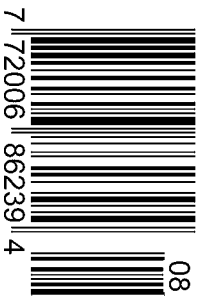


MONITOR



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Please send feedback to
monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

Editor: Stuart Trew
Senior Designer: Tim Scarth
Layout: Susan Purtell
Editorial Board: Peter Bleyer,
Alyssa O'Dell, Seth Klein, Kate
McInturff, Erika Shaker, Emily Turk

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

CCPA BC Office:
520-700 West Pender Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 1G8
tel: 604-801-5121
fax: 604-801-5122
ccpabc@policyalternatives.ca

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

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

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

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



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Contributors

David Bruer

works at Inter Pares where he is focused on food sovereignty and economic justice.

Dennis Carr

has 27 years' worth of experience creating affordable housing and social facilities in Ottawa and Vancouver, and is the recipient of the 2016 Canadian Housing and Renewal Association Lifetime Achievement Award.

Kory Earle

is President of People First of Canada/Personnes d'abord du Canada and a member of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities' executive committee.

Alicia Elliott

is a Tuscarora writer living in Brantford, Ontario. Her writing has been widely published, most recently receiving a National Magazine Award.

Robert Hackett

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

Trish Hennessy

is Director of the CCPA's Ontario office.

Asad Ismi

covers international politics for the *Monitor*, specializing in the destructive impact of U.S. and Canadian imperialism, and resistance to it, in the Global South.

Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood

is a researcher with the CCPA and author of the recent report, *Tracking Progress: Evaluating government plans and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Canada*.

Alyssa O'Dell

is Media and Public Relations Officer with the CCPA.

Peter Prontzos

is Faculty Emeritus at Langara College in Vancouver, and taught political science for over 25 years. His articles have appeared in print and online, including in the *Monitor*, and he has worked in both radio and television. He is writing his first book, *Remembering Our Humanity: A Better World Is Possible*.

Michal Rozworski

Michal's writing has appeared in *Jacobin*, *Ricochet*, the *Toronto Star*, *Briarpatch* and *The Tyee*, among other places. He produces the *Political Economy* blog and podcast. He currently works as a union researcher in Toronto and is working on a book, *The People's Republic of Walmart*, with Leigh Phillips.

Erika Shaker

is Director of Education and Outreach with the CCPA and editor of *Our Schools / Our Selves*.

Scott Sinclair

is Senior Research Fellow with the CCPA and Director of the Trade and Investment Research Project.

Natalie Spagnuolo

is a PhD candidate in critical disability studies at York University and sits on the social policy committee of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.

Emily Turk

is Director of Communications and Development at the CCPA.

Paul Weinberg

is a Hamilton, Ontario-based freelance writer. His work has appeared in newspapers and magazines across the country, including *NOW Toronto*, *rabble.ca*, the *Globe and Mail*, *Straight Goods* and the *Monitor*.



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



Meaghan Way

This month's cover artist is a Toronto-based illustrator whose clients include *VICE*, *REEL Canada*, *Indigo*, *Frontier Magazine*, and *Drake General Store*, among others. Her work pairs bold, geometric shapes with bright colour palettes; architecture, sculpture and set design serve as the primary sources of inspiration for her designs.

Reading the Moment

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THE CCPA AND FRIENDS GO BOOKISH FOR THE SUMMER, turning to recent releases to help understand our world today—from the rise of populism to the “sharing economy,” the future of social democracy to Indigenous cultural appropriation, anti-women dystopias to the genetic case for equality, and much more.

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STUART TREW

Reading the moment

FOR THE PAST three years around this time the *Monitor* has run a short summer reading guide as a complement to our regular books section. CCPA staff listed one or two new releases they would finally have time to get through over the summer slowdown at the office. It was political, but only lightly so, which was the point. As readers sometimes tell me, the *Monitor* can be a bit heavy.

But hey, these are heavy times—heavy yet peculiarly disorienting. Though our goals at the CCPA have not changed—equality, social progress, sustainability—the terrain of struggle feels different, almost unreal, as if the ground has fallen out from under our feet. An endless stream of podcasts and think-pieces despair that citizens of the West can't agree even on the facts anymore, let alone a program for changing the world. We live, they suggest, in a post-truth era where one absurd tweet by Donald Trump can throw the global order—and perhaps reality itself—into flux.

These are, of course, exaggerations. Politics is by definition a dispute between contested views of reality, an argument about what facts or economic indicators (e.g., a stable rate of inflation or labour's declining share of total wealth) are most important. This novel type of disorientation is also, if we're being honest, mostly a luxury of a privileged class within rich countries, whose relative socioeconomic stability is bought, today as it always has been, at the cost of war, poverty and state repression elsewhere (and within our borders).

Nonetheless, it is fair to say that growing numbers of people in the West are struggling to find meaning in the post-Trump world. Importantly, they are questioning conventional wisdom that has held sway for more than a generation: economic sacred cows like free trade, privatization and balanced budgets, and the belief that government should be run by compe-

tent managers rather than transformational idealists.

Politicians and much of the news media, who still by and large believe there is no viable alternative to neoliberalism, are fumbling to adapt lest they fall prey to a Trump-like populist backlash. At the same time, new technological developments—from AI to big data to automation to the proliferation of the on-demand digital service economy—are forcing governments at all levels to anticipate what the economy might look like in 20 years, where the jobs (and job insecurities) will be, and to regulate appropriately.

This expanded version of the *Monitor* summer reading guide takes a break from frenetic social media feeds to assess the fluctuating political and economic landscape from a place of relative stability: books. Rather than just telling us what they will be reading this summer, contributors ground longer arguments about the state of the world in recent Canadian and international non-fiction releases with a connection to the CCPA's underlying mandate: to promote social, economic and environmental justice.

Trish Hennessy, who has been reading (and writing) a lot about the so-called sharing economy, wonders what an Ontario town's decision to contract out its transit system to Uber says about the future of good jobs in Canada. Do convenient app-based services, many of them offered by publicly listed high-tech firms, truly benefit consumers enough—are the on-demand services they offer that much better than traditional taxis, pizzerias and laundromats—to justify the precarity that follows in their wake? And is this future really all we have to hope for once, as the line goes, “the robots take our jobs”?

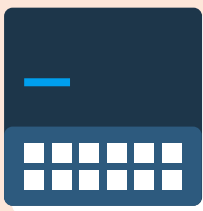
Michal Rozworski's review essay challenges radicals and progressives to think outside the Keynesian box when discussing these questions, and in particular when thinking through political alternatives to the crisis-prone cap-

italist order. Mitterand's retreat from state intervention in the French economy in the early 1980s, the inability of post-Pinochet Chilean governments to undo the neoliberal rules forced into place at gunpoint, and New Labour's embrace of Thatcher's union-busting market fundamentalism have left social democratic parties struggling for relevance in an era when more and more young people are rediscovering socialism. The lesson, especially after Jeremy Corbyn's surprise success in June's U.K. election, might be to get radical or get lost.

Scott Sinclair tackles “the populist explosion” head-on in his review of John Judis's book by the same name, which came out before Trump was elected but is no less important for how it puts the rogue Republican's success in a historical context. Populism of the right-wing and left-wing varieties have always looked very different and will have different lasting effects, says Judis. But both symbolize “tears in the fabric of accepted political wisdom.” This rupture creates challenges and opportunities for the left.

Reading the moment is obviously a subjective and loaded act that captures only snapshots of a complex, varied reality. *Whose* moment are we talking about? Which power imbalances do we perpetuate while prioritizing one conversation over another? I acknowledge and apologize for the gaps, but assure you that the *Monitor* is committed to covering the multitude of struggles for justice in magazines to come.

On the other hand, there's a lot more in the issue than I've mentioned here, including Emily Turk's five reasons we should all be watching *The Handmaid's Tale*, summer reading tips from Octopus Books and RankandFile.ca, and several excellent features you won't read anywhere else. If you think we've missed any important new books, please write to let us know. We'll share your ideas in an upcoming issue. **M**



Letters

History lessons

The *Monitor* should be applauded for examining Canada's historic contribution to Palestinian dispossession ("Canada and the birth of the Israel-Palestine conflict," May-June 2017). But Clare Mian's summary of the UN negotiations over the British Mandate of Palestine omitted relevant details about diplomat Elizabeth MacCallum and the broader political context.

The only Middle East expert at External Affairs at the time of the UN discussion of Palestine, MacCallum opposed the dominant opinion at the department. She claimed privately that Ottawa supported partitioning Palestine into ethnically homogenous states "because we didn't give two hoots for democracy." Despite Jews making up a third of the population and owning less than 7% of the land, under the UN partition plan the Zionist movement received 55% of the territory.

At the time of the partition vote, notes Arthur Andrew in *The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power*, "MacCallum scribbled a note and passed it to Mike (Undersecretary of External Affairs Lester Pearson) saying the Middle East

was now in for 'forty years' of war, due to the lack of consultation with the Arab countries." She was prescient, even if she did underestimate the duration of the conflict.

A huge boost to the Zionist movement's desire for an ethnically based state, the Canadian-shaped partition plan contributed to the displacement of at least 700,000 Palestinians. Scholar Walid Khalidi complained that UN (partition) Resolution 181 was "a hasty act of granting half of Palestine to an ideological movement that declared openly already in the 1930s its wish to de-Arabise Palestine."

While many have been understandably appalled by recent Harper/Trudeau support for Israeli violence and expansionism, Canada's most significant contribution to Palestinian dispossession took place at the UN 70 years ago.

Yves Engler, author, *Canada and Israel: Building Apartheid*

Kudos to the editors of *Monitor* for publishing Clare Mian's article on Canada and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the May-June issue. It is an excellent and fair summary of the situation, and makes it clear that Canada needs to clean up its act.

We need to end Canada's disjunction between official policy and actual practice. It is in the interests of both Israel and the Palestinians that the occupation, going on in one form or another for the 70 years the article covers, come to an end.

I hope to see future articles in the *Monitor* on this issue. Keep us aware of what is happening in this critical geopolitical situation.

Donald Grayston,
Vancouver, B.C.

Thank you for Clare Mian's excellent article on Elizabeth MacCallum. As an expert on the League of Nation's mandate system, MacCallum would have been well aware that under the league's covenant the Palestine mandate was invalid. Its terms were totally inconsistent with the provisions of Article 22, under the authority of which it purported to be made. It violated both the spirit and the letter of this article.

The mandate system was conceived in the interest of the inhabitants of the mandated territories. The Palestine mandate was conceived in the interest of a people originating from outside Palestine, and ran counter to the whole concept of mandates. The framers of this document did not restrict the mandatory power's role to "the rendering of administrative advice and assistance," as was the case with all other Class A mandates, but granted Great Britain full powers of legislation and administration. These powers were not given in the interest of the inhabitants of the land. They were intended to be used, and were used, to establish by force the "Jewish National Home" in Palestine. This was a perversion and an abuse of the purpose of the mandate system under the covenant.

Promising the Palestinians independence at the end of the mandate period, while inserting the Balfour Declaration into the mandate, with no intention of consulting the Palestinians, was an injustice that has had for them terrible consequences. And there is no end in sight. Occupation has become annexation. Structures designed to enforce domination based on ethnicity suffocate the territories.

The Palestinians have been dispossessed, in the words of Edward Said, by the very people who taught everyone the importance of not forgetting the past. He suggests the only way forward is to develop something entirely missing from both Israeli and Palestinian realities—the idea and practice of citizenship, rather than ethnic or racial community, as the basis for co-existence.

Elizabeth Marmura,
Antigonish, N.S.

While I welcome badly-needed coverage on the 70th anniversary of the UN Palestinian partition plan (and 50th anniversary of the Six Day War), I am incredulous that the *Monitor* would print Clare Mian's article, given the current context of Israel's treatment of Palestinians, i.e., its devastating siege of Gaza, now in its 11th year, and its criminal and apartheid treatment of Palestinians, documented most recently by a UN report.

Mian's article is unacceptable not only because of significant misrepresentations of fact, but also due

to its grotesque concerns about “Islamic extremism” and Israel’s welfare rather than how Gaza’s two million men, women and children can survive Israel’s blockade. Gazans have virtually no access to potable water, and the inadequate food is permanently damaging their children. Israel’s illegal treatment of the Gaza Strip is causing an environmental catastrophe; a UN report claims it will soon no longer be able to sustain life.

Mian fails to note Israel’s military occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza; she neglects to mention the horrific terrorism and massacres that forced Palestinians to flee their homes in 1948 or the inalienable legal right possessed by 10 million Palestinians to return to those homes. She suggests that since international law “is a dead letter,” truth and reconciliation is the solution, despite Israel’s ongoing, daily terrorism against Palestinians that is

predicted to become even worse.

The serious solutions suggested by various UN leaders include boycott and divestment from companies profiting from Israel’s crimes, as well as demanding that signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention (including Canada) honour their contractual legal obligation to ensure that Israeli leaders are held legally accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The mainstream media censors the Palestinian reality: their continued ethnic cleansing; the ongoing theft of their land, water and gas; daily Israeli violence and humiliation; and Gazans’ struggle for survival. That the *Monitor* would publish an article so sympathetic to the oppressor in these circumstances has left me deeply disappointed.

Karin Brothers, Toronto, Ont.

Author’s response

I thank Yves Engler for his supplementary information. Elizabeth MacCallum did indeed play a courageous role in the crucial period of 1947, and the fact that her view did not prevail led to continuing tragedy for the Palestinian people. This was not a distinguished beginning to independent Canadian foreign policy making.

I agree with Karin Brothers that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, and the daily suffering being inflicted on all Palestinians, especially those in Gaza, are situations that call for immediate condemnation and action by concerned citizens and by our government. My subject was essentially historical, and my point was to shine a light on the largely unknown and less than honourable role Canada played in allowing the partition plan to move forward with the tragic results that MacCallum foresaw.

Without explaining Israeli policy since 1948, I certainly did not express concern for “Islamic extremism.” On the contrary, I pointed to the fact that the Canadian government was fully aware of the Balfour Declaration, was complicit in accomplishing the Zionist program, and is currently abetting the continued illegality of the occupations and the injustices being perpetrated on the Palestinian people by the government of Israel and its supporters.

Clare Mian, Toronto, Ontario

NOMINATIONS FOR THE CCPA MEMBERS’ COUNCIL

CCPA supporters can nominate a supporter in good standing to sit on the Centre’s Members’ Council for a two-year term (2018–20). The deadline for receiving nominations is August 31, 2017.

Please note that this nomination form must include the signature and consent of the person nominated to stand for election.

Please either mail, scan and email, or fax all nominations to:

Larry Brown, President,
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
251 Bank Street, Suite 500, Ottawa ON K2P 1X3
Email: charlene@policyalternatives.ca
Fax: 613-233-1458

Name of Nominee (must be a CCPA supporter; please print):

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Consent of Nominee (signature):

I hereby consent to allow my name to stand for election to the CCPA Members’ Council. I am familiar with and support the aims of the CCPA.

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Behind the numbers

RICARDO ACUÑA | ALBERTA

Bill 17 is not radical or extreme

The Alberta government's recently introduced Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, is a huge piece of legislation designed to provide long-overdue updates to both Alberta's Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code. Neither of these key pieces of legislation had been significantly revised or updated since the 1980s, and Bill 17 takes some important steps in bringing the laws governing employment and collective bargaining in the province up to par with some of the best practices from around the world and with legislation in other provinces.

On the employment standards side, the bill does things like providing unpaid job-protected leaves for illness, spousal abuse and other family emergencies; it explicitly makes illegal the practice of making employees pay for dine-and-dashes and gas-and-dashes; and it prohibits the practice of paying disabled workers less than others because of their disability. On the labour relations side the bill modernizes the process of certifying or decertifying unions in a workplace, minimizing the opportunity for bullying and intimidation by either side, makes it easier for newly certified unions to secure a first collective agreement, and formalizes Alberta's recognition of the Rand formula, whereby all workers in a unionized environment are required to pay dues,

since they all benefit from the union's bargaining.

According to labour lawyer Andy Sims, the former Labour Relations Board chair who advised the government on this bill, "this is not a cutting-edge, lead-the-country reform. It is, in most respects, a bring-the-best-experiences-from-elsewhere to Alberta." Many Alberta workers, advocates and labour unions were actively lobbying and pushing for the government to go much further in reforming both pieces of legislation. They are, for the most part, happy with what's in the legislation, but are also disappointed that so many asks (like preventing the practice of construction companies bypassing union agreements, and making the use of replacement workers during a strike illegal) were simply left off the table by the government.

The political strategy of the NDP government on this bill was clearly two-fold: to minimize push-back by bundling the leave provisions and protections on the employment standards side of the equation with the greater union rights granted on the labour relations side, and to minimize criticism from employers and the business lobby by limiting the enhanced rights provided to unions. As political strategies go, it's a good one, since opposition MLAs find themselves in a place where they will be voting against things

like job-protected sick leave and equal pay for the disabled.

And if that wasn't a bad enough situation for the opposition to be in, Wildrose MLA Derek Fildebrandt did his party absolutely no favours with his interjection during debate on the bill in the legislature. In what can only be described as a rabid anti-union rant, Fildebrandt portrayed Bill 17 as a bill that would give unions unlimited power to take their members' money and pretty much do whatever they want with it.

By unabashedly portraying unions as dictatorial cartels of thugs and bullies who do little more than force workers to pay dues for the sake of propaganda and electoral campaigns, Fildebrandt betrayed his and his party's fierce ideological objection to democratic representation in the workplace and collective bargaining in general. His criticism of the Rand formula, which has been a staple of labour law in Canada since a 1946 Supreme Court decision, and his inability to recognize that unions are fundamentally democratic organizations that simply carry out the expressed wishes of their members, both demonstrate that what he objects to is not the provisions within the bill itself, but rather the very concept of a union. This disdain of unions and unionized workers is further reflected every time Fildebrandt or his leader, Brian Jean, draw explicit distinctions in their press releases and statements between hard-working Albertans and union members.

What the NDP has presented with Bill 17 is a very modest and balanced set of reforms to move Alberta from the bottom of the heap to the middle of the pack when it comes to labour legislation in Canada. Fildebrandt's over-the-top characterization of the bill and of unions in general highlights the degree to which Albertans should be wary of what his party would do to workers' rights and worker protections in this province. They may claim to care about "hard-working Albertans," but their actions and positioning on Bill 17 say otherwise. **M**

RICARDO ACUÑA IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PARKLAND INSTITUTE. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN VUE WEEKLY ON JUNE 8. FOLLOW RICK ON TWITTER @ RICACUNA.

Province chooses \$15 and fairness



In a game-changing move, the Ontario government will raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by January 1, 2019, increasing first to \$14/hour on January 1, 2018 under a phased-in plan. About a third of workers in Ontario earn less than \$15 an hour. This raise will result in a 30% increase in the minimum wage, which is substantive and has been a long time coming. It is a big win for the \$15 and Fairness campaign that has been organizing provincewide. Last year, the Ontario NDP gave the campaign a boost by committing to raising rates as part of its policy platform. Now it will become a reality.

While some business groups are playing Cassandra, predicting apocalyptic consequences, the evidence suggests otherwise. In an excellent CCPA-BC paper, UBC economics professor David Green concludes that the positive impact of reducing income inequality and increasing incomes for low-wage workers will offset any reduction in employment that could result from

the rise in wage costs. Jordan Brennan and Jim Stanford similarly concluded in their 2014 CCPA-Ontario report that there is no consistent evidence that minimum wage levels increase or decrease employment levels, which are overwhelmingly determined by larger macroeconomic factors.

It's also important to note that not all employers oppose wage increases. Fifteen employers, including small businesses like Hamilton's Cake and Loaf Bakery, wrote a letter to Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne this year urging her to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The Ontario Living Wage Network signed up about 150 living wage employers within the network's first year of existence. It's clear the narrative is rapidly shifting on what is viewed as an acceptable minimum wage in this province and elsewhere. Alberta's \$15 minimum wage will come into effect in October 2018.

While the \$15 minimum wage announcement garnered major head-

lines, the Ontario government also announced other measures that will improve the working and personal lives of low-wage Ontarians, including allowing workers personal emergency leave and greater control over work scheduling. Concretely, this will mean workers will be able to take a day off when they are sick or when they need to take a sick child to the doctor, and it means they will have advance notice of shifts to ease child care arrangements.

New requirements in the legislation for equal pay for casual, temporary, part-time employees will reduce very clear and large inequities in individual workplaces. No longer will people work alongside others doing the same work yet earning a different hourly wage just because one worker is classified as temporary and another is permanent. The reforms will also reduce the incentive for employers to use temp agencies and part-time workers, which is a welcome development.

Of course, these enhanced workers' rights are only valuable to Ontarians if they are enforced. There are clear and widespread violations of current rights under the Employment Standards Act. The government's announcement includes measures to enhance enforcement, but they don't go far enough.



DAVID BUSH (RANKANDFILE.CA)

The best way to enforce these rights is to have the protection of a union. The government is making some progress toward ensuring that Ontarians who want to join a union will be able to. Measures to increase access to card-based certification, and modernize union voting and access to information processes are positive, as are measures to reduce the negative impact of “contract flipping.” But they are only half-measures. More needs to be done on this front—to make sure that workers in more insecure jobs, such as retail and food services, are able to join a union and keep it.

Make no mistake, these labour law changes will have an impact on workplace conditions in Ontario. They will make it less profitable for businesses to exploit low-cost workers and have an impact on the revenue of temporary staffing agencies. But the beauty of capitalism (if you can find beauty in it) is that employers will find ways to adjust their business models to continue to make a profit. Just as they did when we collectively decided, through legislation, that seven-year-olds should no longer work in factories, or when we legislated an eight-hour workday and gave workers a weekend.

As part of that adjustment, if we all have to pay a bit more for lattes at Starbucks or double-doubles at Tim Hortons, that is a fair price to live in a province that supports decent work. We all benefit from living in a place where all workers are fairly valued, where there are protections for the most vulnerable workers and where work pays enough to lift people out of poverty. It's important to point out that women, recent immigrants, Indigenous people and racialized workers, who disproportionately work in low-wage, precarious jobs, will be the primary beneficiaries of these changes to labour standards in Ontario. It's about time.

The bottom line: raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour will reduce income inequality. That's the minimum we should expect from a province as prosperous as Ontario. **M**

SHEILA BLOCK IS A SENIOR ECONOMIST WITH THE CCPA. FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER @SHEILA_M_BLOCK.

BRUCE CAMPBELL | NATIONAL

Trump launches NAFTA renegotiations



On May 18, U.S. President Donald Trump sent a letter to Congress announcing his intention to renegotiate NAFTA, starting a 90-day waiting period before North American trade negotiators can formally sit down to figure out what a new deal should look like. Policy-makers and big business groups in all three countries have called for a “modernization” of the 23-year-old agreement, though Trump has threatened to walk away from the table, and even tear up NAFTA, if an America-first solution cannot be found. On June 5, the Canadian government launched a public consultation on the matter, presumably to inform its negotiating position, but clearly all three countries hope to have a NAFTA-plus framework in place before the talks officially begin later this summer.

NAFTA transformed the economic and social landscape of North America. That much we can agree on. But views diverge significantly on whether or not the transformation has been for the better. The elite consensus is that NAFTA has greatly benefited Canada and its partners, since a major increase in cross-border trade produced millions of jobs. Implied here is that without NAFTA, supply chains would rupture, trade would collapse, jobs would disappear. There is substantial evidence this isn't the case.

NAFTA has also played an important role in the growth of job insecurity and precarious work; in the dramatic increase in income and wealth inequality; in wage stagnation and the hollowing out of the middle class; in the weakening of public services and shrinking of Canada's social safety net. NAFTA is not solely responsible for these changes, but it was a key strand in a web of mutually reinforcing policies that have facilitated the “structural adjustment” of the Canadian state in line with the demands of the “new global reality.”

Some former government insiders saw it coming. The late Mel Clark,

Canada's former deputy negotiator for the GATT (the forerunner of the World Trade Organization), warned that NAFTA was most importantly an investment agreement, reflecting the ascendancy of the forces driving the corporate globalization project. The deal's key provisions protect and enhance the private property rights of internationally mobile corporations, impose constraints on policy flexibility, allow corporations to directly sue governments, and lock these and sibling policies prior to NAFTA in a treaty to prevent future governments from backsliding.

At its core, said Clark, NAFTA was about power—the transfer of power from workers, communities and governments to corporations. In his 1995 book, *The Mexican Shock*, Jorge Castañeda Gutman, who would later become Mexico's foreign minister under President Vicente Fox, similarly described NAFTA as “an agreement for the rich and powerful in the United States, Mexico and Canada, an agreement effectively excluding ordinary people in all three societies.” Nowhere was this more true than in Mexico.

Mexicans were told that joining NAFTA would bring the country into the first-world club of developed nations. The reality, for the large majority of its citizens, has been otherwise. Previously at the forefront of Latin American development, Mexico's living standards slipped to near the bottom of regional country rankings during the NAFTA era. Average Mexican wages dropped, as did the labour share of national income. Its poverty rate remained extremely high.

The NAFTA labour side agreement was totally ineffectual in raising wages. Only about 1% of Mexican workers belong to a democratic union, the vast majority being covered by “protection contracts” with company-approved labour groups. As U.S. and Canadian-based companies relocated significant production to modern plants in Mexico's border export zones, worker



THEO MOUDAKIS (ARTIZANS)

productivity grew, but already low wages actually fell by 20%. Almost five million Mexican farmers were displaced from their land by the huge influx of U.S.-subsidized corn and other agricultural products. Some found seasonal employment in the agribusiness export sector. Others fled to the border export zones looking for factory work, or crossed into the United States.

I represented the CCPA at a trilateral forum in Mexico City at the end of May, and spoke on a panel about NAFTA's impact on Canada and what the Canadian government might want out of a renegotiation. I was not surprised to hear Mexican civil society representatives emphasizing the severity of the NAFTA-induced social crisis in their country, and calling for a new model of economic integration and development in North America. But how seriously should we take Prime Minister Trudeau's promises to make NAFTA more progressive? Can Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland really produce a deal that more fairly benefits workers in all three countries?

