

Lower Island NEWS

An independent democratic socialist newspaper serving the Lower Vancouver Island area for 31 years

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Official Opposition Leader Tom Mulcair is joined by Randall Garrison, MP for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca (left) and Murray Rankin, MP for Victoria (right) at a meeting with supporters and representatives of Fair Vote Canada where they each signed a Fair Vote Canada pledge to introduce proportional representation within the first term of an NDP government, in time for the 2019 federal election.

Five ways the government has put medicare on life support

PressProgress

Months away from a federal election, no one's really talking about the elephant in the emergency room: medicare.

The diagnosis isn't good.

iPolitics Linda McQuaig has weighed in, arguing that the Conservative government has quietly eroded our health care system, stacking the deck for failure and increased privatization. She argues that "two-tier medicine is a virtual certainty if the Conservatives are re-elected."

Journalist Susan Delancourt recently argued that health care is a "sleeping issue", just waiting to wake up and grab the attention of voters -- and politicians.

Government critics believe that medicare as Canadians know it will face *serious* hurdles in the years ahead -- the direct result of a combination of government policy and funding cuts.

For a quick refresher, we've outlined five major ways the Harper government has eroded medicare:

1. No new Health Accord

The government simply *allowed* its 10-year accord with the provinces and territo-

ries to expire in 2014 -- not even bothering with the pretense of negotiations.

That lack of federal leadership has left the provinces to forge their own path. The 2004 accord saw the feds commit \$41 billion over a decade, in return for provincial pledges to commit to certain priorities, such as primary care and reducing wait times.

2. No national pharmaceutical strategy

The government backed away from developing and implementing the national pharmaceutical strategy outlined in the 2004 Health Accord -- even though our aging population could certainly use the medical and financial break.

Ten days before Christmas, Ontario's health minister wrote an op-ed calling for national pharmacare.

A 2014 study commissioned by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, posits that a national pharmacare plan would reduce drug costs and administration fees.

Data compiled by CFNU shows Canada had the highest per capita growth in prescription drug expenditures between 2000-2010, and Canadians had the second highest per capita prescription drug expenditures among OECD countries in 2011:

3. Defunding the Health Council of Canada

The government stopped funding the

Health Council of Canada, a major blow to national health care strategy and standards

Five ways, continued on page 2

Victoria MP Murray Rankin to serve as NDP Health Critic

VICTORIA -- Murray Rankin, MP for Victoria, was appointed as the NDP's Health Critic January 23 by NDP Leader Tom Mulcair.

"Universal healthcare is one of the biggest NDP contributions to Canada," said Rankin. "I'm proud to be serving as the Health Critic in the NDP's Shadow Cabinet. Conservatives are cutting \$36 billion dollars in healthcare funding, greatly putting Canadians at risk. New Democrats are pledging to reverse these cuts.

"Health issues are top of mind for people in Victoria. Cuts have left people facing issues like long surgery wait-times and inadequate care for seniors," said Rankin. "After a decade, the Conservatives have done social, environmental and economic damage to Canada. Canadians are ready to replace Stephen Harper and repair the

damage he's done."

Mulcair was enthusiastic about Rankin's new role stating, "After a decade of Conservative government, middle class families are working harder but falling further behind. Canadians are ready for a change, and the NDP is up to the challenge. I am proud of the solid experience offered to Canadians by a strong team of NDP MPs. This is the team that will give Canadians a choice in the next election."

Rankin has gained a lot of traction on his previous file, National Revenue, where he held the government to task on politically-motivated audits of charities and attacking tax haven loopholes. As Rankin moves into the Health portfolio, he will continue to hold the government to account as the Deputy Critic for National Revenue.

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Five ways the government has put medicare on life suport, from page 1

-- and all to save \$6 million.

Michael McBane, national coordinator of the Canadian Health Coalition, argued that, with the move, the government essentially said “it is time to wind down national medicare”. Formed in 2003 to provide coordination and accountability on national health care, the council’s elimination “put an end to pan-Canadian health outcomes” and “common standards across the country,” McBane wrote in the *Star*.

It’s little wonder the Tories aren’t fans of the council when their reports said things like this:

“We cannot continue our disparate, tentative approaches to health care reform across the country.”

4. Painful new federal health transfer formula

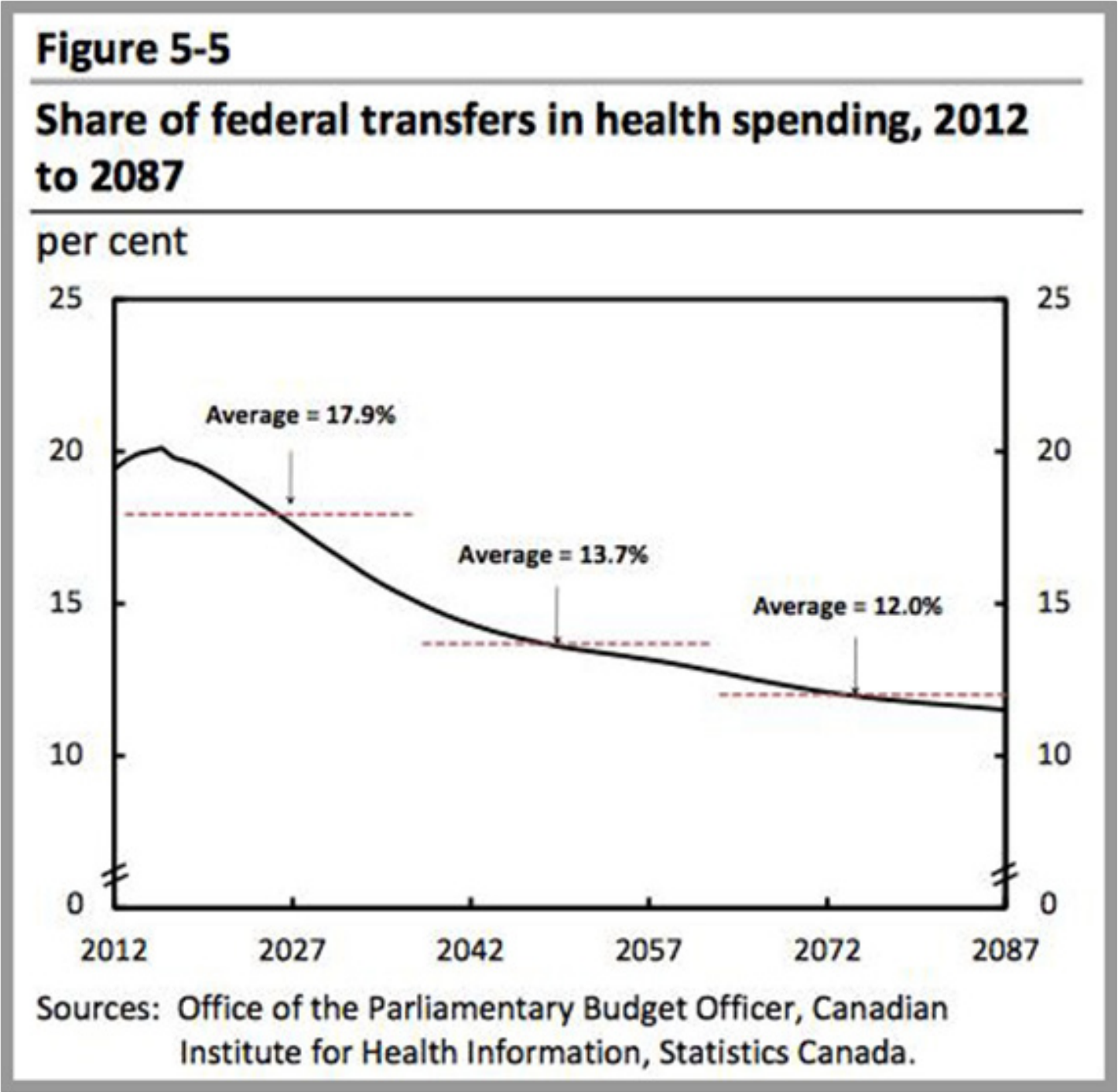
In 2011, the government unilaterally announced that, starting in 2016-2017, the annual growth rate in federal health transfers will decrease from the fixed number of 6%, and instead be tied to nominal GDP growth (with a minimum of 3%).

The CHC estimates this could cut transfers to provinces and territories by \$36 billion over 10 years (2017-2027). Cash-starved provincial governments would be hard-pressed to fill that void, with private health care advocates eagerly waiting to lend a “helping hand”.

Doubling down on unilateral changes, the 2014 federal budget made the equalization portion of the Health Care Transfer contingent on a per capita formula -- as opposed to needs-based. This move is expected to reduce transfers to have-not provinces by \$16.5 billion over five years.

5. Offloading cost

The federal share of health care spending is projected to nosedive from its current level of 20% to below 12% in the next few decades. The below chart, based on numbers from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, comes courtesy of the Canadian Health Coalition:

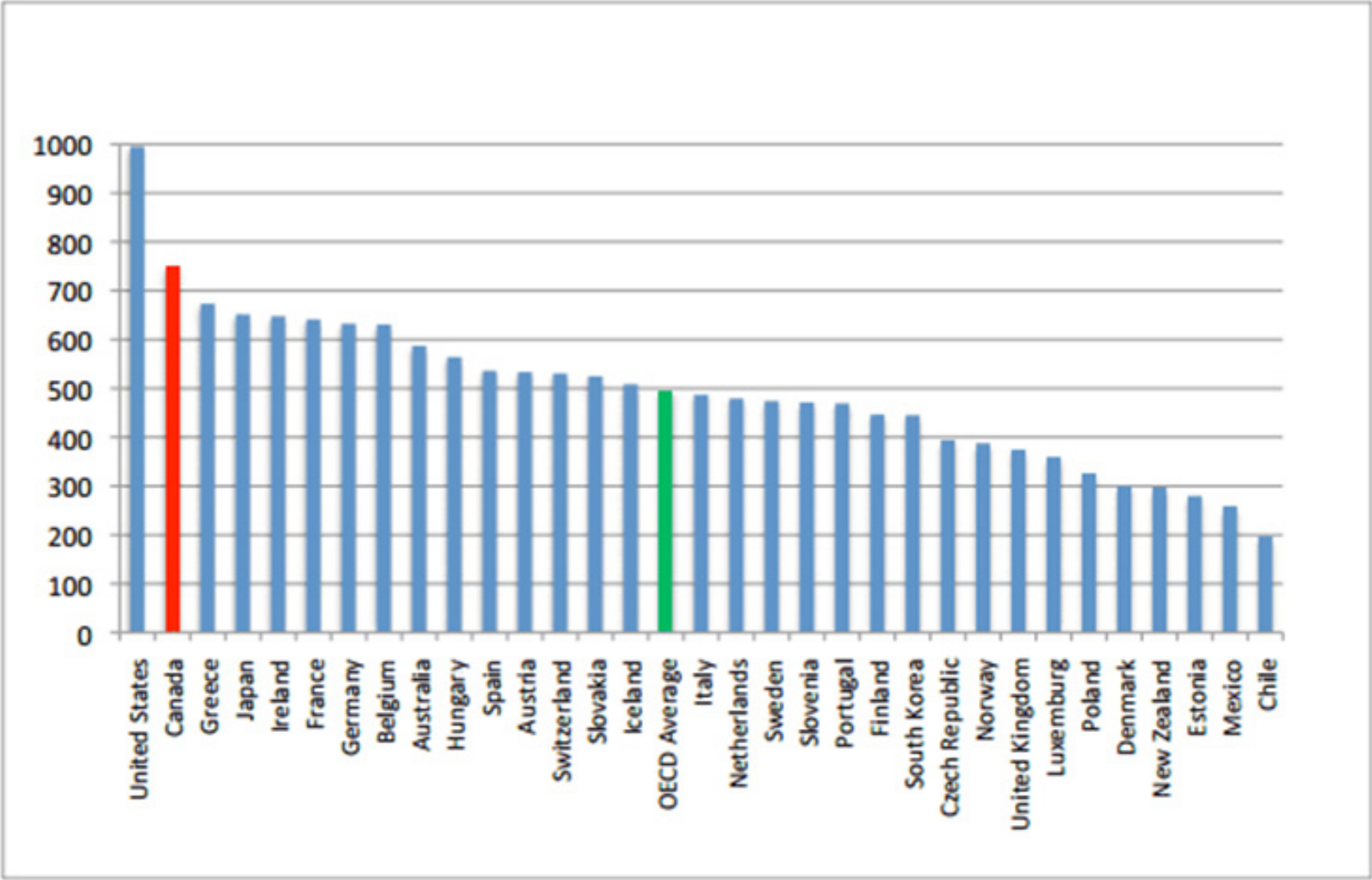


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Broadbent Institute, advances progressive solutions and challenges conservative ideas with

hard-hitting news and analysis. Visit PressProgress at www.pressprogress.ca

Total prescription drug expenditures per capita, 2011 (US\$, PPP)



Source: CIHI, OECD Health Data 2013

Dan Cantor talks about the Working Families Party

By Mike Lloyd

On Sunday, January. 18, in Vancouver, the Broadbent Institute sponsored an interesting forum with Dan Cantor of the Working Families Party from New York. The event was a standing-room-only kind of presentation packed with a very good cross-section of older to younger activists. There were at least three MLAs there, including Rob Fleming. We found the net result to be both encouraging and energizing.

The Working Families Party, of which Dan Cantor is the national director and one of the founders, is a “social democratic political machine” that has elected several progressives in New York and Connecticut – primarily at the municipal and school board level. They have aspirations for government at other levels as well.

Cantor describes the collective of individuals in WFP as “garden variety social democrats, trying to use the state to make people’s lives a little less hard”. Most recently the WFP was influential in the election of Bill de Blasio as mayor of New York. Interestingly New York State (one of several) has a “fusion” law that permits a candidate to run as a nominee of more than one party. Bill de Balsio ran as a Democrat and as a candidate for the WFP.

The WFP (co-founded by Cantor 15 years ago) is a third-party in US politics – it remains outside of both the Republican and Democrat Parties – although it is decidedly progressive and closely aligned with the Democrats.

Interestingly, Cantor equates the role of the WFP, relative to the Democrats, to be akin to that of the Tea Party movement within the Republicans. – but somewhat external to the Democrat Party. It is a policy generator and a vehicle for activism. Cantor’s view is that it is valuable to have an “outside view” rather than an “inside view” (where one would “have to buy the whole party policy”).

Among the policies promoted by the WFP are ones for greater women’s equality and representation in elected bodies, public financing of elections, higher fair taxes (rather than narrow-minded corporate tax reductions – “trickle down” economics at its worst). Cantor shares the opinion that “trickle down” policies decrease wealth levels among the poor and already economically deprived groups in North America. Well-spent taxes help society and social stability -- from which the very wealthy also benefit.

Cantor noted a familiar story about the compression of the middle class and stagnation or actual reductions of income. WFP strongly supports unions and the role that they play in helping to raise income for all workers through collective bargaining and the spin-off for other workers.

Basically he is promoting the idea that when we “raise the floor (income) for everybody – then everybody benefits”. The fight to turn the tide on, and trend of, income inequality will likely be a focal point for years to come.

On campaigning, Cantor conceives it as really a 12-month-a-year activity, where activists talk to neighbours, identify supporters, engage people in the community about

local issues of common concern – and the last two months before the election you “crush your enemies”, as Cantor says.

This style of political influencing makes sense and is a challenge to us in BC when we get lulled into expecting a political campaign that is almost exclusively contained in the time between when the writ is dropped to election day as little as five weeks away. [By then it is almost too late.]

Local campaigns (which we sorely needed during last provincial election!) will be and should be about issues we and our neighbours care about. These might include job creation, or healthcare, environmental protection, or....

As a side note; MP Nathan Cullen’s electoral success federally seems, in large measure, to have come from creating a coalition of the unheard, and speaking up with and for them, in the spirit of giving voice to issues and about needs that were about the local environment, local economics, local employment.

Cullen’s was the kind of campaign that responded to “ground-up” kind of vectors rather than “top-down” policies contesting for electoral support.

A fascinating perspective of Cantor’s is that we often get caught into thinking and discussing things from “left vs. right” perspective. The Working Families Party instead always shifts the discussion into a “bottom vs. top” axis -- as a more effective vehicle of discussion about the value of what we are proposing.

Focusing on unfairness and inequality – and what we are going to do about it -- is a bottom vs. top kind of discussion that likely has more resonance with voters. The WFP approach seems to be focusing on and talking about needs and solutions – and less of this is our policy because.... The voter’s/ community’s “need” drives the discussion of solutions. The strong stance is “we, the people...” and the action springs from that.

In an *American Prospect* article on Dan Cantor [http://prospect.org/article/dan-cantors-machine] Cantor relayed that some early moves by WFP were “pragmatic compromise(s) that enabled the progressives to make long-term strategic advance(s)”.

Apparently Cantor always says he “understands that purity is not the path to power”. “We don’t just want to have grievances – we want to govern,” he says.

From another article on Cantor, “The WFP doesn’t just want to speak truth to power, we want the middle class, the working class and the poor to share in that power.” (This is along the lines of “from grievances to governance, from protest to policy” – Joel Rogers).

Cantor’s thrust is that we can work together, and perhaps engage in some thinking “from outside the box”, to turn Canada into a country we are proud to hand over to our children.

And the final words of the day from host Rick Smith, executive director of the Broadbent Institute: “We want to move from the ideal to the possible – so we can make the ideal possible”. So let us get on with it!

The Broadbent Institute can be found at www.broadbentinstitute.ca [pressprogress.ca



Photo by Tony Sprackett

Tara Ehrcke (l) and Deborah Nohr join the fight to raise the minimum wage in BC.

BC takes up the minimum wage fight

By Tara Ehrcke

Dozens of activists hit the streets on January 15 in the new *Fight for Fifteen* campaign, endorsed by the BC Federation of Labour. Organizers are planning events for the 15th of every month until we see the provincial minimum wage increased to \$15/hr: 15 in 2015.

BC currently has the ninth lowest minimum wage across Canada, at \$10.25/hr. This is below the \$13/hr poverty level and only half the living wage in the mid-size and large cities, which ranges from \$18 - \$20/hr.

It is despicable that such a wealthy province allows so many workers to remain in poverty level wages. More than half of

those earning minimum wage are adults supporting themselves and often children. It is therefore no wonder that BC also has the highest child poverty rate in Canada.

Every concerned citizen should be active participants in this fight. We all gain when we raise standards and wages for all workers and we broaden the solidarity in the labour movement, social justice movements, and with the broader working class.

We will need a vibrant, active and broad-based movement to budge the BC Liberals into another increase. If you live in BC, you can sign the petition and join the campaign at fightfor15bc.ca or if you live in Greater Victoria, find us on Facebook under Fight for Fifteen Victoria.

Esquimalt-Royal Roads New Democrats!

You are invited to our annual

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an evening of great food and conversation,
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on Tuesday, March 10
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For reservations or more information,
contact Andrew Barrett at 250-891-6454
or esquimaltroyalroads@gmail.com
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Rev Dale Perkins (l) and Robin Tosczak join activists on Victoria streets to demand that BC’s minimum-wage be increased,

Photo by Tony Sprackett

“He had grown up in a country run by politicians who sent the pilots to man the bombers to kill the babies to make the world safer for children to grow up in.”

--Ursula K Le Guin American writer 1929-

Our view:

The human spirit has proved unquenchable, time after time

The euphoria of New Year 2015 evaporated on January 7 in Paris when gunmen murdered 12 people at the office of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Two days later four people were shot at a Kosher supermarket. A media and political frenzy followed, with events described by media and politicians as an attack on free speech, and “western values”, with the inevitable “terror” thrown in.

Let us be clear – the Paris attacks were crimes against humanity, carried out by organized and determined zealots, just like the attacks in New York, London and Madrid. But they are part of a long-running pattern, not confined to Western cities. Before the Paris attacks, 145 people were murdered at a school in Peshawar and 2000 were killed by Boko Haram at Baga, Nigeria.

Despite the rhetoric about “attacks on free speech” or “western values” (whatever they are), it is doubtful if the young men who perpetrated the Paris crimes awoke that day determined to attack them. They were angry, frustrated, marginalized and probably bent on avenging the real or imagined ills visited upon Muslims by “the west”. *Charlie Hebdo* was an obvious and high profile target.

In the land of Voltaire, the right of fierce criticism of religion and rulers is embedded in the French psyche. However, in the countries of some politicians who marched arm in arm in Paris that is certainly not the case. While the Saudi Ambassador marched with Francois Hollande, David Cameron and Benjamin Netanyahu, Saudi activist Raif Badawi was sentenced to 1000 lashes and 10 years in jail.

Strip away rhetoric about attacks on free speech and the outstanding issue is the courage of those who know the price for speaking out and are ready to risk paying it– as happened with the journalists of *Charlie Hebdo* and Raif Badawi. It is easy to go around saying “je suis Charlie” but who is willing to risk paying the price? In France, in 1942, when thousands of Jews were held by French police in appalling conditions at Drancy near Paris, and then transported to Auschwitz to be gassed, there were no thousands of “Charlies” turning out to prevent that horrifying crime.

As we enter 2015 the great threat to our future is the inconsistency of our political leaders, who toady to Saudi Arabia while (rightly) castigating Russia; bomb ISIL yet allow Bashar al Assad to get away with murder.

The crisis in Ukraine now entering its second year is still appallingly dangerous; probably a greater threat than ISIL, and the recent flare up in fighting could have untold consequences. For the last year western politicians have visited Kiev and spoken strong words, sanctions have been applied to Russia, Canadian and other NATO fighter aircraft have been flying around Eastern Europe, but nothing changes. Russia does what Russia has always done – pursue what it perceives as its national interest, come what may. The wild card is that Putin may cut up rough.

