MONITOR

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DEMOCRACY IN FREE FALL?

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

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Trumpism on trial

Reflections on the 2020 U.S. presidential elections and the political moment from Luke Savage, Arushana Sunderaeson, Erica Lenti, Anthony N. Morgan, Natasha Bulowski, Shayna Plaut, Asad Ismi, Paul Weinberg, and Laura Macdonald and Jeffrey Ayres.

14–32

SPECIAL INSERT

See our centre spread for a detachable, foldable pamphlet on building trinational worker solidarity produced by Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung New York

A reckoning for Trump, and us

DONALD TRUMP MAKES people sick, including himself. In early October, the 45th president of the United States of America contracted COVID-19 along with much of his inner entourage, adding "super-spreader" to a sordid list of his defining attributes: pathological liar, serial sexual abuser, xenophobe, union-buster, self-serving nihilist, tax-dodger, etc. It was unclear as the *Monitor* went to print how Trump's "I get it now" moment would affect his electoral chances. Biden was still up in most polls in early October when his campaign temporarily suspended attack ads against the hospitalized president, puzzling and infuriating many Democrats. The Republicans did not return the favour.

They hardly have a choice at this point. The Republican establishment has tied its fortunes to Trump. The party's cynical support for fossil capitalism, its naked cronyism and corporate favouritism, and increasingly open white supremacy are all supercharged by the president's outrageous public outbursts *and* shielded from view by the ignominy they instill in "mainstream" voters. Had Trump joined the more than 220,000 Americans to have perished from a novel coronavirus he has consistently ridiculed, the world would still have to deal with the U.S. Republican Party, "the most dangerous organization in human history," according to Noam Chomsky.

While the Democrats have drifted to the right since the 1970s, fully embracing the carceral state and a neoliberal economic program of profits over people, Republicans have "mostly gone off the spectrum," Chomsky writes in *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal* (Verso, 2020). His focus in that book (written with Robert Pollin and C.J. Polychroniou) is the existential threat posed by Republican climate denialism (see our interview with William Carroll on page 38 about its Canadian variants), but the relative threat to democratic governance—domestically and internationally—is also multiples higher under Trump's party versus the Democrats.

The president is encouraging his supporters to defraud the U.S. electoral system by voting twice. His administration simultaneously withheld funds from the U.S. postal service as a way to suppress mail-in voting, which electoral experts see as a way to reverse decades of disenfranchisement, particularly among Black, Indigenous and Latinx voters. Trump's foreign policy, though less blatantly imperialist than is normal for Washington, has nonetheless taken the world closer to nuclear war than at any point since the end of the Cold War (see Asad Ismi on page 29).

And yet despite these high stakes, instead of attacking the corruption, authoritarianism and exterminism at the heart of the Republican Party, Biden has been enlisting its "moderate" flank to his modest cause. The list of prominent Republicans to endorse his ticket with Kamala Harris is embarrassingly long for a team that is depending on growing numbers of young, left-leaning Bernie Sanders backers (see Arushana Sunderaeson on page 15) to hold their nose and vote Democrat on November 3. "Between a Wall Street–friendly campaign and a tough-on-crime pivot amidst national reckoning with racial injustice [see Anthony N. Morgan on page 21], liberal America's standard-bearer is promising conservative restoration in a moment demanding radical change," writes Luke Savage in his cover story for this issue (page 12).

To no one's surprise, Trump makes Canadians sick, too. A 338Canada/Léger poll of 1,500 people published in early October showed that 84% of us would vote for Biden if we had the chance, increasing to 90% in Atlantic Canada and dropping to 68% in Alberta. According to a Pew Research Center survey in September, those attitudes are common across many key U.S. allies, including Germany, France, the U.K., Japan and Australia. Populations in all 13 countries surveyed by Pew ranked the U.S. response to COVID-19 far lower than their own government's, China's or the World Health Organization's.

Strictly speaking, it doesn't matter what we or any of these people think about Trump or Biden. Except for expats, none of us can vote in November's presidential election. But all of us will be affected by the outcome, Canada in particular. There can be no decoupling with the United States, as Trump has proposed Western nations must do with China. If Trump is re-elected, we should be prepared to resist the tyranny, racism and fossil-fuelled societal disintegration that could burst out of control.

If, on the other hand, the Democrats take control of the U.S. government, Canada should find ways to work with, not against, Biden's plans to retool the U.S. manufacturing sector, as CCPA trade researcher Scott Sinclair argued recently on the CCPA's Behind the Numbers blog. Though it may not carry the title of a Green New Deal, the Biden-Harris platform contains a number of innovative programs that would create good local jobs, lower greenhouse gas emissions and increase union density. Canada is bound to benefit from these measures and should seize the political opportunity, given our own unequal economic recovery, to adopt something similar here. M

Letters

Public debt and the banks

With the entirely admirable efforts of the federal and provincial governments to get money to people (to support them) and community structures (to preserve the functioning of the economy), it must strike us that the thinking is the opposite to that which has prevailed in the era of neoliberal economics and "austerity." We must keep thinking. The money now flowing must not become, through debt assignment, a resource to banks and speculators. How this may be prevented has been indicated by John McMurtry (in his book, *Value Wars: The Global Market Versus the Life Economy*, Pluto Press, 2002) and others. I am not an economist, just a student through many years of capitalism and the ravages of the austerity doctrine as it has been so often applied. Here is where the CCPA comes in. Over to you.

Frank Thompson,
Parry Sound, ON

Editor's response
Assignment accepted, Frank. The CCPA has been countering austerity rhetoric and policy for 40 years and our national and provincial offices are putting as many resources as we can to advancing publicly financed and directed solutions to today's overlapping crises of COVID-19, inequality and the climate emergency.

Stop the oil oligopoly

By continuing to subsidize and enormously expand the fossil fuel industry in Canada our governments are violating the Canadian people's guaranteed "right to life, liberty and security of person." The development and burning of fossil fuels, which the UN and our world's best scientists warn will cause devastating global climate change, will also obviously cause painful sickness, death and destruction to all life on Earth. Our governments must be held accountable for this, and be forced to transfer all government funding and development assistance to building a new 21st century Canadian economy powered by the abundant, free, safe renewable energies of our sun, wind, oceans and the geothermal energy of the Earth, all of which can be cheaply harnessed with new technology. This will create cheap power for the Canadian people and millions of good jobs across Canada. It will also set the people free from the terrible destruction and poverty being caused by the fossil fuel industry, with its mining, fracking, piping, shipping, polluting and poisoning of vast areas of land and water. We the people of Canada must join our children, and Indigenous First Nations, to stop this oligopolistic fossil fuel madness before we all die from unstoppable climate devastation.

Francis Blundell,
Victoria, BC

Electric solutions are here

I was pleased to see Angelo DiCaro's call for a national plan to address the slow disappearance of the important Canadian auto industry ("A just industrial strategy," Sept/Oct 2020), but suggest that, from our existing environmental knowledge, we can lay down some immediate actions that will help get things going faster.

We know that almost all power usage in the future will need to be electric (aircraft being perhaps an exception). Our governments can, and should, set a date by which all cars sold and made in Canada will need to be electric. Be proactive, not reactive. Electric cars will be either battery (most likely lithium) or fuel cell (most likely hydrogen) powered. Both technologies will be needed to meet normal Canadian consumer needs. Indeed, in Europe and Asia national plans for hydrogen are already developed, recognizing that batteries alone will not be sufficient.

Provincial and federal governments must take responsibility for developing the required infrastructure networks that will be needed for refueling hydrogen and recharging batteries. The government will also give priority to the infrastructure needs of electric automobiles manufactured in Canada. This is the carrot that goes with the legislated "all-electric" stick. There are already car manufacturers in Canada that have successful battery and hydrogen cars developed; they should be keen to move some production to Canada to get their standards recognized in return.

Michael Brothers,
Toronto, ON

Corrections

On the *Contents* page of the September/October issue we misidentified Katherine Scott as Katherine Sinclair. In *From the Editor*, a report accredited to the World Bank and found without cover page on the World Bank website was in fact prepared by the Centre for Disaster Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Canada's trade deficit in medical supplies in 2018 was more than $13 billion CDN, not US$13 billion as stated on page 24. On page 27, Vietnam's ratification of ILO Convention 98 is described as protecting "the right to organize independent unions," which is correct with respect to protecting against interference from private employers, but only Convention 87 (which Vietnam has not ratified) protects workers' right "to join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorisation [from the government]." We apologize for these errors.

Send your letters to monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

New from the CCPA

CCPA in the news

Amid a fresh wave of COVID-19 cases in Canada, a Speech from the Throne that seemed to draw liberally (no pun intended) from the Alternative Federal Budget Recovery Plan, and major changes to employment insurance and other federal benefit programs announced in late September, CCPA experts have been in high demand from the news media this fall.

In late August, as news broke that the country was in official recession, CCPA-Ontario senior economist **Sheila Block** was featured on CTV News explaining how the pandemic is redefining our understanding of responsible economic policy in a downturn. New **CCPA-BC** research from **Alex Hemingway** and **Michal Rozworski**, on how Canadian billionaires' wealth has skyrocketed during the pandemic (see the Up Front section of this issue), generated instant media buzz nationally and became the basis of a *Toronto Star* editorial on the need to tax extreme wealth.

During the leadup to the throne speech of September 23, as millions of Canadians faced serious uncertainty in the impending transition from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to EI (or to nothing, depending on their situation), CCPA senior economist **David Macdonald** and CCPA-Ontario senior researcher **Ricardo Tranjan** gave dozens of interviews on CBC programs across the country on the need for modernized income supports that leave no one behind. When news broke that the government would indeed turn some of the CCPA's proposals into policy, Macdonald went on Global TV, CTV and CBC's *The National* to explain what it would mean for unemployed and precariously employed Canadians.

CCPA data was featured heavily in recent ***Globe and Mail*** coverage of how the pandemic is driving higher levels of inequality in Canada. David was also on Evan Solomon's radio show as news about the federal government's new benefits legislation broke, providing a moment-by-moment breakdown of the likely impacts. And new reports from the **CCPA-Manitoba** and **CCPA–Nova Scotia** offices, on the insufficiency of their province's minimum wages (see Up Front section), were featured prominently by CBC and Global News.

Renewable Regina

The result of a truly collaborative research effort, ***Renewable Regina: Putting Equity into Action***, published by the **CCPA-Saskatchewan** office in September, makes the case that the city's efforts to achieve 100% renewability must be equitable if they hope to succeed. Through interviews with 25 community-based organizations, the report demonstrates that municipal leaders and planners must understand how access to services and policies differs among different parts of Regina's urban population, so that they might design environmental policies that reach the greatest number of people, particularly those most in need.

Living wages in Atlantic Canada

The living wage was first calculated in Atlantic Canada in 2015 for Halifax. Antigonish was added in 2016 and Saint John, New Brunswick in 2018. Last year, the **CCPA-Nova Scotia** office calculated the living wage rate for St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. This year's report, by **Chelsea Driscoll** and CCPA-NS Director **Christine Saulnier** (see our CCPA profile on page 11), adds two more Nova Scotia communities: Bridgewater and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

The calculation of the living wage provides communities with the following information:

Real life/real time costs of living and raising a family in the community What are the most significant costs? What can be done to lower the costs?

How communities compare with others Using a consistent national methodology allows for comparing costs, taxes and government programs across the country. What is being done or can be done at the local, provincial and/or federal level to support families to have a good quality of life?

This year's living wage report provides updated wages in Nova Scotia for Halifax ($21.80) and Antigonish ($19.55), as well as for Saint John, New Brunswick ($19.55). It also includes new calculations for two additional communities in Nova Scotia: Bridgewater ($16.80) and Cape Breton Regional Municipality ($17.65).

"Once again the living wage calculation demonstrates the huge gap between the minimum wage and what people actually need to live with dignity and be fully included in our communities," says Wyanne Sandler, chair of the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition. "In particular, in a university town like Antigonish, we continue every day to see the impacts of the lack of affordable housing. From women staying in unsafe and unhealthy situations to families sacrificing recreational opportunities for their kids, we know that the lack of affordable housing options constrains people's choices and opportunities."

For more reports, commentaries, blogs, infographics and videos from the CCPA's National and provincial offices, visit www.policyalternatives.ca.

Alex Hemingway and Michal Rozworski / National/B.C.

Canada's billionaires got much richer during pandemic

SINCE THE COVID-19 lockdown in March, Canada's richest 20 billionaires have accumulated an astonishing $37 billion in combined new wealth, according to data from *Forbes*. That's an average gain of just under $2 billion per billionaire, during one of the most economically catastrophic six-month periods in Canadian history, reflecting the increasingly clear decoupling of the stock market from the real economy.

The biggest gains (an estimated $8.8 billion in wealth) went to the Thomson family fortune, followed closely by Shopify's Tobi Lutke ($6.6 billion, mirroring some of the huge gains among big tech firms like Amazon and Apple south of the border. Lululemon founder Chip Wilson has also done exceptionally well, with a gain of nearly $3 billion. We've listed all 20 billionaires and their pandemic gains in the table on this page.

To see how the same group fared leading into and through the big stock market drop earlier this year, we compared family wealth in *Forbes*' February 9, 2019 report with the September 14 values. No need to worry: the top 20 have still collectively amassed over $28 billion in wealth gains compared to 2019, their total wealth now standing at $178 billion.

As Loblaws owner Galen Weston (#3 on the list) and his billionaire friends have seen their wealth balloon, workers in Canada continue to bear the economic consequences of the crisis. Labour force data released in August showed there were still 1.1 million fewer people employed in Canada compared to pre-COVID

Canadian billionaires' wealth during 2020 pandemic

Name	Ranking, March 2020	Wealth, March 18 ($billions)	Wealth, September 14 ($billions)	Change, March 18—September 14 ($billions)
David Thomson and family	1	41.7	50.6	8.8
Joseph Tsai	2	13.2	17.7	4.5
Galen Weston and family	3	9.2	10.8	1.6
David Cheriton	4	7.3	9.2	2.0
Huang Chulong	5	6.7	6.9	0.1
Mark Scheinberg	6	6.5	6.5	0.0
James Irving	7	5.9	8.1	2.1
Jim Pattison	8	5.7	7.4	1.7
Emanuelle Saputo and family	9	5.0	5.9	0.9
Anthony von Mandi	10	4.4	5.8	1.5
Daryl Katz	11	4.2	4.6	0.4
Chip Wilson	12	4.2	7.0	2.8
Alain Bouchard	13	4.1	5.9	1.8
Tobi Lutke	14	4.0	10.6	6.6
Lawrence Stroll	15	3.4	3.4	0.0
Bob Gaglardi	16	3.3	3.6	0.3
Arthur Irving	17	3.3	4.4	1.1
Jean Coutu and family	18	3.2	3.6	0.4
Charles Bronfman	19	3.0	3.0	0.0
Mitchell Goldhar	20	2.9	3.3	0.4
Top 20 total		**141.2**	**178.2**	**37.0**

SOURCE: FORBES ANNUAL BILLIONAIRES LIST AND "REAL-TIME BILLIONAIRES" DATA. SHOWN IN CANADIAN DOLLARS.

levels. Another 713,000 workers were technically employed but have lost half or more of their usual hours due to the pandemic, with a total of 1.8 million jobs affected.

While the situation has improved from its worst level of 5.5 million impacted jobs in April, the pace of recovery is slowing. Indeed, the recovery in total work hours stalled between July and August even as some improvement in jobs numbers continued. Low-wage workers have been hit hardest, with employment among people making less than $16.03 per hour still substantially below the pre-pandemic level (87.4%), while the highest wage groups have recovered to pre-pandemic employment levels. As Statistics Canada data show, women and racialized Canadians are overrepresented among low-wage workers.

Low-wage, frontline workers have been putting themselves in harm's way to keep our cupboards stocked with groceries and essentials, to keep the lights on and to care for children and the elderly. Public support for these newly recognized essential workers led to a brief $2/hour "pandemic pay" increase for many. But this was short-lived and quickly clawed back in early June by companies owned by the very billionaires on the top-20 list.

Shares in Loblaws, the grocery and drug store chain owned by the Weston family, rose after it instituted the pay cut for workers in June. When Jim Pattison's (#8) grocery chains cut back pandemic pay at the same time, he told reporters that he was "not involved" in the decision, while conceding that "we own and finance the company."

Several corporate executives in the grocery industry were grilled by members of Parliament about these decisions in July. But they did not restore the pandemic pay and insisted they hadn't co-ordinated the cuts, which were announced at nearly the same time. The message, however, was clear: increases in the value of these companies were intended for the pockets of their owners, not their workers.

In a CCPA-commissioned poll of British Columbians conducted in late May and early June, there was strong public support for measures that would effectively override the billionaires to back these workers, with 59% of respondents supporting an "increase in the minimum wage for all frontline retail workers to $20/hour immediately." There was also overwhelming public support for requiring all employers to provide paid sick leave for their workers (77%) and increasing health and safety protections for all workers (83%).

In past crises, Canada and other countries increased taxes on the income and wealth of the richest as a way of fairly spreading the burden of reconstruction and recovery. Today, Canada must get serious about taxing the rich to reverse the rise of extreme inequality, to start to undo the concentration of economic and political power, and to create ongoing revenue streams to fund badly needed public investments for the long term.

The idea of taxing wealth is enormously popular. Achieving it is within reach as long as there is enough organized public pressure from below. As a growing body of research shows, the key barriers to instituting wealth taxes are not technical or economic but political. A wealth tax needs to be combined with other measures, including a major crackdown on tax havens, corporate tax reform and equalizing the tax treatment of capital gains income.

Canadians are frequently told that "we're all in this together" when it comes to the COVID-19 crisis. There is some truth to this—ultimately, anyone can get sick. However, the explosion in the wealth of billionaires illustrates how the crisis has only magnified the ways in which a wealthy minority lives in a very different world. They can afford to pay more (in taxes) so that the many may suffer less. M

New Research / Manitoba

Precarity and the minimum wage

A NEW REPORT FROM the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Manitoba office finds that Manitoba's $11.65 minimum wage does not bring all households out of poverty, even when government transfers and subsidy programs are included.

In ***Surviving on Minimum Wage: Lived Experiences of Manitoba Workers and Policy Implications***, researchers Jesse Hajer and Ellen Smirl interview 42 workers in Winnipeg and Brandon to gain a better understanding of those workers' experiences, challenges and hopes. "Hard choices" and "poverty traps" were dominant themes in the interviews. Workers spoke of struggling to afford the most basic necessities such as rent, food and transportation, and the "luxury," as some described it, of buying clothes or spending on recreation.