At a bare minimum, to begin to reverse the inequality trajectory of the

last 23 years, the new NAFTA would need to include strong, enforceable labour rights provisions incorporating International Labour Organization and related UN human rights conventions—on par with the enforcement powers granted to corporations in the investor–state dispute mechanism (ISDS) in NAFTA's Chapter 11. Moreover, to discourage corporations from going outside North America to take advantage of weaker labour rights in third countries, NAFTA content rules would have to be strengthened.

This is not, however, what Minister Freeland appears to have in mind, which is to use the labour chapter in the Canada–EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) as a template. As the CCPA pointed out in the report *Making Sense of CETA*, the EU deal's labour provisions are only a marginal improvement over the existing NAFTA labour side agreement: both are largely aspirational and without enforcement teeth. It is also hard to imagine the Trump administration pushing for improved rights, even for U.S. workers (despite Trump's rhetoric), given its actions to date rolling back wage,

health and safety protections. Nor will the hugely unpopular government of Enrique Peña Nieto be inclined to risk eroding its competitive advantage in the continental division of labour.

In bargaining with its much smaller NAFTA partners, the U.S. exercises disproportionate power. Trump is demanding major concessions and threatening to rip up the deal if he doesn't get what he wants, though it's anyone's guess at this point what his red lines are. As we saw with his recent decision to leave the Paris accord on climate, predicting Trump's actions is risky.

Under these circumstances, Canada should be preparing its own NAFTA termination strategy that carefully evaluates the transitional costs and benefits. As CCPA trade researcher Scott Sinclair said in a recent *Toronto Star* op-ed, should NAFTA die Canada–U.S. trade would revert to WTO tariff rates, which would add between \$3.5 billion and \$5 billion in export taxes. "That's a speed bump, for sure, but would not bring trade to a screeching halt," he wrote. On the plus side, it would eliminate NAFTA's most pernicious elements, like ISDS, and restore some policy flexibility (in energy, for example).

NAFTA's death could also give rise to new opportunities for multilateral governance of the kind trade justice activists discussed in Mexico City this May. For example, multilateral agreements to enforce labour rights would be far more effective at distributing trade benefits than the toothless clauses in Canada's free trade deals. Paris accord signatory nations might also be encouraged to impose carbon taxes on imports from countries that fail to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, as was done with the Montreal protocol on ozone-depleting substances.

As world-renowned economist Thomas Piketty wrote, globalization must be fundamentally re-oriented as a matter of urgency. The demise of NAFTA might even be an opportunity to begin developing a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable model of globalization on the North American continent. **M**

BRUCE CAMPBELL IS THE FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CCPA. THE CCPA WILL BE SUBMITTING COMMENTS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON A NAFTA RENEGOTIATION, WHICH YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FIND AT WWW.POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA.

Electoral reform: four lessons for a new government

The B.C. NDP and Green parties have promised a referendum on electoral reform as part of their coalition plan. This is great news, as it's high time we ditch our outdated first-past-the-post (FPTP) system for a better alternative. At the same time, we've already had two referendum votes in B.C. over the past 12 years. The single transferable vote option (BC-STV), which received 58% support in a 2005 vote, was never implemented. And only 39% supported change when a second vote was held in 2009. What might enhance the chances of a yes vote today?

There's much to learn from B.C.'s previous attempts at reform, as well as from Ontario's experience with a similar unsuccessful referendum on switching from FPTP to a type of proportional representation called mixed member proportional, or MMP. An extensive analysis of voter attitudes was conducted during both referenda by a group of political scientists who looked at a range of factors that influenced whether voters supported or opposed electoral reform. I want to highlight four.

First, one of the strongest predictors of support for reform in B.C. was trust in an innovative process called a Citizens' Assembly, a randomly selected group of citizens from across the province tasked with recommending a new system. In the 2005 vote the researchers found "voters said yes if they knew the Citizens' Assembly was made up of ordinary folks and not stacked with government-appointed elites."

If the new government wants to see an electoral reform vote succeed, it should keep the design of the proposed new voting system out of poli-

ticians' hands. One worthwhile option is to entrust this decision to a new B.C. Citizens' Assembly or another process that is similarly credible and independent of political elites. Another option is to vote again on BC-STV, on a 50%+1 basis this time, since it received majority support in 2005 and failed in 2009.

Second, a key finding of analysis of the B.C. and Ontario referenda is that the more voters knew about electoral reform the more likely they were to support it. However, levels of knowledge about the proposed systems, as well as about the Citizens' Assembly process, were quite low in all three referenda. There's obviously room for improvement, and the new government can assist by ensuring higher levels of resources for public education, discussion and debate than there were in previous referenda.

Third, a very likely consequence of moving to proportional representation in B.C. will be an increase in the frequency of minority and coalition governments. In the previous referenda, political scientists found that the more favourably voters viewed coalition gov-

ernments the more they came to support electoral reform. The new government will certainly need to positively demonstrate how well minorities can work in practice if it wants to increase the likelihood of a yes vote.

Fourth, not all proportional representation systems are created equal. There are so many possible variants it can make your head spin. For example, MMP systems alone come in different varieties. One sees a portion of the legislative seats (usually half) elected in local districts, just as they are today in B.C., with the other half drawn from party lists. In the "open list" version of MMP voters get to rank the candidates on lists provided by the parties. In the "closed list" version solely the parties decide the rankings of their candidates.

In Ontario, political scientists found that the more voters knew about the closed list feature the less likely they were to support electoral reform. Electoral reform duds like closed lists should simply be avoided in B.C.

A lot of things will need to go right to achieve electoral reform in B.C., and a rushed effort that fails to heed these four lessons will risk wasting a rare window of opportunity. Reform advocates and the new government should seize this chance to help spark a successful discussion among British Columbians about deepening democracy in this province. **M**

ALEX HEMINGWAY IS THE CCPA-BC'S PUBLIC FINANCE POLICY ANALYST. FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER @1ALEXHEMINGWAY.

B.C. Green Party leader Andrew Weaver (left) and B.C. NDP leader John Horgan sign a coalition agreement in Victoria in May.

PHOTO BY BC NDP





PHOTO COURTESY PETER DAY

CHRISTINE SAULNIER | NOVA SCOTIA

Beyond the ballot box

The morning after the Nova Scotia elections in May, a headline on the CBC website read: “Nova Scotia teachers ‘worried about the next 4 years’ under Liberals.” Liette Doucette, president of the Nova Scotia Teachers’ Union, expressed her trepidation this way: “I am willing to work with government—always.... The question is: will the government be prepared to work with us?”

It’s a fair question. The Liberal government of Stephen McNeil has marginalized teacher concerns raised during contract negotiations. Street protests, a work-to-rule campaign and a one-day-strike following the government’s decision to close schools were met with legal amendments and an imposed contract that forced teachers to end their job action. This last move by the government is particularly troubling.

Every day unions reach tentative agreements with employers after going through collective bargaining, which is predicated on both sides pre-

senting proposals, and a few rounds of back-and-forth, before a contract is ratified by union members. This process can’t work when you restrict collective bargaining. When the employer holds the power to force a contract (and ultimately does) there is little room for healthy compromise.

Nova Scotians across employment sectors are rightfully concerned that their wages are not increasing fast enough. New data released by Statistics Canada reveal Nova Scotia’s median employment income (\$29,800 in 2015) was the third lowest in Canada (almost tied with New Brunswick, and a bit higher than P.E.I.). The dubious honour of the smallest real-dollar income increase (\$300 since 2012) belongs to Nova Scotia alone. New Brunswick’s increase from 2012 to 2015 was \$1,400, and PEI’s was \$3,100.

However, freezing the wages of teachers and other public sector workers (the majority of whom are women) helps no one. We undervalue teachers’ contributions to the education system

and to society generally, which harms worker recruitment and retention, and the provision of public services across this province.

The demands on teachers are higher than ever while their ability to meet them is constrained by additional (often administrative) data-gathering or inputting tasks. The work-to-rule campaign highlighted just how much unpaid work teachers do (coaching and school trips, for example) that is not part of their contract yet still essential to the functioning of our schools. At the same time, there has been a lack of meaningful consultation with teachers about how our school system might be improved.

The Liberals campaigned on continuity and earned a slim majority. However, there’s some chance we will see a change in the tone of governance. Without the threat of a deficit to justify continued austerity—it was eliminated partly through public sector wage freezes—the taps have been opened a little. The budget, tabled first in April and soon to be re-tabled, includes some money for a limited (and insufficient) number of teachers, new school psychologists and speech-language pathologists, a further expansion of reading recovery programs and a provincewide breakfast program.

Unfortunately, none of these investments address the challenges faced by children living in poverty. Families on income assistance will not see a boost to support this year as the government continues to transform the system. A small reduction in taxes payable is of little help to those whose incomes are so low they already pay no tax, and it will be costly to the treasury.

Throughout the election campaign, the Liberals reassured Nova Scotians their sacrifices would be rewarded. We will need to hold them to that promise. As we witnessed over the past year with the teachers, it’s all too easy for governments to play the debt card when social needs don’t match political priorities. **M**

CHRISTINE SAULNIER IS DIRECTOR OF THE CCPA—NOVA SCOTIA. FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER @CMYSAUL. A VERSION OF THIS COMMENTARY APPEARS IN THE SPRING/SUMMER 2017 ISSUE OF *OUR SCHOOLS / OUR SELVES*, WHICH FOCUSES ON THE NOVA SCOTIA TEACHERS’ STRIKE.

Index

Climate leaders and laggards

By Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood

In April, Environment Canada released its latest inventory report of the country's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, updated with data for 2015. The annual document is important because the reduction of GHG emissions is the ultimate measure of Canada's efforts to fight climate change. So, how are we doing?

In terms of overall greenhouse gas emissions, four provinces (Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and P.E.I.) set all-time lows in 2015. On the other hand, total GHG emissions from Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan remained near all-time highs. As a result, Canada's overall

emissions declined only slightly in 2015, to **722 megatonnes (Mt)** of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). Alberta's share of the country's emissions rose to **38%** (274 Mt) while Ontario's share, the second largest, declined to **23%** (166 Mt).

Meanwhile, at **20.1 tonnes** of CO₂e, Canada set an all-time low in per-person emissions in 2015. Quebec continues to be the national leader here, producing just **9.7 tonnes** per person. In comparison, Saskatchewan and Alberta both emitted **66 tonnes** per person. The global average is just **4.9 tonnes**.

These huge regional differences can be explained by the production and consumption of fossil fuels. Alberta's oil industry produced **127 Mt** of GHGs in 2015—more than from all sectors in the bottom six provinces combined. Remarkably, the oil sands alone account for **10%** of Canada's overall emissions, and that's before the oil is refined and consumed.

Some provinces also rely on fossil fuels like coal and natural gas for electricity.

Alberta, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan generate more than **80%** of their power this way. Most other provinces rely predominantly on electricity from hydro and nuclear power, which are practically zero-carbon.

But the elephant in the room is transportation (of people and goods), which accounts for **24%** of Canada's overall emissions and well over a third of emissions in many provinces. It's a problem that governments are struggling to address in every jurisdiction.

In May, the federal government provided details on the carbon pricing backstop it has promised to implement if the provinces don't enact a carbon price of their own. The federal price would start at **\$10 per tonne** of CO₂e in 2018, then rise by \$10 per year until it reaches **\$50 per tonne** in 2022. For consumers, that's equivalent to a **2.3-cent hike per litre** in the price of gasoline in 2018, rising to **11.63 cents per litre** in 2022.

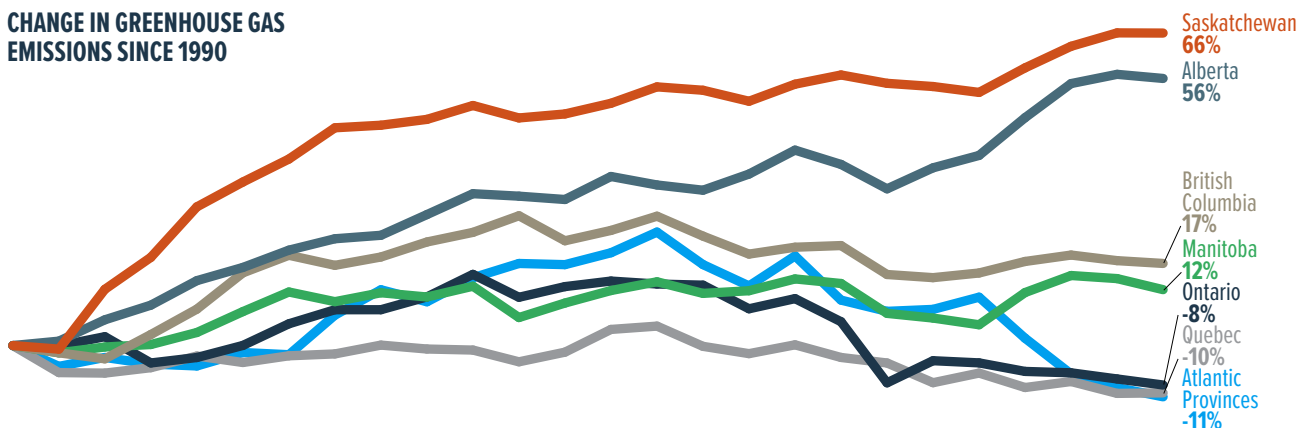
That's not nothing, but it's not enough to drive structural change. By the

federal government's own estimates, the carbon price would have to rise to **\$100 per tonne** by 2020 for Canada to meet its 2030 Paris Agreement commitments.

If carbon pricing isn't enough, what else can we do? A new CCPA report, *Tracking Progress*, provides several recommendations, including a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure, and eliminating the **\$1.5 billion per year** in tax breaks and other subsidies going to the sector. The transportation system also needs to be rapidly electrified, which means large-scale investments in public transit and electric vehicles.

The report also asserts that Canadian governments need to increase their level of ambition when it comes to their GHG emission reduction targets. Canada's current flagship goal of a **30%** reduction below 2005 levels by 2030 is inconsistent with our contribution to climate change. By some estimates, Canada's target needs to be **73%** below 2005 levels by 2030 to do our fair share. **M**

CHANGE IN GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS SINCE 1990



Sources: *Tracking Progress*, a new report by Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood for the CCPA and the Adapting Canadian Work and Workplaces to Respond to Climate Change project at York University, available at www.policyalternatives.ca; Environment and Climate Change Canada, National Inventory Report 1990-2015, April 2017; Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 127-0002: Electric power generation; Environment and Climate Change Canada, Technical paper on the federal carbon pricing backstop, 2017; Marie-Danielle Smith, "Secret briefing says up to \$300-per-tonne federal carbon tax by 2050 required to meet climate targets," *National Post*, March 30, 2017.



New from the CCPA

Betting on bitumen

One of the primary rationales for approving Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion—that accessing tidewater and overseas markets will lead to better prices—is more fiction than fact, according to a new study out of CCPA's British Columbia office. "Canadian crude producers are likely to receive lower prices overseas than in the U.S. because of the higher transportation costs," says CCPA research associate **David Hughes**. "A 'tidewater premium' does not exist." The report is part of the Corporate Mapping Project,

on the power of the fossil fuel industry in Western Canada, which is jointly led by the CCPA, the University of Victoria and the Parkland Institute. Also new from the project, a historical study of Alberta energy policy by *Toronto Star* columnist **Gillian Steward**, titled *Betting on Bitumen*. See www.corporatemapping.ca for more.

A dam big problem

Fracking companies in Western Canada have built at least 16 large unauthorized dams in northeast B.C. to trap water used for operations, according to a new investigation by the CCPA's B.C. office. Two of the dams built by Malaysian state-owned Petronas subsidiary Progress Energy are higher than five-storey apartment buildings, which means they should have been but were not reviewed by the provincial Environmental Assessment Office prior to construction. "There appears to

be a major breakdown by government in protecting public health and safety and the environment," says CCPA resource policy analyst **Ben Parfitt**. First Nations in the area also do not appear to have been properly consulted.

Canada-China trade deal could hit workers

Global Affairs Canada is consulting Canadians on a possible Canada-China free trade agreement. In CCPA's submission, senior researcher **Scott Sinclair** argues that an FTA based on Canada's standard template would almost certainly reinforce Canada's imbalanced trade with China. Such a deal, even with "progressive" elements taken from the recently concluded CETA with Europe, can be expected to leave workers worse off by further eroding Canada's manufacturing base, intensifying competition with lower-waged and

poorly protected Chinese workers, and exacerbating domestic inequality, according to Sinclair.

Tax treatment favours the rich

Preferential tax measures such as tax exemptions, credits and loopholes have become a cash cow for Canada's rich. In fact, the richest 10% of Canadians are responsible for 42% of the federal money spent on such tax expenditures, up from 36% in 1992, according to new research from CCPA senior economist **David Macdonald**. "The richest Canadians have managed to heavily skew that system in their favour," he says. This has robbed the federal government of billions in much needed tax revenue. Macdonald's new report, *Preferential Treatment*, provides the federal government with a range of tax measures it could easily and lucratively eliminate. It is also an unpleasant reminder that this type of

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preferential tax treatment makes Canada's federal tax system more regressive, and exacerbates after-tax income inequality.

The green shift

Across the country, provincial governments are grappling with the looming federal government deadline to institute carbon pricing. A recent study tracking climate change progress in Canada by CCPA climate researcher **Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood** finds a wide "ambition gap" between government promises and policy action (see the Index on page 11). Only one jurisdiction, Nova Scotia, is on track to meet its medium-term emissions reduction targets. But even there more could be done, as a recent CCPA Nova Scotia Alternative Budget backgrounder pointed out. "We need to build on our success and set clear emissions reduction and renewable energy targets past 2020, including phasing out our coal plants, and providing support for workers and communities," says co-author **Stephen Thomas**, energy campaign co-ordinator with the Ecology Action Centre. "The proposed cap and trade program is being planned without broad public consultation or expert review."

CRA audits suspended

The federal government recently decided to suspend the Canada Revenue Agency's controversial political activities audit program after a



Top: Civil rights icon Angela Davis speaks in Winnipeg in May. Right: Molly McCracken (left), director of the CCPA-Manitoba, with Adeline Bird, Alexa Potashnik, Kemlin Nembhard, Krishna Lalbiharie, Uzoma Asagwara, and Angela Davis. (PHOTOS BY CALVIN LEE JOSEPH)

consultative panel pointed to problems with how the audits were being carried out. CCPA Executive Director **Peter Bleyer** responded to the good news in May: "We have devoted four years of resources and finances to defend our right to live up to our charitable mandate. It is very clear from the consultation panel's report that this type of targeted auditing needs to be prevented in future. "Charitable activity is essential to a well-functioning democracy. As the consultation panel notes in its report, Canadian charities rules are arbitrary and outdated.... We look forward to continuing our work as an outspoken progressive research institute engaged in vital



democratic activities—but without a costly and stressful audit hanging over our heads."

CCPA-Manitoba celebrates 20 years

In May, the "small but mighty" Manitoba office of the CCPA, as director **Molly McCracken** puts it, celebrated its 20th anniversary as a hub for independent research and analysis in the province. The office partnered with Black Space Winnipeg and Queer People of Colour Winnipeg to co-host an engaging talk on "Race, Resistance and Revolution" in the Trump era with activist and scholar **Angela Davis**.

"With the changing political landscape, especially with the American election, the role of social movements in social change is increasingly important," McCracken said in an interview with the *Winnipeg Sun*. "To have somebody who was so prominent in the late '60s, early '70s, still publishing to this day and still doing her work, is very fortunate for democracy and civil society.... We jumped at the opportunity to bring her to Winnipeg."

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

ALTERNATE FUTURES



REMIE GEOFFROI

ROBIN SHABAN

Rules of the sandbox

THE FINANCIAL SECTOR is undergoing a significant technological transformation with new financial tech firms (fintechs) popping up in Canada all the time. Businesses such as Lending Loop, Wealthsimple, Kickstarter and Indiegogo, to name a few, provide a host of innovative services such as peer-to-peer lending, crowdfunding and robo-investing, all typically via the internet. Some of these services will improve life for Canadians, by making it easier and less expensive to finance the start of a new business or save for retirement, for example.

Because many of these companies are disrupting the status quo in the financial sector, regulators are under pressure to adapt quickly to the new digital services reality. That pressure includes calls to lessen the “regulatory burden” faced by new fintechs trying to enter the market.

Some argue that current rules can be so complex and incompatible with how fintechs operate that they prevent startups from entering the market at all, to the ultimate detriment of consumers. In response, financial regulators around the globe are creating regulatory “sandboxes,” essentially regimes where fintech companies are exempted from some of the rules that typically apply to incumbent financial services businesses.

The Ontario Securities Commission recently launched a regulatory sandbox called LaunchPad. Among other things, the LaunchPad team helps fintechs register as securities providers, but with certain exemptions to the rules

that most securities firms must otherwise follow. These exemptions are typically provided for a limited time during which the fintech is restricted in who it can serve.

For example, as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) explains in a submission to the federal government this year, the peer-to-peer lender Lending Loop operates under a “crowd-funding exemption” to normal securities rules. Typically, when firms offer a security, as Lending Loop technically does, they need to publish a prospectus on the product for investors. Under the crowd-funding exemption — the sandbox in this case — Lending Loop can skip this step if it adheres to certain limitations, including that retail investors cannot invest more than \$10,000 via the service over a 12-month period. (Technically, the regulatory sandbox for Lending Loop was not formally facilitated through LaunchPad, but this is an example of the sort of exemption the Ontario project is designed to facilitate.)

Naturally, reducing and altering regulations, even in a controlled manner, raises issues about consumer protection, which is already relatively weak in Canada’s financial sector (think of the recent controversy related to high-pressure sales tactics at Canadian banks). While consumer interests are likely a factor when defining regulatory exemptions, it is not clear how they are considered. Overall, the process of establishing new sandboxes is not transparent, particularly for the typical consumer.

For some time, consumer protection advocates have been demanding the creation of a consumer code for financial services, much like those that exist in most G20 countries. Such a code would guarantee a certain standard of service for consumers, a set of principles on top of which specific rules and regulations can be built. A consumer code would also make it easier for consumers to understand their rights and identity when they are compromised. In fact, the idea of a consumer code has received some traction in the airlines industry, with the Liberal government recently introducing a plan to create a national consumer code like the ones that exist in the United States and Europe.

Given the need to update financial regulations for the fintech era, a consumer code would be invaluable. Firstly, and most critically, a code would fill any regulatory holes that exist in the current system, particularly those allowing undue harm to come to vulnerable consumers. Once a code was established, it would ensure that regulatory changes or exemptions (sandboxes) do not erode the welfare of consumers. A code would also bring transparency and accountability to the process of updating regulations, as any rule changes would have to adhere to strict principles.

Simply put, fintech firms that intend to serve retail consumers should only be allowed to enter the market if they can meet basic standards of service — no exceptions. A consumer code can provide a transparent framework for assessing how current regulations should be updated and whether certain fintechs should indeed get to play in the sandbox with regulatory exemptions. **M**

ALTERNATE FUTURES IS A NEW COLUMN BY ROBIN SHABAN, AN INDEPENDENT ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC POLICY CONSULTANT BASED IN OTTAWA. YOU CAN REACH ROBIN AT CONTACT@ROBIN-SHABAN.COM.



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TRISH HENNESSY

Share and share alike?

Contesting views of the on-demand service economy and the future of work

EARLIER THIS YEAR I got a call from CBC reporter Solomon Israel. Statistics Canada had just released its first-ever survey of “sharing economy” activity in Canada, showing that 2.7 million Canadians participate in this new way of exchanging services. Solomon wondered whether the official Canadian data collection agency should so readily use the hotly contested term “sharing economy.”

In his New Economics Foundation essay, *The Sharing Economy: The Good, The Bad, and The Real*, Duncan McCann offers probably the best answer to Solomon’s question:

If I offered to share my cake with you and then I charged you money for a slice, would I have really shared it with you at all? No: it would be selling.

I’m not sharing my house by letting it out on Airbnb, nor do I share a car when I use Uber. In both cases someone has developed a new way of connecting a customer with a service provider in a new easy tech-driven way.

How could anything where a monetary transaction is involved be part of a sharing economy? We need a better way of describing this new strand of innovation.

We hear the word *innovation* a lot, often alongside *disruption*, in the context of the so-called sharing economy. But what do these words actually mean?

Thanks to technology, there’s a new way to secure a ride. In major cities you can download an app on your cellphone to order an Uber driver to take you anywhere taxis can take you, sometimes for a lower fee and a shorter wait. Uber also co-ordinates food delivery, so its drivers can double up as “cabbies” and delivery persons. Some

people are fitting their bicycles with a basket to deliver Uber food orders that way too.

The “sharing economy” has also given us a novel way to secure accommodations. Airbnb allows you to rent out your home on a night-by-night basis so you can “earn money from your space without all the work,” as the company markets its service. Airbnb offers consumers the chance to “book unique homes and experience a city like a local.” As with ride-sharing apps, the booking is an online transaction, with Airbnb as the mediator—the brand.

In both of these cases the venture is a commercial one, but the marketing tool—the hook—rests upon a false premise of sharing.

In fact, there is a long list of terms that better capture the range of exchanges under the rubric of the “sharing economy”: collaborative consump-

tion, peer-to-peer, crowd-based capitalism, and (my personal favourite at the moment) the on-demand service economy. In his book, *The Sharing Economy: The End of Employment and the Rise of Crowd-Based Capitalism*, Arun Sundararajan proposes a broad definition for the trend: “market-based, high-impact capital that finds new opportunities to maximize everything from assets, skills, time, and money.” The “sharing economy” commercializes activities once considered personal, he says, such as giving someone a ride in your car.

Finding the right terminology and the parameters of what is marketed as *sharing* is important, since it will fall to governments to regulate the service transactions that occur in these new ways. And because the focus of emerging “sharing economy” activities is at the local level, municipal governments will be particularly challenged to walk the fine line between being open to “innovation” while also protecting consumers, service providers and even entire neighbourhoods from what often looks like exploitation with a high-tech veneer.

Imagine that you live in a small community of 36,000 people and your local council is trying to figure out how to provide affordable public transit to help you get to the library, the chiropractor, the vet, or to visit family. A single bus route costs \$270,000. Your community would be better served with two bus routes, which increases the cost to \$610,000. It’s a lot of money, and there are competing claims to limited tax dollars.