Sanctioning hard men and dictators often has the opposite of the intended effect and Putin may resort to nationalism and further military adventures to take Russian minds off economic hardships. Even during the Cold War, despite (nuclear armed) NATO protestations, Russia crushed the uprisings in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. In the end, change came from within.

Russia is on home ground in eastern Europe with short lines of communications and supply – a formidable problem for NATO. The Ukrainian Army seems unable to bring matters to a conclusion leaving NATO the dilemma of risking a war or pouring arms into the conflict on the Ukrainian side. Either way, the already blood soaked soil of Ukraine would once again run with the blood of the innocents. Although Timothy Garton-Ash wrote in *The Guardian* on February 1, “Putin must be stopped and sometimes only guns can stop guns”, those “sometimes” have been few and far between and such a decision will not be taken lightly – if at all.

Fixing the problems is not going to be easy and perhaps we and politicians have to accept that some things can’t be fixed – at least not by “us” and not right away. The Arab Spring has gone nowhere and although the Kurds have finally retaken Kobane, innocent Japanese were murdered by ISIL and Syria and Iraq remain a complete shambles as does Libya.

Despite years of “training” by NATO members, Middle Eastern and other Muslim armies either cannot or will not contain the jihadist organizations that rise one after the other. How much more training can we do?

Things in Egypt are worse than they were under Mubarak. Arrests and executions are commonplace and the US has re-started supplying arms to the military regime. Jordan has reinstated the death penalty; Turkey is slipping backwards with President Erdogan being compared to Vladimir Putin as he jails journalists and consolidates personal power.

Within the EU, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban is curbing freedoms, increasing ties to Putin, corrupting institutions and sending shudders through other EU leaders. In Asia, Hong Kong simmers with discontent (no Western leaders joining pro-democracy protesters there) while Burma (Myanmar) now beloved of the West, oppresses Christian minorities -- two Christian teachers raped and murdered by the army just recently.

But there is hope. The human spirit has proved time and again to be unquenchable. In Greece, after years of austerity, people finally got totally fed-up with the Brussels elite, bankers, hedge fund managers and all those that Greeks believe caused the financial crisis and years of misery that followed. Syriza may not fix Greece’s problems, but like Podemos in Spain, it is a manifestation of what happens when people get pushed too far by those who are seen as remote, powerful and uncaring. -- DJO

The Lower Island NEWS

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Editorial Committee Chair: Sharon Hazelwood

Editor: Dale Young

Editorial Writer: David Olsen

Book review and travel writer:

Distribution: Jocelyn Floyer and others

Advertising:

Contributors to this issue: Starla Anderson, Gwen Brodsky, Kevin ampbell,Karen Cooling, Shannon Daub, Shelalgh Day, Tara Ehrche, Trish Garner, Randall Gar-rison, John Hilton, Ben Isitt, Carole James, Marc Lee, Phil Little, Mike Lloyd, Alistair MacGregor, Jim Manly, David Olsen, Dale Perkins, Jessie Singer, Tim Pheotist, Murray Rankin, Diane Walsh, Barry Weder, Terry Wolfwood, and others.

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As others see it

From discrimination against temporary foreign workers to sexual harassment, there’s no shortage of issues a human rights commission could tackle

By Gwen Brodsky and Shelagh Day

British Columbia is the only province in Canada that does not have a Human Rights Commission. That makes us the weakest province when it comes to fostering human rights awareness and preventing discrimination.

Currently BC only has a Human Rights Tribunal, which mediates and adjudicates complaints about discrimination after it has occurred. The Tribunal does its job well. But the onus to identify and report human rights violations rests on individual British Colum-bians, who must know their rights, navigate the complaints process, and handle the risk of failure.

We know that the complaints that get to the Tribunal are only the “tip of the ice-berg”, and that many of the tougher, more systemic issues are not resolved through individual complaints.

For example, troubling evidence has come to light of abusive treatment of tem-porary foreign workers and recent immi-grants in the food service and tree planting industries. Workers have been subjected to intimidation and sexual and racial harass-ment, and coerced into using overcrowded and inadequate accommodation provided by the employer.

These workers are too vulnerable and face too many obstacles—including fear, financial need, lack of English fluency and isolation—to deal with this discrimination on their own.

A Human Rights Commission—if we had one—could investigate, issue public guidelines that would provide information, education and protection to both workers and employers, and monitor the situation.

Recent events have also heightened our awareness of the prevalence of sexual harassment and violence against women. Our institutions—even sophisticated ones like the University of British Columbia (e.g. rape chants and campus sexual assaults) and the CBC (Jian Ghomeshi)—have yet to institute adequate practices and proto-cols that can prevent discrimination against women, and respond effectively when it oc-curs.

Because women often do not trust the police to help them, most do not report sexual assaults. Again, a Human Rights Commission—if we had one—could de-velop standards, protocols and supports for employers and key service providers like the police.

The accommodation of people with mental health issues, and of workers who are also caring for children, parents, or a

disabled family member, is an emerging part of human rights law. A Human Rights Commission—if we had one—could pro-vide education, information, and advice, so that complaints could be avoided. Most employers, service providers and landlords want to comply with human rights law. But right now, we provide little help or encour-agement.

These are just a few examples of how a Commission could help advance human rights in British Columbia. And there is no shortage of other pressing issues a Com-mission could help us deal with: not enough supports for youth with mental health prob-lems; race and sex bias in policing; the concentration of Aboriginal, immigrant and racialized women and youth in low-wage employment; homelessness and lack of af-fordable housing...just to name a few.

Without a Commission, BC has no pub-lic institution that can take steps to prevent discrimination, educate the public, initiate inquiries on broad systemic issues, devel-op guidelines, and promote human rights compliance. We do not have the institution-al machinery necessary to make good on the stated purpose of BC’s Human Rights Code—which includes to “identify and elim-inate persistent patterns of inequality” and to “prevent discrimination.”

Despite its importance, BC’s human rights system has had a volatile history. A Commission was first formed in 1973, dis-banded in 1984, later re-instituted, but dis-banded again in 2002.

Now even the truncated human rights system we have left appears to be under review by the provincial government, and may be hollowed out even further by fund-ing cuts for advice and assistance to people who take complaints to the Tribunal.

We should not be playing “political foot-ball” with the human rights system. Gov-ernments need to be committed guarantors of human rights and supporters of strong, stable human rights systems.

That’s what British Columbia needs now—adequate resources for advice and legal representation, and a new indepen-dent Commission appointed by the Legis-lature that provides British Columbians with real tools to prevent discrimination.

Gwen Brodsky and Shelagh Day are co-authors of *Strengthening Human Rights: Why British Columbia Needs a Human Rights Commission*, published December 10, 2014 by the Poverty and Human Rights Centre and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The changing media landscape

It won't have escaped the notice of many *Lower Island News* readers that the printed page, as a source of news and information, is in increasingly short supply – unless you're looking for this week's best deals on chicken wings or baked beans.

Newspapers and magazines are being merged, abbreviated, and closed with almost daily regularity.

Lower Island News remains as one of the few printed formats for news and opinion in the Greater Victoria region. Many other regional newspapers have ceased publication.

In place of the printed page readers are now frequently diverted to online publications.

It seems such a convenient and progressive alternative -- and the ink doesn't come off on your fingers.

But is the internet a Trojan Horse in the world of information dissemination?

The internet is fragile. It doesn't work during power cuts. It's monitored and spied on. Private access is increasingly expensive. Stories are often designed simply to support advertising and marketing. Themes

are mirrored by a continually narrowing ownership profile.

The printed paper works during power cuts. It can be read in places the laptop can't survive. It's a physical entity in a way that the electronic "byte" isn't.

In this uncertain climate of media delivery changes *Lower Island News* believes there are important lessons that can be learned by looking closely at how our current electronic media revolution is interacting with the printed newspaper.

***Lower Island News* is pleased to announce an important live forum and discussion on these themes, to take place later this year.**

Speakers will include experienced print and electronic media writers and editors, political stakeholders, educators and publishers.

Venue and dates will be announced on our website – www.lowerislandnews.com--and in the next edition. In the meantime *LIN* welcomes communication from readers with relevant expertise who can make informed contributions to the discussion.

--Editorial Board

Who decides who and what gets media attention?

Re. "A global fight to fortify democracy", *Globe and Mail* (January 10/15)

The central issue is how to make a diverse population with divergent attitudes and opinions into a monolithic group of like-minded, satisfied people. The over-arching pre-occupation, it seems, is to safe-guard vulnerable populations from tyranny imposed by a few – that's been true for dictatorships from "time immemorial" to all so-called democratic regimes.

How can we permit, even encourage, diversity of opinion, values and beliefs inside a single nation state? That is the crux of the drama unfolding in France and its jewel metropolis Paris this past month.

When a few citizens become fixated over a set of beliefs and attitudes different from the common ones held by the majority, who then judges and decides they must be purged and expelled? Will those judges be

the ones permitted to carry and use heavy weapons and sophisticated surveillance tools, or are they to be suspicious neighbours who don't like what they are seeing or hearing? (a kind of Block Watch system of social control).

And how can proportionate reactions be held? At the same time the 20 or so people were killed in France, over 2,000 people – most of them children, women and elderly – in Nigeria were being slaughtered by a gang of terrorists for being "different" from the norm the terrorist wanted to demand of that population. However, nowhere in this issue of the *G & M* was there any mention of this travesty in Africa.

Who decides which focus garners all the media's attention? The fight to fortify democracy is a big problem, and is anybody prepared to tackle it?

Rev. Dale Perkins
Victoria

Site C dam revisited. Why?

I find the site C dam revisited a puzzle. We fought it over 30 years ago (in the 80s), and the logic of preserving our rare agricultural land prevailed.

Today we have probably twice the population, and yet we want to flood class 1 and 2 fertile soils. Again. And for what good reason?

As far as I understand it, this is electricity for export, mainly. Some may also be used for the unsafe fracking methods to get more hydrocarbon fuels out of the ground. The water becomes contaminated, and is no good for drinking, and may poison crops

too (who knows, eh?).

So we are blithely eliminating two things we really depend on -- clean drinking water, and fertile soils for food production, and why?

Hey, Ms Premier, I don't know about you, but I like to live a healthy life! I can skimp on electricity, but hate to skimp on food and water. Oh, and another thing: is it really good money management of taxpayers' money to go billions of dollars in debt for something as questionable as this project?

BC Old Timer

Friends of the Lower Island News

Well, here we are just months from a federal general election, and hanks to the continuing generosity of our donors, we are in good financial shape to cover the politicians, their promises and their antics for you our loyla readers. ..e continue to appreciate and be grateful for your financial help.

Below is the latest list of Friends of the Lower Island News who have given donations since the last issue in November:

Anonymous	\$200
Elizabeth Rutherford	\$20
John Heaney	\$60
Richard Creech	\$50
Zona MacDonald	\$25

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

Canada becoming a police state?

The danger of Canada becoming a "Police State" was never more evident than it is now.

Bill C-51 creates new powers for CSIS, so now any opposition to State activity will fall under the terms of the Bill, and any of us who participate in expressing opposition to what the Canadian government is doing can be arrested and charged as a terrorist.

How many of my fellow citizens are alarmed by this surreptitious action on the part of the Harper government?

If our democracy means anything it must mean we can stop government from violating our human and civil rights. Are we up for the challenge?

Dale Perkins
Victoria

Just Transition: Creating a Green Social Contract for BC's Resource Workers.

Making a Just Transition

By Karen Cooling, Marc Lee, Shannon Daub and Jessie Singer

The steady stream of bad news from Alberta's oil patch is a potent reminder of the boom-and-bust nature of being a resource commodity exporter. It's a story deeply understood in Canada's resource communities, as decisions made halfway around the world dictate whether you will have a job tomorrow or not.

The outlook for fossil fuel-exporting industries is likely to get even worse if governments are successful in negotiating a new global deal to limit carbon emissions this year. On the heels of a climate deal with China, US President Obama stated in his State of the Union address: "No challenge poses a greater threat to future generations than climate change."

It is now widely recognized that anywhere from 2/3 to 4/5 of proven fossil fuel reserves worldwide must be left in the ground to avert catastrophe. That means high-cost producers like Canada are most likely to get squeezed out.

Canadian politicians have existed in a state of denial of these facts, pushing instead for more bitumen, coal and LNG exports. Canada's claim to being an "energy superpower" may be an empty boast if demand for our fossil fuel exports dries up.

But what does all this mean for people whose livelihoods currently rely on these industries?

In our research, we talked with resource workers around BC who have experienced boom-and-bust cycles first-hand—especially in forestry, where mill closures have led to job losses and economic insecurity for the province's many forest-dependent communities.

What we uncovered is a very unhappy legacy. A concern is that climate action could mean the loss of well-paying jobs and key employers and a repeat of this tragic pattern.

As we plan for a transition to a zero-carbon economy, we will need to ensure a "just transition" for fossil fuel industry workers, who should not have to pay the price of doing the right thing on climate change.

In past resource busts, families have faced extreme financial and emotional instability due to job loss of one or more income earners. Income loss can increase levels of stress that lead to drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence and divorce.

ust Transition: Creating a Green Social Contract for BC's Resource Workers. **Making a Just Transition**

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When a factory closes, there are also ripple effects throughout the economy, as reduced spending forces the closure of small businesses and service providers, municipal government budgets collapse, and the residential housing market becomes glutted with "stranded assets."

In BC and elsewhere in Canada, the lure of work in Alberta's oil sands has al-

ready affected life in resource communities, although high pay in Alberta does not necessarily make for a good quality of life. The movement of workers to "the patch", with families left behind, means the diminishment of common community functions like volunteer fire-fighters, Little League coaches, etc. Workers would prefer to stay in their communities and united with their families.

Stable management of fossil fuel industries over a 2-3 decade wind-down period with a just transition plan can get us off the resource rollercoaster, and better serve workers, communities and the BC economy.

A lot of work will be required to build the zero-emission economy we need—but we should embrace that. Building new, green infrastructure for the future includes investments in district energy systems, localized food systems, regional rapid transit, efficient buildings and "zero waste" management of materials—all of which can be a major economic benefit in rural and resource communities.

We also need to stop lumping in all resource sectors together. While fossil fuel industries are at the heart of the climate problem, there can and should be a bright future for renewable resources like forestry. With strong stewardship and enhanced value-added, forestry in BC could support an additional 20,000 good permanent jobs—far more than will arise from any LNG development. This means reversing direction on forestry policies that have gutted the industry and its connection to supporting communities.

A coherent managed approach would also allow for planned transitions for workers that include income supports, advanced skills training programs, and apprenticeships. This means investing in skills that are transferable from carbon-intensive to green industries. Pro-active planning and collaboration across government, industry and unions is critical for ensuring a just transition.

This new "green social contract" will require a reallocation of financial resources. We recommend creating a just transition fund out of resource royalties or carbon tax revenues. The fund could enhance income security for workers, support early retirement initiatives for some, and help people through retraining and job search processes.

Rather than trying to cultivate the next boom (think LNG), our aspirations should be to develop a high-quality, full-employment strategy that supports workers, families and communities to transition beyond fossil fuels.

Karen Cooling is a former representative with the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers' Union. Marc Lee and Shannon Daub work in the BC Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. This piece draws on a new

See more at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/making-just-transition#sthash.3v8jLX2m.dpuf>

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Charity is not the right way to tackle poverty in British Columbia

By Trish Garner

The existence of poverty in British Columbia is a violation of human rights. There is not only a moral duty to eradicate poverty but also a legal obligation under international human rights law. Just before the holidays, December 10 was International Human Rights Day but we have little to celebrate here in BC.

A human rights approach to poverty is based on a fundamental respect for human dignity as opposed to a charitable approach, which, let's be honest, situates poor people as pitiful. A human rights framework recognizes people in poverty as rights-bearers entitled to assert legal claims rather than being passive recipients of charitable aid.

In 1976, Canada ratified the United Nations *International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which recognizes "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions."

The government of British Columbia is clearly failing to meet its human rights

obligations. BC has had one of the highest poverty rates in Canada for the last 13 years, and yet, it is now the last province left without a poverty reduction plan.

The high rates of child poverty in BC violate BC's obligations to respect children's rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes "children's right to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development," which is far from being met by keeping children in poverty and malnourishment.

BC's welfare rate of \$610 per month is grossly inadequate to provide an adequate standard of living, and the minimum wage of \$10.25 per hour is still not enough to lift a full-time worker above the poverty line. "The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has expressed particular concern about women's poverty in BC, noting that inadequate welfare rates present an additional obstacle for women fleeing abusive relationships" (West Coast LEAF's 2014 CEDAW Report Card, Oct. 2014).

Basic civil and political rights, such as freedom of speech and the right to vote,

are relatively well protected in Canadian law, but economic and social rights to basic necessities such as food, water, housing, and education are routinely violated. Without these rights secured, poverty is a barrier to accessing civil and political rights in a meaningful and effective way. This has a disproportionate impact on marginalized groups including women, LGBTQ communities, racialized and Indigenous persons, and people with disabilities, among others.

Individuals must have an avenue to claim their rights and report violations. Legislation may be one avenue but it is an expensive route to securing adequate solutions. A human rights commission is an important venue through which rights claimants can obtain a hearing and secure effective remedies but, more importantly, a commission can report on systemic issues and recommend preventative approaches. Unfortunately, BC is the only province in Canada without a human rights commission – it was eliminated by the provincial government in 2002 (Strengthening Human Rights: Why British Columbia Needs

a Human Rights Commission, CCPA, Dec. 2014).

Despite its human rights obligations, the BC government is not ensuring an adequate standard of living, access to legal aid, or adequate healthcare for all, nor is it respecting the rights of marginalized groups.

It's time for the BC government to comply with its obligations under international law and stop relying on our generosity to tackle the crisis of poverty, a generosity that can never fill the hole left by government inaction.

Trish Garner is the community organizer of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, a broad-based network of over 400 organizations throughout BC that are calling on the provincial government to commit to a comprehensive poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines.

For more information on this issue, read *Poverty in British Columbia is a Violation of Human Rights*, the BCPRC's recently released position paper on poverty and human rights, which is now the foundation of their approach.



Maurine Karagianis, MLA for Esquimalt-Royal Roads (centre) and Carole James , MLA for Victoria-Beacoln Hill, pause from serving dinner at Our Place, to talk with Our Place Executive Director Don Evans. Our Place is an inner-city community centre serving Greater Victoria's most vulnerable: working poor, impoverished elderly, mentally and physically challenged, addicted and the homeless. Our Place serves over 1,200 meals per day, and provides hot showers, free clothing, counselling and outreach services, plus 45 transitional housing units

And then there was one! BC is now the last province without a plan to tackle poverty!

By Trish Garner

On October 22, the government of Saskatchewan announced in their Throne Speech that it would commit to the development of a poverty reduction strategy, making British Columbia the very last province in Canada without a plan to tackle poverty.

This despite the fact that BC has the highest or second highest poverty rate in the country, depending on the poverty measure used. Notably, the Saskatchewan decision was made by the Conservative government of Brad Wall, highlighting this should not be a partisan issue.

How can the BC government ignore the mounting evidence?

First Call recently released their 2014 *Child Poverty Report Card* revealing that 1 in 5 children in BC still live in poverty. That's 169,420 poor children, enough to fill the Canuck's stadium over nine times.

BC also has the highest inequality in Canada according to *Haves and Have-Nots: Deep and persistent wealth inequality in Canada* from the Broadbent Institute. The wealthiest 10 percent own over half the wealth in BC while the bottom 50 percent have only 3 percent of the wealth, with many of the poorest facing huge amounts of debt.

ness, the BC government has recently launched its Homelessness Prevention Program, which expands rent supplements to four at-risk groups but does nothing to actually provide more affordable housing.

The Burden of Poverty : A snapshot of poverty across Canada from Citizens for Public Justice highlights that BC has the highest local poverty levels in Canada, with Prince Rupert and Richmond facing devastating poverty rates of about 23 percent.

Comparing welfare income to the poverty line, *Welfare in Canada 2013* from the Caledon Institute, found that a single "employable" person on welfare in BC receives just under 40 percent of the poverty line leaving a poverty gap of almost \$12,000. Welfare in BC is deeply inadequate at \$610 per month for a single person and has been frozen for the last 7 years.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, BC's Representative for Children and Youth, chastises the government for failing to act on her recommendation for a "provincial strategy and action to reduce child poverty" in *Not Fully Invested: A Follow-up Report on the Representative's Past Recommendations to Help Vulnerable Children in B.C.* released in early October.

The latest report from Food Banks Canada, *HungerCount 2014*, shows that almost 100,000 people visited a food bank in BC in a typical month this year, and close to a third were children. That's a 25 percent increase since before the financial crisis of 2008, and almost 4 percent higher than 2013.

This is not surprising given that *Food Costing in BC 2013* from the Provincial Health Services Authority shows the average monthly cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four in BC is \$914, an increase of almost \$50 since 2011.

Recognizing that food banks are a necessary crisis measure but don't tackle the real problems head-on, Food Banks Canada itself recommends strong, comprehensive government policies to address poverty and hunger, and "significantly reduce the need for food banks."

In *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013* from the Canadian Homelessness Research Network, Vancouver has one of the highest rates of severe housing need in Canada, and a growing number of homeless people from the latest homelessness count.

And the implications of this are shocking. *Megaphone Magazine's* recent report, *Dying on the Streets: Homeless deaths in British Columbia*, highlights that "the median age of death for a homeless person is between 40 and 49. This is almost half the life expectancy for the average British Columbian, which is 82.65 years."

