



Canadian Centre for  
Policy Alternatives  
Manitoba Office

# work *life*

## A Tribute to John Loxley; Economist, Educator, Social Justice Advocate

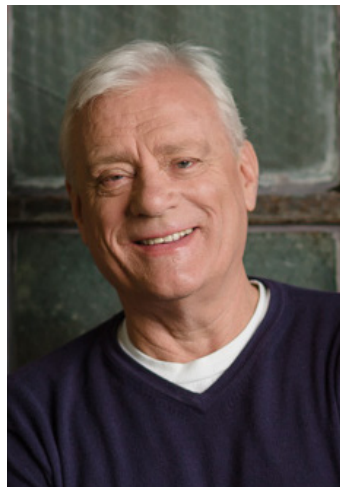
Dr. John Loxley will be honoured at the 8th Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues Brunch on November 3, 2019. Every year the committee chooses an honoree who exemplifies the spirit and beliefs of Errol Black - life-long social activist, labour supporter, economics professor and Brandon city councillor. Errol would be proud to know that his friend John, who shares Errol's values and aspirations, had been chosen.

John's commitment to social justice can be traced to his childhood in Sheffield, England where he was born into a large, working-class family. He learned at a young age that families with low incomes could thrive if supports like access to education, proper housing and food supplements were in place.

Thanks to the progressive policies of the Labour government, John was able to study economics at the University of Leeds. After obtaining a PhD, he embarked on a distinguished career working in various African countries as a university lecturer and government advisor. He was particularly active in Tanzania where he was Chief Economist at the National Bank of Commerce, Director of the Institute of Financial Management and professor at the University of Dar es Salaam. His work in Africa established John's reputation as an expert in monetary and finance policy, and in 1974 Manitoba's newly elected NDP government recruited him for the position of Deputy Minister of the Research and Economic Development Cabinet Sub-Committee. Even after moving to Manitoba, he continued advising African governments, including Nelson Mandela's incoming government in South Africa.

John has had a great effect on policy in Manitoba and Canada. His scholarly analysis of Community Economic Development has been transformed into practical applications, and his influence is palpable from a series of NDP governments from Ed Schreyer's to Greg Selinger's. Decades of writing continues to inform community development in Manitoba's northern communities.

In 1977 John left the provincial government to become a faculty member in the economics department at the University of Manitoba, where he is still professor. He makes and has made important contributions to heterodox economics: he was one of the first critics of IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programs, and continues to offer insightful alternative analysis of current policies such as public-private partnerships (P3s) and social impact bonds (SIBs). Deeply committed to the labour movement, he writes books and briefs for them and leads workshops for union activists, equipping them with sound economic arguments in support of public financing and ownership models. His research



is used by those speaking out against creeping privatization.

John has influenced scores of students who are now working professionals in academic, government and community-sector jobs around the world. He has supervised many Master's theses and PhD. dissertations and continues to mentor students at the U of M and through the Manitoba Research Alliance – a group of academic and community members who have received 3 grants

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IN LABOUR ISSUES

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through the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. John has been and is the Project Director for all these multi-year/multi-million dollar grants, and as such, provides intellectual guidance as the team does community-based research on how to improve the lives of Manitoba's most marginalized. Through the MRA, and with U of M archives students, John oversaw a ground-breaking project archiving decades of local community development documents, working with local Indigenous leaders so the material could be housed at the U of M Dafoe Library in a culturally appropriate manner. He is currently overseeing a multi-faceted research project looking at the Indigenization of Thompson that includes an archival project for that community.

John has long been engaged in policy work with First Nations. His work with the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada revealed the inadequacy of federal funding of First Nations child welfare agencies. His findings influenced the hearings of the Human Rights Tribunal into complaints brought by the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada of funding discrimination against First Nation children and continued federal underfunding of First Nations Child Welfare. Always professional, compassionate and respectful, John is highly regarded by First Nation agencies in Canada, and his expertise sought after by many.

John is known for his work in the community. He is an active member of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), and has worked closely with Winnipeg's urban Indigenous community for decades. His best known community initiative is the alternative budget movement - a community exercise that teaches people how government budgets work, and allows them to make choices about revenues and expenditures "as if people mattered", all within a realistic fiscal framework.

The idea took life in Winnipeg in the early 1990s

with the grassroots advocacy group called Choices, of which John was co-chair. The group prepared alternative municipal and provincial budgets that were fiscally and socially responsible, demonstrating the many options to cuts that governments have when determining budgets. The exercise was taken up later in the 90s by the CCPA Mb. (currently working on a 2020 Alternative Provincial Budget) and then in Ottawa, where the Alternative Federal Budget is produced every year. The exercise has proven an effective means of challenging, educating and inspiring the public, politicians and policy makers across the country.

Those who know John well have noted his ability to participate in financial and economic policy discussions with finance ministers, leaders of governments and international institutions, and then engage with local community groups about the same issues. This flexibility is borne of the lessons he carries from his upbringing, combined with a keen intellect and deep knowledge of economics.

John has never forgotten that the choices governments make have tremendous influence on people's lives, for better or worse, and he has made it his life's work to push for better. In doing so he has inspired generations of progressive academics and labour and social activists, showing them how, as Jim Stanford said, "to keep their eyes on the sky, but their feet on the ground." His pragmatic, but compassionate approach to economic policy and unwavering dedication to social justice continues to drive progressive politics in Manitoba and Canada.

*Lynne Fernandez studied economics with John Loxely and currently holds the Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues.*

**work** *References available upon request.*  
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