

# Lower Island NEWS

An independent democratic socialist newspaper serving the Lower Vancouver Island area for 30 years

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Volume 31 Issue #1

March, 2014

Victoria, BC

## Standing up for the Agricultural Land Reserve

By Ben Isitt

Last month, I joined farmers and citizens from across Vancouver Island and beyond to rally for the Agricultural Land Reserve. With the changes contemplated by Premier Christy Clark's government, all of us have a personal responsibility to stand up for the future of farmland and our food supply.

Here on Vancouver Island, we have approximately 72 hours worth on food supplies. Over 90% of food products are imported from elsewhere. Now, the provincial government is considering far-reaching changes to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), established 40 years ago by the Dave Barrett NDP government to protect BC's finite supply of arable land (less than 5% of the landbase of our mountainous province) for food production.

By the time this newspaper goes to press, the BC Liberals may already have introduced amendments to the *Land Commission Act* that could erode the autonomy of the ALR and the commission that is entrusted to protect it. Statements from the Minister of Agriculture and the minister overseeing the core services review do not instill confidence in the government's commitment to a province-wide, arms-length



Victoria City Councillor Ben Isitt attends rally for the Agricultural Land Reserve held in front of the Legislature Buildings in Victoria February 10.

system of farmland protection.

Faced with uncertainty over the security of arable land in our region and province, I have been working with farmers, citizens and grassroots organizations in the Farmland Protection Coalition to raise awareness and support for the ALR and for farmers and food systems. In a series of

Town Halls – in Sidney, Saanich, Duncan and Nelson – and three rallies on February 10 in Victoria, Summerland and West Kelowna, people are taking action to stand up for the ALR.

Local governments have also gone on record supporting the province-wide, one-zone system, including the City of Victoria, Capital Regional District, Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich and Metchosin.

You can assist these efforts by calling Premier Christy Clark to share your views on the Agricultural Land Reserve and food security: 250-387-1715. You can also email: [Premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Premier@gov.bc.ca), and share a copy with the Farmland Protection Coalition ([contact@FarmlandProtection.ca](mailto:contact@FarmlandProtection.ca)). To learn more about this issue, visit the website: [www.FarmlandProtection.ca](http://www.FarmlandProtection.ca).

Alongside these provincial efforts, there are steps we can take right here in Victoria and the Capital Region to support food security. We can examine the inventory of municipal, CRD and School Board-owned land to determine whether there are opportunities to expand food production in the form of community gardens and low-cost leases to young farmers. We can also expand the supply of publicly owned farmland through the creation of a regional farmland levy, like the CRD Regional Parks Levy.

We can encourage residents and business operators to buy local food products. And we can support incomes policies and social services to assist our most vulnerable citizens in achieving food security and good health.

Together, we can increase the independence and stability of our food supply here on Vancouver Island and across BC, by ensuring there is sufficient farmland to grow food for the future, with support for farmers and food systems. I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Ben Isitt is a Victoria City councillor and CRD director. He can be reached at [Ben@Isitt.ca](mailto:Ben@Isitt.ca), by phone at 250-882-9302 or via his website: [www.BenIsitt.ca](http://www.BenIsitt.ca).

# 30!

Lower Island News is 30 years old!

And to mark this milestone of presenting progressive voices to readers on southern Vancouver Island, the editorial board is hosting a celebration (and fund raiser) on Saturday, May 3, from noon till 3 pm in the auditorium of the BCGEU building, 2994 Douglas Street.

A few short speeches are promised, along with lunch, a silent auction, lots of visiting time and live music by Victoria's Rabbleberries.

LIN started life as small newsletters sent out by individual NDP provincial constituency associations to their members, but around 1983 the constituency executives decided to take the next step, band together and start their own small newspaper for the Lower Island.

So in 1983 the first 4-page tabloid edition of LIN appeared. At that time, editorial copy was still set up in old fashioned lead type, and the resulting pages of articles were then glued to large markup sheets and then printed.

But times and technology changed. Around 1987 the editorial board authorized the purchase of their first copy of Adobe's Pagemaker software. It was a sharp learning curve, but the editors mastered the new techniques and started producing the LIN you see today. The size of the paper also gradually increased to its present 24 pages per issue.

In time, it became apparent that LIN should become officially independent of the NDP constituencies. The Lower Island News Society was formally registered with the BC Societies Branch, and in 1999 the paper took off on its own.

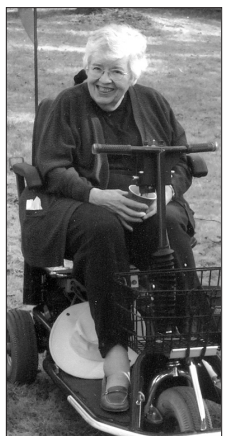
Current editor Dale Young originally joined LIN as its treasurer in 1986, but when the then editor resigned unexpectedly in 1991, Young took over the still 4-page paper and has grown it to its present size with the help, she explains, of an amazing and skillful group of volunteer writers and photographers.

Young, a former journalist with the *Ottawa Journal*, *Weekend Magazine* and *McGill Daily*, edits all the material received for each issue, and uses Pagemaker's successor, Adobe's In Design to put the paper together before emailing it to the printers.

Attendees at the LIN's celebration will be asked to honour Young's 28 years with the paper -- and her 80th birthday.

Tickets to the event are \$25 and \$15 and may be purchased from Lower Island NDP constituency executives (each will have 10 tickets to sell).

For further information and additional tickets, contact Starla Anderson at 250-744-2791 or [starla.haverfield.anderson@gmail.com](mailto:starla.haverfield.anderson@gmail.com).



Editor Dale Young



(Above) Over a thousand demonstrators wave signs and listen to speakers at the Save the ALR Rally.



(Left) Among the spectators were (left to right) MLAs Gary Holman (Saanich North and the Islands; Maurine Karagianis, Esquimalt-Royal Roads; and Carole James (Victoria-Beacon Hill). Photos by Heather Tufts  
More photos on page 2

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Lower Island News  
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Victoria, BC V8T 4E8

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Standing up for the Agricultural Land Reserve, from page 1



NDP Agriculture Critic Nicholas Simons (centre) is applauded by MLAs Rob Fleming (Victoria-Swan Lake) and Lana Popham (Saanich South) as he speaks to the large crowd on the Legislature lawn,

Photos by Heather Tufts

Congratulations Dale!!!

The Victoria Federal EDA would like to congratulate and thank you for 27 years of excellent work producing the *Lower Island News*, ensuring South Island New Democrats have a special place to share our important progressive message.



Nathalie Chambers, organic farmer and co-chair of the Farmland Protection Coalition, welcomes the crowd and numerous speakers at the Save the ALR Rally.

The Board of the Lower Island News invites you to ...

A Celebration of **30 years** of **Progressive Voices** in the **Lower Island News**

*Saturday, May 3*  
Noon - 3:00  
BCGEU Auditorium  
2994 Douglas Street

*Lunch & Silent Auction*  
A few short speeches  
Lots of visiting time  
Live Music!



\$25/\$15

*Join us as we honour Dale Young's 27 years on LIN staff & 80th birthday*

Contact: Starla Anderson:  
250-744-2791 or starla.haverfield.anderson@gmail.com



Elder Joan Morris from Songhees offers a welcome and blessing.



A mixed crowd of young and old enjoys a sunny day while attending the rally.



**By Barry Weisleder**

South Island New Democrats  
JOIN THE ORANGE WAVE  
EARTH DAY MARCH AND FESTIVAL  
Gather at Centennial Square  
Saturday, April 26, 12 noon  
WALK WITH US IN RESPECT OF THE EARTH  
AND IN HOPE FOR THE FUTURE  
And a reminder: If you wish to vote for a new provincial NDP leader, Thursday, June 26 is the deadline to apply for memberships in the BC NDP..



*Our people are like children who would never of their own accord decide to learn.*  
*--Peter the Great of Russia -- 1725*

# A stiff dose of Realpolitik

Russia’s (Putin’s) aggressive actions in Ukraine – specifically Crimea – are an outrage and the outcome of the crisis can only be bad, but it is not just good guys versus bad guys. Ukraine has been fought over so often, it is remarkable that it has preserved a national identity. In the last 400 years, Ukraine has had only two short periods of independence – for three years after World War 1/Russian revolution and since 1991 following the end of the Soviet Union. Lithuania, Poland, Turkey, Nazi Germany and particularly Russia, have all had a piece of the action. The soil of Ukraine is soaked in blood, its people often starved or dispossessed; with two inevitable results – a huge diaspora and insurrections against corrupt and callous rulers – which continues today.

From 1880 to 2004 as many as six million Ukrainians moved to Russia/Kazakhstan, almost 1 million to Canada. Since independence in 1991 hundreds of thousands (mostly from the Western Ukraine) have left for the EU – including oligarchs and wealthy elite following the election of the now overthrown Victor Yanukovich.

In 2013 the International Organization for Migration reported that Ukraine’s population (45 Million) “is shrinking by 330,000 per year”, with emigration a key factor.

Vladimir Putin’s actions are reprehensible but Harper, Baird and other western politicians should have seen this coming. Many Ukrainians are also Russian and vice versa. Secondly, the Russian need for a strategic warm water naval base is almost visceral, going back centuries to the seizure of the Crimea and Black Sea coast from the Turks by Catherine the Great in 1783. We ignore history at our peril.

The Russian naval base in Crimea was always going to lead to trouble. No matter that Russia agreed to Ukrainian territorial integrity – no Russian ruler has ever set much store by such agreements. And why is Putin doing what he is doing now? Because he can!

What the poor battered Ukraine and its long suffering people whatever their background need most, is peace, order, freedom from corruption and good government – just like everyone else.

While the world and Canada were focused on gay rights and winning medals at Sochi, Vladimir Putin was undoubtedly looking further ahead. Western leaders have said that Putin’s aggression is “inconsistent with 21<sup>st</sup> Century standards”. They forget that it is completely consistent with Russian history. The very first protest following Yanukovich’s rejection (engineered by Putin) of the EU trade pact was a godsend to Putin, allowing him to escalate the situation to achieve the key Russian aim of recovery of the Crimea.

Instead of taking a gang of Conservatives (anathema to Putin) to Kiev at the end of February, John Baird could have taken an all-party delegation - probably including Tom Muclair and Green Leader Elizabeth May – to Ukraine. And to be seen to be trying to look at the big picture, to perhaps have also visited Kharkov in Eastern Ukraine, where the epic battle of Kursk (the largest land battle ever fought) ended in 1943 with the death of between one and two million Russians, Germans and Ukrainians. People don’t forget those numbers. The crisis in Ukraine is what we in the West and Canada get for cozy-ing up to authoritarian leaders and regimes such as Russia and China with corporate profits as the only goal. It may be just the beginning -- this could be the century of living dangerously.

Politicians need to be careful what they wish for. Libya is now an anarchic mess. Egypt has gone full circle back to military rule. Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan – the list goes on and on. So if Baird and Harper did less posturing and got out there like Lester Pearson would have done and exercised real diplomacy, they could bring some real hope to all Ukrainians and honour to Canada.

# And on the home front...

While Stephen Harper was justifiably socking it to Russia over Ukraine, there was silence about the four-year jail sentence handed to Chinese civil rights lawyer Yu Zhiyong for “gathering crowds to disrupt public order” – a protest meeting! Perhaps it all comes back to the tar sands and Chinese investment and markets.

The “Middle Class” whoever they are, are getting a lot of attention lately. Justin Trudeau waxed lyrically about them at the Liberal convention, as does Christy Clark. Barack Obama talks endlessly about them. Years ago, “middle class” was what “working class” or “lower class” people were assumed to want to become.

That has all changed. Higher education leads to underemployment and crippling debt and old age means hardship. There are instead, people who have much more than enough for an extravagant lifestyle and an awful lot somewhere outside or below the mythical middle class for whom catastrophe is just one pay cheque (or lack of it) away. People are now treated as commodities. Residential care homes are bought and sold – with the vulnerable seniors in them– like a Monopoly game and the employees re-hired (or not) at ever lower rates of pay. Employees are now referred to as “human capital” – not people.

On 26 February CBC TV aired a real jaw-dropper; “The Disability Advantage”, which extolled the virtues of hiring mentally or physically disabled people – not because it is the right thing to do but because it can create huge profits! No mention of compassion or the thought of distributing some of the fat profits to the disabled (and able) employees.

The BC budget was of course praised by the BC Liberal fan club of Chambers of Commerce, and Independent Contractors Association. *Times Colonist* writers generally kow-towed to the BC Liberals, leaving the rest of us to wonder what the future really holds apart from drifting into a cloud of natural gas. Even Jack Knox sees voters in the CRD as “failures”, stating that in the last election “the capital region *failed* to elect a single member of government”, implying that only areas where people vote Liberal are entitled to have some of their tax money come back to them. We will of course still have to pay our share of the \$38 million pledged by Finance Minister DeJong to the LNG industry – that’s about \$6 million from the Island voters who “failed” to elect Liberals.

Meanwhile the headline was “More spent on health than anything else” as though this was somehow a bad thing. Spending on public health and education are two of the key indicators of a worthwhile society. Look at the countries where these items are bottom of the budget list you wouldn’t want to live there! -- **DJO**

## The Lower Island NEWS

The *Lower Island NEWS*, in its 30th year of publication, is an independent newsfeature tabloid newspaper, published as often as financially possible, by the Lower Island News Society, Box 311, 2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC V8T 4E8.

Signed articles are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Lower Island NEWS* or the Lower Island News Society. Articles submitted for publication are subject to editing at the discretion of the Editor.

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**Printed at Web Express, Coquitlam, BC**  
**Canadian Publications Mail Agreement #40008124**

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### As others see it

## Sound familiar?

These are not easy times for education in British Columbia. Public mistrust is high. Teachers are defensive. Parents and students are confused. The Minister of Education appears to be more committed to threatening people than to improving the educational system. His calls for a core curriculum barely disguise his hostility to the province’s teachers.

Meanwhile, university professors complain that schools are not teaching literacy. Unemployment, particularly among young people, continues to worsen, encouraging more complaints about lack of preparation for work.

Taken together, these complex issues constitute a near crisis in BC education. Throughout the province, they have intensified the search for scapegoats. Public officials casually blame women who are no longer satisfied with second-class citizenship for destroying family life, and thus undermining discipline in the schools. People on welfare are singled out as the cause of our economic problems. Non-white immigrants are accused of fomenting racial violence.

Teachers are attacked for their lax discipline, failure to teach “basics”, and inability to prepare youth for the labour market. Their working conditions are deteriorating even as the demands upon teachers increase.

Centralized control of education and accountability manifest a “we don’t trust you” attitude. Declining enrollments are being used to threaten job security. Decisions are being made to increase teacher unemployment, rather than to decrease pupil-teacher ratios.

This hardly seems the best time for a radical journal of education to begin publishing. Yet it is precisely the crisis in which education finds itself that must be analyzed. Taken in isolation, the issues mentioned above are serious. But they cannot be understood in isolation.

The literacy crisis is tied to an economy which continually reduces the number of jobs requiring high standards of literacy. The failure of schools to train youth for jobs is part of a deteriorating economy that creates unemployment. Hostility towards teachers and the decline in their working conditions are shaped by a broader financial crisis which threatens to undermine all our social services.

The back to basics and core curricu-

lum slogans exploit the fears people have about getting jobs and about their children’s changes of getting university degrees and high status work.

*WORKING TEACHER* hopes to analyze these and other issues. It seeks to relate the educational system to the social structure, to show how schools are tied to the economic order. It will blend analytic articles with pragmatic material on classroom teaching.

While it recognizes the reform within schools cannot appreciably change the amount of social inequality in our society, *WORKING TEACHER* will also argue that pedagogical and curriculum change, and improved working conditions are important. They can ameliorate alienation between teachers and students, and improve the quality of learning. The struggle for humanistic educational reforms can equip teachers and students with the tools for the creation of a society in which material goods and decisions are equitably shared.

*WORKING TEACHER* embarks on a difficult task at a difficult time. We welcome submissions from our readers. Teachers and others involved in education often feel isolated within their classrooms, school districts, and political and social organizations. Hopefully, *WORKING TEACHER* will act as a forum for sharing problems, solutions, and ideas in ways that will reduce the difficulties of communication.

We believe than an articulate, creative, and controversial presentation of major educational issues can find readers willing to assess our work and debate our arguments, and that it will provide an important socialist perspective on education in British Columbia.

We ask for your support because we believe that *WORKING TEACHER* can elevate the level of educational discussion in BC and will contribute to an educational sanity now sorely needed. -- **written by the WORKING TEACHER collective.**

**Editor’s note: While the sentiments expressed in this editorial by the WORKING TEACHERS collective may sound familiar to 2014 readers, it was actually written in the summer of 1977! It is clear that times have not changed a whit.**

Permission to reprint this article was given by Starla Anderson, a member of the Working Teacher collective.

**We welcome your letters to the editor, as well as articles and reviews, photos, and anything else you think would be of interest to our progressive readers.**

**Please mail them to the Editor, at Box 311-2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, email them to dale\_young@telus.net, or phone 250-384-7621.**



# Mayors initiative for disarmament in Canada

At its annual convention in 2013, 3,000 US mayors passed unanimously a resolution calling on the US federal government to decrease military spending and to re-direct funds to domestic needs. The full resolution is at: <http://wsfweb.org/docs/usc-mres2013.PDF>.

Victoria Women in Black has initiated an appeal to Canadian mayors to propose and pass a similar resolution when Canadian mayors meet in 2014. Letters have been sent to our local mayors by groups and individuals; several Victoria councillors have offered their support. The initiative is also being taken on by other organization and citizens and is moving to cities across Canada.

Canada's military budget is at an all-time high while national infrastructure -- from railroads to postal service to all social services- are being cut by the federal government.

Most Canadians live in cities, close to 80%; our mayors have an important role to

take in federal politics. Our cities need funding for transportation, affordable housing and many other services. We elect mayors and federal politicians. As one peace activist said, "If the people lead, politicians will follow."

In November a majority of US citizens polled said they wanted their government to end foreign military intervention. Since that time talk of war on Iran and Syria has diminished. It appears that national governments do heed the opinions of citizens and their civic representatives.

Canadian mayors can work for a resolution that would influence federal policy and show that Canadians are well aware of our war-heavy federal budget while people go homeless and hungry in Canada. Let us add our voices, individually and as cities to the call for peaceful, sustainable and just federal spending.

We have a voice. If we speak up together, we will be heard.

**Theresa Wolfwood**  
Victoria

Re: Merry Christmas! (LIN December 2013)

## Number of Muslims killed rivals that of Christians in sectarian violence

I always enjoy reading the letters section of this paper, but I have to take issue with one printed in the last edition of the LIN (December 2013)..

In "Merry Christmas!" the writer apparently feels that the Christian majority in Canada are in some way being victimized by that familiar conservative bogeyman called "political correctness"

While disputes over whether Christmas greetings should be run on public transit may seem silly and censorious, it hardly amounts to systematic state persecution. There may even be some valid concerns behind the occasional complaint.

Last I heard, there was no shortage of appropriate season's greetings anywhere in Canada, and I've yet to hear of anyone being denounced for it, let alone detained.

There were no shortages of city councils spending public dollars on Christmas decorations either, the last time I looked, despite the democratic state not supposing to favour any particular religion over any other -- even that of the majority.

As to the claim repeated that "Christians are the most persecuted group in the world", I would like to see some hard evidence for that from some independent sources.

Individual Christians are indeed targeted for violence in some countries, sometimes state sponsored, sometimes not, but I seriously doubt the numbers could rival that of Muslims killed since "we" decided to embark on another "Clash of Civilization".

**Gavin Hearn**  
Victoria

# A democracy you say...

"I can remember when..."

People in their second half of life catch themselves saying those words often. We still look back on past chapters of our lives and the experiences and ideas we had, in full expectation they might still solve today's problems (if they were given a chance).

I refer to more than simple nostalgia of times dripping with gold, sweetness and light. I am referring to those clear memories of times when people led the way for programs that gave life colour and meaning and offered real opportunity for better days.

For some it would be a return to the socialist dream; for others it would simply be longing for an ideal of what constituted the "good life".

Lately I have thought a great deal about our democratic system we've evolved over the years. Nothing is perfect and no one has all the answers, but never have I felt so discouraged or despondent about the state of our democratic system than I do today. It seems to be falling apart, and I don't see many attempts at "massaging the corpse" of the system my parent's generation worked so long and hard to establish.

Huge and increasing disparities appear in our common life, cynicism seems to have the general public by the throat. We expect very little from our democracy and we aren't disappointed, as one public/communitarian operation after another crumbles or dies from malnutrition because of lack of public funding and support.

What can be done? There are those who only prescribe holding the line, trusting the status quo will carry us through this "dark night of the soul". They are content to hold fitfully the vain notion that someone, or something will return us to greater balance and life will continue much as we have known it over the years. Others are now prepared to step out into the abyss and attempt a reclamation of gigantic dimensions. I suspect most of us are somewhere in the middle.

I look first at the reformers and their prescriptions. In this camp I place firmly the Green Party. Reading, listening and studying their program I discover that a group of people with firm beliefs play the same political games but with (what they consider to be) better candidates and policies.

Elizabeth May nationally, and now Andrew Weaver provincially are the flag-bearers of this political movement. They represent the Green credo very well -- smart candidates with a few signature policies which now become the new buzz vocabulary for the Green Party.

Listen to and read the Green Party's platforms and policy statements. New or trail-blazing. Hardly! Just orthodox formulas and concepts, which sometimes even get encased in new language. For instance, look at any sentence in the Green's Policy booklet, invariably you would run into the formula --°. When asked what it means a regular Green lay person can only explain it sounds "green" so probably it's better than what was there before.

Unbeknownst in that small formula was the demand Andrew Weaver required as his price for joining the Green Party. Most haven't a clue what it means, but it sounds politically "green".

As a world-renowned climate scientist he made that formula a core template for Green Party policies. Without it there is nothing significantly different about the Green Party.

What we desperately need now won't be sexier political parties with cuter candidates

Re: Senate scandal upstages... (LIN December, 2013)

## Writer's view that the Senate should be abolished is seriously misguided

I appreciate Barry Weisleder's noting how our priorities are distorted when we allow the hi-jinks of former Harper cheerleaders Duffy and Wallin to distract us from the urgent issues of the day. But Mr. Weisleder's throw-away closing line about needing "of course, to abolish the Senate and the monarchy" is seriously misguided.

Not only is such superficial sloganeering itself a distraction from the real issues, it does a huge disservice to progressive politics as a whole. Bashing the Senate and the monarchy plays right into the hands of Harper and his cronies, who vigorously promote this kind of political ignorance in order to continue their destruction of parliamentary democracy.

Too few Canadians realize that the "reserve powers" of both the Senate and the Crown can sometimes be all that stands between us and complete tyranny. If those disappear, we the people will be robbed of two institutions that still possess the constitutional potential to forestall total dictatorship by the PMO.

The present government in Ottawa would like nothing better than be able to barge ahead with their destructive agenda without any risk of interference from a rebellious Upper House or an informed and conscientious Governor General.

For the moment, Harper has managed to bend both institutions to his will while continuing to subvert the other mechanisms by which governments are traditionally held to account in our parliamentary system. He relies on public ignorance and cynicism to help him keep those mechanisms inoperative.

Harper certainly does not want people to embrace the idea that there are creative solutions to the problems of our democracy, like a true "people's Senate" and a Governor-General with guts. The good ol' boys in the PMO must be secretly delighted by the frenzy of Senate-bashing now being led by the Official Opposition. "At this rate," they'll say, "we'll never have to worry about any sober second thoughts from that quarter again."

It's high time the NDP and others on the Left informed themselves about how parliamentary responsible government is designed to work, and pushed to restore rather than eviscerate its institutions.

**Helen Forsey**  
Ompah, ON and Biscan Cove, NL

[Ed. note: See also Helen Forsey's article on A People's Senate on page 19.]

## Transfer the wealth of the world from the 1%ers to the 99%ers

The vision of the 1%ers is the New World Order where the 1%ers control the wealth of the world and reduce We the 99%ers to serfs to continue to be milked of all the wealth we produce.