In response to the crisis of homeless-

The list of research reports goes on but this is a problem of more than numbers and statistics – it is children and seniors, people with disabilities and recent immigrants, queer youth and single mothers, not being able to make ends meet and going hungry in one of the richest provinces in Canada.

Enough is enough! It's time for a better BC, one that works for all of us, whether rich or poor. On October 30, Michelle Mungall, MLA for Nelson-Creston, tabled a *Poverty Reduction and Economic Inclusion Act* again. Since then, thousands of people have urged the government to act and members of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition delivered those letters to Premier Christy Clark.

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services recently released their report from province-wide public consultations on the next provincial budget, and this bi-party committee again recommended to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government "introduce a comprehensive poverty reduction plan".

When will the government listen? The evidence is clear: we need a poverty reduction plan for BC.

Please email the premier and urge her to take action at <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/email-the-premier>

Trish Garner is the community organizer of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition.

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World Religions Conference report:

Stop the social crisis

By Starla Anderson

The ninth World Religions Conference was held on the afternoon and early evening of January 11, in the David Lam Auditorium at the University of British Columbia. Spiritual leaders from six global religions spoke about the principles of their faiths and how these principles guided their practices. Many who attended especially wanted to learn about the Moslem faith; this conference was held only four days after the killings in Paris by French citizens who were al-Qaida sympathizers.

Fahd Peerzada opened the conference with a recitation from the Holy Qur'n.

Mohammad Aslam Shad, BC regional president of the World Religions Conference, then spoke of the aims of the organization: to bring mutual understanding and respect between the peoples of different faiths by helping them to recognize the beauties of each religion. Shad said, "The interfaith concept is unifying: brotherhood, love, and peace can prosper."

The Youth Vice President for Western Canada, Shafique Ahmad, then introduced the moderator, journalist Howard Markson, who presently teaches at Royal Roads University.

Hamish Tucker, a leader at Victoria's Shambhala Meditation Centre, spoke from a Buddhist perspective. Tucker opened by saying that "Crisis might be putting it mildly." He referred to global conflicts such as on-going civil war in Syria but pointed out that we have home issues such as addiction that we need to act on. "We need to be engaged politically to help people be housed, fed, and part of a social network. Losing heart is laziness—to be aware and act, we need a mind that cooperates and meditation can be helpful as it settles the mind."

Tucker spoke about how meditation helps us distinguish between being present or being distracted, and it helps us to be friendly both to ourselves and others, as well as to have compassion. "It helps us to experience what we are doing in the present and to have faith and beliefs that help us be open rather than believing in concepts that shut us down." He made the appeal that meditation can help us to help the world, or at least not to do harm—one of the teachings of Buddha (dharma) is that "Being a human being is just tough and meditation makes it possible to experience it without giving blame."

Pastor Dr. Randy Hein spoke about his Christian ministry to the disenfranchised—he works with Mustard Seed as well as with parishioners in a Gordon Head chapel. Hein said that he deals with people, not theory. "This social crisis is growing—there is not one social crisis but multiple crises. If problem-solving is rooted in history and place, we can get closer to solutions. What do I know about Ferguson, Syria, Palestine? I can see the effects but I know little about the cause. We must begin by seeking understanding."

Hein asserted that "social reform and religious ideology can be a toxic mix, and when you add this to marginalization, loss of power, idealism of youth with a gun in hand, a crisis point is spilling out everywhere. We want to separate ourselves from extremism; we want to be moderates. But is that the answer?"

Hein referred to Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail* where King wrote, "Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Jesus Christ was an extremist for love, truth and goodness." Hein said that Jesus taught that spirituality has no context outside of the framework of restored relationships—that reconciliation with God and others offers healing. He concluded with the statement that "No one has the corner on the truth."

The perspective of the Hindu faith was given by Dr. Suresh Basrur who opened his presentation by stating, "The topic hit me like a cold Arctic blast. Which crisis?" Basrur identified many crises here in Canada: high housing charges, drug trafficking, resource conflicts, harm inflicted on the internet, religious and race discrimination, and exploitation: corporate, political, social, economic, ethnic. He asserted that the root causes for these crises are greed,

hatred, injustice, and discrimination (self-centeredness).

Basrur asked, "Is hope and prayer all that's left or can we do something proactively?" He argued that the State should control resource misuse, financial fraud, corporate misbehaviour, and overpopulation, and that "justice needed to be applied to those who would not change their evil ways."

Basrur said that it is a Hindu belief that every human being has a soul—Atman—that is God, and that it is religion's responsibility to infuse morals and ethics into young children and reinforce the same with adults. Hinduism teaches: Dharma - good conduct, assuming duties, and responsibilities without focus on reward; Karma - our actions in this and previous existences which determine our future state of existence; Justice - do what is right and correct what is wrong. In the Hindu faith, Basrur said, it is up to each individual to strive to live in harmony with others with compassion and humility; he described the Miracle Slum of Mumbai, one of the most impoverished communities in the world, where Christians, Muslims, and Hindus live side by side with no terrorism or violence. Parents share common human values of wanting a better life for their children and they work hard to get their children educated. "Spiritually and socially, this is a miracle place."

Imam Balal Khokhar, who spoke on behalf of the Moslem faith, began with the invocation, "Peace Be Upon Everyone." Khokhar acknowledged the crisis in the Middle East and said that it spills over here as well. He said that radical groups such as ISIS use religion for territorial, economic, and political reasons but that historically extremism and radicalism can be found in sects of every religion. Overwhelmingly, Muslims are peaceful, law-abiding citizens and those who are drawn towards extremism are unstable youth looking for greater purpose and many have mental disorders and challenges of substance abuse. Social media us used to recruit them under the false pretext of jihad—which is opposed to the use of the sword—and they kill Muslims as well as others. They misunderstand the personal challenge of jihad to strive to attain nearness to God. "There is great social pain to watch ISIS and terrorist organizations say they are Islam—they are not. Extremists have hijacked religion for their personal gain," he said.

Imam Khokhar told a story of Mohammed's daily walk along a street where an old lady threw garbage at him every day. One day she wasn't there and upon looking for her, he found that she was sick. Mohammed showed her compassion and she was humbled and saw him for who he was. Khokhar said that this story spoke to some of the values and the core ideals of Islam: meekness, righteousness, justice, peace, tolerance, compassion, brotherhood, spirituality, loyalty to country and community, and submission to God. "We have kindness at heart for all of mankind."

Khokhar encouraged the audience to listen to an address delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, head of the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community on the occasion of the 2014 Interfaith Peace symposium held at Baitul Futuh Mosque in London, England on November 8, 2014. It can be found on Youtube titled: Interfaith Peace Symposium 2014.

Rabbi Harry Brechner opened his remarks about the Jewish faith perspective by quoting a rabbi who had offered comfort to the Jewish community in Paris after the killings in a Jewish market a few days before this conference: "When you feel fear and that sense of being a target, what we need in this situation is more fraternity, to reach out to others, to not just be with self."

Brechner then shared his own insights: "Our traditions have certain anchors that can guide us—when you pray for clarity, give 40 days for some clues. Tolerance isn't about sharing, cooperation, and collaboration . . . How much crashing around made stones smooth? We need strength in self and trust in others to make things smooth between people—there has

to be some thrashing about. Each one of us is unique and without uniqueness, we don't have authenticity."

He continued, "Each of us humans is created in God's image—each of us has the Divinity within us, and we have to put sacred words into action: If I love the other as I love myself, I want the other to have what I have or want: basic needs met, hope for a day of goodness. Wanting to hurt others is antithetical to all religions—that is about power, control, authoritarianism. We need to look at our own lives—we can never change the other; all we can do is change how we respond. If we really respond to the other, we need to be able to be vulnerable and open to change."

Brechner spoke of the difference between truth and peace, Shalom. It is believed that we don't have the capacity for the BIG truth and having a sense of doubt stops us from moving into extremism. THE truth is too big and it gets in the way of Shalom. If one religion claims to have THE truth rather than A truth, then we have a problem—we have the capacity for compassion and love but absolute justice and truth belongs in the realm of God. Brechner said that the essence of peace is more important than truth as Shalom is God and God makes Shalom. He concluded by saying: "I don't know where we're evolving as humans but hopefully we'll become more sensitive, more open, more peaceful and God-willing, more enlightened "

Gurdeep Singh presented the Sikh faith perspective. He talked about the Power of One—"We take oneness within oneself, family, community, the environment. My purpose is to be part of the global community, in harmony with oneself and

the Creator."

Singh suggested that social injustice and economic wars are the result of our own environmental associations. There are so many universities and yet . . . we have created these problems. We are all responsible for them. He asked, "How will the attributes of God come within me? As they do, God will illuminate me and I will have a better understanding. The first essence is compassion—for others, animals, the environment . . . God's language is the language of love and can be spoken by anyone here."

Singh identified the five vices as lust, anger, greed, emotional attachment, and ego. He said that we must search our inner selves and ask: Are you what you're saying you are? Each of us represents God and if we do not get up off our chairs and understand what is going on around the world, a line will be drawn between race, religions, and cultures and it will be too late. "Are we helping the downtrodden? The helpless? The needy? The hungry? Where is our courage as humans? Do we say, He's a Muslim—not my problem. He's a Hindu—not my problem. If we call God infinite . . . it will be my feeble attempt to express Him to help all with lessons of peace, love, and universal brotherhood. If I love God, why don't I love the creation which is right here? Everyone."

A question and answer session followed the presentations.

The conference closed with a silent prayer for World peace—Missionary Khalil Mobashir encouraged all participants to offer prayer according to their faith and traditions.

On second thought – why does the World Religious Conference matter?

By Dale Perkins

Starla Anderson has done a stellar job in attending and copiously recording what all six male presenters said to the World Religious Conference January 11. Each presenter came out of a faith community with adherents and members from the Greater Victoria region. While each only represented himself, we are given to believe that each actually represented central tenets of their faith tradition, which was being pulled together for the Conference.

The backdrop was recent happenings in Paris, France, where 17 people were killed by violent assailants who were citizens of France, but who carried a stomach-full of hatred for anyone other than the most virulent members of their particular faith tradition. However almost by accident, their crime was overshadowed by a similar tragedy happening in Nigeria, where members of the Boko Haram radical sect killed over 2000 people, mostly women, children and the elderly.

Nevertheless, any killing is tragic, and must be held in contempt by all civilized citizens anywhere in the world.

Back to the World Religious Conference – each representative offered capsule observations of important ingredients from their religious heritage, and it never occurred to me that what they said about their respective faith tradition needed correction or fine-tuning by anyone of us. However, having had some experience both in Christian church history and theology, and of late, connecting with leaders and spokespeople from various other faith traditions, I am emboldened to offer a few comments:

I noticed several common denominators coming out of each presenter's apology of their own faith tradition. An obvious one is their unity around respecting each other's faith traditions. There was no evidence of "one-up-man-ship" from any of the presenter's statements. I was impressed with how polite and restrained they were with each faith tradition outlined. Each presenter attempted to address particular social crises which dominate the world's stage. Some articulated special teachings

of their religious tradition, which they considered emblematic of their faith perspective. However, no one appeared to incite prejudice and hatred against another's religious tradition. That alone was worthy of praise and appreciation.

However, after all was said and done, were they really offering a way for all of us to become united and peaceful in such a chaotic and inflamed environment? Were they suggesting that religion was an antidote and corrective to hatred and war? And if only the vast majority of the citizenry in our country would delve deeply into one of these many religious traditions presented the world would actually have a better chance of surviving with the human species still in tact?

And as to how all of this relates to terrorism, I ask whether terrorism requires religious beliefs to exist? We hear vitriol spewing from the mouth of our prime minister as he equates jihadists as being the embodiment of evil, and yet from my study jihad is a noble characteristic of Islam, and certainly not something to fear or hold in contempt. But it's a handy stick used by PM Harper to incite fear and hatred, and since most of the Canadian population has zero informed awareness of what the word means, it becomes another stereotype for increasing intolerance and hate between people. Therefore the word has stopped serving a useful purpose, and isn't a helpful in the ongoing fight to make us all one.

So while I applaud the gathering and the intention of the World Religions body, I wonder whether it serves a useful purpose in our highly-charged social environment. Far more appropriate and useful would be consensus by all representatives of religion to expend time and energy on teaching about the Charter of Compassion (that Karen Armstrong has outlined so kindly and written).

By simply focusing on the so-called "Golden Rule" (common to every faith community) we might better serve our community and world. Now that would be a precious gift our faith communities might offer us. Dale Perkins is a retired church minister and social activist.



Craig Scott talks to people after a townhall, to affirm the NDP’s longstanding commitment to introduce proportional representation within the first term of an NDP government, in time for the 2019 election.

Progress in Parliament starts with our voting system

By Murray Rankin

For more than a year, Craig Scott, a constitutional expert and Opposition critic for Democratic Reform, has criss-crossed the country holding public meetings on how to improve the way we run elections in Canada.

It’s a crucial question in a country being transformed by a Conservative government that won 39 percent of the votes but holds 100 percent of the power in Parliament.

New Democrats are leading a campaign to replace Canada’s broken “winner-take-all” system with a proven model of proportional representation used by healthy democracies like Germany, Scotland, and New Zealand. The beauty of the model—called Mixed Member Proportional—is that it provides both local representation and a balanced legislature where each party’s seat count matches its popular support.

At a townhall in Victoria, Craig Scott not only affirmed our party’s long-standing commitment to proportional representation, but also laid out the plan to introduce it within the first term of a New Democratic government, in time for the 2019 federal election.

I’ve spoken with hundreds of constituents about this issue—at our townhall in November, in my constituency office, and on doorsteps across Victoria—and I know just how deeply we feel the need to renew our democracy. It’s an imperative that cuts across issues and party lines.

By introducing proportional representation, a New Democratic government would let a more cooperative politics take root in Ottawa, opening a path to real progress on Canada’s economic, social and environmental priorities.

So, in December, we put proportional representation to a vote in House of Commons. Working across party lines, I’m pleased to say that 92 New Democrats were joined by 16 Liberals—although regrettably not Mr. Trudeau—as well as both Green MPs.

That vote is a good example of the kind of cooperation we’ve been able to achieve in spite of a hyper-partisan Conservative majority. Another is the NDP’s motion to compensate survivors of thalidomide, for which we built support from all parties. But to make that kind of progress the new norm

in Ottawa we don’t just need to replace Stephen Harper, we need to prevent future false majorities.

That’s why, despite opposition from the Liberal leader and Harper’s Conservatives, proportional representation remains a priority for New Democrats. Within days of the vote in the House, Tom Mulcair came to Victoria to meet with Fair Vote Canada and sign a pledge to introduce the new voting system within the first term of a New Democratic government.

Speaking to reporters in Victoria, Mulcair called the number of Canadians who stay home on Election Day “a crisis in our democracy” and pledged to inspire non-voters by offering a system in which each and every vote is truly counted.

The broader benefits of proportional representation are clear. Political scientists studying these “consensual” democracies point to more engaged voters and more satisfied citizens, faster economic growth and less inequality, more women in government and healthier environmental policies.

With a New Democratic government, proportional representation will produce a parliament that engages and empowers more citizens, offering policies more in step with the values of most Canadians. That kind of policy-making isn’t just better suited to solving tough social and environmental challenges, it’s viewed as more credible and more stable, giving businesses the confidence they need to invest in Canada.

That’s the kind of real change a New Democratic government would deliver: a system that inspires more Canadians to participate, puts an end to fearful strategic voting, and fosters cooperation in Parliament.

After 10 years of Stephen Harper, Canadians want real progress—on creating jobs and paying fair wages; on better healthcare and more affordable childcare; on cutting greenhouse gases, investing in clean energy, and kickstarting a sputtering economy.

Proportional representation will help deliver progress on these priorities by increasing citizen engagement, making Parliament accountable to more Canadians and ensuring that every vote is counted.

Murray Rankin is Member of Parliament for Victoria.

Crowder’s derelict vessel legislation to be debated in House at end of February

Derelict vessel legislation will finally be debated in the House of Commons in the last week of February. Derelict and abandoned vessels, barges and docks pose environmental contamination and safety risks. They also create visual pollution in our communities that negatively impacts tourism and commercial activities.

The age of vessels in Canadian waters is increasing and so the incidence of abandoned and derelict vessels is expected to increase and become unmanageable. Yet no provincial or federal ministry is taking ownership of the problem, despite repeated local government and community appeals for leadership.

Nanaimo-Cowichan MP Jean Crowder’s new private member’s bill, Bill C-638, will designate the Coast Guard as a receiver of wrecks and require them to take reasonable steps to contact the owner and also to provide for government to make regulations on the removal, disposition or destruction of derelict vessels.

It also creates an ongoing, positive obligation to take measures to deal with derelict vessels in all cases except in circumstances outlined in regulations. It will also allow the Coast Guard to act without waiting for someone to report a vessel as a derelict; however, they must take steps to identify and contact the owner in every case.

The intention is to give the Coast Guard the regulatory power it needs to take action before a derelict vessel becomes a problem.

This is an important issue for coastal areas as well as rivers and lakes where more and more derelict vessels are being abandoned: many go on to be hazards to safety or the environment.

Sheila Malcolmson, NDP candidate in the new federal riding of Nanaimo-Ladysmith, and former chair of Islands Trust Council has been highlighting this issue for the last five years, since many residents of the Gulf Islands know the hazard that derelict vessels and wrecks can present.

Malcolmson led three local government delegations to meet with BC’s minister responsible for derelict vessels, the last two with almost 20 local governments represented.

And she has pushed the federal government to take stronger action. In a 2013

letter to then Transport Minister Denis Lebel, she wrote:

“The Islands Trust has been concerned with derelict and abandoned vessels for decades and has been asking since 2010 for the Province of British Columbia and the federal government to develop a coordinated approach to the timely removal of all types of derelict and abandoned vessels, barges and docks.

“Although we’re grateful for the leadership shown by Transport Canada staff in some specific derelict vessel removals last year, no permanent solutions have been adopted.”

That is why Malcolmson and Crowder are pushing to ensure that there is clear jurisdiction for dealing with derelict vessels and to urge the federal government to continue working with all other levels of government on even more solutions.

“We hope the government listens to the voices from all coastal areas in Canada asking for action on the problem of an aging fleet, the lack of recycling facilities for fiberglass and a desire to protect waterways from potential environment or safety concerns,” Malcolmson added.

People are asking how they can help ensure this legislation gets passed. Please consider writing the Minister of Transportation, Lisa Raitt (lisa.raitt@parl.gc.ca) and point out the following:

- Constituents want this legislation to eliminate or reduce the environmental, economic and navigational hazards posed by derelict vessels in their communities.
- Constituents desire greater jurisdictional certainty to provide proper support and guidance when removing or destroying derelict vessels.
- Constituents are concerned about the environment and desire a process that can effectively remove or destroy derelict vessels to limit pollution in their communities.
- Constituents are concerned about the capacity of municipalities to deal with derelict vessels with little support or guidance. Bill C-638 would clarify the main jurisdictional authority responsible for derelict vessels.

For updates on the progress of Bill C-638, go to Jean Crowder’s webpage at www.jeancrowder.ca and look for the derelict vessels tab.



Above, MP Jean Crowder (Nanaimo-Cowichan) chats with MLA Bill Routley (Cowichan Valley) at an NDP fundraiser. Right, she casts her ballot at the Nomination Meeting to choose a candidate to run in the new Cowichan-Malahat-Langford riding.

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Garrison reflects on his career as a long term NDP activist

By Randall Garrison

As the NDP candidate in the new riding of Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke, I thought it appropriate to share some reflections on my career as a long term New Democrat activist supporting environmentalism and social justice. This is also a response to those of you who have been urging me to tell more of my own story.

On the first Earth Day April 22, 1970 I was a student and, with a group of a dozen friends, we decided to bicycle downtown and block rush hour traffic. We did get people's attention but perhaps not in the most effective way. I have considered myself an environmentalist ever since.

I have always done what I can to reduce my personal carbon foot print. I drive an extended range electric vehicle, and despite my reservations about offset programs, I do buy carbon offsets to try to reduce the impact of the overwhelming amount of flying I do as an MP. April 18 this year I will be hosting my fifth annual local food dinner as my main fundraising event in an ongoing effort to keep the issue of local food security on the public agenda. Not to mention letting people know where they can get some terrific local food.

Starting in 1989 I worked first as executive director and subsequently as a board member, and then a volunteer for Pacific Peoples Partnership (PPP), a small Victoria based NGO that works on indigenous rights and environmental advocacy in partnership with indigenous people in Canada and the Pacific Islands. In 1990 we did a tour of BC schools warning of damage to coral reefs from global warming and ocean acidification and the threat of global warming to the viability of human life on the Pacific Islands, the beginning of PPPs ongoing environmental advocacy work.

As a city councillor in Esquimalt (2008-2011) I pushed hard and succeeded in getting Esquimalt to adopt science based greenhouse gas reduction targets, well

above those adopted by other communities. I also pushed hard for greater density to help reduce the carbon footprint of our community and succeeded. I also sponsored the motion to legalize secondary suites in Esquimalt and the motion to adopt a living wage policy. Both were adopted.

I continue to believe that environmental and social justice issues can and must continue to be linked. I was also proud that Esquimalt passed my motion (June 2010) calling for a ban on tanker traffic on the North Coast and opposing any increase in tanker traffic on the south coast, making Esquimalt the first municipality to take such a position.

I have tried to use my position as MP to draw attention to specific local environment issues. I have introduced private members Bills C-509 to restore federal environmental protection to the Goldstream River and C-557 to restore protection to Nimpkish Lake, Owikeno Lake, Horne Lake, Kennedy Lake, Great Central Lake, Sproat Lake and the Campbell River.