Enter Uber, a multinational company based in San Francisco, offering a “car sharing” online platform in about 270 North American cities and

It’s important to find the right terminology, and the parameters of what is marketed as *sharing*, since it will fall to governments to regulate the service transactions that occur in these new ways.



ILLUSTRATION BY KATIE CAREY

many more around the world. For an initial start-up cost of \$100,000 Uber will connect a network of local residents who want to “share” their asset—in this case a car or minivan—to drive people without their own form of transportation to where they need to go (for a fee, of course). Your ride will be available at the click of a button on an online app.

Uber says its platform allows you, the driver, to “make money on your schedule” as an “independent contractor.” There are huge financial incentives for “sharing economy” companies to characterize the people who work for them as such, rather than as full-blown employees. The latter, after all, come with additional costs and responsibilities for the employer, such as vacation pay, overtime pay and minimum wages—costs that don’t apply to contractors.

As of last August, Uber faced 70 lawsuits in the U.S.—some related to this contractor-employee distinction. In one of them, the New York

Taxi Workers Alliance, a new union for Uber drivers, is seeking such basic employment guarantees as a minimum wage, overtime pay and expense reimbursement. These challenges were buoyed recently by a court decision in the U.K. requiring Uber to start treating its drivers like employees. But the company is fighting back, deploying new entry strategies in cash-strapped cities looking to improve mobility for their residents.

Welcome to the “sharing” city, where no one ever need wait outside for the bus. Under the Uber model, which is being tested in several North American towns, there may not be any buses at all. No public sector workers fully trained, unionized, and paid by the city to move your neighbours from point A to point B. Instead, a corporation with a bad-boy reputation for bending, and even breaking, the rules will be publicly subsidized to compete with the local taxi company.

This isn’t fiction. Innisfil, Ontario, has decided to forego investments

in public bus routes and, instead, use public dollars to subsidize Uber to activate local drivers, who will use their own vehicles to chauffeur townsfolk. There is an existing taxi service in the community, but it’s not getting the subsidy. Uber, a multinational company that has managed to skirt paying local taxes in the communities in which it does business, will get the money instead.

The Innisfil deal is the first of its kind for Uber, and a clear sign of where the company wants to move in the future, with hopes of eventually replacing human drivers with automated vehicles. At that point the contractor-employee distinction goes out the door.

Uber is proving to be a highly contestable venture. In December 2015, about 2,000 angry taxi drivers brought downtown Toronto traffic to a grinding halt to protest Uber’s insinuation into the local market and city council’s foot-dragging on proactive regulations. “We’ve been working in this in-

dustry so many years and this is our livelihood. We play by the rules and it's a regulated business," taxi driver Bozlul Kabir told Global News. "UberX don't have any insurance. They don't have any licence. They don't have any rules they follow. They are stealing our business."

Mayor John Tory and the Toronto police chief chastised the taxi drivers for using such disruptive tactics. But the drivers themselves were simply demanding that UberX be subjected to the same regulations as taxi services.

In August 2016, Toronto became the first city in Canada to grant UberX a private taxi company designation, which requires only that drivers pass background checks and get a private operator license from the city. Uber would get a pass to continue undercutting the Toronto taxi system.

Elsewhere, other multinational corporations are challenging local regulations and disrupting communities in the name of "sharing." In Vancouver and Toronto, where the supply of affordable long-term rental units is compromised by speculative investors, municipal and provincial regulators are grappling with ways to protect the affordable housing stock. Though we knew the rise of short-term online rentals—facilitated by "sharing economy" companies like Airbnb—must be contributing to the problem, we didn't know to what extent that was the case.

Earlier this year, the CCPA released the results of its research into Airbnb activity in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). We found that, although the online app-based service company is supposed to be a "home sharing" platform, a small number of hosts (13%) account for almost half of all Toronto Airbnb revenue. And almost two-thirds of Airbnb listings in Toronto (64%) are for entire homes (houses, apartments or condos), not rooms in other people's homes.

The activity that Airbnb makes possible is not so much sharing as it is turning homes into short-term rental (investment) properties, which can drive up the cost of buying a home, tighten the market for affordable long-term rental units, and turn a condo zoned for residential use into an alternative hotel, raising new challenges for condo owners and even condo boards intent on preserving the residential nature of their building.

The rise of Airbnb happened so quickly that Canada is playing catch-up in terms of regulating the new short-term housing market. The challenges are not unlike the ones regulators face relating to Uber. They include getting a clearer understanding of what the ideal relationship should be between regulator and multinational "sharing econo-

my" company, avoiding regulatory capture, and protecting the notion of decent work, i.e., secure work with benefits, a living wage and sick pay. For it to work for everyone, the "sharing economy" cannot become another iteration of a neoliberal order intent on deregulating markets and diminishing public expectations of good jobs.

In a recent *New Yorker* article, a reporter who turned to an online "sharing economy" platform called TaskRabbit for help with household chores, like putting up art, wrote about his conversation with the worker who eventually showed up at his home. Though Seth F., the worker's TaskRabbit name, was earning a living (and high ratings on the online platform), and seemed content enough with the work, he told the reporter "these are jobs that don't lead to anything. It doesn't feel sustainable to me."

The CCPA found similar attitudes among "sharing economy" workers in the GTA when we surveyed them for our April 2017 report, *Sharing Economy? Or On-Demand Service Economy?* More than a third of survey respondents identified the following downsides of their work: the hours are unpredictable, it's hard to get enough work, they don't make enough money providing these services, and if they get sick they don't get paid.

In other words, the "sharing economy" is as precarious for workers as the traditional service sector. The only major difference—the innovation, if you will—is the business model workers use to find work. Service workers are skipping the resume and turning to companies such as Uber, TaskRabbit and Airbnb to connect them with customers through online platforms or apps.

The CCPA partnered with the Centre for Labour and Management Relations at Ryerson University to create the first typology of "sharing economy" type businesses operating in the GTA. Through that exercise we discovered that a lot of "sharing economy" businesses deliver services you might not consider sharing or especially innovative.

For instance, you can call Molly Maid to hire someone to clean your house. Or you can go online, to a company such as Cleanify, to schedule someone to come and clean your house. It's the same service, only the means of securing it is different.

It's the same thing with food delivery: you could call your local pizzeria, or you could go online to Foodora or JustEat to type in your order, credit card information, and even factor in the tip so the delivery person (who is not an employee of the restaurant you've ordered food from) need not fumble for change at the door. This middleman option *feels* convenient, but it has downsides for customers as well as workers.

A couple of weeks ago I went online to order my usual pizza—green olives, onions and tomatoes—but the website seemed glitchy. Within moments my local pizza guy called me to ask if I had really meant to order two large Mediterranean pizzas with double the toppings. That didn't make sense to him, nor did it make sense to me. I described the medium pizza that I really wanted, we laughed, I thanked him for catching the mistake then quipped: "The next time someone says robots are coming to take our jobs, remember this conversation."

The Innisfil deal is the first of its kind for Uber, and a clear sign of where the company wants to move in the future, with hopes of eventually replacing human drivers with automated vehicles.

There are some things technology cannot get right. I recently read about an artificial intelligence (AI) test of a neural network algorithm that invents new paint colours and gives them new names. It turns out the algorithm was good at the first task but was challenged, shall we say, in the second. Among the names the AI chose for its new paint colours were Bank Butt, Stummy Beige, Dorkwood, Dope, Stanky Bean, and Turdly.

As I joked to the pizzeria worker, robots aren't necessarily coming for *all* our jobs anytime soon. Of course, that won't stop people from worrying about it. Last fall, I was on a panel addressing the precarious nature of the so-called sharing economy when an audience member asked: but isn't the real threat to good jobs automation? The answer isn't as simple as the techno-utopians or dystopians would have us believe.

For as long as there has been work, there has been intimidation (threats of job loss) by employers, technological disruptions in the way we do the work, and fear about what both mean for future employment opportunities. The jobs created in the so-called sharing economy are no different than those that resulted from the advent of desktop computers. Or perhaps they differ in terms of the explicit precariousness embedded in this form of service delivery.

What is the role of the "sharing economy" in this latest wave of technological disruptions? And how can workers, consumers and communities harness the optimism in the idea of a sharing—and caring—economy to make it work for everyone?

In their book, *Sharing Cities: A Case for Truly Smart and Sustainable Cities*, Duncan McLaren and Julian Agyeman make the case for a future in which "cities transform themselves and the rest of the world" based on one key trait: sharing. They reject the narrow definition of the "sharing economy" as one primarily premised on economic transactions in favour of one based on norm-challenging values. "An advanced democratic city," they write, "is not one where even the poor own cars, but one where even the rich ride buses."

The activity that Airbnb makes possible is not so much sharing as it is turning homes into short-term investment properties, which can drive up the cost of buying and renting.

McLaren and Agyeman advance a fairly hopeful outcome from "sharing" activities:

We hypothesize...that with the spread of the sharing paradigm—both within the formal economy and outside it—public tolerance for abuses of human rights, environmental standards (and so forth), in the interest of cheap consumer products, should decline. In other words the norms seeded by online sharing have the potential not only to transform sharing behaviour in the material world but also spread new norms into wider economic, sociocultural and political domains.

For cities, McLaren and Agyeman see "sharing economy" services such as carpooling and Airbnb rentals as having the potential to "reduce operating or service-provision costs." Like others, they turn to the "sharing economy" as a source of innovation.

It sounds promising in theory, but there is a danger in romanticizing what still looks like the commodification of service provision and the neglect of the original sharing economy: public provision of social services and support programs, crowdsourced (to use the popular "sharing economy" terminology) through the tax system.

The authors note that "sharing economy" activities are disrupting conventional capitalism, but which public services might multinational corporations, operating under the

guise of sharing, also be undermining? And to what end?

McLaren and Agyeman acknowledge "that some variants of the sharing economy may simply be one (albeit more cuddly looking) head of the hydra that is neoliberalism." They also refer to Sascha Lobo's term for this activity: platform capitalism. Which takes us back to Innisfil, where elected officials are grappling with a way to provide a public service—affordable transit—in what they hope will be a cost-efficient manner.

Unfortunately, the deal they have made is with a multinational company that is trying to rewrite the rules around traditional employer-employee relationships, and that is willing to go to court to support its disruptive activities.

In Innisfil, the rich won't have the opportunity to ride buses, but will the poor be able to afford an Uber price surge (some call it price gouging) in future? Will the town be able to afford future negotiations with Uber once the company has its hooks on the only means of transit beyond private car ownership? What happens if Uber proves not to be a viable business model?

What if a company with different priorities buys Uber and doesn't want to proxy for public transit? What if Uber converts its cars to self-driving vehicles, eliminating local jobs? These are questions and regulatory challenges that befall governments of all levels, and not just with respect to Uber but other on-demand services as well.

It turns out *sharing* is a highly contestable notion. Much is at stake in how we decide to define the term: the future of public service delivery, the future of work, the future of what we consume (and how we consume it). It will be up to regulators to get this right. It will be up to the rest of us to get clear about what a "sharing economy" actually is, and whether we can harness the power of sharing for the collective good. **M**

ERIKA SHAKER

Viva la evolución!

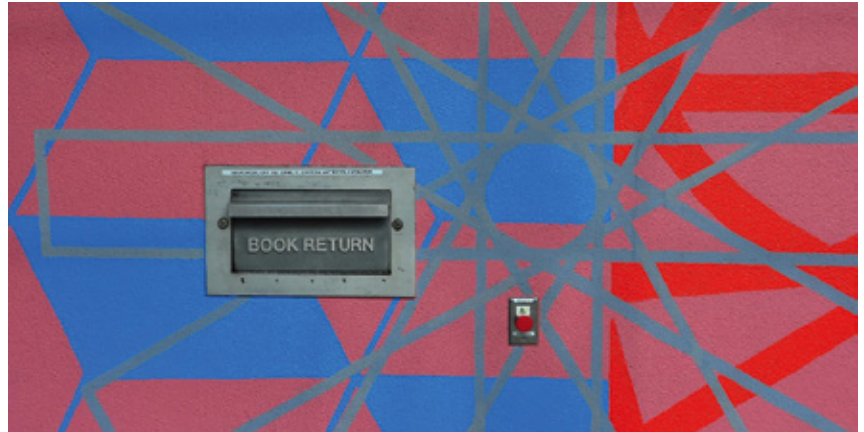
If you haven't been to the library recently, you are missing out

GROWING UP IN Hamilton, Ontario, my family frequented two public libraries: the downtown branch, a gorgeous structure built in 1913 with funding from American steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie, and the charmingly named Terryberry Library, after the 19th century settler on whose Hamilton Mountain property it was built. The name “Terryberry” lent the otherwise ordinary-looking building a sort of fairy-tale feel, with the bonus of ensuring I never, ever mispronounced “library” as “lie-berry.”

As kids we spent hours there, checking out books using the old card system, and later researching school projects through card catalogues. Every summer we got an extended loan period so we could borrow extra books for the entire two months of vacation. Even now when I go back home to visit my parents I am likely to find at least one book that never made it back to the library, its card and due-dated envelope affixed to the inside cover like a permanent, ink-stamped guilt-trip.

In 1980, Hamilton opened a new and much larger main branch downtown with (at the time) cutting-edge microfiche machines. The building itself is connected to the mall and the farmers' market it houses, another Hamilton institution I've been visiting since I was in utero. On Saturdays it was common to see people leaving through the library doors, fresh vegetables and baked goods in one hand, book bag in the other. And as we became more independent, no longer needing parental accompaniment, the library somehow managed to be both an occasion and a familiar hangout at the same time.

Lest anyone think the Carnegie-funded heyday of this quaint institution has come and gone, my kids still have “Library Day” at school. When



The Vancouver Public Library

ROAMING-THE-PLANET, FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS

they were younger it took the form of regular class trips to the branch down the street, where Sue the librarian would read them a story before they picked out a book of their own to curl up with. Today my family still visits the library weekly for books and movies. The automated checkout stations are, granted, much flashier, the banks of computers connected to the internet always fully booked. But the clubs and reading circles, the public events and meetings, the hushed areas for silent study, the books and periodicals remain everything they used to be. In spite of the “death of print,” libraries, it seems, are still a thing.

But, as with most public institutions, libraries are also in austerity's crosshairs. The mantras are predictable: we can't afford such an expanse of non-commercial space; nobody reads books anymore; kids do all their research on the interwebs. The attacks have ranged from cold cost-cutting assessments (KPMG advised the City of Toronto in 2011 to “rationalize the footprint of libraries to reduce service lev-

els, closing some branches”) to ignorant political musings. Toronto councillor Doug Ford famously and incorrectly claimed his Etobicoke ward had more libraries than Tim Hortons—apparently a crime against nature. His Hamilton counterpart Donna Skelly announced this year that any increase to the city's budget must “be based on the role the library plays in modern society, and not the one it did 100 years ago.”

Newfoundland and Labrador announced in 2016 it would close over half the province's public libraries, which would put 15% of the population more than a 30-minute drive from their nearest branch, and leave Fogo Island without a library altogether. For smaller communities it was a devastating decision. “Books are often scarce in these areas,” wrote Nick Faris in the *National Post*, “but their libraries, like Fogo's, are not just repositories of printed words. They make the internet freely accessible, in places where broadband connectivity is not quite universal. They provide public space where movie theatres and sporting arenas have never been built.” The public was so enraged the government

suspended the closures pending consultations and a review of the policy.

More recently, Saskatchewan planned to inflict \$4.8 million in cuts to its public libraries, reflecting “the new reality for libraries in the 21st century,” according to a CBC report. “The future of libraries is leaning more towards electronic media,” said Education Minister Don Morgan. “I’m not saying you shouldn’t have bricks and mortar, but there certainly is a shift.” Mere days later the government hastily backtracked. “We’ve heard from people pretty clearly that they value the library in its present form,” Morgan conceded. “It’s important for them not just to have the electronic capability, but they also want to have the physical space to go to.”

In both Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador the library as a structural feature may be safe, at least for now, but elsewhere the institution’s lifeblood—its librarians—is being sapped. Back in Toronto two smaller libraries recently extended their short hours, but with a catch: the facilities will not be staffed. Instead, empty buildings will be monitored through video surveillance, “to connect customers to staff when needed.” People can reserve or pick up books, and use the wireless, but the space will no longer be conducive to deeper research.

Librarians are more than mere monitors of the library space. Montreal’s Côte-Saint-Luc’s city hall lowered its flags when the town’s founding librarian died, in recognition of her community contributions. In a public talk, the recently deceased Indigenous author Richard Wagamese paid tribute to the St. Catharines, Ontario librarian who changed his life by answering his questions, recommending books, and taking him to art galleries and the opera.

There is no question that, in a time of “alternative facts,” librarians have an even more vital role to play. We are inundated with information on a daily—even hourly—basis. The line between opinion and news is blurring, and conspiracy-based websites are proliferating, shared more easily than ever on social media platforms. In such an environment, the ability to

find accurate, vetted information has never been more important.

And that is precisely what librarians were trained for. It’s no wonder they are helping design school curriculum and resource guides, and holding workshops to educate the public on what digital literacy and critical thinking means—in the immediate political context, yes, but as a general requirement for an informed citizenry.

Far from being outmoded or irrelevant, libraries continue to occupy a key place, literally and figuratively, in the hearts and minds of communities. They are increasingly at the forefront of municipal and architectural revitalization initiatives, and today, in both Europe and North America, they are combining traditional lending and preserving functions with new services of use to urban centres. The Ottawa Public Library, for example, offers video and audio streaming services, free access to hundreds of magazines through apps like Zinio, and the latest video game rentals.

According to the Pew Research Center in the U.S., a significant percentage of library users think branches should consider moving some books out of public locations to free up space for technology labs, meeting or reading rooms, or for cultural events, so that the institution can continue to play an evolving role for patrons. However, a comfortable (and growing) majority of users do not want the library’s footprint to be reduced. In fact, they would prefer to see more space for reading, working and relaxing. And two-thirds of library users in the U.S. aged 16 and older believe closing their public library would have a major impact on their community.

The numbers were higher for women, older adults, parents of young children, low-income Americans, African Americans and Hispanics, who are more likely to use library computers and wireless. Additionally, those who are more civically active, or have worked with others to address a community problem or try to affect government policy, are more likely to visit the library, often for public meetings. Libraries were also seen in the Pew study as helpful in seeking health care information or learning new technol-

ogies, providing information on community events and alerts about volunteering opportunities, and finding a job or obtaining job training.

Some newer libraries have integrated the ongoing and expanding role of the library into its physical design. Halifax’s central library, for example, includes space for cafes, auditoriums and video gaming, as well as areas to record podcasts or play board games. The Toronto Reference Library and Vancouver’s central library offer digital media spaces, and a recent expansion to the latter has added a theatre, silent reading gallery and rooftop garden. The Waterdown Library and Civic Centre in Hamilton is literally built into the topography of the surrounding area, incorporating a seniors’ recreation centre and various municipal services, and designed to allow the facility to evolve with the varied needs of its patrons.

Architectural novelty often provides an attractive financial justification for library construction or expansion. That’s because libraries can offer remarkable return on investment. According to a high-profile 2013 study, for every \$1 invested in the Toronto Public Library, Torontonians receive \$5.63, representing an economic windfall to the city of \$1 billion. Similar stats exist for the Ottawa Public Library. And when the Calgary Public Library eliminated fees for library cards in 2015, annual visits jumped by one million people. Ontario public library usage is at an all-time high.

Numbers aside, the public’s fondness for libraries—both for their potential as future hubs for new services and as a popular physical destination—is a reminder that these public institutions, despite the rhetoric of rationalization, have the capacity to be as nimble as any Silicon Valley startup. What is a makerspace or neighbourhood tool-sharing kitchen if not mostly a trendy library? This should be particularly relevant to urban planners and policy-makers today, as so many other community spaces and support programs are being reduced or becoming unavailable.

Far from old-fashioned, the library’s version of sharing is innovative and—bonus!—sustainable. **M**



MICHAL ROZWORSKI

R2HOX (FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)

A radical break

As social democracy fumbles in a post-crisis world, two books wonder whether we should all stop being Keynesians now.

IN THE 10 years since the global financial crisis of 2007-08, few economists have been summoned figuratively from the dead as often as John Maynard Keynes. Indeed, in their ideas and political proposals many of today's radicals sound much like the liberal economist himself or his acolytes from the 1960s. So why is Keynesianism considered radical today? Can Keynesianism be radical at all? It is precisely these questions that Geoff Mann's *In the Long Run We Are All Dead* (Verso Books, January 2017) can help to answer.

Mann argues we shouldn't be surprised by Keynes's return: the spectre of spiralling crisis is a constant fixture of liberal capitalism, and Keynesianism is the standard liberal response to crisis. His book, ostensibly on Keynes,

is in fact a 200-year history of ideas that sees Keynesianism as a strand of thought that both predates and has outlived its progenitor, adopted even by those who would not identify with him. For Mann, Keynes is the most consummate friendly critic of liberal capitalism—the true believer criticizing from within—whose aim was to ultimately bolster the legitimacy of the system to stave off something worse.

Mann admits he started out writing what he thought would be a withering critique of Keynesianism, but finished the book only to find his own inner Keynesian. That person was not of the post-crisis “we are all Keynesians now” variety. He was not the caricatured Keynes of aggressive fiscal policy. Instead, Mann says he found a fear-

ful Keynesian, one motivated by the desire to avoid the collapse of civilization itself.

What follows is not quite a review. Rather than concentrate on whether Mann's Keynes is truly reflective of the original, I want to explore what he can tell us about where we are a decade out from the most severe crisis since the Great Depression.

Productive tensions

A good portion of *In the Long Run...* traces Keynesianism as an “immanent critique” of liberalism. Mann's Keynes is the most truthful variety of liberal, one who accepts capitalism, warts and all. Keynes is the “shrewd bourgeois.” He acknowledges the tragedy of poverty alongside plenty, but sees

the poor only making things worse if their grievances are given full hearing and acted upon.

Mann draws parallels between Keynes and Hegel. In fact, he dedicates four chapters to making the case for Hegel as a Keynesian before Keynes. On Mann's reading, the early 19th century philosopher and the early 20th century economist were equally perturbed by the tension between the abstract equality of market society and the concrete inequality of material life. Both understood poverty under capitalism to be systemic, not merely incidental. But both also saw the capacity of revolutionary changes to produce terror—Hegel writing after the French Revolution and Terror, Keynes after the First World War and during the rise of fascism.

Mann's fascinating, if idiosyncratic, account of Keynesianism is punctuated by long forays into the history of philosophy, the history of the French Revolution and the history of economic thought. The book is broad in scope and imaginative. And the co-existence of poverty and plenty is just one of several overarching tensions animating the account.

Mann also identifies a conflict between abstract rules of morality and ethics rooted in living communities that roughly approximates Kant's and Hegel's approaches to moral philosophy. For Mann, the difference between free-market and Keynesian economics is that the first relies on abstractions about perfect markets to ram through its vision for a capitalist economy, whereas the second is ready to admit the structural imperfections, especially expectations about a fundamentally uncertain future, that have to be permanently managed by the state to enable the system to survive and even thrive.

Then there is the tension between the realms of necessity and freedom. Mann frequently references "the rabble," which in past iterations included the *sans-culottes* of the French Revolution or Marx's *lumpenproletariat*. Because capitalism inevitably creates poverty amidst plenty, there will always be people mired in the world of necessity, those whose simple quest for survival can obliterate the rules of

the community. When deprived of any aspiration of exiting their situation, the rabble stand ready to rebel. The question—which Mann picks up from Robespierre—is whether an "honourable poverty" without rebellion is possible.

Finally, there is perennial conflict between politics and economics—the practice of governing the economy and the theory of how it should operate. The (oddly enough, dialectical) resolution of the two is a political economy that, when it "comes face-to-face with necessity, 'goes Keynesian'...turns away from the long run to the immediacy of the moment." After Keynes, Mann argues, a clean separation between the realms of politics and economics is impossible and political economy eventually returns whenever crisis strikes.

All of these tensions exist under the surface of capitalism, which is naturally prone to crises when they boil over, on their own or in combination. An economic hiccup becomes a crisis under capitalism when the system's legitimacy is questioned. Mann identifies the task of enforcing and restoring legitimacy as central to the Keynesian program. It is not particular economic policies that underpin Keynes's

Mann's Keynes is neither first a committed capitalist nor a committed democrat. He is, above all, a committed bourgeois—fearful of revolution, and loyal to an imagined civilizing role.

economics, but an attitude toward economic governance. Keynesianism is a political economy whose main concern is granting legitimacy to liberal capitalism above all else—not for its own sake but out of that fear for civilization itself.

In the end, Mann's Keynes is neither first a committed capitalist nor a committed democrat. He is, above all, a committed bourgeois—fearful of revolution, and loyal to an imagined civilizing role. He both presages and is already a member of a new technocratic class, one that abets capitalism, all the while fighting its worst instabilities and excesses.

Mann is right here to identify uncertainty and an enforced scarcity of capital as lynchpins of Keynes's economic thinking. Capital is kept scarce to produce a yield that elicits entrepreneurial investment, meanwhile the fundamental uncertainty about the future creates conditions where yield habitually becomes too low relative to the interest rate on money. Scarcity of capital produces its opposite—unemployment, or the overabundance of labour. This scarcity is necessary but it creates crisis. For Keynesians, writes Mann, "the highest policy priority in a monetary economy is to manage the link between the future and the present, so as to render it as stable as possible." Otherwise, the good entrepreneur becomes the bad rentier. Or, to use the language of Thomas Piketty, whom Mann identifies as the best example of a contemporary Keynesian, r (the net rate of return to capital) overtakes g (the growth rate of output).

Keynesianism understands the internal contradictions of the system—the "economic problem" of poverty alongside plenty, and the potential for systemic depression beyond a mere lack of goods—but wants to save it from the inside. Its tool is not revolution, which will only make things worse (especially for the poor, by whom and in whose name it is carried out), but mechanisms internal to the system. For Mann, Keynes wants a "revolution without revolutionaries," whose end is preserving civilization, something broader than just liberal capitalism.

“Keynes...does not believe the poor deserve their fate,” he writes, but this fate is still better than the revolutionary alternative. To this end, rentiers can and need to be sacrificed for a common good that is bound up with capitalism. Keynesianism is thus not the set of abstract, rote policy proposals invariant to time and place often conjured up under the heading, but a political economy—one at war with the workings of *laissez faire* as much as with those who would undo the whole edifice. Not out of unbridled belief in the system but out of fear for what would come after it.