I also have a vision. It is that We the 99%ers use our overwhelming 99% of voters to vote in our own People's Government. This government will correct the current mal-distribution of wealth between the 1%ers and We the 99%ers.

This mal-distribution could be corrected by rolling back the income tax cuts to the rich, funding government services and programs (including infrastructure projects), and reducing income taxes for the 99%ers to a nominal percentage.

The redistribution of wealth would provide a strong stimulus to the economy by increasing demand and putting more money into circulation.

This vision would not be achievable immediately but it provides clear direction towards which We the People and our People's Government can move towards. The vision could also help mobilize the 99%er politically behind their Government due to the benefits they will receive.

It is only right that the wealth generated in our rich country be shared by all.

**Gerry Masuda, Duncan**

and lovely formulae. What we need is another way to do politics. In no small way we must radically embrace another way of engaging regular folks in doing politics. Until that happens nothing will change significantly on the ground.

There are two lively options before us right now: one is the option of engaging regular lay people in specific residential zones (called Ridings or Constituencies) where they might set the political agenda and respond to political issues.

This approach is called Constituency Assemblies. A slight adaptation would be to hold them at the same time the Legislature is meeting. That way the participants would know what is coming "down the chute" (as it were) in the way of legislation and their input could influence in no small way the behaviour and voting practices of their local MLA.

That same politician would then have to juggle their commitment to their electorate over and sometimes against the will of their leader and party caucus.

However, that conundrum would make for wonderful shifts in priorities and signal to regular constituents there was a hopeful way to have their voice heard and listened to with real potential that it would make a difference.

A second option has been tried already -- Wisdom Councils. This approach would bring together a certain number of people (either 12 or 24 in total) from the general public, picked randomly without any reference to the person's political party loyalties, policies and positions.

The Council would be chosen using an established system of random selection, and they would agree to meet several times, to outline what they considered to be the most significant issues facing them and the general public. After a consensus on solutions was achieved, then formal statements would be issued to media and political leaders for their considered response. This could be targeted to particular regions, but would not be defined according to constituencies.

I favour the first option. It's tied directly into particular residential areas, and it's open to anyone from that constituency to attend and express their perspective on actual bills coming before the Legislature at that session.

There's nothing theoretical about this approach; just cold, hard reality as to what is being proposed at this time and place.

Participants could have direct contact with their MLA at that same time, either by having her/him attend the session or connecting via SKYPE or conference phone. And if the participants met again after the Legislature was recessed, then they could hear an exact accounting as to how their MLA performed and whether he/she followed the wishes of their constituents.

This would be direct democracy.

How would you want our democracy to work? You can respond to the LIN (at [lineditor@telus.net](mailto:lineditor@telus.net)) and the editor can share your response with me and we can go on from there.

My self-interest is enlivening our democratic system for the sake of my children and grandchildren and their peers before I die -- it's as simple as that. It may not happen, and I'm OK with that outcome; just want to make an effort and see what materializes.

**Dale Perkins**, Victoria



# Reflections on NDP Convention

By Allan Collier

The BC NDP Convention, held November 15-17, 2013, was my first, as it was for many of the 14 delegates who attended from Saanich North and the Islands.

It promised to be like no other. Spirits were down, anger was up and change was in the air. What possibly could be accomplished in an atmosphere of disillusion, discontent and distrust? Would we, could we, emerge from this gathering with hope renewed and a sense of purpose?

A glance at the agenda and the tone of the opening plenary session made it clear that the weekend would be tightly managed with little opportunity for substantive debate – not a good feeling as delegates settled in to hear the words of Stephen Lewis.

And what words they were! Imploring us as New Democrats – social democrats – to combat six threats to the Canada we desire:

1. Climate change
2. Economic and social inequality
3. Aboriginal suppression
4. Gender equality and the stranglehold of paternalism
5. Decline of Canada as a positive force in the world
6. War on unions

Embers brightened and spirits emboldened as we left the hall for the evening.

The next day and a half were dedicat-

ed to resolutions debate, executive elections and a parade of speakers including Leaders Adrian Dix, Tom Mulcair, Andrea Horvath (Ontario NDP), an assortment of MLAs, mayors, labour leaders and guests Mira Oreck (international campaign strategist) and Ed Schultz (media commentator).

Those who had come expecting constituency views to predominate would be disappointed. With some 250 resolutions up for discussion, fewer than 30 received attention with virtually all being approved with little challenge or debate.

Regardless of the process that seemed at times superficial, a fundamental belief system emerged from the resolutions approved.

New Democrats desire an economy that values jobs and is sustainable; an economy that encourages value-added production, innovation and environmental stewardship. New Democrats call for actions to improve health care for seniors, mental health support for youth, increase graduation rates for First Nations students and increased access and affordability of trades training and post-secondary education.

They advocate for the health of their water, air and land resources. They will not tolerate exploitation of workers including foreign workers.

New Democrats demand action to reduce obscene poverty levels in BC, advocate for fair treatment for First Nations,

enhance child care, end violence against women, end human trafficking and support youth and seniors through enhanced policies and programs.

These resolutions, taken together, form the cornerstones of a society that is physically and mentally healthy, fair and equitable; an economy that is productive, efficient and sustainable; a workforce that is trained, fairly treated and engaged; and an environment that is managed for the long term. Clearly, this is not the society, economy, workforce and environment that we currently have in BC.

A major concern, both during and after the convention, was the number of people on stage talking “to” us not “with” us. In many delegates’ minds, this was symptomatic of the “top down” attitude that is a common complaint from constituencies throughout BC.

I believe the reasons for the inordinate number of speakers were twofold; first, to fill the time and keep discord to a minimum (knowing media were there anticipating a fractious gathering) and second, to hammer home a message that BC New Democrats may be down but not out.

~~The themes running through these passionate and thought provoking pronouncements were “We are New Democrats”, “We desire a better tomorrow for all”, and “if not us, then who?”~~

The presentations may have diluted

grass roots debate on the floor but, taken together, they ultimately served to remind the 1,000 plus delegates that we, as social democrats, have a job to do. **It is important, it is urgent and it will be done.**

I entered the convention weekend with one objective; to hear unequivocally just what a BC New Democrat was and what the BCNDP offered to British Columbians both as a political party and social democratic movement in 2014; what we offered that was better, more positive and more hopeful than alternate political parties’ ideologies and visions. My objective was met but not in the way I had hoped for; that is, in one rhetorical statement or clever phrase.

Over the course of the three days, I got my answer from the delegates’ passionately expressed views, from the speakers and their beliefs, from conversations with the young and the old, from the new and the long time members and from the socially minded energy that demands change and remains steadfast despite political disappointment.

I came away from the convention knowing that New Democrats live in hope, demand fairness, serve community and work together for the benefit of future generations.

I am a New Democrat.

Allan Collier is president of Saanich North and the Islands NDP

# Convention leaves mixed feelings--mostly exasperation

By Richard Mills

Having attended the recent BCNDP Policy Convention, I am left with mixed feelings, mostly exasperation.

As with the other three conventions I have attended, I felt joy being in a community of fellow progressives, people of like mind, people I trust to make a better world. Stephen Lewis, Ed Shultz and Mira Oreck gave amazing presentations. My fellow delegates were committed to doing the

work of the various committees. I applaud them all.

Unfortunately, the elephant in the room was left virtually untouched. That elephant being Power.

With all due respect to the Elections Review Committee, I expect we will lose the next election if we follow its recommendations. For all our lofty ideals and values, if we as progressives don't start to take our heads out of the clouds and our arrogance of being morally correct, we will not form government. We will not engage the various constituencies that we so want to bring forward. Until we acknowledge the nature of people who are not yet progressives and the nature of power, “both as constraint and as empowerment” we will sit in opposition working for crumbs for our constituents.

I am by no means advocating abandon-

ing any of our values, but making them relevant to people who have only five minutes a year for politics. As I go about my day to day life I engage as many people as possible in political discussion. I find that when explained in relevance to them, persons of all backgrounds agree with our values but are afraid we can not effect practical change. What they respond to are the Corky Evans style analogies of their real lives. They are not intellectuals, or as some would say, “silk shirt socialists”. The fact of the matter is that a lot of the core of the NDP are of reasonable means and we have the time, resources, and education to effect change. On this level we do have power and should make no apology for it. We should, and we do share it.

At the beginning of convention we always talk about anti harassment. I would then say that we should start respecting the nature of power. Every convention I feel harassed for having been born with the power of being white, male, and of reasonable means. I have spent my entire adult life trying to share my accidental power with anyone who needs it. And as I talk in my community with fellow white men of power you would be amazed at how many are quite happy to give up that power. At convention we call each other brother and sister, but we ignore our inclusive ideal when it comes to those outside our movement. Every person on this planet is my brother or sister.

be a better game.

So as we are sitting on the sidelines for the next four years, dream about how nice it would be to find funding for everything from PEERS to Environmental Initiatives or whatever your favorite action is. Then grab a ball and wait to benevolently share the power.

Footnote: On a recent trip to Mexico, I encountered a group of six good old boys from Arkansas; real hard core Republicans. I sat with them for four or five afternoons talking about progressive policy initiatives, from health care to finances. I asked them what they wanted and answered in terms and perspective they could understand, mostly analogies. I never once compromised on the core values of progressives. While leaving the hotel for the airport one of the group yelled out to me in a southern drawl, “If you were in Arkansas we'd all vote for you.” Meanwhile in Toronto Rob Ford could very well get elected again. Ask the honest question “Why?”

The unfortunate answer is that even in his ignorance and arrogance he understands power. He doesn't give complex answers. He doesn't ask for consensus. He just powers ahead. You don't have to like it but we better well learn the lesson. Leaders have to lead, look strong and no apologizing for it. Our values will do the rest.

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Olivia Chow, widow of former NDP Leader Jack Layton, and MP for Trinity-Spadina, speaks at her February 8 Victoria visit on her book tour.

Photo by Tony Sprackett



# Slaves for a lifetime

By Tim Pheotist

The recent annual Oscar bash served its usual intended purpose of movie marketing and pretentious distraction. All good fun and even useful as a reflection of our times.

This year’s best movie winner, **12 Years a Slave**, perhaps more than most, did reach to serve a higher purpose in reflecting and reminding of the cruelty that existed, not so long ago, in the racially segregated USA.

The movie tells the tale of a “Free” man – Solomon Northup -- kidnapped and extracted from his peaceful and comfortably successful family life in Washington DC in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and transported to Louisiana to spend 12 enforced years as a slave. It’s a true story based on the writings and recollections of the victim of this horror.

Solomon Northup was a resourceful man who managed to eventually find a way to establish his true identity and escape from, what would otherwise have been, a lifetime of servitude.

Reunited with his family the story explains that he devoted many of his remaining years assisting others to escape the fate that he endured.

His original abductors were tried and acquitted of criminal activity. Owning and using humans for forced labour was entirely legal. The “Free” man could only escape captivity by affirmatively proving that he was not the property of any Louisiana landowner.

Not so many decades earlier a similar segregation of human value was the law of the land in England and in many other nations. The US wasn’t the only nation to perpetrate these evils by any means. Just one of the more recent and obvious.

The response to this year’s Oscar win-

ner has been appropriate and predictable.

We understand that visiting a lifetime of legally sanctioned indentured servitude on our fellow man is uncivilized and wrong. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century we officially abolished such social manipulation of labour. All developed nations now purport to eschew the concept of slavery as it existed prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But...while this writer makes no claims to be a reliable judge of movie magic, there are some painfully obvious economic truths that are unsettlingly brought into 21<sup>st</sup> century focus by the 19<sup>th</sup> century slave story.

History teaches that the struggle of human labour to maintain a fair price when subjected to unfairly distributed and protected capital groupings, is as old as the oldest recorded civilizations.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the most effective curbs, ever, were legislated in order to protect and progress developed democratic societies.

Through the ballot box nations voted to end the exploitation of human labour and adopt laws requiring fair reward for work performed. Progressive societies introduced protections, pensions and welfare benefits.

And such progressive policies have produced the greatest explosion of constructive economic activity in history. A vast and greater good has been served in so many ways.

We look, now, at the times of **12 Years a Slave** with contempt.

It’s a good thing that the majorities of our populations now understand and accept that exploitation of labour is not only inhuman but also that it is economically entirely counter-productive.

But...it’s a bad thing that ugly forces again are popping up their greedy, exploit-

ative heads.

Not every capital grouping understands that slavery was, and is, a bad thing.

Today, under many “developed” governments, slavery is back as an economic tool, albeit under different names.

Tens of millions of people throughout North America and Europe are now deprived of earning an independent living. They are unemployed. The term is almost a yawning cliché.

The actual consequence of such endemic unemployment is what has been called “workfare”. Broadly, workfare compels labour for minimal, subsistence, reward. Variations of workfare include unpaid internships, zero hours employment contracts, “fire at will” laws and “right to work” regions – i.e. anti trades union regimes. There is little difference between today’s concept of “workfare” and Solomon’s 19<sup>th</sup> century experience of indentured slavery.

Any and all of these socio/economic devices are entirely designed to exploit labour for the unfair benefit of capital groupings controlled by very few of any nation’s populations – remember the 1% !!

The governments of most developed nations have sought to justify cities of homeless and unprotected sick and elderly individuals with policies that proudly impose “austerity” on the voters. Lives of “austerity” will somehow deliver an economic nirvana – one day. In the meantime people must work like slaves, if they have jobs, and live and die like animals if they are unemployed for too long.

The rationales aren’t much different from the times of Solomon Northup. We just call it austerity rather than slavery. Both are and were the law of the land.

It’s important to remember that healthy economic times can only exist in a climate

of social equality.

Sick economies are the consequence of exploitation of labour, social discrimination and enforced poverty. Negative economic trends lead to revolutions and wars if not contained and reversed.

In progressive societies we rely on elected, democratic governments. If the policies don’t work we vote the bums out.

So what is happening now? Clearly we wouldn’t need “austerity economics” if things were working well.

There seems to be an inevitability about the bad times. All nations seem to be affected – economic contagion. There seems to be no escape, whether or not the elected governments come from the political times – with times of government sanctioned abuse in behalf of private interests.

As in the times of Soloman Northup, unregulated private enterprise, then and now, will always lead to abuse of resources and particularly the abuse of the labour of the ordinary citizen.

In recent history the solution to troubled economic times has been in the election of strong governments which have reigned in and tightly controlled private enterprise and profit, bringing the public interest before private gain.

In Canada at the moment there are signs that these lessons are again being understood and that the Conservative misappropriation of national resources will end with the election of a more enlightened Canadian government – an NDP government.

A continuation of today’s disastrous social and economic policies will turn the image of **12 Years a Slave** into a reality of **Slaves for a Lifetime** for the majority of this country’s working population, now and for generations to come.

The 17th annual New Year’s Day Poor People’s Levee Tour once again took in Government House January 1. Rose Henry (right) joins the Clowns Against Child Poverty along with other Tour members in enthusiastically singing both “Hallelujah I’m a Bum” and “Soup” in the big hall.

Photo by Art Farquharson



## Friends of the Lower Island News

In May, as you will see elsewhere in this issue, we are holding a fund raiser to help with the huge increase in mailing costs mandated by Canada Post to get the paper out to readers of this newspaper. However, that is only the beginning, and we will continue to rely on the generous donations of you, our readers, to help with printing costs as well. As one of our donors wrote, “Every little bit helps,” And she is so right!

Our most recent donors include:

Elizabeth Mcouat	\$50
Zona MacDonald	\$25
David Turner	\$45
Red Hens	\$55

If you like this issue of the LIN , want it to continue to be published and can afford to give something, please consider becoming a supporting donor and send us a cheque, whatever amount you can afford. All donations, large and small, will be appreciated.

Donations may be sent to the Lower Island News Society at Box 311-2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, and will be acknowledged in the paper. Please indicate if you prefer to be “anonymous”. Unfortunately we cannot take credit card donations, or give tax receipts.

Thank you!

Dale Young, Editor, for the Editorial Board

## Saanich-Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca Federal NDP Third Annual Earth Day Local Food Dinner

Saturday, April 12, at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific  
505 Quayle Road, Victoria, BC (off Interurban Road)

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER  
Niki Ashton, MP

Status of Women Critic – Official Opposition NDP

MEET YOUR MP  
Randall Garrison, Saanich-Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca

6:00 p.m. Reception      7:00 p.m. Buffet

Local Food Buffet Dinner catered by  
Nourish Cafe and Bistro

Tickets \$100 at the door (\$50 students and unwaged)  
For information and reservations: Fred Hiiigli 250-384-7374

## Saanich Gulf-Islands NDP AGM /Founding Meeting

Join us for a  
New Democrat Afternoon  
featuring **MP Murray Rankin**

Sunday April 6th, 2014  
1:00 pm SGI registration  
1:30 pm SGI AGM starts  
2:00 pm Murray Rankin  
followed by refreshments  
Tsawout Auditorium  
East of Hwy 17 off Mt. Newton X



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Saanich-Gulf Islands New Democrats would like to express their gratitude to Dale Young for providing a platform for the progressive voices of the Lower Island, through her almost 30-years of service to the Lower Island News.



# Thank-you Dale!

(and Happy Birthday)



# Enbridge and the urgency of now: Why we must act together, and act now, to save our coast

By Murray Rankin

Over 100 First Nations oppose it. Nearly 10,000 Canadians told the Joint Review Panel that they oppose it. Towns and cities across BC oppose it.

Yet it seems that Stephen Harper will stop at nothing to push through the Enbridge Northern Gateway project, despite the risks to British Columbia.

A spill could contaminate our coastline for decades and ravage communities that depend on tourism and fisheries. But perhaps, some argue, if the risk of a spill is so small, it's worth going ahead. So, what exactly is the risk?

Using Enbridge's own data, Dr. Gerald Graham of Victoria-based World Ocean Consulting has calculated that over a 50-year period, the chance of a major tanker spill is somewhere between 8.7 and 14.1 per cent. At the top end, those are the same odds you get in Russian Roulette.

Applying a standard model used by governments to project spill risk, researchers at Simon Fraser University have estimated that the Northern Gateway pipeline would generate a tanker spill somewhere between every 23 and 196 years; a terminal spill every 15 to 41 years; and 15 or 16 pipeline spills on land every year. Overall, they peg the probability of a tanker spill at 90 per cent.

These are not comforting numbers. And yet, the Joint Review Panel reached an incredible conclusion: "a large spill is unlikely" and while "a large spill would initially have significant adverse environmental effects...the environment would ultimately recover."

Not immediately, of course, but perhaps in up to 20 years, according to Enbridge itself. Over those years, the projections tell us that another 300 on-land spills could occur, and perhaps even a tanker or terminal accident as well.

One crucial question, seemingly downplayed by the Joint Review Panel in reaching its logic-defying conclusion, is this: does diluted bitumen sink?

In 2010, an Enbridge pipeline burst and, for 18 hours until company personnel finally shut it down, pumped diluted bitumen—a toxic cocktail of oil from the Oil Sands and corrosive chemicals like benzene—into Michigan's Kalamazoo River. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would later estimate that Enbridge pumped more than a million gallons of that mixture into the river—the largest onshore oil spill in US history.

Three years and more than one billion dollars later, Enbridge was still far from finished cleaning up the river. The US government ordered Enbridge to return to dredge 684,000 litres of bitumen from the bottom of the river.

The Kalamazoo River spill—the continent's first terrestrial spill of diluted bitumen—taught us one thing: diluted bitumen sinks in fresh water. These events were unfolding as the Joint Review Panel deliberated. Yet, the Panel came to its unbelievable conclusions without even knowing how bitumen behaves in salt water or in the presence of particulate matter.

The crux of the matter is this: the risk of a spill does not affect everyone equally. For Enbridge, the logic is that since the pipeline will pump out money every day, and spill oil only occasionally, the risk is outweighed by the reward.

But for everyone else, for everyone whose livelihood depends on fisheries or tourism, everyone who lives on the pipeline route and can't afford to wait up to 20 years for the land to recover after a spill, everyone who believes in preserving a pristine ecosystem and managing resource development in a sustainable way, the risk looks very different.

The majority of British Columbians have said no; now it's time for Stephen Harper to listen. Harper thinks he can get away with forcing the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline and supertanker project on British Columbians, but we know better. We know the fight is far from over, and we know together we can take back our coast.

Over the coming months, it's more important than ever that we come together and say "No" to Northern Gateway, and "Yes" to pristine coasts and rivers and a sustainable future for our province.

Go to [MurrayRankin.ca](http://MurrayRankin.ca) for more information on our campaign.

Murray Rankin is Member of Parliament for Victoria.

Join Murray Rankin MP for Victoria, Official Opposition House Leader Nathan Cullen MP, and special guests on Saturday, March 22, at 2:00 pm in the auditorium at Vic High.

Ask questions, meet local leaders and environmental action groups, and find out how we can work together to stop the Enbridge pipeline.

# Jean Crowder to retire when next federal election called, after 10 years as MP

Statement from the MP for Nanaimo-Cowichan

"After 10 years as the Member of Parliament for Nanaimo-Cowichan, I've decided that I will not be putting my name forward for re-election when the next federal election is called.

I am very honoured to have been elected to serve the people of Nanaimo-Cowichan, and I'd like to thank my constituents for giving me this opportunity. There is still much work to be done in Ottawa, and so this has not been an easy decision, but I am not running again in order to spend more time with my family and the community that I love.

When I was first elected in 2004, the NDP caucus in Ottawa had just 19 members. I've had the privilege of being part of a period of historic growth for our party, serving under the leadership of Jack Layton and Tom Mulcair. I am very proud of the work that our NDP team has done, and I look forward to the day we have an NDP government in Ottawa.

I will continue to work for my constituents with the energy, enthusiasm and dedication with which I've served



MP Jean Crowder

them these past 10 years. I look forward to electing a New Democrat here in 2015 to continue to work hard for this community."

Jean Crowder, MP, Nanaimo-Co-

# Alistair MacGregor to run for nomination in new Cowichan-Malahat-Langford riding

**DUNCAN** – Alistair MacGregor, constituency assistant for MP Jean Crowder, has announced his candidacy for the Cowichan-Malahat-Langford NDP nomination.

MacGregor's decision to run was prompted when Crowder announced in January that she would not run in the next election.

"Jean has been a very inspiring person to work for, and I plan on continuing the strong tradition of excellent community representation she has personified if I am elected," said MacGregor.

MacGregor has worked in the federal constituency office since 2007, and he plans on making the experience gained from this position a central part of his cam-

paign for the nomination. «I've worked with hundreds of individuals and many different community groups to help solve local issues and complex federal problems over the years, and I've witnessed first-hand how government policies affect people," said MacGregor.

The founding meeting of the new Cowichan-Malahat-Langford NDP Electoral District Association was held on, February 15 at the Dennis McLean room at the Kerry Park Recreation Centre in Mill Bay. The election process for the nomination will be laid out by the new executive in the coming weeks.

The campaign website for Alistair MacGregor is at [www.alistair4ndp.ca](http://www.alistair4ndp.ca)



MP Murray Rankin (centre) joins Camosun College students at a Rally to Save ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. The Conservative government has cut its funding of ESL at universities and colleges, and shifted it to non-profits.



During the Lunar New Year celebrations in Victoria's Chinatown children run along the streets, watched by hundreds of spectators, including MP Murray Rankin.



During the Lunar New Year celebrations, Rankin takes the opportunity to chat with some of his constituents, including these parents and their children .