"My paycheque runs out before the next one comes in. And it's hard, I feel like I can never get ahead.... I'm barely keeping my head above water," said one minimum wage worker and research participant. "[Y]our two cheques (a month) will cover your rent and a bit of food. You buy macaroni for a month. Anything else, extracurricular hobbies, passions or anything of that stuff is just impossible," said another. Some participants spoke of struggling to afford the most basic items like toilet paper and toothpaste.

Over 38% of respondents said they regularly used either food banks and meals at churches or charity organizations. One man with diabetes explained that due to budgetary constraints he often eats processed

foods that spike his blood sugar and make him feel sick, which affects the number of hours he is able to work. A single mother of two said she felt guilty that she is unable to afford healthy food for her children. Many workers reported struggling with mental health issues including depression and anxiety related to their jobs and low income.

Surviving on a Minimum Wage confirms precarious work is on the rise in Manitoba. Involuntary part-time workers—those who would like, but cannot find, full-time work—represent approximately 22% of all part-time workers in Manitoba, according to Statistics Canada. "I think $15 would be liveable...at full-time hours; $11.65 an hour is not proportionate to the cost of things that you need," said one research participant.

Low wage workers are the least likely to receive paid sick leave, and 86% of those who earn below $16,000 a year have no leave at all. Only one worker in the study received health benefits and paid sick leave at their job. This finding has huge implications for the COVID-19 era, since it means many workers who are at risk of catching the virus cannot safely stay home if they do. The pandemic-related economic downturn has disproportionately impacted low wage workers, in particular those in the retail and hospitality sectors.

In addition to speaking with workers about their lived experiences, Smirl and Hajer calculated how the minimum wage stacks up against the cost of living in the province. They found that all family types have insufficient disposable earnings on a minimum wage to escape poverty, based on Canada's official poverty line calculation. Once government transfer and subsidy programs are considered, the minimum wage still cannot bring a one-person household out of poverty, and single parents working full time can only make it over the poverty line by accessing the province's Rent Assist program in addition to the Canada Child Benefit.

The report recommends that Manitoba raise the minimum wage to closer to $15 an hour, as in Alberta. A review of existing empirical studies finds that moderate increases in the minimum wage have no clear impact on employment levels, and the effect is small if it exists at all. Two-thirds of Canadians and Americans support higher minimum wages. The provincial government is also encouraged to work with the labour community to address precarious working conditions—through mandatory minimum notice for scheduling changes, for example, and by introducing paid sick and emergency leave—as part of a comprehensive plan to end poverty in Manitoba.

Worth Repeating

Take back those words

We have trademarked the conservative logo Take Back Canada. This morning (September 17) a coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth with Climate Strike Canada served the Conservative Party of Canada with a cease and desist letter over the use of Party Leader Erin O'Toole's "Take Back Canada" slogan. We chose to take legal action because "Take Back Canada," in the context of the Conservative Party's slogan, is racist, historically revisionist, and promotes the erasure of Indigenous peoples. Canada has NEVER belonged to people like @erinotoolemp. Canada is STOLEN INDIGENOUS LAND.

—Taken (in good faith) from Climate Strike Canada's Instagram page. Erin O'Toole was elected leader of the Conservative Party of Canada on August 24.

Seriously unreliable

I conclude that [Fraser Institute Fellow Nadeem] Esmail is minimally qualified as an expert in the area of health policy. His research and publications suggest a very narrow philosophical interest. He has made the most of his qualifications but this has, unfortunately, included embellishments of his experience.... More importantly, the methodology used in his 2013 and 2016 [doctor survey–based] reports is problematic.... It is unclear whether any general conclusions can be drawn from the Fraser Institute surveys, even if these surveys could generally be relied upon as providing reliable data (a proposition I seriously question).

—B.C. Supreme Court Justice John Steeves discounted evidence from the right-wing/libertarian, corporate-backed Fraser Institute in his September 10 judgment of the closely watched case brought by private health care suppliers, including Dr. Brian Day's Cambie Surgery Centre, against the province's Medicare Protection Act. The B.C. Health Coalition called Steeves's decision "a historic victory against an attack that could have ushered in U.S.-style profit-driven health care" across Canada. "The courts have made it clear that this case was never about wait times—it was about profit." The Canadian Constitution Foundation, a charitable "free market" group with close connections to the Fraser Institute and conservative parties in Canada, and which partly funded the Cambie case, responded, "This decision is wrong, and we look forward to the appeal."

Work Life

LYNNE FERNANDEZ

To rejuvenate the labour movement, we need young people and new laws

AS COVID-19 CONTINUES to upend lives, I have seen many people musing about a resurgence of trade unions to deal with increased stress in the labour market. It makes sense that workers would turn to a tried and true strategy, especially since unionism was on the increase in some parts of the world even before the pandemic hit.

A year ago, Nicholas Gilmore wrote an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* titled "Why Labor Organizing is Making a Comeback." From Kentucky coal miners blocking the rails to protest bounced cheques from their bankrupt former employer, to air traffic controllers calling in sick to support flight attendants' call for a general strike, to teachers' strikes in four U.S. states, 2018 deserved its *Washington Post* billing as the "biggest year for worker protest in a generation," he claimed. In a country with a 10.5% union density rate, this was very good news indeed.

Gilmore noted the results of two polls showing unions had the approval of 62% of people of all ages and 75% support between the ages of 18 and 29. These numbers may help explain the growth of movements like Gig Workers Rising, "a campaign supporting and educating app and platform workers who are organizing for better wages, working conditions, and respect," according to its website. Gig Workers Rising represents drivers for Uber and Lyft.

Amazon workers are also trying to organize. According to a May 21 story from Reuters, 16 labour groups are or have targeted the tech giant, but the legal obstacles are so high they can't break through. Undeterred, the workers have changed strategy and have had some success teaching workers how to file labour complaints with the federal government, set up online petitions and reach out to media and elected officials.

The COVID-19 pandemic has focused Amazon workers' attention on figuring out how to protect themselves. The activism they've undertaken under labour's tutelage has helped turn public opinion in their favour, organizing workers more tightly in preparation for union membership. Such tactics are required in Britain as well, where young workers are now bearing the brunt of the brutal labour market changes started in the 1980s.

In a recent article for *Tribune* magazine, University of Leeds industrial relations professor Gregor Gall asked if unions are making a comeback in his country too. Britain's 2019 labour force survey showed a year-on-year increase (the third in a row) of 91,000 new union members, bringing the total unionized workforce to 6.44 million. Union density also rose slightly to 23.5% in 2019, up from 23.4% in 2018.

The increase was driven by more women working in the public sector, mirroring union membership changes in

Canada. This is positive news for Britain's women and their families. But in terms of what the increases mean for unions in general, Gall had some sobering additional observations.

Only 4.4% of the new members were between the ages of 16 and 24, whereas 40% were 50 and older. Gall pointed out that the future of trade unionism is connected to growing the number of young members. Although unions are focussing on recruiting young workers, Gall claimed their success in this respect is dependent on legislative reform as well.

From the mid-1990s on, Britain's union membership has not grown nearly at the same rate as the workforce, causing union density to decrease from highs of 55% in the early 1980s to less than a quarter today—a situation similar to here in Canada. Gall is calling for fundamental changes to Britain's Employment Relation Act to make it easier to organize unions.

We need to be doing the same here. Instead, as this column has pointed out, governments in Alberta, Manitoba and elsewhere are passing laws that make unionization even harder.

The federal government missed an opportunity in the Speech from the Throne to reach out to Canadian workers. I had hoped that minimum wage for federal workers would be increased, that stricter regulations around sick time would get some mention, and that frontline workers in the services sector and personal care homes would warrant specific attention. Not only was there no mention of these issues, there was no recognition that Canada's labour laws need to be strengthened so that our union density stops creeping ever lower.

Unions in Canada, the U.S. and Britain are responding to workers' fears about COVID-19 with creative ways to organize. If we can capitalize on the public's favourable view of unions, the next step will be to elect governments that support worker rights and reverse decades of retrograde labour legislation. M

Lynne Fernandez is the Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues at the CCPA-Manitoba.

In brief

Canada's killer exports

3HARRIS WESCAM, the Canadian subsidiary of U.S. defence giant L3Harris, is one of the world's leading producers and exporters of Electro-Optical/Infra-Red (EO/IR) imaging and targeting sensor systems, with approximately $500 million in annual exports. WESCAM is located in Burlington, Ontario.

Like most Canadian-based weapons manufacturers, WESCAM exports most of what it produces. Its products are used in more than 80 countries on more than 190 platforms, primarily to perform intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR).

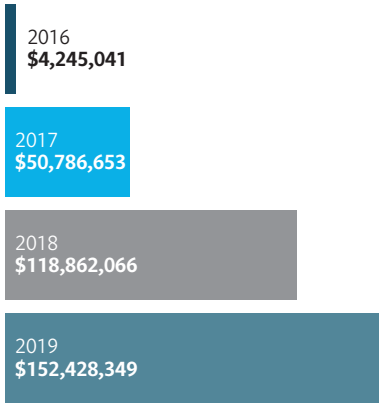
Since 2017, Turkey has been a major customer for WESCAM products, second only to the United States. During this time, the Turkish military has not only been active in trying to put down an insurgency in southeast Turkey but has become increasingly involved in armed conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

Based on an analysis of Canada's international obligations, domestic arms controls, and an evaluation of Turkey's recent conduct during warfare, Canada's export of WESCAM sensors to Turkey poses a substantial risk of facilitating human suffering, including violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Canadian officials are obligated by international and Canadian law to mitigate the risks of such transfers, including through the denial of export permits, when such risks are apparent from the outset—which appears to be the case with WESCAM exports to Turkey.

Project Ploughshares has collected evidence in government and public records, media reports, academic sources, accounts from credible human rights monitors, and open-source data that strongly indicates that WESCAM EO/IR sensors, mounted on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), have been used extensively by Turkey in its recent military activities. Such use raises serious red flags, as it has been alleged that Turkey's military has committed serious breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL) and other violations, particularly when conducting airstrikes. It appears that Turkey has also exported UAVs equipped with WESCAM sensors to armed groups in Libya, a blatant breach of the nearly decade-old UN arms embargo.

The dramatic rise in exports of WESCAM systems to Turkey has persisted despite Canada's 2019 accession to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the first binding framework that aims to regulate the international trade and transfer of weapons and reduce the human suffering posed by their proliferation. The export of WESCAM sensors to Turkey constitutes a troubling case study of the way in which Canada is complying with its obligations under the ATT. If they are an indication of future Canadian practice in authorizing arms exports, the outlook is hardly promising. M

Total Canadian military exports to Turkey, 2016–19



—Reprinted from the Project Ploughshares website (https://ploughshares.ca), where you will find Kelsey Gallagher's new report, *Killer Optics: Exports of WESCAM sensors to Turkey—a litmus test of Canada's compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty.*

The good news page

COMPILED BY ELAINE HUGHES

On September 22, Unifor announced its members had reached a tentative agreement with Ford that will see the company invest $1.95 billion to retool the Oakville, Ontario auto assembly complex to build five electric vehicle models and bring new product to Ford's engine plant in Windsor. / The federal government is partnering with the government of Nunavut to fund the retrofit of six schools and one health centre in the South Baffin region to make them energy efficient and introduce solar power. / Sweden's coalition government announced it will allocate the equivalent of $1.42 billion in its 2021 budget to electric vehicle subsidies, public transport, renovations of public housing, cycle paths and other measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. / Starting in 2022, New Zealand will welcome hydrogen fuel cell–powered long-haul trucks to its roads. The trucks, produced in partnership by Kiwi company Hiringa and U.S.-based Hyzon Motors, can travel up to 500 km on one carbon-free tank. / Toronto Star / Nunatsiaq News / Reuters / Good News Network

The Uganda Wildlife Authority recorded seven baby gorillas born in just six weeks in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park near the southwestern border with Democratic Republic of Congo, a rare conservation success in a region fraught with poaching and civil conflict. / In antiracist spirit, the American Ornithological Society has renamed the McCown's Longspur (after Confederate Captain and slaver John P. McCown) the Thick-billed Longspur (pictured). Townsend's Solitaire, Townsend's Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, Audubon's Oriole (John Audubon raided Native American graves and trafficked human remains), Nuttall's Woodpecker and Cooper's Hawk are among 149 other 19th century bird names to be changed. / An Indian farmer, Muthu Murugan (62), has set aside an acre of land to grow sorghum and pearl millets for wild bird species in his area, some of them on the verge of extinction. / The Kaki Recovery Programme in New Zealand released 104 captive-bred Black Stilts, a very rare wading bird, bringing the number of adult birds in the wild up to 169. / Australian conservationists announced they had eradicated, through fences in the Mallee Cliffs National Park, all feral cats and foxes from a 9,570-hectare area, creating the largest feral predator–free haven on the country's mainland. / In September, Washington State became the seventh U.S. state to ban wildlife killing competitions of any kind. / Reuters / Birdwatching Magazine / My Modern Met / Mongabay / Australian Wildlife Conservancy / Project Coyote

On taking office in December 2018, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador axed plans for a $13-billion Mexico City airport on 4,800 hectares of waterlogged lake bottom. The site is now part of a 12,200 hectare marsh, half of which will become a park and public events venue. / The Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau tribe of western Brazil is using $2,000 drones to document illegal logging activities on its territory. / A group of NGOs, non-GMO food associations and a food retailer have jointly created a gene editing detection method for the GM herbicide-resistant rapeseed US Cibus, which will allow European countries to prevent the unauthorized crop from entering EU food and feed supply chains. / A social enterprise in Cambodia, Ibis Rice, is paying farmers above-market prices for chemical-free, "wildlife friendly" rice in an effort to counteract deforestation inside protected areas. / Reuters / CNN / GM Watch / Reuters

Thick-billed Longspur

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

YOUR CCPA
Get to know **Christine Saulnier**

OFFICE: **HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA**
POSITION: **DIRECTOR**
YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **13**

Office setup: I am the sole staff person in the Atlantic Region. Our primary mandate is to focus on progressive policies for Nova Scotia, but I do collaborate on issues in the other three Atlantic provinces. I am supported by a local steering committee and a network of volunteer research associates in the region.

Research interests: I am interested in research to advance social and economic equality, and do work on antipoverty, social policy, labour market policy and fiscal policy. I oversaw the writing and editing of 10 alternative provincial budgets—fully costed annual documents involving multi-sectoral representatives coming to consensus on policy issues corresponding to all major provincial government departments, from education to health to economic development to taxation.

Proudest CCPA moment(s): I lead the living wage work in the Atlantic region, which started in 2015 with the calculation of the living wage in Halifax. This benchmark wage is cited frequently and has supported advocacy groups seeking a higher minimum wage. The living wage is used in collective bargaining and provides workers with proof that they are not alone struggling to make ends meet in a region with the lowest wages in the country.

Extracurricular activities: I am at rallies and marches and involved in advocacy work outside of my direct work for the CCPA. My three children (aged 10, 15 and 19) are often alongside me. Nova Scotia is a beautiful place to live and we try to get out and enjoy it as much as we can. I am so pleased that biking infrastructure is improving and making it safer to go out with my youngest for adventures in the city and beyond. I also love to read fiction and do my fair share of binge watching.

Challenges in your region: There is a narrowed space for local democratic involvement—all English-language school boards were abolished, and local regional health authorities were rolled up into one provincial health authority. We are the only province that had no legislative sittings during the pandemic. There are no provincial budget consultations. We have very few funded advocacy organizations and there has been a silencing of non-profit organizations that receive provincial funding. Fewer people have more control over decision-making and over the dominant discourse, which has largely been that we are a poor province that cannot afford to tackle the big issues, whether low wages, poverty, homelessness or rural unemployment. Cracking through to get beyond the narrow focus on fiscal debts to build social solidarity is our challenge.

Reasons for hope: It has been exciting to watch high school students organize to pressure governments to act on the climate emergency and ensure that these actions centre Indigenous peoples, racial justice and a just transition. Community members have rallied to support the local Black Lives Matter movement, including with a solidarity fund that raised $300,000 for mutual aid within the African Nova Scotian community, in response to the inequitable impact of COVID-19. I recently helped organize a rally to support the families of the victims of April's mass murder in the province, to pressure our governments to undertake a full inquiry. It is exciting to see that our communities will mobilize when they must.

STORY BY LUKE SAVAGE | ILLUSTRATION BY REMIE GEOFFROI

An anti-populist election for a populist moment

Distaste for Trump's handling of the pandemic may nudge Biden into the White House, but the Democrats are unprepared to meet America's social and political upheavals.

EVEN BEFORE the ravages of a global pandemic, America's body politic looked dangerously ill. On this sentiment, at least, there is probably still widespread agreement. But, as with any diagnosis, the devil is in the details.

The United States boasts levels of extreme poverty and wealth concentration that set it apart from most industrialized nations. Even by the standards of neoliberal capitalism, U.S. workers are chronically underpaid, exploited and overworked. The country's health care system, unique among affluent liberal democracies, is essentially a giant Ponzi scheme whose main function is guaranteeing the profits of corporate insurance conglomerates while tens of millions of people go without even basic coverage.

Thanks to robber baron campaign finance laws, big money interests dominate both the legislative and electoral process to such an extent that the country's official status as a "democracy" is now very much a question for philosophical debate. As Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (one of the few bright spots in an otherwise bleak political landscape) pointed out last year, lawmakers regularly legislate around the very industries that fund them, making it difficult to discern where organized wealth ends and whatever remains of democratic politics begins.

All this was evident before COVID-19 exposed the frayed nature of America's social bonds or the brutal police murder of Minnesotan George Floyd underscored its persistent racism. With crisis piled upon catastrophe, perhaps no moment in U.S. history since the Civil War has made such a strong case for sweeping political upheaval.

And yet, November's 2020 presidential election will ultimately pit the incumbent right-wing menace against a conservative Democrat whose basic message is that little beyond the current occupant of the White House is in need of revision. In short: an anti-populist election in a moment more primed for popular insurgency than any other in decades.

How exactly did it come to this?

Though little about politics feels certain anymore, 2020 was always going to be a referendum on Donald Trump. In a sense, of course, the same can be said about every election featuring an incumbent president. But Trump's 2016 rise so resoundingly shattered our collective sense of political reality that virtually every development since has seemed epiphenomenal. With impeachment dead on arrival, thanks to a Republican-controlled Senate, and Trump poised to run again, the answer to one very important question would inevitably define the contours of the 2020 election cycle: namely, what would the alternative look like?

The necessity of unseating Trump being a given, plenty of constituent questions remained for U.S. liberals. Who would the Democratic presidential nominee be, and would he or she embrace a radical or a centrist agenda? What coalition of voters would Democrats try to assemble? Why exactly had Hillary Clinton lost what was probably the most winnable election in modern history? Though answers to questions like these have largely broken along predictable left/right lines since 2016, Trump's omnipresence in the American political imagination meant that, like virtually everything else in 2020, even they would necessarily revolve around how exactly one explained him.

