. This is not only a contradiction in terms, but also a tragic political, geopolitical and humanitarian failure.

Beyond charity, Canadian civil society should be prepared to consider Canadian co-operation with Russia, as proposed by former prime minister Jean Chrétien on October 1, with a view toward a negotiated peace settlement. The added benefit of such a move is to position Canada as part of a stable multipolar global order, rather than to push us toward a new Cold War. The Arab Spring objectives of replacing tyranny with popular government obviously must remain dominant. However, there is no evidence a protracted military intervention would be any more successful in this regard than it was in Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya. ■



Andrew Callaway

# Apploitation in a city of instaserfs

How the “sharing economy” has turned San Francisco into a dystopia for the working class

ILLUSTRATION BY REMIE GEOFFROI



**F YOU SPEND**  
enough time in San Francisco, you'll notice sharing economy workers everywhere.

While you're waiting to get some food, look for the most frantic person in the lineup and you can bet they're working with an app. Some of them are colour-coded: workers in orange T-shirts are with Caviar, a food delivery app; those in green represent Instacart, an app for delivering groceries. The blue jackets riding Razor scooters are with Luxe—if you're still driving yourself around this city, these app workers will park your car.

In the Bay Area, there are thousands of such people running through the aisles, fidgeting in line and racing against the clock. They spend most of their time in cars, where it can be harder to spot them. Oftentimes they're double-parked in the bike lane, picking up a burrito from inside an adjacent restaurant or waiting for a passenger to come down from the apartment on top. If you look closely, you'll see a placard in the window that says Uber or a glowing pink moustache indicating they drive around Lyft's passengers. Last summer, I was one of them.

Oh, Canada! I'm writing you from Berkeley, California to warn you about this thing called "the sharing economy." Since no one is really sharing anything, many of us prefer the term "the exploitation economy," but due to its prevalence many in the Bay Area simply think of it as "the economy." Whatever you want to call it, the basic idea is that customers can outsource all the work or chores they don't want to do to somebody else in their area.

You can be chauffeured around the city while somebody picks up and launders your dirty underwear. You can have groceries delivered to your door and your bathroom given that deep clean that you don't have time to do yourself. The best part is you can do it all on your phone! Sharing economy companies promise their customers all the luxuries of the rich and famous—and they can do

that by taking advantage of the system and, in some cases, bending or simply avoiding labour laws.

I know this because I spent a month driving, shopping and in other ways serving the users of apps like Uber, Lyft, Postmates and Instacart. I recorded the whole thing for a podcast called *Benjamin Walker's Theory of Everything*. Benjamin wanted to see what it was like to work for an app, but he didn't want to do the work himself. In the spirit of the sharing economy, he convinced me to "partner" with him. There is so much ridiculous stuff I can't get to in this short space that you should listen to my full adventures online at [www.sharingeconomy.fail](http://www.sharingeconomy.fail) or by searching for "Instaserfs."

I signed up for as many sharing economy jobs as I could, but they're not really jobs. I was never an employee; I was a "partner," or a "hero" or even a "ninja" depending on the app. Sharing economy companies are just middlemen, connecting independent contractors to customers. When I signed up to work with (not for) these apps, I was essentially starting my own ride-sharing/courier business.

As a freelance filmmaker, I knew the deal: being your own boss is a big responsibility. In the U.S., we independent contractors have to pay an additional self-employment tax and we have to find our own health insurance. We're also not guaranteed a minimum wage. As sharing economy workers, we use our own cars, which means paying for our own gas and maintenance costs. We are on our own.

We do still have a boss. It just isn't a person. It's an algorithm.

## Becoming a five-star driver

It is generally quite easy to become an Uber driver; all you need is a relatively new car and a driver's license. Unfortunately, my 2012 Scion xB has a few scratches on the passenger side. Uber's car inspectors told me it wouldn't have been a problem had the scratches been on the driver's side, but they would be too visible to customers, so I was rejected! I turned to Lyft—essentially an Uber clone and just as popular in the Bay Area. They

didn't care about the cosmetic damage to my car. After submitting my insurance info, and going for a quick drive around the block with another Lyft driver (to prove the car actually works), I was good to go.

I was excited to get started. I like talking to people, and in the movies being a taxi driver always seemed really interesting. Almost everybody I picked up was great, but it is a problem when the passengers aren't cool, like the group of racist, self-righteous venture capitalist bros who smoked in my car. If I was really running my own business, I could have let them know I thought they were all assholes, but with Lyft, and a lot of other apps, the customers are rating you. And if your average rating falls below 4.7 out of 5 stars you are removed from the platform—fired.

Whether it's Uber, Lyft or any other ride-share app, when you're in the car, the passengers have the control. The rating system is essential to the sharing economy's ability to function because the companies aren't legally allowed to train their independent contractors like they would employees. They test the workers in the field and drop those who get low ratings, which passengers can give for any reason. The venture capitalists, for example, told me they didn't like drivers who had a hard time with English.

Defenders of the sharing economy often tell me they've talked to a driver who loves it! Many drivers do, but consider that, as a passenger, you're going to be rating your interview subject, and that anything under five stars will bring the driver one step closer to getting kicked off the platform. That can have some implications as far as how honest drivers are when their passengers ask about how much they like it. Depressing workers don't get high ratings. Nobody wants to feel guilty about using an app they like.

Realistically, people aren't driving around strangers because they love it. They do it because they need to earn a living and it's been hard in America since 2008. Workers are grateful for what they can get and here it's the companies who have all the control. The standard ride-sharing or couri-

er app's business model looks something like this:

- 1) When introducing your app into a new city, take heavy losses by over-paying drivers and under-charging customers.
- 2) Offer drivers cash bonuses to get their friends to sign up.
- 3) Once you've got a steady supply of drivers invested in the app, start lowering their pay.

The companies don't send out an apologetic email letting drivers know a pay cut is on the way. It happens inconspicuously through "upgrades" to the app, which can often change fare and payment rates. Only drivers with enough extra time to carefully analyze their earnings will notice that the new terms don't work in their favour. After enough pay cuts, some will quit, but many in the workforce buy cars specifically to become a part of the sharing economy and end up stuck, continuing to work for less money or switching to one of the other apps.

Independent contractors are allowed to work for as many companies as they want, but Lyft doesn't want you driving for Uber and vice versa. In January 2015, Uber announced it would guarantee earnings of between \$10 and \$26 an hour depending on peak hours. But to qualify you have to accept 90% of all ride requests, accept one ride per hour and be online for 50 minutes of each hour worked. Lyft has a similar deal where you can earn a 10% bonus for driving 30 hours in a week, a 20% bonus for working 40 hours a week, and a 30% bonus for driving 50 hours a week. The idea is to reward loyalty and prevent drivers from having Uber and Lyft open at the same time. The thing is, if you're working 40 or 50 hours a week with one company, that looks a lot less like a gig and a lot more like full-time employment.

## Connecting to the workforce

In Los Angeles, September 2014, a group of Lyft drivers burned their pink mustaches in protest of the pay cuts. These kinds of actions aren't very common because most of us

don't know our co-workers and there is no physical location to congregate. Lyft doesn't allow their drivers at the head office. The main place for "sharing economy" workers to connect is through online forums and Facebook groups. All of the apps out there have at least one and my favourite is the Postmates Couriers group.

Postmates is a delivery app. As a customer, you can order anything you want and have it delivered to your house within an hour. Most often, people are ordering food, but every once and a while you'll get an order for Whip-It canisters or an HDMI cable. It seems like a relatively simple job, but it actually can be quite a challenge, which is why it's important to have a community of drivers that can learn from each other.

The official Postmates courier group on Facebook is fairly innocuous, made up mostly of people asking for advice on how to make more money and some posting their earnings with pride. The responses are all optimistic and inspirational, making Postmates seem like a pretty decent gig. So I was surprised when I joined the unofficial Postmates group, which restricts membership to couriers, and the very first thing I saw was this pinned message from the moderator:

Be mindful that there are people in this group spying for corporate. Your words in here can lead to your being suspended or banned from the platform. We do our best to keep any corporate employees out but that is a near impossible task. We don't want to see anyone get banned from the platform over a Facebook post so please give your words thought before hitting post.

Yes, people have been kicked off Postmates for complaining. I've talked to them. And yes, the official Postmates courier group on Facebook is censored to erase anything that could be perceived as a complaint. But more importantly it's clear that Postmates is not preparing its workers for the realities of life as an independent contractor. Many are shocked about how much they have to pay in taxes and how little they're making doing the

work. There are plenty of screenshots showing that some are making less than minimum wage.

One way to ensure you won't make a lot of money over a shift is to accept orders for Postmates' "promotional offers." One time, I entered a self-serve frozen yogurt shop (for the third time that day) and saw two people frantically looking from their phones to the display of toppings. I started making the frozen yogurt combination listed on my phone when I heard, "you guys don't have any raspberries?!" He was also a Postmate. When the answer came back (they had run out of raspberries), the three of us realized that we were all in the same boat and took a moment to commiserate.

"Postmates?"

"Yeah, hold on, I'm gonna call my customer."

Both of their customers asked for a substitute topping. Mine wanted to cancel the order. But I had already started filling a cup with froyo! The cashier was looking at me. What was I supposed to do? I threw on some M&Ms and bought it for myself. I had to run—if you want to make more than minimum wage working for Postmates you have to "stack" orders, which means accepting a new job before you finish the one you're working on. There was only 45 minutes left before a guy across town needed a burrito in his hand.

I ended up having to take on all kinds of little expenses like these. It's part of the risk of starting your own business. That time, I just had to buy a \$3 froyo but it can be a lot worse (parking tickets in San Francisco can be over \$80). Oftentimes you have to choose between parking illegally or being late with an order.

One Postmates employee suggested I park in driveways because I would be less likely to get a ticket than if I double-parked. When I stopped by the Postmates office to ask if they reimburse tickets (they don't), they gave me a parking placard that would inform meter monitors I was a Postmate who would be right back to move my car. All the risk falls onto the worker and the company is free of liability—despite the placard being an explicit suggestion that it's okay to break the

law if that's what you've got to do to get the order done on time.

## True efficiency

When you start a shift driving for Uber, the first thing you do is look for hotspots. Drivers and customers have different interfaces on their phones. For drivers, a red area on the map supposedly identifies where the most people are (or will be) requesting rides, so you drive to that area hoping to find a passenger. But since all the available Uber drivers are moving to the same places, the red zones can change before you get to them.

Why doesn't Uber just tell its drivers exactly where rides are needed? Giving direct orders would transform their independent contractors into employees with rights and benefits. The result is a system that is much less efficient (for the drivers) than it should be simply because the ride-share app companies want to avoid the responsibilities of being full-blown employers.

Postmates once allowed their drivers to see the details of an order before accepting a job. This was great for couriers because we could estimate how much money we would make on an order. It also meant we could reject bad jobs, which created a situation where it could take a long time—or even be impossible—to find a courier who would accept a low-paying job. Postmates responded by "updating" the app to a "blind system" in which we could still accept or reject jobs, but without enough information to determine whether it would be worth our time or not (e.g., a huge grocery store order). To make sure we accept jobs quickly without analyzing them, the app plays an extremely loud and annoying beeping noise designed specifically to harass couriers into submitting to the algorithm.

One of the best companies I worked for is called Washio. I picked up dirty laundry and delivered clean laundry. It was the best paying and least stressful of all the apps I worked with that month because there was no illusion of choice. Washio tells you exactly what to do and you do it. It is simple

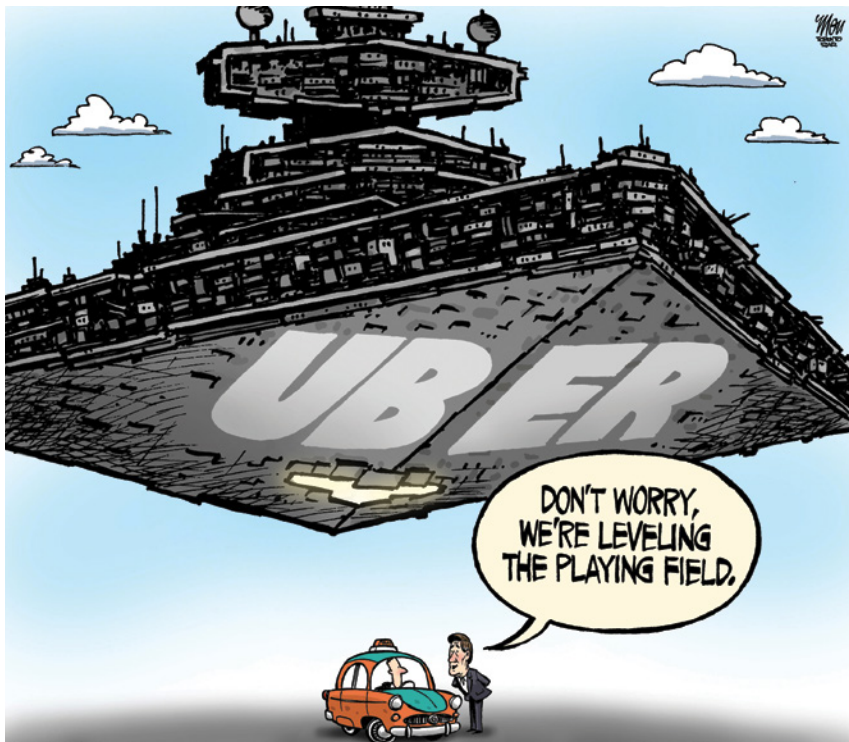


ILLUSTRATION BY THEO MOUDAKIS / THE TORONTO STAR

and honest. But it also betrays the spirit of the independent contractor, and that's important for a number of reasons.

In the United States, as I suspect in Canada, all the worker protections in our legal code are specifically designed to help employees. For example, employers are required to pay a minimum wage, to provide medical insurance, and to supply certain benefits such as sick days. By pretending that their employees are actually self-starting entrepreneurs, sharing economy companies can avoid these obligations and save an enormous amount of money in the process—savings that are both passed on to the customer and pocketed in profits. It sounds great until you ask about things like insurance.

True story: an Uber driver hits a six-year-old girl in the crosswalk and kills her. Uber doesn't take responsibility because the driver wasn't carrying a passenger at the time and so technically wasn't working for Uber. His insurance company, on the other hand, doesn't cover the accident because by working for Uber without a commercial driving insurance policy he was violating the terms of the policy he did have. Uber settled for an un-

disclosed amount after a year and a half of litigation.

Your auto insurance company can terminate your policy if they discover you are driving passengers or cargo for profit. I know this because I called mine to say I was "thinking about" signing up for Uber. They told me not to, since I'd be driving without coverage. Hopefully, they'll never hear the podcast!

### Regulators! Mount up.

Some simple Google searches led me to a number of articles about Canada's response to the sharing economy. I can see you're struggling with Uber in particular, from Vancouver to Halifax, and the word that keeps popping up is "regulation."

I understand that it's hard not to give in to the lower prices and the convenience of getting whatever you want on demand with an app. It's kind of awesome, actually! But I would argue that the exploitation economy is just as unhealthy and dehumanizing for the customers as it is for the workers.

Postmates couriers are told that it is strictly against the rules to shake a customer's hand. Like all rules, this didn't come from nowhere. The truth

is that using sharing economy services can breed contempt for the workers. One creepy Uber driver can nurture disdain for all the lowly drivers. You never even have to see the person who is cleaning your house or your clothes. Plenty of people requested that I drop off their food at the door. Customers grow to love apps that make the worker anonymous. That way, you don't have to feel guilty about having servants.

The most common defence of the sharing economy I hear is, "if it's so bad, why are so many people doing it?" Many do it out of desperation. I've talked to a number of drivers who will work over 30 hours every weekend *in addition* to a full-time job just to have enough money to pay rent and take care of their kids. It can also seem like you're making a lot more money than you really are if you're not diligently adding up your expenses, many of which are invisible. For example, taxes aren't taken out of your paycheck, so when April comes around it can be a shock to discover how much you owe.

On the other hand, the sharing economy can be a great thing for some of the workers. If you listen to the third episode of the "Instaserfs" series you will meet Brooklyn, an amazing TaskRabbit worker I hired to help me finish the show. She quit a six-figure salary to pursue her passion (a fashion blog at [www.boisclub.com](http://www.boisclub.com)) She can do that and still pay the rent because of the flexibility she enjoys as an independent contractor. But she is legitimately an entrepreneur, not the average sharing economy worker.

There is a place in this world for the sharing economy, and it could be a beautiful thing, but where I live these companies run the show. There are no rules. The apps are breaking the spirit of the law by abusing the independent contractor loophole and actively encourage (e.g., through dubious car placards) actually breaking the law. But it will only ever be the workers, not the companies, who are punished. If you're going to let the sharing economy into your country, dear Canada, please take control of the situation. Don't just let the invisible hand lead you wherever it wants you to go. **M**



Stephen Dale

# How do we protect “gig” workers?

**IM HUDAK HAS** seen the future, and it is Uber.

Ontario should “send a signal that we are an economy that is open for innovators, for new ideas, and would take a leading role in supporting technology,” remarked the former Progressive Conservative leader in late 2015. The province could do that, he said, by passing laws encouraging the spread of Uber-like app-based businesses that link contract service providers to consumers through their phones.

Uber, the renegade ride provider that has municipalities across Canada scrambling to revise their taxi by-laws, is the best-known emissary of the so-called “sharing” or “gig economy.” But Uber is just the tip of the iceberg.

In the U.S., a multitude of companies with names like TaskRabbit, Zaarly, Postmates (Canadian version: SkipTheDishes) and Kitchensurfing, many of them based in Silicon Valley, are marshalling an army of casual employees waiting to be dispatched, via text message, to do a few hours’ work picking up fast-food orders, cooking in someone’s home, doing laundry, pet-sitting or performing some other daily chore their app users would rather not do.