Though I know they will not pass in a Conservative majority parliament, these Bills are tools in an attempt to make the public aware that the Conservatives removed all environmental protection for all rivers, lakes, and streams on Vancouver Island.

I also conducted a year-long consultation with those concerned with the fate of the Southern Resident Killer Whales and then introduced Motion M-460 in the House of Commons, a motion representing the consensus of what needs to be done. I am continuing to work to make sure that the government's recovery plan (legally required to be released early this year) has real action in it to ensure the survival of our local orcas.

I sponsored a very well attended session of Nathan Cullen's Take Back our Coast tour in October. I have been successful in getting funding for the repair of the E&N railbed necessary for the restart



Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca MP Randall Garrison (l) met with Janet Barney of CUPW and constituents concerned about potential end of Canada Post home delivery in Colwood at the Pilgrim Coffee House January 24.

of passenger service and I continue to advocate for federal infrastructure funding for local LRT.

As I have said publicly many times, most recently on CFAX, I believe climate change is the biggest challenge facing our society. I remain a strong voice for climate action within our caucus.

The NDP's full environmental platform will be released later this year. But so far we have said that we would immediately shift the \$1.8 billion in federal subsidies that continue to go to fossil fuel industries over to the renewable energy sector. The NDP has said pipelines can only be approved if they respect aboriginal rights, have social licence, and undergo rigorous environmental review. For that reason the NDP has opposed the Northern Gateway Pipeline. I personally continue to oppose the Kinder Morgan pipeline as well as I do not believe it can meet those standards.

As an MP I have been privileged to serve as the NDP public safety and LGBT spokesperson. I am proud to be one of five out New Democrat MPs.

I am also one of only three Opposition members to get a private member's bill passed through the House of Commons. That Bill, C-279, would extend hate crimes protection and add explicit human rights protection for transgender Canadians to the Canadian Human Rights Code. Unfortunately a small group of Conservative Senators have blocked passage of my bill for nearly two years. However, in the inter-

im since we started this debate in parliament six provinces have added protection against discrimination on the basis of gender identity to their provincial human rights codes.

I have also spent a great deal of time fighting in the House of Commons against the Conservatives tough on crime agenda, which does nothing to build safer communities despite its enormous financial and social costs.

Before being elected as an MP, I taught criminal justice and political science at Camosun College for 20 years and maintained an active role in international human rights work. I served as the founding president of the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre and as a human rights observer in the Philippines, East Timor, Indonesia, and Afghanistan.

I was a participant in the organizing drive that led to the creation of the union of college instructors (FPSE) and have always been a supporter of the union movement in Canada. We share the same values and commitment to environmental sustainability, human rights and social justice.

That is why I am a New Democrat candidate and proud to be an environmentalist and social justice advocate.

I encourage folks to follow me on the following platforms:

Website: www.randallgarrison.ndp.ca
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RandallGarrisonPage>
Twitter: https://twitter.com/r_garrison

Ready for the challenge ahead

Alistair MacGregor

After a very long campaign that had several false starts, NDP members in the new federal riding of Cowichan-Malahat-Langford came together on Sunday, January 25, to elect their candidate for the 2015 election. The main event was at the Cowichan Secondary School Gymnasium in Duncan, but there was also a satellite voting station at the Branch 91 Legion in Langford. An impressive 488 members registered to vote.

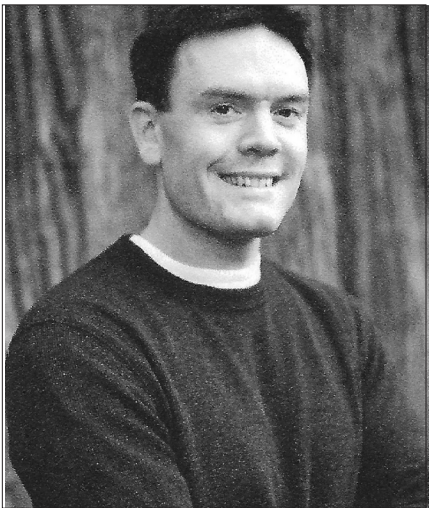
After three rounds of voting, I was honoured to be nominated to serve as your candidate in the next federal election, which is scheduled for October 19, 2015 but could be called early in a snap election this spring.

It was a privilege to share this campaign with five other amazing candidates: Ellen Oxman, Nick Wade, Hilary Abbott, Ian Morrison, and Georgia Collins. All are strong representatives and ambassadors for our party, and I will count on them and their supporters for the difficult contest ahead.

As many of you will know, I've had seven years of experience in a Member of Parliament's office, and I have seen up-close the effects of bad policy and legislation under the Conservative banner. When I first started working for MP Jean Crowder, I thought I had already led a pretty worldly life, but it wasn't until I sat down and listened to the stories of people from all walks of life that I started to realize the depth of the injustice present in the approach of the Conservative government.

In those early days, a small fire was kindled inside of me because I *knew* that the problems people were bringing to me could be *solved* by smart, forward-thinking policy. That small fire has continued to grow over the years; it has motivated me, it has kept me going, and it is the *essence* of my candidacy.

The most important words of advice I received in respect to seeking to become an elected representative were "remember who you are representing". It is because



Alistair MacGregor

of those words that I worked hard to engage with NDP members in the campaign and why I spent five months door-knocking and visiting almost 200 households. During that time I had my commitment to the nomination process, to the NDP, and to the federal change we need to see affirmed, over and over again.

The Cowichan-Malahat-Langford NDP is now in the early stages of getting into election readiness. I am looking forward to the challenges ahead and to engaging with a wider audience. Your support in this election will be crucial, because if past poll results are a guide, this new riding is either going to go to the Conservatives or the NDP. I will work hard to be the progressive standard bearer here, bringing the same passion, drive, determination, and dedication to the job that I had in the nomination campaign and that I have always shown the hundreds of constituents I have helped over the last seven years.

I fully appreciate how much responsibility has been placed on my shoulders, and in return I promise to give all of the skills, ability, and energy I possess to becoming your next Member of Parliament. Thank you for your confidence and your support.

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MLA Report:

Budget should focus on priorities that matter to people

By Carole James

The provincial government will table its budget on February 17, and I will be watching closely to see if it addresses any of the urgent needs in our community. Many of the pressures we're facing here in Victoria are the same ones citizens are dealing with right around the province.

This fall, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services toured BC to hear from citizens and organizations. I sat on the committee as the Opposition Spokesperson for Finance, and we heard about how hard it is for people to afford services and balance their daily needs as the cost of living continues to increase.

Citizens pointed out that, if government is going to promote economic development, then it needs to provide the physical and social infrastructure to make it happen. That means affordable services and access to housing and medical care, including doctors, nurse practitioners, mental health and addictions supports, publicly-funded schools, and efficient roads and transportation.

At the conclusion of the tour, the committee issued its report on budget consultations. It was a balanced summation of what we heard, and I hope the Minister of Finance listens and acts accordingly.

Let's remember that when government boasts about balancing the budget, the money to make that possible is coming out of the pockets of British Columbians. Citizens are paying through their taxes, BC Hydro rates, increased MSP premiums, and extra charges for other government services.

This budget should recognize the challenge of affordability for families and individuals, and not add to the burden people are facing.

Government could start by addressing poverty in this province in a meaningful way with a poverty reduction strategy. Shamefully, B.C. is the only province in the country without one. Moving to eliminate poverty makes sense socially and economically. If we don't deal with inequality, it's going to impact the economy and all citizens, not just those living in poverty.

Persons living with disabilities are

barely able to scrape by, and affordable and accessible childcare is out of reach for many families. It's just not fair that government continues to punish single parents on income assistance and their children by clawing back child maintenance payments.

Will these issues be addressed in the upcoming budget? Will this government see these critical needs that I see each and every day in our neighbourhoods?

We hear a lot about the BC Jobs Plan, but it is falling well short of what is needed as government cuts funding to education, colleges and universities. Last month the province broke its promise and announced new fees for adult basic education upgrading and English Language Learning. People seeking to upgrade any of their high school courses to qualify for post-secondary, or upgrading their English skills to get into the work force, will now have to pay out-of-pocket.

That's bad policy. If we're going to fill the needs of today and into the future, any jobs plan is going to fall short if it doesn't recognize the vital importance of education and training. We need to help citizens gain the skills that our society will need in the years ahead, not put roadblocks in their way.

As we look into the future, we need a real commitment to meet greenhouse gas targets and address climate change in a comprehensive way. We should be investing in renewable energy technologies, conservation through retrofits, and public transit, which we can do right now to help our communities and reduce GHG emissions.

What if we had a budget that worked with and strengthened the services citizens need? We cannot solve all these problems overnight, but I want to see a budget that focuses on the priorities that matter to the people in our community and province.

As always, I appreciate hearing your views on this topic and any others of interest to you and your family. Please contact me at 1084 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8V 3K4; by phone at 250 952-4211; by email to Carole.James.mla@leg.bc.ca; or visit my website at www.carolejamesmla.ca.

Carole James is MLA for Victoria-Beacon Hill.



Victoria-Beacon Hill MLA Carole James speaks at the recent Citizenship Ceremony in Victoria. She noted that it was moving to see over 60 new Canadians from around the globe, celebrating this very special day.

Revised application, same dead-end coal mine for Vancouver Island

Raven Coal Mine proposal should stay buried, says Wilderness Committee

VICTORIA – The application for a new coal mine on central Vancouver Island has been re-submitted, more than a year and a half after it was rejected by the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO). The proposal for the Raven Coal Mine has now entered a 30-day screening period to determine whether it contains all information required by the EAO.

This is as far as the project made it when the original application was rejected by regulators in spring 2013. During the previous screening process, the EAO found the application was missing hundreds of pages of required information and sent the proponent, Compliance Energy, back to the drawing board.

“Compliance has disregarded the environment and local water quality, as well as the First Nations and other people who this mine would impact,” said Torrance Coste, Vancouver Island Campaigner for the Wilderness Committee. “Since its sloppy application was denied in 2013, the company has done absolutely nothing to gain public trust or social licence.”

The Raven Coal Mine would extract around 30 million tonnes of coal and rock over 16 years from a site near Fanny Bay in the Comox Valley.

The project has been fiercely opposed

by the general public, environmental groups, the shellfish industry and other local businesses. All four municipal governments in the Comox Valley have opposed the mine, and the the K’ómoks First Nation has expressed concern about its impact on the riparian ecosystem and ongoing treaty negotiations.

The potential negative impacts of the Raven Coal Mine include the disruption of wildlife habitat, impacts to the watershed and riparian zones, and a significant increase to the Island’s contribution to the climate crisis – among many others. The mine would also result in a huge increase in heavy truck traffic, as the coal would be carried on public highways 4 and 19 to the port of Port Alberni.

“On top of the immediate environmental impacts, approving this mine would signal that this type of short-sighted, 19th century development is welcome on Vancouver Island,” said Coste. “This sort of risky, unsustainable project is a thing of the past here on the Island – we need to leave it there.”

The Wilderness Committee will be working with local groups to organize town hall meetings and other events to discuss the proposal, and will set up an online tool to help people participate in the upcoming public comment period.

Raw log exports skyrocket in B C

BC exporting raw logs and jobs at record levels

VICTORIA – The controversial practice of raw log exports – shipping unprocessed tree trunks overseas without adding any value here in BC – has reached all-time record levels in the last few years.

The most recent data from BC Stats indicates that 2013 was the record year for raw log exports, with a staggering 6.6 million cubic metres (m³) of timber sent abroad (one cubic metre roughly equals one city telephone pole). That is more than six times the amount that was being exported in the mid-1990s, when raw log exports averaged less than one million m³ per year.

The Wilderness Committee opposes raw log exports, as do forest industry unions, municipalities dependent on forest sector jobs, elected officials, policy experts and many others.

“The spike in raw log exports in the last five years is shocking,” said Torrance Coste, Vancouver Island Campaigner with the Wilderness Committee. “At a time when forestry-based communities are hurting, our government is allowing more logs to be exported than ever before, effectively killing jobs here in BC.”

While 2013 was the record year overall, 2014, 2012 and 2011 came in close behind

with more than 5.4 million m³ of wood exported raw each year. If the logs exported in 2014 alone were loaded onto logging trucks and those trucks were lined up end to end, they would cover the distance from Vancouver to Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Nearly 97 percent of raw log exports in Canada come from BC. As a result, BC gets fewer jobs and less economic benefit from its forest resources than any other province. To create one full-time job for a year, Ontario must harvest 292 m³ of wood. To create that same job in BC, it takes 1,312 m³.

“BC’s current forest model isn’t working for the environment or our economy. To ensure healthy forests and sustainable employment, we need to cut fewer trees while providing more jobs and more value, like the other provinces do,” Coste said. “Banning raw log exports is the first key step toward this goal.”

The Wilderness Committee is calling for other reforms in BC forest policy, including a ban on old-growth logging, better conservation of endangered species habitat and drinking water sources and greater inclusion and authority for First Nations and forestry communities.

Carole James, MLA VICTORIA-BEACON HILL



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1084 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8V 3K4
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www.CaroleJamesMLA.ca

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Alberta First Nation in BC to challenge Federal approval of tar sands project joined by local First Nations fighting pipelines

Vancouver, BC – The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) were in Federal Court in Vancouver October 15 to defend a challenge of last year’s federal government approval of Shell’s tar sands Jackpine Mine Expansion project. The ACFN was joined by representatives of the Squamish First Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation Sacred Trust, Greenpeace and local youth activist Ta’kaiya Blaney at a rally and media event outside of the courthouse this morning.

Speakers at the rally highlighted the connections between the Alberta First Nation’s challenge of the expansion of the oil sands to the local opposition of the tar sands pipeline corridors being proposed in BC, including the notable Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline which was approved earlier this year. The rally follows on the heels of the largest climate rally in North American history that was led by Indigenous peoples held in New York City a few weeks ago.

“Our peoples’ rights and our way of life are being threatened by out-of-control development in our traditional territory,” stated Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. “The Jackpine Mine Expansion approval is another example of how government is trying to push our rights out of the process. There was no meaningful consultation, there was nothing

done to mitigate – let alone understand – the impacts this project has on our people and rights.”

In its case filed before the Federal Court, ACFN alleges that Canada breached its duties to consult and accommodate ACFN with respect to the project and the manner in which the project will impact ACFN’s constitutionally protected section 35 rights. ACFN further alleges that the process, and mitigation offered, was inconsistent with the *Species at Risk Act*, the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, as well as several international agreements and conventions to which Canada is a signatory.

“This isn’t justice. Both the provincial and federal governments are bending to the needs of the oil and gas industry while slowly eroding and destroying the rights of First Nations and the eco-systems in which we live,” added Chief Adam.

The tar sands controversy is no stranger to BC residents, as earlier in 2014 local First Nations were at the forefront of the massive opposition against the recent approval of the Northern Gateway pipeline which would carry 520,000 bpd of tar sands through the heart of BC and numerous First Nations lands along its route.

“The Squamish Nation commend the Athabaskan Chipewyan for their efforts to protect their territories for and on behalf of their future generations,” said Chief Ian

Campbell of the Squamish Nation. “We implore the government of Canada to act honourably in recognizing the inherent and treaty rights of the First Nations and seek reconciliation in decision making, economic, and environmental impacts.”

First Nations are not alone in their opposition to the proposed tar sands expansion and pipeline corridors. Environmental groups and critics have been highlighting Canada’s deficiency in monitoring and meeting international accords to address rising greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the protection of waterways and species at risk.

“The government needs to get its carbon act together before it starts green lighting more tar sands project and pipelines that will just accelerate the problem,” said Shamentsut (Mandy Nahanee) with Greenpeace Canada. “Canada is failing its First Nations people and the rest of its citizens alike. Just last week, the federal audit highlighted Canada’s failure to meet emission targets and effective monitoring in the tar sands. It appears that First Nations are taking real action to try and hold government and industry accountable not just to their people and rights but for the future of all of us. It’s imperative we stand with First Nations and those on the frontline of climate change to find solutions that work for a better future.”

The October 16 rally included one of the faces of the opposition to the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline, Ta’Kaiya Blaney, who brought with her the passion and energy to represent the youth and future generations.

“Indigenous peoples across North America are working to protect what’s left of our territories to safeguard the futures of our peoples future generations,” said Takaiya Blaney, local youth Indigenous rights activist. “We are not protesters but protectors of our territories and our struggles are connected by pipelines, refineries and tankers. We have a responsibility to ensure that there is something left for my generation and my children and my children’s children.”

The Federal Court hearing for the ACFN legal challenge of the Jackpine Mine Expansion was heard from October 15-17 in Vancouver at 701 West Georgia Street, from 9:30am to 4:30 pm daily. The hearings were open to the public.

Budget cuts 2015 must give middle class families a break

VANCOUVER—New Democrats are demanding that the Conservatives use the upcoming budget to change direction and start building an economy that works for Canadians.

«We have just experienced a decade of Conservative budgets causing damage to our country,» writes NDP Finance critic Nathan Cullen in his letter to finance minister Joe Oliver. «Middle class families are working harder than ever, yet falling further behind. Family incomes are stagnant while household debt skyrockets. Young families struggle to pay for childcare while seniors can’t access the care they need.»

“Stephen Harper’s solution is to take billions from the middle class and give it to the wealthiest 15%. This is wrong.”

In the letter, New Democrats ask for Budget 2015 to include practical measures that:

- Make life more affordable by scrapping


the Conservatives wasteful income splitting scheme and implementing Tom Mulcair’s plan to reduce childcare costs to no more than \$15 a day.

- Protect and create good jobs by giving a break to small businesses that create jobs and taking urgent action to address Canada’s youth unemployment crisis.
- Defend public health care by reversing Stephen Harper’s reckless plan to cut \$36 billion from health care budgets and instead work with provinces on reducing wait times.
- Ensure a Canada where no one is left behind, including allowing people to retire in dignity by lowering the OAS age of retirement back to 65.
- Build our economy while protecting the environment by working with companies to create sustainable, clean jobs and ensure polluters pay the cost of their environmental mess.

“It’s time for the minister of finance to stop panicking and get to work on a budget that makes the economy work for Canadians, not another Conservative budget focused on helping the privileged few,” said Cullen.

“Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the earth.”
— William Faulkner

Bill Routley, MLA
Cowichan Valley



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Duncan
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NDP governments have best record in protecting Canadian jobs--Finance Canada stats

VANCOUVER - Not only are NDP governments the best fiscal managers, according to Finance Canada statistics, the evidence shows that New Democrat governments also have fewer unemployed Canadians.

“You can count on Tom Mulcair’s NDP to defend Canadian jobs,” said NDP Employment Critic Jinny Sims (Newton-North Delta) “Harper’s Conservatives are shipping jobs out of the country, while Justin Trudeau’s Liberals have even higher unemployment rates than the Conservatives – and they have no plan to fix it.”

Between 1980 and 2013, New Democrats had the best record when it comes to low unemployment:

AVERAGE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY PARTY IN POWER	
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey	
NDP	7.1
Conservative	9.3
Liberal	10.7

«After a decade of falling behind under the Conservatives, Tom Mulcair is fighting for the middle class,» said Sims. «Only Tom Mulcair has the experience and plan to fix the damage done by Stephen Harper and grow Canada’s economy.»

Gary Holman, MLA
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www.johnhorganmla.ca



Victoria City Councillor Ben Isitt enjoys a hike in the Sooke Hills with his daughter Aviva and their friend Rilan. Protecting wilderness areas is a big benefit of urban containment.”

Protecting forests and farmland from urban sprawl

By Ben Isitt

Right now, the Capital Regional District (CRD) is consulting residents on the Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS), to guide land use decisions from the Saanich Peninsula to Victoria in the urban core to Port Renfrew on the Pacific coast.

The RSS will either strengthen the policy of urban containment, mandating that new housing and development be concentrated in existing population centres, or it will provide a green light to urban sprawl, extending pavement and development into the wilderness areas and farmland of the Capital Region.

I strongly support a policy of urban containment.

Protecting forests and farmland from urban sprawl makes sense for a number of reasons. It conserves wilderness areas for the ecological value of maintaining plant and animal habitat, protecting water quality, sequestering carbon, and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Urban containment also conserves farmland for present and future generations. The Capital Region and BC have a finite supply of arable land, due to mountainous terrain, constraints of the marine coastline, and existing urban and suburban development. While farmland is scarce, we also face external challenges: mounting transportation costs, a changing climate with volatile weather and precipitation patterns, and instability in the global capitalist economy. Support for local food systems is essential.

There are additional benefits to building compact, complete communities, rather than suburbs with sprawling transportation systems. Suburbs are heavily reliant on private motor vehicles, gridlocked highways and the burning of fossil fuels, impacting air

quality and contributing to climate change. Infrastructure of sprawling suburbs is also very costly to maintain over time, with vast networks of roads, sewers and water lines, and low densities to finance reinvestment. Suburbs are often dominated by big box and corporate retail and a lack of social cohesion and community participation.

There are alternatives to urban sprawl. In the City of Victoria, we face challenges including income disparity and a lack of greenspace in some neighbourhoods. But I believe we have greater capacity to succeed over to time, with our vibrant village centres, healthy community services, and proximity to employment and services Downtown.

Within the City and Saanich to the north, there is substantial land to accommodate new housing and growth for the region without urban sprawl. The area between Downtown Victoria and Uptown in Saanich, roughly bounded by Government Street, Burnside and Blanshard, is currently characterized by single-storey commercial buildings and parking lots. This land provides substantial employment, but transitioning to mixed-use with multi-storey residential above commercial provides the opportunity to build thousands of units of new housing and create substantial employment.