Every liberal in America seemed to agree that the country's body politic was ill. But was Trump the disease or a mere symptom?

In the mainstream liberal account, Donald Trump's 2016 election represented the sudden and violent rupture of America's political reality—a break from all precedent so unexpected it defied rational explanation. In this telling, mainstream conservatism and, by extension, the country's electoral process itself were hijacked by something sinister and foreign. "This is not conservatism as we have known it," said Clinton in August 2016. "This is not Republicanism as we have known it." Plenty of people find this story of the past four years persuasive, which is a major reason it has dominated network television and much of print journalism since then.

The problem with this rendering of things has always been straightforward. When Trump and Trump*ism* are passed off as something alien to American politics, the culture complicit in their rise is let off the hook and the conditions that enabled them to flourish can be too easily ignored.

This means, among other things, ignoring or minimizing the storied history of Republican appeals to racism going back to the days of Reagan's "Chicago welfare queen" and long before (Democratic politicians are hardly exempt). It similarly means exonerating the previous Democratic administration for its negligent handling of the 2009 financial crisis, which precipitated the greatest destruction of middle class wealth since the Great Depression.

America's two political parties have had a shared commitment to austerity, neoliberal globalization, and increasing corporate encroachment on both politics and daily life since the 1980s. Though no single event or cultural development is to blame for the Trump phenomenon, disastrous decisions big and small, by Democrats and Republicans alike, undoubtedly contributed to the climate of democratic atrophy and demoralization in which it was able to take root.

Beginning in early 2019, the Democratic presidential primaries effectively pit the mainstream theory of Donald Trump's rise against a broader and more sweeping critique of America's political status quo.

Coming closer to winning the Democratic nomination in 2016 than even many supporters had believed was possible, Bernie Sanders was always bound to be a formidable candidate in 2020. But as the race heated up, he seemed more and more a kind of centrifugal force around which almost everything, explicitly or not, was revolving. The reason for his centrality in the contest was simple, though the ultimately successful effort to stop him would take a dizzyingly convoluted route to its final destination.

As an outspoken critic of the Democratic mainstream (and the class of corporate donors with which it is closely interwoven), Sanders attracted particularly fierce ideological opposition from centrist liberals. His signature policies, notably his unapologetic campaign for universal health care, represented a threat to American capital and its political surrogates more serious than either had faced in decades. Between his radical agenda and willingness to openly antagonize the extremely rich, Sanders's candidacy plainly sought to overturn years of conventional wisdom about what was and is politically possible.

His critique of America's political status quo also extended itself far beyond the errors of 2016 or the personality of Donald Trump. Strikingly, when Sanders was asked to account for the Trump era, he invariably blamed its worst aspects on the leaderships of both major parties and the conditions they have allowed to fester:

> "How did Trump become president? [The fact is] tens and tens of millions of Americans feel that the political establishment, Republican and Democrat, have failed them. What you have is that people are, in many cases in this country, working longer hours for low wages. You are aware of the fact that in an unprecedented way life expectancy has actually gone down in America because of diseases of despair. People have lost hope and they are drinking. They're doing drugs. They're committing suicide. They are worried about their kids."

Though under no illusions about disabusing the Republican base of prejudice, Sanders calculated that a radical and popular agenda could win back working class votes lost by Democrats since the Reagan era, while activating youth and low income voters, even non-voters, who are typically ignored by establishment liberals and conservatives alike. Securing victory on this basis, Sanders hoped to mobilize this same coalition to overcome the obstructionist nature of America's political institutions and pass a program more transformative than anything the country has seen since the New Deal.

Confronted with a second Sanders insurgency, centrist Democrats faced something of a dilemma. Whatever hostility he elicited from the professional political class, the only socialist in the United States Senate was also its most popular member. More to the point, key parts of Sanders's agenda, like Medicare For All, commanded considerable support. The primary race was thus punctuated by a series of increasingly strained and sometimes pathetic attempts to capture Sanders's dynamism while stripping it of anything politically ambitious or radical.

In candidates like Beto O'Rourke and Pete Buttigieg, Democratic strategists hoped to engineer a kind of brand relaunch in which the vague idea of "youth" would stand in for a popular agenda (see article by Arushana Sunderaeson on page 15). Others, like Kamala Harris (since appointed Democratic nominee for vice-president) tried to borrow Sanders's language around issues like Medicare For All while touting an agenda that pandered to the usual caste of special interests and corporate donors. A handful, like little known former Maryland Congressman John Delaney, attempted an explicitly anti-populist formula, though this, too, seemed to fall flat.

The only real exception was Elizabeth Warren. Though significantly less radical than Sanders, the senator was at least comfortable antagonizing the nation's billionaires and pitching policies like a wealth tax that grated against the prevailing consensus. By January, however, Warren had joined other candidates in the field in turning her guns against Sanders—a maneuver that failed to reinvigorate her candidacy but arguably aided the campaign's sudden turn roughly eight weeks later.

Joe Biden, despite being the race's ostensible frontrunner, had performed terribly in early contests, coming fourth in the Iowa caucuses, fifth in the New Hampshire primary and a distant second in Nevada. The former vice president's campaign apparently flailing ahead of the critical votes on Super Tuesday, anti-Sanders forces made another desperate feint toward Michael Bloomberg, hoping that the former Republican billionaire might capture enough delegates to play kingmaker and deny a victorious Sanders the nomination.

Donald Trump's handling of the coronavirus has been so incompetent that his re-election would be something of a miracle.

With the months-long effort to stop Sanders in disarray and the available alternatives losing steam, it briefly appeared that something extraordinary was about to happen and that the Democratic Party's 2020 presidential nominee would be an open socialist pitching a radical critique of America's political status quo. What happened next must therefore rank as one of the swiftest and most punishing turns in the history of primary politics. A sudden consolidation behind Biden succeeded in restoring his frontrunner status just as Sanders was poised to win, while Warren, the only remaining candidate who might have endorsed the Vermont Senator, refused to do so.

In one account that soon trended among pundits, Biden had merely united the majority of Democratic voters who preferred his moderate agenda to the one being championed by his left-wing opponent. Though casual observers might easily conclude the same, this explanation of the outcome doesn't square with what we know about the actual preferences of Democratic primary voters, who favoured, and continue to favour, marquee Sanders policies like a Green New Deal and Medicare For All. Even in South Carolina, the state that gave Biden his first primary victory, a majority of voters reportedly favoured a "complete overhaul" of the U.S. economic system.

Sanders had gambled that these preferences could be turned into a winning coalition. Though his slew of early primary and caucus victories had seemed to bear this out, the

race ultimately swung on something more abstract: the question of who liberal voters believed was the safest bet against Donald Trump. As the more recognized face and the candidate with the backing of most party grandees and luminaries, not to mention overwhelming media support, Biden—a candidate who once pledged that "nothing fundamentally would change" should he win—ultimately secured the allegiance of a primary electorate whose fear of the current president overrode its ideological preferences.

The key question of the 2020 election cycle had thus been decided. Trump was disease rather than symptom, and defeating him with a progressive agenda would take a backseat to putting the old and familiar in his place.

If the current polls are borne out and Joe Biden is elected president in November, it will be in spite of his campaign rather than because of it. Notwithstanding his already disastrous presidency, Donald Trump's handling of the coronavirus has been so incompetent that his re-election would be something of a miracle. Nonetheless, as the candidate who ostensibly represented the safe choice, Biden appeared determined, well into September, to repeat many of the same strategic errors that doomed Hillary Clinton four years ago.

Having similarly witnessed a populist revolt within the Democratic base, the former vice-president has similarly put all his chips on winning the votes of affluent suburbanites and the tiny sliver of Republicans who oppose the current president. Between a Wall Street–friendly campaign and a tough-on-crime pivot amidst national reckoning with racial injustice, liberal America's standard-bearer is promising conservative restoration in a moment demanding radical change.

Out-of-touch though it may be, the widespread and well-deserved hatred much of the U.S. electorate has for Donald Trump may well be enough to carry Joe Biden to victory on November 3. But make no mistake: even if Trump goes down to defeat, America's body politic will remain as dangerously ill as it was when he first emerged—and the new Democratic president, having diagnosed the Trump era as disease rather than symptom, will be poorly equipped to offer a cure. M

ARUSHANA SUNDERAESON

Young voters may yet save America

The 2020 presidential election as "last stand" for the boomer generation

"ONLY THE YOUNG, only the young can run," sings Taylor Swift on her political anthem released in early 2020. There is no doubt American youth have been hitting the pavement hard—in the Black Lives Matter resurgence, in protests over climate change, and in calls for economic justice in the wake of pandemic joblessness. The question is, will they show up to polls on November 3, or take advantage of mail-in ballots, to dump Trump?

According to a study published in May by the Pew Research Center, Americans from the Gen-X and younger generations outvoted their elders in the 2018 U.S. midterm election. The study found that Gen Z (born between the mid-1990s and late 2010s) is largely pro-government, anti-Trump, and the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history, with 52% identifying as non-Hispanic white. In September, *The Economist* referred to 2020 as "the last stand of the baby-boomers," who have dominated elections since the 1990s.

The Joe Biden–Kamala Harris campaign has been challenged for not engaging enough with this growing young cohort of potential supporters. In March, Biden's main competition for the Democratic presidential nomination, Bernie Sanders, warned the party establishment: "In order to win in the future, you need to win the voters who represent the future of our country. And you must speak to the issues of concern to them. You cannot simply be satisfied by winning the votes of people who are older."

Timothy Ellis, a U.S. immigrant to Canada who worked on Sanders's 2016 campaign, tells me the Democrats have to realize that the centre has shifted.

"Young people have grown up watching a steadily worsening climate crisis unfold while our elders did nothing to address it," says Ellis, now a senior organizer with Leadnow.ca. "We've grown up watching the rich get richer while wages stagnate. Many lack health care entirely. In the U.S., life expectancy is actually going down. Democrats will need to offer real, bold, progressive solutions that match the scale of the daily crises we face if they want to win Millennial and Gen Z voters."

Ellis offers up the example of the recent Senate primary in Massachusetts between Joe Kennedy, who

ran as a "new voice" of youth with the right family connections, and the 74-year-old incumbent Ed Markey, a co-author of the Green New Deal resolution with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (who endorsed him). Polling had Markey down by double digits in the beginning of the campaign, "but he won handily in the end by running an unabashedly progressive campaign that energized and drew in Millennials and Gen Z while also retaining older suburban moderates," says Ellis.

"What [Democrats] used to consider 'far left' is the new centre. If Democrats embrace that, they can win landslides for two generations."

This time around, if the Democrats do again lose to Trump, and with Sanders off the menu for future bids, the question becomes: what next? Erica Bronco, a University of Ottawa student who resides in Vermont and will be voting for Biden-Harris on November 3, says she thinks Harris or Cory Booker look promising.

"Booker's compassion and thoughtfulness in the way he talked at the [Democratic primaries] debate and in interviews really reminded me of President Obama and I miss having a president who is so thoughtful about other people and the impact of making important speeches during times of division or tragedy and trying to unite the country," she tells me. Bronco adds that she is glad to see Harris as the vice-presidential candidate, as she says it will bring a new perspective and representation of women and people of colour.

Regardless of the results, the impact of younger voters will change political considerstions for Democrats and Republicans alike, says Paul Hamilton, an associate professor at Brock University. "The Democrats have been rebuilding since Clinton's defeat in 2016. They have moved to the left and worked on policy that will appeal to younger voters. A new generation of Democrats will begin to take place after this election," he tells me.

"The near-term future for the Republican party is grim," Hamilton adds. "The problem is that the party is very divided, and the primary system encourages extremist candidates. The electoral environment is also hostile to Republicans, as American society becomes increasingly diverse, and left-leaning Millennials and Gen Z voters make a larger impact on elections." M

ERICA LENTI

Queer politics and the 49th parallel

IF THERE'S A PARTICULAR point of pride Canadians love to cling to, it's that we are not Americans. Our neighbours to the south, ever boastful, lack our trademark politeness, our "everyone belongs" rhetoric and our progressiveness—or so we think. We were especially smug in 2016, when polls across the U.S. closed and Donald Trump emerged victorious. Our recently elected prime minister, by contrast, focused on gender balanced cabinets and climate action plans. While Trump set Americans back, we had taken a giant leap forward.

That, of course, is not to downplay Canada's failings—our awful relations (personal and institutional) with Indigenous peoples over the years, the mistreatment of racialized people by police, our government's unwillingness to act on climate change, just to name a few. But wherever Canada faltered, we were sure we remained steps ahead of the U.S. *It could always be worse.*

That same hubris may be on display this November when, amid an unprecedented health crisis, Americans decide whether Trump deserves a second chance in office. So lucky are we to be avoiding the politics of mail-in votes and maskless rallies (those pesky rumours of a fall election notwithstanding). But it's arrogant to think we'll emerge unscathed. For LGBTQ2 Canadians in particular, the 2020 U.S. presidential election will have an impact on the ways we're perceived and how the issues we face come to light.

Let's get the obvious out of the way: Canadian queer and trans folks currently have more social and legal protections than our LGBTQ2 neighbours to the south. While legislation like the Equality Act, which would enshrine anti-discrimination protections for queer and trans people, remains stalled in a Republican controlled Senate, Canadians have enjoyed similar protections in Bill C-16 (amendments to the Criminal Code and Human Rights Act) for three years now. It's not unlike the legalization of same-sex marriage at the federal level in Canada, which took the U.S. an additional decade to pass.

But laws aside, it's American *ideology* that poses the greatest threat. Some call it the social contagion effect: where America leads, Canada supposedly follows. Or, as the saying goes, "When America sneezes, the world catches a cold."

After Trump took power, Canada caught a serious American flu. Hate became more widespread—from the nationwide appearance of anti-Muslim, anti-gay

flyers calling to "Make Canada Great Again" to the vandalization of numerous rainbow crosswalks across the country.

In 2017, even after the aforementioned Bill C-16 enshrined anti-discrimination protections for trans and non-binary Canadians, debate over gender identity and expression flourished. Opponents of the bill, like writer and speaker Meghan Murphy and professor Jordan Peterson, called into question the legitimacy of trans rights. That came as an American conversation over anti-trans "bathroom bills" (a pejorative name for legislation that polices sex-segregated spaces on the basis of gender identity) reached a fever pitch; that year alone, 16 states considered similar bills.

Even more recently, talk of abortion rights—an issue that, over the years, most Canadian politicians have chosen not to revisit—arose in debates among Conservative leadership hopefuls, as conversations of overturning *Roe v. Wade* swirled along our southern flank. Opposition Leader Erin O'Toole may hold a pro-choice stance, but shifts in the U.S., especially following the sudden death of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, may yet embolden the opposite camp within his party and its voting base.

Let's not forget that our relatively progressive government is hanging by a thread, as it may soon be challenged in an election. Burdened with ethics scandals and a growing deficit, the Trudeau Liberals face a reconfigured and well-funded Conservative Party whose leader has called for a "Canada first" strategy that eerily echoes Trump's election stance.

The reality is that we're not immune to America's social ills, no matter how much better we think we are. We are beholden—begrudgingly or not—to our neighbours to the south.

The future of democracy is on the line, with many U.S. voters unsure of whether they will be able to participate in a process from which they are increasingly disenfranchised. When we all eagerly watch the polls close and the ballots get counted, we need to keep the future of our own country in mind, too. After all, political ideologies can be contagious. M

Erica Lenti is a senior editor at *Xtra*, a news and culture site covering current events through an LGBTQ2 lens, where this article was first published.

LAURA MACDONALD AND JEFFREY AYRES

The Safe Third Country Agreement must end

Much is at stake in Canada's appeal of a court ruling against a harmful refugee pact with the United States

FOR THE MOST PART, Canadians like to think of themselves as open to immigration, especially compared to the anti-migrant policies that prevail in the United States and many parts of Europe. The Trudeau government has capitalized on this self-image, particularly in its response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis. Trudeau famously tweeted: "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength. #WelcometoCanada." Beginning in November 2015, working closely with Canadian civil society organizations, the government welcomed over 25,000 Syrian refugees.

This image has been marred by the virulent response of the media and political actors to the thousands of people who have arrived in recent years, often on foot, to make an asylum claim at the Canada-U.S. border, primarily at Roxham Road in Quebec near the New York state border. This situation is the outcome of especially the new anti-migrant policies adopted by the Trump administration since 2016, and the long-term effects of the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) that Canada and the United States signed in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

That agreement meant that Canada must turn away any individual who arrives at an official point of entry from the United States, preventing them from making a refugee claim in Canada, since the United States is considered a "safe country" to make such a claim. However, asylum seekers discovered a so-called loophole in that agreement that meant if they arrived between official points of entry, they had to be permitted to make their claim in Canada.

This July, the Federal Court declared the STCA unconstitutional, since it violated "the right to life, liberty and security of the person," as guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The case had been filed by Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees and the Canadian Council of Churches on behalf of several test plaintiffs. The

judge's decision confirmed the argument that had been made by refugee and human rights activists for years, that the United States, particularly under the Trump administration, was not a safe place for refugees.

The Trudeau government has nonetheless decided to appeal the decision, to cling to an indefensible agreement at exactly the moment the racist and nativist policies of the Trump administration make it all the more dangerous, illustrating the contradictions of refugee and immigration politics in Canada.

The Safe Third Country Agreement came out of the Canadian and U.S. governments' Smart Border Declaration signed in December 2001. In addition to commitments to increased information sharing on perceived security threats, preclearance (for cross-border travel and goods shipments), shared border facilities, common standards, etc., the bilateral accord included measures to "identify potential security and criminality threats and expose 'forum shoppers' who seek asylum in both systems." The STCA, which was meant to manage the flow of asylum claimants at land border ports of entry, was signed in 2002 and came into effect in December 2004.

The agreement represented a long-standing desire of the Canadian government to limit the number of people making refugee claims here, since would-be claimants are far more likely to travel by land through the United States to Canada to make a claim than in the opposite direction. Although the U.S. initially resisted Canada's proposal, since it meant it would have to deal with more claimants, after 2001 the Bush administration agreed to this request in exchange for Canada's co-operation on other U.S. security priorities.

The agreement means that Canada must turn away any individual who arrives at an official point of entry from the United States, preventing them from making a refugee claim in Canada, since the United States is considered a "safe country" to make such a claim. The Canadian government defended this measure based on the argument that the U.S. had similar policies to Canada regarding refugee rights (even though Canada accepts more claims). The agreement had a dramatic impact: in 2005, Canada received just over 4,000 claims at border points of entry, down from approximately 8,900 claims filed in 2004.