What the tensions have produced

Postwar social democrats in the Global North became this class of Keynesian non-revolutionaries: professionalized, well-meaning, dedicated to betterment but through technocratic incrementalism rather than revolution. However, as the political and economic conditions sustaining social democracy have waned (e.g., a strong labour movement and postwar reconstruction), this progressive political class increasingly debased itself.

Consider the chasm between British Labour’s Clement Attlee (nevermind Aneurin Bevan) and Tony Blair. Social managers deprived of an organized base able to hold them to account wholly absorbed the values of the professional-managerial class. And after the most recent crisis, even they are disintegrating as a political force, leaving an elite intent on enriching itself as far as it can in their wake.

Today’s crisis of social democracy can be overlaid on—and is partially the cause of—a crisis of capitalism. In fact, in country after country, as described in *Three Worlds of Social Democracy: A Global View* (Pluto Press, October 2016), an excellent new collection edited by Ingo Schmidt, this crisis can be dated much earlier than our current morass.

The contributions on Europe nearly uniformly date the crisis of social democracy to the late 1970s or early ‘80s, decades before today’s electoral disintegrations. French president François Mitterrand’s program of state intervention disintegrated faced with a capital strike in 1983. In Norway, union proposals for industrial democracy, including reserving half the seats on company boards for worker repre-

sentatives, dissipated even earlier as the governing social democrats took a more business-friendly tack. In the U.K., New Labour’s path to “progressive neoliberalism” was cleared by the Thatcher Conservatives, who, as Max Crook writes, “made economic management and the appearance of economic competence simpler for governments.” Once the unions were broken there was less need to seek legitimation from a less organized working class.

Across the Global South the experience has been more uneven. Chile, for example, saw the overthrow of the short-lived socialist government of Salvador Allende in 1973, followed by a right-wing dictatorship that was itself overthrown in 1989. The right had a solution to the fear of the rabble that was very different from the one Mann reads into Keynes: the army and a government of generals. However, when democratic rule returned, the economic strictures of the 1980 constitution put in place by the generals

U.K. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn addresses a campaign rally in Birmingham, June 6, 2017.

DARREN STAPLES/REUTERS



remained unquestioned. The social democrats of the post-dictatorship era were bound by rules they did not create but, taking inspiration from their Third Way counterparts in the North, nevertheless obliged. Here social democracy did not become neoliberal but inherited a neoliberalism it could not shake. (Are Chile's contemporary social democrats Keynesians of Mann's variety, foremost afraid of any revolutionary opening when past efforts were so brutally repressed?)

Elsewhere, from South Africa to the state of Kerala in India, the rapid succession of post-colonial development and the opening up of the global economy produced social democratic parties that nevertheless faced pressures to adopt strands of neoliberal policies, creating tensions between government parties, unions and their constituencies. As Schmidt writes in his summary: "Hopes that at least part of the South could belatedly follow the post-WWII model of combining prosperity and class compromise are fading, while the new social democratic governments in the South are facing an explosive mix of rising discontent among different layers of the population, increasing fiscal pressures and

Today's crisis of social democracy can be overlaid on—and is partially the cause of—a crisis of capitalism.

the dangers of foreign debt and currency crisis. The mix is pretty similar to the one that derailed the social democratic project in the West during the 1970s."

The figure of capital and its political representatives, whether in sharp suits or army boots, plays too small a role in Mann's account. This begs the question: to what extent are the Keynesians who desire to uphold the legitimacy of the liberal capitalist order doing so not on behalf of organized labour, but to seek legitimacy from much more organized capital?

While Mann traces fear of a lumpen rabble from Hegel to Keynes to Piketty, the history of capitalism has had as one of its major protagonists *organized labour*—the rabble transformed. Organized labour has been the political expression of the power of the working class. The welfare-state Keynesianism of the postwar decades has not been the default economic response to the most recent crisis—the most severe since the 1930s—in part because the decline of organized labour is now so severe. As the historian Eric Hobsbawm put it, "one of the worst things about the politics of the last 30 years is that the rich have forgotten to be afraid of the poor."

The slow decay of social democracy since the 1970s and '80s has only accelerated since the 2007 crash, at least in the Global North. In some places it looks like a near-terminal collapse. In Greece, PASOK was reduced to single-digit support in the 2015 elections won by SYRIZA. The rout continues across Europe: 6% voted for the Dutch Labour Party in elections this March, the same result achieved by the French Socialists' presidential candidate Benoît Hamon in April (Jean-Luc Mélenchon, running to his left,



received three times as many votes). The main counter-examples all feature parties at least rhetorically signalling a break from the legitimization project, most notably in the U.K., where Jeremy Corbyn's Labour success in the June election has opened space to the left of social democracy.

Keynes after the crash

Keynesianism is the necessary horizon of liberal capitalism, its perennial fallback. Mann calls it "pharmaceutical," a medicine for when things get out of hand. The more panicked initial years of the current crisis generated rhetorical appeals to Keynes and some fiscal stimulus—from Obama's TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program) bank bailout, to Stephen Harper's temporary spending boost, to quantitative easing by the major central banks. But, as the acute crisis passed, a big portion of the appeals to Keynes subsided, especially as it became clear the crisis was not generating much explosive social discontent.

There are still those who see impending threats to civilization: *Financial Times* columnist Martin Wolf on the right, or Yanis Varoufakis on the left, for example. But the policy-makers in government and at central banks have largely grown complacent and have chosen a different path. Mann breaks down the Keynesian program this way: "(a) skilled management of the rate of interest...; (b) when necessary state spending to maintain a stable or increasing level of aggregate demand; and (c) as low inflation as is practically possible without too much disruption of the labour market." Today the bare minimum is largely focused on option (a). But, despite low interest rates and stable inflation, the only thing surging are equity prices—so much for the euthanasia of the rentier!

This response is only barely working, both economically and politically. Across so much of the Global North the crisis may be past, but there is no robust recovery either. The U.S. economy is stuck on a low-GDP-growth, low-wage-growth, low-productivity-growth path. It is neither in crisis nor surging out of it. If not for the

The political transformation and ultimate failure of social democracy across much of the North has enabled the rise of new left-wing political forces.

commodity boom, concentrated in three provinces, Canada would have been in the same boat; even so, the majority of the population has still seen living standards remain not far from flat. Across the Atlantic, the U.K. is in even worse shape. The EU, too, is largely mired in stagnation, only its peripheries are no longer at the precipice of collapse.

Politically the response has not fully restored the system's legitimacy. If anything, it has made the legitimacy crisis worse. Today the capitalist system is losing legitimacy at the fastest pace in several generations. More people, especially the young, identify with socialism. The far right is also making a comeback, undermining the legitimacy of liberal capitalism from a wholly opposite direction: the right likes capitalism but not liberalism. Fascism can break through the Keynesian impasse because it breaks the working class; the rule of capital is undisputed and the state, now totalitarian, is left to enforce full employment because the fear of worker bargaining power is gone.

The political transformation and ultimate failure of social democracy across much of the North has enabled the rise of new left-wing political forces—SYRIZA in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the Bernie Sanders movement, Corbynite Labour in the U.K., Jean-Luc Mélenchon's *France Insoumise*. While most of these formations nev-

ertheless continue to espouse Keynesian economic programs, or have even turned to implementing austerity in power (in the case of Syriza), some cracks are showing. June's surprise showing by Corbyn is instructive: his is the first Labour program in generations to go beyond fiscal redistribution and propose public ownership and economic democracy.

Even if Mann calls Piketty the closest contemporary avatar of Keynes and Keynesianism, it is in fact Mann's Keynes who is our contemporary—fearful and subdued into timidity. His time, however, may be slowly drawing to a close. And while Mann is good at looking honestly within his own radical soul and seeing Keynesianism, he at times does a disservice to the radical kernels in Keynes that can be taken up by the contemporary left—most notably the socialization of investment that is implied by a true euthanasia of the rentier.

There is a risk of psychologizing Keynes and Keynesianism too much. Yes, there is an element of liberal anxiety, but as a political practice Keynesian political economy can have concrete effects in the world that not only assuage anxiety for liberals but alter material reality for the vast majority. Whether and how Keynesianism achieves this depends on how organized the rabble of the world are. Poverty can be made bearable to sustain the conditions that produce it, but it can also be made bearable as a precursor to organizing people to eradicate these conditions.

We are still far from either option in the response to 2007-08, still stumbling along. But social democrats and radicals today face choices increasingly sharpened by material reality. Mann lays out a final helpful guidepost: "Deferral is therefore a possibility, sometimes necessary, sometimes simply the best one can hope for—but it is always, in the end, deferral." **M**

WORK LIFE

LYNNE FERNANDEZ

On automation: the more things change...

THE BANK OF England's chief economist boldly predicted in 2015 that within 20 years, 80 million American workers will lose their jobs to robots. Is this prediction accurate? What would such massive technological change mean for workers? For society?

Some jobs are already being performed by robots. Think factory workers, telephone sales, bank tellers, airline personnel, cashiers, surgeons, vegetable producers, salespeople, pharmacists, accountants, translators, etc., etc. But the fact that these technologies are available does not necessarily mean they will be widely adopted or permanent.

In a *New Labour Forum* article, Peter Frase, author of the recent book *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism* (Verso Books, October 2016), explains that when employers have access to a large pool of unemployed/underemployed workers, they can afford to be less productive. Only when labour is scarce or has sufficient bargaining power through unionization will “low-road” employers be forced to adopt new technology. After all, a compliant low-wage worker may be more profitable to employ than even the most efficient robot.

Non-competitive employers aside, we can't deny that automation has driven the evolution of capitalism—and work—from the Industrial Revolution to the present. But a price is always extracted for that progress, and not just because technology replaces workers; at times it changes the nature of the work that people do. This is where the issue gets thorny. Who controls technology? How is it used? And how is the profit shared?

According to *Wired* columnist Clive Thompson, the much-maligned Luddites dealt with the same issues in the early 1800s. Far from being backward-looking, machine-destroying thugs, these skilled weavers used sabotage to try to get their new bosses to help ease their transition from autonomous craftspeople to exploited factory workers. They pushed for labour standards, a minimum wage and a tax to fund pensions. Sound familiar?

Carolyn Wilkins from the Bank of Canada acknowledged in April that the coming transition will be difficult, from the “challenging adjustment for the labour force, to the

distribution of the new wealth.” Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee's acclaimed book *The Second Machine Age* (W.W. Norton & Company, January 2016) offers a treatise on how to exploit emerging digital technologies while avoiding the sort of problems Wilkins refers to.

U.K. scholar David Spencer published a critical review of Brynjolfsson and McAfee's book this June. While the authors acknowledge that digital technologies can increase inequality, Spencer points out they also believe that “technological unemployment” is avoidable if those who lose their jobs take advantage of emerging opportunities. Like Wilkins, they recommend investment in education and infrastructure to ease the transition (though we never learn how governments will afford it).

Spencer claims this idea that we can all become creative writers or scientists or that good-old standby—entrepreneurs—is unrealistic. Importantly, it ignores power relations in the production and use of digital technologies, which are just as likely to control and exploit workers as they are to replace them. For example, Amazon's “crowd employment” platform Mechanical Turk enables a gig economy in which you can earn between \$.02 and \$2.00 for each HIT (human intelligence task) you perform. One fellow made more than \$2.00 by performing a series of mind-numbing tasks over a four-hour period, confirming Spencer's conclusion that this sort of work is dull, repetitive and pays workers far below minimum wage while ignoring employment standards.

Amazon has perfected the use of technology to implement what is referred to as “digital Taylorism,” effectively dehumanizing its workplace at the same time as it monitors workers and pushes them ever harder. So yes, technology can produce jobs, but it often ramps up the degree of exploitation in the workplace.

Where does this leave us? Technological change marches on, as it always has. Some jobs will disappear, but just as many will morph into digital jobs, filling a brave new labour market with faceless workers toiling alone in the online world. It's a new version of an old theme—the constant struggle between employers and workers. Spencer's main insight, and that of the Luddites, is in understanding the profoundly political nature of technological change and how it is used to augment employers' power.

Here's one more history lesson. The Mechanical Turk is named after an 18th-century automaton that played a mean game of chess. In fact, the automaton was a hoax, manipulated by a hidden person. The Mechanical Turk is more than a glib reference to today's hidden, digitized worker. It reminds us that although technology can twist and turn the relations between workers and employers, in a capitalist system it cannot definitively replace human labour. **M**

LYNNE FERNANDEZ IS THE ERROL BLACK CHAIR IN LABOUR ISSUES WITH THE CCPA-MANITOBA. FOR FEEDBACK ON WORK LIFE, OR TIPS FOR FUTURE COLUMNS, YOU CAN REACH HER AT LYNNE@POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA.



SCOTT SINCLAIR

Populism ascending

GAGE SKIDMORE

DONALD TRUMP WAS still about two weeks away from winning the U.S. presidency when *The Populist Explosion* was released in October. The election would take many people by surprise, including the book's author John Judis, sure as they all were that the more mainstream candidate could not lose. Since then we hear the word "populism" used again and again by journalists and politicians, almost always in the negative, and usually describing right-wing (or "alt-right") politicians who brashly challenge what they call an elite, liberal establishment.

Judis shows us what should probably be obvious—that there is much more going on here. His still timely book is an astute examination of one of the most important political phenomena of our era. In just under 200 pages it offers a lively history of populism, an overview of its current resurgence in Europe and the U.S., and

reflections on its deeper meaning and the social forces underlying it. Populism inspires both hope and fear, and Judis—journalist by trade, philosopher by training and skilled political economist by craft—provides a knowledgeable, balanced guide to both its perils and promise.

Populism has no definitive set of features that can be spelled out in social scientific terms, writes Judis. Instead, the various populist figures and movements have "family resemblances...but not a set of traits that can be found exclusively in all of them." Earlier analysts described populism as a political "language" (U.S. historian Michael Kazin) or "logic" (Argentine political theorist Ernesto Laclau) that "pits the people against the elites or an establishment, and seeks to mobilize the former against the latter." Populism, then, is not a fixed ideology but "a way of thinking" about politics, and as such can be employed by both the

right and the left. Judis adds a simple but clarifying element to previous explanations by distinguishing between populism's left-wing and right-wing variants.

"Left-wing populists champion the people against an elite or establishment," he writes. "Theirs is a vertical politics of the bottom and middle arrayed against the top. Right-wing populists champion the people against an elite that they accuse of coddling a third group, which can consist, for instance, of immigrants, Islamist, or African American militants. Left-wing populism is dyadic. Right-wing populism is triadic. It looks upward, but also down on an out group."

This usually racist hostility toward outsiders (both within and outside national borders), with its latent threat of violence, is what makes right-wing populism so frightening. At its core right-wing populism is reactionary, while left-wing populism is at least po-

tentially universalist and progressive. Donald Trump's politics feed on fear and anger; Bernie Sanders harnesses anger to cultivate hope.

Judis also distinguishes left-wing populism from socialist movements, and right-wing populism from conservatism. Left-wing populism breaks with class-based politics by appealing to a broad, loosely defined base (for example, Occupy's slogan "We are the 99%"). Right-wing populists part ways with traditional conservatives in that the latter are generally committed to work within the framework of representative democracy, while the former are prone to denigrate and subvert it.

Another key idea in the book is that the success of populism is usually "a warning sign of political crisis." The author's eye is consistently drawn to the structural problems of modern capitalist economies and the legitimacy crisis of neoliberalism.

For example, Judis contrasts the attitudes of the U.S. middle classes during the Great Depression and Great Recession. In the 1930s the U.S. middle class tended to identify with the poor and the unemployed, in part because before the advent of the welfare state they could readily imagine joining the ranks of the poor. But with social safety nets in place during the Great Recession, the middle class was more apt to look down on and fear the less fortunate: they did not want to subsidize the poor or fall to their status. This hostility, frequently racialized, provided fertile ground for a right-wing populism, in contrast to the left-wing populism of the New Deal era and the Great Depression.

Judis also points to structural problems in the European Union, which gave rise to left-wing populism in southern Europe in the form of Greece's SYRIZA, Spain's Podemos and Italy's Five Star Movement. As other analysts have stressed, the progressive vision of a Social Europe has been eclipsed by the neoliberal project of Financial Europe. Given the ruling elites' hostility to debt relief or a potentially redistributive fiscal union, the monetary union and the euro placed southern Europeans in the almost-impossible position of "leaving the eurozone entirely" or submitting

to a brutal program of austerity and "internal devaluation."

Judis stresses how populism can lay the groundwork for lasting political change, often brought about when populist ideas are absorbed by mainstream parties. In the 1930s the populist appeal of Louisiana Governor Huey Long, and the prospect of him splitting the Democratic vote by running for president, helped propel FDR to craft the New Deal. The United Kingdom Independence Party's agitation against the EU has today been internalized by the Tories in their embrace of Brexit.

While Judis may well be right in saying that populism was invented in the U.S. he overlooks other non-European countries' experiences. It's worth noting that Canada had its own distinctive versions in the left-wing Prairie populism that gave rise to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the right-wing Social Credit movement, chronicled by the eminent political theorist C.B. Macpherson. These Canadian movements were no doubt influenced by U.S. antecedents, but they were not purely imitative.

Judis does not shy away from taking strong, even contrarian positions. He rejects the frequently hurled charge that Trump is a fascist as an unhelpful exaggeration that obscures his role in contemporary history. Ju-

dis acknowledges that Trump shares many toxic qualities with genuine European fascists, but so far the president has not moved to disband Congress or wage wars of territorial expansion. Fascism also arose in unique historical circumstances where European ruling elites felt mortally threatened by Bolshevism and were receptive to fascist militants prepared to violently destroy communist and socialist parties. Judis notes that right-wing populists may morph into fascists "as conditions change in the U.S. or Europe, but it's not an accurate view of where they are at present."

Given when it was published, *The Populist Explosion* does not consider what happens when a right-wing populist wins office in the most powerful country in the world. Trump in power has been true to his populist rhetoric in terms of moving ahead with fairly easy gestures, such as nixing the Trans-Pacific Partnership and withdrawing from the Paris accord on climate change. But his campaign rhetoric assailing elites on behalf of the (white) American working class has, unsurprisingly, already proven to be bogus, as can be seen in his administration's sellout to the billionaire class on taxes, health care, financial and environmental deregulation, and (soon) through negotiating even more corporate-friendly trade deals, starting with a revamped NAFTA.

But for those hoping or expecting that Trump will implode, so things can get back to "normal," Judis's book contains an implicit warning: the success of populist movements is a sure sign of serious problems, which the author calls "tears in the fabric of accepted political wisdom." It is vital, Judis warns, "to understand why what populists say resonates with the greater public, and they are pointing, however imperfectly, to real problems that the major parties are downplaying or ignoring." In other words, there is probably no normal to return to, just a revival of politics—the belief that "the people" can challenge entrenched power and actually change the world—for better or for worse. **M**

The success of populist movements is a sure sign of serious problems, which the author calls "tears in the fabric of accepted political wisdom"

REVIEW BY PETER G. PRONTZOS

Inequality: it's enough to make you sick

IN 2016, OXFAM made an almost unbelievable announcement: the richest 62 people in the world had as much wealth as the poorest half of the global population. But relatively speaking, those were good days for inequality. Oxfam's follow-up report, released earlier this year, found that today just eight people are worth as much as the planet's poorest 3.6 billion.

It's not easy to put this wealth gap into perspective—the numbers are so enormous. But consider that you could easily fit those eight rich people into one of their (perhaps numerous) private jets, while there are about a billion people living across North, Central and South America.

Yes, eight people own more wealth than three times the population of the entire Western Hemisphere. Never has there been such inequality in the world. And as Keith Payne shows in his important new book, *The Broken Ladder* (Viking, May 2017), it is deeply affecting how we live with each other and think about our fellow humans.

Payne, a professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina, begins his book by showing how we (and our primate cousins) are hard-wired to react to perceptions of relative status and inequality. At the same time, we are prone to “fundamental attribution errors,” notably the assumption that another person's successes and failures are mostly their own doing.

“The college graduate is smart. The drug addict is weak willed. The person shopping with food stamps is lazy,” writes Payne, listing some of those assumptions, which are frequently expressed openly in conservative dialogue but can linger in even the most progressive minds. “One reason it is so

prevalent is that it is simply easier to think about people than situations.”

This social problem was dramatically revealed in Philip Zimbardo's (in)famous Stanford prison experiment, in which college students were randomly assigned to be either “guards” or “inmates” in a pretend jail. The experiment had to be ended early because normal young people were so negatively affected by their roles: “guards” became brutal and even sadistic, “prisoners” were traumatized.

As Payne underlines, most attitudes and actions are, most of the time, “shaped by particular situations” rather than by individual disposition. Moreover, again most of the time, we not only have very little control of *situations*, but almost no control over our thoughts and feelings, 99% of which are unconscious to begin with.

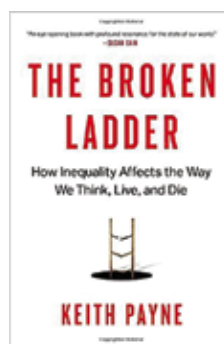
“Emotion can be even more powerful than thoughts,” writes Payne, while documenting how the constant psychological stress of poverty, racism and inequality can cause one's body to get stuck in fight-or-flight mode, sometimes “for weeks, months, or years.” And that very unhealthy state can lead to inflammation, heart attacks and many other dangerous medical conditions.

The now famous Whitehall study of British civil servants exposed a dramatic example of this phenomenon in action. There is a very clear hierarchy of power in the U.K., writes Payne, such that “even the difference between the highest-status government officials and those just one rung below was linked to increased mortality,” among other medical problems. These differences exist even though all of the subjects “have decent government jobs and the salaries, health insurance, pensions, and other benefits that are associated with them.”

“The workplace is where most people experience inequality most directly on a daily basis,” adds Payne, an observation that would not have surprised Karl Marx.

The unhealthy consequences of inequality hold true around the world. For example, citing research by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, from their book *The Spirit Level: Why Equality Is Better for Everyone*, Payne points out that the most economically equal developed countries (Japan, Sweden and Norway) have fewer health and social problems than those countries with the greatest inequality. At the top (or bottom) of the scale is the United States, which has both the most inequality and is also the most unhealthy of all developed countries.

“For at least 40 years, research evidence has been accumulating that societies with larger income differences between rich and poor tend to have worse health and higher homicide rates,” write Wilkinson and Pickett in a study updating *The Spirit Level* that was just published in *The Lancet*. “More recently, this has been contextualised by findings that more unequal societies not only have higher rates of poor health and violence, but



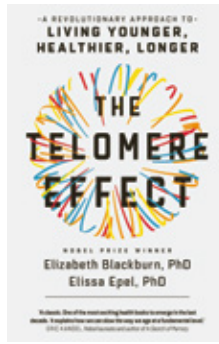
also of other outcomes that tend to be worse lower down the social ladder, including teenage births, lower math and literacy scores, obesity, and imprisonment.”

In 2012, notes Payne, the average CEO in the U.S. “earned” about 350 times the average worker’s income. Attempts to justify such disparities are usually based on the claim that these executives add more value to their corporations than regular workers—another “fundamental attribution error” if I’ve ever seen one. Do these CEOs work 350 times harder than the average employee? Are they 350 times smarter? Apparently not. “In one comprehensive analysis of thousands of corporations over nearly two decades...only about 5 per cent of the performance differences...could be attributed to the CEO,” writes Payne.

But the meritocratic myths live on, grounded as they can be in deeply held beliefs about the independence of the human psyche. In our hyperindividualistic and competitive culture, the dominant ideology claims each person is, overall, the master of their fate. As one Republican candidate for the 2012 U.S. presidency put it, if you are poor, “Don’t blame Wall Street. Don’t blame the big banks... blame yourself.”

Such views are not only heartless, they are demonstrably unscientific. Dennis Raphael, a professor of health policy and equity at York University, once explained in the *Monitor* (November 2008) how the “[s]ocial determinants of health are the primary determinants of whether individuals stay healthy or become ill.” They also decide “the extent to which a person possesses the physical, social, and personal resources to identify and achieve personal aspirations, satisfy needs, and cope with the environment.”

One of the most dramatic breakthroughs in this field is the recent discovery of the importance of telomeres, “repeating segments of non-coding DNA that live at the ends of your chromosomes,” in a person’s health and development over time. Elizabeth Blackburn, who shared a Nobel Prize in 2009 for her research into telomeres,



describes the fascinating process in her new book with her University of San Francisco colleague Elissa Epel.

In *The Telomere Effect: A Revolutionary Approach To Living Younger, Healthier, Longer* (Grand Central Publishing, January 2017), they explain that “aging is a dynamic process that can be accelerated or slowed, and in some aspects even reversed.” One key to aging is our telomeres, which normally get shorter each time a cell divides. However, under the right circumstances, our telomeres may actually get longer—and that can markedly improve a person’s health.

In the first part of the book we get a guide to the basics of aging, telomeres and telomerase—an enzyme that can replenish telomeres. The second part describes how factors like stress, types of thinking and negative feelings can all affect the health of your telomeres (your genes). The authors provide a way for the reader to assess their own personal situation, and offer some “stress-reducing techniques shown to boost telomere maintenance.” Exercise, diet and metabolism are covered in more detail in part three, along with more self-improvements. But it is in part four that the societal implications of this research become frighteningly clear.

In one chapter in this section, “Outside In: The Social World Shapes Your Telomeres,” the authors outline, as Payne and Raphael would, how social factors determine health outcomes, for better or worse. “People in neighborhoods with low social cohesion and who live in fear of crime have greater cellular aging,” while those who have the opportunity to spend more time in nature have lower levels of stress and the stress hormone cortisol.

Not surprisingly, higher exposure to toxic gases like carbon monoxide, and to pesticides, air pollution and dangerous chemicals at work, increases the risk to a person’s telomeres, with the consequences this can have for their chances to develop cancer and other deadly illnesses. Cellular aging can even begin in the womb, linked to nutrient consumption and stress levels, and not just on the mother’s side. “[B]oth parents’ telomeres—at whatever length they are at the time of conception in the egg and sperm—are passed on to the developing baby (a form of epigenetics).”