Hudak’s glee that this new work model, already well established and growing in major U.S. cities, may soon take root in Canada mirrors the enthusiasm of his ideological brethren.

Presidential hopeful Marco Rubio, for example, in his eagerness to make Republican inroads in staunchly Democratic Silicon Valley, has declared “the on-demand economy is a miracle that only American free enterprise could produce.” There’s also no shortage of hyperbole coming from the industry itself, which likes to portray the foot soldiers of the “gig econ-

omy” as self-directed, empowered “entrepreneurs” who can work their way to riches on their own terms.

McMaster University labour studies professor Wayne Lewchuk says we need to look past this hype and acknowledge the conditions that gave rise to app-centric employers if we are ever going to deal with the challenges they pose to the social and economic security of workers in Canada.

Enterprises like Uber or TaskRabbit “aren’t at all different from a temp employment agency, other than it’s all done online,” says Lewchuk. The recent growth of the “gig economy” reflects neither the brilliance of the technology nor the novelty of the business model, but rather the more mundane reality that “there are lots of people who are desperate for work.”

And while they are often portrayed as bringing revolutionary change to the workplace, Lewchuk insists Uber-style companies are just more of the same—“a new variant” of an ongoing and well-established trend where stable employment is being replaced by precarious contract work.

Leaving aside the matter of wages (gig workers often earn less than minimum wage) this trend toward precarious employment has already had a significant impact on the way Canadians work and live.

A 2015 study, written by Lewchuk for the United Way, found that 52% of workers in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area hold temporary, contract or part-time positions, with profound personal consequences. Precariously employed workers are twice as likely to report mental health problems, six times as likely to delay starting relationships, and three times more likely to delay having children than workers in secure, full-time employment.

Almost half of precariously employed workers say their unpredictable work schedule disrupts their family life.

But perhaps the most prominent hallmark of precarious employment is that even those workers on longer-term contracts who are reasonably paid are less likely to have access to benefits.

“Most people on contract who are classified as employees might be entitled to CPP (Canadian Pension Plan) and unemployment insurance, although the chances of collecting unemployment insurance these days are practically zero. But they wouldn’t be getting employer-funded benefits like pension or healthcare,” says Lewchuk. “On the other hand, if they are classified as self-employed, they don’t even get any of the government benefits.”

This is precisely why companies like Uber classify their workforce as independent contractors. It lets app-based service providers get out of paying benefits while washing their hands of the responsibility of administering government programs or underwriting capital costs (such as cars, gasoline and maintenance if the service involves delivery). Meanwhile, the firms take a considerable percentage of all transactions between app users and workers.

This business strategy is not unasailable. A California judge recently agreed to hear a class action suit from a group of Uber drivers who want to be recognized as employees of the company and entitled to benefits. Meanwhile, courts in the same state ruled in 2014 that FedEx could not treat its couriers as independent contractors.

The bottom line for all precariously employed people, says Lewchuk, is that “whether you are a freelancer or an Uber driver, you don’t have a permanent relationship with an employer, and therefore you don’t have any buff-

er from the instability that's inherent in a market economy." Or, as U.S. Senator Mark Warner expressed it, "these [gig economy] workers exist on a high wire, with no safety net below them."

Rectifying this situation, according to Lewchuk, requires an understanding of how the previous social contract unravelled, while leaving in place a set of legal and social provisions that are inadequate for today's workplace realities.

He says the fracturing of the "great social compromise" coming out of the Depression and Second World War, whereby companies agreed to supplement government health and pension plans designed for a primarily full-time workforce, has made it necessary to fortify the state's social safety net and find new vehicles for delivering supplementary benefits.

The good news is that models for providing those benefits already exist. In the building trades, for example, where electricians or carpenters work on a succession of projects for different firms, the norm has long been for construction unions to provide worker training, and to collect fees from the companies that allow them to administer benefits on behalf of their members. Unions take on the same roles in the theatre and film worlds.

"Those are also project based," explains Lewchuk. "A film comes in and it needs a crew. People work on the crew and when the film is done the operation vaporizes."

Leslie Dyson, B.C.-based president of the Canadian Freelance Union (CFU), envisions a day when her organization will assume the same function within its corner of the contract worker universe. Chartered in 2009, and operating as a "community chapter" of UNIFOR, the CFU represents a wide number of communications-related professionals including writers, editors, illustrators, web developers and designers, and project managers.

Currently, the union offers benefits like insurance, although "we're not big enough yet to offer a pension plan," says Dyson. Ultimately, she adds, the organization hopes to take a role in collective bargaining, sitting down with "non-unionized workers and industry people to set minimum standards of pay and

## The trend toward precarious employment has already had a significant impact on the way Canadians work and live.

working conditions" that employers would be obligated to adhere to.

But for contract employees to gain that kind of representation there must be an enabling legal framework in place. In its submission to Ontario's Changing Workplace Review, which is looking into labour code reforms that would better respond to current workplace conditions, UNIFOR has proposed several measures that would give leverage to advocates for casual and contract workers.

For one, the union calls for government-mandated sectoral councils, made up of labour organizations, independent contractors and employers, charged with establishing a minimum pay scale and discouraging "competition based on low wages and precarious working conditions."

The UNIFOR submission also proposes the application of the "Status of the Artist" model in dealings with freelancers such as media workers. This model requires employers to meet with an organization deemed by the Labour Relations Board to represent workers in a specific sector to negotiate a standard agreement that must be respected by the employer in transactions with any contractor.

Dyson says she thinks these mechanisms could be extended across the country, and that they would be of clear benefit to workers in a wide range of industries. She also envisions the "community chapter" model "being really effective for other people who don't have any protection, maybe even Uber drivers," since it combines the organizational strength of a big union like UNIFOR with the familiarity of chapter officials with specific conditions in their own industry. Dyson reports the model is spread-

ing beyond the media-related workforce; for example, there is a UNIFOR community chapter representing ministers and other faith workers employed by the United Church.

Lewchuk stresses that improved standards for precariously employed workers inevitably hinge on governments creating the conditions for those initiatives to succeed. He cites as an example the provision of health insurance for previously uninsured restaurant workers in San Francisco. There, the city passed a law requiring that businesses pay health premiums for their workers. While restaurants have the option of funding the program through a surcharge on customer bills, or absorbing the costs as part of their general overhead, what makes the program work is that employers are legally obligated to fund their workers' health care.

It also seems essential, in this era of casual and contract work, to update and strengthen government-run social programs introduced in an era when full-time employment, often with only one company, was the norm for a large number of people. A supplementary, government-administered pension plan to augment the CPP, under active consideration in Ontario and endorsed in principle by other provinces, seems a logical response to the widespread disappearance of workplace pension plans.

"That's definitely the right thing to do," says Lewchuk. "But bringing self-employed people into the scheme is still a challenge. Ontario is struggling with how a self-employed person would deduct their pension contributions from their income. Does the Uber driver charge customers a surcharge for pension contributions?"

Dyson is convinced the acutely felt need for "gig economy" workers, freelancers and contract employees to gain greater security indicates that multiple efforts—new organizing drives for new forms of labour organizations, better legislation, new obligations for employers—are required simultaneously.

"Everybody has that sense of insecurity now," she says. "I don't know anybody who doesn't feel that they can be easily replaced. I don't know anybody who feels 'I'm untouchable.'" **M**

Sheila Block

# Ending on-call scheduling and unpaid overtime

**THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT** is in the midst of a review of its labour legislation. It is considering amendments “to best protect workers while supporting businesses in our changing economy.” Among the workplace trends the government is examining are the increase in temporary, involuntary and part-time work, the rising prominence of the service industries, globalization, technological change and greater workplace diversity.

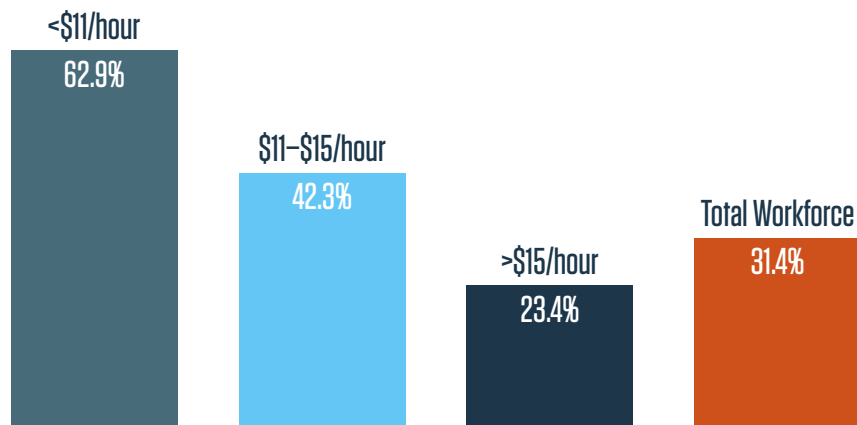
In a *Behind the Numbers* blog post in September, I suggested that this important review would do well to look at two new developments in U.S. labour market policies: unpredictable work schedules, and the rise in unpaid overtime.

A number of major retailers in the U.S. are moving to end on-call scheduling. Also known as “zero-hour contracts,” the on-call system requires workers to be available to work, but with no guarantee they will be called with a shift and no compensation when they are not needed.

For retail workers it means not knowing how much you will earn from week to week, which limits your ability to work other jobs and creates a great deal of uncertainty for family life. For example, how do you arrange for child care in case you are called into work? How do you pay for it if the call doesn't come?

Major retailers in the U.S. are reconsidering the practice, but not because they woke up one morning and decided they needed to be better employers. Groups including the National Employment Law Project have been organizing around this issue. It resulted in a number of state governments proposing legislation to end on-call scheduling. Improving labour

% share of employees with unpredictable schedules, Ontario (2014)



market conditions in the U.S. are also putting pressure on employers to improve working conditions.

Unpredictable work schedules don't stop at the border. In fact, many low-wage workers in Ontario and across Canada face the same kind of uncertainty on the job.

In 2014, 63% of minimum-wage workers in Ontario had jobs where hours varied from week to week (see graph). The situation is slightly better for those earning between \$11 and \$15 an hour (42% of workers in this group had unpredictable hours). In sharp contrast, only 23.4% of workers who made more than \$15 an hour had variable schedules.

Advocates in Ontario, like the Workers' Action Centre, have proposed changes to the Employment Standards Act that would address this issue. They include requiring two weeks' advance posting of work schedules, mandatory compensation if schedules are changed within that two-week period, and protection from reprisals if workers request different hours.

On the second issue of unpaid overtime, there are also lessons from south

of the border. Currently in the U.S., if you are classified as a manager and you make more than US\$23,660 a year (below the federal poverty line for a family of four) you are not entitled to overtime pay. President Obama has proposed changes that would more than double this threshold, which would have a particularly positive impact on managers in the retail and restaurant industries.

Overtime rules differ in Ontario, but here, too, managers and supervisors are not eligible for overtime pay. That can be justified for middle managers whose median earnings are more than \$40 an hour. But supervisors in food services with median earnings of \$12.50 an hour, and in retail where they are \$15 an hour, should be eligible for overtime. The proposal in the Ontario's Changing Workplace Review to repeal overtime exemptions and special rules would address this issue.

By mirroring progressive changes in U.S. labour market policies, Ontario has an opportunity to make immediate, concrete improvements in the lives of low-wage workers and their families. It should take it. **M**

# The Index

## A snapshot of the Canadian workforce

Compiled by Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood

There are **18 million** working people in Canada, according to the latest estimates, out of a total population of nearly **36 million**. Who are they? What do they do? Where and why?

**11.6 million** people in Canada are employed in the private sector (**65%** of all workers), while the public sector accounts for another **3.6 million (20%)**. The other **2.7 million workers (15%)** are self-employed.

**81%** of Canadians work full time and the rest work part time. **35%** of workers are salaried and the rest are paid by the hour.

Although most workers are Canadian citizens or permanent residents, there are more than **380,000** temporary migrant workers in Canada, accounting for about **2%** of the workforce.

Not everyone who wants a job has one. **1.3 million** people in Canada are out of work and the unemployment rate is hovering around **7%**. Among the provinces, the unemployment rate is highest in Newfoundland and Labrador (**13%**) and lowest in Manitoba (**5.3%**).

Youth unemployment is **13.3%** nationally.

The unemployment rate has declined from its recent high of **8.3%** in 2009, but that's partly because many unemployed people have given up looking for work. The participation rate (percentage of population in the workforce) has actually declined since 2009, from **67.6%** to **66%** today.

Underemployment (where workers are overqualified for their current position or wish they could work more hours) is a related concern. By some measures, there are **1.4 million** underemployed workers in Canada. For workers under the age of 25, the underemployment rate is as high as **28%**.

Of the **3.4 million** people working part time, **936,000 (27%)** are doing so involuntarily. For people working part time in their prime working years (ages 25–54), **38%** wish they were working full time.

**78%** of workers in Canada are employed in the

services (including **90%** of women). By industry, wholesale and retail trade is the biggest employer (**15%** of the workforce), followed by health care and social assistance (**12%**) and manufacturing (**10%**).

Some industries in Canada are highly gendered. Men are overrepresented in construction (**88%** of workers in the industry are male) and resources (**81%**), while women are overrepresented in health care (**82%** of workers in the industry are female) and education (**68%**).

Manufacturing and agriculture are the only industries in Canada to experience an absolute decline in employment over the past three decades—they employ **330,000** and **159,000** fewer people today, respectively, than they did in 1987. Health care has seen the biggest increase—there are **1 million** more health-related jobs today than there were in the 1980s.

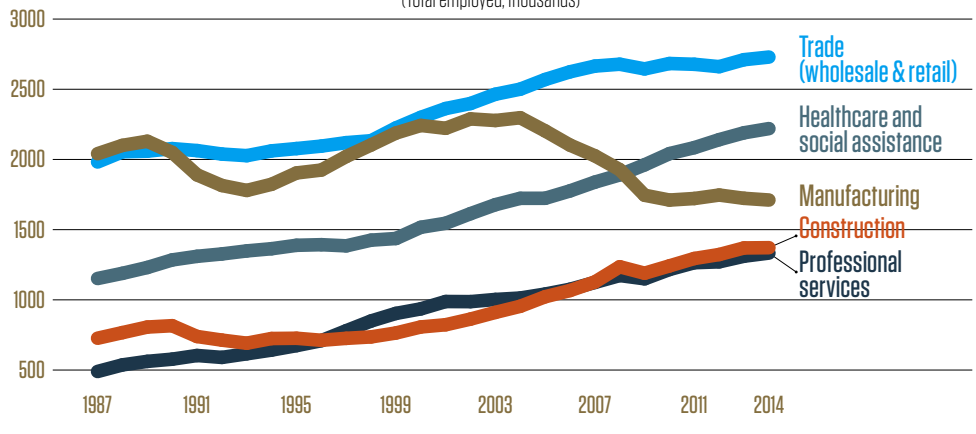
The median wage in Canada is **\$21/hour**.

Median wages are lowest in accommodation and food services (**\$12/hour**) and highest in utilities (**\$36/hour**). Men receive a higher median wage than women (**\$23/hour vs. \$20/hour**) and full-time employees receive a higher median wage than part-time employees (**\$23/hour vs. \$13/hour**). Provincially, Alberta has the highest median wage (**\$25/hour**) and Prince Edward Island has the lowest (**\$17.50/hour**).

Among working people, median employment income (earnings before government transfers or taxes) is **\$32,400 per year**. There is a big gap in median annual employment income between men (**\$38,700**) and women (**\$27,000**). There is also a big gap between Alberta (**\$41,700**) and P.E.I. (**\$25,700**).

In comparison, the median pay of Canada's top 100 CEOs is **\$7.7 million** and rising. The average top CEO earns as much by lunch on January 2<sup>nd</sup> as the average Canadian worker earns all year.

Employment in Canada's five biggest industries  
(Total employed, thousands)



SOURCES: Statistics Canada CANSIM tables 111-0024, 282-0012, 282-0014, 282-0087, 282-0089 and 282-0072; Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood, "The hidden growth of Canada's migrant workforce," in *The Harper Record 2008–2015*, eds. Teresa Healy & Stuart Trew, CCPA (October 2015); "Underemployment is Canada's Real Labour Market Challenge," Canadian Labour Congress Research Note (March 2014); Hugh Mackenzie, "Glory Days: CEO Pay in Canada Soaring to Pre-Recession Highs," CCPA (January 2015).

Karl Flecker

# New country, new job — new risks

**DUARDO IS SUFFERING** from a repetitive strain injury. Working at Costco, stocking shelves, moving large boxes of everything he never eats, he jokes, is not what he planned to do with his European training in logistics management. New to Canada, he realized a survival job was likely necessary until his credentials could be recognized. No one told him it would take so long, cost so much, and despite his training and experience still leave him without a job in his field. Manually moving foodstuffs has left him injured with no choice but to keep working or lose the income he needs to stay afloat.

Aishay can't hide her depression. Her face no longer suggests she is an internationally trained doctor with years of experience in women's health. Like many others, she found the credential recognition process lengthy, expensive and systemically biased against newcomers. Her savings ran low, leaving no choice but to take a job serving coffee at Tim's. Adjusting to this new status in the Canadian job market hurts in ways she never imagined.

These are just a few of the stories of many newcomers to Canada, be they permanent residents, refugees or temporary migrant workers who increasingly are the face of our workforce. The last reliable census data from 2006 found that one in five Canadian workers is an immigrant. In the early 2000s, immigrants accounted for 80% of net labour growth. In about the same amount of time it takes to pay off a new car loan we will become 100% dependent on immigrants for growing the labour force.