This situation changed with the election of President Donald Trump in 2016 on a notably anti-migrant platform, and his administration's announcement in 2017 that it was ending the temporary protected status (TPS) designation. While the largest group of people benefitting from TPS were from El Salvador (about 200,000), the designation also covered nearly 60,000 Haitians who have been living and working in the U.S. since a devastating earthquake hit their country in 2010.

TPS was introduced in 1990 to provide temporary refuge to people in the United States who originate from countries affected by conflicts or natural disasters that prevent these people from returning home. Trump's cancellation of the designation had the unexpected result of dramatically increasing the numbers of people crossing the northern U.S. border into Canada, often away from official border crossings, to seek refugee protection.

The refugee claimants took this more dangerous, "irregular" route to skirt the Safe Third Country Agreement, which requires Canadian border agencies to return claimants to the United States. Instead, people crossing into Canada at points between designated ports of entry were apprehended by RCMP officers and taken to official entry points to process their refugee claims.

The number of claims spiked in August 2017 when 5,712 people entered Canada "irregularly" to file asylum claims, mainly in Quebec. The province responded by opening Montreal's Olympic Stadium to provide temporary housing. By 2018, 18,518 of the total 19,419 RCMP interceptions of individuals and families crossing the border occurred in Quebec. At the same time, the rate of acceptance of such refugee claims declined, Reuters reported, from 53% in 2017 to 40% in the first three months of 2018.

The debate over the Safe Third Country Agreement became, for a while, a lightning rod for racist and xenophobic rhetoric. Former federal Conservative immigration critic Michelle Rempel called on the Liberal government to close the "loophole" and extend the pact to the whole border. "Persons coming from a safe country and not directly fleeing persecution should not be able to ignore our laws and enter Canada illegally," Rempel wrote. "If they do, they should be charged."

In the federal Conservative leadership campaign in 2017, Kellie Leitch won applause from party members for saying that those who cross the Canada-U.S. border "illegally" should be "detained, questioned, and sent back to the United States immediately." Lisa Raitt, then deputy leader of the Conservatives, raised concerns about the speed at which refugee claims were approved, claiming that "the border isn't secure." Raitt argued that Canadians were wondering why immigrants are able to walk across the border and said it was a security issue, not an immigration issue. Maxime Bernier, another leadership hopeful in that contest (who went on to form the anti-migrant People's Party of Canada after losing), further argued that if police and border guards fail to stop the flow of migrants, "I would look at additional temporary measures, including deploying Canadian forces in troubled border areas."

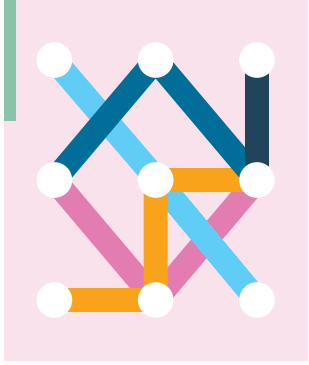
In the midst of this and other very public fearmongering, an August 2018 Angus Reid poll showed that two-thirds of Canadians believed that the arrival of

people claiming asylum in Canada was a "crisis." Storm Alliance and La Meute, two far-right nationalist groups in Quebec, argued that the situation represented an "invasion" of Quebec by "illegals," and periodically held protests at Roxham Road holding the sovereigntist Patriote flag.

Provincial politicians also reacted with alarm to the increase in refugee claimants. In 2018, Ontario Premier Doug Ford, Quebec's then-premier Philippe Couillard and Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister issued a joint statement that called on the federal government to provide compensation to the provinces for the increased costs associated with the arrival of irregular migrants, and to speed up the adjudication process for claimant hearings.

Subsequently, the numbers of refugee claimants arriving at the border declined. Moreover, as a result of "temporary agreements" between the U.S. and Canada, refugee claimants entering at official land, air and maritime ports were to be sent back to the U.S. Meanwhile, the Safe Third Country Agreement remains in effect while the federal government appeals the Federal Court's decision, even though Amnesty International and others have demanded the agreement's immediate suspension.

The Trudeau government may hope that a change in administration in the United States will undermine the case against the STCA. However, there is no guarantee that Trump will not be re-elected, or that a Biden administration would substantially improve the situation of asylum claimants in the United States. More fundamentally, the government's decision to appeal the decision undermines Canada's respect for international refugee law and risks fuelling anti-migrant sentiment, which is again running high in the wake of COVID-19 scapegoating by Trump and other right-wing politicians. M



Index
The Trump Presidency: A small glimpse

26
Number of women who have accused Donald Trump of sexual assault and harassment since the 1970s. Trump denies the accusations and, in 2016, promised to sue every one of his accusers. He has yet to do so, but two of the 26 women are suing him, including E Jean Carroll, who accuses the U.S. president of raping her in the mid-1990s. Trump is one of 262 famous people who have been accused of sexual misconduct since the #metoo movement began in April 2017, largely in response to the president's misogyny.

212,000
U.S. deaths attributed to COVID-19, the novel coronavirus thought to have originated in China and first detected in late 2019, when the *Monitor* went to print. In late September, the U.S. accounted for 6.9 million of the world's 31.4 million cases, with the Trump administration's late response and contradictory public health messaging blamed for the high pandemic death toll in the U.S.

281
Corporate lobbyists appointed by the Trump administration by October 2019, or one for every 14 political appointments. Andrew Wheeler, picked by Trump in January 2019 to run the Environmental Protection Agency, is a former coal lobbyist. Wheeler replaced the scandal plagued Scott Pruit, who is now working as an energy lobbyist in the state of Indiana.

194,000
Estimated U.S. military personnel actively deployed abroad at the end of 2019, only 4,000 fewer than were deployed at the end of the Obama presidency, despite Trump's promise to stop America's "forever wars." The U.S. army now operates in 40% of the world's nations as part of its endless Global War on Terror, which has cost the U.S. government US$1.9 trillion (about $2.5 trillion CDN) since 2001, and resulted in hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, largely in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Pakistan.

100+
Environmental policy rollbacks launched in areas such as toxic substances, energy extraction and climate change since Trump took office on a promise to deregulate just about all economic activity. In high profile cases, Trump authorized drilling in an Arctic wildlife refuge, rescinded tighter rules on fracking on federal and Indian lands, weakened bird and habitat protections, weakened mercury regulations in power plants and coal storage, and withdrew the United States from the Paris agreement on climate change.

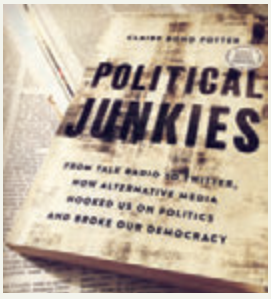
2,100
Reported incidents of anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S. between March (when Trump referred to COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus") and June, according to the Stop AAPI Hate campaign. Leading up to the 2020 presidential election, Trump frequently referred to COVID-19 as the "plague from China." Overall hate crimes hit a 16-year high in America in 2018, according to the FBI, with incidents targeting LatinX people rising from the year before. In his first presidential bid, Trump referred to Mexican and other Latin American people fleeing violence in their countries for the United States as "rapists" and "killers," comments he continues to defend.

200
Number of judicial appointments made by Trump up to July this year. By comparison, Obama successfully appointed 334 federal judges over his two terms as president. On September 25, Trump announced the conservative jurist Amy Coney Barrett would be his nominee to replace the recently deceased liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the Supreme Court, which Democrats worry will have serious ramifications for progressive laws and policies for decades to come.

SOURCES: BUSINESS INSIDE, THE GUARDIAN (U.K.), THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE, POPULAR SCIENCE, AXIOS, VOX, PROPUBLICA, CNN, TIME, THE INTERCEPT.

REVIEWED BY NATASHA BULOWSKI

Lies to power



POLITICAL JUNKIES: FROM TALK RADIO TO TWITTER, HOW ALTERNATIVE MEDIA HOOKED US ON POLITICS AND BROKE OUR DEMOCRACY
CLAIRE BOND POTTER

Basic Books, July 2020, $40

ON NOVEMBER 8, 2016, the United States elected its first populist president. According to Claire Bond Potter, we have the right-wing alternative media to blame. In her new book, *Political Junkies*, which comes on the eve of another chaotic and sharply polarized presidential election, Potter critically reflects on how alternative media shapes political ideologies and, as a result, the political establishment.

Potter contends that alternative media has given rise to hyper-partisan narratives that turn us into "political junkies," voraciously consuming news that speaks to our ideologies and continuously seeking more of the same. But the story of alternative media and its powerful political influence is much more complex than this and is tied up with technological and social changes that have together drastically altered U.S. democracy.

To understand the roots of alternative media, Potter takes us back to the paranoid McCarthyism of the 1950s. Despite its claims to professional independence, mainstream media at the time largely conformed to McCarthy's conservative populist narrative, creating a vacuum for progressive and left-wing media content. In 1953, *I.F Stone's Weekly* stepped in to fill that space.

Produced by seasoned reporter I.F. Stone, the *Weekly* promised readers well-researched stories based on government documents (as opposed to the slippery words of politicians) and delved into affairs the mainstream media wouldn't touch. Free of editorial boards, political influence and advertising, a new breed of independent newsletters won the trust of audiences by responsibly, honestly and thoroughly reporting on topics being suppressed by the establishment.

Where progressive alternative media arose out of necessity, Potter argues that the conservative alternative media gained large followings by attacking mainstream media as too liberal, despite its ample coverage of conservative issues. From the beginning, instead of producing original stories, conservative alternative journalists elaborated on views already expressed in the news, fuelling a conservative populist movement by creating political division through hyper-partisan narratives.

As it turns out, they would never look back, only become more proficient. Potter walks us through the consequences of technological changes for the enlargement of the conservative press, revealing a disturbing pattern where it becomes easier and easier to spread misinformation and push a right-wing agenda. Newsletters, talk radio, broadcast television, internet forums, blogging and social media helped grow populist movements on the left and right. Potter analyzes the overarching effects this has had on U.S. elections.

One of the most significant shifts Potter chronicles is what she calls many-to-many production facilitated by the diffusion of home computers. Instead of a single producer writing or broadcasting to an audience, internet forums conducted and published political conversations free of censorship and advertising, creating a horizontal news distribution with readers fact-checking each other.

These online communities, and later social media and blogging, made people feel like they had a front row seat to the political drama, and political junkies consumed more and more news in pursuit of feeling a personal connection to politics. As our political news, political conversations and online networks become increasingly personalized and partisan, the political divide between progressive and conservative populists deepens.

Potter's other main point of focus in the book is how the effects of alternative media on elections, voter identification, voter outreach, smear campaigns and fundraising have evolved to create the climate which made a candidate like Trump possible. In his last campaign for the presidency, Trump expertly harnessed the power of a conservative populist movement and stoked its fire with brazen misinformation, outlandish statements, targeted propaganda and anti-establishment promises.

But Potter emphasizes that populist narratives can be truth-seeking as well, as in the Black Lives Matter movement, and that the widespread dissemination of these ideas may help set the stage for a Democratic victory in November. At least that is Potter's hope. M

Colour-coded Justice

ANTHONY N. MORGAN

The meaning of the third of November for the Negro

STARTED WRITING THIS column on September 18 as my social media feed filled with posts about National Black Voter Day, marking 50 days until the U.S. presidential election on November 3.

Launched this year by the National Urban League, Black Entertainment Television (BET), and more than 50 other partner organizations, National Black Voter Day is an education and advocacy campaign aimed at increasing civic engagement and voter participation among African Americans. The day included a smart, sleek and media savvy series of mostly virtual events, forums, talks, learning sessions, performances and speeches focusing on invigorating Black voting, community engagement, economic development, health and education.

Trump's last year of his first presidency has been traumatic for Black lives. The president condemned the newly insurgent police reform movement as being made up of "THUGS"—not tens of thousands of everyday Americans protesting the police killings in March of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. In late August, Trump tweeted his sympathy for the teen killer of three peaceful Wisconsin protesters demanding justice for Jacob Blake, another Black man shot by police. Against the wishes of Portland's mayor, he sent federal officers to that city in a military-style operation dubbed "Diligent Valor" and, in late September, declared Portland an "anarchist jurisdiction." He dismissed the civil rights legacy of John Lewis after his passing this summer, in a case of sour grapes over the fact the respected Georgia Democrat had refused to attend the president's inauguration.

Calls to remove the statues of notoriously anti-Black Americans are merely the "cancel culture" of "left-wing mobs" to Trump, who vowed to pass an executive order enforcing "patriotic education" versus more comprehensive histories of slavery. Trump has ordered the Office of Management and Budget to flag any costs related to antiracism training sessions, while OMB Director Russell Vought has asked federal agencies to specifically target training on critical race theory and white privilege. Trump has even blamed the Black Lives Matter movement for spreading COVID-19—a virus that has disproportionately affected and taken the lives of African Americans and people of colour.

As Americans grapple with the prospect of four more deleterious, dreaded and dumbfounding years with Trump still in the White House, National Black Voter Day is a sign that many Black Americans feel the stakes are especially high this election and that their votes matter like perhaps never before.

COVID-19 has reiterated the borderless reality of anti-Black racism. Black residents make up 7.5% of Toronto's population but 21% of the city's COVID cases, while in Ottawa, 66% of residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 are either Black or from other non-white backgrounds. Many politicians here, too, sidestep conversations about systemic racism while condemning our own coming to terms with Canadian history as just more "cancel culture." As such, I found myself following the daylong #NationalBlackVoterDay campaign curiously, perhaps longingly. I was captivated by the steady flow of clips and commentary filling my timeline with their motivating messages of the power of Black voices.

Ironically, though, the longer I watched the stream of sometimes revival-like inspiration, the more I became gripped by sinking feelings of despair. Furtively, I asked myself, Do Black voters really matter?

While I firmly believe that all Black people should exercise their right to vote as they see fit, including the right to not make their mark at the ballot box, I personally view voting as a positive civic obligation. It's a responsibility I proudly take on, as a fundamental right gained and paid for in the blood, sweat and tears of my African ancestors as they struggled from the plantations to their liberation. But given we are clearly not yet free, to me, voting is not simply a duty of democracy but a demand of Black freedom.

Why then did I feel such despair watching African Americans rally around this right on National Black Voter Day? I began to imagine what I'd do faced with the same presidential choices they now face. Can we call it a real choice? I'm still not sure, and am relieved that I don't have to make it, given that I'm not American.

On the one hand, if we're talking about the lives and interests of Black communities, it would be intellectually dishonest for me to say that there is absolutely no qualitative political difference between a would-be Trump-Pence Republican presidency and a would-be Biden-Harris Democratic presidency. In office and well before that, Trump has shown open disdain for, and even supported outright opposition to, African American interests in the areas of criminal justice, education, employment, housing and health care. While Biden and Harris both have some deeply troubling tough-on-crime skeletons in their political closets, their overall track records suggest they would be less averse than their Republican opponents to advancing laws and policies that protect and promote the interests of African Americans.

But this is precisely the problem. Where the alternative to not voting is the possibility that anti-Blackness will be a few degrees less intense than it might otherwise be, there can be no choice for African American voters that doesn't feel like a co-signature on the perpetuation of racial inequality and discrimination.

Surely the centuries-long, multi-generational struggle of African Americans—from slavery to abolition to the right to vote and full civil equality—cannot culminate in this dreadful false choice at the end of 2020. Surely their struggle was for a greater vision and version of Black emancipation at the ballot box and beyond.

Reflecting on this, I remembered the sobering words of emancipation era abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who, in one of the most incisive and excoriating critiques we have of American freedom, exposed the callous hollowness of the 1852 Independence Day celebrations. In his address, "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro," Douglass said:

> *What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sound of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants brass fronted impudence; your shout of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanks-givings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States....*

I wondered, were he alive today, what would Douglass have to say about the meaning of this third of November to African Americans. Would he also see in this false choice another gross injustice and cruelty to which African Americans are the victim, making the election a sham, a hollow mockery, fraud and deception?

He might. But he also might point to other developments making it necessary to keep pushing for increased Black voting. For instance, in opposition to Trump's vilification of Black people and open support for white supremacy, there are the hugely popular NBA strikes for Black lives, the defunding of police in at least 13 U.S. cities including Austin (which redirected a third of that money to social programs), and a resurgence of Black mutual aid societies to provide COVID-19 support where the state has failed to do so.

Based on my readings of Douglass, I think he would have welcomed National Black Voter Day and encouraged African Americans to vote in this election, to help support and advance these reforms. I imagine he'd urge African Americans and their allies to continue fighting every day to make every subsequent vote mean much more than the one before it.

Naturally, I'd agree with him. That's how you truly make Black voting mean what our ancestors dreamed it should. M

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

Inspired

AARON EISENBERG

OVERCOMING FEAR: A WORKERS TOOLKIT

OVER TWO DAYS last November, more than 40 trade unionists, activists, movement allies and policy practitioners from Canada, the United States and Mexico gathered at the offices of UE (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America) Local 506 in Erie, Pennsylvania to discuss how collectively we might foster greater international solidarity to overcome reactionary and right-wing rhetoric around trade, migration and climate.

The detachable, foldable pamphlet on the next four pages, "Overcoming Fear, Taking Back Power," is one tangible outcome of that gathering (and biweekly meetings since then) that the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung New York Office is very pleased to make available to Monitor readers. A web version of the pamphlet, along with French and Spanish versions, can be found at www.trinationaltoolkit.com.

By highlighting the dichotomy between what our governments are currently offering on trade, climate policy and migration, and what we know is needed, we hope this toolkit can help progressives in each country develop proactive messages on these issues. Additionally, with the map, we are illuminating the interconnectedness of these topics and showcasing how they cannot be siloed and separated.

Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung New York Office thanks all the participants, the convening parties, the translators, and the designers for their fantastic work. Ultimately, this project is an example of coming together to foster solidarity across borders—something that we desperately need much more of in the world.

For any questions or comments about the toolkit or this trinational gathering, please contact Project Manager Aaron Eisenberg at Aaron.Eisenberg@rosalux.org.

TRADE POLICY

Do you care about having a good job? The corporations writing our trade agreements do not.

These agreements enshrine:

- Fossil fuel expansion
- Investment protections for corporations
- Regulatory loopholes
- Greater privatization

In the hundreds of pages of text that make up these agreements, enforceable social protections are missing. We need:

- Strong climate policy
- Social protection for farmers
- Workers rights protections
- Gender rights commitments
- Justice for indigenous communities
- Guaranteed public health

TRINATIONAL TOOLKIT

OVERCOMING FEAR, TAKING BACK POWER

WHEN A TRADE AGREEMENT HAPPENS...