The City of Victoria and District of Saanich are currently developing local area plans for this corridor, which will require extensive consultation with residents, as well as “quality of life infrastructure” (new parks and dedicated walking and cycling greenways) to ensure new density improves rather than undermines the quality of life.

I hope you will take the opportunity to contact the CRD Board expressing your views on regional land use and urban containment, by emailing CRDBoard@crd.bc.ca. Together, we can build a sustainable region that leaves no one behind and protects the natural environment. Doing so requires saying no to development in some areas and concentrating new growth within the urban core.

Ben Isitt is a Victoria City Councillor and CRD Director. He can be reached at 250-882-9302 or bisitt@victoria.ca.

Cowichan region farmers’ co-operative introduces online marketplace

The Cowichan Region’s new producers co-operative is moving forward on bringing more local food to market this spring.

Cow-Op.ca, the **online** marketplace for Cowichan farmers, will be the first item to launch in a series of priority initiatives set out by the Cowichan Valley Co-operative Marketplace (CVCVM), the region’s new food producers co-operative

Incorporated in November of 2014, the CVCVM is a not-for-profit co-operative guided by a board of members made up of local farmers, business owners and community partners including Cowichan Green Community. Funding for the development of the website and business plan has been provided by Coastal Community Credit Union and Economic Development Cowichan.

“Cowichan farmers make significant contributions to our local economy, which is why it’s important to us to lend them our support,” says Moira Hauk, Coastal Community’s Regional Manager for South Vancouver Island. “Cow-Op.ca is an innovative and truly unique solution for helping local food producers share their goods all year-round. We can’t wait to see the lasting benefits this website will have for Cowichan businesses.”

Cow-Op.ca will be the first online marketplace of its kind for the region and will feature a variety of produce, meats, eggs, seafood, cheeses, honey, and more all grown or produced throughout the Cowichan Region.

“Cow-Op.ca will give farmers yet another option alongside existing farmers markets, CSAs, and farm-gates sales, to get their yummy local fare onto Cowichan plates, with great convenience and no waste,” explains Heather Kaye, coordinator for the new website.

Future initiatives for the co-operative include a delivery truck and food waste processing.

The CVCVM’s first AGM was held Thursday, January 29 at The Station, 360 Duncan Street in Cowichan Food producers were encouraged to attend, become a member of the co-op and learn more about the online marketplace initiative. It was a potluck dinner and the evening began with a cheque presentation from Coastal Community Credit Union.

For more details contact Heather Kaye at 250-748-8506 or email info@cow-op.ca.

Newfoundland “game changer” on Europe-Canada free trade agreement: pulls out of negotiations, could reject deal

As the government of Newfoundland and Labrador made the unprecedented move of threatening not to support CETA, the Europe-Canada free trade agreement -- pulling out of all future Canadian trade negotiations -- the Council of Canadians, long-time trade activists, congratulated the government on its January 19 announcement.

Darin King, Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development said, “If we see no activity we’ll take the actions we’ve just described to you here from a trade perspective and we’ll pull the plug on CETA and Newfoundland will no longer be a part of the deal.”

“Whether it is France, or Germany, there is momentum against this deal. Newfoundland would be in good company if it withdrew its support for CETA,” said Maude Barlow, national chairperson of the Council of Canadians. “CETA is not just bad for Newfoundland and Labrador, it is a disaster for all Canadians. It gives a huge amount of power to corporations to sue governments. It is no wonder that Newfoundlanders and their government are upset.”

Newfoundland contests the fact that the Harper government reneged on promises to contribute to a \$400 million fisheries fund. This fund would have compensated for jobs lost after CETA eliminated minimum processing requirements in the province’s fisheries.

The Council of Canadians reiterates its demand that the province hold public consultations on the deal.

“Once again, Newfoundland could be a game changer in this deal, the one province that is looking after the jobs and the interests of their citizens,” added Ken Kavanagh, a Council of Canadians board member from St. John’s. “CETA and the broader ‘free trade’ agenda is harmful to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We ask that the government go further by holding public consultations on the CETA. Newfoundland could be the first brave province to stand up for Canadians and reject this deal.”

As well as losing regulations that protect fishing jobs, CETA could force Canadians to pay investors for profits lost under investor-state dispute settlement provisions. In 2012, NAFTA tribunals ruled that Newfoundland could not require Hibernia oil field producers to invest some of their profits back into research and development.

In 2010, the Harper government paid \$130 million to settle an investor-state claim with AbitibiBowater. While the company was in bankruptcy proceedings, Newfoundland tried to save jobs by expropriating the Grand Falls Windsor mill. The company charged that it expropriated the company’s water and timber rights.

Newfoundland and Labrador will also face millions in increased costs for pharmaceutical drugs given the Harper government agreed to extending patent protection to highly profitable drug companies under CETA. In 2011, the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association estimated the cost to Newfoundland and Labrador of this provision would be \$13.2 million a year. Another study that same year by two of Canada’s top academics on pharmaceutical policy put the price tag at \$46 million a year.

The Newfoundland government has already lobbied many European embassies. Its actions mean that it is discontinuing all trade negotiations including the Economic Partnership Agreement, and all negotiations related to the World Trade Organization.

The Council of Canadians has been lobbying against CETA and has met with members of parliament in Europe and in Canada.

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A tale of determination

By Kevin Campbell

I know for certain that I wouldn't be writing this if I hadn't been "tricked" by my own body more than six years ago. I was diagnosed with IgA Nephropathy (Berger's disease). For a layman's explanation take a look here: www.kidney.org.uk/help/medical-information-from-the-nkf/kidney-diseases-index/medical-info-kidney-disease-iga/

Basically my kidneys were failing. This was a twist in my life that I certainly didn't plan. Now in my early 50's. and the recipient of a donor kidney, I am sharing what I've tried to shape into a "treat" -- lemonade from lemons -- with the thought that my experiences might assist others who find themselves in similar circumstances.

Born and raised in Victoria, BC, for a kid I'd lived an eventful and adventurous life. I was athletic and a talented hockey player. I'd lived and schooled in Victoria and in Germany where my parents were located for a period. By any standard I lived a family life that was "rich", with loving parents and siblings.

My career path in BC led me to train as a chef and as a personal trainer. In 1996, armed with management and work experience I moved to Ibiza, Spain, employed as a personal trainer, chef and property manager, often for personalities whose names are well known. I was in the prime of my life by any standard.

In 2000 I met and married a practicing physician in Ibiza who was to become the mother to my wonderful daughter, Julia, now 13, and we settled into the beginning of family life, with its normal twists and turns.

Leading up to 2008, as an individual used to an enhanced level of physical fitness, I found myself feeling increasingly unwell.

My physician wife soon arranged for the tests and the diagnosis that delivered the "trick" that has changed my life, as well as those around me. I was diagnosed with serious kidney disease. The condition was terminal if not treated and even then the prognosis was rough.

I would need regular five-and-a-half-hour dialysis sessions, three times per week, combined with careful monitoring, constant tests and heightened care to avoid the bugs that most of us overcome with normal resistance.

My first surgery occurred in Spain and it quickly became clear that Canada's and BC's healthcare systems were better equipped for my long term care than those available in my adopted country.

It was a terrible time for all of us. I would have to return to Canada, leaving my wife and young daughter, but if I was to survive to be around for them in the future we needed to make the difficult decisions.

In 2008 I returned to Victoria and experienced my first dialysis at Jubilee Hospital, ironically, on Halloween.

It's not difficult to imagine the changes in life that resulted. From a fit, independent family man, I had now returned to live close to the hospital in Victoria, at my parent's home.

My wife and daughter were now 6,000 miles away, adjusting to life without me. There was no certainty about the future other than the knowledge that half of my week would now require being attached to a hospital bed. For the remainder of the week I needed to find work. My daughter's reflections, recently, speak volumes:

"I don't really like being 6,000 miles away from my Dad because he is too far and I don't get any of his hugs which is very hard for me. I love Ibiza but imagine being away from your Dad and only getting to see him a few times a year. Skyping him isn't the same as actually being beside him.

"One day at school a friend told me, 'I wish I was just like you,' and a girl said, 'You don't want to be like her, you don't want to have your dad dying,' that hurt my heart. At school I see everybody with their dad and I didn't have Him there.

"I don't like that my dad has to take so many pills because the make him tired and I know it's hard for him to take so many pills. I don't like to see my dad with so little energy but I know he tries his best.

"I am feeling really scared because I don't know what is going to happen to my dad with his transplant and that really bothers me."

The mental and physical challenges were massive. It was clear that this could not continue forever and that I must make every effort to adjust while a search was mounted to find a donor with a match that would replace my own kidneys.

There is not space here to mention the names of the many physicians, professionals, friends, family who have helped and encouraged me over the past few years -- my eventual book will tell the full story -- but their combined energy and effort brought me to the understanding that I was not alone. That I actually had an opportunity not only to help myself get well but also to possibly raise the hopes and realistic expectations of others whose lives are consumed with conditions that could be improved if organ donation systems were better understood.

In a sense my treatment became a "lifestyle" -- the more I realized the constraints -- I realized, also, the possibilities.

I was somewhat unique as a patient. I didn't look particularly ill. After my return to Victoria I'd decided that I would work, as much as possible, at my business as a personal trainer, both for income and to enable my own level of fitness. It was clear that my ability to fight infection and to eventually successfully receive a donor kidney would be significantly improved if my fitness level was maximized.

My nature is to be optimistic and active and these "talents" were noticed by doctors and activists who explained how I might make a contribution. I found myself being asked to attend meetings, gatherings, seminars etc. to speak about my experiences.

Now, searching the internet with my name will land you in more information sites about kidney disease and organ donation than you might ever have imagined. I've found myself in a world of film producers and writers as much as the world of physicians, specialists and hospitals.

Perhaps the most notable happening to date was my involvement in the "Tough Mudder" event. Designed as a 25 km military boot camp exercise which would challenge even the fittest SAS competitor, I became the first dialysis patient, ever, to compete and complete the course.

Competing nearly killed me -- but I finished to tell the story. Take a look here: www.steamincups.com/kidney-mudder/

The images tell the tale, with pictures of my daughter Julia who made an unforgettable visit to support me, and pictures of the end of the event and my immediate and emergency journey to hospital where things got quite tricky.

So I've found myself with a public profile simply because I'm quite ill. I could have wished for such attention as a hockey playing kid. Now I'm not so sure.

Along the way there have been four occasions when it has seemed a kidney would become available only to find that a transplant was not possible. Roller coaster anyone?

On November 4, 2013 I received a kidney from a donor who had read some of the stories about me. Thank you Darin and thank you to the doctors and staff at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, as well as the staff at Jubilee and all who have helped along the way.

It's not the end of the story for me. I will be under medical care and subject to tests for the foreseeable future but I have been disconnected from the dialysis machine, giving me back a

complete life again!

Just as importantly I've been given the motivation to use my good fortune to inform and project information and ideas about how we can improve the availability of organs for transplant in our society.

Shelley Hunt, co-founder of www.becauseicanproject.com, reports that recent surveys indicate that 90% of Canadians would be ready to donate an organ and 95% would accept a transplant where circumstances and necessities exist. Nevertheless connecting donors or viable organs to recipients is very difficult.

In Canada it is difficult to be clear about donation intention. Our system, which reflects provincial regulations, defaults to requiring that potential donors, "opt-in". There is no automatic assumption that anybody would be willing to donate in the event of a fatality and frequently even where a victim has chosen to make a donation available, next of kin in tragic circumstances are not always clear about the preference of their loved one.

A better system is for the default assumption to be automatically "opt-in". Unless a person chose to "opt-out" of the default, the assumption would be that a person would always be willing to make viable organs available.

There is every reason to respect the preferences of those who would wish to opt-out", but many lives would be saved with this change in protocol.

Of course in the case of kidney donation, a donor's life goes on normally after a few weeks of recovery. But what a service has been performed -- giving life back, not only to a person with kidney disease but to their world of family and friends. Darin's gift to me deserves my continued efforts.

My daughter Julia visited from Spain this summer and I travelled with her as she returned to Ibiza for the start of school. A truly 21st century international person, fluent in English and Spanish, she will carry forever the message on her tee-shirt -- My Daddy Needs a Kidney -- but now that message can be extended very much beyond Julia's Dad. There are so many more people who need kidneys and if telling my story can better inform, then the "trick" on me can still be turned into a "treat" for others.

Kevin Campbell can be reached at <http://agelessliving.ca/kevin-campbell-needs-a-kidney/>



Kevin Campbell and his daughter, Julia.

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On the home front:

Time for politicians and managers to tell us how the are going to deal with the real world in 2015 and beyond

By David Olsen

People everywhere remembered the Holocaust on the 70th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by Russian troops on January 27, 1945.

The memory of the Holocaust should never fade – we should feel it looking over the shoulder of every generation. Why? Because as *The Guardian* said, “We cannot explain the Holocaust – instead it explains us.” As a guard at Auschwitz said, “There is no ‘why’ here.”

A sobering thought and it is right that the Holocaust should be commemorated by a new memorial in Ottawa this year -- and that memorial should also record that even in Canada, the government opposed any assistance to the Jews. In 1938 Prime Minister McKenzie King said that the admission of Jews posed a greater threat to Canada than did Hitler.

Then there was the ship *St Louis*. In May, 1939, with its more than 900 Jewish refugees turned away from every port in the Americas, including the USA, Canada was the last hope. It was not to be. McKenzie King stated his “emphatic opposition” to the admission of the Jews on the *St Louis*.

And so the ship made its melancholy journey back to Europe, where the passengers were finally accepted by Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Sadly, many of those who disembarked in Europe died in concentration camps after the German invasion.

The Holocaust Memorial is scheduled for completion this fall, at the same time as another contentious memorial. This is the “Memorial to the Victims of Communism” which, unlike the Holocaust Memorial has been given the last remaining iconic site in Ottawa, right next to the Supreme Court of Canada.

This is a project close to Stephen Harper’s heart and provides the opportunity for a lot of ideological speeches. Although supported by all political parties (why?), it has also come in for much criticism. The Chief Justice has raised concerns about the use of the Supreme Court site; others have criticized it as ugly, brutal and out of character with the Supreme Court building. This is the explanation from the government website:



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Memorial to the Victims of Communism — Canada, a Land of Refuge

This national memorial will create awareness of the “crimes of communism” and pay tribute to the more than 100 million people worldwide who perished or suffered under communist tyranny. This new Capital landmark will recognize the role Canada has played in offering refuge to the millions that left behind torment and oppression for a new beginning in a free and democratic country.

Canadian Heritage is the federal department responsible for new national commemorative works in Canada’s Capital Region and is managing this monument project on behalf of Tribute to Liberty, a Canadian charity whose mission is to establish a Canadian memorial to commemorate the victims of communism.

This appears to be a Canadian copy of the American “Tribute to Liberty” project dedicated by George W. Bush. Certainly millions of people who have lived in countries whose despotic megalomaniac rulers who claim to be “communists” have been oppressed. But communism is merely a system in which most property and resources are collectively owned – not too different from the shops and gas stations of the Peninsula Co-op, the hospitals of our public health system or our national and provincial parks!

Economic philosophies do not oppress people or commit crimes; people do – and they are doing it around the world with gusto as you read these words. Memorials commemorate events in the past and remind us to try to not make the same mistakes again – sadly with little success.

The memorial is due to be opened just before the federal election – a heaven-sent opportunity for a massive prime ministerial photo-op just before polling day, with the chance for some heavy-duty ideological rhetoric. A great danger of the new memorial, on its iconic site, is that it could easily become a focal point for all the wrong demonstrations, for all the wrong reasons. Add a few banners, a few people in uniform, a national anti-communist day and you can guess where we are headed

Oppression is ongoing – as North Koreans suffering under Kim Jong Un (a lunatic who pretends to be a communist) can testify, so there is no point in a memorial with a pretence that oppression has ended. If we are to stand up for victims of oppression we should recognize that it is happening and do something about it, instead of spending money on an ugly slab of concrete next to the Supreme Court on a site earmarked for the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Judicial Building.

Of course, a Memorial to Victims of *Oppression*, might cause the government a few problems since it could include many First Nations, Japanese -Canadians in World War 2, Jewish refugees who were refused entry to Canada in the 1930s, and recently, Roma refugees from Hungary who were enthusiastically deported by then Immigration Minister Jason Kenney.

We can add the ongoing horror in the Middle East, the victims of apartheid in South Africa, the genocides in Rwanda and Burundi, the victims of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and the millions of women who make all our clothing in inhuman conditions in Asia Then we might have to add the 9 million women and girls and 9 million foreign workers in Sani Arabia “whose rights continue to be violated”, as Human Rights Watch put it.

But that wouldn’t do, would it, now that we have just contracted to sell US\$10 billion worth of armored vehicles to Saudi Arabia. In a tragi-comic twist to the Saudi deal, the Ontario Conservative MP Susan Truppe said the deal showed the Conservative government was “not just spouting empty rhetoric” – oh, and by the way, Ms. Truppe is Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women.

Then there are people oppressed by military, capitalist and fascist regimes worldwide – but that’s OK in the Conservatives’ book as long as they are not “communist”. Then there is China, but the Conservative government is pretty muted on that too – after all we might end up with no steel at all for the Blue Bridge! And don’t let’s kid ourselves that China is “communist”. Maybe that’s what Mao Zedong had in mind in 1948, but it is now a totalitarian capitalist state.

It is now only months until the next Canadian federalection and we need to face up to these and other troubling issues. On CBC TV recently we had the ludicrous spectacle of defence spokesmen for the Conservatives, NDP and Liberals splitting hairs over the semantics of our military engagement against ISIL. The issue was whether Canadian forces are on the “front line”, with the government spokesman tying himself on knots to try and show that, although they were being fired on, and firing back, they were somehow not on the “front-line”.

All the parties better get real on this. Stephen Harper has stated that “we are at war with ISIL”. War is war – you can’t be in it and yet not in, as the government will find out if CF-18 pilots are shot down and captured by ISIL. So let’s stop pretending and let Parliament address it head on – it is war, and we do it or we don’t.

As the election looms, the famous “middle class” are getting a lot of attention – especially from Justin Trudeau who is unwilling to admit that if there is a middle class there must also be an upper and lower class -- or some euphemism for it. At the Liberal caucus meeting in London, Ontario recently, Trudeau rambled on about “the middle class and those who aspire to join it”. Is it some special club, for heaven’s sake, to which people aspire? How do you qualify – go to the right school, have nice clothes or what? What defines this ephemeral “middle class”?

We are surrounded by aspects of Disney World Canada. The Federal government stopped the Alaska ferry terminal in Prince Rupert because the Americans wanted to use American steel, yet here in Victoria the new bridge will be delayed six months – not because we are waiting for Canadian steel, but because we want Chinese steel to replace the first lot of faulty Chinese steel!

Before Gordon Campbell and Christy Clark we might have had ferries built in Canada – not anymore!

At all levels governance is just blundering along. Health ministry researchers unjustly fired (with one suicide) with the Ministry hammered for its flawed investigation. Robert Dziekanski killed by RCMP tasers in 2007 because constables “acted according to their training” – some training!

Poverty in BC still a huge problem – while the premier trots off to India with her son so he can “learn to empathize” with poor people. BC facing a huge healthcare financial shortfall because government pretends there is no need to plan for taxes to cover it. Before he is even sworn in, Mayor of Saanich fires CAO. BC Cancer Foundation uses donations to give BC Cancer Agency CEO an extra \$75,000 a year on top of his half million dollar salary! New Mayor of Victoria wanting to spend \$55, 000 on a consultant “who did help with some of my pre-campaign planning” and then causing a storm in a teacup over an oath of allegiance.

So -- time for politicians and managers to tell us how they are going to deal with the real world in 2015 and beyond.

Former Prime Minister Joe Clark speaks in Sidney

By David Olsen

Inspired by the words of a First Nations Chief, “Let us lift each other up,” the Right Honourable Joe Clark challenged a Sidney audience to break the habit of “looking at the world from our own point of view, interests and prejudices”.

Canada’s 16th prime minister spoke to a capacity audience at Mary Winspear Centre, on January 19, participating in Elizabeth May’s eminent speakers program with the subject “How we Lead – Canada in a Century of Change” - the subject of his new book.

Clark focused on Canada’s role in the world; how the country had a significant and positive role in world affairs in the decades following World War 2, and how it could and should do so again.

Clarke’s address mirrored his deep concern, “that the present Canadian government has aggressively narrowed Canada’s official international policy to concentrate on trade and military initiatives; and rejecting conciliation, most notably in the tinder-

box of the Middle East”.

While relaxed and often humorous he left his audience in no doubt that time is running out if Canada is to regain its rightful status in the world. He also praised the work of NGO’s, such as Oxfam, MSF and Greenpeace. He recalled that Canada was a key architect of the United Nations, the Commonwealth and NATO and that we need to identify new alliances including Ghana – one of Africa’s most successful democracies, the Nordic States and Indonesia, which has the world’s largest Muslim community.

Clark said he sees such engagements as a key response to what he described as “the threatening time” in which we live, citing Ukraine, Boko Haram, Paris, and Ebola. “Even wars,” he said, “once had rules” which allowed the UN, MSF, Red Cross/ Crescent etc. to alleviate suffering in conflict zones. But now, “attacking the innocents”, is all too common.

In a rousing call to action Clark declared, “we are here tonight as citizens of the world to make a difference.” We will



Rt. Hon Joe Clark

never again have the World’s 7th largest GDP (the ticket to the G7) he cautioned. Our **soft** assets, not military or resource power, will define our future international reputation. Our quality of fairness, our capacity to find common ground – these will help to inch steadily towards a more just and peaceful world and we need to “lead from beside” convincing others to want the same outcomes as ourselves.