Murray Rankin

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**Ron reviews:**  
**KALILA**, by Rosemary Nixon, GOOSE-LANE BOOKS  
This novel has been getting rave reviews. The novel of the century, etc. Mothers will love it... love, grief and child-birth are its themes.  
--Ron MacIsaac





MP Randall Garrison signs a Poster in Support of Wounded Warriors at Esquimalt Legion February 21. The Legion’s motto is Honour the Fallen, Help the Living. They do an annual walk/run on Vancouver Island and across Canada, with February 21 being finish day in Greater Victoria where they did several events including this one at Esquimalt Legion attended by Garrison. Founded in 2006, Wounded Warriors Canada is a non-profit organization that helps Canadian Forces members – be they full time or reservists – who have been wounded or injured in their service to Canada. Through a wide range of programs and services, they help find solutions where gaps have left Canadian soldiers in need. Currently, their primary focus is on mental health and, particularly, the staggering impact of PTSD, perpetrated by operational stress injuries. Overall, however, their mandate is to help any Veteran in need as they transition to civilian life

# Conservative election reforms will undermine democracy

By Randall Garrison

Stephen Harper’s Conservatives have a bad record when it comes to respecting our election laws. Now Conservatives are using their so-called Fair Elections Act – Bill C-23 -- to skew the next election in their favour, giving themselves every advantage and at the same time making it harder for many of their likely opponents to vote. This unfair bill is nothing short of a serious attack on our democracy

After widespread voter suppression and documented fraud by Conservatives during the 2011 election, this legislation was supposed to offer tools to crack down on abuse. Yet the Conservatives have refused to include the most effective measure to enhance investigations of irregularities, giving Elections Canada the power to compel testimony. And they ignored a 2012 NDP motion that would have given Elections Canada the power to have access to political party documents, which would help uncover shady schemes.

Bill C-23 will actually make it harder for most Canadians to vote. The Conservatives have eliminated the two provisions that have proven most effective in ensuring Canadians can cast their ballots. One is the long-standing Canadian practice of vouching which allowed more than 120,000 people to vote in 2011. Vouching allowed

a voter on the voters list with proper ID to swear to the identity and address of one other voter who lacked sufficient ID. Students, seniors in residence, First Nations people living on reserve, and others often lacking ID with a current address have been able to use vouching to exercise their right to vote.

The second way Bill C-23 will suppress voting is that Elections Canada officials will no longer be able to accept Voter Identification Cards as identification. These are the cards voters get in the mail that tell them they are registered, give their current address, and tell them where to vote on election day or at advanced polls.

Not allowing voters to use these cards as identification means all voters will have to bring two pieces of ID to the polls to prove they still live at their current address, not just their card and a Driver’s License as most people have done. This will make voting day more difficult for most voters and lead to confusion and congestion at polling stations.

Conservatives claim that vouching and use of voter identification cards are the source of widespread fraud, but there is zero evidence to support these claims. Instead, Bill C-23 seems to be a concerted attempt to disenfranchise those with lower incomes or more transient lives.

This bill also attempts to muzzle the Chief Electoral Officer by prohibiting him from engaging in public education or outreach to groups that are less likely to vote. At a time of record low voter turnout, this just does not make any sense. As the Chief Electoral Officer Marc Mayrand pointed out, “There are no other jurisdictions in the world where the electoral body cannot talk to voters about democracy”.

This restriction means that it will now be illegal for the Chief Electoral Officer to run the very effective civics-outreach Student Vote Program. During the 2011 election, over 500,000 students across Canada cast mock ballots through the program, an effort designed to encourage them to vote when they turn 18. Nor will Elections Canada be able to employ special outreach officers who previously worked with aboriginal communities to help people get on the voters list and to encourage getting out to vote.

Finally, passing major changes to the Elections Act, of all legislation, is something that should be done in a non-partisan way, consulting with experts and all parties. Instead, the Conservatives failed to consult the top expert on elections law, the Chief Electoral Officer, or any of the Opposition parties and then moved to shut down debate in the House of Commons an hour after the Minister introduced the bill.

We deserve genuine electoral reform to stop fraud during elections and to ensure every Canadian can exercise their right to vote. Unfortunately, in Bill C-23 Stephen Harper’s Conservatives have given us the opposite.

Canada deserves better.

Randall Garrison is MP for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca.



What a great day for democracy! The Council of Canadians and its friends at the Canadian Federation of Students descended on Parliament Hill February 11 armed with more than 30,000 petitions signed by concerned people across the country. With media outlets clamouring for position, they sent a clear message on behalf of all current and future voters across Canada: Stop this (Un)Fair Elections Act from being rammed through Parliament and conduct proper public consultations. There to accept the petitions was Craig Scott, Official Opposition Critic for Democratic and Parliamentary Reform, who had nothing but praise for all who signed the petition and who are taking action to defend Canada’s democracy.

## New Prosperity Mine rejection a huge win for the environment and human rights

**VANCOUVER** – The Wilderness Committee is overjoyed at the final decision issued by Canada’s Environment Minister, stating that Taseko Mines Ltd.’s proposed New Prosperity Mine is not authorized to proceed.

In an announcement February 26, Minister Leona Aglukkaq confirmed that the federal government had considered the report of the independent Review Panel, and concluded that “the New Prosperity Mine project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects that cannot be mitigated.”

“This decision comes as an incredible relief to all those who have wanted to see Fish Lake and the surrounding Tsilhqot’in Nation territory protected from this proposed mine project,” said Joe Foy, the Wilderness Committee’s national campaign director.

“The Minister has absolutely made the right decision in saying ‘No’ to this risky proposal, and now that it is done with, it’s time to protect this area for good,” he said.

The proposed mine, situated in Tsilhqot’in Nation Territory just west of Williams Lake, is strongly opposed by the

Tsilhqot’in and their allies, and has long been a focus of conservation campaigns by groups including the Wilderness Committee.

The original Prosperity Mine proposal was turned down by the federal government in 2010, after a scathing report from the Review Panel that identified significant threats such as the loss of Fish Lake, an abundant fishing lake in the proposed mine area. The company re-submitted an application, renaming the project as the New Prosperity Mine and promising to save Fish Lake, but the revised proposal was still recognized as a major threat to the region.

While this new decision acknowledges a number of the project’s serious impacts – including adverse effects on fish and fish habitat, on the use of lands for traditional and cultural purposes, and on grizzly and moose populations – the minister’s statement still “invites the submission of another proposal” from the proponent that addresses the government’s concerns.

“There’s no right way to do what’s wrong. Taseko’s mining plans have now

been turned down twice by the federal government, and what we need now is to see these plans kicked to the curb – once and for all,” said Foy.



### Randall Garrison, MP ESQUIMALT–JUAN DE FUCA

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# With no plan to reduce poverty, throne speech is “deeply disappointing”

By Carole James

After 200 days without sitting, the government at last called the Legislature back into session February 11 to table a throne speech that sadly shows it is more concerned with self-interest than the needs of British Columbians. The speech is woefully short on substance or action to deal with pressing needs in our communities.

The speech mentioned poverty only once, and I am deeply disappointed that this government continues to ignore child poverty, even as we remain the province with the highest child poverty – a sad reality for more than a decade. We need real action with real resources to provide support to children in need.

Where was the commitment to a province-wide poverty reduction plan, with real measurable targets and a plan to begin to address this shameful statistic? The Opposition has drafted legislation government could use, and yet it refuses to act on this

urgent issue.

Our senior citizens, who are such a vital part of our community, and have given so much over their many years, did not even rate a mention in the throne speech. Not once. Yet they are some of those most affected by the cuts government is imposing on citizens.

Where was a commitment to home care support that could meet the needs of many seniors and save health care resources?

Since the legislature last met, the government has continued to mismanage key files and make life less affordable. Medical Services Plan premiums are up yet again and ferry fares have increased, and will jump again in April, while ferry services will be cut up and down the coast.

In the fall, just before the legislature should have returned to work, the government unveiled a hike to hydro rates that will add \$300 to the average bill per family per year, while allowing the hidden debt at BC Hydro to climb. Yet the throne speech

contained nothing to give people hope that the government understands the impact of these increases.

The impacts are real, and are causing hardships in our community. It's a message I hear every day in my community office.

BC's debt has risen by \$2.5 billion since we last sat, climbing faster under Christy Clark than any premier in our province's history. Despite government claims that jobs are being created, the reality is that private sector job growth is the worst in the country. Thousands of people are leaving BC searching for work in other provinces. In the last 200 days, BC has lost more than 21,000 full time jobs.

Where is the plan to strengthen our economy through diversification? We need a strategy to grow renewable energy and our arts, culture, and film industries. Our local businesses and tourism sector should be supported by government policies that enable them to grow and thrive.

Yet after 200 days away from the leg-

islature to contemplate what is needed to respond to the pressures facing our province, the government could only come up with pipe dream promises about LNG and repeats of old announcements.

For a government that has been in power 13 years The report, *Lost in the Shadows*, details this throne speech showed a shocking lack of vision and substance.

Political games aren't what British Columbia needs now. We need strong, engaged, decisive leadership on issues that matter, and it's long past time that we made children, affordability, and the environment priorities for action.

It's a message I am continuing to carry forward to the legislature on behalf of the citizens of Victoria-Beacon Hill. Please tell me what you think. I'd appreciate hearing about your priorities for change.

Carole James is MLA for Victoria-Beacon Hill, and can be reached at 1084 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8V 3K4, by phone at 250 952-4211 or by email at Carole.James.mla@leg.bc.ca

## BC is failing vulnerable children across the province

By Carole James

The heartbreaking story of a First Nations girl who was failed by our government was revealed in a report from the independent representative for children and youth at the end of February.

The life and death of a young First Nations girl. This girl's mother suffered from severe mental illness that led her to threaten the girl's life and act violently toward her.

This girl did her best to ask for help. She repeatedly called the police. She spoke to doctors, social workers, teachers — searching for adults who would offer her stability and support — yet despite her repeated attempts to reach out, she was left to struggle alone. Eventually, the weight of these issues led this girl to take her life. She was only 14.

We failed this child. Worse, we are failing children like her all across the province today.

This report from the representative for children and youth is just the latest in a stack of reports outlining the tragic lives of children who relied on the government to be their family and protect them. In each

and every one of them, the government failed to offer these children the protection, support and services they needed.

Each time one of these reports comes out, the BC Liberal government says it accepts all the recommendations made. It offers platitudes about the importance of these children, the importance of their lives and the important lessons the government has learned from their suffering. Yet little changes.

Reports from years ago sit collecting dust, their recommendations forgotten.

When Christy Clark first became premier, she brought in Family Day and pledged to put “families first” — yet she puts children in her government's care last. These children, who are depending on Clark's government to help and protect them, are treated like costs, not like kids.

Even though short-staffing at the local ministry office was one of the major factors that led to this child's death, the Minister of Children and Family Development confirmed that this office remains short-staffed today, three years after this girl died.

Children are vulnerable. They depend

on and look up to their families for love, support and protection. Even the most headstrong and independent child still needs caring adults in their life who can help them navigate life's difficulties, big or small.

Unfortunately, as this story shows, not every child has a family that is capable of providing them with all the support and protection they need to survive and thrive. When families are unable to ensure that their children are safe and supported, other adults need to step in and keep children safe.

That is the core role of the Ministry of Children and Family Development, to make sure that children are not left alone, struggling and suffering.

For children whose families can't meet their needs, the government, the ministry and the adults who work for and represent them need to step in and be part of the fam-

ily, by offering services, support, care and attention. That means treating these children with the tenderness, care and respect they would offer their own children.

Offering care and support to the province's most troubled children is a big responsibility, and it's a responsibility Clark is failing to meet.

I hope this Family Day, the premier, the minister and members of the BC Liberal government took the time to read about the tragic life and death of this little girl, and pledge to truly do better for the province's children.

Governing is about priorities.

It is long past time that this government made children a priority. That means taking real action, with real resources to provide support to children in need. Words are not enough.

## Court decision proves students put last

**VICTORIA** – A ruling by the Supreme Court of British Columbia on the state of public schools in the province proves Premier Christy Clark and the BC Liberals chose politics over students for over a decade, say the New Democrats.

“Premier Clark and the Liberal government have been playing politics with the quality of education for our children,” said New Democrat education critic Rob Fleming. “It proves they would rather provoke strikes than improve classroom education.”

Original legislation that paved the way for larger classes and reduced special needs supports was struck down in 2011 by the courts at which time the premier said, “Clearly it wasn't the right bill. The Supreme Court told us that and we are going to have to address that. And we're going to have to make sure that we get on a different footing with the teachers' union.”

Today's decision shows the premier was disingenuous. Justice Griffin said in Monday's ruling that the Liberal govern-

ment “did not negotiate in good faith” and instead were preoccupied with a strategy to “provoke a strike”.

The judge ordered the government to return class size, class composition and specialist staffing levels to the collective bargaining process.

“The premier was centre stage in 2002 when this mess began,” said Fleming. “Christy Clark was the education minister when Bill 28 was imposed showing that her pattern of playing political games instead of doing what is best for our kids and families goes right back to her first time in government.”

“This supposed family-first premier has shown her true colours -- that children and parents weren't her priority 10 years ago and still aren't her priority today,” said Fleming. “Today is a victory for BC families. Once again this government has been reprimanded by the courts for not taking public education seriously.”

Sincerest thanks for your support.

I am honoured to serve as your MLA for Victoria – Beacon Hill, and I look forward to our work together.

**Carole James, MLA**  
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## Comox deserves answers from the Conservatives about SAR services

**OTTAWA** – After gutting search and rescue (SAR) services throughout BC, Conservatives proved they have no shame by holding a SAR related press conference February 19 in Comox, according to the NDP.

“It's insulting for the Conservatives to come here and pretend to care when their decisions have proven that SAR is not a priority for this government,” said NDP MP Fin Donnelly (New Westminster-Coquitlam & Port Moody).

“The people of Comox and all of BC deserve answers, not another Conservative photo-op.”

Conservative Ministers Kerry-Lynne Findlay and John Duncan were to an-

nounce a tax credit for search and rescue volunteers.

“Volunteers have and always will play an important role in search and rescue operations,” said Donnelly. “However, the federal government has significant responsibilities when it comes to SAR, and the Conservatives do not take this responsibility seriously.”

The Conservatives have closed search and rescue centres throughout BC; failed to deliver on fixed-wing SAR procurement and repeatedly voted against NDP motions to improve SAR services.





Recently elected BC NDP president, Dr. Craig Keating, is surrounded by well-wishers at the January 18, 2014 Victoria-Beacon Hill New Year celebration. Keating’s good-humored talk helped to stoke optimism in all who attended the event. Held at the Church of Truth on Superior Street in MLA Carol James’ constituency, Keating noted that the venue’s name symbolizes what all need to aspire to in the political arena.

--Photo by Arifin Graham

# NDP is searching out, listening to and giving voice to the issues--Keating

By Craig Keating

When I was elected BCNDP president at our convention last November, delegates gave me and the entire executive of the Party – a clear mandate for renewal.

Today that work is underway.

We know that there are key changes we need where we need to improve our capacity.

In January I hosted a BCNDP “digital summit” that brought together some of the brightest minds in our universe to lay out a path forward for building our capacity to use data effectively in political campaigns.

In February members participated in a “fundraising summit” where we charted a path to ensuring that, together, we will have the skills and resources we will need to fight and win the next election.

We are also developing a strategic plan that will lay out a roadmap to an election win in 2017. And in the weeks to come we will be working with constituencies to help them develop and implement their own local plans.

The long-term strategic work we need to do has started – and will be ably supported by the addition of Brian Gardiner as our new provincial director.

Equally important is the work we are doing now to stand up to the uncaring agenda of the BC Liberals.

It was just a year ago that Premier Christy Clark was touting her “families first” agenda. But in her throne speech a few weeks ago there were just two – that’s right, TWO – mentions of families.

For hard pressed BC families who face stagnant incomes, who go to bed wondering how to make ends



meet, who wonder how their kids will succeed in overcrowded classrooms or find the skills training they need, the Christy Clark Liberals have offered only deeper cuts and more fees and charges that are making life even less affordable.

Our MLAs are doing their part to stand up to this uncaring agenda. We need to do ours.

It means getting involved now with the renewal efforts that I know are going on in constituencies everywhere, in the YND, in the Women’s Rights Committee.

It means getting involved in the upcoming local government elections, using them as an opportunity to develop needed campaign and organizing skills and electing progressive candidates.

But most importantly it means helping us tell the stories of ordinary British Columbians. Stories of their struggles. Stories of their frustrated hopes. Stories that Christy Clark would rather went untold.

Today. Now. We need to search out, listen to, and give voice to the issues that matter to the hardworking people of BC.

It’s what we’ve always done -- and it’s what BC needs today more than ever.

Craig Keating was elected BC NDP President in November 2013. He is a five term Councillor for the City of North Vancouver and has twice been the BCNDP candidate in North Vancouver-Lonsdale.

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**By Ed Deak**

There was a time, many years ago, when I would have given 10 years of my life to compete in the Olympics, and had a good chance in a couple of sports. Today I wouldn't cross the street with paid tickets in my pocket to watch any events.

Although I have competed in a number of sports I was never a spectator for any of them, as I always considered watching other people do things a monumental bore. I still exercise, work out with weights, on the bike and walk long distance every day, use no drugs, realizing and enjoying the benefits of physical fitness.

The only parts of the Sochi Olympics I saw were the endlessly repetitious news items, attempting to justify the incredible resources governments put into the building of the facilities and the training of the competitors.

Yes, I fully admire the young people competing and share their joy when they receive their medals, but, unfortunately, the Olympics have long ceased to be sporting events and became show business with paid performers doing their acts for applause and cash.

I arrived in London in May 1948, during the summer Olympics and although the games were in the news, there was no artificially pumped up hysteria surrounding them. That was only three years after the end of the war, when London still had large empty areas where the bombed out buildings once stood, with only some of the foundations still showing.

There was no talk, or need, for the country to go bankrupt to put up some fantastic infrastructures and ceremonies . The Olympics were still strictly enforced, amateur, sporting events that any country could have organized without too much problem.

The rot and the road for the Olympics to become professional show business events really started with the Soviet bloc

, where athletes were given military ranks and other phony jobs, then pumped full of drugs and chemicals for increased performances to prove the superiority of their ideological system to the world. The drugs killed and made some of the competitors, especially the women, crippled for life.

The East Germans were at the top of the list of corruption, when some of their women competitors had to shave and virtually changed their genders from the drugs.

Of course, being competitive societies, our side had no choice but to insist on the inclusion of paid performers and now we have hockey stars making millions of bucks every year in other countries, waving the flags of the countries of their birth for a couple of weeks, pretending to show their undying patriotism.

Of course the Olympic committee sees to the impartiality of the events; that's why they have forbidden the Canadians to wear stickers commemorating the tragic death of skier Sarah Burke and the Ukrainians from wearing black armbands, over the tragic human losses that went on in their country.

Yet it was perfectly OK for competitors of all nations to wear the disgusting Nike Slash, advertising and glorifying the kiddie labour of a multinational company. There was no problem with that. The same way as Canadians proudly wear their Maple Leaf mittens, and wave the Maple Leaf flags, all of them Made in China

There was a time when people would have considered it totally unacceptable to have business advertising on their backs, caps and clothing, but now they're paying big bucks and are proud to carry the largest letters and symbols.

The same way as the “sandwich men” in the past were paid to wear and carry placards and other advertising , parading in the streets, and also the same way religious sects have always been and are wearing silly looking clothing and things on

their heads to prove their faiths while planning to kill the infidel to please God.

Having lived a long life, under every ideology known in my young years, then having spent many years in search for the causes of history's repetitious tragedies, I thought I had seen it all.

Now, even after having seen and studied the subject for many years, I could never have imagined the destructive and enslaving stupidity that rules the world today under the guise and the false claim of so called "economics". Not real economics, but games with imaginary monetary figures used to distort realities. The use of the word economics is to mislead people into believing and following some of the worst nuts and crooks. As always in thousands of years of history, where there's never anything really new.

The tragic events in Ukraine have been in the news for months now. All sides are blaming foreign influences for the misleading and driving of people into violent acts.

My wife has a Russian/Ukrainian friend from the Crimea, married, in Williams Lake, and they have long phone conversations several times a week. According to her the corruption of the past government was incredible. Now some \$70. billion is claimed to be missing from the treasury of the country, while the president, who was living in obscene luxury, may have salted

away huge amounts into foreign bank accounts, now frozen in Switzerland and other countries, while he's beating his chest to return with Russian help.

Putin of Russia has just had a rubber stamp permission from his parliament to occupy parts of the country, claiming to maintain order, but in reality, to stay forever, wanted and encouraged by local Russian majorities, not to mention the military demands of a huge Russian naval base, now located on foreign territory.

Can he get away with it ? Of course he can, in the sacred name of Mother Russia and the perennial flag waving in all parts of the world, licensing, urging and blessing various societies to commit any criminal act as long as they are doing them in the name of religions and national pride, brain-washed into people from day one.

And I'm not talking about theories I may have read in books, but from personal experience, having gone through it all. The same way as people here are now brainwashed to wreck and sell the land from under their feet to "wealth creating foreign investment", that once upon a time used to be called invasion and colonization.

This article first appeared in the Gold River *Record*.

**By Ron Duffy**

If I were to propose Lucifer as the Patron of Socialism or maybe of the Trade Union movement, what an outcry that would raise. Wringing of hands, ringing cries of opposition. "No, no, never! Lucifer is Satan, the Devil, Beelzebub", whatever name you choose to denote the Prince of Darkness, the enemy of God, the Lord of Hades.

But all of you who would oppose such a proposal would be wrong. Lucifer is *not* the profoundly evil adversary of God and humanity. “O Lucifer, son of the morning!” Does that sound like the common idea of Lucifer? It doesn’t, does it? That one and only reference to Lucifer in the Bible—Isaiah 14:12—is a reference not to Satan but to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia. Nowhere in the Bible are we told that Lucifer is another name for Satan.

You see, “Lucifer” literally means “the bringer of light”, from Latin *lux*, meaning “light”, and *ferre* “bring”, as in *transfer*, *infer*, etc. In Middle English Lucifer is “the morning star”, that is, Venus, or “the shining one”.

“Lucifer” is the King James Version’s rendering of the Hebrew word *heylel*. This word occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible and according to Strong’s Concordance it means “shining one, morning star, Lucifer”. The Latin Vulgate translates *heylel* as an adjective, “light-bringing”. In Greek the Hebrew word is rendered as *heōsphoros*, literally “bringer of dawn”, as a name for the morning star. In the Christian Church according to Harper’s Bible Dictionary, the passage from Isaiah came to be connected with Jesus saying in Luke 10:18: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Thus the connection was made (erroneously) between Lucifer, he who fell from heaven, and Satan, and as a result Lucifer was popularly understood—or rather *misunderstood*—as another name for Satan.

The ancients of the human race, who in many ways were closer to the source of true knowledge than we are, worshipped the morning star as a god, as a creator. Light, after all, is the symbol of creation. Without light there is only darkness. Nothingness. Eternal night. *Fiat lux*, remember. Let there be light.

In Milton's *Paradise Lost* Lucifer employs his rhetorical skill to organize his followers. A typical trades union leader. It could be argued that he was leading a rebellion against the tyranny of God, the Universal Dictator, whose orders must be obeyed on pain of eternal damnation. 'Thou shalt not have any other gods besides me.' Those who disobeyed God or stood in the way of his plans for his own chosen people

or for world domination, he slaughtered indiscriminately with plague and pestilence, fire and brimstone, burning winds and drowning floods. This God of the Bible brutally butchered innocent men, women, children, newborn babies, even whole armies, and destroyed cities. "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, punishing the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those that hate me."

In my interpretation, Lucifer stood defiant and determined against God, the evil tyrant. I see Lucifer's light (as in "Bringer of Light") as showing the way to freedom not just for the disaffected angels in Heaven, but for Earth's fallen angels: the downtrodden, abused and oppressed peoples of the world today: the exploited poor of the "developing" nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America; the aboriginals of the world who have lost everything; the workers in "developed" countries who struggle to make a daily living in the face of greedy, money-hoarding employers like Walmart or McDonald's or the ultra-Right-wing market manipulations of multi-billionaires like the Koch brothers or the big banks.

Is this not the role of Socialism and the Trade Unions? To shed light on the evils of today's wealth-dominated world? To organize the workers and lead the fight for greater social equality?

The people of the world must be made to see that they have been as mistaken about Socialism and Trade Unionism as they have about Lucifer.

*Lucifer the Lightbearer* was an individualist-anarchist journal published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Moses Harman, an American schoolteacher and publisher notable for his staunch support for women's rights. The name was chosen because "Lucifer, the ancient name of the Morning Star, now called Venus, seems to us unsurpassed as a cognomen for a journal whose mission is to bring light to the dwellers in darkness."