With 47% of the workforce already at 65 or nearing that mark, and a consistent downward trend line of natural births, demographic change is dra-

matically affecting the composition of the labour force, according to Statistics Canada. Projections show that by 2030 or sooner, immigrants will be the principal source for growing the population.

Eduardo and Aishay's experiences are unfortunately typical for most immigrants. Those who arrived in the 1990s and 2000s, particularly those from racialized groups, are more likely than Canadian-born workers to end up in precarious, low-wage jobs. This includes factory work, restaurants, hotels and retail stores. Many high-skilled immigrants are more educated and experienced than their Canadian peers.

But due to employers' discomfort with international experience and qualifications, and/or having different levels of language proficiency, and/or an absence of Canadian work experience (often nothing more than a proxy for xenophobia), immigrants endure the survival job to support themselves and their families.

Immigrant workers are amongst Canada's most vulnerable when it comes to their health and safety on the job. Research findings from the Institute for Work and Health (IWH) point to three main reasons for this growing reality: not knowing their legal rights, working in jobs without experience or hazard-specific training, and being unlikely to raise health and safety concerns for fear of losing the job that is keeping them afloat.

While these factors also apply to many Canadian-born workers, particularly young workers, Dr. Agnieszka Kosny from IWH notes an important difference: immigrants, by virtue of their status as newcomers to Canada, tend to find employment, particularly in the early years of their arriv-

al, that does not mirror the jobs they left behind in terms of qualifications.

"These workers end up doing jobs they have never done before, often involving manual, heavy and repetitive work and with little knowledge of the hazards, tools, or machinery associated with the work," she says. Research statistics paint an equally grim picture. Ninety per cent of immigrant workplace injuries require medical attention, compared to 65% for other workers.

Newcomers are more likely than Canadian-born workers to be employed in jobs with a high number of workplace health and safety hazards. Recent immigrants are also less likely to access compensation after a workplace injury. In addition, IWH researchers have found newcomers are often unfamiliar with workplace safety protections and the workplace injury claim and compensation processes.

Additionally, immigrant workers who are not proficient in English or French are more likely to make mistakes on incident/injury forms, or to misunderstand an adjudicator or employer, which can sometimes make them appear unco-operative. IWH has also documented systemic problems such as inconsistent or a total lack of interpretation services at the correct time in the workplace safety compensation process, which leads to further problems.

IWH researchers also found cases of workplace injuries involving immigrants where employers offered affected workers time off rather than filing a workplace injury report. In other instances, employers misled immigrants about their rights or told the worker to return to work or be fired.

The necessity for a paycheque leaves newcomers with few options

# Truth, reconciliation, and employment equality

"In 2009, the Métis unemployment rate for persons aged 25 to 54 was 9.4%, while the non-Aboriginal rate was 7.0%. In 2006, the Inuit unemployment rate was 19%. The true rates of unemployment for people living on reserves are difficult to ascertain because of limited data collection.

"Aboriginal people also have incomes well below their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

"The median income for Aboriginal people in 2006 was 30% lower than the median income for non-Aboriginal workers (\$18,962 versus \$27,097, respectively). The gap narrows when Aboriginal people obtain a university degree, which they do at a far lower rate. Not surprisingly, the child poverty rate for Aboriginal children is also very high—40%, compared with 17% for all children in Canada. The income gap is pervasive: non-Aboriginal Canadians earn more than Aboriginal workers no matter whether they work on reserves, off reserves, or in urban, rural, or remote locations.

"The proportion of Aboriginal adults below the poverty line, regardless of age and gender, is much higher than that of non-Aboriginal adults, with differences ranging from 7.8% for adult men aged 65 or older, to 22.5% for adult women aged 65 or older. The depth of poverty is also much greater, with Aboriginal people having an average income that falls further below the poverty line on average than that of non-Aboriginal adults, and their poverty is more likely to have persisted for a significant period of time."

*Excerpt from the December 2015 final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which, among its many recommendations, calls upon the federal government "to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians."*

but to keep working, and limited options create risks.

A 2011 study examined for the first time the relationship between workplace injuries, education and job mismatch. It revealed that recent immigrants who have higher educational qualifications than required for the job are more than three times as likely to report a workplace injury as an immigrant with five years' experience (in the new country) who is not overqualified for their job.

Another study explored how over-qualification among new immigrants affects general and mental health. Using data from a Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada administered by Statistics Canada, the study found that employed immigrants who worked in their field before coming to Canada were in good health upon arrival, but the impact of enduring the survival job situation resulted in declines in mental health with "persistent feelings of sadness, depression or loneliness."

The IWH lead researcher on the study, Cynthia Chen, points out that immigrants receive very little information when applying to come to Canada about what type of work they are likely to end up in and how long they may have to remain in jobs for which they are overqualified. Chen says the study "shows that unmet job expectations increases the risk of decline in mental well-being over a relatively short time."

The fact that about half of recent immigrants end up working in jobs for which they are overqualified means not only that our economy is underutilizing their talents, it puts people at risk of both physical workplace injury and deleterious mental well-being.

Changing this situation is possible, but will require innovation, collaboration and comprehensive policy improvements. A labour movement concerned with protecting all workers, and particularly newcomers who will make a major and growing contribution to its numbers, needs to strengthen its advocacy for immigrant workers.

Unions need to forge links with immigrant and settlement agencies to

assist in the development of accessible and multilingual information about employment standards, occupational health and safety rights and the workers compensation process. By working together unions can help add these components to immigrant and settlement agencies' job search and language training classes offered to all newcomers preparing to enter the labour force. In return, unions get an early start at organizing these workers.

Governments also have increased obligations that could include the following:

- ▶ Rigorously targeting workplaces with high concentrations of immigrant and other vulnerable workers for health and safety inspections, and requiring that employers implement effective injury prevention programs.
- ▶ Greater protections for injured workers who file claims, including multilingual access to legal information and access to alternative income support programs once injured.
- ▶ Offering professional-level interpretation services at the onset of claims and periodically, throughout the process, to improve workers' understanding of their claim and outcomes.
- ▶ Properly advertising and promoting WSIB services for newcomers in order to overcome known barriers. This requires collecting data on the experiences of newcomers with the system, since currently there is no way to identify claimants as immigrants.
- ▶ A more efficient and timely credential recognition process designed for skilled workers that would result in immigrant workers securing jobs in their fields and commensurate with their international experiences and training.

Without a comprehensive set of measures to better protect our workforce, with particular attention to vulnerable workers like Eduardo and Aishay, we are putting people in harms way and missing out an opportunity to organize and support a growing demographic of the labour movement. **M**

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# WHAT'S LEFT

**What's Left** is weekly digest of current news and events, curated by the good people at Citizens' Press, which focuses on left-wing issues in Canada, important international struggles, and useful analysis for workers and activists across the country.

To subscribe to **What's Left**, go to [cpress.org/whatsleft](http://cpress.org/whatsleft). Here is an abridged sample of what you will receive minus the helpful links that come with each segment.

## Flawless theft of a public company

**L**iberal Premier Kathleen Wynne channelled Margaret Thatcher in November as the Ontario government finished its initial public offering (IPO) for 15% of Hydro One. No one agrees with the move, including the budget watchdog, independent finance experts, over 80% of the general public, and most of Wynne's own party—and this has led to a precipitous decline in the government's approval ratings. Only continued public pressure and mass campaigns will halt the selloff of everything the public owns.

## Workers disciplined for having opinions

**I**n this age of free speech, Canadians are still being punished for expressing their opinions outside of the workplace. Even unionized employees are being fired or disciplined for things they do, write or say when they're off the clock—especially on social media. Increasingly, employers are using surveillance to target employees they dislike. Posts on social media are being used to attack workers and fire those who say things employers find inappropriate. While in some extreme cases a few workers have been disciplined for crossing the line and engaging in harassment of their peers, this does not justify the zealous and unregulated actions of employers. It will be critical for regulating bodies to tackle the question of just what is appropriate in these circumstances.

## Korean police raids seek to halt progressive organizing

**I**n the early morning of November 21, the South Korean police raided the of-

fices of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), the Korean Public Services, and the Transport Workers' Union (KPTU). Following an earlier raid of the KPTU office, these latest actions resulted in police seizure of all documentation relating to the People's Mass Mobilization that took place on November 14, the KPTU-TruckSol's Safe Rates Rally, the April 16 Sewol memorial event, and May Day. Not since the end of the dictatorship in Korea has the KCTU and its affiliates seen this kind of state response to legitimate protest against increasingly unpopular policies. The violent actions of the government would seem to represent a regression where the democracy that Korean workers and common people won is, once again, moving toward dictatorship.

## Fast food workers strike in record numbers

**O**n Tuesday, November 10, exactly one year from election day in the United States, low-wage workers were on strike in record numbers across the country. Their demands include increasing pay to a \$15 minimum wage and asserting their rights to organize as unions. There is hope this movement will expand and intensify in 2016, forcing candidates to consider these as priority issues in the U.S. election.

## Canada's largest union debates resource allocation

**A**t its convention in early November, the Canadian Union of Public Employees debated the question of where to focus the use of union dues, in campaigns or in strike support. Canada's largest union decided to engage its members on the issue during a two-

year cross-country consultation. Given changes to "essential services" legislation that ban an increasing number of CUPE members from striking, and the growth of precarious employment and the number of people living paycheque to paycheque, fiscal strain is becoming an increasing barrier to engaging in strike actions. As such, members are being asked how CUPE can best balance these priorities. The future of militant action within CUPE is at stake. If the union gets it right, it could lead to a broader change in the way unions advance change for working people.

## Neuropolitics in the wild... watching, learning

**D**ata has become a critical part of any political campaign. Information about who voted where, what they said on the doorstep, whether they donated to a party, showed up to an event, or liked a post on Facebook are now all being used by political campaigns to better shape messaging, mobilize supporters and get out the vote on election day. As the *New York Times* detailed in a November 4 article, "neuromarketing" or "neuropolitics" takes this data collection a step further. By embracing technologies such as facial recognition and biometric scanning, political parties, governments and companies are able to get live, visual feedback from random, unknowing citizens encountering political imagery and messaging in their day-to-day lives. For instance, by placing hidden cameras in billboards, a political party can learn, in real-time, how individuals react to different kinds of messaging. Already in the wild, this technology is being used to choose candidates and shape political messaging in dozens of countries, including the United States. **M**

Jenn Clamen and Kara Gillies

## When sex works

Labour solidarity for sex workers has come a long way, but more can be done

**I**N 2013, *IN R. v. Bedford*, the Supreme Court of Canada declared three of Canada's prostitution laws unconstitutional, recognizing that criminal laws against prostitution contribute to the harms perpetrated against sex workers. The new sex work-related laws, introduced by the Conservative government (Bill C-36) in 2014 in response to the ruling, bear a striking resemblance to the ones that had been struck down a year prior, both in theory and application.

As the bill made its way through Parliament, many people and organizations allied with sex-worker rights groups spoke up against it, including LGBT rights groups, AIDS service organizations, women's groups, agencies working to end violence against women, and also, notably, unions. In Canada, sex workers have attempted for years to garner the support of the labour movement, and more recently unions like CUPE and OPSEU

have made public their support for total decriminalization. But why is sex work a union issue in particular?

Sex work is rarely perceived as a form of work, but rather as a social problem that requires elimination or containment. Sometimes this entails viewing sex work as a morality issue, other times it involves constructing sex work as a negative manifestation of women's sexual exploitation or an individual pathology. While issues of economic insecurity and violence are at play in some sex workers' lives, they do not define who sex workers are or what sex work is about. Instead, we believe a more accurate definition is achieved by understanding sex work the way the workers themselves experience it—as a means of generating income and supporting themselves, their families, their needs and their aspirations. In a word, sex work is work.

Understanding sex work in these terms is easier when we have a bet-

ter sense of what the work is about. Whether working in massage parlours, in strip clubs, on the street or in other locales, sex workers are providing services of both a physical and emotional nature as well as interacting with clients, colleagues, management, other third parties and the physical work environment. These interactions involve negotiating labour issues such as pay, work hours, services, professional responsibilities, and occupational health and safety. Like workers in other sectors, those in sex work worry about low wages, personal and workplace safety, the ability to take time off when they are sick, and access to state and employer benefits that enhance both their own and their families' wellbeing.

Unfortunately, the stigma surrounding most forms of sex work, and the accompanying resistance to treating it as "real" work, have hindered sex workers' ability to access basic labour rights, including those of minimum wage, reasonable hours, enforceable contracts and secure working environments.

These obstacles are compounded by the continued criminalization of many aspects of sex work, especially prostitution. The purchase of, communication for, advertising of and receiving a material benefit from sexual services are all illegal. Sex workers are directly criminalized if they communicate for work purposes in public places, as well as marginalized and subjected to violence and exploitation by criminal laws that make the actions of third parties and clients illegal. The absurdity of these prohibitions becomes clear when one contemplates their hypothetical application to other work sectors.

Imagine working as a mechanic, but it being illegal for your customers to



Tyler Anderson/National Post



purchase your services, or for you to hire staff. Or envision being a hair-stylist who is unable to advertise, or whose clients are unable to communicate what haircut they want and what price they are willing to pay. These are ludicrous scenarios, yet sex workers are currently legally required to work under such circumstances if they wish to avoid surveillance, arrest and incarceration. Needless to say, most workers are unable to meet these requirements.

The criminalization of third parties creates further complications when it comes to realizing the labour rights of sex workers. Because the worker-third party relationship is often criminalized, many sex workers have difficulty addressing exploitation in their workplace, and seeking rights and protections under employment laws and before labour boards.

There are many supporters out there of sex workers' rights, but others see sex work as distinct from similar workers' struggles. We challenge this belief. While workers in every sector have their own specific sets of concerns, the commonalities override the differences. This is particularly true in the case of workers who

have been cast to the margins of the labour market, and particularly for migrant sex workers, who have been the prime targets for arrest, detainment and deportation, especially since the implementation of C-36.

Similar to sex workers, growing numbers of working people in multiple sectors have been relegated to the rank of independent contractor, denying them the various benefits associated with employee status. Women workers, including those in sex work, make up the majority of the part-time, contingent, temporary labour force and this precarious status undermines their economic security, ability to negotiate working conditions, and organizing efforts.

Migrant workers, including those in some erotic trades, are rendered vulnerable through the government's foreign worker programs, which create a market of temporary, expendable, underpaid labourers who lack the rights of either workers or citizens. Migrants who don't have formal status under these or other programs are further illegalized and left vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

In an effort to overcome these barriers, sex worker rights groups have

been visible for over 40 years in Canada, educating the public about sex work as an income-generating activity—as work. Part of this means promoting and upholding labour rights and labour protections for a diversity of workers in sex work, and recognizing informal labour that takes place on the street and other public spaces.

It also means fighting for recognition that all forms of sex work constitute legitimate labour and that sex workers are entitled to the same basic labour rights as other working people. These include the right to recognition and protection under labour, employment and contract laws; the right to work independently, collectively or for third parties; the right to enforceable work contracts (as independent contractors or employees); the right to labour organizing, whether in the form of professional associations or unionization; and, finally, the right to be free from criminal prosecution and other repressive state interference. **M**

KARA GILLIES AND JENN CLAMEN ARE SEX-WORKER RIGHTS ACTIVISTS. IN 2003, THEY FOUNDED THE NOW DEFUNCT CANADIAN GUILD FOR EROTIC LABOUR AND ARE CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN SEX WORKER-LED MOVEMENTS FOR TOTAL DECRIMINALIZATION OF SEX WORK.



# TELEPHONE TOWN HALL

MARCH 22 @7:15PM ET

## What?

Join our annual Telephone Townhall for a lively discussion with CCPA's senior economists David Macdonald and Armine Yalnizyan.

## How?

To join the call, simply answer the phone when we call you on March 22, shortly after 7:00 pm Eastern Time. You'll have the opportunity to ask your questions live.

Pierre Ducasse

# Democracy at work

Happier and more productive workplaces are within reach

**W**E SPEND A large portion of our lives at work, much more than in what we call social or political activities. We tend to believe that we live in a democratic society, yet in most cases companies are organized according to an autocratic model. Despite the many changes in our society since the Industrial Revolution, capitalism looks and behaves, with respect to labour relations, much as it did 200 years ago—like a struggle between a master and his or her subordinates. Any project aiming to democratize our society and economy must therefore confront the need to democratize our workplaces. Though no model is perfect, certain management practices are better than others.

## Worker co-operatives and self-management

Worker co-operatives and self-directed enterprises are often considered to be ideal forms of economic democracy. A worker co-operative is an enterprise owned by the workforce. Important decisions are taken during meetings or assemblies based on the principle of one member, one vote. There are no distant shareholders; the workers are at once producers, entrepreneurs and investors—truly their own bosses.

On a day-to-day basis, certain co-operatives operate like vertical organizations, with some employees specializing in management as they would in a traditional private business model. Others deploy a more self-directed management model where decisions about operations (e.g., how work is organized, who will perform what tasks) are made during assemblies or councils bringing together either the entire

workforce or else all co-operative representatives. MONDRAGON Corporation of Spain is proof of how successful this model can be. The half-century-old group pulls together 260 co-operative enterprises with collective revenues of nearly 12 billion euros (\$17 billion) and total employment of 75,000.

There are also numerous examples of worker-recovered companies, mostly in Latin America, but the idea is spreading. These are private companies that have been taken over by the workers, often after the owners closed shop. Once democratized, worker-recovered companies are more often than not successful. That being said, the model does not easily apply in all cases or countries. We therefore need to consider hybrid or transitory models.

## Co-determination and participation

One interesting alternative, quite common in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, is called co-determination, which is sometimes mislabelled co-management. In this model, employees are represented on a company's board of directors or on so-called supervisory committees. There is sometimes equal representation of owners and workers on these committees, though the obligation normally applies only to larger companies (e.g., with 500 employees or more).