Recalling that 2015 is the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, Clark deplored the

serious decline in the ability of Parliament to hold the government accountable – and had harsh words for the current use of omnibus bills which prevent parliamentary discussion.

Clark came across as progressive and thoughtful – a far cry from today’s “Conservatives”. Recalling his experience as prime minister in a minority government he said he believes now that it was a mistake not to reach out to the other parties and, even if not forming a coalition – which he said, can work - to have been more inclusive.

But, he said, he was locked into the old way of doing things, trying to govern as if it was a majority – which it wasn’t.

Asked about Canadian military action in the Middle East – “the most dangerous place in the world” -- Clark observed that “we have taken sides – and there are already too many sides”. “We need to do what we used to do -- help find the common ground”.

His final message was “be involved and ask what could we be – to what can we aspire”?

Are rail passengers ALSO getting fracked by BIG OIL?

Photostory by Diane Walsh

Amtrak is doing its best in the face of challenges presented by a fracking boom in North Dakota and beyond.

In Wisconsin, there have been previous reports of freight train crews coming to the end of their shift and simply abandoning a train on the rail line when done with their shift – no one scheduled to take over from them.



An Amtrak train is parked, with no crew to man it..

A parked train! All rather frustrating to Amtrak. The effect of this kind of brazen blockage is that Amtrak’s passenger train (honourably trying its best to keep to schedule) is simply unable to pass, left hostage to the theatrics of industry giants.

One wouldn’t think that freight-train shortage-of-staff would be Amtrak’s problem but there have been instances of Amtrak actually having to call someone and plead to get a parked freight train moved so its passengers can get by.

Further reports, only very recently, are that more freight staff have since been hired.



Passenger trains are being delayed by heavy freight trains.

On Saturday, November 1, 2014, just before midnight, there was another rather odd incident. Ten to 15 minutes out of Spokane going east, en route to Idaho, Amtrak’s Empire Builder was delayed behind a freight train which had collided with an unoccupied SUV. The freight train was going about 60 miles an hour, needless to say demolishing the vehicle right in its track. It is unclear why the vehicle was on the track and what the circumstances were around the incident.

The Amtrak passenger train, the Empire Builder, was behind the freight train and therefore was halted for three hours while emergency services, the Sheriff and 20 BNSF staff swarmed the area. Cleaning up a big mess of debris enabled both the freight train and the Empire Builder to then continue.

Incidents off this nature are apparently not that uncommon.

Even more troubling however is the impact of three times more freight trains running on the tracks in the last two years on Amtrak’s ability to gauge how long any particular journey is going to take. Amtrak is beholden to freight priority traffic.

The boom in North Dakota is creating enormous freight traffic. Doubtless Warren Buffet who owns BNSF is delighted; mounds of money are pouring in – with a cool \$1000/a car to move oil and up to 100 oil cars per train.

Capitalism steals the day as wheat farmers are second priority. It’s \$200/ a car to move wheat. So at the moment it seems

it’s tough times for the wheat farmer.

The bottom line means that “choice”: oil brings in more money.

Amtrak passengers are delayed by the increased freight traffic, be it CSX, BNSF or whatever; industry freight has the right of way. Amtrak is paid a fee for any delay; which is part of the contract.

No incentive on the part of Warren Buffet to support alternate routes for moving the oil because the numbers “are working” in the current situation.

Some Williston, North Dakota, landlords who see dollar signs bouncing everywhere have reportedly racked up rents and are housing fracking boom-business workers whilst uprooting long term residents in favour of those who can pay exorbitant rents.

Still 300+ men to one woman, isn’t much fun for barmaids!

The damage that can be measured is the boom’s impact on Amtrak schedules. Amtrak trains have for years and years been able to say that they’ve had a 90% record of being on-time. But now through no fault of their own, they are late more often than not, as a direct result of the freight cars moving oil tripling in the last two years.

Thousands of black stealth oil cars are



Writer Diane Walsh

dominating the railway line. Amtrak merely gets to “use the railway line” and be at the behest of industry’s priority needs. And there is nothing customers of Amtrak can do about it. The oil boom may actually be said to be culpable in the unintended consequence of virtually ending on-time-commitment passenger rail travel. Amtrak has to tell its passengers it has to play it by ear. Literally.

How slick is the oil boom after all?

Maybe Warren Buffet should be made to be stuck behind a freight train and told “too bad sir, sit and wait.”

Writer Diane Walsh posted this commentary to her blog www.indydianewalsh.com November 4, 2014.

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The \$18 billion worm in the apple & the ravages of economic austerity

By Tim Pheotist

In January 2015 a record breaking statistic was rubbed in the faces of wage earners, globally.

Apple Inc. “earned” profits of \$18 billion USD for its most recently reported financial quarter.

Sales for the quarter approached \$75 billion.

No other public company has posted this level of profit for a trading quarter – ever!!

The amount is as difficult to comprehend as, perhaps, imagining how planet earth relates to the rest of our universe and beyond.

Well – almost as difficult. Apple’s 4th quarter profits in 2104 exceed the GDP of the 10 poorest African nations, added together.

As an economist I’ve learned that, like animals in the wild, random statistics can rarely be trained and tamed. We take snapshots of strange discoveries and behaviours and try to find some use for the information in understanding “bigger pictures” – “macro pictures”.

So Apple’s result is an interesting anomaly – interesting as an example of wild behaviour.

But it is the environment that enabled this anomaly that is more interesting when trying to understand why monthly grocery and utility bills seem to exceed current monthly incomes, nowadays.

Apple’s results have received positive reviews from the “international business sector” as a sign that the “global economy” is headed in the correct direction. The success of the Corporate World is good news for all – Trickle Down economics works?

While Apple’s recent results have been characterized as a success, this writer believes that it is only the shareholding and executive worms in the Apple that are getting fat.

Apple Inc. really is not to blame for its disgusting performance. It’s doing what corporations, today, are licensed to do. It met its fiduciary duty to its shareholders to

maximise use of assets and profits – and it remains solidly in the corporate jungle, along with many other corporate big beasts.

But today such corporate animals are actually meeting their fiduciary duties, not simply by innovation and enterprise, but by underpinning their profits by raiding national tax revenues and labour markets, and then hiding behind the trees in the jungle of international business promoters and media.

Austrian School austerity economic theory has prevailed over Keynesian theory in our modern political systems, with the occasional notable exception.

The result has been the almost permanent instigation of the dire economics of Austerity. While the term is actually the nexus of technical economic debate, the practical actuality is that societies – mostly people without capital and only their labour to trade – are used to preserve the interests of very few, and their massive capital groupings.

What has changed is the speed at which national coffers can be emptied and transferred to distant, tax free, lands.

It’s a crude and regressive system which is now almost beyond the reach and control of democratically elected national governments. Too many of these governments can easily be recognized as simply proxies for capital and corporate interests.

These proxy governments have become the fattening worms in the corporate apples. They feed off the unpaid tax revenues and watch electorates suffer as living standards and infrastructure investment diminishes.

There are signs of discontent in Europe. Opposition to austerity economics in Greece has resulted in a new government that seeks to return some balance to that country’s economy. Similarly in Spain, Italy and France, similar concerns are being increasingly expressed.

In Canada, under the present Conservative Harper government, “austerity economics” continues to rule – but maybe now a little less confidently.

Canada’s resource based economy has

taken a hit. Global oil and gas demand is down. Demand for so much that Canada traditionally exports is down. Explorers and exploiters are closing shop, firing untold numbers in Canada’s workforce.

These events, despite popular opinion, were not unforeseen.

The damage to the broad working population of Canada is part of the collateral damage that is intrinsic to the theory of austerity economics. Austerity is part of the accepted cycle in capital based economic systems and it’s entirely cynical in its approach.

If the global economy is an Apple Inc., then austerity economics is the worm, feeding on your tax and hourly dollar.

So Apple Inc.’s \$18 billion quarterly profit and its nearly \$200 billion cash reserve is not cause for celebration by Canada’s citizens. It’s a symptom of an economic policy that will continue to punish populations in North America and beyond.

Some corrective policies are available but certainly not in Canada, or BC, from the present national or provincial governments.

In Canada electorates still have some power, albeit diminishing.

As an economist, this writer would suggest that any voter dismiss support for austerity economics. Don’t vote any longer for

candidates who tell scary stories about the need to reduce national deficits etc. Those issues are far too abstract and remote and irrelevant to the tasks of providing food and shelter, education and health care to communities, today. It is austerity economics that has eliminated jobs and incomes – not national deficits.

Vote for candidates who advocate public spending, confiscatory taxes on companies that prey on Canadians, and candidates that explicitly pledge to put people before profits.

Canada, together with the “global economy”, has endured an austerity system that has richly rewarded capital groupings and corporations on a scale never before imagined.

These rewards have been entirely at the expense of working people and labour values.

These systems and policies have not succeeded. It’s time to recognize that fact and organize and govern in a “people oriented” direction.

We can now see what’s living inside the corporate Apple. It’s time for voters to shake out and dump the more rotten fruit and redistribute to society, that which has the potential to contribute to the greater good.

A smart on crime approach must include humane prisons that encourage hope instead of taking it away

By John Hutton

Sunday, August 10, marked the 40th anniversary of what has come to be known as Prisoners’ Justice Day in Canada. Ever since the suicide of Edward Nolan in a segregation cell at Milhaven Institution on this date back in 1974, Canadians have held a vigil to remember all who have died while incarcerated.

Many prisoners fast and decline to work on that day while those outside the prison walls renew the call for changes to the correctional system.

This year, the anniversary is a sombre one as we seem to be moving backwards at an ever increasing rate, undoing many of the improvements made to our correctional system following Nolan’s death. Under the guise of getting “tough on crime” over the last several years Canada’s prisons have become increasingly violent, over-crowded institutions.

Unfortunately, although not unexpectedly, this serves to create “tougher”, more violent criminals, something that should be a concern for us all.

Figures for 2012-13 show an increase in recidivism in the area of violent crimes for those released from prison, within five years after the end of their sentence. While the increase is small it is only the tip of the iceberg.

Many of those incarcerated under conditions created by the government’s “tough on crime” initiatives, including Bill C- 10 enacted in 2012 have not yet been released, so the effects of these changes on recidivism have yet to be seen.

Unfortunately there is every reason to believe that those released from prisons in future will be far less likely to integrate safely back into the community.

Speaking in an interview with CBC recently, former prison chaplain Kate Johnson described seeing a dramatic increase in overcrowding following tougher laws and parole rules. At the same time however, one tool after another was stripped away from the Correctional Service of Canada as they work to rehabilitate inmates before release.

The tools lost are all in key areas, in-

cluding employment, educational programs, and access to parole. An ex-offender’s ability to find and keep employment when they return to the community has long been seen as a key factor in reducing recidivism. Yet the federal government has moved away from funding community based employment programs designed to help ex-inmates find work.

Here in Manitoba, the federal government closed the prison farm at Rockwood and the large metal workshop at Stony Mountain Institution– taking away most of the opportunities inmates had for learning and practicing employment related skills while in custody.

Education can also help an ex-offender find work but changes in the last three years have decreased access inmates have to learning programs.

Over the last six years changes in both law and policy have made it much harder for inmates to apply for and receive parole. This means that the amount of time an ex-offender is able to spend in the community on supervised parole with supports and conditions designed to help them reintegrate safely is decreasing, which will certainly increase recidivism.

Forty years ago prisoners banded together and fought back in order to find a sense of hope and purpose for their lives.

These efforts and those of groups like the Elizabeth Fry and the John Howard societies have resulted in a renewed focus on rehabilitation and reintegration within Canadian prisons which we cannot afford to lose.

If men and women cannot see a life for themselves beyond bars, and do not have the supports in place to reintegrate successfully the cycle of crime and violence will continue.

A smart on crime approach must include humane and effective prisons which encourage hope instead of taking it away.

See more at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/fast-facts-justice-requires-hope#sthash.fZGzFoQl.dpuf>

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YOU CAN CONTACT YOUR EXECUTIVE
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AT PO BOX 30041

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We are the ones who can't be ignored

Walkers take to the US Capital to raise awareness about Female Genital Mutilation

Photostory by Diane Walsh

The first of its kind in the Washington DC area was this remarkable “Walk against Female Genital Mutilation” at the Washington Monument, hosted by the **Global Woman P.E.A.C.E Foundation**.

Full credit and accolade is due to GW-PF for the Walk's bounding success. Its courageous aim was specifically designed to have Walkers circle the paths around the Washington Monument in the effort to raise the profile of the growing problem of FGM on Western soil.

The evidence of Female Genital Mutilation, as the imported but “unseen” underground practice occurring as a result of international migration, continues to mount.

Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation is a well-vetted woman's rights and peace organization with registered US. charity status and is based in Fairfax, Virginia. With its strong organizational reputation and with its links to the worldwide movement against FGM, the Walk was successful in being able to attract a diverse group of par-



I met up with the tightly knit group of international anti-FGM activists who gathered together at the NW corner of the Point to raise needed awareness with a specific emphasis on the US situation. The event urged that immediate action be taken on

The Walk itself may have been missed by a seemingly sleepy *Washington Post*, seen omitting to provide coverage of the event despite its global importance – but that's not to say they can't make up for it!

Nevertheless the Walk was indeed picked up repeatedly by the international press and news spread on social media with exuberance. Here in this video, to be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=flJBdzv2ISU, is one

the speakers invited as a key note, Barbara Mhangami. She is a feminist poet and researcher who travelled from Michigan. She, among others, is an example of the shining talent and commitment of some of the “Activist Walkers” who sought to promote GW-PF's aim to open a Crisis Centre right in DC. Guaranteed preventive action against FGM for girls living in the US in addition to service provision for post-FGM women, is, key. More pictures of speakers and attendees here.

Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation is committed to real action on the ground and has now raised leading awareness

in the US Capital. The Walk succeeded in pushing strongly against Female Genital Mutilation, focusing on exposing incidents of the practice on US soil and, importantly, recognizing working in collaboration and in solidarity with a global alliance of activists against FGM to build identification and response services (#IDRS on twitter) to address the problem.

FGM has spread to Western soil, this is undisputed in Europe. It has also leaked out recently that FGM has occurred in the US – this must not be allowed to go unnoticed and unrecorded. Information is that family groups have joined with other family groups to raise money to “import the cutter” to perform FGM in secret. No one can dispute that this is heinous and frankly ghastly that it happens in the West.

The Walk's acute profile is being recognized worldwide and is galvanizing efforts to put this issue at the top of the US political agenda.

More information can be found on twitter, using hashtags #DC #FGM #GAFGM or follow me @dwalshmedia, hashtag #IDRS (Identification and Response Services) including #GAFGM #UN to learn more about global alliance anti-FGM solidarity links. Follow more updates on twitter @1GlobalWoman



ticipants from all over the US (and Canada) agreeing to participate as Sponsored Walkers. Walkers raised their own sponsorship and joined in the cause on the freezing cold but sunny Saturday morning of November 8, 2014, and as one of the proud, I can say it was an incredible experience and a worthy measure to create globalized action with American leadership.

US soil to ensure complete prevention of FGM; the commitment of it never being able to take place in the US.

Furthermore the Walk emphasized the need to secure the goal of a US commitment to complete eradication worldwide, in concert with the 2010 UN resolution against FGM and associated solidarity activists.



Global Women P.E.A.C.E. Foundation “Walk to End FGM” a great success

Fairfax, VA -- Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation (GWPF) was joined by its partners and supporters on Saturday, November 8, on the Washington National Mall to “Walk to End FGM”.

The day began with music, as the crowd gathered to get outfitted in warm clothing and t-shirts. Families and their children assembled in the chilly early morning sun but the atmosphere was positive.

Everyone was there to be a part of a memorable occasion; they were there to participate in the first annual walk to end female genital mutilation (FGM).

No other organization has ever held a walkathon against the practice of female genital mutilation in Washington, D.C.

As the temperature began to rise, 14 teams of walkers lined up after bananas, granola bars, peanuts and water had been distributed to the crowd by many volunteers. The teams of walkers made their way up Constitution Avenue toward the memorials of World War I

I, Vietnam Veterans, Lincoln, Korean War, Martin Luther King and the Washington Monument.

The crowd returned with enthusiasm to the National Mall to listen to a series of speakers tell them about female genital mutilation. Participants came from as far as Canada, Massachusetts, Florida, Arizona, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, Richmond, Virginia, Hagerstown,

Maryland, etc.

CEO and president of IMA World Health, Rick Santos shared stories of violence against women and girls in various countries he had visited. Dr. Martha Allen, Director of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press read a list of FGM survivors and activists around the world, while David Rawls, In-Country Director of Hope 2 Liberia recounted his trips to Liberia where his organization is building a school to help end FGM through education.

UniteWomen.org's Board Member, Shannon Fisher told the crowd, “Female genital mutilation has been illegal in the United States since 1996, and transporting girls out of the US for FGM is now punishable by five years in jail. But the procedure is still performed in private, and it has gone largely underground.”

Vice president and co-founder of We Are Woman, Alaina LaTourette talked about the violation of the female body and FGM, while Summer Pearson, Global Woman's Board member, read a special message from Dr. E. Faye Williams, president and CEO of the National Congress of Black Women, “It is said that the civilization of a nation is determined by the way it treats its women and its children.

“By that measure, most nations have a long way to go to be considered civilized. Certainly no nation that permits mutilation of the genitals of its young girls can be

called civilized.”

Barbara Mhangami-Ruwende, a public health practitioner, shared a special poem she had written and dedicated to all of the mutilated little girls, “Imagine a girl suddenly thrust onto a mat on a floor, in a hut in the forest, or on an operating table in a doctor's office. Imagine the shock, confusion and horror as she watches her mother, aunt and grandmother turn and walk away.”

The crowd did not expect what came next, when the president of Change Agent Network, Annie Wright took the stage and told her personal story through tears about how her mother died in childbirth as the result of FGM, and she too was taken at seven years old to the “bush” and was mutilated.

Annie stood tall on the stage and divulged to the public for the first time, “I can stand here today and say that I am a survivor of FGM. I was told never to tell anyone, and I never told anyone until Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation invited me to their focus group meeting.”

Entertainment was provided by local groups, the Liturgical Dance Group and the Chosen Generation Dance Group. Media coverage was provided by PressThePresident, BRITE Radio, Loudon Woman Magazine, Diane Walsh and Alexandra Gerard.

The program continued with Angela Peabody, president of the host organization reading a speech sent from Liberia by

an FGM survivor, Eva Flomo. Flomo wrote, “America, do you want to be labelled as the nation that stood by and watched countless little girls get mutilated or die simply because it doesn't affect you directly? You lead the free world; make it freer for little girls and women in Africa and other parts of the world actively practicing FGM.”

In conclusion, Peabody announced the three winning teams. The Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press team took the first prize for raising the most money, the FGM No More team walked away with the 2nd prize, while the BRITE Peace Walkers team took 3rd prize.

The proceeds raised from “Walk to End FGM” will help establish a special support centre in the Washington, D.C. metro area, expected to open in 2015. The support centre is expected to include a hotline with trained phone counsellors, career assistance and capacity building for the girls and women affected by FGM.

To learn more about Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation and future events or to make a donation, visit www.globalwomanpeacefoundation.org. Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation is a registered 501c3 non-profit organization with the US Internal Revenue Service. As such, your donations are tax deductible to the maximum extent required by law.

— Lydia Sherwood, Presto Public Relations
<http://www.globalwomanpeacefoundation.org>

Earth Policy Institute announces plans to cease operations

Founder Lester Brown to retire in June 2015 after decades-long career

WASHINGTON, DC – The Earth Policy Institute (EPI), a leading think tank founded by global environmental leader Lester Brown, announced January 20 that it intends to close its doors at the end of June. Brown, whose career has spanned more than half a century working on global environmental issues, plans to retire at that time.

“After careful consideration of my life at 80 years,” said Brown, “and with profound appreciation to my staff, collaborators and supporters, I have decided to step down as president of the Earth Policy Institute and end its work as of July 1, 2015.”

Brown continued, “I believe the Earth Policy Institute has accomplished what we set out to do when we began in 2001, and now it is time for me to make a shift and no longer carry the responsibility of managing an organization. I plan to continue to research and write on issues that I believe I can add to in some meaningful way.”

EPI Board and staff are delighted to announce that Rutgers University, Brown’s alma mater, will be establishing a Lester R. Brown Reading Room in late 2015. Among other things, it will have not only the original English editions of his books, but the entire collection of some 600 language editions of his books. Rutgers will also take over the hosting of EPI’s website, earth-policy.org, and maintain it as an archive.

EPI’s staff, Board and donors expressed their gratitude to Brown for his many years of leadership and hailed his unique global role in calling attention to, and providing innovative solutions for, the environmental and resource challenges that confront our civilization.

Since its founding, EPI has published 13 books, with the fourteenth – *The Great Transition: Shifting from Fossil Fuels to Solar and Wind Energy* – slated for release in spring 2015. EPI has also produced hundreds of Plan B Updates, Eco-Economy In-

dicators, Data Highlights, Fact Sheets, and Book Bytes. Plan B and Brown’s work were also featured in the 2011 PBS documentary, *Plan B: Mobilizing to Save Civilization* produced by Screenscope.

Brown has published more than 50 books, which are translated into 43 languages, and include, through EPI, *Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth* (2001); *Plan B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble* (2003); *World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse* (2011); and *Breaking New Ground: A Personal History* (2013).