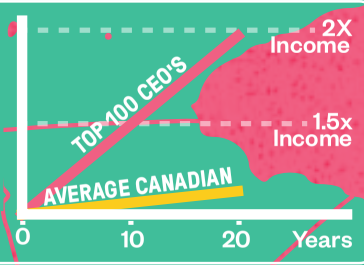
Food and Agriculture

Energy

Workers Rights

ALASKA

When adjusted for inflation, the average **income of the top 100 CEO's** in Canada has grown by **99%** in the last twenty years, compared to **9%** for the **average Canadian.**



All tar sands oil becomes exempt from tariffs to flow to the US and Mexico

Formerly highly regulated dairy industry now must compete with unregulated imports pushing small scale farmers out of work

Small scale farming is killed off as only large multinational factory farms survive

KEYSTONE PIPELINE

Thirty years ago, the CEO-to-worker compensation ratio in the U.S. was **45 to 1.** Today it is approximately **280 to 1.**

In Mexico, consumer goods on average cost **2.6x more** than in the U.S. and **2.3x more** than in Canada.

80% of climate migrants are women

Private international gas companies' right to profit comes over publicly-owned renewables

SUR DE TEXAS PIPELINE

Produce from the US becomes cheaper in Mexican supermarkets while the best Mexican produce is exported to the US

In the last 30 years, **the cost of basic consumer goods** in Mexico has risen to **seven times**, while the **minimum wage** has only grown **four times** over in the same period.

HAWAII

We need all workers to come together!

We must fight both locally and internationally!

Only then can solidarity prevail.

With support from the German Foreign Office (AA)

ROSA LUXEMBURG FOUNDATION

CLIMATE POLICY

The world's top scientists say we have a 2030 deadline to decarbonize our world in order to avert the worst of the climate crisis. Right now there are two possible futures.

What is currently offered is based on profits. This includes:

The belief that technology alone will save us

Fewer public resources, greater private profits

Privatizing the solutions

What is needed is a complete restructuring of our world to meet the scale of the crisis.

Public ownership of energy production with local, democratic control

Good jobs for all workers

Global cooperation

Protections for climate migrants

MIGRATION POLICY

Current migration policy is based on dividing anyone different as an "other." "Others" are mistreated, isolated, and discriminated against.

This is a deliberate choice meant to divide through:

Stoking and inciting fear

Promoting the idea of a scarcity of space

Pitting workers against workers

It does not need to be this way. This divide and conquer ignores that movement is a fundamental human right.

What would you wish for all people that have to move?

Migration policies based on dignity

Removing stigma

Guaranteed social, health, and labor rights

Freedom to move and freedom to stay

SHAYNA PLAUT

A sick cocktail of meritocracy and shame

A "hidden immigrant" attempts to explain the logic of America

TWELVE YEARS AGO, I made the difficult decision to leave the United States, the country of my birth, for Canada, a land that, at the time, I assumed was filled with moose, hockey and—the real draw—national health care.

Ironically, HOPE was really the *feeling du jour* back then in America, especially in Chicago—my home for over a decade. Senator Obama's campaign motto was woven into speeches, plastered on walls, emblazoned on an impressive wardrobe of T-shirts. For me, HOPE was what drove me to put my cats on a plane, my books in a shipping crate, and pack everything else into my car for the drive to Vancouver. I was ready to start a life I truly believed would be better for me and my future children. But it was a HOPE weighed down by frustration and resignation.

On New Year's Eve 2008, the day that my Canadian immigration paperwork arrived, I wrote a letter to Obama, then president-elect, explaining why I was choosing to leave the U.S. It read in part:

> I need a government that will invest in me and my education. I need to be in a country that recognizes health care as a human right and that will allow either parental paid time off to raise a child for the first year or provide affordable state-subsidized quality child care. We're just not there yet, and I don't know if—or when—we will be.... I want to live, prosper and be free and I want my children to grow up believing this is the norm.

On the eve of another U.S. election, my letter looks more prescient than overly pessimistic. Clichés about hindsight aside, the Obama decade's list of policy could-have-beens is long, and a country of HOPE is now steeped in and driven by FEAR. Fear of the pandemic (or masks). Fear of nationalism and white supremacy (or the Black Lives Matter movement). Fear of unravelling democracy and unhinged demagogy. Fear of each other. Much of that fear has been stoked by our sitting president, the former game show host Donald Trump, who appears to thrive on it.

But I digress, as we so easily do around Trump. I set out to write about my experience of leaving the United States and settling in Canada.

I am a "hidden" immigrant to Canada. I am white (and there is the problematic misconception that Canadians are white and immigrants are not), and English is my first language. But I am also a member of a religious and cultural minority who did not grow up in Canada.

When I arrived here 12 years ago, the medical, taxation and postal systems were literally foreign to me and I made a lot of assumptions and mistakes interacting with them. (I have no family here, so I was heavily reliant on these public institutions to guide me in all aspects of my life.) For the first year or so, the "9" on my social insurance number—indicating temporary residency—all but ensured I would not get hired. For many years I could not vote. And since most people I met assumed I was culturally Canadian, my directness was constantly read as rude, my lack of familiarity with Raffi, *Kids in the Hall* or curling a bit unnerving.

When people find out I am in fact American-born, I often find myself trying to explain to my Canadian co-patriots that there is a *logic* behind what is sometimes interpreted as collective madness south of the border. From an early age, Americans are raised on a sick cocktail of meritocracy and American exceptionalism that scoffs at the idea of social safety nets and those who might need them. This is the mentality of desperation, of internalized self-reliance (a close cousin of shame), and it has a direct effect on policy and politics.

The U.S. socioeconomic and political system denies, and in fact belittles, the notion of a social safety net. In my 30 years in America, 15 of them working, I knew what it felt like to not feel you can afford to go to the doctor, to watch an epileptic mother be denied health care because of her pre-existing conditions. As I wrote in my parting letter to Obama, "I was tired of begging for reduced rates with doctors. Tired of having no workers' compensation.... Tired of not having the basic rights of health care and parental leave guaranteed to much of the industrial world."

I remember calculating what taking a single sick day might mean for my job, and thus my health insurance plan. I can imagine how it might feel to get a positive COVID test knowing both medical care and time off

I remember calculating what taking a single sick day might mean for my job, and thus my health insurance plan.

to self-isolate are not viable options. I can understand what it means to fear going to the doctor because you are undocumented and not sure who you can trust—doctor, employer, neighbour—with your immigration status.

I understand what it means to really have no one to rely on but yourself. Like frogs in a slowly boiling pot of water, you become so used to the rising stress you believe it is the only way.

This personal suffering under the mythology of meritocracy is almost a patriotic duty in the U.S. I was raised to believe I was a part of the fabric of the United States, and that with such belonging came both rights and responsibilities. The United States had enabled my grandparents, as Jews, to live a life of safety and escape persecution, indeed genocide, when no other country in the world would do so. This part of our history—the persecution, perseverance, and belief in American exceptionalism—was, and continues to be, a constant refrain in my life. The flag still flies proudly on my mother's door.

Patriotism runs deep in my family. Both of my grandfathers served in the U.S. army even though neither was fluent in English at the time. But for me, patriotism does not mean "my country right or wrong." It does not mean being blind to reality. Rather, as a beneficiary to what would now be referred to as political asylum, I was raised with an obligation to stand up when things were not right and to fight and work to make it better. This was, and is, my definition of what it means to be patriotic: continuously making critical contributions to our broader society.

The author with her daughter Mira

But by the time I turned 30, I no longer knew how to juggle my sense of political and social responsibility with my personal goals of becoming a mother. I was frustrated and I felt like a fraud. I was living and working and indeed contributing to a system I did not believe in and that I knew was dishonest and unsustainable. I was constantly internalizing my "failures" of balancing family, professionalism and activism. Although I am the first to admit my flaws, the problems with the U.S. economic and social system would not be overcome in time to fix the disconnect that was building inside of me.

My current life would not be possible in the United States. But it has not been easy, either. In the 12 years I have lived in Canada, I have *never* worked a permanent job. Child care costs over $7,000 a year (for one child) and for many years I paid for my dentist, eyeglasses and counsellor out of pocket because I had no extended health care. That said, as a white, well educated, English-speaking person, Canada has treated me well. I completed my doctoral work at a respected Canadian institution (paid for by the Canadian government) and received my citizenship in 2017.

In 2019, I gave birth to my daughter without paying a dime.

I have often wondered what I can give back to Canada—a colonial country that I had the privilege, not the right, to join. Although I live in Winnipeg now, when I emigrated in August 2009 it was to unceded lands in British Columbia. My emigration was therefore legal, but not necessarily right, as it was the Queen of England, not the Musqueam, Tsleil'waututh and Squamish nations, who granted me stay. My formal education, English language, and profession—my unmarked privilege—granted me full participation in the colonial state.

For many years now, I have designed and taught courses on social inequalities, migration, and human rights institutions (Canadian and international) at world ranking Canadian universities and have written many journalistic and academic pieces covering issues of race, migration and activism. I like to think my position as "a hidden immigrant" has enriched this work. I feel it has certainly allowed me to see the creeping forces of nationalism, meritocratic ideology, anti-intellectualism and fear as it manifests north of the 49th.

Canada is not exactly the country I thought it was when I wrote my farewell letter to Obama. It is because of my recognition of this fact, my privilege, and my responsibility, that I now work at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and teach and research on human rights (both domestic and international). But I do not forget where I come from and I do not take what I have for granted. I will always keep both in mind as I use my skills and experiences—as an immigrant, an activist-academic, a mother—to contribute to the betterment of both of the countries I choose to call home. M

ASAD ISMI

U.S. empire, Trumped

IN A 1967 SPEECH, Martin Luther King Jr. called the United States government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." He identified economic profit as the motivator of this violence. The record of Washington's international aggression since then has been horrendous, as tacitly recognized even by Donald Trump in his promises, before and after the 2016 election, to end the United States' "endless wars." Trump nonetheless takes his place in the pantheon of violent U.S. presidents who have, since King's judgment, left millions of people dead in the Global South in the wake of incompetent military escapades and cruel economic warfare.

What distinguishes Trump's foreign policy is a pronounced nihilism borne of the decline of U.S. empire, which appears clearer under his administration than any other. Alfred McCoy, a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin and the author of *In the Shadows of Empire* (Haymarket Books), told *The Intercept*'s Jeremy Scahill in July 2017 that Trump is "accelerating perhaps markedly, even precipitously, the U.S. decline." McCoy predicts that China will overtake the U.S. both militarily and economically by the year 2030, but he claims Trump is a byproduct, and not the root cause, of this erosion of dominance.

In foreign and trade policy, the Trump administration has lashed out not just at rival states but also Washington's allies, which only reinforces the appearance of waning imperial influence. U.S. withdrawal from the Paris agreement on climate change, the U.S.-Russian intermediate missile treaty, and Trump's threats to not renew the START agreement limiting the number of deployed nuclear warheads offer prime examples, according to Conn Hallinan, a columnist with Foreign Policy in Focus, a project of the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies. To this list we can add Trump's pulling out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, the Iran nuclear agreement and the Palestinian peace process.

At the same time, the administration has demonized China—for all its domestic economic woes and the high U.S. death toll from COVID-19—while increasing U.S. military operations and surveillance in the South China Sea, making a nuclear military conflict more likely. Trump's unmitigated hostility toward Washington's main rivals on the world stage, China and Russia, has resulted in uniting them against him. Aside from withdrawing from the arms control treaty with Russia, Trump has imposed heavy sanctions on Moscow and is pressuring European countries who depend on Russian supplies of natural gas to stop construction of Nord Stream 2, a new pipeline that will expand Russian gas supplies to Europe (see John Foster's article, "Canada, black swans and oil," in the July/August 2020 issue of the *Monitor*).

"Trump's campaign against China has mixed results," Hallinan tells me. "The trade war is mostly a joke... but the relentless war on China does have an impact, partly by forcing China to spend money on its military, and to pursue policies that alienate many countries in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines."

China's claims in the South China Sea violate international law, Hallinan continues, but they are also a reaction to the U.S. military buildup in the region beginning under the Obama administration. "In the short run, the U.S. has made some inroads in isolating China, but in the long run, the U.S. is losing influence. The Chinese economy is simply too big to suppress, and Trump's trade war has damaged the U.S. more than China."

Hallinan claims the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate accords alienated many in Asia. "By 2030, 600 million Indians will not have access to sufficient water, a direct result of climate change," he notes. "Countries all over Asia will be deeply affected by the loss of glaciers, and the U.S. position currently contributes to that looming crisis. China is making efforts to combat climate change and that sits well with many countries in the region."

As with China, Trump has increased the prospect of nuclear war with Russia by abrogating arms control treaties and moving U.S. troops closer to Russian borders. But all this, along with economic sanctions, has failed to make Russia capitulate to U.S. dictates. "Losing Nord Stream 2 will hurt Russia, but not enough to force it to knuckle under to the U.S.," says Hallinan. "Russia has been developing its relations with Iran, India and China for several years, so it has outlets for its oil and gas and industrial goods."

It's worth noting that Russia has more nuclear weapons in storage than the U.S., rendering comments from Trump's arms-control negotiator—"We know how to win these races and we know how to spend the adversary into oblivion," said Marshall Billingslea in May—virtually moot.

In the Middle East, Trump has alienated the Arab majority by supporting Israel more than any other U.S. president, especially through his moving of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, which signified his absolute repudiation of the Palestinian peace process. To further isolate the Palestinians and strengthen Israel even

more, Trump recently brokered a deal between Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain (all three countries are U.S. client states) in which the latter two agree to recognize Israel and normalize relations.

"These agreements are designed to give an Arab stamp of approval to Israel's status quo of land theft, home demolitions, arbitrary extra-judicial killings, apartheid laws, and other abuses of Palestinian rights," says Medea Benjamin, co-founder of the U.S. women-led peace group CODEPINK and co-founder of the human rights group Global Exchange.

"The deal should be seen in the context of over three years of Trump administration policies that have tightened Israel's grip on the Palestinians: moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognizing the Golan Heights as Israeli territory, and creating a so-called peace plan with no Palestinian participation or input. All of these have hurt the U.S. reputation among Arab people of the region."

Benjamin points out that the Israel-UAE-Bahrain deal is also aimed at isolating and weakening Iran, considered an enemy by all three countries. "This dovetails with Trump's anti-Iran obsession, which includes U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal," she tells me.

As with China, Trump has increased the prospect of nuclear war with Russia by abrogating arms control treaties and moving U.S. troops closer to Russian borders.

Earlier this year, the U.S. came very near to all-out war with Iran when Trump ordered the assassination of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani. Patrick Cockburn notes in *War in the Age of Trump* (Verso) that the targeted killing of Soleimani at Baghdad airport, where he was allegedly en route to meet the Iraqi prime minister, initially rallied Iranian public opinion behind the general. This opportunity for the Iranian regime was wasted, says Cockburn, when its army mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian airliner killing 176 people, half of them Canadian citizens and permanent residents, which redirected public anger on the government.

Benjamin says she sees the imposition of severe U.S. economic sanctions and military pressures on Iran as having made life more difficult for millions of Iranians. But as far as the Iranian government goes, this aggressive policy has "empowered the more conservative factions [who are more anti-U.S.], who won the majority of seats in the recent national assembly elections and may well win the upcoming presidential election," she says.

Trump's Iran policy has also divided the U.S. from its closest allies in Europe such as Germany, who wanted to preserve the Iranian nuclear deal, and has isolated the U.S. internationally, according to Benjamin. She notes the recent U.N. vote in which the Dominican Republic was the only member of the Security Council to support the U.S. insistence on extending the arms embargo against Iran. "Trump has diminished U.S. power in the Middle East," concludes Benjamin. "After 20 years of war and occupation, the U.S. has not only shed blood and trillions of dollars but has lost influence and the respect of many of the region's people."

President Donald J. Trump was joined at the White House on September 15 by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left), Bahraini Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani and UAE Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan for the signing of the Abraham Accords normalizing relations between the three Middle East countries.

WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

In Latin America, too, Trump's policy has been largely destructive. He has been successful in obliterating relations with Cuba, in backing the overthrow of the elected leftist government of Evo Morales in Bolivia, in 2019, and in helping to prevent Brazil's popular leftist former president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, from returning to power in the 2018 elections. Trump has tried (and, so far, failed) to overthrow governments in Venezuela and Nicaragua and has put a $15 million bounty for the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

"In 2017 and 2018, the U.S. unleashed its most lethal and successful weapon: the illegal economic blockade that is restricting food and medicine to the people of Venezuela," says Maria Páez Victor, a Venezuelan-Canadian sociologist and former instructor at the University of Toronto and York University. "The sanctions are a crime against humanity, and U.N. experts have stated so, because they directly target and hurt a human population. In just one year the sanctions directly killed 40,000 Venezuelans," she adds, citing numbers in a 2019 study from the Washington-based Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).

Alexander Main, director of international policy at CEPR, tells me "there is no doubt that the U.S. played a role in subverting democracy in both Brazil and Bolivia." He points to recently produced evidence that Brazilian prosecutors, with support from the U.S. Department of Justice, "colluded with a judge (Sérgio Moro) to design a strategy, with clear political objectives, to ensure that the popular former president Lula da Silva would be jailed and barred from running in the 2018 presidential election. The banning of Lula's candidacy, which had been leading in the polls, effectively enabled the electoral victory of far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro."

In Bolivia, former president Evo Morales was overthrown in a military coup in October 2019 after being accused of committing electoral fraud. Main points out that this accusation from the Organization of American States (OAS) was later shown to be false by various independent analyses, including at CEPR and the *New York Times*. "The Trump administration immediately voiced support for the far-right de facto government that illegally took power following Morales' ouster," he says.

Main emphasizes that these undemocratic developments in Bolivia and Brazil have had "terrible consequences for both countries." Bolivia, for example, "has endured a racist government that has sought to roll back Indigenous rights in the country and that has massacred protesters," he tells me. "In Brazil, the Bolsonaro government has encouraged illegal clearing of the Amazon for farming and mining and has engaged in frequent attacks on the rights of the Indigenous, Afro-Brazilians and LGBTI persons." M

PAUL WEINBERG

Trump, the ICC and Canada's tarnished legacy

A CANADIAN, John Humphrey, drafted the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. In 1998, Canada assisted in the development of the Rome Statute, which led to the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC). In 2000, Canada was the first country to incorporate international law into its domestic legal system. Today, the ICC receives $10.6 million a year from Canada. Canadians work for the court in legal or administrative capacities. Plus, a Canadian is among the candidates in the running to be the next ICC special prosecutor after Gambian lawyer Fatou Bensouda's term ends in the spring.