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At the UN

Canada stands proud, saying “No to FGM”, through art and mobilization

Photostory by Diane Walsh

In commemoration of the February 6 International Zero Tolerance Day of Female Genital Mutilation, the Global Alliance against FGM organized a groundbreaking UN Art Show at Le Palais des Nations in Geneva. In 2010 the GAFGM was co-founded by a Canadian -- Elisabeth Wilson -- along with her partner, German-born Holger Postulart in Geneva on the United Nations campus.

Their exhibition, titled, “Une Femme Blessée est une Nation Blessée - A Wounded Woman is a Wounded Nation”, unites, for the first time, First Nations of Canada artists with European and African to express on the theme of Female Genital Mutilation, in solidarity.

Taking place in the “Paraselle”, a natural, beautifully-lit corridor linking the new and old UN buildings, the presentation sought to juxtapose images, which speak of matriarchal (First Nations) and patriarchal, (African) societies, on the suffering and oppression of women and girls as victims of FGM. A first in any exhibit at the UN.

The exhibition took place in the presence of Michael Moller, the Director General of the United Nations, UN representatives from Togo and Senegal, with endorsement

from the Permanent Mission of Canada (see poster). And in the foreground, an audience of distinguished diplomats, staff, students, and visitors representing all parts of the world.

From Canada, exhibitors included carver and jewellery maker Jadeon Rathgeber, native Canadian from Manitoba; his mother, Patsy Half Moon Bruderer of the Cree Nation of Manitoba (accompanied by her granddaughter, thus three generations). Also participating as artists supporting the Global Alliance were Jacques Newashish, Igor Ustinov, sculptor and Patrick Gignac, painter, from Quebec.

Representing the only woman artist-participant, Half Moon was able to demonstrate a rare First Nations’ art form called “Birch Bark Biting” or “Birch Bark Transparencies”. Half Moon Woman is one of the last Native practitioners of this ancient indigenous art, an impressive technique requiring the use of her teeth.

Last but not least -- in response to the historic UN Resolution adopted December 20, 2012 banning worldwide FGM, the Global Alliance against FGM organized a symposium on February 7, a day later, at the Conference Centre of Geneva. With the participation of multiple countries officially represented and, in the presence of,



Canadian Elisabeth Wilson, co-founder of Global Alliance against Female Mutilation, speaks at the opening of a groundbreaking UN Art Show in Geneva.

Dr Michel Sidibé, executive director of UN-AIDS (ONUSIDA), this international symposium created the infrastructure of the first University Chair specializing in the subject of FGM.

In its goal to pool currently-in-place FGM-abandonment programs, it will link together research, activism and available information and draw from an interdisci-

plinary group, to see and determine what programs conform or do not conform with the UN resolution ban, with special emphasis on evaluation criteria of projects on the ground working to see the abandonment of the practice of FGM.

An edited version of this article appears in the March 4, 2014 edition of *The Source/LaSource*, Vancouver



Visitors view the art presentation held February 6 in the “Paraselle”, a natural, beautifully-lit corridor linking the new and old UN buildings.



Elisabeth Wilson (third from left) greets some of the visitors to the exhibiton. Beside her is Patsy Half Moon Bruderer of the Cree Nation of Manitoba, accompanied by her granddaughter

Conservatives refuse to answer

OTTAWA -- NDP MP Nathan Cullen (Skeena-Bulkley Valley) questioned the Conservatives in the House of Commons February 7 amid charges that the RCMP and CSIS spied on law-abiding citizens opposed to the Northern Gateway Pipeline and passed that information to oil companies.

The questions were evaded by Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources Kelly Block (Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar) and Parliamentary Secretary for Public Safety Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre).

Cullen asked, “The Conservatives like to keep close tabs on those who criticize them – so much so that the RCMP and CSIS have spied on law-abiding citizens, simply because they oppose the Northern Gateway Pipeline and the Conservatives’ irresponsible policies. Even worse, Conservatives are sharing this information with the oil companies. Can the Minister explain why he is using radical tactics to control Canadians?”

Block replied, “The Safety of Canadians is a priority for our government. As part of its commitment to safety, the National Energy Board may conduct a security assessment prior to a regulatory hearing. The NEB will often work with the RCMP to protect the safety of everyone involved and no member of the department gave any instruction to any federal department on this matter.”

Cullen then said, “Protecting the safety of Canadians also means protecting their democratic rights. We’re talking about sending RCMP and CSIS agents into church basement meetings where people are doing such dangerous things like painting protest signs. The freedom for people to peacefully raise concerns is a core Canadian democratic value and this kind of government surveillance is more about silencing and intimidating pipeline critics than it is about protecting national security. Did the Minister approve these operations, yes or no?”

James replied, “The RCMP takes steps to protect Canada’s assets and resources and safety will continue to be a number one priority of this government. But as the member well knows, we will not comment on operational matters.”

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The VLC, representing affiliated unions in the Greater Victoria area, holds its regular monthly meetings the third Wednesday of each month at 7 pm, at the BCGEU Auditorium, 2994 Douglas Street.

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# UKRAINE ON ITS KNEES: US nuclear missiles pea shooter distance from Moscow?

By Bo Filter

The media is clamoring to get Russia for attacking Ukraine, as if the US has had no influence on events. Yet, the riot in Kiev has a striking resemblance to US-sponsored colour revolutions and Arab spring riots.

The template shows US mercenaries hiding behind peaceful protestors, then, igniting violence. The idea is sinister: to co-opt peaceful protestors' legitimate cause, granting some air of legitimacy, followed by a coup to super-impose western imperial demands.

In Kiev, it started, as usual, with peace protests, then, thugs soon joined in as heavily armed trained militia. Western private media, holding its usual bag of secrets, dodges calls to tell us their country of origin.

Turns out, Germany has tried to annex western Ukraine since World War I. Neo-Nazi troops from the Svobada Party, Punch Party, and the Right Sector, totalling some 5,000, attacked the capital in Kiev. Why they were shipped to Ukraine is important.

Neoconservatives from Washington re-united East and West Germany, largely to go after the Soviet Union once again. USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev allowed the rejoining on the promise from George H.W. Bush that he would not send NATO troops eastward. Bush lied.

US-dominated NATO has broken dozens of international laws to get to the gates of Ukraine. Many people do not realize that the hunger to destroy Russia in WWII was just as acute in US elite circles as it was in the Nazi high command.

Neo-Nazis appreciate the opportunity to resurrect WWII with their western counterparts. Demonization of Russia is critical to their success, yet too few people realize that western media is rife with neoconservative/Neo-Nazis moles (planted agents) that hold the key positions on all of the major media editorial boards.

Master conspirator among the supra-governors Allen Dulles bragged about how few people are needed to control the masses. CIA media moles or *assets* put in key positions censor facts the public needs to make informed decisions.

The result is a barrage of half-truths that keep the public stringing along with

CIA/Pentagon war propaganda. The US Department of Psychological Warfare feeds the media the story lines it wants the public to believe. As pretext, media smear campaigns are war drums *justifying* an attack. Character assassination of Russia has been endless since WWII.

Western militarized media claims Putin "bribed" Ukraine's leader, but says nothing of the \$5 billion tax dollars the neoconservative and Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland spent to divide and conquer the Ukraine. Watch her explain live how this will transpire. Masked in democracy jargon, she refers to the plan to loot Ukraine using IMF austerity measures, the same mechanics that destroyed the economies of other countries like Argentina, Latvia, Italy, and Greece.

In the big picture grand chessboard scheme of things, as authored by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Ukraine is a key domino that must fall in order to checkmate, destroy, then partition Russia into dozens of vassal states. Since the beginning of the cold war media near-hysteria has proclaimed: "The commies are coming. The commies are coming."

This slogan derived from the US State Department domino theory, lasting for a good part of the 20th century. This headline, molded into the public mind, provided a near perfect political mask for the truth and opposite reality: the American's are coming. "That's impossible!" people say who have never suspected that western mass media would systematically lace the news with propaganda and misinformation. To gain a better understanding we need to look deeper into history.

The United States has a supra-secret coterie of men who have overpowered the originating Constitutional republic in favour of using the country's massive power to march themselves to world domination,



Protesters burn tires as they clash with riot police during an anti-government protest in downtown Kiev, Ukraine, January 22. At least two people died of gunshot wounds on January 22 during anti-government protests in Ukraine. (ROMAN PILIPEY/EPA)

and it all began shortly after the inception of the United States. This Supra-state has orchestrated the takeover of country after country, one by one, all falling as dominos to the will of these self-anointed masters of the world.

After an exhaustive study of US interference worldwide by this researcher, only six microstates out of 208 countries and territories have escaped coups and subordination, probably because they had no resources worth stealing. The 202 other countries have suffered destabilization and loss of national sovereignty through a plethora of Pentagon military operations like escalation dominance, war-theatre, and psychological warfare.

Countries have had to endure a wide range of grievous assaults, including: saboteurs that contaminate or blowup oil supplies; riots and protests; burning or poisoning of crops; forcing leaders to sign IMF and World Bank austerity agreements that contract these countries to interminable servitude; infiltration of business moles to wreck the economy; embargoes; sanctions; currency devaluation; bribery of politicians; undermining elections; making promises that won't be kept; assassinating leaders; kidnapping, torturing, and assassinating dissidents using paramilitary special forces who specialize in chaos and mayhem; sending in mercenary armies; infiltrating media moles to help cover-up committed crimes.

If all this fails, then US troops are deployed. A more popular ploy and face-saving device has been to attack a target country with "a coalition of the willing". This gives war an air of international approval and legitimacy. The public is seldom apprised of the fact that the "willing" are vassal countries already under the yoke of US power.

The birth of the drive for US Global domination was born, in a sense, with the birth of John D. Rockefeller in 1839. Some could say well, no, it came at least as early as 1813 with the Monroe Doctrine. President Monroe declared that any interference in any part of the Americas by any country other than the US would be considered as an act of war against the US. Public ignorance and compliance has allowed the expansion of this doctrine to include the entire world.

Having worked in a top-secret US war room in the 1960s, military plans to take over the world were not only complete, but were being constantly fine tuned on a daily basis. Global domination is easily masked as plans to free the world. People are shocked by hearing stories of what "freeing" the world looks like from the view of countries under attack, who have dared to choose their own government without the permission from the supra-oligarchy. One example should suffice.

In 1983, Salvadoran National Guard "freedom fighters", under the command of President Ronald Reagan, swooped down on a village in US-supplied helicopters. A peasant woman described the massacre. Her three children were killed and chopped to pieces and thrown to the pigs, while the soldiers laughed all the while. Men "gathered into a circle [were] set on fire after their legs had been broken." Reporter Elizabeth Hanly heard of "trees heavy with women hanging from their wrists, all with breasts cut off and facial skin peeled back, all slowly bleeding to death." Victims were the over-worked peasants who asked for food but instead received a visit from the National Guard. [Book: *TURNING THE TIDE*, by Noam Chomsky, p.22]

In other words, I have written and spoken of the sociopaths in society. Cruel questionably human beings are welcome soldiers in the numerous paramilitaries sponsored by the US supra-governors. We need to ask ourselves what this says about the governors themselves. We need to

wonder why public outrage is missing, and particularly what excuses we use to escape responsibility.

When I share information about atrocities, the most common response is to shun away: "No! Please don't tell me. I don't want to know. I just want to live in my own little world." Fear of what the US might really be doing around the world terrifies people into silence, exacting the great benefit of state-sponsored terrorism. Masses frozen by fear are incapable of addressing horrors unfolding. Mass incapacitation and immobilization by fear is necessary for the few to rule over billions. Terrorism, as such, becomes the zenith in both psychological and physical warfare.

Imagine our world split into thousands of subjugated precincts. Any village that dares to complain or ask for food gets a visit by the National Guard. This will be a dark age with no light for the billions, unless they rise to face their fears. One might ask if people would rather fight bravely to their death to create a genuine civil society, rather than risk hanging from a tree like the poor women in El Salvador. Time is not on our side.

The finish line of absolute global domination is in sight. To make a pro-active stand, we must understand the big picture. To rule the world requires a ruthless military that will perform any act of terror. A template must be perfected that works in all countries, first to destabilize them, then to overthrow them, and then to instill a puppet regime.

Since the fall of the USSR, Dick Cheney and associate neoconservatives have painted a clear picture of how they plan to finish installing their New World Order. Their words are memorialized in the publications of PNAC and its current successor, *Foreign Policy Initiative*. They billboard "freedom," "democracy," and "national interest" while their planned process is clearly fascistic.

With a collapsed Soviet Union, the US has steadily marched eastward. Ukraine is one of the last dominos left to fall, which brings us back to Kiev. This is the second coup by the US, and some of the actors are familiar.

Playing a starring role in the Pentagon's war-theatre program is none other than world heavyweight boxing champion Vitali Klitschko. His act apparently wasn't well enough refined. When Klitschko tried to persuade Ukrainians to accept the EU-brokered deal, he was booed off the stage. Ex-prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko is being ushered in from backstage, hopefully to restore her status as the people's princess that she enjoyed during the US-driven Orange Revolution a decade ago.

Recall that Kiev has been the capitol of Russia for most of its 1,000-year history. This makes the geopolitical caldron hotter than any time in history. Imagine Russia or Germany sponsoring 5,000 Nazi demonstrators in the streets of Washington DC, ransacking Congress and promising to imprison any US troops who fired on them. Bedlam would ensue.

Neoconservatives are doing their best to put nuclear missiles within, figuratively speaking, pea-shooting distance of Moscow. If it happens, our militarized press will howl in support, citing the fact that the USSR put missiles on Cuban soil, so now it's our turn. The fact that Russia retreated will be a small footnote in their reporting. The USSR removed the missiles to avoid a nuclear war. What they will have to consider is that the US will likewise have to retreat in order to avoid a nuclear war.

On the other hand, if Russia folds as easily as Ukraine, then only China, the last major domino, might fall easily as well. This is the goal of the supra-governors, what they call "full spectrum dominance." Visits by the National Guard might well become the new normal anywhere in the world. The masses' strong desire not to know, not to care, will visit hell on their children's children and their children's children.

With Nazis posting their symbols around the parliament building alongside NATO country flags, including Canada, the US has managed to rekindle WWII. The dismemberment of Ukraine is happening at blitzkrieg speed. Neo-Nazis are loose in

Turn to page 15, Ukraine on its knees



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# Can the world feed China?

By Lester R. Brown

Overnight, China has become a leading world grain importer, set to buy a staggering 22 million tons in the 2013–14 trade year, according to the latest US Department of Agriculture projections. As recently as 2006—just eight years ago—China had a grain surplus and was exporting 10 million tons. What caused this dramatic shift? It wasn’t until 20 years ago, after I wrote an article entitled “Who Will Feed China?”, that I began to fully appreciate what a sensitive political issue food security was to the Chinese. The country’s leaders were all survivors of the Great Famine of 1959–61, when some 36 million people starved to death. Yet while the Chinese government was publicly critical of my questioning the country’s ability to feed itself, it began quietly reforming its agriculture. Among other things, Beijing adopted a policy of grain self-sufficiency, an initiative that is now faltering. Since 2006, China’s grain use has been climbing by 17 million tons per year. (See [www.earth-policy.org/datacentre/xls/update121\\_all.xlsx](http://www.earth-policy.org/datacentre/xls/update121_all.xlsx).) For perspective, this compares with Australia’s annual wheat harvest of 24 million tons. With population growth slowing, this rise in grain use is largely the result of China’s huge popula-

tion moving up the food chain and consuming more grain-based meat, milk, and eggs. In 2013, the world consumed an estimated 107 million tons of pork—half of which was eaten in China. China’s 1.4 billion people now consume six times as much pork as the United States does. Even with its recent surge in pork, however, China’s overall meat intake per person still totals only 120 pounds per year, scarcely half the 235 pounds in the United States. But, the Chinese, like so many others around the globe, aspire to an American lifestyle. To consume meat like Americans do, China would need to roughly double its annual meat supply from 80 million tons to 160 million tons. Using the rule of thumb of three to four pounds of grain to produce one pound of pork, an additional 80 million tons of pork would require at least 240 million tons of feedgrain. Where will this grain come from? Farmers in China are losing irrigation water as aquifers are depleted. The water table under the North China Plain, an area that produces half of the country’s wheat and a third of its corn, is falling fast, by over 10 feet per year in some areas. Meanwhile, water supplies are being diverted to non-farm uses and cropland is being lost to urban and industrial construction. With China’s grain yield already among the high-

est in the world, the potential for China to increase production within its own borders is limited. The 2013 purchase by a Chinese conglomerate of the American firm Smithfield Foods Inc., the world’s largest pig-growing and pork-processing company, was really a pork security move. So, too, is China’s deal with Ukraine to provide \$3 billion in loans in exchange for corn, as well as negotiations with Ukrainian companies for access to land. Such moves by China exemplify the new geopolitics of food scarcity that affects us all. China is not alone in the scramble for food. An estimated 2 billion people in other countries are also moving up the food chain, consuming more grain-intensive livestock products. The combination of population growth, rising affluence, and the conversion of one third of the US grain harvest into ethanol to fuel cars is expanding the world demand for grain by a record 43 million tons per year, double the annual growth of a decade ago. The world’s farmers are struggling to keep pace. When grain supplies tightened in times past, prices rose and farmers responded by producing more. Now the situation is far more complex. Water shortages, soil erosion, plateauing crop yields in agriculturally advanced countries, and climate

change pose mounting threats to production. As China imports increasing quantities of grain, it is competing directly with scores of other grain-importing countries, such as Japan, Mexico, and Egypt. The result will be a worldwide rise in food prices. Those living on the lower rungs of the global economic ladder—people who are already struggling just to survive—will find it even more difficult to get by. Low-income families trapped by food price inflation will be unable to afford enough food to eat every day. The world is transitioning from an era of abundance to one dominated by scarcity. China’s turn to the outside world for massive quantities of grain is forcing us to recognize that we are in trouble on the food front. Can we reverse the trends that are tightening food supplies, or is the world moving toward a future of rising food prices and political unrest?

Lester R. Brown is president of the Earth Policy Institute and author of *Breaking New Ground: A Personal History* and *Full Planet, Empty Plates: The New Geopolitics of Food Scarcity*. Check out the Earth Policy Institute’s supporting slideshow for additional data. More resources are available at [www.earth-policy.org](http://www.earth-policy.org).

# Two years in, BC Jobs plan is failing to deliver

By Iglika Ivanova

It’s traditional in many cultures to usher in the New Year with wishes for prosperity. But after a year of slow growth when the province actually lost jobs, fewer BC families can expect to see those wishes come true. To see such weak job market performance four years into a post-recession recovery is unusual to say the least. It leaves British Columbians rightly wondering if the provincial government’s flagship economic initiative, the BC Jobs Plan, is failing to deliver. A new report I’ve published with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives offers some answers. *BC Jobs Plan Reality Check* examines a number of indicators of labour market performance and compares the pace of recovery since the Jobs Plan was announced in late September 2011 with the two years of the recovery that preceded it. The findings reveal a largely jobless recovery, which was not significantly boosted by the BC Jobs Plan. While the jobs recovery has been disappointing across Canada, BC’s is weaker than the Canadian average. The persistently high unemployment rate, still over 2 percentage points above the pre-recession levels, is only the tip of the iceberg.

Jobs created since the Jobs Plan have been primarily temporary positions and have not kept up with BC’s growing population. The employment rate (the proportion of working age British Columbians who have jobs) is virtually unchanged since the worst of the recession. In fact, the province would need 94,000 more jobs to reach the pre-recession benchmark of 74%. That’s as many jobs as were created in 2010, 2011 and 2012 combined. The Jobs Plan was supposed to stimulate private sector job creation, but the private sector actually lost 12,000 jobs in the first 10 months of 2013. It’s very rare for the private sector to shed jobs outside of a recession. In the last 40 years in BC, it has happened only once, in 2001, and then only about 2,700 jobs were lost, much fewer than last year. The resource focus of the BC Jobs Plan was supposed to breathe life into regions outside the Lower Mainland and Greater Victoria, which were hit particularly hard by the recession. But while a few towns like Prince George have seen a lot of activity over the last two years, when all the numbers are added up, only the Kootenay and Northeast economic region have experienced net job creation since the Jobs Plan was launched. Thompson-Okanagan, the Cariboo, and the North Coast and Nechako have fewer jobs than before the

plan, and have yet to recover the jobs lost during the recession. While the government touts the role of the resource sector in job creation, the reality is that just 2% of British Columbians are directly employed in mining, oil and gas extraction and forestry and logging combined. This sector remains such a small share of the job market that even a doubling or tripling of employment would not place it among top employment sectors in BC. Besides, the majority of jobs stemming from these resource projects will be generated during their construction stage, so any lift to the local economies is likely to be short-lived. And these jobs would come at a great environmental price, threatening northern communities with air and water pollution and endangering our climate. On top of this, there is concern that many of these new resource jobs may be filled with temporary foreign workers or skilled workers coming from other parts of the country rather than by local unemployed workers. While temporary foreign workers take up a small share of BC jobs (just over 3% as of December 2012), the increase in temporary foreign workers since the recession represents 29% of the net new jobs created in the province. This points to

serious gaps in our skills training programs that are putting youth and unemployed workers at a disadvantage. One of the assumptions behind the Jobs Plan is that all governments can do is create favourable conditions for (mostly foreign) investors to step in and create jobs. This is not only false but also very limiting for our province. The government itself can be a source of what Premier Clark calls “the first new dollar.” Whether it’s by hiring workers to enhance public services and make them more accessible, by purchasing goods and services from BC businesses or by initiating work on needed infrastructure projects, the provincial government can create jobs and leverage significant spin-off hiring and investment by the private sector. As we enter the fifth year of a largely jobless recovery, it’s becoming clear that BC’s current economic strategy is failing to deliver. We need to shift to an economic strategy that is more diversified and less environmentally risky, and that puts more British Columbians to work in well-paying, family-supporting jobs.

Iglika Ivanova is Economist and Public Interest Researcher with the Canadians Centre for Policy Alternatives and author of *BC Jobs Plan Reality Check: The First Two Years*, available at [policyalternatives.ca/bcjobsplan](http://policyalternatives.ca/bcjobsplan)

## Ukraine on its knees, from page 14

the country, beating, torturing, even burning people alive they suspect of resisting. The democracy has been destroyed and elections are no longer part of the equation. One of Harper’s ministers fabricated wild reasons why the scheduled election in Crimea should not be allowed. “They don’t even have a voters list,” he proclaimed, as if they are a pre-literate people. Media hysteria to get Russia is out of control, precisely to hide in the fog of war the fact that it is us, NATO, committing a

war of aggression, what the UN calls the most heinous act of humankind. World War III is on a slivers edge. Canadians need to stand up to Harper. A mass demonstration is in order. We can’t expect a new Genghis Khan to rise up from the east and save us from the US/Neo-Nazi 1000 year Reich.

Bo Filter is a social scientist, speaker, and author of: *The Cause of Wars and Aggression: Book 1*. See academic reviews at [www.globaljustice.com/](http://www.globaljustice.com/)

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# How will government square its LNG agenda with sustaining water--our most precious of natural resources?

By Ben Parfitt and David Hughes

One glaring problem with the provincial government's strategy to turn British Columbia into a liquefied natural gas exporting juggernaut is that it scuttles any chance BC has to be a climate change leader.

But equally problematic is how our government's economically dubious fixation with gas exports jeopardizes our irreplaceable water resources.

In Alberta as well as numerous US states where natural gas companies operate, there is a growing public backlash against industry operations. Gas-drilling and hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" – a process where immense quantities of water, chemicals and sand are pressure-pumped down gas wells to break up rock and unleash trapped gas – has contaminated local water supplies.

Documented problems include poisoned water wells, "containment" ponds that leaked their deadly post-fracking contents into rivers killing fish, and municipal wastewater plants damaged by the industry's corrosive wastewater.

With nearly 90 per cent of all new gas wells in BC fracked, how much of our water might be used and contaminated as natural gas drilling escalates?

Between them, multinationals Shell, Chevron, Exxon and British Gas and Malaysian state-owned Petronas each have plans for LNG plants in Kitimat or Prince Rupert and have been granted export approvals by the National Energy Board.