Evidence shows co-determination with worker participation can encourage better labour relations, better communication, and make it possible to address problems before they proceed through the grievance process. Importantly, it does so without affecting—and possibly enhances—corporate performance. Some of the top economies in the world, including Germany, Finland and Sweden, are home to a large number of highly productive co-determined companies.

If a German-style co-determination model cannot be achieved, there is a wealth of other management practices or structures that enable employee participation. Joint committees are one simple means to address specific issues like work schedules, production processes, health and safety rules, training requirements, achieving better work-life balance, being more environmentally responsible, etc.

## Rethinking the role of unions

Unions are, by definition, readymade tools for the democratization of the workplace and the economy more broadly. However, the labour movement encompasses a wide variety of approaches and practices. Too frequently they have settled for reacting to events and employer decisions when a proactive stance and the proposal of company-specific or industry-wide solutions could be more effective in the long term.

Protest and confrontation will always be important strategies in the fight for labour and democratic rights, but it is also important that we embrace a participatory logic when appropriate. Workers can and must act positively within the workplace. And this must be accompanied by change

**We must aim for significant employee ownership of enterprises.**

in employer culture as well. Some will say, “That’s ridiculous! Our unions already have a hard time with the basics like negotiating a collective agreement and managing grievances. Now you want to add to that a whole new area of tasks and structures?”

To that question I think we must answer “yes.” The labour movement has taken a defensive stance for too long; it is time to open up new fronts. Sometimes the only way to keep a hold on what we have is to go much further. If we win the issue of increased employee participation in the workplace it will only increase our chances of making gains on more traditional demands for wages, pensions, benefits, etc.

## The issue of ownership

Greater employee participation and the issue of ownership are distinct yet interrelated challenges. That is why, as we struggle for more democratic workplaces, we must also aim for whole or at least significant employee ownership of the enterprises in which we work.

How do we get there? Employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) offer one way in. The idea is that employees, as individuals, become shareholders of their companies, earning stocks either automatically as a perk of employment or else in lieu of bonuses (or both). In the United States, around 13.5 million workers are part of an ESOP, which can have an impact on employee motivation as well as overall corporate performance.

There is an even more interesting model: worker-shareholder co-operatives (WSCs). The logic is similar to an ESOP, but here the power is collective and unified rather than individualized. Workers invest in a co-operative, which itself becomes the shareholder. In the long run, this model appears much more likely to lead to majority takeovers, potentially igniting a revolution from within.

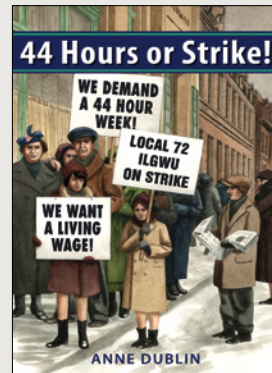
In Quebec, the Laiterie de l’Outaouais is setting a strong example. The joint stock company was set up less than 10 years ago after an existing dairy had closed down. The majority of stock is held by private investors, but 15% goes to a worker-shareholder co-operative and 15% to a consumer co-operative. As such, even if the business remains private, the dairy incorporates the philosophy and practices of co-operative culture. It is an all-round success story and a remarkable example of a “hybrid” ownership model in action.

A common retort to the concept of joint ownership is that it maintains and ultimately reinforces capitalist modes of production. That is not my intent here. I believe we must see these measures as transitory, potentially leading to greater control for workers and even majority control in the long run. We need to start somewhere.

## Conclusion

Because we spend a large portion of our lives at work, it is impossible to imagine a truly democratic society without also democratizing the workplace. Work is one of the vital components of human dignity; it is often what allows humans to develop their full potential and to feel they are contributing positively to society. It is common sense that people will be much happier, and more productive, if they are respected and trusted to take a role in decision-making.

Every structure has its strengths and weaknesses. Nonetheless, research has demonstrated that more democracy at work comes with a number of benefits, including greater job satisfaction, better labour relations, greater productivity, and even increased profits for companies. It is surprising the issue, which should be central to our economic recovery, is not discussed more on the left (or anywhere else for that matter). What are we waiting for? **M**



# 44 Hours or Strike!

Rarely do you come across fiction for young readers where the backdrop is a labour dispute, let alone one as harsh and violent as the 1931 dressmakers’ strike in Toronto. In *44 hours or strike!* (Second Story Press, 2015), Anne Dublin has us follow two young Jewish sisters whose struggle ends up taking place as much within themselves as it does in the cold streets of Hogtown.

Sophie, 14, has just started working as a dressmaker under brutal conditions. She works 13-hour days, but can’t work fast enough for the plant’s out-of-line foreman. Her older sister, Rose, drags Sophie to a union meeting where a hall of agitated women vote to go on strike. Hours, pay and workplace safety are all at stake.

As the country grapples with the Depression, in a context where immigrants face stigma and resentment from all sides, Rose and Sophie walk a cold, windy picket line. Rose is arrested after stepping in to defend her workmate, who was fighting off scabs trying to enter the factory, and gets thrown in jail. Sophie now faces the strike on her own, in addition to having to take care of her sick mother, a situation far beyond her experience.

The story combines many struggles—from working poverty wages in sweatshop conditions to the life of young immigrant women facing anti-Semitism—as the sisters navigate life-changing situations. Their story shows the many challenges and personal sacrifices that are sometimes necessary when fighting for the greater collective good.

Though the result of the strike was not all that great, the sisters prevail. Their fight, and a welcome intervention by Emma Goldman near the end, strengthens their character, understanding and resolve to fight this and other battles over their lifetime. *44 Hours or Strike!* is a fast-paced and accessible read that serves as an introduction to solidarity, unions and the power of sticking together.

— Reviewed by Roxanne Dubois

Alex Hemingway

# Inequality, class and public policy

**A** LONGSIDE GROWING INCOME inequality, academic research shows *political inequality* between economic classes is also expanding in the developed world. Princeton University political scientist Martin Gilens recently analyzed U.S. public opinion data on thousands of policy questions ranging from economic and social policy to the military. Worryingly, he found the policy preferences of middle- and low-income Americans bear almost no relationship to actual policy outcomes (unless their preferences happen to align with those of the affluent).

Instead, policy outcomes tend to follow the preferences of high-income earners, regardless of the views of less advantaged groups. Gilens and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University call the phenomenon “economic-elite domination” in policy-making, while other prominent political scientists like Jacob Hacker of Yale and Paul Pierson at UC Berkeley are warning of a rising “winner-take-all politics” in the U.S.

There are many potential causes of unequal policy influence, including class-based differences in voter turnout, lobbying, campaign donations, and the structural power of wealth-holders over investment. While each of these sources of pressure on policy-makers deserves our attention, we should also ask who the policy-makers are themselves.

The class backgrounds of policy-makers do not tend to represent the broader population. In the U.S., for example, only about 2% of congresspersons elected in recent decades came from working class occupations prior to entering politics. Skewed patterns of class representation are also found in Canada and the U.K., with lawyers, businesspeople and other professionals filling most seats in both parliaments.

In his recent book, *White-Collar Government*, Duke University political scientist Nicholas Carnes shows that the class backgrounds of politicians have important policy implications. His large-scale study of U.S. congressional votes and other forms of legislative behaviour found that policy-makers frequently vote and act in line with their economic class, even after accounting for partisan commitments.

For example, Carnes proposes that had their been a more proportionate class makeup in Congress at the time, the 2001 Bush tax cuts, which disproportionately benefited the affluent, would have been voted down. Low levels of working class representation lead to less progressive outcomes on economic policy and redistribution, including at the state and local level.

As part of my doctoral research, I’m studying whether policy-makers’ class has this effect across a range of other developed countries, including Canada, Australia, Britain, Finland and Germany. I’ll also be analyzing whether the class effect is stronger or weaker under different political and economic rules.

While this type of class-based statistical research is relatively new, there is already a well-developed literature on other forms of “descriptive representation,” a term that refers to how well politicians personally reflect the characteristics of a population. For example, the lack of women in politics has been shown to affect how well women’s issues are represented by policy-makers, and there is similar evidence on the descriptive representation of racialized minorities.

To be sure, descriptive representation—whether of gender, race or class—is not the only driver of policy-maker behaviour. Policy outcomes depend, as ever, on a range of important individual characteristics including party affiliation, ideology and education, as well as broader social forces

like voter and social movement pressure, economic conditions, paid lobbying and campaign donations. Still, as the evidence bears out, there’s good reason to be concerned by the underrepresentation of working class policy-makers, as well as of women and marginalized groups.

The academic literature suggests some possible reasons for the dearth of working class representation. For example, the recruitment networks of political party gatekeepers likely include fewer people from the working classes, just as evidence shows they include fewer women than men. Furthermore, gatekeepers seem to have a modest bias against nominating candidates with blue-collar backgrounds, according to evidence from a U.S.-based field experiment. Working class candidates will also tend to be disadvantaged when nomination and election races are expensive or time-consuming, leading to their not seeking office in the first place.

But working class people can run, win and become policy-makers, particularly with some encouragement and resources. Carnes highlights the example of the New Jersey Labor Candidate School, which provides organized support and training for worker-politicians. The school reports an impressive 685 election victories (a 76% success rate) at the state and local level. A similar effort by the Canadian Women Voters Congress aims to increase the participation of women in electoral politics.

The evidence shows working class policy-makers tend to be more reliable advocates of progressive economic and redistributive policy—grist for the mill, perhaps, for social movements in Canada debating how to effectively engage with parliamentary democracy. **M**

Paul Weinberg

# Is this the end or rebirth for Stelco's remaining steelworkers?

**THE LABOUR DAY** marchers were out in force in Hamilton, Ontario this September, with their banners and other distinct paraphernalia to signify union allegiances. Conspicuously absent was the usual clarion call in the ranks of Local 1005 of the United Steelworkers to save the city's century-old Stelco factory, known since 2007 as US Steel Canada, now under bankruptcy protection.

"I noticed that the 1005 T-shirts at Labour Day were not so much about the fight, and more about how you could never steal their identity as a steelworker," says Peter Graefe, a political scientist at McMaster University who was at the march. "Well, I saw that as an admission of defeat, but you don't want to say that too loud."

To be fair, this might be a reflection of the weakness of labour's position in general in 2015. "I don't like to use the word 'worried,' because it gives a sense of hopelessness," says 1005 President Gary Howe, whose local represents 600 active workers at US Steel Canada's Hamilton Works and the German-owned Max Aicher North America, as well as over 8,000 pensioners in the area. No matter how you squint, though, the situation for The Hammer's unionized steelworkers is bad.

Back in the early 1980s, the Hamilton-based Canadian company Stelco employed 26,000 workers. Today, as a branch plant of Pittsburgh-based US Steel Corporation, operations are a more automated at both the older Hamilton Works plant and a newer, more modern Lake Erie Works in Nanticoke, south of Brantford. In total, the plants employ about 2,200 people.

Things went sour for the steelworkers shortly after the takeover in 2007. Despite making promises to the feder-

al government related to production levels, employment and investment, US Steel was complaining a year later of a glut in global steel supply. It shut down its Canadian operations, locked out workers and shifted production to U.S. steel mills.

The Harper government sued the firm for breach of its Investment Canada Act conditions, but dropped legal action after US Steel made further, still secret promises to the government in 2011. Since then, iron- and steel-making operations at Hamilton Works have ended permanently with the shutting down of the blast furnace, among other tribulations for local workers.

The Canadian subsidiary filed for bankruptcy protection in late 2014 (those hearings continue). Furthermore, in an October 2015 decision, Ontario Superior Court Justice Herman Wilton-Siegel severed all legal ties between the U.S. parent and US Steel Canada. Equally controversial, the judge permitted US Steel Canada to suspend paying health care benefits to 21,000 retired workers and property taxes to Hamilton and Haldimand County.

According to Marvin Ryder, a marketing professor at McMaster's DeGroote School of Business who has been watching it all unfold, the Superior Court decision has turned what was US Steel Canada into a new Canadian operation—a Stelco-2 if you will—with an uncertain future. He is not sure it will be able to survive in a weak market that has seen the price of steel drop from \$650 to \$450 per tonne in the last year.

Ryder argues US Steel Canada, in its present diminished form, "is a sick company," and that it might be better for the bankruptcy to proceed so that

a buyer can be found, at least for the more modern Nanticoke plant. "My fear is that 15 months from now, US Steel Canada is back in the same place and the judge will have no choice but make the bankruptcy decision then."

Aside from the Steelworkers, the company and (you would hope) the federal government, the Ontario government and Hamilton city council also have a stake in the fate of the steel plants, though, according to Graefe, the main political concern seems to be how to avoid getting stuck replenishing the underfunded US Steel Canada pension plan, reported to be \$838 billion in deficit. (The province agreed in December to cover benefit costs until March 2016.) Like Ottawa, the Wynne government in Toronto is just not interested in developing a strategy to maintain and nurture the steel industry in Canada, he says, even when one solution is staring them in the face.

In the early '90s, Bob Rae's NDP government helped fund and support a USW-led worker buyout of the Algoma steel operations in Sault Ste. Marie (bought by India-based Essar Steel in 2007). Graefe sees no political appetite for pursuing a similar plan in Hamilton and Nanticoke.

"It is a non-starter if the governments aren't willing to play," he explains. "In 2008 to 2010, they might have been more willing to try something in the wake of the financial crisis and the questioning of the neo-liberal consensus, although it would have taken a real push to make it happen: occupation, community mobilization, etc. [by the Steelworkers]. More of a push than one might ever realistically imagine. In 2015, that is not longer the case."

David Livingstone, professor emeritus in social justice at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, accepts the merit of a worker buyout and laments that the union is not pushing the option now. "In my mind [this is] a gigantic failure of both imagination and courage," he says.

Livingstone is the co-author of the 2011 book *Manufacturing Melt-down: Reshaping Steel Work*, a culmination of research on the Stelco/US Steel Canada operation since the early 1980s. He says the evidence proves a vital manufacturing sector and domestic steel industry go hand in hand in ensuring a healthy economy. In the book, steel is described as "the most essential material," since you need it to make everything from thumb tacks to transport trucks, tin cans to transmission towers. "Without steel the world we know would not exist."

And though a domestic steel industry is preferable to a branch plant version as exists in Canada, it's impor-

tant not to romanticize the old Stelco, says Livingstone. The Canadian company's history includes atrocious labour relations and a reluctance to invest in technological innovation, unlike Stelco's Hamilton-based rival, the non-union Dofasco (now ArcelorMittal Dofasco Hamilton).

When the hedge fund Tricap sold Stelco to US Steel Corporation in 2007 for about \$2.2 billion, the union applauded. "When Stelco was sold and US Steel came in, there were a lot of people who were excited about US Steel buying us. It was going to be great for Hamilton. But it hasn't been," says Howe, ruefully.

The federal government-approved purchase included a commitment to produce 4.5 million tonnes of steel a year and maintain 3,100 employees in the plants to be operated by US Steel Canada. But according to Ryder, the U.S. parent company did not foresee its business becoming more difficult in the global recession the following year. "I think they regret buy-

ing into the Canadian operations at all," he says.

On top of the bankruptcy proceedings and recent court-approved severance of US Steel from its Canadian subsidiary, a heated legal battle continues with respect to the secret agreement between the firm and the Harper government in 2011. Though it was raised locally by NDP and Liberal candidates in the federal election campaign, none of the three major party leaders, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and NDP leader Tom Mulcair, made any commitment to opening up the agreement for public scrutiny, notes Graefe.

"My view is that none of the parties really want to do anything drastic, so the easiest thing is to criticize

Former Hamilton mayor Bob Bratina speaks at a 10,000-strong rally in 2011 in support of locked-out US Steel workers.  
Ontario Federation of Labour



the Conservatives for doing it badly without really saying what you would do differently. I noticed that it is the local [Hamilton area] candidates who wanted to open up the secret deal. But they made sure that Trudeau did not say a thing. Much like Mulcair [who] more or less admitted that he didn't think you could open the deal."

Ryder warns we should not jump to conclusions about what is in the secret agreement.

"There are a lot of people who want to give a very black hat to US Steel: you can't trust them, they cheat, they lie. And so the common wisdom is that they violated the second deal," he says. "We don't know [that]. If the deal was made public we could [be] accountable to it."

But Ryder expects the new Liberal government may be advised by its lawyers not to divulge the contents of the secret agreement. "This could jeopardize a future ability to keep these [kinds of] deals secret. Generally, businesses do not want to make any deals with the government public as they do not want competitors to know the details."

At the moment, there is no bidding process to find new buyers for US Steel Canada, but that could change. One much discussed scenario is that the Canadian operation could end up in the hands of Essar, like its relatively successful Sault competitor. Former USW research director Peter Warrian says it is the best option even though Algoma is also going through bankruptcy protection.

Essar's Algoma plant and the old Stelco operations are entirely complimentary, explains Warrian, now a senior research fellow at the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. Algoma would make the slabs of steel then ship them by boat through the Great Lakes to the Stelco operation for processing. "It would continue Hamilton in the steel business and produce the larger gains, long term, for the Hamilton economy," he says.

Livingstone and his *Manufacturing Meltdown* co-author Warren Smith (a former president of USW Local 1005) are opposed to such a plan. US Steel Canada was robbed of its productive

capacity by one transnational and we should expect little better from Essar, they argue. That's because typically in global companies the crucial decisions about investment and technological innovation are made in the head office, based on changing finances and priorities.

Furthermore, Smith points out, US Steel did not establish any research and development activity in its Canadian operation. Production was stripped away from the Hamilton and Nanticoke plants, and Stelco's customer lists and order books were handed over to the Pittsburgh office and US Steel's American sales force.