The consequences of these findings are profound. Notably, we can now say the unhealthy effects of poverty, stress, inequality and similar social problems can be biologically embedded in our cells and passed on to our children, and even our grandchildren, so that “it is possible for the effects of social disadvantage to accumulate over the generations.” Adverse childhood events are not only psychologically damaging, they may play a part in shortening one’s telomeres, especially if the traumas are severe and/or common.

Hope lies partly in our body’s ability to heal itself. “Our genes are like computer hardware: we cannot change them. Our epigenome, of which telomeres are a part, is like software,” say Blackburn and Epel. We may be able to rewrite the program.

We know enough about the causes of both mental and physical illness to go beyond healing, to prevent most damage from happening in the first place. In their *Telomere Manifesto*, Blackburn and Epel list the steps we could take, today, to protect everyone: improve prenatal care, protect children from violence and other traumas, reduce inequality, eliminate toxins, and make sure everyone has access to fresh and healthy food.

As Social Ecologist Murray Bookchin pointed out decades ago—confirmed again and again by Oxfam’s stunning inequality reports—we have more than enough wealth and knowledge to provide everyone with a healthy social and natural environment. If, that is, we make this goal a political imperative. **M**

GERARD DI TROLIO

There's power in a good book

A workers' summer reading guide from RankandFile.ca

WE'RE LIVING IN uncertain times, and they are more uncertain for some than for others. Economic inequality, war, and warnings of environmental disaster dominate the news. But so, too, do calls for radical social and economic reform—in national elections and grassroots struggles across the world. We asked our friends at RankandFile.ca, Canada's labour news portal, what we should be reading this summer that would help us grasp the major economic forces at play in our world, and how to meet today's challenges head-on. RankandFile.ca co-editor **Gerard Di Trolio** kindly recommended the following recent books.



Movements for economic, racial and environmental justice are growing louder every day, bringing pressure to bear on politicians. In *No Shortcuts* (Oxford University Press, September 2016), Jane McAlevey's second book, the longtime environmental activist and labour organizer asks us to look back, for both inspiration and a warning, to the upsurges of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which seemed to offer hope for a more egalitarian society—until the neoliberal assault of the 1980s got in the way.

McAlevey chalks up past failures to the professionalization of activism and proliferation of non-governmental organizations who spent their time *mobilizing* (campaigning) for political change when they should have been *organizing*. She proposes an organizing model—“whole worker organizing”—based on the one the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) used during its mass union drives of the 1930s, where organizers sought to build broad community alliances and respond to the needs of workers in their workplaces, homes and neighbourhoods.

McAlevey's case studies are expertly chosen, proving it is possible to build worker power even—and perhaps especially—when it appears to be de-

clining everywhere. No one involved in progressive activism should skip this book.

Will he or won't he walk away? That's the question surrounding President Trump as he continues to send mixed signals about the future of NAFTA, mere weeks before the deal is meant to be renegotiated. Business and governments in Canada and Mexico are opposed to sweeping changes, but they, in league with corporate America, also don't want to see NAFTA torn up.

Continental Crucible (Fernwood Publishing, April 2013) is a short and accessible summary of why North American big business has come to rely on NAFTA, how well-organized CEOs got the deal passed in the first place, and the effects it has had on workers in all three countries. Roman, associate professor emeritus at

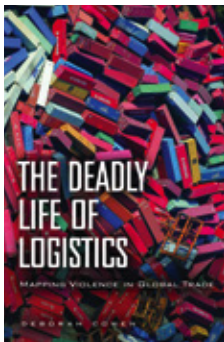


the University of Toronto, and Velasco Arregui, professor of law and labour economics at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City, may turn Canadians' perceptions of this issue on their head.

Instead of U.S. corporations throwing their weight around to pressure Canada into free trade concessions, we learn how big business in Canada,

fearful of protectionist rhetoric from Ronald Reagan (during the 1980 presidential election and the early days of his administration), copied U.S. corporate strategies to push governments to adopt business-friendly policies and trade deals—a combination we have come to know as neoliberalism.

With NAFTA's future still uncertain, the most important sections of the book explain why resistance to the corporate agenda in North America needs to take on a continental focus, and that cross-border solidarity is a must in order to chart a more equitable economic order. (Editor's note: see page 7 for Bruce Campbell's account of a trinational civil society dialogue on NAFTA that he participated in recently in Mexico City.)



The modern logistics industry has become essential to the global economy; Walmart or Amazon would not be the retail powerhouses they are without it. But there is a dark, even violent, side to this technology of globalization, argues University of Toronto geography professor Deborah Cowen in *The Deadly Life of Logistics* (University of Minnesota Press, September 2014). After all, modern logistics owes a lot to military logistics, especially those developed during the Second World War. As Cowen tells it, the industry can't shed its violent origins.

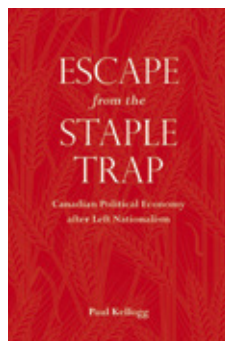
Logistics are what make global supply chains and just-in-time production methods possible. Cowen calls this "arguably the most under-investigated revolution of the twentieth century." While business has benefited from this revolution, gaining markets across the world, the implications for workers—outsourcing, precarious

working conditions, declining union representation and dangerous workplaces—have really hit home.

Cowen notes that logistics have strengthened not just corporate power but state power as well. In the Canadian context, they make possible the securitization of trade, with federal agents assigned to monitor Indigenous activists who protest Canada's export-oriented extractive industries (oil, gas, mining). At the same time, she writes, from Canada to Somalia to China, global supply chains have created new chokepoints of capitalism, where workers have the ability to exert their own power.

While we're rethinking how Canada fits into NAFTA, it's a good idea to dive into Paul Kellogg's *Escape from the Staple Trap* (University of Toronto Press, October 2015), itself a rethinking of Canadian political economy for a new generation on the progressive left.

Back in 1970s Canada, it almost went without saying that to be a left-leaning political economist was to be an economic nationalist. The most well-known incarnation of this point of view was probably the Waffle movement within the New Democratic Party, which argued Canada was a dependency of the United States—a semi-peripheral country within the



U.S.-led global capitalist system—and that this status was stunting the country's economic development.

Kellogg argues this analysis was misplaced. Canada was, even then, a wealthy and powerful capitalist state in its own right, able to push its own imperial interests. Exhibit A: the amount of foreign ownership in the Canadian economy was actually declining after



1970, and by the 1980s big business in Canada was definitely pursuing its own agenda at home and abroad.

Once you understand the basics of Canada's role in the global economy, it's time to pick up *Blood of Extraction* (Fernwood Publishing, November 2016), a new book (reviewed in detail by Jen Moore in the November-December 2016 issue of the *Monitor*) that chronicles Canada's shameful role in Latin America, especially within the mining industry.

The official documentation of this Canadian-style imperialism is impressive. Gordon and Webber base their analysis on piles of access to information requests corroborated and complemented by interviews with Latin American activists and officials. The book describes how resource extraction by Canadian corporations, backed by their government, has done a great deal of environmental and social damage to many communities across the continent.

But, as with the other books here, all is not bleak. *Blood of Extraction* also details the many opposition movements, often led by brave Indigenous activists, that have sprung up to resist Canadian capital. One of those struggles recently celebrated a great victory when El Salvador's government passed a blanket ban on metals mining in the country.

The book is timely here in Canada, too, where activists continue to pressure the Liberal government to fulfil its promise of creating a mining ombudsman to investigate wrongs committed abroad by Canadian mining companies. Consider this a call to action. **M**



HULU

EMILY TURK

This future is closer than you think

Five reasons every
progressive should watch
The Handmaid's Tale

THE TEST OF a good dystopian novel or film was never how accurately it predicts the future; it is how unsettled it makes you feel about the way we live today. Some prophecy is important, obviously. But the best dystopias hit close to home by reflecting our weaknesses and exaggerating our fears; by showing us how razor thin the line is between our (for the most part) livable if imperfect reality and a nightmarish future.

Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale*, a new television adaptation of Margaret Atwood's classic science (or speculative) fiction, finished production before Trump was elected president of the United States. It is excellent as far as dystopias go, and should be essential watching for progressives. The show reminds us that, as immediately disastrous as "Trumpocalypse" or Brexit may feel, the conditions that make Gilead possible have been with us for some time.

Embrace the bleakness and watch *The Handmaid's Tale*.

1 The war on reproductive rights isn't dystopian. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* came out almost 30 years ago at the nascence of the conservative Christian anti-choice movement. But the story, which unfolds in a near-future where women have been stripped of their bodily autonomy and forced to bear children, is painfully resonant today. In just the past seven years, hundreds of legislative restrictions have been enacted in the U.S. to unnecessarily delay, shame or entirely curtail the rights of those seeking an abortion. These laws essentially enforce childbirth. Meanwhile in Canada, the abortion pill (Mifegymiso) finally arrived *this year*—three decades after it became available in Europe.

3 A post-racial society is a myth. On TV, *The Handmaid's Tale* handles race differently than the book—but not differently enough. Whereas Atwood's novel conveniently skips over the question of race (people of colour are quickly exiled to forced labour camps and never mentioned again), the televised version establishes itself in some kind of post-racial or "colour-blind" society. It might be the show's most dystopian element. For a story so deeply informed by slave narratives and the idea of the subaltern, the show still elevates white experiences, and ends up invalidating the racist past it has appropriated. The show also misses the opportunity to draw from contemporary anti-racist organizing, and gets wrong what it gets so right about reproductive rights: the importance of centering the voices and experiences of the oppressed.

2 Gilead is rape culture followed to its logical conclusion. We live in a culture that trivializes sexual violence, that regularly doubts and blames victims, that justifies rape and fails to hold perpetrators accountable. *The Handmaid's Tale* series effectively draws a slow, straight line from those cultural norms to the horrifying state-sanctioned, ritualized rape of the handmaids in Gilead. In flashbacks, we see the new political power maneuver women into submission. In quick succession they are humiliated, erased from the workforce, have their movements restricted, and become increasingly dependent on "good men" to act in their best interests. They cannot consent to anything because they have no autonomy. It's rape culture uncut, and it's easily the most disturbing aspect of Atwood's story.

4 Trade policy is a human rights issue. Spoiler: a major plot point in the TV show revolves around the trade relationship between the Republic of Gilead (formerly the U.S.) and Mexico. Suffice it to say, there's a reason many progressives today think human rights protections need to be strengthened in free trade deals (or supersede the deals entirely). Shot last year, *The Handmaid's Tale* ends up presciently articulating anxieties about the renegotiation of NAFTA, and highlighting key trade/rights intersections like workers' rights, migrant rights, the right to a healthy environment, and more.

5 Climate justice and gender equality are inextricably linked. An unnamed environmental disaster sets the events of *The Handmaid's Tale* in motion and, in part, creates the conditions necessary for the subjugation of women. Three years ago, at the UN climate summit, then Chilean president Michelle Bachelet noted that women and children are 14 times more vulnerable than men in climate change-related natural disasters. But that doesn't mean that women are predestined to be casualties of their environment. It means that those who are unequal and vulnerable to the effects of climate change understand exactly what's at stake in trying to prevent it. But just like in Gilead, governments have struggled to recognize that empowering—not controlling—women is the answer. Instead, women and their fertility have been blamed for rising CO2 emissions, their bodies targeted by dubious population control strategies, and they've been largely excluded from policy- and decision-making arenas where key climate change policies are forged.



HADRIAN MERTINS-KIRKWOOD

Ironically Canadian

JOURNALIST AND CULTURAL critic Jesse Brown spares no sacred cow in *The Canadaland Guide to Canada* (Touchstone, May 2017), a funny, irreverent ride through Canadian history, politics and society that, despite a few questionable facts and a few bad jokes, contains some genuine insights into the Canadian condition.

The book is an outcropping of Brown's *Canadaland* platform, which he started as a podcast in 2013 after stints at the CBC, *Maclean's* and a number of other news organizations. (Vicky Mochama, a *Metro* columnist and former collaborator on the *Canadaland Commons* podcast, contributes, along with comedy writer Nick Zarzycki.) Brown's role in exposing the Jian Ghomeshi scandal in 2014 drew mainstream attention to *Canadaland* and the platform has since expanded into a news website and podcast network.

The Canadaland Guide to Canada exemplifies the scathing criticism of Canadian myths and institutions that Brown has become known for in his journalism and podcasting. Colourful anecdotes, satirical infographics and cheeky observations are loosely arranged into a half-dozen thematic chapters ranging from "The People Who Run Canada" to "How We Think."

Over the course of 230 pages, Brown touches on everything from Canada's colonial legacy to famous Canadian inventions we didn't actually invent to the violence of hockey parents. Every person, place or thing gets a punch-

line and there are some brilliant lines. One of my favourites: "The vast majority of corruption in Canada is just a bunch of chill bros doing each other a solid or two."

The Canadaland Guide is not intended to be a rigorous journalistic work. In the introduction, the author acknowledges that not everything in the book is true. Most obviously, the text's margin notes are cheeky one-liners with little claim to reality (e.g., "Every Supreme Court robe is manufactured from at least sixteen baby deer and/or ducks"). But elsewhere it's less clear what is evidence-based and what is speculation, exaggeration or fabrication. The unnecessarily blurry line between fact and fiction is the book's greatest weakness.

Moreover, there is no conclusion and only the briefest introduction, so the thesis of the book (if there is one) is mostly left to the reader to discern. This lack of direction is often evident and occasionally exasperating.

In spite of its chapter structure, the book bounces between topics and themes with bewildering aplomb. Off-beat historical snapshots get mixed in with rambling commentaries and irreverent quips, all on the same page. Brown's humour is so dry it can be difficult to discern the clever satire ("Oops! You're not a terrorist after all") from the more trivial gags ("All the good swears are French") and the downright silly bits ("Should I f*** the Prime Minister?").

Yet the book, when read and appreciated as a whole, offers some real insights into Canada and Canadians. Brown's relentless exposé of racism, classism and incompetence through the ages amounts to a thorough and compelling critique of Canadian society and of our many unexamined national narratives. I came away from the book not with a long list of facts and arguments, but with a more critical understanding of the myths we tell ourselves as Canadians and why they deserve scrutiny.

Whether or not you will enjoy *The Canadaland Guide* may depend on which section of the bookstore you find it in. As a work of cultural criticism it is too scattershot and shallow, but as a work of political humour the book delivers the laughs while shining light on many of Canada's most serious, pervasive issues.

Brown has his finger on the pulse of young, politically engaged progressives in this country, and they are the demographic most likely to relate to his language and style. But *The Canadaland Guide* may have broader appeal for young people and others who haven't yet taken an interest in critical issues like Indigenous reconciliation and climate change.

And if Brown's book is able to connect with an audience that isn't otherwise engaged in our national conversation, then it is a very good book indeed. **M**

Thanks for calling!



THE CCPA'S 2017 TELEPHONE TOWN HALL WAS A HUGE SUCCESS

On April 4, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives held its fourth annual telephone town hall with CCPA supporters. Almost 3,000 of you called in, from coast to coast to coast, for an engaging virtual dialogue on the economic, environmental and social justice challenges facing Canada today. For CCPA staff, being able to connect personally with supporters is one of the highlights of our year.

Executive Director Peter Bleyer hosted a lively discussion with CCPA economists and researchers, including Sheila Block, Trish Hennessey, Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood, David Macdonald, Erika Shaker, Scott Sinclair and *Monitor* Editor Stuart Trew. Some of the hot topics covered included inequality, the environment and climate change, international trade, basic income, and much more.

During the call, supporters let us know their own research and policy priorities through their questions to CCPA participants, and in real-time interactive polls. We squeezed in as many questions as possible over the course of the hour-long town hall, and have done our best to get back to those CCPA supporters who followed-up with questions or comments afterwards.

For example, Lorne Iverson of Burnaby, British Columbia asked us shortly after the Telephone Town Hall about the risks of pipelines and other fossil fuel infrastructure in his province.

"You're completely right to be baffled and frustrated by these decisions," replied CCPA climate researcher Had-

rian Mertins-Kirkwood. "It's pretty clear that politicians are not prioritizing health, the environment or local jobs when they approve these projects and dismiss criticism. Our B.C. office has been documenting the influence of the fossil fuel lobby in provincial/national politics, which gets to the heart of some of these issues. You can check out some of that work at www.corporatemapping.ca."

Madelaine Mageau of Deep River, Ontario followed-up with a question about trade. "Since NAFTA is going to be renegotiated, details please, on what a FAIR free trade agreement should look like," she wrote us.

"It's a great question, and one I've been thinking about quite a bit lately," responded Scott Sinclair, senior trade researcher at the CCPA. "There is a lot of interest in alternative, fair trade policies right now." Sinclair proposed removing excessive investor "rights" in NAFTA, scaling back expensive patent term extensions (on brand name drugs), strengthening pro-

tections for workers and the environment, and greater flexibility for economic development policies that create good jobs.

If you missed the Telephone Town Hall, or you'd like to listen all over again, you can find a full recording on the CCPA website at www.policyalternatives.ca. Our annual town halls are only open to CCPA supporters. If you didn't have the opportunity to join us this year, please donate today and participate in the next one!

"Well done, Peter Bleyer and the CCPA! This was a fascinating way of hooking people in from all over Canada. It reminded me a little bit of the Farm Forum programs that the CBC used to offer many years ago."

John Oussoren, Sturgis, Saskatchewan

ROBERT HACKETT

Journalism and the climate crisis

TEN YEARS AGO climate change was high on policy and media agendas. Today governments around the world are soft-peddling from an inadequate Paris Agreement, or even backpedalling in the case of the Trump administration. The U.S. president is rolling back environmental protections to unleash further fossil fuel extraction.

What happened? Well, quite a lot: there was the economic shock of 2008, growing inequality and insecurity, continued political exploitation of fear about terrorism, the feeling that climate change is an intractable or distant issue, and what we should call job blackmail by Big Carbon industries threatening to leave if they don't get their way (one aspect of the CCPAs collaborative Corporate Mapping Project).

But there is also the complicity of corporate news media in diverting humanity from the existential challenge posed by climate chaos. That complicity is the starting point for my new book with Susan Forde, Shane Gunster and Kerrie Foxwell-Norton, *Journalism and Climate Crisis: Public Engagement, Media Alternatives* (Routledge, 2017). In part a product of the CCPAs Climate Justice project, our book emphasizes several cross-cutting themes.

First, while climate change is underreported relative to the scale of the problem, the key shortcoming of conventional news media is not lack of information but of agency, hope and efficacy. Millions worry about climate change but have not taken political action on the issue. Climate-friendly journalism would normalize political engagement, offer solutions, celebrate successes and identify the vested interests blocking the transition to a low-carbon economy. Journalism needs to rethink its mission, in other words, from informing citizens to engaging publics and mobilizing social movements.

This could be done by complementing journalism's *monitorial* function (reporting on events and issues) with more emphasis on the *facilitative* role of promoting public discussion, and the *radical* role of identifying injustice, accessing marginalized voices and advocating social change. The latter two roles are particularly well-suited to the "alternative" media, given their oppositional content, participatory production, engagement with communities and movements, and ownership and control independent of corporations and the petro-state.

Compared to corporate media, outlets like *The Tyee*, *National Observer* and *DeSmog Blog* offer accounts of the climate crisis that are more hopeful, optimistic and engaged, less cynical and spectatorial, and represent political action as a viable and meaningful form of agency. Our case studies also showed that Australian alternative media are more clearly committed to addressing climate change, critiquing complicit and complacent governments and industry, encouraging grassroots political action, and sourcing climate change's victims rather than its deniers.

Still, no single type of journalism could meet all the demands of planetary crisis or of democratic communication. Even within western traditions there are competing models of democracy, each emphasizing different roles for media.

Market-liberal models reduce the citizen's role to choosing between competing teams of elites, emphasizing journalism's monitorial function. Deliberative democracy, which has greater faith in the public's capacity to reason, highlights the facilitative role. Socialist and egalitarian democracies emphasize social and economic equality as prerequisites for political democracy and imply a radical role for journalism. After earlier flirtations with anarchism and eco-authoritari-

anism, green political thought has gravitated toward deliberative and, increasingly, ecosocialist versions of democracy.

But what about Trump? Brexit? In an alarmingly short time, the global political environment appears to have shifted toward pulling up drawbridges, building walls, demonizing Others and (to mix metaphors) scrambling for the lifeboats rather than collectively stopping the ship from sinking. Climate change and resource depletion accelerate this process, as does a global economic system doubling down on fossil fuel extraction, creating ever more sacrifice zones, expendable people, mass migrations and conflict for resources as basic as food and water.

Such developments undermine the cultural resources needed to address planetary crisis: empathy, hope, solidarity, Other-oriented ethics, political efficacy, civic trust and belief in the possibilities of collective action. Thus, we argue in the book that the climate crisis is not just a matter of environmental degradation and economic systems, but also of political and communicative capacity.

For climate action, we need better democracy. For better democracy, we need better media. For better media, we need better media structures, including stronger independent media. And for all these things, we need an active and engaged civil society.

Fortunately, millions of people have been catalyzed by coming face to face with the abyss, especially in the U.S. The extraordinary mobilization at Standing Rock, and struggles against the Enbridge, Kinder Morgan and Energy East pipelines in Canada, demonstrate the potential for new intersectional alliances; protection of watersheds, wildernesses, coasts, communities, and Indigenous rights are entry points to the climate change issue. So too is democratic public interest journalism oriented toward climate crisis. **M**

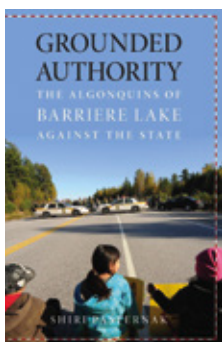


LISA GREAVES

AN OCTOPUS BOOKS SUMMER READING GUIDE

A **S OWNER OF** Octopus Books in Ottawa I've been helping the *Monitor* co-ordinate its reviews section for a few months now. But when they came to me for a list of new titles that will help people better understand the world this summer, I thought, "wow, that's a big ask." The world is a complex place; nailing down even one part of it would be difficult, and leave a tonne of questions unanswered. Instead, I thought I would draw your attention to books that not only enlighten but may even help you, me, and all of us make the world a more bearable place to be. These books will educate you, anger you, and some will hopefully entertain you. Balance and mindfulness is what it's all about these days. That's what this list is about too.

As fantastic as all these books are, the year is only half-finished, and we're expecting some blockbusters before the fall. Get ready to dive into Thomas King's *Illustrated Inconvenient Indian* and Naomi Klein's *No Is Not Enough*, as well as new fiction from Salman Rushdie and Kathleen Winter, new poetry from Anne Michaels, and the hard-hitting *Security Aid: Canada and The Development Regime of Security* by Ottawa's Jeffrey Monaghan, which presents a critical analysis of the securitization of humanitarian aid. Happy reading!



GROUNDING AUTHORITY: THE ALGONQUINS OF BARRIERE LAKE AGAINST THE STATE

SHIRI PASTERNAK

University of Minnesota Press, June 2017

Since the election of Justin Trudeau's Liberal government in 2015, Canada has been hailed internationally for venturing into a truly progressive, post-postcolonial era, including through improved relationships between the state and Indigenous peoples. Pasternak corrects this misconception, showing that colonialism is very much alive in Canada. From the perspective of Indigenous law and jurisdiction, she tells the story of the Algonquins of Barriere Lake (in western Quebec) and their tireless resistance to federal land claims policy. *Grounded Authority* chronicles the band's ongoing attempts to restore full governance over its lands and natural resources, through an agreement signed by settler governments almost three decades ago but which the state refuses to fully implement. This aversion to recognizing Algonquin jurisdiction, argues Pasternak, stems from the state's goal of perfecting its sovereignty by replacing the inherent jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples. From police brutality and fabricated sexual abuse cases, to an intervention into and overthrow of a customary government, Pasternak provides a compelling, richly detailed account of rarely documented coercive mechanisms employed to force Indigenous communities into compliance with federal policy. It is a vital contribution to current debates in the study of colonialism and Indigenous peoples in North America and globally.



TEARDOWN
CLEA YOUNG

Freehand Books, October 2016

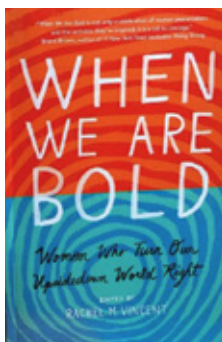
Young's debut collection of short stories is the perfect read for those summer days when you want to escape into someone else's world for a bit. The settings are nameless yet familiar, filled with characters we feel we've met before, and others we recognize in ourselves. "Congratulations & Regrets" speaks to the isolation one can sometimes experience even when surrounded by others; each reader will take something different from this story depending on what they bring into it. Young's collection left me feeling inspired, like a walk through a beautiful garden, and motivated to do more to see things as others might. A real gift.

ROUGHNECK
JEFF LEMIRE

Gallery 13, April 2017



Roughneck came to Octopus Books as an advance copy. Though, for whatever reason, graphic novels don't normally appeal to me, as Lemire is the artist who teamed up with Gord Downie to produce *Secret Path*—about Chanie Wenjak's residential school escape and tragic death—I thought I'd better see what all the fuss is about. I get it now. For all our talk about domestic violence, alcohol and drug addiction, poverty and homelessness, and the catastrophic toll they take on folks of all sizes and stripes, frequently we get stuck in a bubble, pretending these things don't happen to the people in our lives. Roughneck makes you realize it's all there, right under the surface. In very few words, but with startling graphical style, Lemire tells the grim story of a man who loses a promising hockey career, retreats to the northern community of his childhood and is joined unexpectedly by his sister, herself fleeing a brutal home life. It's short, anything but sweet, but you will return to it again and again, feeling perhaps like you've spent a day in someone else's shoes. And you will see Lemire's images transposed onto your neighbourhood, reflected in the faces you once passed disinterestedly in the street.