Given all this investment in the court, it was disappointing to hear that Canada had sent a private letter to the ICC in February, repeating its opposition, first expressed by the Harper government, to an investigation and possible prosecution of several architects of the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories. Amnesty International is describing the case before the ICC as one last legal chance to hold Israel to account for facilitating the illegal construction of Jewish settlements primarily in East Jerusalem (annexed by Israel in 1980) and the West Bank (also facing whole or partial annexation).

Although Canadian government officials regularly state their support for a two-state solution, the reality on the ground is that Canada, the U.S. and many European Union states are helping, through their neglect or indifference, to put an end to the once promised Palestinian state in lands under Israeli control. Meanwhile, Palestinians in the West Bank particularly live under a regime of military justice, detention, curfews, checkpoints, nighttime raids on homes, the jailing of children, confiscated property, harassment (by police, soldiers and Jewish settlers) and even killings.

Israel faces an existential crisis. It can no longer call itself a democracy if Palestinians continue to live under permanent occupation, without full democratic rights, while their Arabic-speaking brethren within Israel's pre-1967 borders, who also face forms of discrimination and exclusion, can nonetheless participate in the Israeli electoral process. Perhaps the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority is doing Israel a favour by bringing a series of complaints involving Jewish settlements and the killing of civilians by Israeli military in the Gaza Strip before the ICC.

ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda briefs the press on Libya in May 2016

UN PHOTO

Last December, the ICC special prosecutor announced that the Palestinians have a case and she is ready to proceed against Israel and Hamas, the nominal governing authority in the blockaded (by Israel) Gaza Strip, which is accused of war crimes for rockets shot over the border into Israel. The ICC investigation is the culmination of a lengthy five-year process. Israel has resisted the probe by not allowing ICC personnel to interview potential witnesses inside Palestine or Israel. While the Jewish state is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, Palestine is and can therefore legally forward the complaint to the international body.

Michael Lynk, currently the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, says that Israel has legitimate reasons to be worried about the ICC investigation. "There are few things that are more settled in international law than in the issue with respect to the occupation. Israeli settlements are illegal and quite possibly a war crime. Human rights violations are rife in the occupied territories."

Before proceeding, the ICC special prosecutor is asking for a ruling from a pre-trial chamber on whether the court has the jurisdiction to hear this complaint from the Palestinian Authority. Palestine is recognized as a state at the United Nations, but a minority of countries including Canada have never accepted this designation. Bensouda can legally go ahead and prosecute selected Israeli politicians and generals without making this request. But there is also the political reality that Israel is a key member of a Western alliance, again including Canada, with close trade, security and military relations. If the Palestinians cannot get their day in court, "it is very unlikely that allegations of crimes under international law will ever be investigated and prosecuted and victims able to access justice and reparation," laments Amnesty International.

A more optimistic Lynk defends the "astute" decision by Bensouda to seek the opinion of the pre-trail chamber. "I think she has a good legal case that Palestine is a state for the purposes of the ICC statute," he says. "It avoids the mud that would be thrown at a future prosecution of Israel and/or Hamas." A decision as to whether Israel and Hamas will be put on trial can happen anytime.

All of this has not gone unnoticed in Washington. The U.S. government under Donald Trump has expressed its displeasure over both the Israel investigation and a separate case involving an ICC probe of alleged war crimes by the U.S. military and other parties in Afghanistan. To prevent an examination of the conduct of U.S. soldiers in the latter, the Trump administration has issued an executive order whereby Bensouda and another top ICC official face serious sanctions that prohibit Americans, including human rights lawyers and specialists, from working and assisting them. "Individuals and entities that continue to materially support those individuals risk exposure to sanctions as well," U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has warned.

The concern among human rights groups is that this action effectively undermines the work of the ICC. Diane Marie Amann, a U.S. academic and specialist on children and armed conflict, told the *Guardian* (U.K.) recently that a new legal chill prevents her from continuing her unpaid advisory work for the ICC special prosecutor. A group of lawyers in the U.S. are asking a federal court in New York to freeze the sanctions and have their constitutionality determined.

What impact this will have on the Israel case was not exactly clear as the *Monitor* went to print. If Trump, a Republican, is not re-elected in the November U.S. election, his likely successor, Democrat Joe Biden, is not expected to continue the ICC sanctions. M

Meet Ann Atkinson, CCPA Donor

The *Monitor* talks to Torontonian Ann Atkinson about the issues she cares about and her decision to donate stock to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Can you give us one example of how COVID-19 has changed your life?

Strangely, it has made me grateful. I have shelter with running water, heat, food, a computer and a telephone. That makes life very easy for people like me. I donate money to two United Nations agencies that house and feed people who are suffering. Right now, those two donations are earmarked for South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

What drew you to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives?

I became a CCPA supporter after a conversation with a political science professor at the University of Toronto, who recommended the CCPA. I sponsor a scholarship in that department for Radical Political Theory. Instead of just supporting one graduate student, I wanted to branch out and find an organization such as the CCPA that has more reach, i.e., a lot of readers.

What are you reading, watching or listening to right now?

I am a socialist and read a lot of the socialist press online. I like the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, for instance, and several of the socialist groups here in Canada. The Tricontinental Institute for Social Research does a good job of representing the Global South and its interests.

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

I liked the recent *Monitor* issue on COVID-19. Every issue has well-researched articles that help to counteract so much of the false news in the mass media that we are subjected to every day.

Why did you choose to donate stock to the charities you support?

Donating stocks to a charity allows tax relief for the capital gain. Also, since I am older, I want to eliminate as many capital gains on my estate as possible. I can always buy the stock back that I just donated.

Donating stocks is easy: one form is for the CCPA and the second one goes to my broker, in my case an account at one of the big banks. They fax in the form or send it in their overnight mail to the department that transfers stocks. The transfer is very quick, usually within two days.

What should the government be focused on right now?

I am most concerned about inequality. This year, our government has done the right thing to support people who are losing their jobs and who are needy. We need to do more. For instance, what happened to the initiative to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000? Why don't we have a universal drug plan?

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Donating publicly traded securities like shares or mutual funds is a tax-smart way of supporting progressive policy through the work of the CCPA. To donate securities, please talk to your broker and forward a completed copy of our Gift of Securities form to Katie Loftus at katie@policyalternatives.ca. You can also call Katie at 613-563-1341 ext. 318 (toll free: 1-844-563-1341) or visit www.policyalternatives.ca/give/donate-securities to learn more about this type of donation.

ANDREW JACKSON

The fiscal deficit, modern monetary theory and progressive economic policy

MODERN MONETARY THEORY (MMT) has crept in from the academic margins to become an influential doctrine in progressive policy circles in the United States. Both Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders drew on the ideas of MMT to shape their ambitious public spending platforms during the Democratic Party primaries this spring. MMT has been cited as one way to fund a Green New Deal, in combination with progressive tax reform.

It is safe to say that most Canadian progressives are not debating the finer points of monetary and fiscal policy. However, it is useful to critically consider some of the most important pros and cons of MMT as discussed by leading U.S. advocate Stephanie Kelton in her recent book, *The Deficit Myth: Modern Monetary Theory and the Birth of the People's Economy* (Public Affairs, 2020). In a nutshell, MMT puts forward a powerful critique of mainstream macroeconomic policy, but the theory discounts the need for truly radical change if the economy is to be regulated and managed for the public good.

MMT is something of a misnomer. Far from being "modern," it draws heavily on monetary theories developed in the 1930s by John Maynard Keynes, and since that time, by left Keynesian economists rejecting orthodox finance and the view that government budgets should (almost) always be balanced, that deficits crowd out private investment which should be driving the economy, that monetary policy (changes in interest rates) as opposed to fiscal policies (changes in public spending) should be the key policy tool for managing fluctuations in the economy, and that private investment is much more productive than government spending.

The government and MMT

The central proposition of MMT is that a state controlling its own currency can readily finance fiscal deficits (resulting from spending increases or tax cuts) at low or no cost through money creation and direct funding of government spending by the central bank. Unlike households or businesses, governments with their own currency and their own central bank can never go broke because they can always create money to fund deficits or to pay off debts. The only real constraint on public spending for countries with monetary sovereignty is real productive capacity. Too much additional deficit financing of public spending or tax cuts in an economy with full employment will push up inflation.

Many countries in fact do not have monetary sovereignty because they do not have their own currency (e.g., individual countries in the eurozone) or because they carry high levels of debt denominated in a foreign currency such as U.S. dollars (e.g., Argentina). Until the 1970s, the gold standard also constrained the ability of central banks to create new money.

Today, we in Canada, and many other countries, do have "fiat" money that can be created by central banks "at the stroke of a pen." Central banks can and do expand the monetary base. Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa, he has a printing press and it can indeed be used to give money to all the children.

However, it should be noted that, in normal times, the great majority of new money is created by the private banking system as loans rather than directly by the central bank to finance the government's operations. Indeed, in neoliberal times, the state's capacity to create money has been rolled back and kept out of view. Many mainstream economists accept that government and the central bank can adopt MMT-type policies but argue that it is unwise to use the lever except under extraordinary circumstances.

MMT says central banks can also set interest rates from the short term to the long term through a variety of techniques. Again, many economists would broadly agree.

MMT rightly challenges the orthodox idea that government budgets should be balanced and that deficits should be incurred only to fight deep depressions when low interest rates no longer work. As argued by Keynes in the 1930s, deficits will not crowd out savings and private investment if the economy is operating below capacity. Indeed, public investment financed by deficits can "crowd in" private investment. And public investments financed through deficits and debt can create a more robust economy and infrastructure, leaving future generations with greater wealth and opportunities. Keynes, unlike the "bastard Keynesian" wing of

mainstream economics, looked forward to the day when the economy would be driven by productive public investment with no need for the state to borrow from the rentiers living off interest income.

In short, the key ideas of MMT are not so much modern as a return to the radical Keynes and the left Keynesian tradition. Both hold that conventional policy results in economies running well below capacity much of the time, and both reject the mainstream view that the macroeconomy should be primarily managed through monetary rather than fiscal policy.

Extraordinary circumstances

Today—amid the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic—the Bank of Canada is printing billions of dollars to buy government bonds in order to lower interest rates. For the first time the bank has moved beyond "quantitative easing"—buying up government bonds in the secondary market to lower interest rates—to direct purchases of government bonds. It is supporting massive federal and provincial government deficit spending.

The bank may not loudly endorse MMT per se, but it is acting on that basis and demonstrating that the state can indeed always pay for what must be done. Similarly, all kinds of orthodox economists and policy-makers have temporarily accepted that a massive increase in public spending can and should be undertaken without raising taxes and almost irrespective of the deficit and debt.

So far, so good. The key question is how long this can go on. In her book on MMT, Kelton calls for much higher levels of public investment and spending to deal with a wide range of social ills, funded directly by the central bank, on a continuing rather than one-time emergency basis. This has understandably appealed to progressives.

So long as we have low inflation and a very depressed economy, the Bank of Canada is unlikely to change course and will backstop massive government spending to deal with the crisis. They will give fiscal policy the latitude to drive recovery in full recognition of the fact that even near-zero interest rates are not enough to deal with the slump. But, as things stand, they still basically control monetary policy.

MMT is rather silent on this, just saying that governments can set the interest rate. It begs the question of who actually controls interest rates, and in whose interests.

Dating back to at least the 1970s, the Bank of Canada, which is largely independent of the government, has generally chosen to accept some slack in the economy so as to discipline labour and to maintain low and stable inflation. The federal government and the Bank of Canada have consistently argued that the sole objective of the central bank should be to hit the formally agreed 1%–3% inflation target, without a parallel mandate to achieve full employment as called for by progressive economists. It would be a big political change, to say the least, for the government to tell its central bank to promote full employment, let alone to direct the bank to fund government operations on a non-emergency basis. The whole point of current arrangements has been to isolate the Bank of Canada from democratic political pressures.

Conventional thinking has emphasized setting low interest rates in an economy operating below capacity, as has been the case in the slow recovery from the global financial crisis. But this, as Kelton argues, has starved public spending, while fuelling the destructive and unsustainable growth of household and corporate debt, and fuelling the asset price inflation that has greatly increased inequality of income and wealth. Loose monetary policy has singularly failed to boost real wages for most workers and has also manifestly failed to revive private business investment. Indeed, corporations have borrowed at low rates to ramp up unproductive activities such as share buybacks and increases in dividends.

MMT rightly emphasizes that priority should be given to fiscal policy over monetary policy, while taking no single position on what governments should spend on. Proponents such as Kelton generally support big increases in public investment—the green economy, education, infrastructure, etc.—as well as a federal job guarantee. They also argue that if and when inflation becomes a problem, it could be tackled through selective tax increases on households and business, as opposed to an increase in interest rates that would limit

So long as we have low inflation and a very depressed economy, the Bank of Canada is unlikely to change course and will backstop massive government spending to deal with the crisis.

The whole point of current arrangements has been to isolate the Bank of Canada from democratic political pressures.

government investment and drive up the carrying costs of the public debt.

Kelton argues that support for MMT should exist across the political spectrum, but she neglects the role of real-world interests. The banks want to retain their central role in money creation. Orthodox fiscal and monetary policy that is focused on low inflation and balanced budgets is strongly supported by corporate and financial interests. They do not really believe in the need for balanced budgets, as shown by the support of most U.S. corporations for the Trump tax cuts, which have created huge deficits. But the private banks do want small government and lower taxes, and they want to ensure the economy is driven by private investment, which means government deference to the wishes and needs of capital, rather than by public investment.

MMT also tends to minimize real structural constraints on government macroeconomic policy in the context of global capital flows. As noted, MMT says that governments can control the interest rate through the central bank. This is true in the first instance but highly problematic in a world of capital mobility if investors fear too much inflation or currency devaluation. The Bank of Canada can maintain low interest rates, but they face the possibility of capital flight on the part of both domestic and foreign capital, which would bring down the exchange rate and fuel inflation. This point is discounted by MMT proponents, who are mainly talking about the U.S., which controls the global reserve currency and is thus in a unique situation.

Many foreign central banks of surplus countries such as China and Japan own huge reserves of U.S. bonds that they would be reluctant to sell quickly, since this would raise their own exchange rate, result in large paper asset losses and cause a major disruption to the global financial system. But fears that the U.S. was making too much use of Santa's printing press could still cause capital flight from the U.S. dollar on the part of private bondholders, and it may help fuel U.S. inflation.

The ability of the bond markets to punish smaller countries with high levels of public debt and incipient inflation cannot be dismissed. Keynes argued that countries could only control interest rates if currencies were managed and if there were controls on international flows of capital. Dismantling of the postwar Bretton Woods arrangements was intended to set the stage for a shift from nationally controlled economies to a world of international capital flows that constrain governments.

MMT is right to argue that so long as the economy is operating below potential, we can and should run large deficits to fill the gap and to address public policy priorities such as the need for affordable housing, expanded public health care, and building a green economy. These deficits will have most impact in both social and economic terms if used to finance well-chosen public investments, as opposed to tax cuts. Inflation is not likely to be a problem.

But MMT tends to hide in a technical argument that does not address real political constraints that need to be seriously confronted. We can run large fiscal deficits now, but not indefinitely, without major changes in fiscal and monetary policy and in political direction. In the longer run, we cannot have everything we want just by printing money.

If we want permanently higher public spending, we also need to raise taxes. If we want much more public investment, we will also have to give less priority to private consumption, especially the luxury consumption of the rich. If we want greater control of our economy, we must confront the power of private financial interests.

In short, MMT, based on the theoretical legacy of left Keynesian economics, offers us a way forward, but it does not free us from the very real constraints of capitalism. M

This article first appeared in *The Bullet*, an online publication of the Socialist Project, on July 14. It is reprinted here with permission from SP.

GARY HOYER

Canada needs a universal school meal program

HEALTHY EATING IN childhood and adolescence is critical for proper growth and development and to prevent chronic illness developing later in life. Extensive research has concluded that serving healthy meals (breakfast, lunch and snacks) to school children significantly improves their cognitive abilities, enabling them to be more alert, pay better attention and do better on reading, math and other standardized test scores.

School is the best place to provide children with both healthy food and a food education. But unlike most industrialized countries and all other G7 nations, Canada has no national school meal or Farm to School program and only a patchwork of programs at the provincial level. In Canada, nearly one million children (almost one in four) say they go to school without breakfast. A universal healthy school meal program with a Farm to School (F2S) approach would go a long way to rectifying this issue.

The Farm to School approach rests on three pillars: 1) consuming healthy local food; 2) practising and learning about food, food security, food systems, agriculture, cooking, nutrition, and what constitutes a healthy diet; and 3) making community and school connections. School gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips are important hands-on examples of the F2S approach, which empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy.

Faculty and students of George Brown College in Toronto recently completed a three-year study on international F2S and school meal programs. Our research confirmed that a universal school meal program in Canada that includes a F2S approach would provide benefits that far outweigh costs, now and into the future.

In the U.S., as a result of the National School Lunch Act of 1946 and the introduction of the School Breakfast Program in 1966, nearly 100,000 schools and institutions feed 30 million children each school day through school meal programs. And as of 2015, there were over 40,000 U.S. schools involved in F2S activities. One of these initiatives, New Mexico's *Breakfast After the Bell* program, requires schools where 85% or more of students are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch to serve a nutritious breakfast at no cost to students, with funding from the state.

Studies from the National Bureau of Economic Research, among others, have shown that providing (potentially) hungry students with greater access to food through these programs improves learning. Students who eat school breakfast have better math scores, attendance, punctuality, and decreased anxiety, depression and hyperactivity, according to the findings of Valeria Edefonti et al., published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* in 2014. Another study by David Frisvold found that states which mandate the availability of federally assisted School Breakfast programs showed math achievement increased by at least 23%.

While providing much needed nutrition, F2S programs also educate students about the entire food system, through the development of school gardens, for example. A 2002 study by Jennifer Morris and Sheri Zidenberg-Cherr found that when children learn where food comes from, in a school garden or a classroom setting, they eat more fruits and vegetables at and away from school.

A hands-on learning and garden-enhanced curriculum also improves children's knowledge of nutrition, with long-lasting effects. For confirmation of this, we can look to the Maxine Smith STEAM Academy, a public school in Memphis, Tennessee, which partnered with the Big Green organization on a school garden and curriculum that teaches students how to make healthy, nutritious food from their own harvests, the science of gardening, and how ecosystems affect their community.

An investigation into the efficacy of the Big Green program shows that 80% of students subsequently chose fruits and vegetables to fill half their plates, 44% showed improvements in understanding how healthy eating connects to their own health, and 44% reported increases in their families' support of healthy eating. Given what we know about the link between food literacy and healthy eating habits developed in childhood, on the one hand, and cognitive development, long-term health and overall well-being throughout one's life, on the other, achievements like this cannot be discounted.