With combined investments of \$70-billion, this group will need years to recoup investments and generate profits. So let's assume they build the plants by 2020 and operate them through 2040. How many new gas wells would need to be drilled between now and then? And how much water would have to be sucked out of our rivers, lakes and streams or from wells and rendered toxic?

One underappreciated aspect of fracked gas wells is that gas production can be spectacular initially but declines rapidly. To maintain gas flows, then, it's drill baby drill.

The largest five of seven LNG projects currently approved would export 14.2 billion cubic feet of gas per day (bcf/d) – not including gas used to power the liquefaction process itself. BC currently produces 3.5 bcf/d, all of which is committed to current customers. So BC would have to ramp up production roughly five-fold to meet these export requirements.

Let's assume that only 70% of this

capacity gets built. Based on known gas production rates and declines in fields like the Horn River and Montney, where most of this new gas would originate, roughly 39,000 new wells would be required by 2040. Assuming that nine of 10 wells were fracked, a very conservatively estimated 582 billion litres of water would then be polluted and removed from the hydrological cycle.

But the likely number is far higher. Minor increases in the percentage of wells drilled in the Horn River – a major gas source for proposed LNG projects - would push water use sky high. In 2012 it took on average 77 million litres of water to frack just one gas well in the Horn, compared to 17 million litres of water elsewhere in BC.

Currently, the industry pays nothing or virtually nothing for that water, while taxpayers foot all downstream environmental and human health costs.

With Premier Christy Clark vowing to make BC the "lowest cost jurisdiction" for LNG, don't count on government heaping higher water management responsibilities on the industry – just the opposite.

In April, the government granted the energy industry regulator – the OGC – authority to issue long-term water licences to natural gas companies making the fossil fuel industry the only entity in BC with its own dedicated water regulator - a regulator established by the province to speed approvals of industry development applications.

Meanwhile, natural gas industry operations in BC have already resulted in isolated incidents of contamination and misuse of water.

Recently, a leak of contaminated fracking water occurred at a massive double-lined pit maintained by Talisman Energy near Hudson's Hope. Outside of Fort St. John, a pipeline ruptured in 2011 spilling toxic wastewater onto a field killing cows. Gas companies have also jeopardized water flows by overdrawing during low-water periods and been forced to halt water takings after drawing down lake levels too far.

In the midst of this, the government promises a new *Water Sustainability Act*.

Perhaps, then, it's time government explained how it intends to square its LNG agenda with sustaining our most precious of natural resources. Where, exactly, will all the water come from to meet an unprecedented drilling program? How will environmentally safe water flows be maintained? Will water use fees be high enough to ensure that public servants can adequately monitor and enforce environmental regulations and protect the public interest - hopefully at arm's length from the OGC?

It's time for answers -- before another 39,000 gas wells are drilled.

Ben Parfitt is resource policy analyst with the BC Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a research associate with the University of Victoria's POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, and author of *Fracking Up Our Water, Hydro Power and Climate: B.C.'s Reckless Pursuit of Shale Gas*.

David Hughes is a geoscientist who studied Canada's energy resources for more than 30 years with the Geological Survey of Canada and author of BC LNG: A Reality Check.

# Climate change and the cost of housing

By John Luton

Lately the city of Victoria has been wrestling over the amenity bonus it was asking for a local developer, an issue which has been a difficult balancing act over the years.

Developers (and truth be told there are many who do good work), come to the city asking for zoning changes to build more density on their lots. It adds value to their portfolios, provides opportunities to create additional housing or commercial space, and as we continue to evolve our city, creates a more sustainable planning model that can reduce our reliance on the car for some of our daily transportation needs.

To be sure we need to extract some value for the trade off – individual property owners reap significant windfalls from rezoned land. Communities rightly own some of the surplus value that they grant for development and increased density needs to be serviced by off-site infrastructure and amenities that they must maintain for the long haul.

But the exchange needs to be partnership more than a lottery win and both will come out winners.

To the point, though, two key issues facing the city emerged from the article, and it reminded me of yet another, and all have a connection to the cost of housing and the slow motion catastrophe that will accompany climate change.

For the deniers, the simple economics of storm water management will tell you that things have changed. The graphs and charts and noise generated by an industrial scale effort to dismiss climate change as a fraud can be found underneath our downtown streets.

Apart from the amenity bonus discussion, one requirement developers of downtown properties are obliged to provide is storm water holding facilities in their new buildings. It can be the size of a small

apartment and cost them \$250,000.

In the overall scheme of things, it may not seem like the cost of doing business – buildings may be worth millions and include dozens of apartments, but multiply that constraint over and over again and you lose unit after unit of space that might be better suited to providing an apartment or a condo – living space for someone.

The cost adds the price of every unit in every building where the requirement has been enforced, and everything new is going to need it. And it's climate change that is driving the requirement.

Victoria's underground infrastructure – all that stuff you cannot see but rely on every day was built for a climate that is 100 years or more out of date. The weather we are experiencing today, coupled with that increased density that loads our water utilities, is overwhelming, for one, our storm sewer system.

When I sat on council, our engineering department came to us asking for our permission to spend \$20 million over 15 years to rebuild downtown storm sewer systems – they could no longer carry the flows associated with more intense winter rainfall events that accompany climate change.

From some you may find a story of deliberate efforts to stuff the bills under the mattress, but that's just not credible. The challenges were trotted out in public meetings, the issues and costs spelled out in reports and minutes and all of the posturing about looming catastrophes in our city treasury so much grandstanding by the nouveau penny pinchers who are looking for a soapbox to run on – but that's a different story.

Like any business, the city relies on its capital assets, and must invest, repair, renew our tangibles, on a regular basis, to keep delivering the infrastructure and services citizens and our economy rely on. Storm sewers are one of those assets.

# BC Supreme Court challenge continues over endangered Coastal Douglas-fir forest

Province's failure to protect Coastal Douglas-fir forest is unlawful, environment groups say

**VANCOUVER** — Hearings are continuing in a case to determine whether the government of British Columbia is bound by law to protect the province's endangered old-growth Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem.

"This ecosystem has been nearly wiped out by logging practices and now the province has a legal obligation to preserve what little is left," said Devon Page, Ecojustice executive director. "We're here to make sure BC's forestry laws are upheld, for the sake of the forest and the many wildlife species that rely on it."

Ecojustice lawyers are representing the Wilderness Committee and ForestEthics Solutions in this lawsuit, filed in BC Supreme Court in May 2013.

The Coastal Douglas-fir forest once dominated an area covering approximately 2,600 square kilometres. But after decades of logging, the BC Forest Practices Board estimates that only 1,600 square kilometres still remain. And according to government data, only about 2.75 square kilometres — an area smaller than Stanley Park — remain in old-growth condition.

"It's frustrating that we're forced to take the province to court to defend the tiny remainder of such a rare and important ecosystem – one the government's own scientists say needs protection," said Torrance Coste, Vancouver Island campaigner for the Wilderness Committee. "The status of this ecosystem is a stark example of the utter mismanagement of forests in B.C."

The BC government controls about nine per cent of all lands in the Coastal Douglas-fir forest, and despite its purported protection under BC's forestry laws, the province recently allowed logging in a forest of this type near Nanaimo. An affidavit from former long-time Ministry of Forests employee Mary Jo Hamey, who rang the alarm bell on logging in this endangered ecosystem, forms part of the evidence submitted by the groups.

"If the government is breaking its own law, then we need the courts to take action to make sure these iconic forests don't go the way of the dodo," said Valerie Langer, BC conservation director for ForestEthics Solutions.

# Commitment to environmental protection lacking in BC budget

**VICTORIA** – The 2014 Budget released by the provincial government February 18 made clear that the future of BC is being bet on LNG expansion with little regard for environmental protection or the long-term climate change impacts that this and other fossil fuel proposals will have on the province.

"As the industry and government are attempting to turn the Salish Sea into a fossil fuel highway, it's revealing that the budget showed no meaningful investment in increasing capacity for environmental protection, in particular staff and equipment to better respond to spills," says Christianne Wilhelmson, spokesperson from the Georgia Strait Alliance.

Though the budget showed some increases in areas such as environmental assessment, it is clear this relates to upcoming LNG proposals and is not intended

to raise the bar on protecting BC's environment. Across Ministries, LNG expansion is being touted as the "solution to all ills", with no indication that the environmental impacts – from contamination from fracking to the rise in local greenhouse gas emissions are being considered.

"A study released last year revealed that existing oil spill response equipment does not meet the spill threats from current shipping traffic," says Wilhelmson. "If the government wanted to show leadership, this budget should have included a financial commitment and a plan to fix today's problems before signing on to further expansion plans."

Formed in 1990, Georgia Strait Alliance is the only citizens' group working to protect and restore the marine environment and promote the sustainability of Georgia Strait, its adjoining waters and communities.

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# The global movement in cities: addressing global issues at home

**By Dean Fortin,**  
In 2010, we passed a major landmark when, for the first time ever, more than half of the world’s population lived in cities. With this increased urban population comes tremendous responsibility - the 2008 World Energy Outlook estimated that cities account for over 70% of global carbon dioxide emissions from energy consumptions.  
Cities and their leaders have an unprecedented opportunity – and responsibility – to lead the way in sustainability and environmental stewardship. Since 2008, the City of Victoria has introduced a number of programs to help the City reduce waste and emissions, increase efficiency and create a livable city for everyone.  
Cities can have a major impact on greenhouse gas emissions by making thoughtful decisions about transportation infrastructure. I am proud of the steps that Victoria is taking to shift the emphasis away from “moving vehicles” toward a priority for “moving people”.  
This February, we broke ground on an important new project that reflects this shift in thinking. BC Transit, in partnership with the City of Victoria, is installing time-limited bike/bus lanes on the Douglas Street corridor,

which will allow people using public transportation and bikes to bypass congestion during peak commute hours. This will reduce the commute time in and out of the downtown core for people using public transit and bikes, incentivizing these modes of transportation. This change will also free buses that were previously stuck in traffic to serve other under-resourced routes and reduce pass-ups. Buses currently make up 3% of the traffic on our roads and account for 40% of commuters. With improved service, this number is likely to rise even more.  
These dedicated lanes will further improve Victoria’s cycling network which has increased in length by 52% since 2008. We still have work to do to ensure that our city is bikeable for riders of all ages and abilities and in 2013, which is why we launched a Cycling Task force to update the City’s Cycling Master Plan. In the coming months, we will be consulting with the community to identify priority areas for new cycling infrastructure in the City. Our goal is to increase ridership, especially among new riders, and to make Victoria more bikable for everyone.  
Community greenspaces have been another area of priority. The City has planted community fruit tree orchards in two

public parks and worked with Community Associations to plant two community gardens and a community herb garden. These orchards and gardens are maintained by residents and provide recreation, learning opportunities and food for citizens.  
We continue to revitalize playgrounds throughout Victoria, consulting with families and children about the features that they want to see. The redeveloped playgrounds have seen a resurgence of usage, providing attractive play spaces for children and gathering places for parents. We have installed outdoor fitness circuits in two City parks, and we will install three more this year, increasing accessible recreation opportunities for everyone.  
Vibrant public spaces are important for healthy communities – they provide a place for families to play and gather, for neighbours to connect with one another and for residents to connect with the city around them.  
Sustainable programs often require the participation of citizens to be successful, and Victoria residents truly embraced the kitchen scraps program that we implemented in 2013. In the first year of the program, over 1,800 tonnes of kitchen scraps were

separated and processed into compost, instead of being sent to the landfill. That is 300 tonnes more than the original target of 1,500.  
The participation of local residents resulted in a monthly average diversion rate of 36.5%, surpassing our original goal of diverting 30 percent of the waste stream from the landfill. Diversion rates steadily increased each month, with November reaching a high of 41%. This is over 6.5 tonnes of kitchen scraps each day. Small, everyday actions can have meaningful, positive impacts in our community and I would like to thank all of the 14,000 households and the City staff that contributed to the success of this program.  
Creating and preserving sustainable programs requires an ongoing commitment from Mayor and Council. The decisions are not always easy, but they are always important. I am proud of the work that we have done at Victoria City Hall, and I look forward to continuing to this work in the years ahead.  
I can be contacted directly at dean@deanfortin.ca. Share your ideas!  
Dean Fortin is mayor of the City of Victoria.

# Communnity action helps to preserve important public area

**By Susan Haddon**  
To quote a line from Joni Mitchell’s *Big Yellow Taxi*, “Don’t it always seem to go that you don’t know what you’ve got til it’s gone.” Fortunately a local community realized what it was about to lose before it was taken away.  
A proposal to build a private eight-clay-court tennis facility in a small corner of Cedar Hill Park was unanimously rejected by Saanich Council recently, thanks in part to the efforts of a group of concerned citizens. Reasons for the rejection included lack of community consultation on all options for the space in question, cost and risk to taxpayers, environmental issues, and the fact that it would put public land into private hands.  
That this important area has been preserved for whatever future use the community decides for it is a huge source of relief and a cause for celebration.  
There were many issues with the tennis court proposal for area residents. The location planned for the facility was the last remaining flat, open green space in Cedar Hill Park; a natural wetland adjacent to Bowker Creek used by the community in many ways. Special Olympians play softball there, it’s used as a staging ground for school cross-country teams, children and families play and dogs run on it and it is appreciated simply for its natural beauty.  
Not only would the proposed facility have fully taken over the remaining space but it also raised significant environmental concerns. Cedar Hill Park was purchased by Saanich taxpayers in 1968 for \$1.4M and is public land yet the proposal was for it to be given for the almost exclusive use of a private tennis club. The proponents had requested a \$100K grant from Saanich and a 10-year, \$250K interest-free loan yet only 1500 hours of court time would be available to Saanich residents on a to-be-determined basis.  
Many residents were annoyed they

hadn’t been asked about their visions for their park. When surveyed as part of the creation of a 2012 Parks Master Plan covering all Saanich parks, the majority of respondents had expressed a desire for more hiking trails, natural areas and green spaces and only 2.6% believed tennis services in the municipality were insufficient.  
The proposal had been under development by the Cedar Hill Clay Court Tennis Society (CHCCTS) since at least late 2011 but the wider community only really became aware of it in mid-2013. On May 28, the Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association hosted the second of two meetings that provided the CHCCTS an opportunity to present their proposal. This second meeting drew a good crowd, most of which were against it and it was at this point that people started to talk about how they could work together to defeat the proposal. It had been slated to go to Council for approval in mid-June but, given the reactions at this late May meeting, it was deferred until the fall. This provided the window needed for the community to come together to plan its course of action.  
The group began by reviewing planning documents such as Saanich’s Official Community Plan, the Parks Master Plan and the Bowker Creek Initiative 100-year plan; municipal policies that related to citizen engagement processes, partnerships, land use and environmental assessments; and the proponent’s documentation in detail.  
Comparisons between it and existing facilities elsewhere were undertaken. Overall, seven documents including ones on demand, construction and operating costs, risk and environmental analyses and process were developed and sent to Mayor and Council.  
The group recognized that those most likely to oppose the proposal either lived within a 10-minute walk of the Park or were users of the chip trail, so signs were posted around the trail and flyers distributed in the

surrounding community.  
A “Save Cedar Hill Park” website, facebook page, blog and email distribution list were developed as means of sharing information and generating interest and engagement. On several occasions, several of the group staked out the dimensions of the proposed facility in the park and passed out information and the web address so passers-by could better visualize the scope and understand the implications of the project.  
Email addresses of Mayor and Council were included on the printed information so individuals could write to or meet with councillors to voice concerns and hundreds of letters and emails were written.  
Meetings were also held with Parks and Planning/Environment Department management and staff to discuss the issues. Letters to the editor were written and television, radio and print media interviews conducted.  
The first Committee of the Whole meeting to discuss the proposal was held on November 28, 2013. The material that went to Council in preparation for the meeting was the final proposal and a briefing note from Parks that recommended a) approving it or b) working with the proponent to find a suitable location elsewhere in Saanich.  
There were so many people wishing to speak that two subsequent meetings were held to accommodate everyone, one in late January and the last one on February 1. More than 180 people spoke on both sides of the issue. Speeches were eloquent, passionate, convincing, thoughtful, funny and charming. Whole families spoke as did young children, artists, se-

niors, long-time residents, park users, Special Olympians, environmentalists.  
After the last person spoke, Councillor Vic Derman moved that the proposal be rejected, the motion was seconded by Susan Brice and passed unanimously.  
In their remarks, Council members reiterated the concerns they’d heard from the community – public land for almost exclusive private use, public tax dollars going toward a grant and interest-free loan, lack of a guiding master plan for the park, lack of opportunity for citizens to share their visions for the space, and potential environmental downsides, particularly with respect to Bowker Creek.  
It was clear that our advocacy had been effective. But perhaps what was even more exciting was the fact of our community coming together with shared values, a shared commitment to each other and to what we share in common and many, many new friendships.  
Finally, a Friends of Cedar Hill Park Society has been formed as a means of staying in touch, volunteering in, continuing to act as advocates for, and to be part of a community-wide planning process for Cedar Hill Park.  
Susan Haddon was one of the organizers of the protest



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# Cockrell House-- a safe home for homeless veterans

By Ron Duffy

Driving westwards out of Victoria, you will have passed it by, off Sooke Road in Colwood. You may have given it no more than a glance, or maybe just a moment's thought as it falls behind in your rear-view mirror. A large pink and brown manor in its own grounds. This is Cockrell House, the first shelter for homeless veterans ever opened in Canada. No, not after the First World War; not after the Second. In fact not until 2009. Canada has not done well by its veterans.

Kirsty Duncan, the Liberal Veterans Affairs Critic, visited Cockrell House in November 2010. "The veterans I met said they would still be on the streets if it wasn't for Dave Munro and Russ Ridley, who helped launch this important facility."

Russ Ridley, a Colwood developer, owns Cockrell House "and picks up the taxes, utilities and cable."

Dave Munro was the chairman of the non-profit, volunteer-run South Mid Vancouver Island Zone Housing Society, which created and operated the Legion-affiliated homeless shelter. The society leased the five-unit townhouse that can accommodate 11 veterans for \$5,700 a month. It has been supported by the Legion, which donated more than \$85,000, by the Municipality of Colwood, which donated \$60,000; the Victoria Remembrance Day Committee, which donated \$25,000 on the official opening day; regimental associations, veterans groups and local charities. The federal Homeless Partnering Strategy kicked in \$86,400 of short-term funding. None of this money, you will note, came from the federal government.

Dave Munro told Kirsty Duncan that because of the enormity of the sacrifice Canadian veterans were asked to make, "Canada owes them, and should help them get back on their feet."

"Canada owes them" but is reluctant to pony up to help them get back on their feet.

"There needs to be more facilities like Cockrell House," Munro says, because many veterans "are still living in the bush and on the streets."

Luke Carmichael was one of them. After 19 years in the Armed Forces, including a stint in Cyprus, the Halifax native spent seven years living in a tent and three years in a trailer. He was one of the first residents of Cockrell House.

Claude Rochon of Cape Breton was medically released in 1990 after eight years in the services. His left leg had been injured on duty. "They did a few surgeries, and couldn't fix it so they fused it; it is three inches shorter, there's no knee in it...steel bolts and rods hold it all together."

Rochon left the services angry. "There was no help, no guidance, not even clues." Although he went to college and retrained to design and maintain computer networks, his anger got worse. Already taking narcotics for pain, he became a heavy drinker with a violent temper. As his life fell apart, he fled to the US, working sporadically, living on the streets, using homeless shelters. Then he began blacking out, doing things he couldn't remember afterwards. It scared him sober and he decided to come back to Canada "to put things to rest and try to fix

my life," he says. He now helps in the running of Cockrell House.

Daniel Scott was nearly killed during a training exercise in Afghanistan in 2010, when metal balls from a mine that exploded by mistake ripped through his chest, fracturing a rib, collapsing his left lung and damaging his kidney, spleen and pancreas. Scott fought for his life and won. But back home he found himself fighting a whole new kind of battle. He received a letter from Veterans Affairs (VAC) assessing the award for his injuries at a little over \$41,000, to be paid out as a lump sum. His mother, who worked for an insurance company, knew that this amount paled in comparison to what he would have received through Workers' Compensation. When she crunched the numbers, she calculated that the \$41,000 plus interest her son received from the government worked out to about \$140 a month for 25 years. For the same injuries the WCB would have paid about \$1,400 a month until age 65.

Corporal Glen Kirkland, a severely injured Afghan vet testified at a parliamentary committee hearing about his struggle to get adequate coverage for his on-going medical treatment. "The army doesn't look after its injured soldiers," he declared.

Claude Rochon would agree. He fought the army for insurance for his injured leg all the way to the Supreme Court. "It took 24 years," he says. "Twenty-four years! But I won."

Dennis (who asked that his full name not be used) got fed up with bureaucracy. Medically released in 1981 after nearly four years in the navy, the New Brunswick native fought through red tape for years. In 2000, after being denied benefits for post-traumatic stress, "I took a wheelbarrow with all my documents—it was a big wheelbarrow and it was full—I took it out to the backyard, built a bonfire and got rid of it."

The federal government is in no hurry to help Canadian vets. Operating under a stingy budget from the Department of Defence, VAC notoriously raises every possible barrier in the way of paying what our vets are owed. They tangle the vets in strangling red tape: 26-page difficult application forms; deadlines almost impossible to meet; detailed reports required from doctors, dentists, psychiatrists; "lost" files and medical reports.

Warrant Officer Barry Westholm says, "We asked them [our vets] to go to war and they went. They got beat up over there and now they want to get better. But now we've set a trap for them: We're saying 'come on, it's here' but it's not."

Many of our maimed, mutilated, and mentally troubled vets give up in despair, sink into deep depressions, commit suicide. The suicides of Master Corporal William Elliott, Master Bombardier Travis Halmrast, Warrant Officer Michael McNeil, Master Corporal Sylvain Lelièvre were reported in media around the world to Canada's shame. All four took their lives *in one week* early last December.

On Christmas Day that same month Leona MacEachern of Calgary died when she drove her Pontiac Grand Am across the centre line of the Trans-Canada Highway into the path of a transport truck. It was the final desperate act of a retired Canadian



Cockrell House residents Dave Munro (left) and Luke Carmichael (middle) talk with Kirsty Duncan and Keith Martin at Cockrell House, in November 2010.

veteran who was undergoing treatment for PTSD-related "Major Depressive Disorder and anxiety disorder not otherwise specified".

In a published statement her husband said, "We would like to say that Leona had slipped through the cracks in the system but, in fact, there does not seem to be a system...We believe her PTSD symptoms manifested themselves as the result of some protracted battles with Veterans Affairs to obtain medical benefits for issues arising from dental work in the late 1980s while stationed in Germany during the first Gulf War."

Typically, DND "could not locate files of the original dental procedure so the claim was simply rejected several times through to the end of the appeals process." MacEachern felt there was no hope as no one seemed to be addressing the root causes of her condition. So she took her own life on Christmas Day.

No one seems to know how pervasive suicide has become. VAC makes the shameful admission that it does not know how many veterans have taken their own lives. The department's Directorate of Mental Health reports that of 42 documented cases about half of the victims had struggled with PTSD, depression or substance abuse; about two-thirds had been deployed overseas, and over one-third had been deployed multiple times; 10 were under 25 years old. Many of the victims dealt with failed relationships, chronic physical problems and financial or career issues.

Giving up expectation of ever getting needed help from VAC, the Canadian military created its own Joint Personnel Support Units to give hope and help to the flood of physically and mentally injured soldiers coming home from Afghanistan and those still damaged from previous missions. Eight regional JPSUs would oversee 24 troop support centres and dozens of smaller satellite facilities scattered across the country.

But increased demand, burned-out and departed staff, and lack of resources meant that many of the centres have gone from good to bad to worse. "A much-admired military unit that has helped many injured and mentally ill Canadian veterans," writes Chris Cobb of the *Ottawa Citizen*, "has deteriorated so badly it is now in crisis itself. Former staff, clients and critics tell that the government and military brass are not providing resources to keep up with demand that is only likely to increase."