EPI’s Board of Directors acknowledged Brown’s decision and passed a resolution thanking him for his years of leadership and service. The resolution noted that “For half a century, Brown and his colleagues have written authoritatively on nearly all the sustainability issues facing our species as we diminish the Earth’s life support systems. Their work was characterized with unwavering accuracy and an uncanny capacity to foresee the impact of burgeoning human numbers, pressing energy needs, rapacious water consumption, shrinking tropical forests and fisheries, expanding deserts and stressed croplands. Despite these challenges, Brown always offered a hope-filled action plan for the future. After a stunning run as a writer, leader and pioneer, Brown’s lifework is a reminder of what one can accomplish. We recall the words of the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu, ‘His merit secure, the leader steps aside.’”

Reah Janise Kauffman, EPI’s co-founder and vice-president, also thanked EPI’s supporters for their years of hard work and dedication. “We are truly grateful for the support received over the years from our staff, Board and donors,” said Kauffman. “Our Board members, Judy Gradwohl, Raisa Scriabine, Bill Mansfield, Scott McVay, Hamid Taravati, and Jeremy Waletzky,

have played a critical role over the years and now in the resolution of EPI. Special thanks to Judy, our board chair, for her wise counsel in helping with this transition.”

“We also give thanks to Roger and Vicki Sant for EPI’s startup grant, to the financial support we have received from the Gellert, Goldman, Hewlett, Jones, Lannan, McBride Family, Shenandoah, Turner, Wallace Genetic, Weeden, Winslow foundations, the Educational Foundation of America, and the UN Population Fund. We are also indebted to the generosity of individual donors including, importantly, Fred Stanback, Col. Henry Ingwersen, Harriett Crosby, Junko Edahiro, John McBride and Laney Thornton.”

“The tremendous work EPI has produced also would have been impossible without our stellar staff,” Kauffman continued, “whose tireless efforts have made our aspirations a reality. Particular thanks go to Millicent Johnson, Janet Larsen, J. Matthew Roney, Emily E. Adams, and Julianne Simpson, who will be with us as we say goodbye to EPI. We know they will continue to make outstanding contributions in their work on our most pressing collective challenges.”

Brown began his career as a tomato farmer in New Jersey. The time he spent on farms in India in 1956 under the auspices of the International Farm Youth Exchange changed his worldview and career trajectory. In 1959, Brown joined the US Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service as an international analyst, and went on to become the adviser to Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman on foreign agricultural policy. In 1966, the Secretary appointed him Administrator of the department’s International Agricultural Development Service where he managed USDA’s technical assistance programs in 42 developing countries.

In early 1969, he left government to

help establish the Overseas Development Council. In 1974, with support of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Lester Brown founded the Worldwatch Institute, the first research institute devoted to the analysis of global environmental issues. In his book *Building a Sustainable Society*, Brown developed more thoroughly the concept of sustainable development, a concept he had pioneered in *The Twenty Ninth Day* and earlier writings. Brown left Worldwatch to found EPI in May 2001, to provide a vision and a road map for creating an environmentally sustainable economy.

EPI also extended its thanks for years of support from its publishers, particularly Drake McFeely and Amy Cherry of W.W. Norton, which has been publishing Lester Brown’s books for 40 years. Brown’s books have also been published around the world, and EPI thanked its global publishing collaborators including Lin Zixin in China, Hamid Taravati and Farzaneh Bahar in Iran, Gianfranco Bologna and the team at Edizioni Ambiente in Italy, Soki Oda in Japan, Editura Tehnica in Romania, Lars and Doris Almström in Sweden, Doyosae Books founded by Yul Choi in South Korea, TEMA in Turkey, Earthscan in the U.K., David Biro in Hungary, Cyril Ivanov of Paper Tiger in Bulgaria, Pierre-Yves Longaretti and Philippe Vieille in France, Gilberto Rincon of the Centre of Studies for Sustainable Development in Colombia for the Spanish edition, Maurits Groen MPMC in The Netherlands, and Makis Fountoulis of Editio Chronico in Greece.

For more information on Lester Brown’s and EPI’s work, please visit <http://www.earth-policy.org>.

ABOUT EARTH POLICY INSTITUTE: Earth Policy Institute is a research organization dedicated to planning a sustainable future and providing a roadmap of how to get from here to there. More on EPI available at www.earth-policy.org.

“Granola that Counts” gets a community buzz for Every Step Counts and Thrifty Foods

Victoria Cool Aid Society reports that it is very delighted with the buzz it is getting from its community members who have bought and love “Granola that Counts”, the breakfast cereal packaged and sold by Cool Aid during the month of January as a fund raiser.

Officials report that while they don’t have the final sales numbers as yet, they anticipate proceeds of \$5,000-\$10,000 to support Cool Aid’s running and walking program, based on the fifth week of sales and the generosity of its partners including Thrifty Foods in waiving all costs except for Cool Aid’s food costs.

When the numbers are in, Cool Aid Society will evaluate this pilot project to determine whether Cool Aid should continue granola sales occasionally or throughout the year. Readers may wish to ask about the product at Thrifty Foods, wondering why they can’t purchase it anymore!

Victoria Cool Aid Society announced the production and sale of a new, local granola at all Victoria area Thrifty Foods locations

from January 8 through February 6. All proceeds from “Granola That Counts” granola will support Cool Aid’s Every Step Counts running and walking program, which empowers people stay healthy and housed.

The unique initiative and product launch took place at 9 am on Thursday, January 8, at Thrifty Foods Cloverdale, 3475 Quadra at Cloverdale. An in-store sampling followed..

“We are so fortunate to have generous businesses behind our runners and this product,” said Gillie Easdon, coordinator of the program.

Thrifty Foods listed the product at no cost during this promotion and is the sole distributor of Granola That Counts at this time.

The granola is produced under the supervision of Jena Stewart, team chef, and the Truffles Group, in the Truffles Catering kitchen.

All packaging and display materials have been donated by Victoria Box & Paper Ltd.

McAllister Marketing has donated the packaging and point of sale marketing materials.

Vancity provided a framework and valuable tools to embark on a social enterprise.

“Thrifty Foods is proud to support the Victoria Cool Aid Society and the Every Step Counts program. This is a partnership that was a natural fit for us,” said Vivian Chenard, manager of community relations at Thrifty Foods.

“When we were approached by the Every Step Counts team to partner with them to sell a local product, which in turn supports a healthy program for people in need, we knew we had a winning combination. We’ve tasted the granola and it’s delicious. Our customers will love it.”

“January, when everyone is thinking about New Year’s resolutions and their health, was an ideal time to launch a new, local health food,” said Tracy McAllister, a principal of McAllister Marketing, who contributed the Every Step Counts logo, package design and marketing materials.

Granola That Counts is made by volunteers in the Truffles Group kitchen from a local recipe featuring oats, dried cranberries, coconut, sesame seeds, toasted almonds, pumpkin seeds and dates. It is the same recipe that feeds the runners and walkers in the program every week. Each package costs just \$9.99 and 100% of the proceeds support Cool Aid’s Every Step Counts running and walking program.

“I’ve been volunteering with Every Step Counts since 2009,” said Karen Palmer, co-owner with her husband Kirk, of Victoria Box & Paper Ltd. “I know how the simple act of running, walking and eating together can profoundly help people improve their lives. When Gillie asked if we could help with packaging, it was an easy decision for us to contribute.”

“We took on the provisioning of deli-

cious and nutritious food for Every Step Counts this year, out of our Canoe Brewpub,” said Truffles Group Vice President John Reese. “It was a natural next step for us to provide expert advice and our kitchen for the granola production. This is a great product, with a great future, for a great cause. Every Step Counts really changes lives.”

Every Step Counts is a unique running and walking program founded by the Victoria Foundation and hosted at Cool Aid. This innovative program is designed for people experiencing barriers and challenges with housing, mental health, addiction and other related issues.

It is positive and unique, drawing on the wide-reaching and long-lasting benefits of exercise and teamwork to foster self-esteem, confidence, energy and healthy lifestyle choices. Since its founding in 2009, Every Step Counts has helped over 600 individuals improve their lives.

Thrifty Foods was founded in 1977 in Victoria, BC. Today, Thrifty Foods, a banner of Sobeys Inc., has a total of 26 retail grocery stores across the Lower Mainland, throughout Vancouver Island and Salt Spring Island.

The Victoria Cool Aid Society builds homes, lives and community. It create opportunities for people who are homeless or living in poverty. It make a difference through housing, health care, support and emergency shelters.

Founded in 1968, Cool Aid helps over 9,000 people in the Capital Region every year at 14 locations in Langford, Victoria and Saanich. The Society’s major new campaign is to Help End Homelessness by building an additional 360 apartments for people in the community who have no home.

Juan de Fuca Constituency Association

Staying In Touch

Contact President Sharon Wilkinson
sawilkinson@shaw.ca
250-478-5907

Going to sea

Lower Island News’ editorial writer, David Olsen, writes the first of what LIN hopes will be a frequent series: reminiscences of how life used to be. LIN invites readers to submit their memories of how it used to be for them

By David Olsen

After two years training as a cadet in the Royal Naval Reserve training ship HMS Worcester, I went to sea in April 1954 at age 17 to serve a three year apprenticeship with Furness Withy, after which I would be eligible to take the examinations for a 2nd Mate’s Foreign Going Certificate.

I signed indentures with the company which also had to be signed by my parents – apprenticeships were a serious matter in those days. For its part, the company promised to train me in all the duties and skills needed to become a certificated deck officer and to pay me 90 pounds sterling for the first year, rising to 120 pounds in the 3rd year (later increased to the princely sum of 135 pounds – C\$250 in today’s money).

For this I was required to work 7 days per week, 8 hours per day while the ship was at sea – in fact it worked out usually to be 7 days per week for the whole voyage with the occasional day off on a Sunday if the ship was in port and not working cargo. One usually worked up to 11 or 12 hours per day, often longer, and for work in excess of 8 hours per day I received the princely sum of one shilling per hour overtime (10 cents in today’s money). If the ship was at sea

cacophony which accompanied the loading and unloading of a cargo ship in the days before containerization.

The next day I started my first voyage – 40 miles, up the Manchester Ship Canal to Manchester! Although a seemingly short distance, the journey could last as long as two days in winter, since it was a daylight-only operation and we fitted into the locks with literally inches to spare. At that time, Manchester was a busy port, with its own resident shipping line, Manchester Liners, which had cargo services to all the major east coast ports in the US and Canada.

Although registered in London, Manchester was also the home port of the *Pacific Fortune* and her sister ships which operated via the Panama Canal to all the major – and a lot of the minor – ports on the west coast of the USA and Canada. Each four month voyage started and finished in Manchester. The ships would load in Manchester and Glasgow and then sail to Colon at the Atlantic end of the Panama Canal to discharge some cargo and refuel and then go through the canal to the Pacific and call at Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Victoria and Vancouver, discharging cargo in each port. Then with the ship empty, the process would start all over again as the ship loaded for the return voyage.

It is hard to imagine nowadays what a tough, back-breaking and exhausting job it was as an apprentice on an old style merchant ship, particularly during those intense weeks on the coast, loading and unloading..

To become a certified deck officer, not only did you have to be able to navigate and manage the ship anywhere in the world, but you had to be able to do everything an able seaman did. In addition, the really unpleasant and dirty jobs (of which there were plenty) always seemed to be given to the apprentices!

Before containerization, ships were usually loaded and unloaded with their

own cargo handling gear – except in the relatively small number of ports – mostly UK and Europe where there were cranes. Ships had their own derricks and winches and in port, there were heavy wires, tarpaulins, hatch covers, battens and wedges all over the decks, while pallets of cargo swung through the air and in and out of the holds, frequently crashing against the sides of the hatches and holds on the way up or down.

Ships were dangerous places then –



Crews worked hard to load their ships as compatly as here.

you needed to be alert and have eyes in the back of your head!

Between each port, the derricks had to be dropped into their cradles, hatches battened down and at the next port it all had to be prepared for cargo again. This was all done manually by the crew. Each derrick, weighing several tons, had to be winched up with thick wire cables (topping lifts), then held with a chain stopper while the heavy stiff wires were secured on huge cleats.

The Pacific Northwest was a hard place for ships crews. In the 1950’s it was still economic for ocean going merchant ships to put in to say, Everett for three or four hours to pick up a couple of hundred tons of apples (stowed in the refrigerated chambers of the holds), then sail three hours up to Bellingham to load 150 tons of canned salmon, then on to Chemainus, Port Alberni, Woodfibre, New Westminster and so on.

This could last for weeks, often involving 12 to 16 hour days or more and it was a relief to finally leave Los Angeles homeward bound via Panama to Antwerp, London, Liverpool and Manchester, loaded right down to the plimsoll marks.

The 30 day trip from Los Angeles to Europe was spent cleaning and painting the ship and dozens of other tasks, as well as two four hour watches per day, as lookout or helmsman.

The Atlantic crossing in winter could be tough, with huge deck cargoes of lumber, lashed down by chains which had to be tightened in heavy weather with the ship swept from stem to stern by large cold wet breaking waves – one hand for the ship and one for yourself was the rule – not always observed!

I spent the next five years on a variety of ships in various parts of the world, as an apprentice and then a deck officer – something that relatively few young people in western countries can do today in the world of flags of convenience. There is still a British merchant navy – a fraction of its former size and now well paid, but Canada provides no such opportunities, despite our huge seaborne trade.

Why did I and so many others (there were more than 100,000 people in the Brit-

ish merchant navy in those days) do what was a hard job, poorly paid, often under harsh conditions?. A sense of adventure, certainly a maritime tradition – but most of all perhaps, because that’s the way life was.

We didn’t expect very much and didn’t see ourselves as terribly hard done by – for most working people in the 1950s life was still pretty hard. We supported trade unions and the Labour Party and had aspirations – we wanted a better life but we got quite a lot of satisfaction out of small things. We didn’t miss the Internet, sophisticated medical treatment and all the other stuff – it just did not exist!

Most of all, there was a feeling that life was going to get better, and it did. I don’t have that feeling any more – I feel threatened by the government, not supported by it as part of a social contract.

If you want a really good read about merchant shipping today, read “Ninety Percent of Everything” by Rose George. It will open your eyes!



A young sailor learns to navigate as part of his duties.



A young merchant sailor at sea.

Innovative tech product aims to change lives of bipolar teens

VICTORIA – iBRiD iPhone Wallets is a new tech-based company run by two charismatic co-founders, Sami Saeed and Chris Cordray from Victoria, BC. The duo recently launched their Indiegogo Campaign with an engaging video at: <http://igg.me/at/iBRiD>.

They are collaborating with Andrea Paquette, executive director of the Bipolar Disorder Society of British Columbia, who is well known for having created the Bipolar Babe Project www.bipolarbabe.com.

“We are so thrilled to be teaming up with a new local business that is donating \$10 for every phone case sold. This shows iBRiD is extremely passionate about helping countless youth and adults living with mental illness. It was even more fitting that they focused their efforts during October --

mental health month! We had 25 days to make a huge impact in Victoria, and we appreciated your support.” said Paquette.

In launching iBRiD iPhone Wallets, Saeed and Corday teamed up with www.bipolarbabe.com because they have close family members and friends that struggle with Bipolar Disorder.

The Bipolar Disorder Society of BC delivers support for youth, and educational programs in schools about stigma and mental health. The impact has been immense, and many kids have received the help that they need and even more youth are changing their stigmatized attitudes and perceptions.

What is unique about the iBRiD iPhone Wallet is, unlike traditional wallet styles that

are uncomfortable against your ear and force the user to have to flip open the case with each use, the iBRiD is made of premium quality leather, and is a front facing design. This makes it much more user friendly and keeps your credit and other important cards securely enclosed at all times.

This collaboration is an excellent example of how local business can partner with charities to not only further a worthy cause, but introduce their quality products to the marketplace.

For more information on iBRiD iPhone Wallets and its products, click on <http://www.ibridwallet.com> to visit the Web site.



New Democrats offer leadership on agriculture

New Democrats are taking the unprecedented step of convening an Opposition Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food after well over a decade of BC Liberal neglect of the BC agriculture industry.

“New Democrats believe that agriculture deserves a place in the legislature and we fully intend to give it the attention it deserves.” said New Democrat Leader John Horgan.

“Agriculture is a multi-billion dollar economic generator that has enormous untapped potential. This is an industry that can unlock prosperity in communities throughout the province. That’s why I’ve asked our New Democrat agriculture spokesperson Lana Popham to work with her colleagues to bring this conversation to people across the province.”

Popham noted that a Standing Committee could help reverse the age gap in BC’s agriculture industry by developing strong agricultural policies that incent young people into agriculture, and allow them to make a good living.

“Retaining young farmers is critical to having a strong agricultural future. The BC Liberals have not taken the steps needed to encourage young people to get into the industry. In 15 years they haven’t developed a long-term agriculture plan and they have put our provincial food security at risk,” said Popham.

Popham has worked for the last six years to get the BC Liberals to bring back the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture,

which hasn’t met since 2001. She says that although the Opposition Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food will be operating without legislative supports such as Hansard, the committee has support across the province.

“I have heard tremendous support for a legislative committee from all parts of the agriculture industry,” said Popham. “We have support from small farms and big farms, conventional farmers and organic farmers, and from entrepreneurs and food security advocates.

“Although we would prefer a Select Standing Committee with legislative support and both sides of the legislature participating, we believe we can accomplish important work.

“British Columbians can’t afford to wait for action on agriculture in the face of climate change and missed economic opportunities. We must have a long-term, sustainable agriculture and food plan in order to be resilient.”

The members of the committee are:
•Lana Popham, MLA Saanich South
•Raj Chouhan, MLA Burnaby-Edmonds
•Katrine Conroy, MLA Kootenay West
•Robin Austin, MLA Skeena
•Nicholas Simons, MLA Powell River-Sunshine Coast

A schedule of committee meetings, a public website and information on how the public can participate will be released over the next month.

Independent MLA joins Opposition Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food as vice-chair

Independent MLA Vicki Huntington has joined the Opposition Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food as vice-chair.

“I’m pleased Vicki Huntington is joining as vice-chair of the Opposition Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food,” said committee chair Lana Popham. “A proven champion of BC agriculture, she brings a wealth of experience to the position.”

Popham announced January 29 the formation of the Opposition Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food in response to the fact that the government hasn’t activated the official legislative committee for more than a decade.

“Lana Popham is an extremely commit-

ted advocate for agriculture in this province and her work is respected on both sides of the House. Agriculture and food security are issues that cross all party lines and I look forward to working with Lana and the committee,” said Huntington.

Popham noted that BC’s agriculture industry creates jobs in every corner of the province.

“It’s long past time that the agriculture industry, which is a powerful job creator across the province, had the opportunity to be heard by a legislative committee,” said Popham. “I’m pleased that this sector enjoys broad support from members of the legislature.”

BC Liberals take money from cities to pay for BCLC mistake

BC cities that host casinos are losing revenue because of the BC Liberals’ botched restructuring of the BC Lottery Corporation, say the New Democrats.

“First, the BC Liberals managed to spend \$28.5 million on a restructuring project that was meant to save money, and now they’re passing these costs directly on to cities that had nothing to do with this screw up,” said New Democrat gaming critic David Eby. “As if people didn’t pay enough municipal property tax, now they’re being asked to subsidize this government’s mistakes.”

A complex provincial accounting trick has reduced casino profit usually paid out to cities. Of the \$28.5 million lost in the restructuring – including \$25 million spent on a disastrous early retirement and sev-

erance packages recently profiled in an internal government audit of BCLC – the BC Liberals dispersed \$22.6 million in costs to casinos and gaming centres across the province, where the money was absorbed under their administrative and operating costs. These costs were then subtracted from gaming revenue to determine the 10-per-cent portion of revenue each host municipality received.

“While the rot is with the Liberal government, they are trying to pretend the stench is coming from city halls across the province,” said Eby. “It’s dishonest, and it hurts cities that are already struggling to balance budgets.”

“Cities across the province lost money they were entitled to receive from casinos in their communities. The seven cities that lost the most revenue lost at least the following amounts:”

BC Liberals in damage control ahead of Mount Polley mine

The BC Liberal government’s admission that the mining ministry has been underfunded shows they are bracing for a scathing report this week on the Mount Polley tailings dam failure, said New Democrat leader John Horgan.

“You just can’t take Christy Clark at her word. Announcing this week that the government will increase funding to the Ministry of Energy and Mines is simply an admission that years of cuts to inspection and enforcement have hurt not only public safety but industrial development in BC,” said Horgan.

“The premier is trying to get out ahead of this damaging report because it was her government that made deep cuts to inspections and monitoring in the first place. The failure of the Mount Polley tailings dam shocked British Columbians, created an environmental disaster and undermined public confidence in our mining industry and the communities and families who depend on mining jobs,” said Horgan.

Horgan said that New Democrats will be looking to the expert panel report due out this week for answers on several key questions including:

- To what extent did Ministry of Energy and Mines staffing cuts and its 50 percent reduction in mines inspections contribute to the dam failure on August 4, 2014?

New Democrats call for legislation to protect franchisees

The BC Liberal government should be taking more action to ensure that British Columbia franchisees are operating on a level playing field with the corporations they are partnering with, say the New Democrats.

“Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in this province, yet the lack of support from their provincial government means that they are often at the mercy of large franchisors,” says New Democrat finance spokesperson Carole James. “British Columbia needs legislation like they have in other provinces to ensure that these large corporations deal fairly with small businesses.

“If the Liberals aren’t prepared to introduce this type of legislation this spring, New Democrats will.”

James said the regulatory void means franchisees often have obligations to the parent company but fewer rights. Franchisors exert significant control over the small businesses, she said.

“When people buy real estate, the seller is required to disclose everything pertinent about the property, yet that level of transparency does not exist for franchisees,”

- To what extent did the absence of geotechnical inspections at Mount Polley in 2009 through 2011 contribute to the dam failure?