"US Steel bought [Stelco] for one reason and that was to capture a customer base and the order list. And make those people comfortable dealing with US Steel people and then shut this fucking plant," says Smith.

As proof, he says US Steel is trying to move the finishing production lines out of Hamilton Works—those parts responsible for producing high-value steel components important to the auto industry, among others. "If you take that production out of that plant and transfer that to an American plant, that is pretty well the last bullet in the head," says Smith.

Livingstone says a much better option to another foreign takeover would be to forge an independent Canadian steel company. The raw steel could be produced from coal, iron and coke at Lake Erie Works, which has its own blast furnace, while the finishing work is accomplished in the Hamilton Works plant.

"They could be an effective steel operation for Canadians, and build the base for the reclamation of the Canadian steel industry," he says. "That may sound like a dream at this point, but the elements are there at Lake Erie for a separate and efficient steel production at the front end and in relationship to finishing facilities. Some of the finishing mills at Hamilton Works could be resuscitated and that relies on the strengths of its two plants."

Instead, he adds, US Steel has been winding down the Hamilton Works facility, while shipping the hot coils of steel it produces at Lake Erie Works to its U.S. plants for finishing. "If you go

around Hamilton Works there are 400 people just keeping the fires burning and not really producing anything."

Worker buyouts continue to be supported at USW's international office in Pittsburgh by the union's president, Leo Gerard (a Canadian), who played a central role in the Algoma buyout decades ago. Toward these goals, the union has established a collaborative relationship with the largest worker co-op in the world, Mondragon, which is based in the Basque country in Spain.

But the Canadian section of the steelworkers' union continues to hold its tongue on the subject. "It's been discussed, that's all I can tell you right now," says Howe, who is also bullish about the potential for a domestic Canadian steel industry, pointing to the new Liberal government's infrastructure spending plans for bridges, tunnels and other large projects that will all require steel.

Ryder says USW probably could have made a bid for the old Stelco operations last July and that the chance might arise again in the future.

"Now, I don't know what its source of funding would be. It would not likely get a loan for \$2 billion," he says. "As well, once it 'owned' the operations, it would need to 'operate' the plant. Most steelworkers focus on the steel production side of the business but the union would also need to hire salespeople and find buyers for its steel.

"There was never a question that US Steel Canada or Stelco could make steel. The problem has always been finding buyers, and buyers willing to pay a price that allows the company to be profitable."

Meanwhile, just to make things more complicated, Graefe warns the entire Canadian steel industry will be affected if Canada signs and ratifies the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement, which loosens the rules for auto parts made outside North America and Mexico in a way that can only encourage more offshoring to Mexican and Asian plants.

"I just think if TPP hits the parts sector, that makes it harder for both Stelco and Arcelor [Dofasco's parent company], given that their highest value products is auto-grade steel," he explains. **M**

Dianah Smith

# Racial and social inequality is alienating a “pushed out” workforce

**WE ARE RAISED** to believe when we finish school we will get a job or profession and that with this job we will be able to provide for ourselves and for our families.

It is assumed, as a sign of success, we will want to leave our parents' home and make our own way in the world. There is a tacit understanding that our lives should unfold relatively smoothly and that, maybe, we might even be happy.

But if the ubiquitous “we” in that paragraph is assumed to be white, heterosexual, middle class and able-bodied, what is the experience of schooling and work for those outside the dominant culture? How is happiness defined and measured for them?

As someone who is not a member of the dominant culture, my experience of working life thus far has been mainly one of alienation: from self (body, mind, spirit), from community and from culture. This experience stems from our society's belief that work is a neutral space where we are among equals. Current buzzwords such as “diversity” and “work-life balance” only superficially address how power and privilege manifest in the workplace.

Arguably, education at the primary and secondary levels teaches us, among other things, how to sit still, how to listen, how to do certain (often mundane and repetitive) tasks, and how to at least fit in, if not get along, with others. These are all very transferable skills for when we enter the world of work.

What about those of us who never learned how to sit still or to listen? We were bored stiff with the mundane and repetitive tasks and often felt awkward, like we never quite fit

in. We chafed throughout our education, especially during those four or five years of high school. (Often, our subsequent experience of the working world would feel similarly off.) I did not master most of these skills until my early teens. It meant that, until that point, I spent quite a bit of time on the “Thinking Chair” at the back of the class, or at the principal's office, for infractions big and small.

I look back at my childhood self now and see that my “acting out” was about a kid trying to make sense of massive changes that she was experiencing, the major one being a reunification with my parents in Canada when I was six after being raised by my extended family in Jamaica. I now also understand that many of those big and small infractions were a reaction to my invisibility as a poor, black immigrant kid. By high school, the “Thinking Chair” and principal's office were no longer my reality. I still often felt like I didn't fit in, but instead of acting out I became disengaged and, in my junior years, skipped the classes where I felt the most unseen and unheard.

In university I and others began to give voice to our experiences. My classmates in the early- and mid-1990s, and some of our professors, were using words such as privilege, power, white supremacy, patriarchy, classism and heterosexism. Students were demanding that our course readings better represent the student body. I began to learn about “the hidden curriculum,” about cultural capital and how socioeconomic status is a major determinant of a person's future outcomes.

These were not easy conversations. Many of my peers still believed their parents were successful because they “worked hard,” not because of unearned privileges or their social loca-

tion. But these conversations ended once I entered the workforce. There seemed to be an unspoken belief that we were now all on a level playing field—that we were now members of the same group: working people.

I worked throughout my 20s, at one point leaving university to take a job with a national youth organization. Most of my employment then was with small non-profits. In these first “real” jobs I began to observe the unspoken ways that power and privilege functioned, how some co-workers were able to “volunteer” their time or work unpaid overtime, and how despite modest wages a few others were able to go on vacations or purchase expensive name brands. This was possible not because they were frugal or good savers, but because they were still being financially supported by their parents (which was only revealed to me much later). The rest of us had no choice but to live within our means and again to wonder what we were doing wrong.

After completing a bachelor's degree, I applied to teachers college with an explicit desire to work from an anti-oppressive, inclusive framework. However, I was very surprised by the conservative attitudes of many of my peers there. Many believed “not seeing colour” was a positive approach when working with racialized students. Their idea of an anti-oppressive, inclusive classroom was to treat all students “the same.” Class stratification and discrimination was barely considered.

Although I was extremely frustrated by these attitudes, I didn't give much thought to my relationships with my future colleagues or what my experience would be like as an employee. I knew we would not all be “on



the same page.” But I imagined that once I started teaching I could close my classroom door and impart the lessons in the way I saw fit. I was 30 when I completed my teaching degree and was hired as a full-time teacher not long afterward. I passed the two-year probationary period and became a full-time permanent teacher with the Toronto District School Board.

Yet with each passing year I became more and more unhappy. During each break (Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.), I would almost always, with the rare exception, come down with a nasty cold or flu. Often I’d come home from a hard day at school and, after a quick dinner (and marking and/or prepping for the next day), plop down on the couch in front of the TV and not get up again until after the 11 o’clock news. If you asked me what was wrong I don’t think I would have been able to name it.

I knew I did not want to rush all the time. I wanted to sleep until I felt rested (at least *some* days). I wanted to *sometimes* feel sunshine on my face in the park in the middle of the afternoon. I wanted Sundays not to be filled with dread. I wanted to shop for groceries, cook, do laundry and spend time with my friends and family without feeling like they were using up precious time I needed for marking, lesson planning and preparing for the workweek.

I only realized once I left my full-time teaching job that I also needed much more: a workplace where I saw my lived experiences, and those of other marginalized people, represented and reflected in meaningful, respectful, deep (versus superficial), non-exploitive, non-appropriative ways. Ideally, I did not want to be the only queer and/or black and/or formerly working class staff member in my school. I wanted celebration and representation of black culture to go beyond Black History Month or Kwanzaa. I wanted the understanding that there was much more at stake in my relationship with students, parents and the larger community as an “out” queer black teacher, and that being “out” or coming out in school was not just a matter of pride or a “teachable moment.”

After paying off my student loans, I decided to take an unpaid leave from full-time teaching. I worked for one semester and took the second semester off. I did this for two years and then took a full year of unpaid leave. At some level resigning from the profession felt drastic, but it also felt liberating. School had become a place where I had to put on armour. Each morning before I left home, I felt I had to gird myself for the day. This protection and my ultimate “choice” to leave was a form of survival.

The term “pushed out” was coined by researchers to describe the experience of mainly poor and/or racialized students who leave school (drop out) because they feel they do not fit with the values or expectations or mechanisms of mainstream education. As adults we have more agency than students, but I feel the term also works for those of us on the other side of the desk who “choose” to switch to part-time work, or to leave our profession altogether because our values, desires and expectations did not fit the system. Perhaps we, like those younger “drop-outs,” might still be part of the system if there was a better “fit” for us. Until then, a system that assumes a white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied norm will only reflect, privilege and perpetuate that norm.

Changing the culture of work is extremely difficult as work is the means by which each of us supports ourselves and our family. Anything that threatens our individual well-being or that of our family is always contentious, but discussions about power and privilege need to be had for the betterment of us all. The fact that the experiences and values of some members of society are represented, reflected and validated on an ongoing basis while those of *others* are marginalized makes us all that much poorer in the end. **M**



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# DISTANT INSURGENCIES, LOCAL POSSIBILITIES

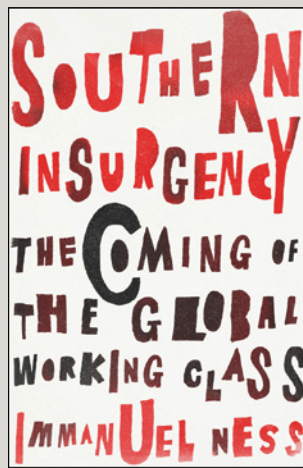
Nation-state boundaries no longer contain the full range of the working class. Thanks to globalized capitalism, it is more spread out and disunited than ever before. The poorest workers, located in the Global South, create goods and services under the financial control of companies still largely headquartered in the Global North. For Immanuel Ness, their militancy and activism present a fundamental challenge to capitalism. He examines the composition of this new globalized proletariat, and chronicles emerging worker struggles, in his new book, *Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class* (Pluto Press).

“At a time when academics are struggling to locate any sign of life among amorphous working classes in Europe and North America, worker struggles are rampant throughout the South,” he writes, arguing the shift from manufacturing to service-sector employment has contributed to labour’s disorganization in the Global North.

Outside of Europe and North America, though, manufacturing workers are at the heart of the struggles Ness considers among the most exciting in the global labour movement. His first case study examines how autoworkers at the Maruti Suzuki plant in India took radical action to fight against precarious and part-time employment, and low wages. Ness says their decade-long struggle demonstrates that “newly proletarianized workers,” those recently from rural communities who have moved to work in urban factories, “gain class consciousness as quickly as veteran workers from the region.” This feeds back into the author’s main thesis that established unions are just too stodgy—either unwilling or incapable of being the vehicle that confronts capitalism—and should therefore look south for more effective ways to do it.

Ness also examines the successful organizing of Chinese workers despite their membership in a statewide bureaucratic union that prohibits them

from forming independent organizations. Waves of activism in 2010, where tens of thousands of workers in the manufacturing sector went on strike, demonstrated that parallel rank-and-file workers’ organizations can have an impact on slowing (or stopping) capital production. By leveraging the constraints on contractors, workers were



able to slow down production and force the bosses to improve working conditions and wages—all outside the formal union structures to which they belong.

For Ness, this proves how new ways of organizing and mobilizing are possible, though we never quite learn exactly which struggles or tactics, most of them well-worn in North America and Europe, could be imported into a “post-industrial” Northern reality. Could autoworkers in Oshawa take the same actions that workers in India took? Maybe, but the author never tries to draw the potential parallels, content to repeat the stodgy-North-versus-radically-anti-capitalist-South dichotomy.

Look around: global capitalism slouches forward despite these undoubted important local instances of class consciousness. Even in his case studies, it is debatable whether or not all the workers who took radical action are materially better off as a re-

sult. Many of the Indian workers who were locked out fighting Maruti never got their jobs back.

Despite weaknesses like these, the underlying lesson in *Southern Insurgency* is an important one: if the trade union bureaucracy isn’t willing or able to confront capitalism, activists may need to organize around it, among the rank-and-file. When workers build the capacity among themselves to confront power, they can pull leadership, which might have a tendency to be more conservative, toward action. This is what grassroots power is all about—mobilizing the base and building the confidence and capacity of the leadership to move together in the same direction.

In Canada, there’s no better example of this than in Quebec, where members of the Common Front, representing public health care, social services and education workers, are engaged in a battle that is determined to stop the Charest Liberal government’s austerity program. The strength of these mobilizations comes directly from members who, in many parts of the province, are connected not just through the Common Front, but also community solidarity efforts. While there still exists problems of democracy (e.g., decisions made at the leadership level that may be strategic but not driven by democratic membership bodies), it remains the best example of what unions can achieve when the grassroots are mobilized.

Most importantly, the Quebec mobilization is building community power to continue to confront the Liberal government even if bargaining committees accept new contracts for Common Front members. The Liberals have constantly threatened workers with back-to-work legislation, which will be costly to defy both for individual union members and unions themselves. Moving outside of the formal union structure might be exactly the way to continue the fight against austerity. **M**

Kate McInturff

# What's it worth to you?

**W**OMEN HAVE ALWAYS worked. What has changed over the past 40 years is that more and more women are being paid for their work. What hasn't changed is that women continue to do more unpaid work in the home than men do—twice as much work, actually. Jobs that look most like unpaid work—child care, for example—continue to be among the lowest paying occupations in Canada. Consider that a home child care provider will earn just over \$11,000 a year. Early childhood educators fare only slightly better with median incomes just under \$18,000.

Women are paid less than men in almost every occupational category measured by Statistics Canada (469 of 500 occupations if you want to be precise). Yes, that's even working full time, full year, even with the same experience and education as their male co-workers, even with university degrees. And it includes young, single and/or childless women who have yet to face the 8% motherhood penalty on their lifetime earnings.

But wait—the past decade has seen economists and important financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF start to wake up to the value of women's work. “Look!” they said, “the rise of women's participation in paid work is contributing to GDP growth in almost every country in the world!” That goes for Canada too. The OECD went as far as to say that “rising female participation in the labour force has been the mainstay of per capita real income growth [for Canada] over the last decade.”

Women's paycheques have also been essential in allowing Canadian families to keep up with the increase in the cost of living. While male wages

have been largely stagnant over the past decades, family incomes have kept pace in large part because women's wages are making up the difference.

The experience of the global financial crisis in 2008 only solidified the interest of international economic institutions in women's work. Women returned to the workforce more quickly after the economic downturn because they were, and are, more likely to work in the kinds of jobs that were on offer in 2009: part-time, precarious, minimum-wage. Women played a distinct role in the global recovery because of this swift return to paid work. Their paid work was coupled with their contribution of additional unpaid care work—filling the gap as governments withdrew social and health services in the name of austerity.

Which is perhaps why I'm not convinced yet that the World Bank is a real sister in the struggle for gender equality. Essentially, the positive contribution women's work made to the economic recovery, and to subsequent economic growth in Canada and around the world, was made possible by the marginalization of those women within the paid workforce and the continued expectation that women will take on the majority of unpaid care work.

From this perspective, women were good for Canada's economic recovery because they are segregated into service- and care-related occupations, because they are twice as likely to work for minimum wage, because they are three times as likely to work part time, and because they are willing and expected to take up ever-increasing hours of unpaid care work.

Even from a purely instrumentalist perspective on women's role in eco-

nomical growth there is a fundamental problem. At some point, we are going to run out of women.

Women currently make up 48% of Canada's labour force. What happens when they make up 50%? Women are over-represented in part-time work, but the majority of the growth in women's employment over the past 30 years has been in full-time employment. What happens when women's full-time employment matches that of men?

Finally, there are still only 24 hours in a day, and as women spend more and more of their time doing paid work, there will be a point at which some of that unpaid work is not going to get done. (Indeed, the number of hours we spend on housework has gone down over the past two decades.) More importantly, the unpaid care work that is not fungible (that diaper is not going to change itself) will have to be done by someone—increasingly that someone will get paid for that work.

I could get excited about that development—the financial recognition of the value of care work that women do in the home—until I remember what we pay child care workers. Which suggests there are some social shifts that need to occur in how we think about women and their work, and how we value that contribution to the quality of our daily lives as well as to our community and our economy.

As global financial institutions come crashing bear-like through the feminist china shop, I suggest they ask not what women can do for the economy but what the economy can do for women.

Consider this: we could pay women as much as we pay men. Closing the wage gap would increase wom-

en's wages, thereby increasing consumer spending and—voilà!—contribute to GDP growth.

Oh, but the poor employers, you say. Won't their profit margins be shattered?

Canadian corporations have come out the financial crisis with very nicely feathered nests. Corporate tax reductions and other financial concessions offered in the name of stimulating the economy have largely been banked by corporations rather than reinvested in new equipment, machinery or increases in hiring or (gasp) wages. This suggests our larger corporations and institutions public and private are well positioned—not to mention legally bound in the Charter—to close the wage gap. The resistance to doing so is not strictly financial.