Although there are some excellent Farm to School and individual meal programs in Canada, lessons learned from the above and other examples can and should be applied here. Schools are in a unique position to provide students with opportunities to learn about and practise healthy eating behaviors, which translate into benefits in adulthood that drive further substantial social and economic gains. We must work to make this a reality. M

Breaking through Big Oil's "regime of obstruction"

An interview with William Carroll about Canada's fossil fuel power elite—its networks, public and private support, and climate denialism—as exposed and examined in his important new anthology for the Corporate Mapping Project.

William K. Carroll is a critical sociologist at the University of Victoria with research interests in the political economy/ecology of corporate capitalism, social movements and social change, and critical social theory and method. His current research is focused around the relationships between corporate power, fossil capitalism and the climate crisis. Carroll co-directs the SSHRC-funded Corporate Mapping Project with CCPA-BC Director Shannon Daub in partnership with the CCPA, Parkland Institute and several universities. His edited anthology, *Regime of Obstruction* (AU Press, November 2020), is a culmination of research from the first three years of the Corporate Mapping Project and represents a midway point in its work. The *Monitor* reached Carroll by Skype at his Vancouver Island home this July.

The *Monitor*: In your introduction to *Regime of Obstruction*, you write: "Corporate control of the production of energy (most of which takes the form of fossil fuels), and the reach of corporate power into other social fields, pose the greatest obstacles to addressing the ecological and economic challenges humanity faces today." Explain why you think that is the case.

William K. Carroll: Clearly the global ecological crisis is broader than just the climate crisis, but I think that that crisis is particularly urgent. And it's particularly difficult to address because of the way capitalism has developed as a way of life that is really fuelled by fossil fuels. Even after relatively half-hearted attempts to move away from fossil fuels in the past few years, still more than 80% of all the energy in the global economy is generated from carbon.

It's one of these wicked problems. It's intractable because there are so many different aspects of corporate power, as we try to develop in the book, that are reinforcing this way of life and obstructing the kinds of relatively rapid changes that we need to be making in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change. The effects are already being felt

and they're going to get worse. Even if we were to radically reduce carbon emissions tomorrow, the inertia in the climate system is such that it's going to be a rough ride for humanity in the next number of years.

But to avoid a *really* bad situation, we would need to shift away from a way of life that really inscribes corporate power at its centre and provides various kinds of attractions. There are appealing aspects to this way of life for many people—if you happen to have money (laughs). In my view it's a rather alienating way of life, as our social relations are so commercialized and mediated by markets, and the profit motive is so corrosive to healthy social relations. But I think individuals who are financially secure experience this as a very pleasant way of life.

That in itself is a very difficult problem. It's a kind of first world problem, but it's really a global problem. And it gets into the question of hegemony that we explore in this book. How is it that people end up supporting an ecologically, and in terms of social justice issues, deeply problematic way of life? What is it that pulls us into this and makes us consent and even often stand as boosters of this way of life?

M: In their chapter, Ian Hussey, Eric Pineault, Emma Jackson and Susan Cake talk about the oil patch's ability to continue to prosper even during a bust cycle, by squeezing labour and finding technological efficiencies to keep the flow of oil steady. But, they write, the survival of these firms "rests on their ability to capture and control [energy and environmental] policies at both the provincial and federal levels and this requires sustained deployment of organizational power." How has fossil capital organized its power during the Trudeau years?

WKC: Shannon's chapter on the "new denialism" is quite useful in this respect. She and her co-authors track the new denialism that is different from the kind of fairly hardcore denialism that we found under Stephen Harper's regime, and also that I think we see with Jason Kenney as well. The more hard-right denialism, if you like, is exemplified by the classic ExxonMobil denial of there being a climate crisis at all. Now very few people are in that category at this point. So really the trend has been toward new denialism and I think the Trudeau government is a good example of that.

The new denialism doesn't deny the science; it accepts that there is a climate crisis, but it offers up solutions that are obviously inadequate and that basically provide cover to industry. So that rather than making the fairly dramatic changes that need to be made, the argument is we can do this at a very, very slow, incremental pace that doesn't in any way endanger the profits and the investments that Ian Hussey and his co-authors write about in the chapter you mentioned. And so it's an attempt to solve the problem within the logic of capitalism, that is to say, through the use of market mechanisms and by trying to steer market decisions through putting a price on carbon, through technological innovations that make carbon extraction less intensive in terms of its emissions, and so on, but without changing anything about the social relations and the logic of endless growth on a finite planet.

That is, I think, at the heart of the issue—whether this problem, which in our view is endemic to the actual social logic of fossil capitalism, whether it can actually be solved within the social logic of fossil capitalism. Our argument would be that it really can't. But of course, industry is entrenched, their interests are in maintaining those structures and they do that in various ways. And part of it is constructing these new-denialist narratives.

M: Beyond crafting the narrative, are there specific measures or policies fossil fuel companies are seeking during the present crisis (in Alberta, for example), any shift in what they're looking for and how they are organizing to get it?

WKC: When the present oil crisis initially hit in March, we had some discussions in the Corporate Mapping Project about what would be the likely industry ask, and whether there might be a major bailout of the industry. Eventually, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers settled on an ask of between $27 billion and $30 billion in bailout money. That didn't exactly happen. What the federal government actually did was somewhat more targeted. (Editor's note: In April, the government announced $2.45 billion in aid for workers, $1.7 billion to clean up abandoned oil and gas wells, $750 million on emissions reducing activities, and the availability of "higher risk financing" in the form of Export Development Canada commercial loans.) But I think there's interesting maneuvering going on to package industry bailouts in ways that are optically not problematic, because so much public opinion is concerned now about the climate crisis.

The popular sector has been arguing for a just recovery from the pandemic-induced recession. And that's interesting language, I think, to combine recovery with the just transition from fossil capitalism to something different. A just recovery from the COVID-19 crisis would involve seriously looking at our various institutions and thinking about how we can make them more socially just as we move out of this crisis, which has revealed profound injustices, from housing, health care and elder care to wages and working conditions for many workers.

Obviously, the initial phase of the crisis on the fossil fuel sector brought a massive collapse to the price of oil and gas, but that was related to other conjunctural factors in terms of OPEC, and Russia and Saudi Arabia

in particular. So, there was concern that the industry was just going to collapse completely. The bailouts, as I say, have been somewhat targeted, but I do think there is maneuvering to try to get funds to the companies to keep them going. In the initial support program last spring, funds for the energy sector were modest, but they went exclusively to the oil and gas industry, not renewable energy.

Of course, we are already paying the fossil fuel industry enormous amounts of public money in the form of subsidies. There was an International Monetary Fund study last year that found post-tax subsidies to be in the US$43 billion range in 2015-16. That was almost 20% of the federal budget before all this pandemic spending started. I mean, other countries massively subsidize their energy sectors as well. Canada is not really an exception. But it is quite remarkable the extent to which the profitability of this industry is almost entirely dependent on state subsidy.

M: Your chapter with Jouke Huijzer looks at strategic control of fossil fuel companies—strategic power based on share ownership—which is concentrated among wealthy families and other corporations. But you point out that by looking at share ownership alone, you cannot see whether or how fossil power works in a coherent way. Could you say a bit about what you call "constellations of power" and how they affect company behaviour?

WKC: If we think about how firms are controlled, the most straightforward approach is where one capitalist owns a company outright and controls it completely. Most companies in Canada are actually owned and controlled by single capitalist individuals or families. But in large corporations, shares are typically owned by various shareholders and often there's a principal shareholder. If that principal shareholder owns a majority of shares, then that investor has complete control of the corporation and can mobilize the capital that is actually owned by the minority shareholders as part of the capital that the principal shareholder controls.

But many corporations nowadays don't have a principal shareholder or might have one who only owns 10% of the shares. They're giant corporations, so 10% of the shares might amount to a fortune of $5 billion. So, it's understandable you don't find a lot of giant companies that are majority owned by a principal shareholder. And so, for many of the biggest companies nowadays there isn't any one identifiable shareholder that one could say is in a position of actual strategic control over the corporation. But that doesn't mean the major investors that own, say, 5% here, 5% there, don't actually exert power and influence in terms of corporate strategy.

That gets us to that somewhat murky situation of control by a constellation of interests. This is a situation where, in terms of the way we operationalize it, there isn't any principal shareholder, but there a number of (typically institutional) investors—asset managers, banks, other financial institutions—that own significant slices of, say, 5% or even 2%. The various slices add up to a situation of effective control, but it's a constellation that doesn't necessarily function as a controlling unit.

In that sense, it's an ambiguous situation. But I don't think it would be accurate to say these investors have no influence. Take an asset manager like BlackRock, which has

Fossil capitalism and energy democracy at different scales

Scale	Instances of fossil-capital hegemony	Practices of energy democracy
Everyday life	Fossil-fuelled consumer capitalism as a way of life, automobility as freedom	Politically-inflected lifestyle changes; informal local and online discussion
Local community	Civic privatism/boosterism; Indigenous ambivalence	Free public transit, principled alliance politics of decolonization and democratization, subsidiarity
Institutions	Entrenchment of fossil interests in institutions of knowledge production, etc.	Reclaiming public institutions, divestment, science and technology for the people
Sub-national	Fossil boosterism in extractive and sacrifice zones	Reclaim Alberta, Iron and Earth
National	Contention over the "national interest," through elite policy-planning and online extractivist populist networks	Leap, RAVEN (Respecting Aboriginal Values and Environmental Needs)
Transnational	Global governance and transnational policy-planning	Trade Unions for Energy Democracy, Indigenous Environmental Network

investments in virtually every large corporation in the world. It's churning its investments, it's figuring out—with the assistance of computerized algorithms—how to optimize at any given moment, so it's moving a certain amount of capital around within its portfolio. BlackRock doesn't appoint directors—it would be practically impossible because it's basically invested in everything. The kind of influence you get with this kind of situation, of a constellation of interests, is more the power of exit, of potentially leaving—of divesting, if the firm fails to earn sufficient profit.

The business press has pointed out in recent years that sometimes institutional investors come to hold sufficient shares in a company that they consider themselves to be locked into the investment. And in those situations, while they may not appoint a director to the board, they can make a phone call to the CEO. So, the influence can take other forms.

It's a complex situation, but certainly constellations of interests are important to keep in mind in looking at the fossil fuel sector in Canada and the role of, for example, Canada's five big banks. They're heavily invested. They also lend enormous amounts of money to these corporations and they own significant blocks of shares in the major fossil fuel corporations.

M: Does the involvement of institutional investors in the sector, including mutual funds, private pensions and even the Canada Pension Plan, affect public support for fossil capital?

WKC: As early as the late 19th century, critics of the economic system pointed to the rise of a labour aristocracy—relatively well-paid artisanal skilled workers who had strong positions within the economy. Their relative affluence tended to have a politically conservatizing tendency, giving them a stake in the system. Something similar began to happen in the late 20th century, with the rise of what's sometimes called an "investor aristocracy." Many people in countries like Canada now have pensions that are invested in the fossil fuel sector as well as other sectors. That is to say, a relatively affluent segment of the working class has pensions that appear to be more than just deferred wages, but investments.

As people see their retirement income tied up in the fossil fuel sector and other sectors, they might very well develop a sense of allegiance, a sense of solidarity with the sector, a sense of converging interests. And that can be a real ideological barrier, a kind of golden straitjacket. But in our current situation, this can be a double-edged sword with the strength of the divestment movement and the declining profitability of the fossil fuel sector, and the whole question of what demand for fossil fuels is going to look like as we go forward. The rational choice today would be to divest rather than to support this industry, and workers with pensions invested in the sector may expect this of these funds.

M: Fossil power has been entrenched in Canada for a long time. In doing this research into its current shape and practices, and recent protests against it, does anything surprise you?

WKC: For me, what would stand out in that regard, and we address it in a couple of chapters in the middle part of the book about the struggle for hearts and minds, is the play of corporate power *vis à vis* Indigenous communities and Indigenous nations. For me that was quite striking to look into, especially the work that Cliff Atleo (a Corporate Mapping Project core team member at SFU) has done in his chapter.

Cliff traces how, after centuries of colonization, Indigenous communities are, as he puts it in the title of his chapter, between a rock and a hard place. This is a situation that stems from their having been dispossessed, colonized and dominated by the Canadian state for such a long time. And now the industry, particularly pipeline and other infrastructure projects, needs access to, or through, Indigenous land. The whole question of how that works is an important one.

What I found particularly eye-opening was the developing strategic perspective of the industry toward a soft denial approach: they are interested in partnership, in effect co-opting Indigenous communities into the project of fossil capital. These communities are in many cases suffering very deep impoverishment and here's an opportunity to actually get in on a gravy train and get some share of the revenue from carbon extraction. These revenue sharing agreements are a carrot that's being held out to Indigenous communities and understandably a number of them have signed up. That divide and rule approach, I think, is really front and centre both for industry and the Canadian government in trying to get things built and keep a lid on dissent. These agreements actually commit the Indigenous communities to not dissenting and not blocking any pipelines.

From an investment perspective, of course the concern is always with "certainty." Investors want certainty, they don't want disruption. They want to be able to have a smooth flow of profit into their coffers. In a number of Indigenous communities, globally and not just within Canada, there is a political and cultural movement of Indigenous resurgence, really pushing harder and robustly for decolonization. But at the same time there is this kind of initiative from the fossil fuel sector in Canada to try to co-opt and establish "partnerships." Right now, that's a really important piece of the struggle for hearts and minds.

M: With fossil capital exerting influence at the community, provincial, national and international level, is there one best place for the counter-movements to push their vision for climate justice and a just transition?

WKC: The regime of obstruction operates at various scales (see chart—Ed.). From everyday life to the global. We need to be active at all these scales, but I don't know whether one has priority over the other. From everyday life, in terms of conversations and online presence and local initiatives, obviously issues of free public transit, for example, are important. There's a lot of initiatives, going from that everyday life level to the level of global climate conferences.

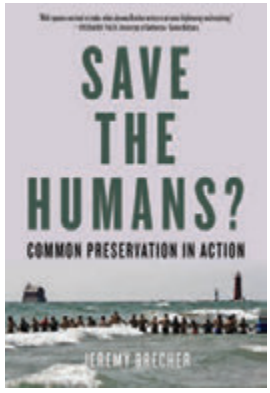
The Canadian federal government and the B.C. government talk about a just transition. On the one hand B.C. has unfortunately gone all in with liquefied natural gas (LNG), but the current provincial government does have some good initiatives as well, and I think it's a government that responds to pressure to some extent. So pressuring governments is important. Changing attitudes and divestment politics are important.

As Seth Klein argues in his new book, which is more state-centred than ours, "we need an all-out effort." (Editor's note: Seth's book, *A Good War: Mobilizing for the Climate Emergency*, was excerpted in the September/October issue of the *Monitor*.) We need to think about the fronts that need to be opened up, from everyday life right up to local and national politics to the global. That seems overwhelming, but there are movements already active at these levels. I take some optimism from that. M

Regime of Obstruction: How Corporate Power Blocks Energy Democracy will be released by AU Press in November. The anthology includes contributions from Laurie Adkin, Angele Alook, Clifford Atleo, Emilia Belliveau-Thompson, John Bermingham, Paul Bowles, Gwendolyn Blue, Shannon Daub, Jessica Dempsey, Emily Eaton, Chuka Ejeckam, Simon Enoch, Nick Graham, Shane Gunster, Mark Hudson, Jouke Huijzer, Ian Hussey, Emma Jackson, Michael Lang, James Lawson, Marc Lee, Fiona MacPhail, Alicia Massie, Kevin McCartney, Bob Neubauer, Eric Pineault, Lise Margaux Rajewicz, James Rowe, JP Sapinski, Karena Shaw and Zoe Yunker.

REVIEWED BY SEAN ARTHUR JOYCE

Our common fight against doom



SAVE THE HUMANS?
COMMON PRESERVATION IN ACTION
JEREMY BRECHER
PM Press, June 2020, $27

PART ACTIVIST'S MEMOIR, part forensic audit of progressive movements over the past 50-plus years, Brecher's life of dedication gives the lie to any notion that the boomer generation passively lived the good life while the social and environmental sphere deteriorated. He can certainly claim more bona fides for his activism than most of today's "clicktivists," having been a committed activist since protesting nuclear weapons in his teens during the 1950s. His new book provides badly needed historical context demonstrating that the most successful movements relied on careful organization and collective, unified effort.

Brecher's deep historical view of the labour, anti-nuclear, peace and social justice movements is unflinching. This is no mere hagiography but a frank assessment that acknowledges the failures as well as the successes, with a view to learning from past mistakes. It's a sophisticated analysis, though it tends to give only a light touch to the failures, such as the post–Arab Spring collapse into rule by military junta in Egypt.

Brecher attempts to counter the prevailing narcissism by building his narrative on the central theme of what he calls "common preservation," the idea that success in progressivism relies on a willingness to subsume one's individual needs or identity to the whole. Whether that is still possible in the era of solipsistic social media and militant identity politics depends on your point of view. Brecher highlights the urgency of the situation by pointing out that the Doomsday Clock is now set at only 100 seconds to midnight, closer than it was even during the height of the nuclear arms race. Yet for all that, his message remains committed to the ideal of progress: "Can we save the humans? The answer may be uncertain, but one thing is certain—*we can refuse to consent to doom*" (italics in original).

During a career as an author spanning many decades, Brecher has written extensively on unions and workers' movements, providing some detailed critiques of specific historical incidents. Surprisingly, he concludes that some of the most successful labour disruptions and general strikes were the result, not of top-down union management or strategy, but of spontaneous eruptions of workers' dissatisfaction. "Sometimes the movements least guided by theoretical discourse were the most successful." The sit-down strikes of workers in U.S. factories during the 1930s were actively opposed by union leadership. Unfortunately, labour unions over time came to be less the advocate of the working class and more what Brecher calls "a junior partner in capitalism."

People are people, whatever their political stripe, and Brecher is enough of a realist to understand that even the most well-intentioned can deteriorate into internecine bickering and power games. On the one hand, he writes, "I learned

that the seemingly romantic ideal of isolated, passive people joining together to act in concert was not just a fantasy; I saw it happen over and over again." On the other, "I learned that movements can create new forms of domination and new, sometimes monstrous, problems." This has provided government and corporate leadership with a ready avenue of dissension to exploit, as once again individual needs and priorities overcome collectivist goals.