"There are almost 80,000 veterans in Canada," says Bridget Preston, director of VAC's Victoria office, "but the number of homeless vets is not known. Counting and classifying who is homeless in general is a challenge."

The *Ottawa Citizen* reports on "the federal government's lack of commitment and a persistent refusal by the upper crust of Canada's military to provide the resources and innovation necessary to cope with an overwhelming demand that only seems likely to increase as military personnel who served in Afghanistan emerge from the incubation period that typically precedes mental breakdown..."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper says that everyone should encourage veterans in need to reach out to the systems that are there to help. Soldiers and their families trying to cope with PTSD can call a confidential toll-free referral service at 1-800-268-7708. But another veteran, Mike Cole, from Trenton, Ontario, says that soldiers are telling him that when they call the number, they are put on hold, or told to go to

hospital.

At the same time as troubled soldiers are being publicly urged to reach out, an internal memo from one platoon commander at CFB Shilo in Manitoba, obtained by CTV News, instructs soldiers not to speak to the media unless they have received permission from the chain of command.

Jobs are to be cut at VAC despite Opposition demands that the federal department's budget remain untouched. An NDP motion to exempt VAC from Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's budget axe last March was defeated 147-122 by the Conservative majority in the Commons.

Yet the government is prepared to spend \$45.8 billion for fighter jets we don't need. An estimate in 2011 reckoned that they have shelled out \$18.5 billion fighting a war against people who are no threat to us. Our foreign aid spending totaled \$5.67 billion in 2012 alone. The budget for VAC is set at \$3.6-billion and this is being cut. The government maintains it can cut five hundred jobs through attrition and better planning. These job cuts will be accompanied by slashing \$226 million from the VAC budget and cutting five to ten per cent in funding.

In light of these cuts, it is important to remember that the federal government has a responsibility to provide specialized health care services to veterans as part of its moral obligation to those who accepted the condition of "unlimited liability" in the service of Canada. Cuts to jobs and funding at VAC and losses of beds available to veterans in hospitals and long-term care facilities indicates that the government is not upholding this responsibility.

"We are not out to lay blame or criticize the individuals working in Veterans Affairs or the health care system," say friends of the deceased Leona MacEachern. "These people are suffering too, trying to make the most with their ever dwindling resources. Too many bad decisions are being made by disconnected politicians and unaccountable mandarins at both federal and provincial levels."

And the situation gets worse. The VAC office in Prince George has already been shut, and the government says that by the end of last month, offices in Corner Brook, Charlottetown, Sydney, Thunder Bay, Windsor, Brandon, Saskatoon and Kelowna would be closing their doors to veterans too. These offices provide valuable support and services to traditional and younger veterans, including those with serious physical and mental health issues, who depend on these services for face-to-face frontline help.

In Ontario, the veterans in Thunder Bay will now have to travel over 10 hours to get to the nearest office and those in the Windsor area will be forced to travel over two hours to get service in London.

"The veterans I met are tired of empty promises from the Conservative government," wrote the Liberal Kirsty Duncan in 2010. "They want real change and they want more rehabilitation programs and reintegration facilities like I saw at Cockrell House." Instead they are receiving fewer.

Cockrell House provides case management services, local OSISS (Occupational Stress Injury Social Support) as well as peer support and counselling. Government funding for Cockrell House ends in March. The OSISS officer, a knowledgeable and tireless source of help for those in her unstinting care, is likely to go. The facility will need to resort again to private funding to continue their important work, despite the generous support from people like Russ Ridley.

The strong feeling in Cockrell House is that "we don't want DND involved. They will build a high fence of red tape around the place and make it as difficult as possible for us to function."

Claude Rochon is optimistic that enough private and Legion donations will be forthcoming to enable them to continue to do its excellent work of housing and helping vets with physical and mental injuries (PTSD, suicidal tendencies, alcoholism), the one often leading to the other.

I hope so. One of the current residents is my son.

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# A People’s Senate

By Helen Forsey  
for *Lower Island News* (Spring, 2014)

In my article on the Senate in the July, 2013 issue of LIN, I hinted that Canadians had much better options than to tear off on a wild goose chase after “Triple E” or abolition. Now it’s time to come through with the follow-up I promised about alternatives.

Most of last year’s public discussion of the Senate got stuck in simplistic and circular arguments, limited by ignorance, partisanship, and a failure of imagination. But recent events have shaken up the debate, and may get us past the bottleneck. Here are some questions to help free up our thinking as we take a fresh look.

What if we had a Senate that was non-partisan, truly dedicated to “sober second thought” and the common good? What if Senate appointments were the product of a participatory process, based on merit, devoid of partisanship, and reflective of Canada’s diversity?

What if senators were able to devote themselves to their proper legislative and investigative work, cooperating wherever possible, free of party control or electoral worries, and financially accountable to the Auditor General?

That’s the kind of Upper House my father, the late Senator Eugene Forsey, wanted to see. He wanted reforms, certainly, but based on his own experience in the Senate through the 1970s, he defended its “value as a protector of the public’s right to be heard, [and] its indispensability for the proper working of our parliamentary system.”

“The Senate as constituted,” he said, “does much good, and is politically too weak to do any serious harm.” In his view, the Upper House needed reforms that would strengthen its power for good while retaining its relative inability to do harm. And he believed that goal could be achieved.

Obviously that has yet to happen. More than three decades later, the Red Chamber is mired in scandal and disrepute, thanks to appalling appointments, rampant partisanship and power-mongering, cynicism and self-interest. Never has the need for change been clearer or more urgent.

But any changes must be workable. Canadians have wasted enough time and energy spinning the kind of “gossamer palaces of Senate reform” that used to cross my father’s desk with depressing regularity.

Like other knowledgeable critics, Eugene Forsey recognized the problems our repatriated Constitution posed for advocates of Senate abolition or drastic reform. As he told the Canadian Bar Association in 1985, “There are two types of Senate reform proposals: the practicable and the impracticable. The impracticable would require constitutional changes. They have as much chance of becoming law as I have of becoming Archbishop of Canterbury.” Pursuing them, he said, amounted to “playing games – a sort of constitutional Trivial Pursuit – and not harmless games either, for they foster illusions, distract attention, set people chasing wandering fires.”

Nonetheless, those same unworkable proposals are still being promoted by pundits and politicians. They include juggling the number of seats for each province, elections for senators, appointment by provincial rather than federal governments, and, of course, the NDP’s perennial hobby-horse, abolition.

My father ran through scenarios for all these schemes, showing why they wouldn’t work. For example, under the *Constitution Act, 1982*, changing the distribution of seats would need the consent of Parliament plus seven provincial legislatures representing half the population of the 10 provinces. Some increase in Western seats would likely be accepted, he said, but attempts to implement the “equality” aspect of “Triple E” would hit a brick wall. Equal numbers from every province would reduce the percentage of Senate seats for each of Ontario and Quebec from the present 22% to 10%, and under the applicable amending formula, at least one of them would have to agree. “Anyone who believes either province would accept this,” Dad said, “can believe the moon is made of green cheese.”

How about election? At first glance, an elected Senate may seem appealing, and “Triple E” proponents would love to see an elected Upper House with the legitimacy and clout they think would follow. But their assumption rests on a simplistic American-

style definition of “democracy” which demands elections for everything from local sheriffs on up. Canada’s parliamentary system is very different from the US republican model, and those who favour electing our senators should perhaps be careful what they wish for.

For one thing, an elected Senate would lose the ability to fulfill its special roles of independent investigation and careful revision of legislation – vitally important functions that the Commons, as the elected body with the real decision-making power, simply does not have the time or flexibility to perform. Elected senators would almost certainly be even more subject to party discipline, and drawn even further into the partisan games that now so often make a mockery of democracy in the Lower House.

What’s more, an elected Senate could easily find itself at odds with the House of Commons on crucial issues, leading to the kind of gridlock that frequently stymies effective government south of the border. Meanwhile, we as citizens would be saddled with even more election campaigns, even more money spent on PR and attack ads and robo-calls, with media and politicians alike focussing on popularity contests rather than on real and urgent needs. Is that what Canadians really want?

In practical terms, moreover, the requirements of the constitutional amendment process would frustrate any attempt to switch from appointment to election. As my father pointed out, “an elected Senate could say to the Commons, ‘You represent the people? So do we!’ The last thing the Commons wants is a Senate with more clout. Any constitutional amendment strong enough to please the provinces, the House would turn down. Anything weak enough to get past the Commons, the provinces would spew out.”

As for the third “E”, effectiveness, we need to ask: “effective to what end?” In general, the Senate’s very “ineffectiveness” as an unelected body makes it, as Dad said, “politically too weak to do any serious harm.” Surely that is not a bad thing. He also noted that even if the “effectiveness” proposals got past the constitutional hurdles, “most of them would give the Senate more power to make a nuisance of itself, which is not what it should be.”

For example, “a Senate appointed by provincial governments would give those governments their own private monkey-wrenches to dislocate the national political machinery.” That would undermine the overall mandate of Canada’s Parliament: to bring together local, regional and national interests in an ongoing dynamic balance that works for the common good.

In any case, the Senate already has all the legal power it needs to be effective in its proper mandate: revising legislation, examining issues in-depth, and, in rare cases, ensuring that if opposition to a controversial government measure is stifled in the Commons, the issue can be put before the electorate.

These powers are temporarily rendered useless when a ruthless government commands (literally) a majority in both Houses, but the powers are still there. I suspect that is a major reason why Mr. Harper would actually love to see the Senate disappear.

So if these reform proposals have such serious drawbacks and are essentially impracticable under our Constitution, why not just abolish the Senate and be done with it? First, because abolition, too, is a bad bet constitutionally, requiring provincial consent that is very unlikely to be forthcoming. Second, because it would mean tossing out the important benefits and safeguards, already mentioned, that Parliament’s Upper House was established to provide. And finally, because we have good and sensible alternatives. The dirty bathwater needs to go, but we should – and can – keep the baby.

Once we understand that the Senate problem is not numbers, lack of clout, or the fact that senators are appointed, we can start working on realistic reforms, reforms that can be brought about without trying to pry open the Pandora’s Box of constitutional change.

My idea of a progressive alternative would be a “People’s Senate”. The phrase is a gift from Errol Sharpe of Fernwood Publishing, at whose urging I am now writing a small book on the subject.

Of course, the concept didn’t originate with us; it is bubbling up from the grass

roots. News of this may not yet have reached Mr. Mulcair (he told the CBC last fall that he “hadn’t met a single Canadian who supports keeping the Senate”) but the sentiment is present and growing.

That was refreshingly evident, for example, in many of the calls to CBC Radio’s Cross-Country Check-Up back in January; days later came Justin Trudeau’s surprise move to free 32 senators from party control.

The whole discussion has now shifted into a new gear. Despite the troubling contradictions inherent in Trudeau’s top-down action, and the practical questions still to be worked out, we now have a creative and widely publicized option on the table.

Even Mr. Mulcair has reportedly called Trudeau’s move “a step in the right direction.” Since it is clearly not a step towards abolition, perhaps the NDP leader is now open to the possibility of better alternatives.

In any case, I hope the party’s rank and file will join other progressive Canadians in considering the idea of a People’s Senate, developing it, and working to make it reality.



Author Helen Forsey

Let’s start with a vision of what such an Upper House might look like. It would surely include some well-known and widely respected individuals – people like Margaret Atwood, Severn Suzuki, Sheila Fraser, Romeo Dallaire, Gabor Maté, Alanis Obom-sawin. But most of the faces in a People’s Senate would be unfamiliar to the pundit crowd. They would include young folks and elders, women and men, scientists, farmers, activists, home-makers, artists, shop stewards, teachers – their diversity reflecting the multicultural richness of this country and its regions. Compassion, competence and service would be key qualifications for a Senate seat, together with the courage to stand up and speak out on important questions.

Free of partisanship and patronage, the “people’s senators” would be a breath of fresh air, bringing with them a wealth of grass-roots wisdom, experience and creativity. Granted, they might not be the kind of individuals some Prime Ministers would want to see reviewing and revising legislation and conducting independent inquiries into crucial public issues. But the governing elites would no longer have much choice in the matter.

Gone would be the days when Prime Ministers could do as they pleased in handing out Senate appointments. The PM would still formally advise the Governor General on whom to appoint, but that advice would now be strictly circumscribed by a pre-selection system rooted in citizen participation.

A very public on-going process in each province and territory would involve people at the grass-roots level in developing short-lists of potential appointees, and appointments could only be made from those lists. This would exclude what my father called the “spavined political war-horses, the duds, the has-beens, the doubtful characters, the dedicated enemies of effective national government” who might otherwise be in the line-up for appointment.

The idea of provincial lists is far from new. Back in 1980, the Lamontagne Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs recommended that the provinces provide the federal government with lists from which appointments would be made. Dad also liked that proposal, suggesting it could enhance diversity and representation.

The People’s Senate concept, though, goes further, essentially taking the power of

appointment away from both levels of government and giving it to the people. Every person on the provincial short-lists would have been proposed, vetted and approved through a citizen-based, non-competitive, participatory process, with criteria similar to those used for awarding national honours. Properly set up and independently monitored, this system would leave no room for patronage or lobbying. The main role of the provincial and federal governments would be to facilitate and finalize the process.

Such a change would not require constitutional amendment. In fact, my father claimed the original idea could be implemented even without legislation, simply if each party leader formally declared that they would follow the practice. Nowadays such faith in public declarations by politicians would seem quaint and naive at best. But strong public pressure on all parties could generate the political will to establish the practice, with legislation to make assurance doubly sure.

Like most Canadians, Eugene Forsey wanted a Senate made up of truly capable and dedicated men and women representing “a wide range of opinion, interests, and experience.” He endorsed proposals to end the property-owning requirement, strengthen the rules on attendance and retirement, and ensure that vacant seats be filled in a timely way. Above all, he wanted a healthy non-partisanship to reign both in the selection of senators and in the exercise of their parliamentary duties.

“A reform many of us are keen on,” he told an interviewer in 1978, “is that on appointment, every senator should sever completely his ties with any political party, at least for senatorial purposes.”

“Once we are in here, we should regard ourselves as Independents. There should be no party whips, and on every bill we should vote exactly as we see fit. That is what I have done all along.”

Sound familiar? Justin Trudeau’s surprise announcement at the end of January has made that particular suggestion a sudden reality for the 32 senators who started 2014 as Liberals. Much as we may dislike the top-down way it was done – and it certainly flew in the face of the kind of democratic reform needed within political parties – Trudeau’s action was much more than a mere gesture. It actually did unharness those senators from the party machine.

The implications, both practical and symbolic, are major. Public discussion has been reframed and reinvigorated, and there is now a clear focus on the problem of rampant partisanship which, together with patronage and greed, has brought the Senate to its present state of disgrace.

The newly configured People’s Senate would be genuinely honourable – wise, diverse and non-partisan. Dedicated to its proper mandate of “sober second thought”, discussion and independent investigation of major issues, it would also provide a much-needed check on executive power masquerading as “democracy”.

Moreover, its structure and operations would be open and transparent, closely monitored by the media, the public, and the Auditor General’s office.

Citizens of all provinces and territories would be so involved, and so committed to seeing the new set-up work for the common good, that any sign of self-serving behaviour, or of political pressure from parties or vested interests, would be quickly exposed and denounced.

Of course, it’s not just the one parliamentary institution that desperately needs reform; it’s the entire body politic. Restoring integrity and democracy in Canada must include major changes to our electoral system, party structures, and legislative practices and procedures, at both the national and provincial levels.

But a People’s Senate would be a key part of such reform, and it is entirely feasible if the political will is there. That’s a big “if” under present circumstances, but “present circumstances”, thank heaven, aren’t permanent.

So let’s get on with it!

Helen Forsey is a feminist writer and activist based in Eastern Ontario and Newfoundland’s Avalon Peninsula. Her book, *Eugene Forsey, Canada’s Maverick* Sage, Dundurn, 2012, details the many facets of her father’s work and its continuing relevance. She is now working on a book on a “People’s Senate.”



# Continuing Mandela’s long walk to freedom

Story and photos by Heather Tufts

*“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”-- Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)*

In December the world mourned Nelson Mandela by sharing songs, dances, memories and tributes. He belonged to all of us. Madiba was the inspiration we longed for, a symbol of the change we crave, and the hero we unite to admire.

But Canada’s official self-congratulatory tone on the fall of apartheid is duplicitous. It is true that the Mulroney years reflected the populist cry to *“Free Mandela”*, introduced modest divestments and lobbied for change at the United Nations.

Notwithstanding Prime Minister Brian Mulroney’s highly credited vision of *“being on the right side of history”*, it is well known that South Africa modelled its apartheid system on Canada’s racist *Indian Act*.

Linda Freeman, author of *The Ambiguous Champion* wrote that *“South African officials regularly came to Canada to examine reserves set aside for First Nations, following colleagues who had studied residential schools in earlier parts of the century.”*

In 1948 the movement of black South Africans was systemically and brutally controlled. Government officials had studied Canada’s first nations’ identity and pass system to enforce similar restrictions.

During the apartheid era black South Africans were evicted in hundreds of thousands from properties that were in areas designated as “white only” and were segregated into extreme poverty and overcrowded conditions. South African townships were masterfully hidden from view, often positioned behind hills, away from main highways and stretched out for miles. These forced removals were shamefully inspired by Canada’s Indian reserves and land displacement policies.

In 1964 soon after Mandela had been sentenced to life in prison NDP leader Tommy Douglas had the foresight to appeal for clemency in the House of Commons: *“Nelson Mandela and seven of his associates have been found guilty of contravening the apartheid law and so I ask the Prime Minister if he will make vigorous representation to the government of South Africa urging that they exercise clemency in this case.”*

But this was not a popular position in Canada at that time since the priority was for continued trade and promotion of the private sector in South Africa rather than dismantling apartheid. No response of substance was ever offered by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and in terms of free trade policies trumping international human rights, nothing much has changed.

In 1989 Stephen Harper was policy chief of the Reform Party and became a member of the Northern Foundation (NF). The exclusive mandate of the NF was to sabotage the anti-apartheid efforts of the Mulroney government which was pressuring South Africa to release Nelson Mandela. Harper’s presence at Mandela’s memorial was therefore an insult to Canada, especially its indigenous peoples.

Conservative MP Rob Anders was the lone voice in parliament to oppose giving Nelson Mandela honorary Canadian citizenship in 2001. By vehemently calling out “No,” and denouncing Mandela as a terrorist, he denied the House unanimous consent. Nonetheless the motion was passed and we inherit the opportunity to learn from the teachings of the world’s most famous honorary citizen.

Mandela’s powerful words are the mantra for our tireless walk to freedom and justice: *“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than it’s opposite.”*

Even in death Mandela brought political foes together and the world watched with curiosity when US President Obama shook hands with Cuban President Raul Castro during the memorial ceremony. The press frenzied to attribute different meanings to this token gesture.

Soon after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela visited Cuba in 1991. His rarely published words reveal an admiration for Cuba’s independence and sover-

eignty: *“The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom, and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character.”*

Revolutionary Cuba had played a vital role in the international movement against white minority rule in South Africa. Mandela’s earliest vision for post-apartheid days in South Africa had aligned liberation philosophy with participatory democracy inspired by the Cuban revolution. However some of Mandela’s socialist ideals were not realized in the complex transition to a new South Africa when international investments were encouraged to boost the economy.

Mandela’s close relationship to Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian cause was also a taboo subject during his memorial week. Both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) represented majority indigenous populations that were oppressed and denied basic rights. Notwithstanding Mandela’s personal outreach to South African Jews, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu declined an invitation to attend the memorial because Mandela had been outspoken about Palestinian rights.

*“Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians. All of us need to do more in supporting the struggle of the people of Palestine for self-determination.”*

The legacy of the anti-apartheid movement which has been re-ignited by Mandela’s death reminds us that many of its inherent struggles remain today, including unacceptable levels of widespread poverty. *“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity; it is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings,”* Mandela said.

Systemic racism embedded in colonialism leads to exclusion, lack of co-operation, poverty and dispossession of land which Mandela understood in his heart and denounced with his words. However a meaningful reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada remains elusive. The Harper government still refuses to honour treaties and internationally-sanctioned indigenous rights in favour of corporate interests.

So long as First Nations’ schools continue to exist with inequitable funding, a public apology is mere tokenism. Neither can a genuine apology ignore the outcry for a public inquiry into 582 missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada. Meanwhile more than half of our aboriginal children live below the poverty line and many reserves lack decent housing and access to clean drinking water.

Justice Murray Sinclair, who leads Canada’s [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), agrees that Mandela recognized how Canada’s indigenous peoples have shared in the anti-apartheid struggle for racial equality. *“He was certainly an elder ... a wise and kind man who brought with his presence to this country an understanding of what it was that aboriginal people in this country were experiencing and had experienced in this country.”*

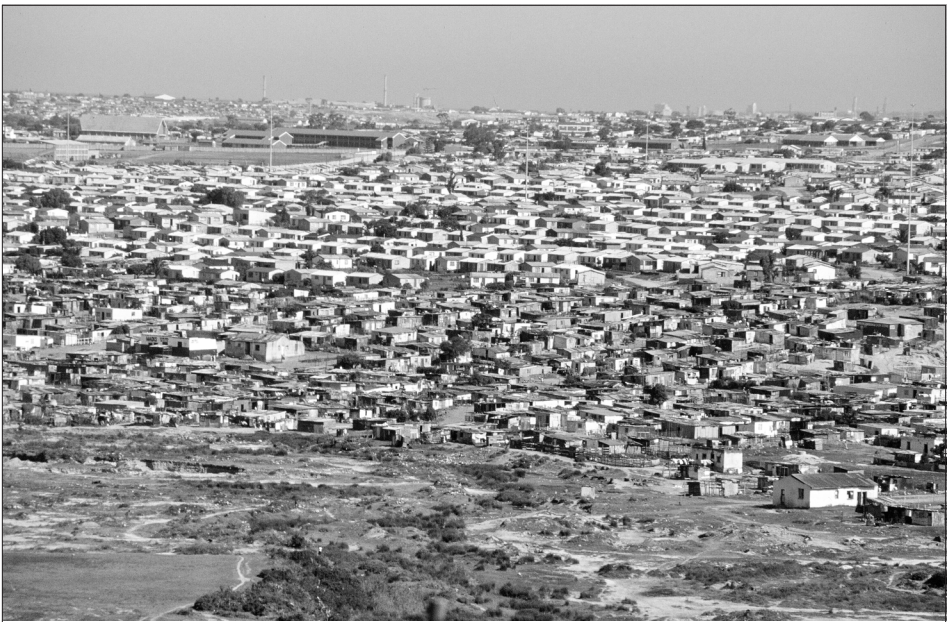
When AFN National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo attended Mandela’s memorial he presented the South African high commissioner with an eagle feather. He asked that it be buried with Mandela as a sacred sign of respect. Atleo reminded the Canadian delegation: *“We must take home with us Madiba’s spirit of reconciliation, that reconciliation requires respect on behalf of all parties, including respect for indigenous rights and recognition of indigenous peoples.”*

Mandela’s fight was for freedom for all because none of us are free until we all are free. The challenge now is to transform our collective gratitude for Nelson Mandela’s vision of equity, into the ongoing struggle for indigenous rights in Canada and around the world.

*Heather Tufts lived and worked in Botswana in the early nineties and travelled extensively in South Africa during the post-apartheid, transitional years.*



Writer-photographer Heather Tufts took this photo of Soweto children in 1991.



The sprawling apartheid township of Soweto in 1991.



Soweto youngsters eat lunch during school break.



Life was hard in Soweto in 1991.



# Remembering John Young -- A champion for education and social justice

By Carol Pickup

The headline in the *Saanich News* on January 22, 2014, read; “Education maverick John Young dies at 92”. It should have read; “A Champion for a relevant and equitable education system, John Young dies at 92”.

I had the privilege and pleasure of knowing John Young for over 40 years. He was both a valued colleague on the Greater Victoria School Board, a wonderful friend and fellow New Democrat. He was also a friend to many people all over the world and believed very strongly that a free education for all was one of the foundations of a true democracy.