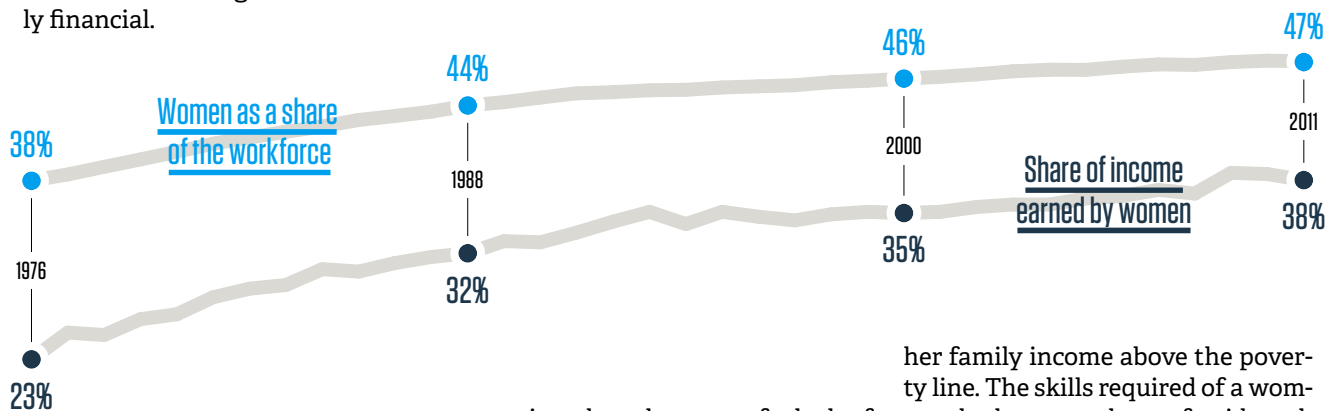
usually from someone who makes 20% more than his female colleagues and is twice as likely to be promoted to senior management, even though he is less likely to have a university degree.

A further suggestion for consideration: value women's work—paid and unpaid. Until unpaid work is more evenly distributed, women will continue to try to accommodate their double burden of unpaid work by taking jobs that are part time, or short term, or which offer shift work that can be scheduled around their care work. Hence the overrepresentation of women in low-paying sectors of the economy where shift work is typical, and jobs are largely part time.

Nearly a third of women who work

This signals a version of family life where unpaid work could potentially be shared more evenly. The experience of European countries echoes that of Quebec, with the further insight that men only take paternity leave if it comes with a significant level of wage replacement. That is, only if it places a significant financial value on their time and their work.

If men and women start performing identical unpaid work in the home, there is potential for both the social value and the market value of that work to increase. That child care worker who spent two years training to get her early childhood education degree might make enough to raise



First, businesses have to be convinced that the wage gap is a thing, that it exists, which means facing the fact that at some point, someone, who may otherwise be a perfectly nice person, has, perhaps unconsciously, made discriminatory decisions. Decisions to offer men higher starting salaries, higher-profile assignments and faster rates of promotion than women.

Second, they have to be convinced that discrimination is a bad thing (harmful to employee retention, for example). Third, they have to be convinced to track rates of pay and promotion. Fourth, they have to be willing to be somewhat public about those rates of pay.

Finally, corporations must be willing to close the gaps where they find them—the point at which you will hear much discussion about “merit,”

part time do so because of a lack of access to child care. Public investments in the affordability and availability of child care will make it easier for women to take full-time work. Good for them, good for household incomes, good for the economy.

However, this means recognizing that child care work is a public good, that it doesn't undermine the choices of families about how to raise their children, but rather increases them. It also means reimagining the role of women within a family—a shift of deeply held personal beliefs.

It's worth pointing out that the shift is happening. Not only out of economic necessity, but also out of that political shibboleth: choice. Evidence of this can be found (surprisingly?) in the behavior of men.

When Quebec introduced paid paternity leave (a supplemental benefit just for fathers), the share of fathers who took leave tripled, to 76%.

her family income above the poverty line. The skills required of a woman who has stayed out of paid work in order to raise three children (multitasking, strategic planning, conflict management) might also be valued at a level that allows her to re-enter the workforce as the experienced worker that she is.

I have argued at length and often that we need policies in place to ensure women's economic security and, yes, their economic independence. At the same time, a true shift in the way we value women's work, particularly their care work, requires a recognition of our dependence upon that work. A recognition that women's work is not merely valuable and skilled work, but necessary. A recognition that means men picking up more hours of unpaid work at home and employers giving women a pay rise.

Trust me, it's worth it. **M**

DAVIS BALLANTYNE CARR

# FEDUP WITH ON-THE-JOB SEXISM

**S**exism and racism are big problems in the restaurant industry. On average, a female server will make 68% of a male server's income. For black women, the number drops to 60%. Women are less likely to be found in higher-paying jobs in the industry, with far more men than women holding powerful positions such as managers, owners and chefs.

Sexism in the industry was brought into the headlines last June when former pastry chef Kate Burnham filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal for sexual harassment and abuse at the Weslodge tavern in Toronto where she worked between July 2012 and January 2014. Burnham alleged she was constantly asked about her sexuality and touched without consent by managers. She agreed to a confidential settlement with the owners of Weslodge in September.

Edmonton's The Feminist Eatery Database – Undercover Project (FEDUP) responds to this all too frequent discrimination in the biz. The group bills itself as "a feminist approach to eating out that seeks to highlight promi-

nent issues regarding sex, gender, and race in the service industry." Sexist restaurants are called out in anonymous tips while restaurants with more positive workspaces are recommended.

FEDUP offers three questionnaires—one for customers, one for employees and one for employers—that can be printed out, filled in and sent back to the site, which posts some testimonials online. The goal of the FEDUP project is to "provide a comprehensive and accessible database of restaurant, cafe, and eatery reviews based off of a thorough checklist that anyone can bring along on an outing if they wish." The website also offers a glossary where terms such as "gender" and "discrimination" are explained.

I asked Samantha (not her real name), a graduate student studying gender in media, about her long experience as a server. She told me other cities like Toronto could benefit from a FEDUP-like service. "I would love to see this in Toronto. I think the checklist for diners is really adept at addressing micro-aggression nuances of the dining experience."

But Samantha cautioned about the potential for a database to stigmatize establishments that have made real efforts to correct their sexism or racism problems. "The restaurant industry rapidly changes," she says. "So a restaurant could have a bad rep for a couple months in the database, but it may not be reflective of the current atmosphere. It would have to be a very active database to be authentic."

The FEDUP project has been on hiatus since April 2015 while organizers compile submissions for the database. But it, and projects like it, show the power of citizen reporting and demonstrate a unique way to leverage technology to address discrimination in the industry. Social media and the Internet help ordinary citizens call out sexism and racism when it occurs (naming and shaming), forcing companies to respond to public outcry and, ideally, change their policies for the better. **M**

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Robert Chernomas

# On the economic possibilities of a post-scarcity society

**OR KARL MARX**, capitalism not only fostered and ultimately limits the productive capacity of the economy, but also shapes the character of the humans who live within it. He rejected the idea that egotistical self-interest was immutable human nature, rather we become this way in a for-profit market economy that rewards and reinforces the relentless pursuit of self-interest, and punishes those forced into alienating forms of work.

In 1930, at the beginning of the Great Depression, John Maynard Keynes wrote an essay called “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren.” He also criticized the accumulation of capital for its own sake, and tried to envision what a post-scarcity society might look like 100 years hence (2030). Keynes is credited by many with saving capitalism from itself, but this passage from his essay suggests the British economist had an ulterior motive:

When the accumulation of wealth is no longer of high social importance, there will be great changes in the code of morals.... The love of money as a possession—as distinguished from the love of money as a means to the enjoyments and realities of life—will be recognized for what it is, a somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensities which one hands over with a shudder to the specialists in mental disease. All kinds of social customs and economic practices, affecting the distribution of wealth and of economic rewards and penalties, which we now maintain at all costs, however

distasteful and unjust they may be in themselves, because they are tremendously useful in promoting the accumulation of capital, we shall then be free, at last, to discard.

For both Marx and Keynes the capitalist social order was a “most distasteful,” but important, stage in human history, a prequel to emancipation from economic scarcity and alienation. For both, capitalist stagnation, depressions and barren economic pursuits slowed the process toward emancipation by compounding permanent losses, now measured in trillions of dollars, of forgone socially useful goods and services.

In his new book, *The Mythology of Work: How Capitalism Persists Despite Itself* (Pluto Press), Peter Fleming reprises the idea that capitalism—the work that produces the wealth of nations, for profit, in advanced capitalist societies—has outlived its usefulness. The book is full of anecdotes about how the nature of contemporary work is as oppressive as it is non-productive, much more about reproducing neoliberal capitalism than doing anything useful. His antidotes include a three-day workweek and a guaranteed living wage.

Is there a material basis for these proposals that would serve society independent of capitalist interests? For example, where would the investment funds come from? And can we afford a shorter workweek while maintaining or increasing the standard of living for the bottom 90% of income earners?

## Do robots get all the good jobs?

In January 2012, a *Bloomberg Businessweek* article noted the U.S. econ-

omy produced almost one-quarter more goods and services than it did in 1999, but with virtually the same number of workers. “It’s as if \$2.5 trillion worth of stuff—the equivalent of the entire U.S. economy circa 1958—materialized out of thin air,” it read, leading into a discussion about whether technology was killing jobs.

“In 2005, the average U.S. worker could produce what would have required two people to do in 1970, what would have required four people in 1940, and would have required six people in 1910,” an economist told *Businessweek*, suggesting this is what progress looks like. For example, where in 1900, 41% of Americans worked on farms, less than 2% do today thanks to tractors and combines. This trend holds in other sectors outside of manufacturing.

“So are robots getting all the good jobs?” asks the article. It is grist for Fleming’s ire about the absurdity of the neoliberal mindset. If the object of production were wealth, not profits, then perhaps we *should* let the robots have the jobs, while we enjoy the goods and spare time to pursue life without drudgery. Unfortunately, and as *Businessweek* concludes (in the Keynesian tradition), today’s unemployment and stagnation are the result of a shortage of demand that is slowing the economic progress represented by the growth in productivity.

And what of cash hoarding? According to James Henry, a senior advisor for the Tax Justice Network, “the world’s super-rich have taken advantage of lax tax rules to siphon off at least US\$21 trillion, and possibly as much as US\$32 trillion, from their home countries and hide it abroad—a sum larger than the entire American economy.” World GDP is approximately US\$70 trillion. Data from the U.S. Internal Revenue Ser-



### Automated car manufacturing plant.

RicAguilar

vice suggests that, globally, U.S. non-financial companies hold approximately US\$5 trillion in cash. Canadian companies are widely reported to be holding about \$635 billion, equal to one-third of the economy.

In all, trillions of dollars that could be available for productive investment are instead channelled into financial speculation and tax avoidance. If this money could be redirected, taxed, then spent on education, a green economy, and research and development, wage growth, a living wage for all, and a reduced workweek are objectively possible. Instead, the United States, as neoliberal poster child, has been moving in the opposite direction for nearly four decades.

Economists Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez provide evidence that between 1973 and 2000, the average income of the bottom 90% of U.S. taxpayers fell by 7%. Incomes of the top 1% rose by 148%, the top 0.1% by 343%, and the top 0.01% by an amaz-

ing 599% in that time. According to economist Lester Thurow, U.S. real per capita GDP rose 36% from 1973 to 1995, yet “the real hourly wages of non-supervisory workers (those who don’t boss anyone else—a vast majority of the workforce) declined 14%.”

In the decade beginning 1980, all earnings gains in the U.S. went to the top 20% of income earners; 64% went to the already massively wealthy top 1%. In a rather stunning calculation, Joel Rogers, director of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy, predicts that if wages tracked productivity, “median family income in the U.S. would be about \$20,000 higher today than it is.”

Elizabeth Warren wrote in 2001 that U.S. family finances are more fragile than they had been for the previous generation. In 2011, Robert Reich testified to a U.S. Senate committee that in the 2000s, the typical American worked significantly longer hours than his or her European or Japanese counterpart, and in fact “many more hours than the typical American middle-class family had worked in 1979—500 hours longer, a full 12 weeks more.” Americans were also sleeping between one and two hours less than they did in the 1960s.

The notorious debt these people have accumulated keeps them working longer hours while reducing their future consumption, as the song says, because they owe their souls to the company store.

### Slumlords or a green economy?

In November 2010, a *New Yorker* article by John Cassidy, “What Good is Wall Street?”, quoted Lord Adair Turner, then chairman of Britain’s since abolished Financial Services Authority, describing a lot of what happens on the world’s stock exchanges as “socially useless activity.” Cassidy’s article reflects Fleming’s assessment of the neoliberal economic order. The oligarchs that run the City of London, Wall Street, and Bay Street in Toronto are, he writes, “the financial equivalent of slumlords or toll collectors in pin-striped suits. If they retired to their beach houses en masse, the rest of the economy would be fine, or perhaps even healthier.”

A reduction in the bloated U.S. financial, insurance, real estate, military, security, marketing and advertising sectors could reduce hours of work without affecting the real needs of citizens. Waste could also be trimmed from the top of the U.S. health care system, which spends 50% more delivering health services than any other country in the world without actually affecting patient care.

The wealth saved on these “slumlords” could be funnelled into critically important climate-friendly production. A Cornell University press release in March 2013 reported that by the year 2030 it will be possible to convert all of New York State’s energy sources from natural gas, coal and fossil fuel to wind, water and sunlight. This would stabilize electricity prices, reduce power demand by about 37% and create thousands of permanent jobs. A series of reports out of the economics department at the University of Massachusetts Amherst provides evidence that the same energy policies could be applied almost anywhere through the right public policy and a focus on community ownership. The fact clean energy is more labour intensive than fossil fuels imbues such policies with a more critically important social end.

In a fascinating forthcoming book, *The New Normal: Persistent Austerity, Declining Democracy, and the Privatization of the State* (Pluto Books), Alan Nasser takes up this topic in depth. He asks why, with generations of rising productivity and an abundance of surplus for investment, with profits up and wages down, is there not an obvious alternative to austerity, inequality and economic stagnation.

At least in the industrialized world, the evidence suggests we have solved or could readily solve the problem of production and sustainability. What remains is a seemingly insurmountable political problem—the problem that generations after Marx and Keynes we are still incapable of demanding our well-deserved share of the prosperity and spare time our labour power has produced. **M**



# The Good News Page

Compiled by  
Elaine Hughes

## Solar-powered airport inspires

Faced with a huge increase in electricity rates that would choke its 2012 profits, Cochin International Airport (CIAL), India's seventh busiest, decided to install more than 50,000 solar panels from which 100% of its power is now drawn. The company has spent US\$10.5 million on the reno, but this cost will be recoverable in less than six years while taking 300,000 metric tonnes of carbon out of the atmosphere—the equivalent of planting three million trees. All India's airports have since been instructed to install solar panels, beginning with Bangalore and Hyderabad, and airport officials from Liberia, Malaysia and Vietnam are showing interest in the Cochin model. Meanwhile in the United States, 2015 was expected to be a banner year for solar power. GTM Research and the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) have released a report showing the country exceeded 20 gigawatts of installed solar capacity in the first half of last year, enough to power 4.6 million homes, reducing harmful carbon emissions by more than 25 million metric

tonnes a year. President Obama's Clean Power Plan requires states to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 32% from 2005 levels by 2030. According to the International Energy Agency, "renewables contributed almost half of the world's new power generation capacity in 2014 and have already become the second largest source of electricity (after coal)." A U.S. study by Stanford's Mark Jacobson and the University of California's Mark Delucchi describes how 139 countries could generate all their energy from wind, solar and hydro power by 2050, creating a million jobs and preventing three to four million premature deaths from air pollution in the process. And the Manila-based Asian Development Bank has announced it will dedicate US\$4 billion a year by 2020 toward financing renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable transport and smart-city projects, with an additional US\$2 billion for resilient infrastructure and climate-smart agriculture. / [Nikkei Asian Review](#), [EcoWatch](#), [Scientific American](#), [Reuters](#)

## Researchers not pissing around

Most toilet water starts off drinkable, but the urine that is eventually flushed is responsible for 80% of the nitrogen, 50% of the phosphorus and 50% of the pharmaceuticals that end up in our wastewater. University of Florida researcher Treavor Boyer and his team of students have developed a

technique that separates these elements at the source so they can be recycled as fertilizer. The project won the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2015 sustainable development award because of its potential application in developing countries. In other good news for clean water, the Blue Planet Project and its allies were successful in their campaign to include universal access to water and sanitation in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) blueprint for the next 15 years, though "the true test of commitment to the new global goals will be implementation," as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out. In Connecticut, Greenwich High School student Oliva Hallisey has won the Google Science Fair's top prize (a \$50,000 scholarship) for creating a simple and cheap test to detect Ebola in less than 30 minutes. / [The Gainesville Sun](#), [Blue Planet Project](#), [Business Insider](#)

## Less poaching, more spawning

South Africa's Black Mamba anti-poaching group has just won the United Nations' Champions of the Earth prize. The 23 women and three men who make up the group walk up to 20 km a day checking fences and looking for poacher trails and camps. Operating in the Balule Nature Reserve from which 1,215 rhinos were poached in 2014, Black Mamba has helped arrest six poachers and removed more than 1,000 snares from the area, while

working with communities near the reserve to discourage people from being recruited to work for poacher networks. And endangered sturgeon have returned to part of a Maine river that has been accessible only since late 2013 when the former Veazie Dam was removed. The Penobscot River Restoration Project hopes it is a sign there will be new spawning this spring. Winnipeg students have produced a Gete Okosomin, or "Big Old Squash," from seeds recently discovered in a clay pot the size of a tennis ball, buried for 800 years underground on the Menominee Tribe reservation in Wisconsin. Thought to be an extinct species, one of the seeds produced a specimen measuring three feet and weighing 18 pounds, proving that heritage seeds can survive over centuries and still remain a viable food source, while providing a lesson in long-term food storage from North American Indigenous knowledge. Meanwhile, Austria and Italy are taking advantage of new EU regulations to opt out of growing genetically modified (GM) maize, joining Northern Ireland, Lithuania, France, Greece, Latvia, Germany and Scotland. South African regulators have rejected the sale of SpuntaG2 (a GM potato), claiming it poses unacceptable risks to human and animal health. / [Associated Press](#), [My Modern Met](#), [Sustainable Pulse](#)

Asad Ismi

# South African students take on neoliberalism and the ANC

**S**OUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS shut down almost all of the country's universities this October during unprecedented nationwide protests against a planned 10% hike in tuition fees. Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets, and beat gathering students with truncheons, but were unable to suppress the movement. More than 10,000 people demonstrated in front of the nation's parliament in Pretoria on October 23, forcing the African National Congress (ANC) government to concede there would be no tuition fee increase for 2016.