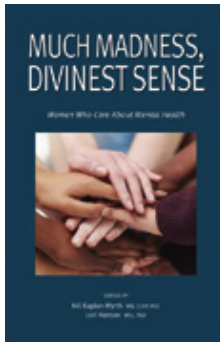


**WHEN WE ARE BOLD:
WOMEN WHO TURN OUR UPSIDEDOWN WORLD RIGHT**

EDITED BY RACHEL M. VINCENT

Art and Literature Mapalé & Publishing, September 2016

This powerhouse of a book collects 28 short profiles of women who boldly worked, and continue to work, for change, by the women writers, thinkers and doers they inspired. Shannen Koostachin of Attawapiskat First Nation is profiled by Cindy Blackstock, executive director of the Caring Society; Flora MacDonald is brought to life by Monia Mazigh (whose latest novel is also on my summer list); and we are introduced to the astounding achievements of murdered Honduran activist Berta Isabel Cáceres in a chapter by her daughter, Laura Zuniga. The book, which will inspire girls and women especially, is a call to action for those who care about fighting injustice, and a fountain of information about those struggles, from Canada to Congo, Iran to Australia.



MUCH MADNESS, DIVINEST SENSE: WOMEN'S STORIES OF MENTAL HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

EDITED BY NILI KAPLAN-MYRTH AND LORI HANSON

Pottersfield Press, April 2017

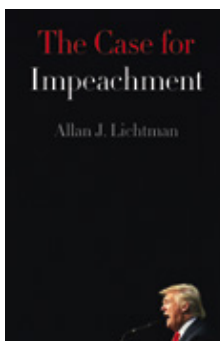
This anthology might be the first of its kind: a collection of writings by, for and about women in mental health care, from all perspectives, including physicians and other health care professionals, Indigenous women, transgender women, daughters, sisters and mothers. “They are the recipients, providers and critics of mental health care,” explains the introduction. Some of their accounts are hard to read; you will recognize in these women yourself, your mother, your friend, your neighbour, and it will hurt. It’s not an academic book, but it should be required reading for all health care professionals. For everyone else, the short pieces collected here create a fascinating map of our uncharted and often dangerous mental health care system.

MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH: PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES IN CANADA

ANDRÉ PICARD

Douglas & McIntyre, April 2017

Picard is a long-standing fixture of the health scene through his *Globe and Mail* column and has a gift for breaking down complex subjects into informative and readable bites. Though a self-described layperson, he knows more than the average bear about cancer, geriatric parents, drug addiction, and which parts of Canada are underserved when it comes to health and related care. He’s also not afraid to wade into activist territory, calling out failure and injustice in the system where he sees it. Though you may be young or lucky enough not to have been personally affected by these public health issues, Picard offers the knowledge anyone would need to support those who are.



THE CASE FOR IMPEACHMENT

ALLAN J. LICHTMAN

Harper Collins, April 2017

Lichtman made my blood run cold when, in September of 2016, he predicted Trump would win that year’s presidential election. Sadly, he was correct (again). The good news is, the American historian is also predicting, based on “deep analysis of Trump’s past and proven behaviour,” there is a case for impeachment. Is he right? Probably. Should you still read his book, given that massive spoiler? I think so. Most Canadians don’t know enough about the U.S. political system. It’s different and confusing, but it has a big impact on us. Trump’s presidency in particular has the potential to wreak havoc on the environment, and Mother Nature knows no borders. “I invite you to follow each chapter and decide for yourself when Trump has reached the critical mass of violations that triggers the implosion of his presidency,” writes Lichtman in his introduction. Of course, then there is the Mike Pence problem, which (quite helpfully) is also discussed here.



RUPTURING THE DIALECTIC: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST WORK, MONEY, AND FINANCIALIZATION

HARRY CLEAVER

AK Press, April 2017

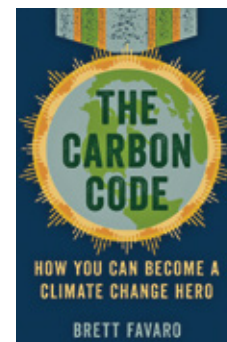
A basic understanding of Marx is helpful but not necessary before tackling this book. And if you don't know your dialectical materialism when you start, you will by the end. Cleaver can be challenging, as when he explains why Marx used Hegel's *Logic* as a template for Chapter 1, Volume 1 of *Capital*, but he's much more frequently accessible, clarifying and motivational. "By controlling the means of production," he writes, "capitalists also control the products we produce for them—including most of what we need—and the only way we are allowed legal access to them is through purchase—with money that, for the most part, we can obtain only by working for them." I couldn't read this book cover to cover in one sitting. It's the kind of thing you will probably need to put down, think about, and pick up again, gaining pearls of clarifying wisdom each time. Cleaver doesn't just want us to understand capitalism so that we might dismantle it. He hopes we can work our way toward a world that supports and embraces humanity rather than profit, and where we live more fully within our families and communities.

THE CARBON CODE: HOW YOU CAN BECOME A CLIMATE CHANGE HERO

BRETT FAVARO

Johns Hopkins Press, April 2017

Yes, this sounds too good to be true, but we need accessible, informative books that give us hope. "The Carbon Code is a tool of empowerment," explains the promotional blurb. "Favaro shows you how to take ownership of your carbon footprint and adopt a lifestyle of conspicuous conservation that will spur governments and corporations to do the same." The future presented in the book is terrifying and ugly and painful, but Favaro is there with options for avoiding the worst. He makes the links between the environment and the economy, jobs and world peace. Chapters on transportation, diet and long-distance travel are clearly written, and the policies he suggests we need our government to impose, and behavioural changes we need to make personally, are all optimistically within reach.



HOPE HAS TWO DAUGHTERS

MONIA MAZIGH

House of Anansi Press, January 2017

Originally published in French in 2015, Mazigh's novel is now happily available for unilingual Anglos in this new translation by Fred Reed. This is a beautifully written, wonderful tale of life in Tunisia as seen through the eyes of a young woman of Tunisian heritage, Lila, who was born and raised in Canada. Lila grudgingly travels to Tunisia to learn about her mother and brush up on her Arabic. While she is there, the Arab Spring erupts, throwing everything into flux. So much of what we read about the Arab world comes from western journalists. Mazigh's book, part of a growing wave of Arabic women's writing, offers a deeper take, through the eyes and perspective of those living through events, not analyzing them from afar. **M**

ALICIA ELLIOTT

On cultural appropriation and havens

REMEMBER THE FIRST time I saw an Indian on TV. It was the character of Little Bear in the 1995 movie *Indian in the Cupboard*. He said he was Haudenosaunee, like me, only he was Onondaga, not Tuscarora. In the movie, Little Bear sang a social song, built a longhouse, fought and eventually befriended a cowboy that referred to him as a “redskin,” a “savage,” an “Injun,” and accused him of scalping people in their sleep. Though Little Bear was sympathetically portrayed—as much as that is possible when embodying the stereotype of the “noble savage”—he was without question ignorant. Little Bear didn’t know what outside was, and couldn’t recognize that nine-year-old Omri was a child. The cowboy, Boone, had no such issues.

This is what I saw of my people in the media, and even though that representation didn’t feel right to me, it was all my siblings and I had. It’s difficult to think about that now: a flawed film made by non-Indigenous people, based on a flawed book by a non-Indigenous author, was how I learned about myself. I’m sure it was also how non-Indigenous kids learned about my people—and by pan-Indian extension all Indigenous peoples. We were simple. We were redskins, savages, Injuns. We were extinct, a relic of the distant past.

As much as I loved it as a child, *The Indian in the Cupboard* was cultural appropriation. But instead of thinking about it as such, perhaps we should pull away from that term—appropriation—which critics tend to pounce on as a “freedom of speech” issue, and instead refer to the act as “cultural misrepresentation and miseducation,” which is far more accurate. *Indian in the Cupboard* mixed a lazy, inaccurate version of my people’s culture and his-

tory with lazy, inaccurate stereotypes to reinforce our dehumanization before a large public audience. Though that film is a work of fiction, it still has an educational effect, particularly when no actual Haudenosaunee people are around to debunk inaccuracies for viewers.

And that, really, is the heart of the problem: marginalized people don’t have a platform to represent themselves to the public, so the public must instead rely on largely inaccurate, stereotypical myths that are offered as uncontested facts. The public then takes those “facts” and recycles them over and over until they no longer know where they originally learned them. This is how discrimination sustains itself, in an endless loop of ignorance propelled by cultural misrepresentation and miseducation. After all, if newspaper editors, book publishers and film executives have themselves learned false information about other cultures, how are they going to recognize when they’re peddling the same inaccuracies? And, more importantly, who is going to hold them to account? Particularly when most media and arts industries are still overwhelmingly run and operated by straight, white people with no immediate stake in representations of marginalized people?

It’s interesting to consider those who want to frame the discussion of cultural appropriation—or cultural misrepresentation and miseducation—as one of free speech. These people don’t seem to understand what free speech actually is. Instead of confronting the free speech of others, instead of facing the ramifications of their decision to willfully propagate cultural misrepresentation and miseducation, they’d prefer to claim their

intellectual laziness is “free speech”; that those holding them to account and imploring them to do better are “silencing” them. What these people want is not freedom but delusion—a safe haven from criticism and accountability, from hard questions and harder answers.

But, as James Baldwin wrote, “Havens are high-priced. The price exacted of the haven-dweller is that he contrive to delude himself into believing that he has found a haven.” Even if these people find their delusory havens, it doesn’t change the societal and political impact of cultural misrepresentation and miseducation. It doesn’t stop films and books like *Indian in the Cupboard* from teaching more generations of children the same stereotypes and inaccuracies that have kept us from seeing one another as fully human for so long. It doesn’t stop those same children from becoming adults that spread those same falsehoods in the form of newspaper or magazine editorials, films, books, and online articles with click-bait titles.

It’s time we stopped thinking so much about our rights and instead focused on our responsibilities. We’re currently creating the world our children and grandchildren will grow up in, which means both our action *and our inaction* carries immense weight. Every one of us needs to decide: are you going to make future generations proud, ensuring their education isn’t the same inaccurate one you were given, continuing the cycle of unconscious discrimination and inequality? Or are you going to stick your head in the sand and make future generations’ work harder? Ultimately, that decision is your responsibility. There is no haven from that. **M**

ALYSSA O'DELL

Relationship status? It's complicated.

We could all be living more symbiotically

IN A SURPRISING twist, the summer's best escape from the combative rise of global populism and us-versus-them politics may not come from bookshelves of civic discourse. Instead, a colourfully illustrated dive by first-time author and California illustrator Iris Gottlieb, into the science of symbiosis in the natural world, convincingly shows readers how important interconnection really is on this big blue mess of a planet we call home.

"No man—or animal, or plant, or fungus—is an island," writes Gottlieb in her book *Natural Attraction* (Sasquatch Books, May 2017), which sets out to explain the huge yet understated role of symbiosis—where species live in close association with one another, for better or worse—in evolution. Original artwork mixes playfully with easy-to-digest scientific facts about Earth's best teammates, collaborators, manipulators and cold-blooded con artists. This is a book targeted for mass appeal.

It's also more than pop-science. Much more. In the context of modern life, *Natural Attraction* (subtitled "A Field Guide to Friends, Frenemies, and Other Symbiotic Animal Relationships") reinforces how the mosaic of human co-operation and manipulation—from communities that welcome newcomers, to advertisers and political players who prey on fear for their own benefit—is in many cases mirrored in existing relationships in the wild.

Take, for example, the moray eels and roving coralgroupers of the Indo-Pacific coral reefs, some of the only fish that hunt together co-operatively. Coralgroupers excel at open-water hunting and will even signal nearby eels when prey is near. The eels contribute by flushing out hidden sea creatures from tight crevices. Together

they are a more lethal pair than they would be on their own.

Or the endangered whitebark pine tree, which, through millions of years, evolved pinecone shapes that match only the beaks of Clark's nutcrackers, a species that in turn spreads the tree's seeds far and wide. If these symbiotic connections come undone, by environmental degradation or climate change, entire ecosystems can collapse. Scientists do not know what will happen to the nutcracker once its endangered symbiotic food source disappears.

On the other side of mutually beneficial symbiosis, where both species are better off, is parasitism, in which one species lives off the energy of another. Nature, as is civilization, is full of grifters. The sand tiger shark, for instance, is subject to a strange sort of in utero self-cannibalism, where the largest embryo will eat all but one sibling, resulting in less competition and stronger offspring compared to other shark species.

There is also the specialized Ophiordyceps fungus, which takes con-

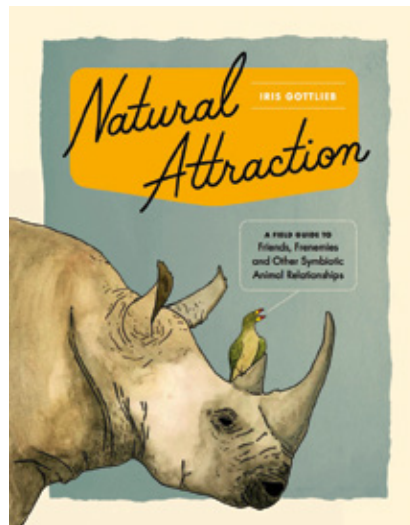
trol of the nervous systems of carpenter ants. As spores sprout out of the living ants' heads and bodies, the insects are essentially turned into tiny zombies to serve the fungus for food and reproductive purposes. Although the ants have developed defences to the parasite, as *Star Trek* assimilation experts the Borg would say, sometimes resistance is futile.

It becomes clear while reading *Natural Attraction* that it's not just humans who co-operate to get things done, or take advantage of others to get ahead. Symbiosis is everywhere.

Gottlieb, whose use of plain language may deter the more advanced scientific reader, admits she is a "layman scientist." Her unique take on making popular science more accessible is in part a product of years of self-guided exploration and freelance illustration work with museums and scientific publications like *Smithsonian Magazine*.

Much like Peter Wohlleben, in his 2016 pop-sci smash hit *The Hidden Life of Trees*, which explores the science behind how trees communicate with each other in a forest social network of sorts, *Natural Attraction* is a testament to how complicated and intertwined the web of life on Earth truly is. In an era where certain political operatives cultivate and feed off fear of the other, and where an us-versus-them mentality dominates news coverage of issues like climate change, economic inequality and migration, it is critical to remember we are all connected.

In turn, those connections—between people, cultures and species—help us evolve, grow and progress. Whatever our divisions, biologically speaking it is simply impossible to go it alone. As Gottlieb writes, "We need each other. Even when, sometimes, we also eat each other." **M**





The good news page

Compiled by
Elaine Hughes

When the world gives you lemons

Jordan is home to more refugees (2.7 million from 40 countries) than any other country in the world, according to Amnesty International, most of them from war-torn Iraq and Syria. Jordanian electricity is also quite expensive, which makes powering UN-run refugee camps a challenge. In May, the UN announced that a 2 megawatt (MW) solar installation at the 35,000-person Azraq camp in central Jordan would save \$1.5 million a year—money that can be put toward other needs. The new power source will provide relief on those all-too-common 37-degree days by allowing residents to use fans, while providing jobs for 50 or more workers. Relief for some residents of Marottichal (in Kerala, India) came in the form of chess, a game that was reintroduced to the town—chess is believed to have originated in 6th-century India—nearly 50 years ago by a local teashop owner who believed, rightly it turns out, the game would help combat alcoholism and gambling. Today, 4,000 of the town's 6,000 residents play chess daily,

including teenagers who compete online. "We don't watch television here; we play chess and talk to each other," says Baby John, president of the Chess Association of Marottichal. Kjell Inge Røkke, a "ruthless corporate raider" who was once addicted, so to speak, to oil—he made a fortune on Norwegian shipping and offshore drilling—has contributed \$2.7 billion toward the construction of a 182-metre "research expedition vessel" (REV) that will take 60 scientists and 40 crew to scoop up five tonnes of ocean plastic a day. The ship's "catch" will be burned—apparently with no noxious gases and limited waste—to help power operations and heat the ship, with backup support from a lithium battery system. / [Fast Company](#) / [Middle East Online](#) / [BBC](#) / [EcoWatch](#)

From reformed oil miners to reformed coal mines, Eagle Crest is partnering with NextEra Energy, the biggest clean energy developer in the U.S., on a \$2-billion project (approved by federal regulators) that will turn old mines into storage chambers for massive amounts of water that could, in combination with renewables on the surface, generate clean hydro power for peak energy periods. The technology dates back to 1909 and was rebooted in the '70s, mainly to help power nuclear stations. Around the world today, 40 pumped-water facilities supply more than 20 gigawatts of energy in this way—enough to power New York City for several hours. Also with a view to reuse, a defunct

Panamanian penal colony on the island of Coiba, which once held 3,000 criminals and political prisoners, will soon house a new research station to be staffed by up to five scientists tasked with cataloguing 1,450 currently undocumented plant species, 172 species of birds, 70 species of ants, 30 species of bats, and an impressive number of orchid bees, sharks, and hundreds of unique animals and coral reefs just beyond Coiba's beaches. / [Bloomberg](#) / [National Geographic](#)

Let the sun shine (on bees)

Residents in Canada's North, anxious to replace diesel fuel as their main source of energy, are optimistic about the \$400 million the federal government has put into an 11-year Arctic Energy Fund for renewable projects. The Yukon village of Old Crow (Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation) already has a number of small-scale solar energy installations up and running; a larger-scale solar plant in the works could cut the community's diesel use by 17% (up to 98,000 litres) each year. The Kluane (Burwash Landing–Destruction Bay) First Nation in southwestern Yukon will install a \$2.4-million wind power project in 2018, which will work alongside biomass energy used for district heating since 1998. Switzerland is also on the cusp of a new energy plan, six years after the country voted to ban nuclear power following the Fukushima disaster in

Japan. Beginning in 2018, the European nation will decommission its five aging nuclear reactors, provide billions of dollars in subsidies for renewable energy, and cut energy consumption by at least 16% by 2020. / [DeSmog](#) / [Guardian \(U.K.\)](#) / [EcoWatch](#)

On cold days, to track the sun and maintain their intense yellow colour, buttercup petals turn into "solar energy collectors," focusing light into the centre of the flower, where reproductive organs are warmed as much as 3 degrees Celsius, which helps with pollination and seed development (and is generally more comfortable for the bees). Speaking of which, the situation of the world's great pollinators has been downgraded from horrible to merely bad, according to U.S. beekeepers, who report that this winter's loss rate from parasites (only 21% of colonies died) was the lowest level in more than a decade. Dennis vanEngelsdorp, a University of Maryland entomologist, credited better weather and new techniques for combatting mites. The male piping plover known as "Old Man Plover" has also made an optimistic comeback on the shores of Lake Michigan. Since first becoming a father in 2005, the bird has sadly lost two mates but successfully fledged 36 chicks, making him a "champion of the [endangered] species," according to Vince Cavalieri of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. / [Guardian \(U.K.\)](#) / [Associated Press](#) / [Audubon](#)

STORY BY PAUL WEINBERG / ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAURA DOYLE

AFTER THE FLOOD



Environmental migration
is the challenge of our times.
To solve it, walls will need to come down.

TWO YEARS AGO this month, New Zealand denied the asylum request of Ioane Teitiota after his four-year legal battle failed to convince the courts he should be accepted to the country as the first refugee of climate change. “I’m the same as people who are fleeing war. Those who are afraid of dying, it’s the same as me,” he told the BBC from Kiribati in November 2015, two months after being deported from New Zea-

land for overstaying his visa. Citing the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol, Teitiota claimed rising ocean waters threatened his island home in the Pacific (population 116,000). The Kiwi courts determined the eventuality of Kiribati disappearing beneath the waves did not represent an immediate concern, since asylum seekers must prove they would face discrimination based on race, religion, membership in a social group,

or a person’s politics if they were to return home.

The New Zealand case left a big question mark over the increasingly urgent issue of how to accommodate climate (or environmental) migrants—people forced to flee their homes because of sudden changes to the environment that are frequently linked to global warming. Scientists say that climate change can be mitigated but not stopped entirely. Ac-

According to NASA, sea level rise is driven by two factors connected to global warming: an upsurge of water from melting ice sheets and glaciers, and expanding ocean water as it warms. Kiribati's very existence, and that of similar low-lying atoll nations such as Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands, is threatened by projected sea-level rises in the vicinity of 60 centimetres or more by the year 2100. The inevitability of the situation is why Anote Tong, former president of Kiribati, speaks of the need to ensure "migration with dignity" for the country's population.

The World Bank, in its recent "Pacific Possible" report, recommends a gradual and planned relocation of residents from the most threatened island nations, to more secure places such as Australia and New Zealand, as the better alternative to a chaotic rush to safety by future generations. Fellow Pacific nations such as Fiji, whose officials were particularly vocal during the November 2015 Paris climate change conference about checking greenhouse gas emissions, have already started welcoming climate change-linked refugees. But as the *Guardian* (U.K.) reported in early

May, governments in Canberra and Auckland have so far responded coolly to the idea, which tends to be framed as a security risk rather than the humanitarian crisis that it is.

Climate change-induced displacement and migration of populations is the subject of much research and scrutiny by university scholars. But very little is happening, practically speaking, at the policy level among the world's most powerful nations. The challenge, say Canadian researchers and diplomats, will be how to convince world powers to adopt a managed migration approach that does not overwhelmingly focus on state security, but treats climate refugees with dignity, while not watering down existing human rights protections in the Refugee Convention. Before that can happen, though, the issue will need a much higher profile, which might be where Canada could play a larger role on the world stage.

According to Robert McLeman, it is difficult to quantify the number of people who potentially face displacement by manifestations of climate change, such as extreme heat,

seawater rise and extreme weather. In January 2016, the geography and environmental studies professor at Wilfred Laurier University helped organize a conference of Canadian and U.S. experts working on environmental migration, along with relevant government officials in both countries, to try to figure out where the data gaps were, and whether a list of priorities for future work could be drawn up. At the time, there was consensus on the urgency of the environmental migration issue, but that has been dissipating under the influence of the climate-denying Trump administration in Washington, McLeman says.

There are some statistics on the scale of the challenge. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, for example, predicts that an average of 26.4 million people per year have been displaced from their homes by natural disasters since 2008. Further UN research has found that 232 million people were on the move globally in 2013, and that in 2015, 65.3 million people migrated internally or externally as a result of conflict or persecution. McLeman says he expects improved techniques in data collection by scientists in the next five years will offer a clearer picture of climate change-induced displacement and migration—in particular in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, where there is not enough precipitation to ward off dry conditions.

Ultimately, McLeman adds, numbers over the next 20 years and beyond will depend on whether national governments keep their promises to switch to cleaner energy technologies. "Obviously, the more [greenhouse gasses] we pump up there [into the atmosphere], the more people who are affected. So, it is a number that we can never be certain of. But you can say to people, policy-makers, decision-makers, 'Here are your options.'"

Managing the movement of climate refugees under existing UN rules may not be one of them, as Teitiota learned on his way through the New Zealand court system. The Refugee Convention was designed in the wake of the chaos and devastation following the Second World War in Europe. UN member states, including Canada, are obligat-



ed to provide asylum for people facing threats to their lives and restrictions on their freedom in their home countries. But the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), which oversees the implementation of the convention, defines a migrant differently, as someone who is leaving their country for other reasons—even, it appears, that country's disappearance under the waves—and yet “continues to enjoy the protection of his or her own government, even when abroad.”

So, is the Refugee Convention out of date in the era of climate change? Should it be revised to accommodate the new reality of international environmental migrants and the movement of other people who face challenges in their home country not related to state persecution, such as armed conflict, a lack of economic opportunities, drought and flooding, etc.?

Sharryn Aiken, a Queen's University law professor and expert on immigration and refugee law, has her doubts. She says she worries that any effort to reopen and update the Refugee Convention would lead to the “watering down” of existing protections, especially in the current political climate of governments seeking to restrict the number of people crossing their borders. Aiken argues that the original convention is focused on individual or group experiences of persecution. Scientists, on the other hand, are warning us that climate change-induced displacement potentially involves massive populations or whole nations. “I don't look to the creation of a new treaty,” she explains. “As a global community we have a responsibility for people who are displaced to have a welcome mat available for them.”

Aiken says she is encouraged by the appointment this year of Louise Arbour as the UN secretary general's new special representative for international migration. The former Canadian Supreme Court judge has been given 18 months to develop a “global compact” on “safe, orderly and regular migration” for those not covered by the refugee convention. Mirroring Aiken, Arbour told CBC Radio's *The House* in March that “climate change and migration are currently the defining issues of the time,” and that the

When migrants from countries such as Syria or Somalia start crossing borders they are frequently perceived “as a disaster” rather than as prospective new citizens.

movement of people across borders should be a positive and normal human activity, not a burden or something to fear. McLeman is also upbeat about Arbour's task at hand and the Canadian government's commitment of \$1 million over two years to help in fulfilling her mandate. “The compact on migration will be very important in setting international policy on migration for years to come,” he says.

Arbour's appointment follows the European Union's inability to agree on a coherent plan to deal with the influx of migrants from the Syrian civil war and other troubled countries. She is also arriving at a time when the U.S., the largest provider of funds for UN aid agencies such as the UNHCR, is threatening major cuts and jeopardizing assistance for migrants in areas like resettlement, says Idil Atak, a Ryerson University criminology professor and past-president of the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. The new UN special representative will also face challenges in how jealously member states defend their individual sovereign right to determine who can be admitted across their borders. “UN member states are more or less willing to discuss some of the as-

pects of migration management, [for example] in trade agreements,” Atak says. “They are reluctant in terms of discussing the protection of the human rights of migrants.”

Francois Crépeau is similarly guarded but no less committed to a global compact on migration. “I keep my expectations pretty low in order not to be too disappointed,” says the McGill University law professor and UN special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. “I certainly hope for more but I expect less. I think [UN member] states will not be interested in a general migration regime. They will try to plug the holes in what they see as a problem today. And they will have a short-term view of what migrant governance should look like.”

Crépeau says he'd like to see longer-term reforms to international governance that target policies to specific migration needs. He points to Kiribati, for example, whose government is already buying land in Fiji to prepare for Teitiota's island's eventual demise. “The level of water is rising, and the people are not going to be able to survive within in the next 30 years.... The water will be salinated, the land will not produce [food] because of the salt.”

Crépeau is opposed to establishing a new legal category under international jurisprudence for climate change-related or environmental migrants because, he says, both designations are too imprecise. He wrote about the problem of defining this type of movement a few years ago, when expert estimates of expected climate migration ranged from 20 million to 300 million people over the next 25 years. “My conclusion was that it is actually very, very difficult to pinpoint a migrant whose main reason for moving or migrating is the environment or climate.”