John and I shared the same values regarding the role of our schools in educating our children and youth. These values were a strong belief that each child is unique; each child deserves to succeed; that the system fails, not the child; and that it is the responsibility of the system to assist the child to succeed.

He also shared my belief that learning is questioning the answers, not just answer-

ing the questions. And that the role of the teacher is a guide not a guard. John was passionate about his beliefs and values but never mean spirited. He could disagree without being disagreeable. His fight to ban fees in BC public schools was realized in 2006 and was an important victory for more equal access to education for all students, especially those from modest income families.

John came from a large family with Micmac ancestry and was raised in New Brunswick. At 18 he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force as a bombardier and spent four years patrolling the West Coast of Vancouver Island. After the war, he studied at UBC and later at the Sorbonne in Paris, earning two degrees and a post-grad diploma. He worked with the Columbo Plan in Sarawak, Borneo, and set up a number of schools to help educate the people there.

He was the first principal of Carihi Secondary in Campbell River and served there from 1965-1972. He was fired by the Campbell River Board for his radical ideas, most of which have since been adopted as sensible, progressive ones. He then went

on to start an automotive business and establish a college teaching English as a second language in China.

John Young served on the Greater Victoria School Board off and on for nearly 20 years. He will be sorely missed by many people for his acts of kindness, his acts of compassion and his belief in social justice and equality for all.

The following lines from the Broadway musical, *Man of La Mancha* sum up my thoughts about John Young, a crusader for social justice in the world:

“ To dream the impossible dream,  
To fight the unbeatable foe,  
To bear with unbearable sorrow,  
To run where the brave dare not go.  
To fight for the right,  
Without question or pause,  
To be willing to march into Hell,  
For a heavenly cause.  
And the world will be better for this,  
That one man, scorned and covered with scars,  
Still strove with his last ounce of courage,  
To reach the unreachable star.”



John Young

A scholarship, the John Young Legacy Scholarship, has been established to help studentsts who overcome the odds to graduate from high school. Donations may be sent to the Greater Victoria Board of Education district office, 566 Boleskine Road, Victoria, V8Z 1E8, attn: John Young Legacy Scholarship.

# Remembering John Preidt -- a gentle-man

By Elizabeth Woods

There were two related themes at John Preidt’s memorial service—his big warm smile and his many and varied services to others. From group after group someone would step forward to talk about how reliably and cheerfully helpful John had been.

John (Johann) Preidt was born in Draas (Transylvania), Romania in 1933. After the Second World War, at the age of 17, he immigrated to Canada, where he quickly learned English by listening a lot and not saying much.

Starting on the largest fruit farm in New Brunswick, where he learned to drive big trucks and tractors, he worked his way steadily west: a job in a tire factory in Kitchener, Ontario, where many of his townspeople were living (and whose homes he helped remodel); Gunnar, in the far north of Saskatchewan, where he worked as a mechanic; Castor, Alberta where he joined the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks;

Edmonton where he met his partner Chris Tomaschuk.; and finally, Victoria, where he moved with Chris in 1993.

Preidt’s interests were many and varied. He was active in the Elks wherever he lived, and for years organized the Victoria Elks, who provided Marshals for the Victoria Day, and Santa Claus annual parades.

Preidt also participated in the Big Blue and Cousins Computer Club, and served on the board of the Juan de Fuca Seniors Centre.

As if that weren’t enough, Preidt was a valuable member of the NDP. Jock Bates, president of the Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca NDP Federal Association recalls that “John was a tireless and dedicated sign crew leader in several federal and provincial campaigns. He had a good eye for choice sign locations and was quick to occupy them to best advantage for the NDP candidate, while fulfilling the wishes of members and supporters who wanted lawn signs for their front yards. John and his crew deliv-

ered signs early and often, throughout the day and into the evening. He was also a familiar sight at campaign offices, assembling and gathering batches of signs for the next round of deliveries.”

Bob Burgis, who worked with John on the sign crew, observed, “He certainly knew how to stretch a piece of lumber a long way.”

As if that weren’t enough, Preidt spent long hours as an inside scrutineer on election days; and helped out with garage sales. He was also a delegate to NDP conventions, which he very much enjoyed.

Carol Harris remembers that at the 2001 convention in Winnipeg he kept her and others “attentive and amused by his quiet and thoughtful observations of the human condition as played out through resolution discussions, canvassing, voting procedures and other Party in moments.” Carol added, “I am one of many who will miss this Gentle-Man”.

In addition to these activities, Preidt practiced yoga, wove rag rugs, made tasty fruit leathers, hunted mushrooms, and cultivated a large garden, which became even more varied after moving to Victoria, where his enthusiasm grew as he discovered all the new veggies and fruits he could produce, including artichokes, and figs. His success in gardening led to his becoming a local guru when he joined the Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers.

In the midst of this abundance, a lively feature of the back yard was a well-stocked (and well-protected) bird feeder where sparrows, finches, chickadees, and juncos could be found at all times of the day.

One of my own favourite memories of Preidt are of the mornings when I would meet him walking along the Gorge Water-

# Remembering Nelson Mandela -- An African youth perspective

By Boma Brown

Nelson Mandela, the man who was the face of South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement, died on December 5, 2013, aged 95.

Confronting Mandela’s legacy as simply heroic is difficult when taking into account the political and social problems that persist to this day. I asked a few members of the University of Victoria African & Caribbean Students’ Association (ACSA) to share their thoughts on Mandela’s legacy.

I have come to the following conclusion having lived in Africa (Nigeria, Botswana) and North America (USA, Canada), and interacting with many students at the University of Victoria. I have come to the conclusion that Nelson Mandela’s legacy is viewed differently depending on who you ask. For the most part, in North America, Mandela’s legacy is one that is viewed as heroic. Among many Africans my age, his legacy is more complex, just as the man was.

Two polarizing opinions often frame conversations about Nelson Mandela’s legacy among many African youth. Amara-chi, a student from Nigeria said, “He is the true definition of a freedom fighter. His voice remained strong in prison, and when he got out”.

Mandela fought hard to place human rights at the core of the ANC’s political philosophy. He openly criticized the late Nigerian dictator, Sani Abacha. Francis, the coordinator of ACSA says, “To his people, he signified change, and to the world, he stood for love and forgiveness and that was his unique quality. But people are still oppressed every day.”

Francis’ views are often echoed by many people my age, who recognize Mandela’s contributions but do not give him the hero-saint status accorded to him by many white Canadians.

In further conversations with ACSA members, the general consensus was that among many African youth, Mandela’s legacy is sometimes blurred by feelings of nationalism. For example, as a Nigerian, why should I idolize Mandela when my country has numerous statesmen? These Nigerian statesmen often fought for things that relate more closely to my identity as a Nigerian woman.

For many of us, it is often easier to idolize someone like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr or Malcolm X. Men whose stories are framed in the context of the civil right’s movement, which took place in the United States, the leader of the free world.

Mandela is believed to have been inspired by the likes of Dr. King and others. Hence, one can draw the conclusion that the civil rights movement resonates more with African youth than the struggle against apartheid.

Many Africans want to live the American dream, and a movement that fights for racial equality in a nation they long to live in holds more significance.

To say that this is merely a geographic issue is to be simplistic. Mandela’s legacy is interpreted differently based on lived experience. “When I got my first passport, and I knew I could travel everywhere in the world, except in South Africa, Cameroon didn’t want to send their citizens to South Africa to be killed,” said Pulcherie, the founder of the Victoria African & Caribbean

Cultural Society.

Although Mandela was the face of the anti-apartheid movement, most people know that he did not single-handedly end apartheid. His role in ending the struggle against apartheid is more than mere symbolism.

Sara shared, “I am surprised by how peaceful and loving he was, and the ideals he promoted despite his experiences. I am trying to understand, because if I were in that situation, I would be more vengeful.”

The ideals of “peace” and “love” do not erase the realities of racism faced by people of colour around the world.

Francis speaks to the notion that South Africa (and maybe North America at large) is now post-racial, largely thanks to the efforts of statesmen such as Mandela. This is not the case, and every day, racialized people continue to face marginalization and exclusion.

Mandela was not without his flaws. A common area of criticism is the Mandela administration’s slow response to the AIDS pandemic. Some critics have argued that Mandela’s economic policies did not provide much benefits for black South Africans.

Despite these flaws, it’s important to focus on his contributions to humankind. As



Group photo of some of the members of the African & Caribbean Students Association at the University of Victoria.

an African living in diaspora, I wish my leaders would take a cue from Mandela’s efforts. His leadership style was laudable and largely free of bad repute.

In writing this article, I asked myself the question: how do I honour his legacy? I think we can all do this by realizing that his work is not finished, and to continue to put forward what he stood for in our various communities.

To stand in solidarity with leaders who are fighting for freedom and equality in various ways. To embody ideals, like reconciliation and forgiveness, that he struggled for.

Boma Brown is coordinator of the University of Victoria Students of Colour Collective.



# The Penguin History of Modern China: The Rise and Fall of a Great Power 1850 to the Present, by Jonathan Fenby, London: Penguin Books, 2013

Reviewed by Jim Manly

In September 2012, Stephen Harper signed the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, commonly known as FIPPA. As with other of Harper's agreements, we do not know all the details; FIPPA has never been properly debated in Parliament and, as yet, has not been ratified. The Hupacasath First Nation is really acting on behalf of all Canadians in taking the government to court for the lack of proper consultation.

All Canadians have good reason to be anxious that FIPPA details will give Chinese corporations investing in Canada the power to sue Canadian governments for environmental, health or labour laws or regulations that the corporations claim can limit their profits. This becomes even more urgent when we consider how Harper is conducting a fire-sale of Canadian resources to Chinese companies. (see Council of Canadians Press Release, November 26, 2012.)

What are we being led into? For most Canadians China is a huge question mark. Even those who have taken a three or four week tour, seen the Great Wall and marveled at the fantastic growth of modern cities with several millions of people, have only a surface understanding. People who follow economic and financial trends recognize that China has become a huge global presence over the last 30 years, holding a large percentage of American debt and becoming increasingly important in terms of international imports, exports and currency trading. In other words we see the effects of the changes that have taken place even though we do not understand the changes themselves.

For these reasons The Penguin History of Modern China by Jonathan Fenby becomes an important resource for at least beginning to understand some of the forces that have helped to mould the China of today from the tattered remains of an ancient empire.

Fenby's book depicts a country where catastrophes such as famine, drought, flood, earthquakes and the devastation of war take such a huge toll of human life that the reader tends to become numb to the reality. Such disasters often grouped together as in 1921-23 when frost, drought, hailstorms and flooding affected five provinces resulting in a famine that took an estimated four to six million lives. The famine in turn led to widespread debt among farmers who had to pay interest that sometimes reached 200% a year. (page 153) Another result of the famine was the growth of bandit gangs which further destabilized an already fractured central government.

In 1942, in the midst of the bloody war with the Japanese, floods, crop failures and locusts caused famine in the province of Henan which was compounded when the Chinese Nationalist Army commandeered 30 to 50% of farm produce. People ate tree bark for food; others turned to cannibalism and an estimated two million people starved to death.

The worst famine of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century however was that caused by Mao's "Great

Leap Forward" (1958-1960) when an estimated 30 million people died. "The Great Leap Forward" attempted to push China into the forefront of industrialized nations but it lacked coherent planning and an honest and efficient feed-back procedure. Farm workers were taken from the countryside to meet the demands of industry. At the same time rural areas were expected to produce more food according to assigned quotas and China was exporting huge reserves of grain to Russia to pay off debts and to other countries in Eastern Europe that were facing difficulties. Droughts and floods compounded the problem.

Fear of not meeting assigned quotas meant that local officials grossly exaggerated food production; in 1958 for example, reports of grain production totaled some 450 million tonnes when the actual output was just over 200 tonnes. Based on these false statistics, the state requisitioned 28% of the crop.

At a 1959 meeting when some Party officials tried to face the reality of what was happening, Mao faced them down, saying, "Some people will waver in times of crisis and show a lack of resolution in the great storms of history." (p. 411) He took personal responsibility for the problems but insisted other leaders had to take their responsibility also. The attempt to have an honest discussion of the Leap fizzled and from that point onward, no one questioned Mao, the Great Helmsman.

Fenby provides a helpful overview of the series of wars and rebellions that affected China in the last 170 years: The Opium Wars of 1842 and 1858 that opened China to exploitation by English French, German, Russian and Japanese interests (just like an early Free Trade Deal!); the turn of the century Boxer uprising against foreigners -- particularly missionaries, the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, uprisings against the Manchu emperors and their eventual deposition in 1912, violent confrontations among regional war lords, the rise of the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek, the 30-year struggle between the Kuomintang and the Communists, the strategic retreat of the Communists (the Long March) and the rise of Mao Zedong, the Japanese invasion with the rape of Nanjing, and after Japan had been defeated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the eventual triumph of the Communists in 1949 and the retreat of Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan.

Fenby illustrates the weakness of China during these years by two anecdotes: In 1858, after anti-British incidents in Hong Kong and Canton, the British and French launched a major attack --the 2<sup>nd</sup> Opium War. After burning the Imperial Summer Palace and other buildings outside Beijing, Charles Gordon, later known as General Chinese Gordon, wrote of their beauty and magnificence. "It made one's heart sore to burn them; in fact these palaces were so large, and we were so pressed for time, that we could not plunder them carefully."(p. 23)

Different countries had different interests in China typified by the remark of a German official that China was like a cow that Britain and Germany wanted to keep

alive so that they could milk it, while the French and Russians wanted to butcher and carve it up. (57)

The thorny relationship between Mao and Stalin and Mao's resistance to Stalin's leadership contrasts with the development of better relations between the People's Republic of China under Mao and the United States under Richard Nixon and Kissinger. When Kissinger remarked that trade between the two countries was infinitesimal, Mao joked that, while China was poor it had an excess of women; he offered to send 10 million of them to America, "so we can let them flood your country with disaster." (507)

Although most of the main actors were men, three women played prominent parts in the book's 150 year history. For nearly 50 years before her death, Cixi, the Dowager Empress (1835-1908) was the power behind the throne as the 267 year old Manchu Qing Dynasty limped to its end. As a young concubine in the imperial court, Cixi had born a son to the emperor Xianfeng, although there was some doubt as to whether he was truly the sire. As the sickly emperor was dying, she brought the five year old boy to his bedside and arranged for him to name the boy as his successor with Cixi and the empress as regents. As a skilful politician, Cixi managed to manipulate different power figures so that they sided with her in the last turbulent years of the dying empire.

In 1927 Soong Meiling (or Meiling Soong according to Western usage, 1897-2003) one of three daughters of the wealthy and influential Soong family, married Chiang Kai-shek, who dismissed his first wife, sending her to the States.

Mme. Chiang became an important public relations link with western countries. For example, she was able to get Time magazine to severely censor a news account from Teddy White about the disastrous famine sweeping through China. Because of her glamour and sex appeal, she became known as "the Dragon Lady" and had a brief affair with Wendell Wilkie, the 1940 Republican candidate against Roosevelt. After a romantic night with her, he had invited her to return to Washington with him; when warned that this would cost him the 1944 nomination, Wilkie backed away. Mme. Chiang postponed but did not abandon her ambition for a relationship. "If Wendell could be elected, then he and I would rule the world." (p. 316) Wilkie lost the nomination anyway because he was too liberal for the Republicans in 1944.

Jian Qing (1914-1991,) a former actress whose favourite role was Nora in A Doll's House by Ibsen, had been active in left wing politics, and was arrested by the Kuomintang. It was rumoured she had used sexual favours to bargain her way to freedom. After Mao arranged a divorce she became Mao's 4<sup>th</sup> wife in 1938 although she was required to keep away from politics for 30 years. Long before this period had passed however, she became involved in cultural criticism and in time became an influential voice claiming to represent Mao's views.

In the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, Mao purged many prominent leaders including other long term veterans of the Long March. As critic of plays and novels, Jian Qing attacked and discredited some of Mao's enemies. "I was Chairman Mao's dog; whoever he told me to bite, I bit." (p. 433) Later she attacked and bit her own opponents.

Attacking literary and cultural leaders as bourgeois anti-Maoist, Jian Qing called for a Socialist Cultural Revolution, an idea which Mao also espoused. The idea was endorsed by Mao and taken up by young people who came to be known as Red Guards. Secondary and college students attacked teachers and professors, beating them and subjecting them to indignities such as forcing them to kneel, ripping their clothes off, placing dunce caps on their heads and hanging denunciatory placards around their necks.

As the movement spread it spiraled out of control as different groups attacked one another as reactionary or anti-Maoist. Thousands of books were burned, cultural artifacts destroyed and professional people banished from the city to agricultural communes. Mao opposed attempts by other Party officials to restrict the movement. "The more ferocious the better, don't you think? The more people you kill, the more revolutionary you are."

In 1967, however, Mao decided that the Red Guards should be disbanded. Although the Cultural Revolution had a disastrous effect both upon the country as a whole and the Party structure, Mao did not reject it.

Jian Qing later became known as a member of the Gang of Four which continued to hold powerful positions in the country's leadership, although in his latter days Mao did repudiate some of her ideas. After Mao's death in 1976, The Gang of Four was arrested and put on trial. Jian Qing and one other member were sentenced to death with a two year suspension giving time for reform. After developing throat cancer Jian Qing hanged herself in May 1991.

Deng Xiaopeng, who succeeded Mao, opened the way for radical changes in the economy, allowing private enterprise to flourish along with state capitalism. This has made China the economic powerhouse it is today. But China is still not a free society as the Tiananmen Square massacre showed. In spite of a growing middle class and a wealthy elite, millions of workers and peasants still live in abject poverty.

China's massive economic expansion has gone hand in hand with massive environmental problems which, of course, also dominate western industrial society. We can hope that China continues to raise the standard of living for all of its people, that it will become a more free and open society and that that it will be able to solve its environmental problems.

At the same time we must struggle and organize to keep our own country from becoming subservient to China through Harper's TIPP.

## The Best Soldier's Wife, by Katrin Horowitz, 2013, Quadra Books, Victoria

Review by Derek Peach

The epistolary novel has a long history in English writing, and Katrin Horowitz uses the format to advantage.

As a series of letters addressed to the wife of the Chief of Defence Staff of Canada's armed forces during our recent engagement in Afghanistan, the story explores the life of Amy Malcolm, wife and mother and individual, as her husband completes a nine-month tour of duty as a helicopter pilot.

The struggle to hold together a family life with an abrasive teenage son, support a marriage with an increasingly traumatized veteran and nourish an evolving personal identity, are all aspects developed seamlessly through the protagonist's letters to her created listener, the General's wife.

These letters provide a framework for the story, a sense of immediacy to events and an intimacy to our relationship with characters. We know the Malcolms' desperate struggle to reconnect when Ian is home on leave or the exasperation caused

by Ethan's simplistic egocentric interpretations of adult events. Horowitz has selected telling incidents which accumulate as character relationships are explored and expanded.

There is an authenticity to the details of this novel which can only come from personal experience, thorough research or both. Even the setting details which parallel the emotional course of the narrative are striking: significant but never a distraction from the story itself. The day-to-day activities of soldiers in Afghanistan and of a working mom in Victoria are selected and used in service to the larger story.

The author crafts a narrative that draws us in and gives us the sense of a person revealing her life fully in a struggle to come to terms with the consequences of a distant war in her sheltered life so that even pettiness, fantasy and the banalities of daily routines can be incorporated without diminishing the pace or the thrust of theme.

If there are weaknesses, they are the weaknesses inherent in the strengths of

the epistolary form. We cannot know all of the characters fully; they are either the products of the protagonist's imagination or peripheral to the main storyline. If the cast is limited, that narrows the scope of actions and so contributes to a sense of isolation of the protagonist. If the chapters appear as separate vignettes it is because they must serve as discrete, significant events prompting each letter. There is always, a verisimilitude of character and a unity to story.

Entertainment and instruction are the two pillars of expression. The narrative elements in *The Best Soldier's Wife* are assembled with a sureness that will guarantee the former; the facts which Horowitz incorporates are no less significant in serving the latter.

The reader is left with some disturbing thoughts about the nature of Canada's support for its military, specifically in regard to the psychological effects on service personnel and their families. Ian turns on his distraught wife when she urges coun-

selling, "They give you a bunch of pills ... \$27,000, and then they kick you out."

The facts regarding a shift to lump-sum payments for deaths or disabilities, the impotence of Military Family Resource Centre, and the chapter-ending lists of casualties chronicling those deaths are as powerful as any of the fictional components of this novel.

Romeo Dallaire does not write novels, but his memoir of the Rwandan massacre and his speeches now as a senator continue to focus our attention on the appalling hypocrisy of a government publicly pontificating on its support for the military while stripping away support for both combat troops and veterans.

In his address to his Senate colleagues, he spoke against bill C-4 saying in part:

"Training budgets are also being cut, which is absolutely devastating for a military that is just returning from an extended conflict. Following the war in Afghanistan, many Canadian military members have  
**Please turn to page 23, Best soldier's**



# Calendar of coming events

**CENTRAL SAANICH RESIDENTS ARE** invited to attend regular neighbourhood gatherings, held every Friday night at 7 pm at Spelt’s Coffee Shop, 7586 East Saanich Road, in Saanichton. Share stories, books, talk politics and enjoy hot coffee. Nothing is taboo. No pretentiousness, no meeting agenda...just a chance to chat with neighbours and build community. Call 250-652-8228 for further information.

**THE VICTORIA LABOUR COUNCIL** representing affiliated unions in the Greater Victoria area, holds its regular monthly meetings at 7 pm on the 3rd Wednesday each month at the BCGEU Auditoriam, 2994 Douglas Street, Victoria. All delgates are welcome to come to meet their executive, president Mike Eso, treasurer, Stan Dzbik, and secretary Susanne Francoeur.

**WOMEN IN BLACK** invite you to join them in their monthly vigil to remember Hiroshina

and Nagasaki and call on all Canadians and people globally to work for peace and disarmament. All those who support our goals are welcome. For further information, contact bbcf@bbcf.ca.

**COWICHAN VALLEY NDP CONSTITU-**ency Association invites you to a social afternoon with guest speaker, Gordon Hak, Professor of History, Vancouver Island University, and author of *The Left in British Columbia, A History of Struggle*, on Sunday, March 22, from 2 pm - 4:30 pm, at the CobbleHill Hall, 3550 Watson Avenue, Cobble Hill, BC. Coffee and tea will be provided. Please bring some finger foods to share. Contact Trudy Thorgeirson 250-748-1785 or Rob Douglas 250-709-0750.

**JOIN MURRAY RANKIN, MP FOR VICTORIA**, Official Opposition House Leader Nathan Cullen, MP, and special guests on Saturday, March 22, at 2 pm in the audito-

rium at Victoria High School. Ask questions, meet local leaders and environmental action groups, and find out how we can work together to stop the Enbridge pipeline.

**TALK ABOUT THE BUDGET PUBLIC IN-**put Sessions with MLA Maurine Karagianis will be held at 7 pm, on Thursday, March 27, at the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, and at 10 am, on Saturday, March 29, at the Juan de Fuca Library. How is the budget impacting you and your family? How can government do better? Please bring your ideas for positive change.

**3rd ANNUAL EARTH DAY LOCAL FOOD** Dinner, sponsored by Saanich-Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca Federal NDP, will be held on Saturday, April 12, at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, Victoria (off Interurban Road). Meet your MP Randall Garrison and special guest speaker, Niki Ashton, MP, Status of Women Critic. Reception starts at 6:00 pm, buffet at 7:00

pm. Local Food Buffet Dinner catered by Nourish Cafe and Bistro. Tickets \$100 at the door (\$50 students and unwaged). For information and reservations, call Fred Hiigli at 250-384-7374.

**SOUTH ISLAND NEW DEMOCRATS** are invited to JOIN THE ORANGE WAVE at the Earth Day March and Festival. Gather at Centennial Square, in Victoria, on Saturday, April 26, at 12 noon. WALK WITH US IN RESPECT OF THE EARTH AND IN HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

**CELEBRATION OF 30 YEARS OF PRO-**gressive voices in the *Lower Island News* will be held on Saturday, May 3, from noon to 3 pm, in the BCGEU Auditorium, 2994 Douglas Street. There will be lunch, a silent auction, a few short speeches, music and plenty of time to talk. \$25/\$15. For further information, contact Starla Andrsen at 250-744-2791 or starla.haverfield.anderson@gmail.com.