So what is Brecher's prescription? In his introduction he states: "To 'save the humans' will require a devolution of power both downward and upward. It requires devolving the power of governments and corporations downward to forms of democratic accountability and upward to forms of co-operation that represent the common interests of humanity—first and foremost our common preservation against doom." This theme is taken up later, following his disquisition of the historical arc of progressivism, and is more fully developed in his other book, *Against Doom: A Climate Insurgency Manual* (also from PM Press).

Unfortunately, Brecher falls into the same trap as many progressives. Like a Victorian English gentleman who steps into the boxing ring committed to competing honestly by Marquess of Queensberry rules, he fails to see that his opponent may have no such qualms. The fight between principled integrity and the win-at-all-costs ethos is an unequal one from the start. His own biography proves that, as successful as "common preservation in action" has been, the forces of greed and power politics have been equally successful in rolling back progress.

Still, Brecher makes a strong case for his argument that the unbridled pursuit of individual self-interest "is led by an invisible hand to mutual destruction." While stopping short of "predicting that a human preservation movement will coalesce," he concludes that "it may provide our best hope of survival." M

REVIEWED BY KATIE RASO

An off-world world to win

TITAN
FRANÇOIS VIGNEAULT
Oni Press, November 2020, $26.99

DEVOURING THE PAGES of François Vigneault's *Titan* left me cycling between two thoughts. First, I recalled what Joe Sacco had written on the importance of the cartoon style as a means to communicate that which otherwise might not be possible to convey. Sacco was specifically speaking about how a cartoon style can be used to tell visual stories for which there are no visuals that capture their depth, such as those compiled in his 2013 release, *Journalism*. Second, I recounted a *Monitor* article written by CCPA alumnus Emily Turk back in 2017, in which she offered, "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." At the intersection of these two thoughts is where Vigneault's novel makes its mark.

Titan's premise is reminiscent of the graphic novel series *Bitch Planet*: set in a not-too-distant future where undesirable and second-class citizens are relegated to off-world homes to live out their days. In this case, genetically engineered workers, Titans, are relegated to live and work in mining colonies throughout the solar system. In the Homestead mining colony on a moon of Titan, 50,000 Titans are overseen by 568 Terrans—ruling class elites temporarily stationed on the planet.

MNGR First Class João da Silva is one such elite. Arriving at the Homestead Station to open the story, he is confident that, as an expert in productivity, he'll be able to turn the struggling station around. Da Silva quickly realizes that tensions between the Titans and Terrans are nearing a crisis point. In a last ditch effort to save the station from closure, Da Silva proposes an invasive worker monitoring program—think the future of Amazon's employee tracking wristbands. Despite his good intentions, Da Silva's approach brings tensions to a fever pitch, and the novel explores the resulting fallout.

At the same time, an unlikely source of hope for the protagonist against this backdrop of fury is his budding relationship with his union liaison, Phoebe Mackintosh. Through his interactions with Mackintosh, Da Silva's character—who could be cast as a flimsy villain, both as management class and colonizer—is given more depth and complexity. Their relationship is both a respite and a tension for the reader, as Da Silva and Mackintosh share simple human moments but also create more problems for the oppressed person in this relationship. But this tension is a credit to Vigneault's narrative: it doesn't weave a love story over top of a class struggle to absolve a colonizer. Rather, it explores a believable connection between two people entrenched in a conflict that, despite their best efforts, shapes and confines the development of that connection.

Through his deft mastery of a three-colour style, Vigneault creates a story that is visually powerful and builds palpable tension. His

choice to draw the Titans as genetically modified super workers and Terrans as much smaller, and physically vulnerable, is an interesting and important visualization. So much of the Terrans' control in *Titan* is related to their access to and control of technology. Even the reduction in productivity that could ultimately result in loss of employment for all 50,000 Titans at the Homestead Station is due to decades of the Terrans choosing to not invest in technology at that station. The disparity in physical size and the outnumbering of Terrans by Titans 100 to one continually calls to mind the inherent inequities in the capitalist system that these players represent: the mass of workers creating value and the fraction of ruling elites who control that system and inherit the value created.

On the surface, *Titan* is a sci-fi exploration of interclass tensions. However, the story that Vigneault has crafted draws parallels that intersect beyond class lines. More masterful than his artistic style, perhaps, is how Vigneault uses his imagined world to explore the myriad boiling points being reached by communities in real time: from workers' rights under the flexible accumulation regime to the Land Back movement to Black Lives Matter. Vigneault spent five years working on *Titan* while living in the United States. The book's exploration of these themes, however, feels as relevant today as it did while Vigneault was writing. His drawing of parallels is neither heavy handed nor clumsy, allowing space for the reader's interpellation of the characters' journey, leaving meaning-making with the reader, as great science fiction does.

Ultimately, *Titan* is a story about the struggle for self-determination and justice, themes which unite all of the movements mentioned above and so many others that are organizing at this moment. It's what makes *Titan* a gripping and relevant read for the fall of 2020. **M**

A crash course on environmental justice

In this excerpt from her new book, *More Powerful Together: Conversations with Climate Activists and Indigenous Land Defenders* (Fernwood), Jen Gobby asks how we can learn from theories of social change and the activists making it happen to speed up the transformations required to meet the climate emergency head-on.

THE MOUNTING SOCIAL and ecological crises we face call for massive transformations to social, economic and political systems. But how does such large-scale intentional systems change come about? How can social movements push this change towards more just and sustainable futures for humanity and non-human life on Earth? These are the questions at the heart of my research. This is what I have been trying to understand through my conversations with others.

Well thought-out theories of social change that can inform effective action are crucial at this moment in time. Yet scholarship and research that focus explicitly on social change remain limited, and activists generally do not have the time to step back from urgent work on the ground to reflect on their own theories of change. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have pointed out, our understandings of change often remain in the shady realm of unstated assumptions, rather than being pulled out into the light of day for rigorous debate, scrutiny and reflection. But when our assumptions remain unspoken, they can render our strategies for change less effective and hinder collaboration between different people, groups and movements that hold conflicting, unspoken ideas.

Duncan Green, author of *How Change Happens* (Oxford University Press), said this about conflicting theories of change:

> Relationships between...activists are often fraught. People bring their own worldviews to the questions of change. Do we prefer conflict ("speaking truth to power") or co-operation ("winning friends and influencing people")? Do we see progress everywhere, and seek to accelerate its path, or do we see (in our darker, more honest moments) a quixotic struggle against power and injustice that is ultimately doomed to defeat? Do we believe lasting and legitimate change is primarily driven by the accumulation of power at the grassroots/individual level, through organization and challenging norms and beliefs? Or by reforms at the levels of laws, policy, institutions, companies and elites? Or by identifying and supporting "enlightened" leaders? Do we think the aim of development is to include poor people in the benefits of modernity (money economy, technology, mobility) or to defend other cultures and traditions and build alternatives to modernity? Do we want to make the current system function better, or do we seek something that tackles the deeper structures of power?

Change is a complicated, unpredictable process and the systems we seek to change are themselves remarkably complex. There is a lot at stake. Understandably, people have wildly different ideas about how change happens, and theories of change are hotly contested. Explicit study of the process of intentional social transformation and deep reflections about our own theories and assumptions of change are needed in order to generate more effective strategies and to forge wider, stronger collaborations towards systemic change.

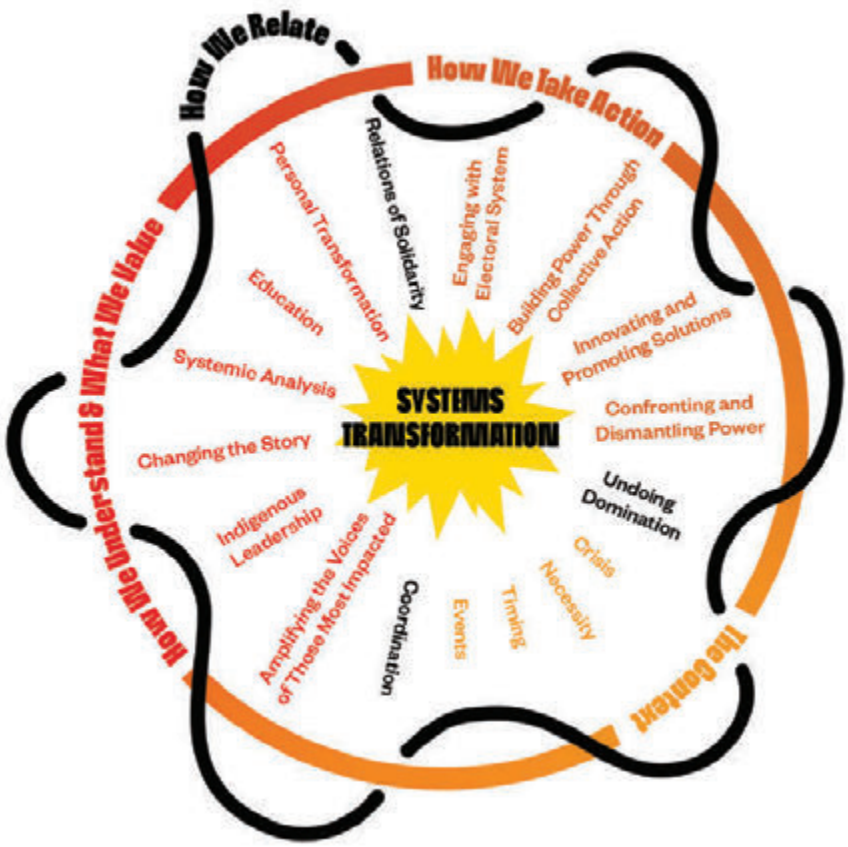
As noted by Tuck and Yang, we spend much of our lives trying to affect change, but our opportunities to think together about how

change happens are rare. And so, in my conversations with activists and land defenders, I asked them: How do you think large-scale systems change happens? What is your theory of change? In what follows, I assemble the many different answers I got to these questions, bringing them into dialogue with each other and with other theories of change I gathered through a review of diverse bodies of scholarly literature, including social movements studies, socio-ecological systems transformation, Indigenous resistance and resurgence, historical materialism and intersectional feminism.

The wide variety of perspectives on the process of change reflects the complexity of the problems and the complexity involved in the kind of change necessary. So much needs to change, and so many things are required to make such changes transpire. I have approached this with the contention that systems change is so complex that none of us can fully understand it, none of us can see the whole picture, but that each person's viewpoint contributes insight, a piece of the puzzle. By bringing them together we gain access to a wider and richer understanding of the process of transformation.

In a wide sweep, these conversations (I draw from them below based on my interview number, or Int#, as bracketed) provide insight that systems transformation happens through a convergence of the context, how we understand and what we value, how we take action and how we relate. Each of these four themes is broken down further into sub-themes, as is illustrated in the graphic on this page.

When I asked folks how they think large-scale change happens, many pointed out that so much depends on context. It's the relationship between what we do and the context in which we do it that shapes change. Context can determine which tactics work and when. It determines whether your action gets traction (Int#19). "There is no one size fits all.... You have to examine the context, the location, the political climate you're in" (Int#20 Michif Cree). This requires activists to be fluid and "constantly attentive to context" (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway). By being attentive to context, we can adapt our strategies and targets as conditions change. One person explained this attentiveness to context as "revolutionary acupuncture.... You put the needle at the right spot at the right moment" (Int#19). Being attentive to context can help us be more effective agents of change.



The systems we seek to change are already and always changing. Human struggles for change happen within the context of complex socio-ecological systems that are continuously changing in ways that are unpredictable, shaping and being shaped by many diverse factors and forces, including but not limited to human agency. Indigenous philosophy sees the "world as in motion, that all things are constantly undergoing processes of transformation, deformation, and restoration ... the essence of life and being is movement," according to Taiaiake Alfred in his book *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*.

The activists that I spoke with discussed how at certain points in time change is more possible than at others, describing this in various ways: political opportunities, tipping points, key moments and political sweet spots. Social-ecological systems scholars similarly describe how ecosystems move through cycles of growth, collapse, reorganization, renewal and re-establishment and that cycles of social change can follow similar patterns. Intentional transformation of a social system may be more possible at certain phases than others, namely the collapse and reorganizations phases; it is at these stages that new structures and dynamics are most likely to emerge. Activists can assess which cyclical phase the

system they are trying to change is currently in and then use this to help inform strategy, according to Green.

Social movements scholars such as Sidney Tarrow refer to opportunity structures: moments when the state is more receptive or vulnerable to movements' collective action. Activists need to be "mindful of these changes as they come into view," according to Bill Carroll and Kanchan Sarker in their 2016 book, *A World to Win* (ARP Books). For example, election outcomes and changes in political power can create differing constraints and opportunities for change, and these call for different strategies for "wedging open and undermining the power structures.... With the more liberal government, you have to work around slippery rhetoric. While with conservative power, you have to deal with the hammer of law of enforcement and fear" (Int#29).

Different times in history call for and enable different forms of collective change agency, reshaping "the terrain on which movements move," write Carroll and Sarker. The question becomes: What approaches to change work at which points in time? One activist told me that change is more likely to happen when our actions and messages resonate with the cultural zeitgeist of the moment in a certain place. According to him, we need to ask: "What's currently possible, politically, here and now? And is our activism reflecting that?" (Int#6).

As we take action in the world, and our work has impact, we change the context in which we act, shaping the opportunity structures that open to us, according to Tarrow. "Movements move in a dialectical relationship with opportunity structures, and success or failure in one conjuncture leads on to a new conjuncture that can open up new opportunities and threats," write Carroll and Sarker.

And to make matters even more dynamic and complex, when movements' hard work is successful and does catalyze a transformation, the way that that transformation process plays out is in itself dynamic. Transformation scholars, including Per Olsson, Victor Galaz, Wiebren Boonstra, Michele-Lee Moore and others, have developed frameworks for describing the stages that social-ecological systems transformations tend to go through. Early stages often involve disruptions; later stages involve routinization and stabilizing the new direction. The important point here is that different stages of change call for different kinds of strategies and different kinds of actors. In other words, they require different approaches to activism. It's important to ask which people or groups are best equipped and positioned to do the work necessary at each phase of systems transformation. For example, direct-action groups may be best positioned and skilled to take the lead during the disruptive phases, whereas perhaps NGO policy analysts may best provide leadership during institutionalization phases.

Direct-action groups may be best positioned and skilled to take the lead during disruptive phases of transformation, whereas NGO policy analysts may best provide leadership during institutionalization phases.

Another main takeaway here is that transformations are generally catalyzed by triggers, such as disruptive events or crises that open up opportunities for change. These can be brought on intentionally or unintentionally by social forces, such as civil unrest, election cycles, direct action or blockades of major infrastructure. Or crises in the system can be brought about through ecological forces, such as abrupt changes in resource availability or disruptive weather events. Crises can come about on their own, or they can be triggered by human agency.

Activists I spoke to discussed the significant impact that events have on change processes: "Unfortunately, it can take drastic things to happen so people will start changing" (Int#7 Kanien'kehá ka). These drastic things happen in the form of events that trigger change (S#34). "There's always a little spark that starts it. [Many] revolutions in history started with a riot and a bread line.... There were people organizing beforehand, but then all of a sudden there's a flashpoint and then everybody comes out" (Int#5).

According to the American sociologist Steven Buechler, Marx thought "that revolution is most likely when economic crises converge with growing class consciousness." The prominent Marxist David Harvey claims the many contradictions inherent within capitalism serve as grievances and opportunities for collective action. He advises movements looking to transform systems away from capitalism to understand the various contradictions inherent in capitalism that create instability and crises, and to develop strategies that can take advantage of the crises as they emerge.

During times of disruption or crisis, certainty and predictability crumble, control is weak and confused. At these times, space is also created for reorganization and innovation. Change becomes more possible when the powers that be are weak or experiencing crises of legitimation, when events disrupt people's taken-for-granted understanding of social reality, or when social controls are weakened enough that people become available and able to participate in collective action.

"When authority is weak because its legitimation is undermined, the social space for social movements increases and they are more likely to emerge and flourish," writes Buechler. Additionally, change can become more possible at these critical junctures because to the people making decisions, "the status quo suddenly appears to be less worth defending," according to Green. It is these phases in which activists have the best chance of influencing events. At these key moments, activists' "long-term work...can suddenly come to fruition," Green claims.

Sometimes, at these critical moments, crises can create conditions in which transformative change becomes necessary. Several people I spoke with suggested that people don't change unless they have to, that systems don't change unless they are forced to. Reflecting on the collective effort that was mobilized during the Second World War, another activist told me "it wasn't voluntary.... That was decided at a high political level, because it was a national emergency. The [government] said, 'this is the new deal.' It wasn't a choice. So, everyone did it" (Int#2). Certain kinds of events create conditions that necessitate changes in how we understand, in how we live and in how society is organized.

"We need some kind of other story to take us over, and sometimes that happens through crisis and catastrophe" (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway). Crisis can change people's perceived self-interest and what they will stand up for and stand up to. "A lot of people engage in conflict because there is no choice. They know that their future depends on engaging in conflict" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Activists and organizers need to be attentive to timing, opportunities and stages of change and choose our moments and strategies accordingly.

But for these crisis moments to trigger transformative change in desirable directions, we need to be paying close attention, be prepared with alternatives and be ready to seize the opportunities that open up. As one person said to me: "There are windows of opportunity that are presented, often in times of crises, often manufactured by massive systemic forces we have no control over. The people who are able to have a massive impact in those moments are the ones who are expecting them and are organized and able to take those opportunities" (Int#28). Progressive organizations are not always nimble enough to take advantage of such opportunities, writes Green.

According to several people I spoke with, echoing Naomi Klein's arguments in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Picador), the political right has proven better than the left at creating and seizing crises. They do so through a politics of fear that produces hostility towards others. One activist made clear that though the answer is not to organize like the right does, "we need to understand that over the last few decades they've done an incredible job of seizing those crises and taking over all the institutions. [They are] better than us at movement building and at actually governing" (Int#28).

The key lesson from this discussion about context is that timing really matters in determining what interventions will work and when. Activists and organizers need to be attentive to timing, opportunities and stages of change and choose our moments and strategies accordingly. Matching strategy to context is key to driving transformative change:

> If we approach strategy from a rigid template, as in—this is how you do it in every single place, every single time, follow step one through 10 and you'll win. No. It ignores the social conditions. It ignores the cultural conditions. It ignores the resource condition of what you have available to you and it ignores the political will. Every place. Case by case. The scenario has to be strategically analyzed to determine its vulnerabilities, to determine its opportunities. And that's why we say "be like water" because you can't come in with this rigid template of strategy. (Int#38 Mi'kmaw)

Given how much needs to change on such a pressing timeline, learning to understand the contexts in which we act and to strategically seize moments of opportunity can help speed up and leverage our work. Context is important, but there are many more forces and factors that determine change. M

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