Michaela Hynie prefers the term *environmental migrant* to *climate migrant* or *climate refugee*. The York University social psychology professor, and co-author of a policy brief on climate change and migration, agrees that a combination of social, environmental and economic factors drive people in the Global South to desperately seek shelter else-

where. But she adds that the decision to move is interwoven with a person's livelihood (when it becomes impossible to plant crops in a dry region) and war (when there is conflict over diminishing resources).

"Environmental migration allows us to capture all of the ways in which people are being affected by the environment and their different adaption strategies," she tells me. "Many people will migrate cyclically, or they migrate temporarily as a way of dealing with environmental change, because they don't want to give up their traditional lands, for example."

Countries in the Global North, including Canada and the United States, have more resources and infrastructure to deal with climate change and damaging environmental events—think of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, or the 2016 Alberta wildfires—than is the case in more impoverished states. Unfortunately, when migrants from countries such as Syria or Somalia start crossing borders they are frequently perceived in recipient countries "as a disaster" rather than as prospective new citizens. Like other migration scholars, Hynie says she is worried that predictions of large-scale climate-related migration could be milked by anti-immigrant political forces for their own purposes. "The concern [among some groups] is not with the welfare of the migrants, but rather using prejudice toward migrants to motivate action on climate change."

Hynie points out that Canada may see far fewer climate migrants than other countries, simply because of its geography—surrounded by vast oceans on three sides. She adds that most low-income people in the Global South, who depend on the land for their livelihood and may be forced to leave if environmental conditions worsen, will not have the means to travel further than a more hospitable part of their country, or will hop across the nearest national border. But that should not let the Canadian government off the hook for future or present commitments. In fact, the immense scale and nature of migration today may render separate categories—for economic and environmen-

tal migrants versus convention refugees—more or less irrelevant.

Unfortunately, says McLeman, "extending our compassion for people who are being displaced...does not fit the election discourse in terms of the United States and Europe with the rise of wanting to throw up borders and walls and the fear of migrants and refugees." He estimates that worldwide about 10% of people live within coastal zones less than 10 metres above sea level. "So yes, a lot of people could be at risk."

Already, governments are not meeting their legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention to the increasing numbers of people fleeing war and conflict in the Middle East, Central America and Africa. So said Lloyd Axworthy in May in an interview with the CBC. The former immigration and foreign affairs minister was recently named chair of a new World Refugee Council, funded in part by the Canadian government, that will complement Arbour's work by developing a plan to overhaul the global response to forced migration.

"Part of the problem is that there are voids and vacuums. People look out and say, 'okay, we've got a large amount of people here, but nobody seems to be in control, managing it and understanding what needs to be done,'" he told CBC. "A lot of the frustration that has been expressed in electoral terms in the last several years is [in response to] government not governing."

Even in Canada desperate people on the move are tarred with the same brush as a security problem to be "managed," says Luisa Veronis, a professor of geography, environment and geomatics at the University of Ottawa. The small numbers of people who fled the U.S. this winter, poorly clothed and risking frostbite, to claim asylum have been erroneously labelled "illegal" by CBC news reports. A strong strain of anti-migrant and anti-refugee positioning was also displayed during this year's Conservative Party leadership race. Maxime Bernier, for instance, called for the military to be deployed to seal the border.

While the Trudeau government earned praise internationally for wel-

coming Syrian refugees in 2015-16, it has been non-committal on the recent northward migration, and is largely silent on climate change-induced displacement. A notable exception, says McLeman (himself a former Canadian foreign service officer), was when Stéphane Dion addressed "at length" the need to do something about the people forced to move because of climate change, during a speech he gave as foreign affairs minister before a cabinet shuffle moved the long-standing environmentalist to a diplomatic post in Europe. Dion's successor at the head of Global Affairs Canada, Chrystia Freeland, has directed her attention elsewhere; for example, to looming NAFTA renegotiations with the United States and Mexico.

But perhaps there are openings even there—in the no-doubt bruising negotiations Canada will have to endure with the Trump administration—for dialogue on migrant rights. Hynie argues that bilateral agreements on temporary migration, such as exist between Canada and some Caribbean countries, offer one possibly way to manage future migration. However, the success of this strategy will depend on more countries, including Canada, signing the international convention for migrant workers and their families. "We could take leadership in developing policies that protect the rights of migrants," she says.

Freeland told the *Globe and Mail* at the end of May that "now is a great moment for Canada to be ambitious at home...and be ambitious about what our voice can accomplish in the world." She was speaking of her desire to promote a Canadian foreign policy vision of an "open society" that is tolerant of difference and welcoming of newcomers. Combined with the government's official support for Arbour, Axworthy and the UN process for reforming refugee policy, there is at least a small hope Canada could provide some resistance to calls, by several of its traditional allies, to build new walls and fortify old borders. **M**



NATALIE SPAGNUOLO AND KORY EARLE

Freeing our people

Updates from the long road to deinstitutionalization

Dormitory at the Huronia Regional Centre, 1960.

MARIO GEO/TORONTO STAR

MAGINE.

You are told when you will go to bed, when you will eat, and what you will eat.

You are denied a key to your own home, or to have visitors.

You are coerced or forced into sexual sterilization, for “your own protection.”

You’re informed the hours you spent shredding paper over 10 years are just a form of “training,” and that you don’t deserve even a minimum wage for this work.

You are told how to vote, or that someone else will vote in your place because you aren’t capable of making rational decisions.

You’re told you have “the mentality of a child.”

You are told you should never have been born.

It’s hard to imagine any adult being treated this way. But these are the insults faced every single day by people with intellectual disabilities. Under the guise of protecting them, many provinces practise intense forms of segregation that expose people with intellectual disabilities to degrading and abusive treatment.

Many are still locked away, against their will, in congregate care facilities and mega-institutions. They can be forced to toil in sheltered workshops for below minimum wage. Consequently, they end up living below the poverty line, completely reliant on punitive social assistance programs. They are set up for abuse, yet forbidden the tools, like adequate legal capacity, that would let them confront these practices and protect themselves.

While these are current and pressing issues, the situation reflects decades of systemic discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. Today’s government-established systems have roots in the century-old eugenic panic that worried “less intelligent” people were outbreeding “smarter” segments of the population. Our laws and policies reproduce these historic fears, if under a different lexicon: vulnerability is the current euphemism for “defective” and “unwanted.”

The assumption of helplessness is a potent form of oppression that permits and justifies the removal of decision-making power. People First of Canada is part of a movement of self-advocates who, with their families and allies, are forcing governments to treat those with intellectual disabili-

ties with respect. We have been fighting for deinstitutionalization for decades, based on the conviction, backed by extensive evidence, that social inclusion goes hand in hand with self-determination. “Nothing about us without us,” as the saying goes.

Unfortunately, while it’s been well-known for some time that people with intellectual disabilities in Canada are also at high risk of homelessness, abuse, sexual violence, criminalization, poverty and unemployment (see box), there has been little solidarity from progressive camps. No one appears to be listening. The infor-

mation and evidence remains buried as a niche topic of little concern or interest to other policy researchers and social activists. This needs to change.

Institutionalization today

Many readers will be shocked to learn that Canada still operates large institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. Images of these places are the stuff of horror films: imposing old buildings with white walls and barbed wire fencing, and where the doors lock upon closing. Inside staff restrain residents with straitjackets, subject them

to chemical injections and confine them in time-out rooms.

But institutionalization isn’t history, it’s a thriving reality. The existence of these places poses an immediate threat to anyone labelled with an intellectual disability. About 900 people are languishing in large institutions (100 beds or more) in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. And according to a civil society parallel report submitted to the United Nations this year by a group of Canadian disability organizations, these institutions continue to receive new admissions.

Violence

People with intellectual disabilities—especially women and girls—are at elevated risk for sexual violence.

Approximately 83% of women with disabilities will experience sexual abuse at some point in their lives. Girls with disabilities are four times more likely to experience sexual abuse.

Approximately 40% to 70% of girls with intellectual disabilities will be sexually victimized before the age of 18.

An estimated 20% of cases of sexual abuse against women with disabilities are ever reported to authorities.

People with intellectual disabilities are 2.9 times more likely to be physically assaulted, and 10.7 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than non-disabled people.

Discrimination

In Canada, 50% of discrimination cases relate to disability.

34.9% of people described as having cognitive disabilities (including intellectual disabilities) reported experiencing discrimination in the past 12 months, compared to 19.4% of people with other (not cognitive) disabilities and 10.6% of people without disabilities

28.9% of people with cognitive disabilities reported being a victim of some crime, compared to 20.4% of other (not cognitive) disabled people and 17.6% of people without disabilities.

Housing and homelessness

Among Canada’s homeless population 45% identify as disabled; within this group, intellectual disability—a proven factor putting people at risk of homelessness—is disproportionately represented.

Almost 25,000 Canadians with intellectual disabilities (15.1%) experience core housing needs, compared to 11.1% of other people with disabilities (not intellectual) and 11.1% of people without disabilities.

In Ontario alone, an estimated 10,000 people with intellectual disabilities are on a waiting list for residential support (the wait time in Ontario was recently estimated at 22 years).

An estimated 100,000 to 120,000 adults with intellectual disabilities face housing and support gaps.

Poverty and employment

People with intellectual disabilities are among the poorest people living in Canada: 34.3% rely on social assistance, compared to 8.6% of people with other (not intellectual) disabilities.

20.6% of people with intellectual disabilities live below the low-income cut-off (LICO), compared to 12.5% of people with other disabilities and 10.3% of people without disabilities.

In 2011, the national employment rate for people with intellectual disabilities was 25.5%, compared to 47% for people with other disabilities and 74% for people without disabilities.

61.2% of people with intellectual disabilities are not in the labour force, compared to 41.9% of people with other disabilities.

Unmet health needs

People with intellectual disabilities experience some of the highest rates of psychiatric disabilities and have a high need for mental health services. Yet they tend to be overlooked and neglected in mental health policies, training and related efforts.

SOURCES Canadian Civil Society Parallel Report for Canada, CRPD Committee (16th Session), February 27, 2017; “Meeting Canada’s Obligations to Affordable Housing and Supports for People with Disabilities to Live Independently in the Community,” submission to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the 17th Session, March 2017; Unpublished data from the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability compiled by Adele D. Furrie, Adele Furrie Consulting Inc; factsheet prepared for the Violence Prevention Initiative of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Canadian Association for Community Living; Robert Blogh and Yona Lunsky, “The Invisibility of People with Developmental Disabilities,” *Policy Options*, April 2017; Annual report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, 2014.

How do we explain this reluctance to deinstitutionalize? The most frequent excuse is that some people simply cannot cope—they are just “too disabled” to join society. People First of Canada and its allies in the deinstitutionalization movement believe, to the contrary, that with the right support all people can live within their community. The problem is that even though institutional care is billed as a “last resort” it quickly becomes the first or only option, given long waiting lists for alternate supports and false perceptions that a person’s need are “too high.” As a result, people with intellectual disabilities are being housed in traditional regional centres and group homes, nursing homes, senior homes, personal care homes and other long-term care facilities. They can even end up in homeless shelters or correctional facilities.

So-called trap doors to institutionalization exist via hospitalization and other warehousing practices that “store” people with intellectual disabilities in inappropriate settings. In many cases, hospitalization constitutes a costly form of institutionalization. In Ontario the costs of warehousing someone (without health needs) in hospital is \$456,250 per year, or \$1,250 a day. This amount greatly exceeds the average costs of supporting someone to live in the community, which, in the case of a group home for one adult, ranges from \$21,400 to \$310,000.

Advocates for deinstitutionalization have used this kind of fiscal reasoning to promote institutional closures. It clearly saves money—something those provincial governments who have agreed to decommission regional centres (the mega-institutions) almost certainly considered. Admittedly, it is troubling that closures have been achieved on these grounds, rather than on firmer principles of justice, the prevention of harm, or public exposure to what was taking place behind the scenes.

Survivors from Huronia (Ontario), Woodlands (B.C.), the Michener Centre (Alberta) and other institutions for people with intellectual disabilities have taught us that institutionalization breeds person-to-person violence. Successful class action law-

The assumption of helplessness is a potent form of oppression that permits and justifies the removal of decision-making power.

suits against provincial facilities have alleged high rates of sexual violence against women with intellectual disabilities; routine degrading treatment, such as group showers; the routine use of physical force, such as electric cattle prods; medical violence, such as forced or coerced sterilizations and teeth extractions (to facilitate “care”), and countless other atrocities.

Though Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne apologized to survivors of such treatment in 2009, when the province shut down its three largest institutions (Huronia, Rideau Regional and Southwestern), the decision was largely a cost-saving measure. A decade earlier, Alberta issued an apology for the forced sterilizations carried out in many institutions under the notorious Sexual Sterilization Act. Yet the reproductive rights of women labelled with intellectual disabilities will be jeopardized as long as other institutions are being funded in this country.

The actions that follow institutional closures are as important as the closures themselves. Harsh survivors’ stories continue to surface; these people must be given a platform and incorporated into policy decisions. Many self-advocates work toward preventing reinstitutionalization by memorializing the shameful legacy of these places and sharing histories of survivorship, as well as the stories of those who didn’t make it out.

The grounds of the former Huronia institution include both unmarked and numbered graves, and survivors

allege violent atrocities took place there. The space is nonetheless now considered prime real estate by the government, which is looking to sell. Infrastructure Ontario consulted the public earlier this year about the future of the 175-acre site and was expected to report on the results before the end of the spring.

One of the questions posed in Ontario’s online survey was, “Do you think the Huronia Regional Campus is an appropriate site for cultural and/or recreational development?” It relates to a controversial proposal to transform the grounds bordering Lake Simcoe into something like Alberta’s Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Project backers have encouraged the province to adopt a forward-looking vision, even suggesting that survivors and the public shouldn’t “dwell on the lugubrious past” of the institution. Survivors and their allies believe it would be inappropriate to build a cultural centre on the Huronia site and that those who were hurt most by the institution should be included in the plans for its future—something they insist is not taking place.

Deinstitutionalization and the struggle to bring justice to survivors is as much about dignifying the memory of past wrongs as it is combating the isolation and poverty that continues to plague members of this community. Historical memory has a large part to play in preventing future atrocities and in restoring the full humanity of this group. Part of this work aims to encourage a culture change in how people with intellectual disabilities are perceived. In other words, society must work to recognize their histories, their right to decision-making, and their entitlement to a dignified standard of support.

Group homes and other trap doors to institutionalization

There are many new and lingering forms of institutionalization, as well as trap doors that lead back to reinstitutionalization. More than ever, we need to ensure that whatever follows in the wake of institutional closures does not repeat past mistakes. Keeping control of services in the hands

of people with intellectual disabilities, their families and allies, and not in the hands of the market-oriented “disability business,” is extremely important in this respect.

Once major institutions are closed, many of their former residents end up living in group homes that offer supported living arrangements. Data on exactly how many people are affected in this way is hard to come by. Group homes operate in a decentralized environment; non-profit agencies are responsible for managing both the real estate and the staffing of the home. Disturbingly, the living conditions in group homes reflect the same problems that existed—and still exist—in larger institutions. So strong are the similarities that these homes, some of them managed by the same people who previously operated institutions, have been dubbed “mini-institutions.”

People First of Canada defines an institution as “any place in which people who have been labelled as having an intellectual disability are isolated, segregated and/or congregated. An institution is any place in which people do not have, or are not allowed to exercise, control over their lives and their day to day decisions. An institution is not defined merely by its size.” Deinstitutionalization therefore means closing all institutions—including group homes—that inappropriately house people with intellectual disabilities. Whether an institution houses 600 people in a single building or six in a suburban bungalow is irrelevant.

Group home providers frequently claim they help support community inclusion. But more often than not, these mini-institutions are present in the community only in a physical sense. The nature of support, the routinization of daily life and the overall lack of freedom, choice and dignity remain the same as what one would experience in a large institution.

Residents don’t have the freedom to choose their own roommates or even the location of their home. Even fewer have opportunities to learn about self-advocacy, to reflect on their life experiences, and to share their stories with peers and the community at large. The primary concern is filling beds and working around the needs of

The fight for deinstitutionalization and desegregation remains an underground struggle waged by a group of people whose very humanity continues to be questioned.

staff. Routines are established and residents must adapt to the prescribed rhythm, regardless of whether it suits their needs or preferences.

Consistent with the lack of available data on how many people are living in group homes, it is very difficult to ascertain how much money is spent to sustain them in any given province or territory. Partly this is because of how many different departments or agencies tend to be involved in funding decisions. Although the salaries of agency managers or directors will vary, support workers can earn lower wages than frontline food service employees. These low salaries, which often result in high turnover rates at

Approximately 30,000 adults with intellectual disabilities live in congregate care facilities and group homes.

Approximately 10,000 adults under 65 with intellectual disabilities are forced to live in hospitals, nursing homes and similarly unsuitable long-term care environments due to a shortage of housing and support options.

SOURCE “Meeting Canada’s Obligations to Affordable Housing and Supports for People with Disabilities to Live Independently in the Community,” submission to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the 17th Session, March 2017.

group homes, reflect the low value that is put on the care and support of people with intellectual disabilities.

In contrast to the paucity of information about group home finances, local and national news reports are littered with stories of neglect, abuse, assault and even murder in nursing and group homes across Canada. In 2009, a stunning 53 lives were lost in Ontario group homes for people with intellectual disabilities. Some such deaths are the result of interventions by police, who are occasionally called to group homes by staff who feel threatened by residents. For example, Aron Firman died in a group home in Collingwood, Ontario after being tasered by police in 2010. In 2009, Douglas Minty, a man with an intellectual disability living in Elmvale, Ontario was shot and killed by police outside his home.

Add racial profiling by police to the mix and interactions with disabled members of the Indigenous and Black communities become even more fraught. Last summer, Abdirahman Abdi, a 37-year-old disabled Ottawa man who was Black, Somali and Muslim, died from injuries he suffered at the hands of the police (the officer was charged with manslaughter in March). Later that year in Brampton, police were called to the group home of Marlon Bailey-Lee, a 21-year-old Ontario man who is Black and who does not use verbal communication. The visit was prompted by a dispute he had with his support staff and resulted in his being repeatedly tasered.

People with intellectual disabilities are also at risk from accusations by the people assigned to look after them. Nova Scotian Amanda Murphy was arrested in 2014 after an encounter with support staff. In a similar incident in a large congregate care facility in Nova Scotia, Nichelle Benn was charged with assault after allegedly biting a staff person and throwing a shoe and foam letter. Charges against Benn were only dropped after a seven-year battle that included protests by People First members. These cases expose an uneven power struggle between residents with intellectual disabilities and a system designed to contain them.

Sheltered workshops offer sub-minimum wages

When will we do better?

In place of containment in institutions and group homes, People First of Canada argues that people with intellectual disabilities have the right to exercise choice in determining their own living arrangements. A popular and very plausible alternative to the group home and congregate care system is direct funding.

When money is tied to the individual, rather than to an agency or geographical region, it provides greater choice and control, and the flexibility to tailor additional support to those who require assistance in managing their finances and in making decisions. Direct funding is more humanizing, since where a person lives is a matter of choice and not dependent on the availability of beds within agencies.

Unfortunately, the logic behind personalized support has been co-opted by a chaotic “disability industry”—a confusing mishmash of not-for-profit private businesses, case-management services, person-directed planning services and others vying for public dollars. Furthermore, missteps in managing the consequences of institutional closures are leading to new forms of institutionalization. Many people are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, reinstitutionalization, including those who managed to survive provincially run institutions.

Once we begin to recognize the institutional patterns that are cropping up in new support models, like group homes, we can get to work on replacing them. To avoid past mistakes—and avoid paternalism—it is essential that input from self-advocates and other people with intellectual disabilities form the basis of policy solutions. People with intellectual disabilities are reclaiming their right to speak for themselves and to redefine their lived experience on their own terms.

But the fight for deinstitutionalization and desegregation remains an underground struggle waged by a group of people whose very humanity continues to be questioned. People with intellectual disabilities are simply not on the radar of most progressive think-tanks—even though their experiences overlap with major social issues, and despite their presence near the top of many data sets on poverty, sexual violence, homelessness, unemployment, and criminalization. They have no substantive rights in Canada. Among disabled people, they are truly the left behind of the left behind.

As recently as the early 1990s, a period when other disabled people were making gains in the U.S. and Canada, public intellectuals like the Australian philosopher Peter Singer were comparing those with intellectual disabilities to animals to justify murdering them. Earlier this year, Singer weighed in on a disability rape case in a coauthored *New York Times* op-ed claiming the alleged victim was both incapable of consenting and not sufficiently “intelligent” to understand that he had even been raped in the first place. Clearly, Singer has learned nothing in over 30 years of debating and engaging with disability advocates.

But how can we expect any better of people when the use of the “R” word is still rarely challenged outside of disability communities? How can we expect any better from society when our own government continues to fund deeply segregated, dehumanizing and dangerous forms of support for people with intellectual disabilities? Out of sight, out of mind has hidden many disturbing facts about intellectual disability from the public for far too long.

We can no longer say that we didn’t know any better. We can no longer say we can’t do any better. These wrongs must be righted and further abuse prevented. We need to bring the “left behind” forward if we are to become an inclusive and accessible country. **M**

Sheltered workshops are places where people with disabilities are “employed” for below minimum wage. Employers justify unacceptably low (and in any other situation illegal) “training wages” by claiming they are providing opportunities for social participation and life skills development. Other rights and concerns are readily swept aside to promote “inclusion” under this faulty framework.

According to the 2017 civil society parallel report (see above), “Although enrollments in sheltered workshops are slowly declining, sheltered workshops, segregated day programming and enclave-based employment persist as a dominant model of support for persons with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities.” The persistence of this model is partly explained by employers framing activities as “training programs,” according to a 2011 report by the Canadian Association for Community Living.

It is hard to ascertain the number of people with disabilities who are toiling in these workshops. A *Toronto Star* series on the issue, published in November 2015, said “the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which funds developmental services, does not know how many sheltered workshops exist or how many people work in them.” Fewer than half the agencies that provide segregated employment settings responded to a government survey, explained one article. Based on the limited responses to that survey, we know that at least 3,463 individuals are working in 52 workshops in Canada.

Since the *Toronto Star* series came out, the ministry has said it will close Ontario’s workshops forever, which has already helped decrease the number of people with disabilities in sheltered workshops in Ontario. But again, we don’t have any hard numbers to back that up.

People First of Canada believes in “real work for real pay.” People with intellectual disabilities should have opportunities to earn a living through paid employment of their own choice in the labour market. Employers must be open to a diverse workforce. Job accommodations and supports need to be provided. Wages and benefits should be equal to those of persons without disabilities.



STORY BY DENNIS CARR
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALISHA DAVIDSON

FROM QUITO TO CANADA

HABITAT III AND THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

URBANIZATION HAS TRANSFORMED our world. Today, more than half of all people live in cities, consuming over 60% of all energy, living on 2% of the world's surface and generating 70% of global GDP. By 2050, over 70% of the world's population will be living in cities, which poses massive sustainability challenges related to housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources. In late October 2016, about 50,000 delegates from around the world gathered in Quito, Ecuador to discuss these interrelated challenges during the United Nations' Habitat III conference.

As the event comes along only once every two decades, for urban policy geeks like myself Habitat is somewhat akin to a religious pilgrimage. Delegates came from governments, Indigenous organizations, the private and non-profit sectors. Though there weren't many cassocks, a lot of participants donned white Ecuadorian-made Panama hats to ward off overhead sun, a reminder that Ecuador is the Spanish word for equator. Once inside the official compound, we were treated to a vast array of workshops, networking events, dialogues, training events, plenaries and high-level roundtables.

Really, there were two conferences in Quito. One was official, with bureaucrats and politicians in suits making boilerplate speeches about poverty, climate change, public safety, gender equality and infrastructure. The other was younger, more urgent and idealistic, made up of people looking to directly shape the growth of the urban spaces they will inhabit over the next two decades. A workshop on how the video game Minecraft can be used to plan cities was especially popular for younger delegates, as was the customary Habitat III Resistance Forum held in parallel at the local university.

All in all, thousands of sessions tackled every possible urban development topic, from planning and financing to housing and accessibility to culture, women's rights and the design of public spaces. The end result of these conversations was the formal adoption by 167 nations of a document called the New Urban Agenda—a blueprint for how the world's cities can evolve, sustainably and in a fair way for everyone, over the next 20 years. Just as importantly, the agenda attempts to reverse the 20th-century planning legacy of uncontrolled sprawl and urban poverty.

Even though it is not binding, the New Urban Agenda is meant to be acted upon. Signatory governments have committed to enhancing livability, education and health levels. They must reduce inequality in their urban centres and are obliged to report back to the UN on their progress. Think of it as a moral compact among governments and civil society stakeholders to realize a new urban future.

While Canada's proposals to the Habitat III conference, as well as recent policy announcements, suggest the federal government is taking municipal development priorities more seriously than it has in the recent past, absent a coherent national or provincial urban strategy local governments will continue to struggle to meet their residents' needs. Moving an urban agenda forward more forcefully will be jurisdictionally difficult. Unfortunately, there is no better alternative if Canada wants to meet its global commitments on sustainability.

A short history of Habitat

The first UN conference on human settlements, known as Habitat I, was held in 1976 at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in downtown Vancouver at the invitation of Pierre Elliot

Quito's contradictions

Nestled at an altitude of 2,850 metres, in a valley surrounded on all sides by Andean foothills and volcanos, Quito offers up a variety of historic, cultural and environmental treasures to residents and visitors alike. The city is also a microcosm of the challenges facing cities in a rapidly urbanizing world.

Early in the Habitat III conference, participants came face to face with an embarrassing dilemma for regional decision-makers. While the New Urban Agenda document calls for smarter, more sustainable cities that prioritize public transit over private motorized transportation, outside the conference a public march protested a road expansion project activists say would displace nearly 70% of inhabitants in a nearby village.

Quito is partnering with a Chinese corporation to create a \$131-million tunnel expansion and bridge project aimed at reducing traffic on the city's busiest road. The mayor believes the project is necessary, not only to ease the gridlock but to give the city a new emergency exit during the kind of natural disasters that have devastated Ecuadorian cities in the past.

In other words, Quito is a perfect example of the types of contradictions leaders will face in the post-Habitat III world, as the legacy of old-school urban planning decisions continues to throw sand in the gears of the New Urban Agenda's push for more inclusive and sustainable metropolitan areas.