Emboldened by their victory, the students continued to press the government on related demands such as an end to contracting out of poorly paid janitorial, cafeteria and security work positions within the universities. From the beginning, student organizers insisted on linking their struggle to that of the working class. Universities have reopened, but the students remain committed to this and a third demand for free education and an end to tuition fees altogether.

"The demonstrations have grown to be a national movement of solidarity," says Katlego Disemelo, a PhD candidate at Johannesburg's University of Witwatersrand (Wits) where the protests began. "Far too long have we black and poor students languished under the yoke of perpetual struggle just to get an education. That is the chief impetus behind our struggle."

Disemelo, who continues to participate in the student actions, tells me the #FeesMustFall and #InsourceOurWorkers movements, "have shone light on the heinous blight of institutional racism and exploitation in South African higher education. Stu-

dents and workers are the backbone of these neoliberal ivory towers."

At about 0.8% of GDP, the South African state spends much less on post-secondary education than the OECD average (about 1.6%) and less than it can probably afford. The proposed 10% increase in tuition fees would have transferred more of the cost of a university education onto students, bumping average fees to between \$3,000 and \$4,000 per year in a country where the median annual income is US\$2,300, 53% of the population lives in poverty, and 40% is unemployed. South Africa also suffers one of the highest rates of inequality in the world.

The ANC, which has ruled South Africa for 21 years since Apartheid (in coalition with the Communist Party), portrays itself as leftist and has the backing of the Congress of South

African Trade Unions (COSATU), the country's largest labour federation. The liberation movement that thrust the ANC into power had high expectations of economic as well as political revolution, with hopes the nationalization of the country's exhaustive natural resources would fuel social development.

This vision was swiftly exchanged in the early 1990s for IMF loans attached to neoliberal handcuffs on the new government. As a result, promises of free education and subsidized housing, medical care, electricity and water remain largely unfulfilled, compelling first workers and then students to strike against the state to demand economic rights.

The situation for the country's miners is especially bleak. In August 2012, police cordoned off then fired on a group of striking workers from a platinum mine operated by the U.K.-based Lonmin in the northeastern town of Marikana. The event and its political consequences are captured in graphic detail in the 2015 documentary, *Miners Shot Down*, which is available for free viewing on YouTube.

With a death toll of 34, the Marikana massacre was the worst act of violence by South African security forces since 1960, when police killed more than 60 people in a crowd of several thousand protesting the segregationist pass laws. For many, it exposed the failure of corporate-led resource development and the corruption it is causing within the ANC and government institutions.

About a fifth of South African GDP is directly or indirectly generated from mining, most of it by foreign-owned companies, and it is to protect these private investors that the ANC has insisted on maintaining

ANC promises of free education and subsidized housing, medical care, electricity and water remain largely unfulfilled.



a neoliberal regime that prioritizes competitive (low) wages, while ignoring growing demands for nationalization. Though the government insists its Black Empowerment Programs, with their local content and employment quotas for major projects, help capture more of the benefits of mining, targets for black ownership of resource companies have been missed, and the industry continues to lobby against having to meet them.

When mineral prices were high (between 2002 and 2011) and the economy was expanding, the availability of cheap credit limited social protests. But with the collapse of raw material prices globally, starting in 2011, annual growth in South Africa fell to 1.5%, stimulating an explosion of protests all over the country as the country's leaders appeared to have no way of dealing with the severe economic crisis.

"The allegiance of the state's economic decision-makers to international and domestic finance and mining capital is obvious enough. Until

the mining sector crash, corporate profits were amongst the highest in the world, and last year PricewaterhouseCoopers named our corporate elites the world's most corrupt," says Patrick Bond, a professor of political economy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban and author of the book *Looting Africa* (2006).

"The Marikana Massacre was a consciousness-raiser, as are repeated threats by the credit rating agencies to downgrade South Africa to junk status unless fiscal discipline and monetarist ideology are tightened."

Bond tells me President Jacob Zuma and Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa ("the big business choice to be the next president") make up South Africa's "core neoliberal bloc." Both have been implicated in corruption scandals, with the latter chairing a large cellphone company responsible for "many financial misdeeds." Zuma is one of the 10 highest-paid national leaders in the world, yet he felt entitled to spend \$17 million in public

**Students at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University occupy the streets of Port Elizabeth during an October 20, 2015 protest against a tuition fee increase.**

*The Herald/Eugene Coetzee/REX Shutterstock*

funds on his private house, supposedly for security improvements.

In one recent scandal—part of "a running joke," according to Bond—the president tried to blame two army officers for a decision to allow the powerful Gupta family to land their private jet at an air force base so family members could attend a wedding. The Guptas own coal and uranium mines in South Africa, and are widely believed to hold too much influence over the appointment of government positions, including possibly that of Mosebenzi Zwane to mining minister in September.

For his part, Ramaphosa is worth an astounding \$450 million, which makes him the 42<sup>nd</sup> richest person

in Africa in 2015, according to *Forbes Magazine*. He was chairman of Shanduka Group, an investment company that indirectly owned 9% of Lonmin's shares at the time of the Marikana massacre. Though an independent commission of inquiry cleared Ramaphosa of wrongdoing in June 2015, he was promptly slapped with murder charges by the opposition Economic Freedom Fighters party (EFF) in July. In November, families of the murdered miners filed a \$95-million lawsuit against the man who could be South Africa's next president.

Bond points out how the 2015 budget increases in government grants for the country's poor do not keep up with inflation, resulting in an actual 3% drop in support. While much of the population has to deal with frequent blackouts, the government offers cheap power to the world's biggest mining company, BHP Billiton. A prominent wealth manager declared the February budget was "a lovely budget for offshore investors," with the country's offshore allowance rising from R4-million (US\$282,500) to R10-million (US\$706,500). "The immigration allowance is now up to R20 million (US\$1,413,000) and corporates can take a billion (over US\$70 million) offshore," said the Citadel director in February.

Disemelo is similarly outraged by the contrast between the ANC's stated priorities and its obvious corruption, as well as the way it panders to the country's industrial and financial elite. "There are countless scandals and exposés in the mainstream media every week about this or that cabinet minister misappropriating state funds or outright stealing from the government's coffers," he tells me.

"But what is amazing is that most South Africans now know this and can see it with their own eyes. We are no longer willing to sit back and be exploited for the gain of only a few. We have been sold out by the ANC in exchange for their lavish houses, cars and clothing. Little do they realize that the global white imperialist capitalists who line their pockets, and whose financial interests they are so keen to protect, will give them nothing more than crumbs."

## The student movement is intimately connected to the broader social struggle for wealth redistribution.

For Disemelo, the student movement is intimately connected to the broader social struggle for wealth redistribution and the reclamation of national resources from the clutches of a domestic and international elite.

"During decolonization, the first thing that people will demand is land. As such, we demand access to the land and its resources so that those who have been previously dispossessed can begin to reap the rewards and resources which come from that land, such that they can live decent human lives from and through it," he says.

"In this regard, I see no other way but to nationalize the mines of South Africa so that its citizens can ultimately reap the benefits therefrom. As long as white global capital (and its cronies) still greedily hold on to the resources of this land, poverty, inequality and exploitation will continue to hold the majority of South Africans in neocolonial and economic slavery. And one of the instruments of such slavery is the outright denial of basic and free education for all South Africans."

Nationalization is also the platform of the EFF, a breakaway faction from the ANC that is challenging the party from the left. The EFF won 6% of the vote in the last election, giving it 24 seats in parliament. Notably, EFF

leader Julius Malema was expelled from the ANC Youth League in 2012 for sowing divisions within the party related to resource nationalization. The internal committee that upheld the decision was chaired by Ramaphosa. Malema has loudly criticized both the white and black power structures in South Africa, and the EFF strongly supported the students.

"But most importantly," says Bond, "I'm increasingly impressed with the EFF's ground troops, not just the two dozen parliamentarians. In November, the leaders brought out 50,000 red-shirted supporters to march more than 20 km from central Johannesburg targets like the South Africa Reserve Bank and Chamber of Mines all the way to the Sandton stock market. Their numbers and their demands for nationalization scared the heck out of the bourgeoisie."

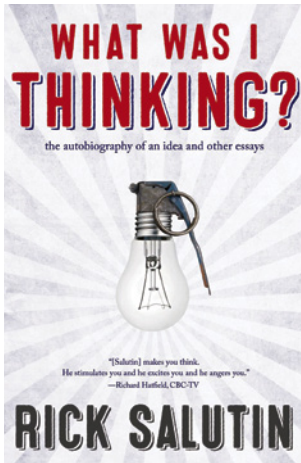
Also launching large-scale demonstrations in Johannesburg has been the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA). With 350,000 members, it is the largest union in the country. And like the EFF, NUMSA has taken a radical left position, calling for nationalization of large companies and the mines.

NUMSA left COSATU in 2014 and demanded Zuma's resignation. Since then, the labour start-up has been exploring the possibility of founding a new socialist party to contest the ANC in elections. The union is currently focusing on creating a labour federation to rival COSATU. The student movement, the EFF and NUMSA signify a revitalized South African left that may soon pose a serious challenge to the ANC's neoliberal hold on the country.

"The period ahead is at least going to offer the prospect of a working class steeped in left ideology deciding between institutions inside the ANC tradition versus those led by metalworkers and left social movements outside," says Bond. "This is very welcome, because the prestige of the ANC, plus the forcefulness of official Communist manoeuvres in the labour movement, have kept the bulk of the working class loyal to a liberation movement that long ago had ditched their interests." **M**

Reviewed by Frank Bayerl

# Ideas and inspirations



## WHAT WAS I THINKING?

RICK SALUTIN

ECW Press (2015), 315 pages, \$22.95

**RICK SALUTIN IS** probably well known to *Monitor* readers. The political columnist, novelist, playwright, and one-time student of philosophy and religion, has always championed leftist causes. We've known what he thinks about a number of issues going back many decades. Now he wants us to understand why *he* thinks he *thinks* that way. What better way to do this than through a series of meandering essays?

The essays in Part I of Salutin's book (*What Shapes The Thinking?*) deal with the evolution of ideas about the Holocaust, psychotherapy and the philosophy of Hans Jonas, one of his professors at the New School in New York. While they start out in a highly discursive manner, these three essays eventually reach a tightly argued conclusion that is well worth the diversions and bypaths along the way.

For example, Salutin examines the thinking on the Holocaust of a former

mentor in Toronto, Emil Fackenheim, and of Hannah Arendt, the scholar who popularized the notion of the "banality of evil." Fackenheim regarded the Holocaust as a uniquely evil event in history. Arendt also saw the Nazi extermination project as unique, but oddly counterproductive to the German war effort and contrary to common sense.

Salutin takes issue with the assumptions of both thinkers, writing that his own background makes him quite ready to assume human beings are capable of the worst atrocities, simply for emotional or ideological gratification. In comparison, he traces both Fackenheim's and Arendt's ideas to their background in the bourgeois European culture of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Salutin puts it, "it seems useful to me to shed light on the origins of ideas, since their meaning will be illuminated and inflected by their provenance. It is an argument for the role of origins in ideas, not for the invalidation of ideas by virtue of them having origins."

Similarly, Salutin's essay in this section on psychotherapy begins with a long account of his responses and attitudes toward his therapists, with asides on events in his personal life, only to lead to a fascinating summary of Harold Innis's views on the oral tradition, which Salutin sees surviving today in two forms: therapy and teaching.

Innis was the Canadian historian of the fur trade who turned to what we would now call media studies in his last years, which deeply influenced Marshall McLuhan. Innis saw the oral and written traditions as two very different ways of understanding the world and had a bias for the oral as being closer to the natural structure of thought. (This brings us right back to the title of Salutin's book, all of whose

chapters are concerned in some way with the process of thinking.)

The oral tradition involves interaction and dialogue, question and answer; it makes it more difficult to reach predetermined conclusions or settle for easy solutions. Innis wanted to see a balance restored between the oral and written, a balance he felt had been upset since the time of Gutenberg, leading to exaggerated individualism and social disconnectedness.

Salutin's third and final essay in Part I focuses on philosopher Hans Jonas, a refugee from Nazi Germany who saw western philosophy, beginning with Plato and Christianity, as characterized by a disdain for nature, or a feeling of superiority to it. Jonas instead emphasized our rootedness in animal life, hoping to undermine the perception of our own separateness from nature. Salutin leaves aside the implications of this debate on, for example, the environmental movement. He is concerned here with Jonas's formative influence on him when he was a graduate philosophy student in New York. As in the two previous chapters, his engaging and conversational tone counteracts any tendency toward abstractness or dryness.

Part II (*The Things to Which We Attend*) contains shorter, though no less readable and thought-provoking, essays on a variety of topics, including Canadian nationalism vs. globalization, and Salutin's experience of a Haida potlatch (an anti-capitalist "scandal" you might expect the federal government to criminalize). He also talks about the mystery of teaching and the central place of teachers in the education system.

In Part III Salutin goes into his life experiences in a more personal way, while Part IV collects and self-exam-

ines a selection of his own writings from his years as a columnist with the *Globe and Mail*, first as an arts and entertainment writer and then as a political commentator. These cover the 1995 Quebec referendum, Conrad Black and Barbara Amiel, the demonstrations at the Quebec Summit of the Ameri-

cas, Israel and Palestine, and the relationship between Brian Mulroney and Karlheinz Schreiber. The columns are a bit dated, but redeemed by Salutin's explanations for why he chose them.

Salutin was always an anomaly at the *Globe*—the paper's token leftist. He admits to never being sure why

he was allowed to appear in its pages; equally obscure are the reasons they dropped him. In any case, the relationship endured for 20 years. Salutin has since switched to the *Toronto Star* where he is a much better fit ideologically and still writing acute political commentary.

Reviewed by Larry Kuehn

## Threats from the digital underground



### FUTURE CRIMES

MARC GOODMAN

Doubleday Canada (2015), 464 pages, \$34  
(Paperback available January 2016)

**D**ISASTER IS INEVITABLE. That is the overwhelming feeling you get in reading *Future Crimes* by security technology specialist Marc Goodman. Even his final section on “what we can do about it” can’t counter the pessimism Goodman generates in what precedes it.

The Internet of Things is a buzzword these days (see Vincent Mosco’s article in the November-December *Monitor*), hyped by tech promoters like Dave Evans, “futurist” at Cisco, a company that makes routers and other components essential to a connected, “smart” Internet. It “will change everything, including ourselves,” says Evans, as quoted by Goodman.

Sure, a self-starting coffee pot that is ready when you get up, thermostats that balance comfort and energy efficiency, and a car that is already warm by the time you head out into minus-20 degree weather sound convenient, but hardly essential or world-changing. Isn’t the Internet of Things really a sell-job by the companies, like Cisco, that will profit the most?

Ever since hearing a tech enthusiast tell a group of teachers in Ecuador about this wonderful Internet of Things techno-future, I’ve been struck by how false the claims are that “everyone” will be affected. How many of those teachers’ students live in poverty, their families with few if any “things” that could plausibly be connected to the Internet? A cheap cell phone maybe. A top-of-the-line refrigerator? Almost certainly not.

However, Goodman is convincing when he warns that though everyone may not benefit equally from the Internet of Things, all will be affected because so much of the global economy is already interconnected, and technology is developing at an exponential rate. One gloomy section in the middle of his 400-page work captures the essence of this argument:

Creating the Internet of Things holds the possibility for immense improvements in our quality of life and the global economy.... Putting aside major privacy concerns for the moment, with billions of cars, coffee machines, buildings, mobile phones, elevators,

dishwashers, and toys talking to each other and taking commands from the Internet, at large, we have provided attackers innumerable points of contact to reach into our lives and affect them for the worse.

Goodman’s title, *Future Crimes*, suggests the nature of the problem. We have built systems without adequate security; most of the “things” we are connecting are totally vulnerable to hacking. The refrigerator that tells you while you’re grocery shopping what vegetables are in the crisper is a back door into the rest of your network.

The significance of that open door grows as the technology develops, producing and connecting bionic body parts, home robots, drones, algorithmic health care, stock trades and dating, as well as driverless cars. Imagine someone hacking in through your refrigerator to turn off your car’s engine or apply the brakes while you are in the middle of freeway traffic. Or don’t imagine, just read about it: “Hackers remotely kill a Jeep on the highway—with me in it,” wrote Andy Greenberg in *Wired* magazine this past summer.

“As the two hackers remotely toyed with the air-conditioning, radio, and windshield wipers, I mentally congratulated myself on my courage under pressure. That’s when they cut the transmission,” wrote Greenberg of the controlled experiment in modern meddling. “Immediately my accelerator stopped working. As I frantically pressed the pedal and watched the

RPMs climb, the Jeep lost half its speed, then slowed to a crawl. This occurred just as I reached a long overpass, with no shoulder to offer an escape. The experiment had ceased to be fun.”

Who might have an interest in hacking us in this connected world? We know our governments are among them, thanks to the revelations of Edward Snowden. We know corporations already collect as much information about us as they can, mostly for future marketing purposes. We may be less aware of what Goodman calls Crime, Inc., a group of bad guys including the punnily named Al-gorithm Capone.