Humour - an unlikely weapon for Aboriginal Rights

## *The Inconvenient Indian – A Curious Account of Native People in North America*, by Thomas King, published by Anchor Canada, a division of Random House, 2013, 314 pages.

Review by Barry Weisleder

Thomas King, best known as the creator and star of the hilarious CBC Radio One series “The Dead Dog Cafe Comedy Hour”, is the author of a funny book about the very sad tragedy of North American indigenous people. The book is a best-seller, proving again that a serious message can reach a huge readership through the medium of satire, without debasing the cause. Born in Sacramento, California, Thomas King is of Cherokee, Greek and German-American descent. As an adult, he migrated to Australia, where he worked for years as a photojournalist.

After moving to Canada in 1980, King taught Native Studies at the University of Lethbridge in the early 1980s. He also served as a faculty member of the University of Minnesota’s American Indian Studies Department. King is currently an English professor at the University of Guelph, about an hour west of Toronto.

King was the NDP candidate for Guelph in the October 14, 2008 federal election, finishing fourth behind the Liberal, Conservative, and Green Party candidates.

*The Inconvenient Indian* is a short, post-modern version of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. King recounts the massacres inflicted by the European colonial powers, records many of the lies, broken land treaties, the physical displacement, and the cultural genocide that still masquerades as education. He postures as the skeptic, and proceeds to eviscerate the skepticism that surrounds corporate media coverage of aboriginal issues.

Why does he use the antiquated word “Indian” when First Nations is the term of choice in Canada, and Native Americans is preferred in the United States? King calls it “the North American default”. Then he amusingly disparages his decision to name the non-native population ‘Whites’. “Well, I struggled with this one. A Japanese friend of mine likes to call Anglos ‘Crazy Caucasoids’, while another friend told me that if I

was going to use the term ‘Indians’ I should call everyone else ‘cowboys’.”

King identifies three kinds of Indian: Dead Indians, Live Indians and Legal Indians. Dead are the ones that “are the stereotypes and clichés that North America has conjured up out of experience and out of its collective imaginings and fears.” Society sees ‘war bonnets, beaded shirts, fringed deerskin dresses, headbands’. You can find Dead Indians everywhere. Rodeos, powwows, movies, television commercials.” They pose no threat to power.

Live Indians, on the other hand, were an “annoying part of life in the New World”. European diseases killed about 80 per cent of them. The American newspaper mogul Horace Greeley said in 1859, “The Indians are children... the very lowest and rudest of human existence... These people must die out – there is no help for them.” King sarcastically adds: “Problem was, Live Indians didn’t die out.”

The Canadian census of 2006 records the existence of 565,000 Status Indians. The total indigenous population in Canada then, including Indians, Metis and Inuit, was 1.2 million – not counting at least 22 Indian reserves, overlooked according to Statistics Canada. In the United States, federal “recognition” is granted to tribes rather than individuals. In 2009 the US Federal Register recognized 564 tribes, encompassing about 950,000 people. The total number of Indians in the US is around 2.4 million, or a few hundred thousand more or less, given the vagaries of the census.

Legal Indians have certain rights and privileges – because of the treaties both countries signed with Native nations. About 40 per cent of Live Indians in North America are Legal Indians. King caustically observes that “while North America loves the Dead Indian and ignores the Live Indian, North America hates the Legal Indian. Savagely.” He acerbically describes the treaties as an error in judgement that the establishment has been trying to correct for the last 150 years.

Legal Indians are “inconvenient”. That’s because their legal rights stand in the way of Private Profit -- er, I mean Progress. (Sorry, I’m starting to sound like the author.)

But why can’t indigenous people just melt into the population at large? Sure, they’ve been robbed, kidnapped, displaced, and much worse than decimated. But why can’t they just say “let by-gones be by-gones”, and just “get over it”??

Well, should Jews, gays and Roma people just “get over” the Nazi holocaust? Ought Blacks “get over” the murderous Middle Passage and nearly 300 years of slavery? Does the commitment to “Never again” require an historical memory?

How about the question of Aboriginal self-reliance?

King writes: “I’ve been told any number of times that we have to learn to stand on our own two feet and develop the skills necessary to manage on our own, without relying on government generosities.

“In the same way that Air Canada, AIG, Bombardier, Halliburton, General Motors, and the good folks out in Alberta’s Tar Sand Project manage on their own, without relying on government handouts.

“I suppose I could have mentioned Enron, World Com, Bre-X, and Bear Stearns as well, but these disasters were more greed than incompetence. Weren’t they? Though I suppose the one does not preclude the other.

“So, if I’ve got it right, while North America is reluctant to support the economic ‘incompetence of Native people, it is more than willing to throw money at the incompetence of corporations. And why not? After all, if we’ve learned nothing in the last century, we should have learned that government support of big business is capitalism’s only hope.”

That’s a surprisingly radical analysis for a one-time NDP candidate, even if it is not accompanied by a concrete program for radical change.

Here’s another way to look at the self-reliance idea, as it’s posed under capitalism. Some workers belong to a union. That gives them strength lacked by workers who don’t. Some indigenous people have treaty rights, which gives them a toe-hold, and a bit of leverage on the capitalist state. In the absence of a cooperative commonwealth for all, does it make sense to give up the little they’ve got, however “inconvenient” they may be to big business?

To be sure, “The issue has always been land,” insists King. “It will always be land, until there isn’t a square foot of land left in North America that is controlled by Native people.” It’s a sensitive issue, as discovered by 13-year-old Tenelle Starr from the Star Blanket First Nation, 90 kilometres north-east of Regina, Saskatchewan. She was sent home from school in early January because she was wearing a pink hoodie bearing the slogan “Got Land? Thank an Indian”. The good news is that now Tenelle’s friends are sporting the slogan, and the social media is buzzing.

In the meantime, indigenous land titles continue to stand in the way of corporate resource extraction, even of military training bases (like the one at Stoney Point Ojibway reserve in Ontario where provincial police shot and killed native protester Dudley George in 1995).

Fortunately, indigenous peoples’ opposition to pipeline construction has helped to forge an alliance with farmers, workers and environmentalists concerned about pollution and climate change. This convergence is reflected in the broad public support for the Idle No More movement that arose in late 2012.

The path that capitalists and their governments have taken to remove the native land obstacle to profit maximization is called “termination”. If the policy sounds deadly, it’s no accident.

Neither is it anything new. After centuries of dispossession and genocide, “modern” governments stepped up to the plate. Duncan Campbell Scott, head of Canada’s Department of Indian Affairs from 1913-1932 put it bluntly: “Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department...”

In 1953, the US Congress passed the *Termination Act* and the *Relocation Act* concurrently. It allowed Congress to terminate all federal relations with tribes unilaterally, while Relocation “encouraged” Native people to quit their reservations and move to the cities.

In 1969, the Canadian government tried to do the same thing with its White Paper. Then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau suggested that there is no such thing as Indian entitlement to land or Native rights, and urged First Nations people to assimilate into Canadian society. The reaction was massively and fiercely negative. What do you suppose would happen if Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau advocated that today?

While the Conservative government of Stephen Harper drags its feet, Tory ideologue Tom Flanagan openly campaigns for the termination of Native status, and for dispersal and privatization of aboriginal lands.

The interest of the working class lies in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. The reasons are clear. One is the practical need for unity between workers and all oppressed peoples against the bosses and their state. Another is based on recognition that the struggle of Indigenous people to preserve their collective land rights constitutes a powerful obstacle to the agenda of Capital – which is to turn all of nature into a commodity, for sale to the highest bidder, subject to ruthless despoliation.

Thomas King’s *The Inconvenient Indian – A Curious Account of Native People in North America* is remarkably witty, often hilarious, and a truthful companion for the important battles ahead.

Read it, and use it well.

## Best soldier’s wife, from page 22

skills and experience that are absolutely invaluable. And yet they return to Canada, and they discover that there is no way to keep up that training. We are losing hundreds of millions of dollars worth of skill and readiness, simply because the government thinks that it will be the easiest way to balance their budget.”

Significant cuts have also been made to programs that ensure the quality of life of our serving members and their families. Members who may need additional supports to continue their career, or to be accommodated before a medical release, are seeing money cut from programs to allow them to move back and be close to their families and support networks.

“Equipment, maintenance, training, and quality of life. These fundamental pillars of our military structure are being cut

by stealth — no parliamentary oversight, no public accountability.”

Veterans advocates say the four apparent suicides recently may only hint at the magnitude of the problem for personnel returning from active service. For every death by suicide, they warn, as many as 12 others may have sought the same fate. In the US, the statistics are 20 suicides a day. These are men and women who will have received their bunch of pills, \$27,000, and then been kicked out before they reached their 10-year service pension-eligibility mark.

Horowitz’s novel may be fiction but the situations it presents are very real.

*The Best Soldier’s Wife* is available at Munro’s, Bolen Books and other local bookstores. The author may be reached at katrinhorowitz@shaw.ca



# Directory of locations, organizations, publications of interest

## MLA COMMUNITY OFFICES

**Cowichan Valley Community Office,** Bill Routley: MLA, 273 Trunk Road, Duncan, BC, or PO Box 599, Duncan, BC, V9L 3X9, phone 250-715-0127, toll free 1-877-715-0127, fax 250-715-0139, email bill.routley.mla@leg.bc.ca.

**Esquimalt-Royal Roads Community Office,** Maurine Karagianis, MLA: A5-100 Ældersmith Place, View Royal, BC, V9A 7M8, phone 250-479-8326, email maurine.karagianis.mla@leg.bc.ca or visit her website at www.maurinek-aragianis.ca.

**Juan de Fuca Community Office,** John Horgan, MLA, 800 Goldstream Avenue, Victoria, BC V9B 2X7, phone 250-391-2801, email john.horgan.mla@leg.bc.ca.

**Saanich South Community Office,** Lana Popham, MLA: 4085 Quadr Street, Victoria, BC, v8 1K5, email lana.popham.mla@leg.bc.ca, or visit website at www.saanichsouth.ca.

**Saanich North and the Islands Community Office,** Gary Holman, MLA., 2393 Beacon Avenue, Sidney, BC , phone: 250 655-5711, toll-free: 1-855 955-5711, fax: 250 655-7398, email gary.holman.mla.leg.bc.ca.

**Victoria-Beacon Hill Community Office,** Carole James, MLA: 1084 Forst Street, Victoria,BC, V8V 3K4, phone 250-952-4211, fax 250-952-4586, email carole.james.mla@leg.bc.ca.

**Victoria-Swan Lake Community Office,** Rob Fleming, MLA: 1020 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8T 2A2, email rob.fleming.mla@leg.bc.ca.

## MPs and COMMUNITY OFFICES

**Jean Crowder, MP,** House of Commons, Confederation Building, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6., email crowder1A@@parl.gc.ca.

**Nanaimo-Cowichan Community Office,** Jean Crowder, MP, 101-128 Ingram Street,. Duncan, BC, V9L 1P1, email jean@jeancrowder.ca or visit her website at www.jeancrowder.ca.

**Randall Garrison, MP,** House of Commons, Confederation Building, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6, email randall.garrison@parl.gc.ca.

**Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca Community Office,** Randall Garrison, MP, A2-1000 Aldersmith Place, Victoria, BC, V9A 7M8, open 10 am-4 pm, Monday-Thursday or by appointment. Phone 250-405-4550; fax 250-405-4568.

**Murray Rankin, MP,** House of Commons, Confederation Building,Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6. email murray.rankin@parl.gc.ca, or visit his website at www.murrayrankin.ca/

**Victoria Community Office,** Murray Rankin, MP, 1057 Fort Street, Victoria, V8V 3K5, phone 250-363-3600, fax 250-363-8422, email him at murray.rankin@parl.gc.ca

## PROVINCIAL NDP CONSTITUENCY ASSOCIATIONS

**Cowichan Valley New Democrats:** Write PO Box 102, Duncan, BC, V9L 1P0, or contact president Robert Douglas at 250 709-0750.or by email at cowichanvalley.NDP@shaw.ca.

**Esquimalt-Royal Roads New Democrats:** Write Box 231, 110-174 Wilson Street, Victoria, BC, V9A 7N7 or email esquimaltroyalroads@gmail.com.

**Juan de Fuca New Democrats:** Phone president Sharon Wilkinsn at 250-478-5907 or email her at sawilkinson@shaw.ca.

**Oak Bay-Gordon Head New Democrats:** Write PO Box 5539, LCD 9, Victoria, BC, V8R 6S4 or contact president Mike Lloyd at 250-812-3785 or by email at president@obghnewdemocrats.ca.

**Saanich North and the Islands New Democrats:** Email president Allan Collier at silcol@telus.net.

**Saanich South New Democrats:** Write PO Box 30041, Saanich Centre Postal Outlet, Victoria, BC, V8X 5E1, phone 250-479-1100, or email samuelgodfrey@gmail.com.

**Victoria-Beacon Hill New Democrats:** Write PO Box 8523, Victoria, BC, V8W 3S1 attention President Marilyn Callahan.

**Victoria-Swan Lake New Democrats:** Contact the president at President@vslndp.ca or write PO Box 282, 1681 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8T 2C1.

## FEDERAL NDP RIDING ASSOCIATIONS

**Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca New Democrats:** Contact president Jock Bates at wanzbates@shaw.ca or write to PO Box 622, 105-1497 Admirals Road, Victoria, BC, V9A 2P8.

**Nanaimo-Cowichan New Democrats:** Contact president Sue Creba at 250-753-3371 or email her at suecreba@aquarius.com.

**Saanich-Gulf Islands New Democrats:** Contact president Michele Murphy at 250-727-9990 or by email to ndpsaanichgulfislands@gmail.com or Irene Wright (Gulf Islands) by phone/fax at 250-537-5347, or email to aiwright@telus.net.

**Victoria New Democrats:** To contact president Kelly Newhook, write to PO Box 8383, Victoria, BC V8W 3R9 or visit their website at www.victoriandp.ca.

## PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL NDP OFFICES

**BC New Democrats:** 5367 Kingsway, Burnaby, BC, V5H 2G1, phone 604-430-8600, fax 604-432-9517, toll free 1-888-868-3637.

**Canada’s New Democrats:** 300-279 Laurie West, Ottawa, ON, K1P 5J9, phone 613-236-3613, toll free, 1-866-525-2555, fax 613-230-9950, TTY: 1-866-776-7742.

## OTHER GROUPS YOU MAY WANT TO REACH

**Amnesty International--Canadian Section:** www.amnesty.org

**BC Council of Senior Citizens Organizations:** phone 604-438-3221.

**BC Latin American Congress:** 4184 Brant Street, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5B4, phone 604-879-3246, fax 604-872-6776, email bclac@vcn.bc.ca.

**Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives:** 410-75 Albert Street, Ottawa ON, K1P 5E7, phone 613-563-1341, fax 613-233-1458, email ccpa@policyalternatives.ca, website www.policyalternatives.ca.

**Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives--BC Office,** 1400-207 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC, V6B 1H7, phone 604-801-5121, fax 604-801-5122, website: ww.policityalternatives.ca.

**Canadian Health Coalition:** phone 613-233-1018.

**Canadian Labour Congress (Pacific Region):** 201-5118 Joyce Street, Vancouver, BC, V5R 4H1; Regional Representative Iris Taylor, phone 604-430-6766, ext 267, fax 604-430-6762.

**Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East,** Victoria Chapter: Victoria, BC, phone 778-679-2943 or email frances.everett@cjpme.org. Enquiries, new members, guests welcome. CJPME’s website can be found at www.cjpme.org.

**Council of Canadians, Victoria Chapter:** PO Box 5515, 1625 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, phone 250-360-8448, email victoriacouncilofcanadians@shaw.ca or visit www.victoriacouncilofcanadians.ca.

**Canadian Wildlife Federation:** 350 Michael Cowpland Drive, Kanata, ON, K2M 2W1, phone 1-800-563-9453, or visit www.cwf-fcf.org.

**Ecojustice:** 214-131 Water Street, Vancouver, BC, V6B 4M3, phone 1-800-926-7444.

**Human Rights Internet:** www.hri.ca.

**Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria:** phone 250-388-4728, fax 250-386-4395.

**Mining Justice Action Committee (MJAC):** contact Heather Tufts at htufts@shaw.ca or Sharlene Patterson at daveandshar@shaw.ca.

**NAPO (National Anti-Poverty Organization) News:** advocates for the poor in communities, courts and polilitical arenas, www.napo-onap.ca.

**NDP Socialist Caucus:** www.ndpsocialists.ca. “Our aim and ongoing struggle as New Democrats must be to establish a Socialist Canada.”

**Parliamentary website** lists all federal cabinet ministers, parliamentary scretaries and opposition spokeseprsons. Visit www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/key/critic.asp?language=E

**Seniors’ Advocacy Services** (Seniors Entitlement Service), sponsored by the Greater Victoria Seniors (OAPO) organization and located at the Blanshard Community Centre, 901 Kings

Rd, (Kings and Dowler Streets), close to the #4 and #6 buses on Quadra St. Service is free to seniors 55+ in Greater Victoria. Normally open on Mondays & Thursdays from 9-3 pm and Wednesdays from 9-12 noon. We will be closed for summer break from July 15 to August 19. For more information please phone 250-388-7696

**Seniors Serving Seniors:** 109-1022 Pandora Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8V 3P5, phone 250-382-4331.

**South Island Health Coalition,** an affiliate of the BC Health Coalition. If you are concerned about access affordability and quality of health care in our community, get involved by calling co-chairs Dale Perkins at 250-592-5487 or Wendy Strong at 250-592-1222.

**Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS):** 302-895 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1H7, phone 250-361-3521; fax 250-361-3541.

**Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society:** Third floor, 535 Yates Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 2Z6 phone 250-361-9433, fax 250-361-1914 or see website www.virca.bc.ca.

**Victoria Labour Council:** 219-2750 Quadra street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, phone 250-384-8331, fax 250-384-8381, email vlcbc@telsu.net.; Mike Eso, president, Stan Dzbik, treasurer, Kim Manotn, secretary

**Victoria Peace Centre:** Box 8307, Victoria, BC, V8W 3R9, hone/fax 250-592-8307, email centre@vicepeace.ca or visit website at www.vicepeace.ca.

**World Wildlife Federation:** 410-245 Eglinton Avenue East, Toronto, ON, M4P 3J1, phone 1-800-26-PANDA, fax 416-489-8055, website www.wwf.ca.

**United Nations Association of Canada (UNAC)--Victoria Branch:** 202-3293 Douglas Street, Victoria, BC, V8Z 3K9, phone 250-475-2868, fax 250-475-5898, email unavic@coast-net.com or website www.unac.org.

## ALTERNATIVE PUBLICATIONS

**Canadian Dimension Magazine:** An independent forum for Left-wing political thought and discussion — including just about the entire range of what passes for the Left in Canada. A few years ago we adopted the banner “a magazine for people who want to change the world”. That’s still a good summary of who we are. Subscriptions from \$29.99. See http://canadiandimension.com for more information.Or contact them by mail at Canadian Dimension, 2E-91 Albert Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 1G5, or by phone at 204-957-1519 or oll-ree: 1-800-737-7051.

**COMER (Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform):** Reform-minded focus fcus on monetary issues and how they affect our society. Membership: \$50; journal only \$30. Contact them at 27 Sherbourne Street North, Suite 1, Toronto, ON M4W 2T3; tel: 416-924-3964; fax: 416-466-5827; email: comerpub[at]comer.org.

**CCPA Monitor:** a monthly journal sent free to all members, and published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Canada’s leading organization for articulating progressive, positive social policy reform. Ever constructive and independent. Contact them at CCPA National Office, Suite 500, 251 Bank Street, Ottawa ON, K2P 1X3; tel: 613-563-1341; fax: 613-233-1458; email: ccpa@policyalternatives.ca.

**Our Times:** Canada’s independent labour magazine and read by most labour organizations and other supporters of working people. Check its website at www.ourtimes.ca.

**The Dominion:** a monthly paper published by an incipient network of independent journalists in Canada. It aims to provide accurate, critical coverage that is accountable to its readers and the subjects it tackles. Taking its name from Canada’s official status as both a colony and a colonial force, the Dominion examines politics, culture and daily life with a view to understanding the exercise of power. It can be purchased at Bolen Books, Victoria, Camas Books & Info-shop, Victoria, Dark Horse Books, Victoria, and Munro’s Bookstore Ltd, Victoria.Or suscribe and Receive an email notice when a new issue is online: Visit http://www.dominionpaper.ca/ to view the paper and to subscribe.

**Turn Left:** Official magazine of the NDP socialist caucus, is published for each federal and Ontario provincial convention. It is written and edited and by SC supporters but also includes articles by and interviews with progressive activists from outside the NDP as well. Download the paper at www.ndpsocialists.ca/Issues.html **Victoria Street Newz:** An independent media Dproject, working to end poverty and homelessness, sold by low income individuals on the

streets of Victoria BC Canada, unceded Coast Salish Indigenous territory. *Street Newz* offers a reliable alternative to corporate or government controlled media. It provides a dignified way for low and/or no income people to earn a few extra bucks and participate in the local economy. It publishes research and opinions and photos and art from you, the people. View it also at http://relativenewz.ca

## ALTERNATIVE WEBSITES

**www.alternet.org--**A US website featuring alternative articles on US and world politics, an online magazine and information source.

**www.avaaz.org/en/global--**By confronting such threats as global warming together, Avaaz hopes to build a more just, tolelrant and vibrant world.

**www.counterpunch.org--**An American website with a left-wing viewpoint.

**http://dominionpaper.ca--**A Canadian ezine covering national and international stories that mainstream sources maynot cover.

**www.globalproblematique.net--**is an invitation to participate in a carefully conceived sustainability-oriented process. The story is organized as a linear flow. First it explains why and how we address the World Problematique in this fashion. Then, it branches out into four distinct, interactive threads. For more information go to the website.

**www.lowerislandnews.com** is a democratic socialist tabloid newspaper published in Victoria, BC, four or five times a year.

**http://newsdaily.ca--CanadaNewsdaily.ca** is a good (and bad) news service with a refreshingly non-corporate view of the news, from local to global stories, with features, opinion, analysis-all for free, including classified ads. Newsdaily covers Canadian and world news, plus a focused look at British Columbia, Victoria, and the Islands.

www.ndpsocialists.ca/Issues.html

**mai-not@globalproblematique.net--**Originally set up to discuss the implications the Multilateral Agreement on on Investments, this website and related email list now discuss world-wide developments of concern to left wing readers.

**http://pacificfreepress.com**

**www.pejnews.com--**Peace, Earth & Justice News, a free email and web service, provides news, opinion and analysis of peace, environment (earth) and justice issues. Stay informed with postings often days, weeks and months ahead of the mainstream media, and often never covered in the mass market. PEJ News is produced entirely by volunteers, and is a project of the non-profit Prometheus Institute based in Victoria, Canada.

**www.policyalternatives.ca--**The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' webpage offers research reports, books amd opinion pieces on issues of social and economic justice.

**www.rabble.ca--**A cheeky site offering original stories, feature articles and columns from some of the progressssive voices in Canada.

**http://socialcoast.org**

**http://socialenvironmentalliance.word-press.com**

**www.straightgoods.ca--**A watchdog working for Canadian consumers and citizens.

**www.thetyee.ca--**BC news and views from a non-corporate perspective.

**www.truthout.org--**US website with Real news.

**www.victoriacarshare.ca--**If you don’t want to own a car, but still need to drive one sometimes, then this website may be for you.

**www.vivelecanada.ca--**The mission of Vive le Canada is to protect and improve Canadian sovereignties and democracy through education, dialogue, and advocacy, especially using existing and emerging communications tools. We believe that the direction of this country should be set by its citizens, rather than by corporations or corporate trade bodies/trade agreements, the United States, or a small number of Canadian corporate elites.

**www.wsws.org--**The World Socialist Web Site is the Internet centre of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). It provides analysis of major world events, comments on political, cultural, historical and philosophical issues, and valuable documents and studies from the heritage of the socialist movement.