Trudeau's Liberal government. The purpose of the formal conference was to discuss rapid urbanization around the world. But the alternative NGO gathering, which took place in a repurposed aircraft hangar at Vancouver's bucolic Jericho Beach, was the place to be.

The NGO conference, itself supported by a federal department of urban affairs, attracted celebrities such as anthropologist Margaret Mead, Buckminster Fuller of geodesic dome fame, the not-yet-sainted Mother Teresa, and Paolo Soleri, who had designed an experimental utopian city in the Arizona desert. The founders of Greenpeace were on hand to help build an outdoor barbecue hut from materials off the beach, and Haida artist Bill Reid created a massive mural.

Habitat I was an inaugural moment for the concept of sustainable development, including its fundamental tenant of social sustainability, which prescribes that environmental issues cannot be solved without first addressing inequality and poverty. The manifesto that came out of the conference, the UN Declaration on Human Settlements, emphasized the importance of improving the rural habitat. It also stated that "adequate shelter and services are a basic human right," that "governments should assist local authorities to participate to a greater extent in national development," and that "the use and tenure of land should be subject to public control."

Somewhat presciently for current-day Vancouver, Habitat I advocated for limits on real-estate speculation and foreign investment in land. "The use and tenure of land should be subject to public control because of its limited supply," the declaration read. "The increase in the value of land as a result of public decision and investment should be recaptured for the benefit of society as a whole." Those were the days. If only they'd lasted a bit longer.

Three years after the Vancouver gathering, Margaret Thatcher was elected prime minister in Britain followed by Ronald Reagan as president of the United States. The like-minded conservative leaders would drive a free-market agenda of public service cuts, privatization and wage restraint we now commonly refer to as neoliberalism. Thatcher would infamously claim "there is no alternative" to this type of globalization, which was more interested in the sustainability of corporate profits than of Planet Earth.

As stark as the contrast in ideals may appear now, we shouldn't feel too nostalgic about the lost promise of Habitat I. For all its language about the public good, the con-

ference declaration reflected antipathy to cities, which were considered unhealthy, too dense and polluted—the reason anyone with a vehicle was abandoning urban cores for the suburbs. Canada's Ministry of Urban Affairs was shut down due to jurisdictional feuds with the provinces. And federal involvement in social housing, rapid transit and other urban infrastructure projects dwindled.

Forty years later, perhaps reinforced by the reality of climate change, cities are increasingly recognized as the places where opportunities for sustainable economic development and social progress are most promising. Density is seen as a valid response to environmental threats, and the automobile and its noxious infrastructure are treated as major problems. Appropriately, a central theme of the Quito conference in October was the idea of a "right to the city," which prioritizes the needs of residents over profit.

Canada and Quito

Canada was well represented at Habitat III, with more than 100 delegates in total. Federally they included Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos and two other members of parliament, who were supported by staff from the departments of employment and social development (ESDC), global affairs, and public safety. Evan Siddall, president and CEO of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), was also there.

On top of this federal presence, several mayors and municipal councillors, and numerous civil society representatives, were also part of the delegation. To its credit, the government included people who have been quite critical of past and current federal policies and practices. As might be expected, given activist sentiment and the immediacy of urban issues and affordable housing in the province, British Columbia had a particularly strong contingent of municipal politicians, representatives from the not-for profit housing sector, other NGO advocates and 15 students from the University of British Columbia.

Canada's national report to Habitat III contains chapters with the aspirational language the country's urbanists have long awaited: *Leaving No One Behind, Sustainable Growth, Leadership in Climate Policy, Building a Safe City for All, Job Creation for Future Prosperity, Housing and Basic Services*, etc. The report has a strong emphasis on the

use of, and access to, land, mitigating the impact of climate change, and the role of cities in improving health by promoting walking and cycling. Unfortunately, however, there isn't any reference in the Canadian plan to controlling land speculation, limiting the power of the market, or sharing in the proceeds of speculative development.

Though it is too early to determine if the Liberal government's commitment to the goals of Habitat III is genuine, perhaps some clues can be found in the two workshops Canada hosted in Quito. One session looked at the benefits of adequate housing for improving quality of life and broader social and economic success. The second featured a panel discussion with housing experts from a number of countries at different stages of development. They discussed how easing access to financing can address the housing affordability needs of vulnerable populations.

The question among housing advocates at the time was whether the lessons from Quito and the nostrums of the New Urban Agenda would be reflected in Canada's proposed infrastructure and affordable housing strategies, along with other federal policies. Having now seen some of the government's plans, there are grounds for cautious optimism, tainted as it might be (for those with long memories) with apprehension.

In April, for example, CMHC released the details of an initiative to facilitate the construction of new rental housing by making lower-cost loans available to developers during construction and for the first 10 years of occupancy. The March 2017 federal budget is also seen by many in the affordable housing sector as an initial step toward a long-overdue renewal of federal involvement in housing. First, because it sustains the current allocation, established in the 2016 budget, of about \$1 billion per year in funding for new housing. But also because it announced an unspecified level of funding for First Nations on-reserve housing, as well \$4 billion over 10 years for housing, water treatment systems, health facilities and other community infrastructure for Indigenous communities.

The concern, of course, is whether these badly needed funds will actually materialize (and when), and whether subsequent governments will respect the commitments. In 1993, the Liberal government, after promising a host of progressive housing initiatives during the election campaign, declared that no more social housing would be funded and that existing federally owned public housing stock would be down-loaded to the provinces. Twenty-one years later, are we headed down the same path of disappointment and broken promises?

With that question in mind, the New Urban Agenda may be helpful. As an international agreement with which many Canadians can identify, the commitments from Quito could be used to hold the government to account. However, the real power of Habitat III is in its recognition of the role that provincial and municipal leaders, as well as civil society, will play in reshaping urban policy. Getting it right will require the federal government to navigate the

realpolitik minefield of competing priorities and jurisdictional responsibilities, and different levels of provincial commitment to the issues of urban renewal, affordable housing and sustainable development.

Urban renewal in the provinces

The City of Quito is obviously not alone in feeling it must create infrastructure for the automobile instead of making investments in public transportation and non-motorized means of travel (see sidebar). In B.C., for example, the government is planning to replace the George Massey Tunnel under the Fraser River with a new \$3.5-billion, 10-lane bridge. Metro Vancouver mayors object to the plan, which they argue "represents an expansion of car-oriented infrastructure and diverts crucial funds from transportation projects that support the regional growth strategy." (Well, of course it does.)

In Ottawa, after a 10-year delay, the municipality is nearly finished the first leg of a new east-west light rail transit system and is close to filling a \$100-million contingency fund that would secure the system's future expansion. This hasn't stopped the city and the province from undermining the transit strategy by proudly making a series



of announcements relating to the “strategic widening” of Ottawa’s Highway 417. As any urban planner will tell you, highway expansions inevitably attract more cars.

The lack of affordable housing and the homelessness crisis have a profound impact on the economic viability of cities. Just like with infrastructure, contradictions abound in local housing policy. In May, the Ontario government released its Fair Housing Plan, a set of 16 measures mostly related to taxation and rent controls, to help people find an affordable home and bring stability to the real-estate market. However, there was no reference to increasing the supply of new affordable rental housing.

The City of Ottawa’s submission to the recent national housing strategy consultation describes a long-standing housing affordability crisis that forces people on low incomes to choose between paying bills, buying groceries or paying rent. In 2015, 40,000 households in Ottawa lived in poverty, more than 10,000 households were on the waiting list for affordable housing and over 6,800 Ottawa residents experienced homelessness. The city requested more support for local initiatives; for example, by tripling federal funding so it can build 1,300 new housing units.

These are admirable sentiments, but what Ottawa’s submission fails to mention is that, in an effort to keep taxes low, the city has dramatically reduced the resources it puts toward creating new affordable housing. Municipal budget documents indicate that, while the city contributed between \$4 million and \$5 million to the creation of new units between 2012 and 2014, it does not plan to spend any of its own money on housing—to top-up federal/provincial funding—between 2015 and 2019.

Additionally, Ottawa’s land development corporation, which has a mandate to add social value to land transactions, has listed several civic properties for sale. Some of them are excellent multi-unit residential and mixed-use sites that could have been used to further the city’s long-term social infrastructure needs. Particularly egregious is the sale of a family housing property on the city’s list of affordable housing sites, notwithstanding the fact that in 2016 over half of all shelter clients were members of a homeless family—a 25% increase from 2014. Ottawa’s family shelters are full. The sale contradicts city council’s own Housing First policy for surplus city lands. Where will the 1,300 units be created?

While the City of Ottawa balances its budget on the backs of the poor, the City of Vancouver is taking a different approach. In 2011, Vancouver committed to building 1,950 new affordable housing units at a rate of 650 a year. The city met its target at the end of 2014 (2,050 units were either completed or in the development/construction pipeline) and renewed its pledge, in a 2015-18 capital plan, to continue building. Though housing advocates dispute just how affordable the rental units are for low-income households, over the seven-year period 2011–2018 Vancouver will have spent about \$22 million per year on new construction absent any federal help. The city is now considering a proposal to raise taxes, in part to create even more affordable housing.

As disappointing as Ottawa’s response is to housing in comparison to Vancouver, it at least shows that cities are

willing to take provincial and federal funding to help solve local problems. So how does the federal government craft its program delivery in situations where municipalities refuse to do anything? Next door to Vancouver, the City of Burnaby won’t even protect its stock of private rental housing, never mind build new units for people who need affordable housing. The city has resisted provincial offers to set up even one permanent shelter.

Burnaby’s mayor has drawn a firm line in the sand, arguing his municipality doesn’t have the mandate to take on the provincial and federal governments’ housing responsibilities. Instead, Burnaby uses the funds it gets from developers, in return for rezoning properties to a higher density, on the amenities and services new populations will require, ignoring the city’s need for affordable housing, and offering cold comfort to households displaced because of gentrification.

Conclusions

The New Urban Agenda and Canada’s national report to Habitat III include ambitious policy objectives relating to implementing the UN’s overarching sustainable development goals (SDGs) at the local level. While it may not be the transformational document many urban activists were looking for, it does set an important precedent for Canada. For the first time, our national government acknowledges the language of local sustainable development that many local governments embraced decades ago.

With access to only eight cents on the tax dollar, cities were never designed to generate revenues on the scale needed to fund physical and social infrastructure. Their tax base just doesn’t allow them to meet all the needs of their citizens. Municipalities in Canada have built and now operate nearly two-thirds of Canada’s public infrastructure, from transportation networks to public buildings to water and waste management systems. In Ontario, cities have jurisdictional responsibility for affordable housing, but every city in the country is affected socially and economically by homelessness and a lack of affordable housing.

Municipal planning is a provincial responsibility. While there is local control over development decisions they are guided by provincial policy objectives. Without robust federal intervention at the local level, a Canada-wide response on sustainable planning practices is unlikely. Strong leadership from the feds will be needed if Canada is going to meet its Quito goals.

Perhaps a key opportunity of the Habitat III process should be to strengthen the role of local governments. Possibly (dare we hope?) this could be facilitated by a new federal ministry of urban affairs. A federal department charged with ensuring money goes to supporting local sustainability initiatives would be able to ensure new national objectives on transportation, climate change, affordable housing, child care, and other physical and social infrastructure needs, could be achieved along pathways established in Quito this past October. It may even be the difference between a highway expansion or new urban transit system in a city near you. **M**



ASAD ISMI

Colombia peace deal inches forward

Indigenous, Afro-Colombian leaders fear the state has not shed its violent past

THE PEACE ACCORDS signed in November 2016 by the government of Juan Manuel Santos and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, Colombia's largest guerrilla army) ended a half-century-long conflict that killed 260,000 people and displaced another six million. Under the terms of the deal, the FARC was supposed to hand over most of its weapons by June 20. Despite its accusations the government was violating the deal, FARC met this deadline on June 16.

Still, factors are threatening to delay demobilization. One of them is the important issue of land reform. Though the main cause of the conflict was the concentration of land ownership in the hands of the Colombian elite, President Santos has pushed that conversation into the future. A resolution

may not even be possible as long as the Colombian government remains committed to an extractivist economic model benefitting the private mining and energy sectors. For Santos, a key benefit of peace is to get the FARC out of the way of multinational corporations that want to exploit Colombia's natural resources in the countryside.

Meanwhile, the violence continues. Most of the killings during the civil war were carried out not by the FARC but by paramilitaries linked to the state. Human Rights Watch called these public-private militias "the sixth division" of the Colombian army. The peace accords do not disband the paramilitaries, who killed 156 human rights activists between January 2016 and March 2017, according to Colombia's ombudsman Carlos Alfonso Negret. In April, two FARC members were mur-

dered by paramilitaries within 10 days, even as the guerrilla army was in the process of laying down its arms—an ominous reminder of the right-wing massacre of 3,000 former FARC members after their successful 1985 election showing under the Patriotic Union party.

"Unfortunately, I believe that these accords will not bring peace because they were not made to resolve the root of the social conflict that brought FARC into existence," says Olimpo Cárdenas, spokesperson for the Social Roundtable for Peace, a coalition of unions, social movements, political organizations and NGOs that promotes the participation of civil society in the Colombian peace process. "The worst thing is the lack of politi-

cal will on the part of the government to open politics to the FARC or to any other political view.

"Violence is a structural element of the Colombian regime," he adds. "Historically every peace agreement has led to the mass assassination of the opposition. The establishment is playing good cop and bad cop, but together they have actually managed to disarm the most powerful guerrilla army of the continent, basically for nothing in return."

Cárdenas is not entirely negative about the accords. Despite the bleak present situation, he says the FARC "is going to open a space" in the political landscape. "It might not be a success in the first year but they should be an important political and social actor in the future." The Colombian peace accords also include an "ethnic chapter" that provides specific safeguards for the rights of Indigenous and Afro-Colombians, both of whom have been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict.

Cárdenas's concerns are shared by Luis Fernando Arias, Indigenous leader of the Kankuamo people and general counsel of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), which represents 47 Indigenous organizations. "This process of paramilitarization of the countryside in Colombia has led to the murders of 27 social, Indigenous and peasant leaders between January and March," he tells me. "This paramilitary offensive obeys an economic logic because following it, the large corporations arrive, especially extractive industries."

According to Fernando Arias, Indigenous people in Colombia have legal rights to 33 million hectares of land, about 27% of the national territory. Furthermore, 87% of Indigenous lands are legally protected as conservation areas, yet 95% of Indigenous territory has been conceded to extractive industries without consultation with Indigenous people. "Essentially what the government has managed to do is get the FARC out of the way so that extractive industries can come into Indigenous lands and elsewhere," he says. "So while it is good that they resolved the armed conflict, on the other hand it will create deeper social, environmental and economic conflicts for us, especially with private companies."

Fernando Arias emphasizes that Indigenous peoples are the most directly affected by the government's conflict with the FARC. His grandfather and uncle were both killed, in 2001 and 2004, along with 386 Indigenous leaders from his community. But he says these recent killings cannot be separated from "a process of historical genocide and this genocide has a master which is capitalism." Then, as now, the objective is "to take our riches, our natural resources such as gold. The European invasion of South America started by Columbus, is now being carried on by corporations and their big extractive projects."

A report published in May by the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., based on declassified documents, found that Chiquita Brands paid armed groups, including paramilitaries, to protect its operations. In 2015, murder charges were laid against an executive of Drummond Coal, a mining company based in Arizona. Charo Minas Rojas wonders how Colombians can talk about a lasting peace under such a brutal extractivist economic model.

"As Afro-Colombians who have endured the armed conflict in flesh and blood, we demand a peace process that confronts and addresses the racism, inequality, and violence directed against us," says the Afro-Colombian human rights defender, and member of the Black Communities Process in Colombia, who helped write the ethnic chapter of the Colombian peace accords. "When we look for the source of the conflict, we find that we are not really victims of the armed conflict, we are victims of capitalism—this is what is killing us. This is what is massacring us and committing genocide against us."

One-third of the six million people who have been displaced by armed conflict in Colombia are Afro-Colombians. In May, over 150,000 Afro-Colombians from Buenaventura declared a general strike that shut down the country's important port city. Traffic was stopped by roadblocks, halting all economic activity. The strikers demanded basic rights from the government, including increased health care coverage, clean drinking water, more education spending, basic sanitation (there is no sewage system) and adequate employment.

Buenaventura has the highest poverty rate in Colombia (close to 66%) and its people have been subjected to years of armed conflict and paramilitary violence. In response to the strike, on May 19 the Santos government sent in the military and police, and the city has been placed under curfew. Strikers have been teargassed, pepper-sprayed and attacked with rubber bullets; 80 people have been arrested and more than a dozen injured.

Sheila Gruner, a professor at Algoma University who has been following the work of the Black Communities Process in Colombia for many years, tells me Buenaventura can be considered "a test case for 'post accord' Colombia." She says the state repression of the peaceful mobilizations in the city "raises questions about the peace accord in relation to political participation and the right to peaceful dissent."

Gruner says the peace process is very important for Buenaventura. "If the issues are not addressed as raised during this strike, if Black leaders who have been working on these issues for decades are not allowed to lead efforts for peace in their jurisdictions, as they have every right to do in the implementation phase of the peace process, if the issue of increased paramilitary activity in Buenaventura is not addressed, then there will be even more fertile ground for the continuation of war, displacement and violence against Black communities."

Even if the deadline for demobilization is met in June, Fernando Arias, like Cárdenas, says the Union Patriótica massacres of the 1980s could easily be repeated. "How can there be peace when killings on such a large scale are continuing? We want the whole world to know that Colombia is not a paradise where peace has been achieved. Paramilitarism is strong in Colombia and as long as it is not dismantled, we cannot have peace in the country." **M**

DAVID BRUER

Canadian pension funds grab farmland in Brazil

Campaign seeks divestment from speculative land-grabbing at home and abroad

PENSION FUNDS ARE among the most influential actors in the global financial industry. They manage more money than all the sovereign wealth funds, hedge funds and private equity funds of the world combined, and Canada is home to some of the biggest pension funds on the planet.

The decisions that pension fund managers make on how to invest working people's savings have enormous consequences. They can inflate real estate bubbles and commodity prices, make controversial megaprojects possible or, in much rarer cases, change corporate behaviour by threatening divestment.

Since the financial crisis of 2008, pension fund managers have been trying to find alternative investments to stocks, especially longer-term investments that can hedge against the volatility of the stock market. One new area of interest for them is farmland and a lot of pension-fund money is going there.

The typical argument for farmland investment goes like this: population and income growth is increasing the demand for food, putting more pressure on the earth's finite and shrinking available agricultural land. Food prices are therefore only going to increase over time, as will the price of farmland. In the words of Mark Twain, altered slightly by investment guru Jim Rogers, "Buy farmland, they're not making it anymore."

All kinds of new funds have been created over the past decade to buy farmland, most of them focussed on attracting money from pension funds. Some target lands in Eastern Europe, others Africa or Latin America. Some see Australia as the big opportunity, while others have their sights on Canada's Prairies.

This inflow of money from the financial sector is already being felt in the countryside. It is pushing up land prices, making it harder for farmers, especially young farmers, to get access to farmland and stay out of debt. It is also contributing to land consolidation and large-scale farming, leading to a further decline in smaller family farms and the expansion of chemically intensive and environmentally destructive agriculture.

In some parts of the world the inflows of pension-fund money are more directly displacing people from the land. More and more small farmers, pastoralists and Indigenous people are being evicted from their lands, often violently, to make way for big farmers and plantation operators backed by international finance. Last year, 26 land defenders were assassinated every month, according to the Pesticide Action Network (Asia Pacific).

Pension fund managers invest in a wide variety of industries that raise ethical questions, from arms to mining, with little accountability to the people whose savings they manage.

In 2012, the Ottawa-based NGO Inter Pares (where I work) linked up with a small coalition of organizations in Brazil, Canada, Sweden and the U.S. to investigate how a global farmland fund managed by the U.S. teachers' pension fund manager, TIAA-CREF, was acquiring farmland in Brazil. Pension funds sometimes invest in funds managed by other pension funds, so TIAA-CREF's global farmland fund had money from Canada and Sweden. In Canada, *Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (La Caisse)* and the B.C. Investment Management Corp. (bcIMC) are heavily invested in TIAA-CREF's global farmland fund.

TIAA-CREF insists that its farmland investments are "responsible." It spearheaded the creation of farmland investment principles for its fellow signatories to the UN's Principles for Responsible Investment, and each year it publishes a report on its global farmland investments that consistently maintains that all of its farmland investments are free of land conflicts and other social or environmental problems.

It's hard to verify TIAA-CREF's claims because the fund manager refuses to make available the exact location of its farm holdings. But after three years of investigations, Inter Pares and its partners were able to identify several farms that the TIAA-CREF fund had purchased. They also uncovered the complex financial structure that the company created to get around Brazilian regulations on foreign investment in farmland.

The TIAA-CREF farms were located in a northern region of Brazil known as Matopiba, which has become the new frontier for the expansion of large-scale soybean agriculture. This is a part of rural Brazil inhabited by



Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian communities and small farming families, who have always lived in harmony with the area's fragile but incredibly biodiverse savannah. It is an area where land conflicts are exploding as ruthless businessmen and corrupt officials conspire to use fraud and violence to drive local people off their lands and then sell that land to foreign companies like TIAA-CREF.

An in-depth investigation into one of the TIAA-CREF's farms in the Matopiba region found that it was purchased from a Brazilian businessman convicted of land-grabbing and widely known to have used fraud and violence to displace local communities in the area. With the support of Development and Peace and other Canadian organizations, Inter Pares is working to put pressure on the *La Caisse* and bcIMC to withdraw from their investments in the TIAA-CREF farmland fund.

A short animated video to explain the issue was uploaded to YouTube to help make people aware of the issue

(see screenshot on this page). The video was produced to accompany a campaign encouraging people to write the two pension funds to ask them to refrain from investing in TIAA-CREF's global farmland funds and to suspend other speculative farmland investments. The campaign also demands that TIAA-CREF make public the nature, extent and specific location of its investments, either direct or indirect, in agricultural land.

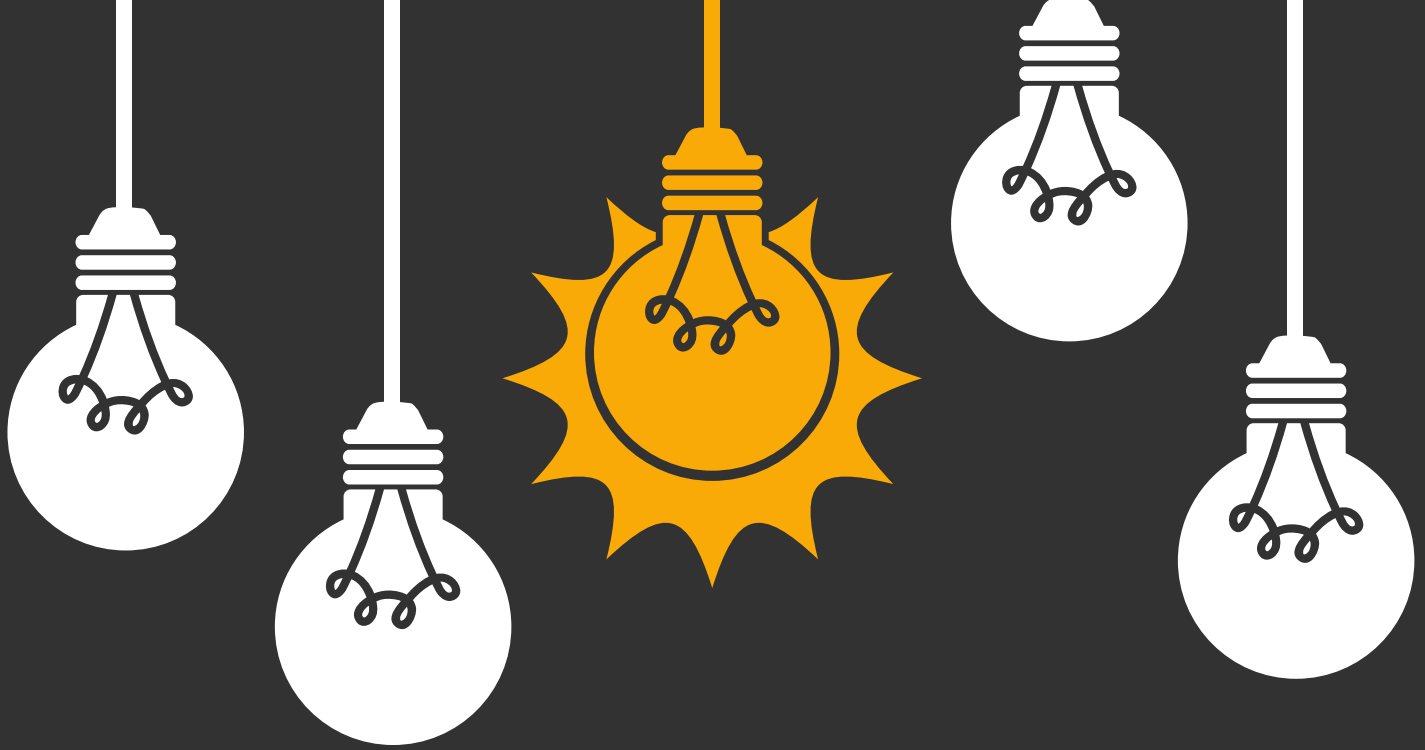
Development and Peace is also working closely with partners in Brazil to help communities affected by land-grabs from TIAA-CREF and other investors in the Matopiba area. Support is needed more than ever, as the new government is moving ahead with a bill to eliminate the country's restrictions on foreign investment in farmland.

La Caisse has acknowledged reading the investigative report but has refused to meet to discuss it, while bcIMC has yet to respond to the campaign in any way. We know they are paying attention and are concerned by

the negative publicity. So are Canada's other pension funds.

The larger objective here is to push back against the increasing interest of all Canadian pension fund managers in farmland, whether the land is in Brazil, Africa or here in Canada. Pressure does work. The CPP Investment Board made a major investment in a Canadian farmland fund last year, then in April this year announced it has decided against making further investments in farmland and is open to selling its existing portfolio.

Pension fund managers invest in a wide variety of industries that raise ethical questions, from arms to mining, with little accountability to the people whose savings they manage. Given their huge financial influence it is high time we started asking some serious questions about how our savings can contribute to positive economic development and whether there are better ways for society to look after its elders. **M**



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