We’re increasingly vulnerable to all these groups as the technology evolves, now into “bio-computers and DNA hard drives.” Says science fiction author William Gibson, “the future is here, it’s just not evenly distributed.” All of the technologies—and problems—listed in this book already exist or are well along the developmental process.

Goodman tries to give us hope in the final section of his book, described as “surviving progress.” He argues government should take an active role in regulating the Internet of Things, as the European Union is doing with its Data Protection Directive, which “enshrines privacy as a fundamental right of all EU citizens,” and though its adoption of the “right to be forgotten.” Encryption should be the default for email and everything else shared over the network as well as on your hard drive.

Education about cyber-dangers should be a part of the school curriculum, says Goodman, expanding on the cyberbullying education that is becoming standard. A global rapid response team equivalent to the World Health Organization should be created to respond to cyber-crime and other cyber-threats. Crowdsourcing could be employed to take advantage of mobs of privacy warriors wanting to help, incentivized perhaps by “competitions for global security.”

*Future Crimes* is an excellent compendium of existing and future cyber issues. Unfortunately, Goodman is more convincing in outlining our increasingly dangerous techno-future than he is at giving hope for controlling its negative aspects.

REVIEWED BY JASON WENZLER

## Standardized tests vs. the instruction of citizenship

### WHAT KIND OF CITIZEN? EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN FOR THE COMMON GOOD

JOEL WESTHEIMER

Teachers College Press (2015), 128 pages, \$24.95

**A** S A TEACHER with an interest in engaging students on important civic issues, I was excited to pick up Joel Westheimer’s new book, *What Kind of Citizen?* I’ve often enjoyed listening to him speak about education issues on CBC’s *Ottawa Morning show*, so I looked forward to reading about his thoughts on citizenship education in North American schools.

The book starts out by describing the decline in teacher professionalism in North America resulting from an increased focus by policy-makers and legislators on standardized testing. Faced with the predicament of “scarce” funding linked to student performance on these tests, administrators in many jurisdictions have forced teachers to shift a greater share of their time and effort toward numeracy and literacy at the expense of other subject areas, including those linked to the development of citizenship (e.g., history, civics, geography).

Moreover, due to the content-focus of much standardized testing, less classroom time is now devoted to the types of rich and engaging tasks that aid in the development of skills related to problem-solving and critical thinking. Instead of designing engaging programs that reflect their own expertise, respond to the interests of their students and confront important contemporary issues, teachers are now forced to deliver prescribed, homogenized programs that emphasize the memorization and recall of “facts” and the rote implementation of algorithms and formulae.

While arguing these recent trends in education are at odds with a democratic conception of citizenship development, Westheimer points out that citizenship education continues to be delivered in schools, in one form or another. Drawing on his own research, he outlines three different visions of citizenship being advanced in today’s schools: a personal responsibility approach emphasising good character and charity; a participatory approach focused on learning to navigate and work within established institutions; and a social justice approach focused on identifying and challenging root causes to social problems.

While asserting his belief that democracies are best served by a social justice orientation to citizenship education, Westheimer says the primary focus of most school-based programs is personal responsibility. Throughout the book, Westheimer provides several U.S.-based examples of citizenship programs from all three categories, including some exceptional programs in which schools have managed to effectively fuse a social justice and participatory approach.

While *What Kind of Citizen?* is a pleasurable and informative read, some might find its lack of Canadian content disappointing. Westheimer seems to suggest the rise in standardized testing and the attack on teacher professionalism is a North American phenomenon, but the examples he cites, including No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top and others, are drawn predominantly from the United States. From my own experience as a new teacher in the Canadian system (I’ve taught for six years in the Ottawa area) I can honestly say that I don’t experience a lot of the issues described in the book. Standardized testing—which in Ontario is carried out every few years for math and literacy up to Grade 10—has had a minimal impact on my teaching.

Moreover, I’ve found that the curriculum for my subject area is flexible and full of language related to investigation, problem-solving and critical thinking. Furthermore, a number of schools that I’ve taught at more recently boast administrators who encourage progressive instructional ap-

proaches and pedagogical risk-taking. In short, I think that the claims made about the Canadian system—and for me, the book more generally—could have benefited from the inclusion of more Canadian examples.

In closing, despite its decidedly U.S. slant, *What Kind of Citizen?* is an accessible book on an important topic that ultimately affects us all—the development of citizenship in future generations. While the takeaway for most readers will probably be the implications of standardized testing in American schools, its most important contribution might be to educators who are thinking about ways to better incorporate citizenship education into their practice. It's got me thinking

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REVIEWED BY JEREMY MILKS

## The “unbearable inside” of Canada’s horror tradition

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### THE CANADIAN HORROR FILM: TERROR OF THE SOUL

EDITED BY GINA FREITAG AND ANDRÉ LOISELLE

University of Toronto Press (2015), 302 pages, \$29.95

**I**N THE INTRODUCTION to their collection on Canadian horror, Gina Freitag and André Loiseau forthrightly set the tone and context of what's to follow, telling of the shared Canadian neuroses, or “terror of the soul,” that has afflicted this seemingly polite society since the ships first landed. They begin with a famous Northrop Frye quotation alluding to Canada's “huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting,” expanding on this theme as the subconscious backdrop for Canada's historic ability to produce unsettling and often idiosyncratic horror films that earn accolades abroad, but largely indifferent or scathing reviews at home.

The schism created when dealing with the “terrifying outside” by retreating to the “unbearable inside” has



Still from the tax shelter slasher *Black Christmas* (1974)

produced some singular film works, from Denys Arcand's *The Decline of the American Empire* (1986) to Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter* (1986). But for whatever reason the Canadian horror film has faced very little academic scrutiny outside of a few sources, notably Winnipeg director Caelum Vatnsdal's 2004 history, *They Came From Within* (ARP Books). Vatnsdal is represented here by a cleverly titled essay, “Monsters up North: A Taxonomy of Terror,” which is complemented a few chapters later by Canadian B-movie historian Paul Corupe's brave assessment of Canada's least renowned (but probably most fun) period of horror filmmaking.

In a section on the “Tax Shelter Slasher,” Corupe describes how “mercenary producers heartlessly took advantage of the generous tax deductions offered by the federal government to fund useless pieces of cinematic trash that tarnished the image of Canadian cinema at home and abroad.” The sentence is delivered with a wink, as this era actually produced some of the wildest, most uninhibited genre cinema in Canada's history, much of it considered classic by a growing B-movie fan base across the world. *The Changing* (1979), *Prom Night* (1980) and *My Bloody Valentine* (1982) were all Canadian tax shelter babies.

Corupe focuses in on director William Fruet's infamously nasty *Death Weekend* (1976), which matched and some would say surpassed the sleaziness of its American contemporaries, Wes Craven's *Last House On The Left* (1972) and Sam Peckinpah's *Straw*

*Dogs* (1971). That Fruet previously co-wrote the audience-revered and critically acclaimed *Goin' Down The Road* (1970) is mentioned almost immediately, effectively stripping away any snobbish impulse to pigeonhole the domestic horror film as some kind of unsavory endeavor undertaken by hacks with no artistic merit.

As promised in its title, seemingly every aspect of the Canadian horror film is covered in some way by the dozen authors in this collection, including strong contributions from editors Freitag and Loiseau. William Beard, a professor of English and film studies at the University of Alberta, covers the films of David Cronenberg—Canada's one horror director who eventually got respect from critics at home, but not without a fight—focusing on the director's later work. It is nice to see lesser-known slasher films and Québécois titles getting equal attention.

Readers who may not be interested in philosophizing about “national identity” in the genre fear not. Most of these chapters get the balance just right, occasionally delving into psychological aspects, but also giving us doses of familiar film criticism, history and personal viewpoints that hang together cohesively.

Sean Moreland has a standout piece toward the end of the book, which manages to put Ottawa filmmaker Lee Demarbre's ridiculously violent 2009 opus *Smash Cut* (an ode to legendary B-movie director H.G. Lewis) in a critical light. Moreland gets to the underlying intentions of boldly casting porn star Sasha Grey in a lead role alongside the late David Hess of *Last House On The Left*. It's in the quote from Lewis that opens the film: “I see filmmaking as a business and pity anyone who regards it as an art form.”

According to Moreland, Demarbre instinctively knows people will enjoy his film, “not from its terror, but from its deliberate terribleness.” From that point of view we can cherish and recognize the cinematic value of a genre that's constantly derided, but also revel in the entertaining murk of an intentional romp, with no conflicting attitude. For a film fan, it's a refreshing outlook. **M**



Chandra Siddan

# That feeling called home

The 13<sup>th</sup> Regent Park Film Festival

“**THIS GUY STOPPED** in front of me and said, ‘Hey! Are you homeless?’ And I said ‘No, I am homefree!’” An ebullient street artist in Shelley Saywell’s 2015 documentary

*Lowdown Tracks* captures the changeable feelings one can have about so basic a necessity as home, incidentally the core theme of the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Regent Park Film Festival celebrated in Toronto this November. Some of the films described here could still be touring Canadian theatres, but all will be available soon electronically if they are not already.

The Regent Park Film Festival began in 2003 (with my programming, I am proud to say, for the first four years), long before the planned revitalization of the central Toronto neighbourhood, and it continues to focus on inner-city issues, migration, indigeneity, multiculturalism, race, class, affordable housing, sexuality and local-global citizenship. Kudos to the board, staff and volunteers for continuing to keep the programming relevant and the whole four-day festival entirely free (even if it means putting up with a corporate-friendly opening night)!

The winner of the Top 10 Audience Favourite award at Hotdocs this year, *Lowdown Tracks* explores the existential edges of the homeless life as experienced by five street artists. Several of them are either in between homes or in temporary housing situations, or simply living in a tent under the bridge. Musicians all, they face the bureaucratic Catch 22 of requiring a busking licence which renders them ineligible for disability assistance. Their choice to sing while literally putting their bodies at risk is not just heroic, filling the air with un-



Still from *Kaaka Muttai*, Tamil for “the crow’s egg”

requited beauty as the work-ridden populace trudges to its labours, but crucial to their own survival as artists, satisfying an urge to play so deep that it defies the tribulations of the external world.

Shot by Deborah Parks, John Tran and Michael Grippo, *Lowdown Tracks* has an ineffable bleak beauty. Never have I seen the interstitial melancholic outdoor spaces of Toronto represented so dynamically. And great music by the artists themselves, professionally recorded on camera with the assistance of the artist-activist Lorraine Segato, gives the film its complex emotional atmosphere. Following the screening, some of the artists played to an admiring audience in the lobby of the Daniels Spectrum in Regent Park.

*After The Last River*, by Victoria Lean, gave festivalgoers another visceral look at home—and its loss to in-

ternational corporate greed. The documentary, shot over five years, follows First Nations activists opposing the De Beers diamond mine in Attawapiskat, Northern Ontario and their eventual linking up with the Idle No More movement. The title refers to the Cree saying, “When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money.”

Alongside features, a section called “Shorts: Testaments of Home” added to the festival a dense program of documentary and fiction shorts on a range of subjects: an Indigenous man cycling through his reserve as he remembers some of the women who have gone missing (*The Routes*, by James McDougall); an Afghan couple recreating Kabul in their backyard garden in Canada (*Seeds of the Past*, by Aisha Jamal); three black trans men talking about their relationships to their urban environments (*Passing*, by Lucah Rosenberg and J. Mitchell Reed); a young Pakistani Canadian woman exploring Karachi as an impressionistic collage (*Seaview*, by Zinnia Naqvi); and a story of brother-



hood that transcended the Iran-Iraq war even while in the line of fire (*My Brother, My Enemy*, by Ann Shinn).

And how can we talk about home without referring to its chief architects, mothers? Motherhood surfaced as a condition of extreme sacrifice in the primal space of home. In *Holy Mother My Mother*, director Vivek Shraya shows us a portrait of his mother through her own tearful words as the family visits Mother Goddess festivals during the Hindu festival of Navrathri in India. In *Julio*, by Eui Yong Zong, a young woman becomes a kind of surrogate mother to her disabled brother after they are abandoned by both their parents. In *Abel's Mom*, a film by Sheena Robertson and Richard Fung based on a family story in Regent Park, we witness a mother starve to feed her son. As inspiring as all this sacrifice is, one can't help observing that the idealization of motherhood and the oppression of mothers seem directly proportional.

The tender yet satirical representation of a slum in Chennai, India in *Kaaka Muttai* (*The Crow's Egg* in English) is a rare treat of an independent Tamil film. Written, shot and directed by M. Manikandhan, the film is a hilarious view from below of class hierarchies in Chennai society. Two young boys collect coal to help their mother get their father out of jail. In

### Still from *Lowdown Tracks*.

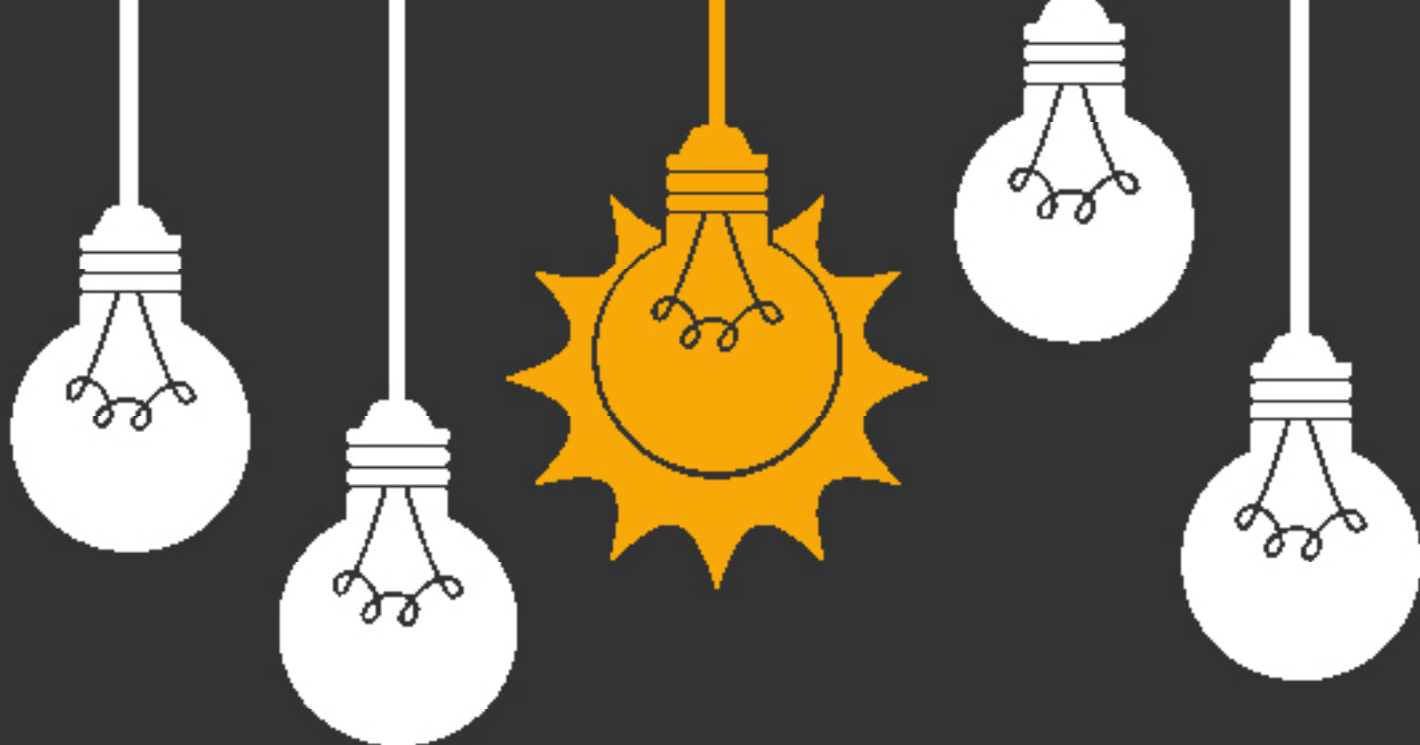
the process, their developing desires derail the class system in an uproarious chain of events. If North American audiences are tempted to see this as a cute snapshot of some faraway place, we must remember that globally the slum (or “projects” or low-income housing) is a universal political space where poverty is contained, managed and observed by anxious mainstream stakeholders. It is a prison of sorts, wherever it exists.

An unfortunately relevant screening of *Home Feeling: The Struggle for a Community*, Jennifer Hodge's 1983 film about black life in Toronto's Jane and Finch neighbourhood, reminds us that police-resident conflict has barely changed in 30 years. In a panel following the screening, three Toronto activists—Desmond Cole, Yufra Ali and Tomas Kanene, with moderator Anupa Mistry—discussed the racist practice of carding (demanding to see ID) by the Toronto police, the Black Lives Matter movement and the impact of gentrification in Regent Park—a social housing development that has not escaped the city's condo boom.

The conversation covered a lot of ground, including the persistent crim-

inalization and objectification of black people, both men and women, as a process of disenfranchisement ensuring their substantial exclusion from many public spaces. A criminal record, so easy to acquire for a black person, has serious repercussions to their housing situation. Given that reality, Ali told the audience it is unacceptable that, as a condition of returning to the revitalized Regent Park apartments, residents must have a clean slate.

The programming of the Regent Park Film Festival has always aimed to bridge newcomer communities, the Indigenous, the poor white, and other marginalized groups—to open a forum for the negotiation of collective notions of home independent from the dominant white settler capitalist perspective. This is especially poignant for me because it was as a new immigrant filmmaker myself that I initiated the festival in November 2003—with the support of York University education professors Jeff Kugler and Harry Smaller—as a playful forum for diverse communities to come together, learn about each other and make new friends. As the 2015 festival made obvious, it continues to be that and more under the current leadership of Executive Director Ananya Ohri, another York University alumna and student of community cinema. Bravo! **M**



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