- Did the Ministry of Energy and Mines take appropriate steps after Imperial Metals’ former engineer of record, Knight Piesold Ltd informed the ministry that “the embankments and the overall tailings impoundment are getting large and it is extremely important that they be monitored, constructed and operated properly to prevent problems in the future”?

- Did the Ministry of Energy and Mines rely too heavily on assurances from Imperial Metals’ engineers about the safety and integrity of the Mount Polly dam?

“We can only hope the Mount Polley report gets to the bottom of how much Liberal cuts to inspections and staffing in this industry contributed to the tailings dam failure,” said spokesperson for interior economic development Katrine Conroy.

“The Liberal government has done more harm than good to BC’s mining industry, from cuts leading to disasters to failing on the promise to open eight mines and expand nine by 2015,” said Conroy. “All this while the premier spent all her time focusing on LNG, which so far has produced little but a string of broken promises.”

said James. “This puts all the risk at the feet of the franchisees, who may not have the means for the kind of investigation needed to determine whether their investment is a good one.”

Former Blenz franchisee Wayne Taylor calls the current situation like “the wild west.”

“Small business owners like myself have little protection against large corporations,” said Taylor, who risked more than \$150,000 in an arrangement with Blenz in 2008. “We are the job creators, we assume the risk, but the big companies have all the power.”

Five provinces currently have franchise legislation: Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, New Brunswick and Manitoba. Alberta’s is oldest, dating back to 1971.

“Franchise legislation supports BC-owned small businesses as they create jobs in our communities and ensures a fair and level playing field,” said New Democrat MLA Adrian Dix. “Four years after Manitoba and more than a decade after other provinces, it is time to act in this session of the legislature.”

BC Liberals break promise and reinstate course fees for adult learners

The B.C. Liberals broke their promise to provide free upgrading courses to adult learners by announcing that British Columbians who are upgrading their courses to qualify for post-secondary will now have to pay hundreds of dollars.

“You can’t take the Liberals at their word. They said they’d provide these courses to adults for free, but now they’re putting up roadblocks for thousands of people across the province,” said New Democrat advanced education spokesperson Kathy Corrigan.

“The previous advanced education minister was all smiles in 2007, so where’s the current minister today to take responsibility for the total reversal? Minister Virk seems nowhere to be found.”

New Democrats were responding today to the B.C. Liberals’ announcement that the policy they announced in 2007 to provide high school upgrading courses for free was being canceled.

People seeking to upgrade any of their high school courses to qualify for post-secondary will now have to pay out-of-pocket. Corrigan noted that the Advanced

Education Ministry has been the hardest hit since Premier Clark took over, so to make matters worse, at the same time that fees are going up – funding is going down.

“Instead of taking down barriers to opportunity for British Columbians, the Liberals are putting up new ones by slapping fees on most courses, including core courses like math and English” said New Democrat education spokesperson Rob Fleming. “New expensive fees for prerequisite courses will shut the door of B.C.’s trade schools and post-secondary institutions for many adults seeking to improve their lives and employability through a trade or profession.”

“How can the government ensure good BC jobs go to BC workers when they’re making it harder for students to get the skills they need for post-secondary education? This policy is bad for BC students, bad for our labour market, and just plain bad for the economy.”

Mulcair proposes concrete measures to help middle class

Manufacturing, innovation and lower small business taxes will create good jobs and new opportunities for the Middle Class.

OTTAWA – In a major speech to the Economic Club of Canada January 27, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair announced concrete proposals that will help Canada’s manufacturers and small businesses create good-paying, full time middle class jobs for Canadians.

“I believe the most important economic asset Canada has is the middle class,” said Mulcair. “Today’s proposals will help our manufacturing sector and small businesses create middle class jobs and help weather the storm in the months and years ahead.”

Mulcair announced that an NDP government will trigger manufacturing investment by extending for an additional two years the accelerated capital cost allowance, scheduled to expire later this year.

He will also boost innovation, research and development by introducing a new In-

novation Tax Credit to encourage manufacturers and businesses in other industries to invest in machinery, equipment and property to further innovation and increase productivity.

Mulcair also announced that an NDP government will cut the Small Business tax rate from 11 percent to 9 percent. “The Small Business tax cut will provide immediate and permanent help for Canada’s hard working small business people who are the backbone of local communities and the creators of 80% of all new jobs in this country,” explained Mulcair.

“These initiatives in manufacturing, innovation and lower small business taxes are a first of a series of important steps to create jobs and immediately give a break to the middle class,” concluded Mulcair.

Make the economy work for the middle class

NDP plans to boost jobs in manufacturing and small businesses

The NDP is putting forward an opposition day motion calling on the Conservatives to take immediate action to stimulate job creation and support the middle class.

“A thriving middle class needs a diversified economy that leverages Canada’s strengths in traditional sectors like manufacturing and seizes new opportunities,” said NDP Industry critic Peggy Nash (Parkdale – High Park). “The right choices today will create middle class jobs and economic security for generations to come.”

The NDP motion is as follows:

“That the House call on the government to take immediate action to build a balanced economy, support the middle class

and encourage manufacturing and small business job creation by: (a) extending the accelerated capital cost allowance by two years; (b) reducing the small business income tax rate from 11% to 10% immediately, and then to 9% when finances permit; and (c) introducing an Innovation Tax Credit to support investment in machinery, equipment and property to further innovation and increase productivity.”

“Tom Mulcair’s NDP is ready to make the economy work for Canadians with a plan to kick-start manufacturing innovation and reduce taxes on small businesses,” said NDP deputy Finance critic Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette – Témiscouata – Les Basques).

Supreme Court ruling a victory for workers

The Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling that a Saskatchewan law preventing public sector employees from striking is unconstitutional is a victory for all workers.

“With this important decision the highest court of the land has reaffirmed fundamental Canadian values like dignity and equality; and recognized every worker’s right to participate in in determining their working conditions,” said NDP Labour critic Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont – La Petite Patrie).

As part of the majority ruling the Su-

preme Court recognized the “deep inequalities” in the employer-employee relationship and workers’ vulnerability and determined that the right to strike promotes equality in the bargaining process.

“The Supreme Court has recognized that the right to strike is constitutionally-protected,” said Boulerice. “This should be a warning to governments of every level in Canada that would try to trample on this important right.”

Middle class Canadians deserve economic leadership

NDP’s first opposition day motion of the year calls on the government to immediately present an Economic and Fiscal Update to parliament and prepare a budget that addresses middle class challenges.

“The Conservatives’ reckless economic mismanagement has cut our recovery off at the knees and left far too many Canadians facing a weak job market and long-term unemployment,” said NDP finance critic Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley).

The NDP motion is as follows:

“That the House call on the government to (a) immediately present an Economic and Fiscal Update to Parliament outlining

the state of the nation’s finances in light of the unstable economic situation, including job losses, falling oil prices, and declining government revenues; and (b) prepare a budget that addresses the economic challenges facing the middle class by creating more good-quality full-time jobs, and by encouraging economic diversification.”

“The NDP has a practical plan to boost the economy while helping the middle class, including \$15 a day childcare and raising the minimum wage,” said NDP deputy finance critic Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques).

Conservatives must close copyright law loophole to end false threats: NDP

The Conservatives must take immediate steps to protect internet users by closing a loophole that allows media companies to bully Canadians with threats of hefty fines that don’t actually exist under Canadian law.

“Canadians are receiving notices threatening them with fines thirty times

higher than the law allows for allegedly downloading copyrighted material,” said NDP Industry Critic Peggy Nash (Parkdale-High Park). “The Conservatives are letting these companies send false legal information to Canadians in order to scare them into paying settlements for movies or music no one has even proved they’ve actually

NDP shadow cabinet ready to fight for the middle class

NDP Leader Tom Mulcair has strengthened the NDP’s Shadow Cabinet ahead of the 2015 election. More than ever, New Democrats are ready to fix the damage done by Stephen Harper and finally give the middle class a break.

“After a decade of Conservative government, middle class families are working harder but falling further behind. Canadians are ready for a change, and the NDP is up to the challenge. I am proud of the solid experience offered to Canadians by a strong team of NDP MPs. This is the team that will give Canadians a choice in the next election,” stated Mulcair.

Key roles have been given to Niki Ashton (Churchill), who will pilot Aboriginal Affairs; Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques), who will take on Energy and Natural Resources; and Brian Masse (Windsor West) who will be the new NDP spokesperson for Small Business.

Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel) will take over the Status of Women file, Pierre Dionne Labelle

(Rivière-du-Nord) is the new spokesperson on National Revenue, and Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles) is being promoted to the Francophonie portfolio.

Murray Rankin (Victoria) was appointed to Health, John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River) will take over the important Pensions file and Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt) will be in charge of the Official Languages portfolio.

Toronto MPs are getting more responsibilities, notably Andrew Cash (Davenport), who will now handle Consumer Protection issues, and Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York), who will tackle Infrastructure and Communities.

“Canadians know they can trust the NDP to make the economy work for the middle class. We have a practical plan, including \$15 a day childcare and a \$15 an hour minimal wage. Our team is ready. Game on.”

The complete list of the shadow cabinet is available at www.ndp.ca/shadow-cabinet

Statement by the NDP official opposition on International Holocaust Remembrance Day

NDP leader Tom Mulcair made the following statement on the International Holocaust Remembrance Day:

“Today we mark the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

“On January 27th 1945 – soldiers of the Soviet Union’s Army of the First Ukrainian Front opened the gates and liberated the prisoners of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps.

“Today, seventy years later, we remember the children, women and men who were victims of Nazi atrocities. We remember the six million Jews – one third of the Jewish

people – who were killed alongside countless others because of their race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

“We must never forget them and, in the words of Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi, ‘carve them into our hearts’ so their history can stand as an enduring warning of the dangers of hatred, bigotry and prejudice.

“We heed this warning today not just by memorializing, but through teaching our children about the victims of the Holocaust and recommitting ourselves to the fight against racial, ethnic and religious intolerance.”

Conservatives make major cut to disaster relief for provinces

Last week, the Conservatives quietly revealed a change that will massively cut funding to provinces and communities that are hit by disasters.

“It’s shocking that the Conservatives are moving with no warning and no consultation to make it more difficult for provinces to get disaster relief, just as scientists are telling us that climate change will increase extreme weather events,” said NDP Public Safety critic Randall Garrison (Esquimalt – Juan de Fuca).

“It’s reprehensible to cut money from a disaster relief program that helps Canadian communities when they’re most vulner-

able, just so the Conservatives can pay for a costly income splitting plan that only benefits the wealthiest,” added Garrison.

The Conservatives announced that they will raise the threshold for disasters to qualify for Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements from one million dollars to three million dollars. If the new rules were retroactively applied, New Brunswick would have received no aid for the 2005 flooding disaster that forced dozens of evacuations; and Winnipeg would have been left alone to face the 2010 flooding which damaged over 600 homes.

NDP to restore CBC funding

If elected to government, the NDP would cancel the Conservatives’ \$115 million cut to CBC/Radio-Canada.

“An NDP government would give our public broadcaster some room to breathe, by ensuring stable, predictable, multiyear funding to help protect the CBC from advertising-market fluctuations and to allow it to fulfill its mandate,” said NDP leader Tom Mulcair.

A New Democratic government would cancel the \$115 million in cuts to be applied over three fiscal years that were announced in the 2012 budget. These cuts led to the dismissal of 650 full-time employ-

ees and also forced the closure of the renowned entrepôt du Costumier in Montreal.

“The CBC is an essential public service in a country like ours, where minority-language communities require regional news coverage in their own language,” said Mulcair.

To prevent this situation from arising again in the future, an NDP government would also set up an independent process for appointing members of the CBC’s board of directors. “Muzzling this institution for ideological reasons is unhealthy for our democracy. The NDP will fix the situation,” added Mulcair.

downloaded.”

Sample letters show companies threatening fines of up to \$150,000, but the maximum penalty under Canadian law is actually capped at \$5,000. The Industry Minister has failed to introduce regulations prohibiting such false claims in notice and notice letters.

“Canadians have a responsibility to follow the law and ensure artists are compensated for their work,” said Nash. “But the Conservatives have a duty to protect the public against companies that try to intimidate Canadians by sending them false legal information. They need to close the loopholes now.

Max Blumenthal, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel*, by Max Blumenthal, New York, Nation Books, 2013

Book report by Jim Manly

Whether you are a critic or a supporter of Israel, *Goliath* is not a pleasant book to read. But it is important, simply because Max Blumenthal has done an excellent job of presenting facts, many of which are not well known.

On the one hand *Goliath* depicts an aging liberal Zionism and feckless peace movement which strongly disagrees with the increasingly anti-democratic forces now in control; however, it seems totally helpless to do anything about it. On the other hand *Goliath* shows a dissolute and ugly fascistic youth movement which backs up the right wing parties that now control the *Knesset*.

We see the results in legislation which has increasingly stripped not only Israeli Palestinians but also Israeli Jews of their human rights. For example the Nakba Law makes it illegal for any municipality to commemorate the Nakba (or “catastrophe”), the name Palestinians give to their dispossession from the land. The *Acceptance to Communities Act* gives towns the right to reject Palestinian Israelis as unsuitable residents.

Goliath details a growing acceptance of anti-Palestinian feeling, much of which is grounded in fear—fear not of overt violence but of the demographic threat of a high Palestinian birth rate. In addition to the fear of Palestinian babies, there is also growing concern about African migration from war-torn and environmentally distressed countries of Africa.

Although the Declaration of Independence defined Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, an increasing number of leaders now subscribe to the dictum of Shlomo Gazit, former director of Israeli military intelligence, that, “Democracy has to be subordinated to demography.” (356)

While this trend has been accelerating in recent years, Blumenthal and others

have pointed out that it was characteristic of the Zionist movement from the beginning. For example, as long ago as 1936 David Ben Gurion was calling for the destruction of Jaffa; this became bitter reality on May 13, 1948, two days before Israel declared its independence from Britain, when 5,000 troops stormed the city and drove some 50,000 Palestinians from their homes. (44)

In a 2005 memoir, Yitzhak Pundek, an Israeli commander remembered the 1948 offensive in the Negev: “My heart is singing. There were two hundred Palestinian villages here and they are no more. It was necessary to destroy them. Otherwise there would have been another million Arabs among us. After 2000 years of exile one cannot create a state by using silk gloves.” (89)

One of Benjamin Netanyahu’s regrets is that Israel did not carry out mass expulsion of Arabs during the massacre of Tiananmen Square, when the world’s attention was focussed on China. (32)

Children, some as young as nine, are arrested in the middle of the night and made to issue forced confessions which are later used to implicate and convict community leaders. As one former soldier testified, “You never know their names, you never talk with them, they always cry, shit in their pants.... There are those annoying moments when you’re on an arrest mission, and there’s no room in the police station, so you just take the kid back with you, blindfold him, put him in a room and wait for the police to come and pick him up in the morning. He sits there like a dog.” (374)

Dan Schueftan, a political science professor at Haifa University, provided a major stimulus to right wing thinking with his book, *The Need for Separation: Israel and the Palestinian Entity*. He argued that in order to maintain its identity, as well as its cultural and economic superiority, Israel had to physically separate from the Palestinian people of Gaza and the West Bank. To

achieve this he proposed a wall that would exclude as many Palestinians as possible. This, of course has become a bitter reality in the last 20 years, having the effect of annexing some 34,000 privately owned Palestinian land and leaving Palestinian communities in the West Bank divided from one another like South African Bantustans of the 70s.

Many Palestinian communities resisted, especially those like Bil’in which were particularly affected by the wall. In addition to the use of force Israeli officials countered resistance with such devices as “the Skunk” a water canon on a vehicle which sprayed protesters with foul smelling chemicals, nearly impossible to was out. They also used “the Scream” which blasted people with intense, high pitched sounds, creating nausea.

Jonathan Pollak, a member of Anarchists Against the Wall, became an important figure connecting Palestinian, Jewish and international protesters as well as members of the international press and diplomats. When arrested, he told the judge, “I go to prison wholeheartedly and with my head held high. It will be the justice system itself, I believe that will need to lower its eyes in the face of the suffering inflicted on Gaza’s inhabitants, just like it lowers its eyes and averts its vision each and every day when faced with the realities of the occupation.” (373)

Blumenthal gives some attention to heroic Jewish resisters like Yonatan Shapira, the helicopter pilot who led a movement of other pilots to refuse to fly combat missions over the West Bank or Gaza that would endanger civilian lives. Or Rami and Nurit Peled-Elhanan whose 13 year old daughter was killed by three young suicide bombers. Instead of blaming Palestinians for the murder, Nurit Peled-Elhanan blamed the Israeli government. “For me the struggle is not between Palestinians and Israelis, between Jews and Arabs. The struggle is between those who seek peace and those who seek war. My people are those who seek peace.” (286) She has done a major study on Israeli text books for children showing how the history of Israeli—Palestinian relations has been totally skewed. For example the 1948 massacre at Deir Yassin is dismissed as “a myth in the Palestinian narrative... and created a horrifying

negative image of the Jewish conqueror in the eyes of Israel’s Arabs.”(288)

The older, more liberal Zionist approach is perhaps best exemplified by the popular novelist, David Grossman; while he opposes the occupation of the West Bank and the growth of settlements, he remains firmly committed to Israel and does not want to recognize the ethnic cleansing that took place in the late 40s and early 50s. It is easy for us to criticize the contradictions in this approach until we realize that these same contradictions can be found in our support for First Nations people while we continue to live comfortably on unceded land. There is no easy road to decolonization.

One of the more interesting figures whom Blumenthal sketches is Yeshayahu Leibowitz, an aging professor and author whom Isaiah Berlin once called “the conscience of Israel”. (264) He strongly opposed occupation of the West Bank following the 1967 war. “The Arabs would be the working people and the Jews the administrators, inspectors, officials and police—mainly secret police. A state ruling a hostile population of 1.5 million to 2 million foreigners would necessarily become a secret-police state.... The corruption characteristic of every colonial administration would also prevail in the State of Israel.” (264) When a state commission authorized torture to obtain confessions, Leibowitz pulled no punches, “A Nazi-like mentality exists in our country.” (268) When students came for advice about serving the military in the occupied territory, he told them they “were sent there as assassins” (267) and urged them to rebel. Although two decades after his death, Leibowitz continues to be widely revered, very few young people have actually taken his advice.

Blumenthal spends much of his book describing repressive and undemocratic forces in present day Israel and how these forces are able to push the Knesset to institute repressive and undemocratic laws. He also spends some time on opposition figures, some well known but mostly ordinary Palestinians and justice oriented Jews. The contrast is stark and he devotes little space to alternatives. Perhaps between those who are motivated by a deep seated fear of demographic trends and those who struggle for justice there is no middle ground.

A COUNTRY NOT CONSIDERED, by Tom Wayman, Canada, Culture, Work, House of Anansi Press, Toronto, ON.

“...*Economy is the bone, politics is the flesh, watch who they beat and who they eat, watch who they relieve themselves on, watch who they own. The rest is decoration.*”
from In the Men’s Room(s) by Marge Piercy

I am impressed that when Wayman uses the third person singular pronouns he puts the feminine first, something that few women writers even do: *her/him; hers/his*. Small, but significant.

Self-expression and writing are important to our cultural identity, as well as our self-confidence. Wayman says, “Unless we articulate our lives we will forever be seen by others, and ultimately by ourselves, as insignificant, not worthy of consideration. I would extend that to also mean that unless we understand our place in geography and history our own culture, Canada, will also be insignificant.”

It is certainly insignificant to US writer Keasy who coined the title in reference to Canada: we are a country not considered, by our neighbour whose culture we lap up like house pets and then end up thinking the way they do.

This is important now; the US has been revealed to all who have opened their eyes to be an empire hell bent on domination of the world – in reality, it intends the world to be the external provinces of the USA Empire. It is also a failing empire, both morally and economically. Canada needs to be separate and distinct, for our own sake, as well as the world – we must be a model; a creative alternative.

I remember when Free Trade was being debated before this book was written and a Nicaraguan said in reply to the Thatcher chestnut, **there is no alternative**, “Canada for us is the alternative – you have an equitable social system in a country where people from different backgrounds live peacefully together. That is what we want.”

Wayman believes that a culture that is recognized as significant will recognize poetry as “*a district rich in treasures of every kind*”. To be alive and vital, poetry will express every aspect of our lives – emotional, political, comic, domestic, ecological, interpersonal and more. And for Wayman that must include that taboo area – work – because he says we are not free at work.

These are the propositions that “are central to understanding and depicting our national, artistic, personal existence”.

He also cautions us to sort out what Canada is and what a country is for. “Does it primarily exist to provide a

place where men and women who own enterprises can maximize profits?” He extends the meaning of democracy from the right and ability to control our governments to our right to democracy in the workplace.

This is an amazing book; full of questions, challenges, insights and awareness on topics most of us seldom consider and seldom consider as connected. Do so rush out and get a copy of this and some of his poetry as well; my favourite is one of the best anti-war poems ever written, about the work of a soldier: *War on a Round Planet*.

Book review by Theresa Wolfwood

This book is a brilliant essay on the connections between creativity and political activism. Tom Wayman is a poet, teacher and activist who lives and works in the interior of British Columbia. And work is what he writes most passionately about and the ability to express connection is one of his literary qualities.

Throughout his exploration of political poetry from Neruda to Piercy and poetry’s importance to political struggle, he finds many examples of poetry from Ho Chi Minh to Roque Dalton of El Salvador. His awareness of politics and the poetry of politics came with the war in Vietnam when he studied in the USA and first heard Pablo Neruda in translation.

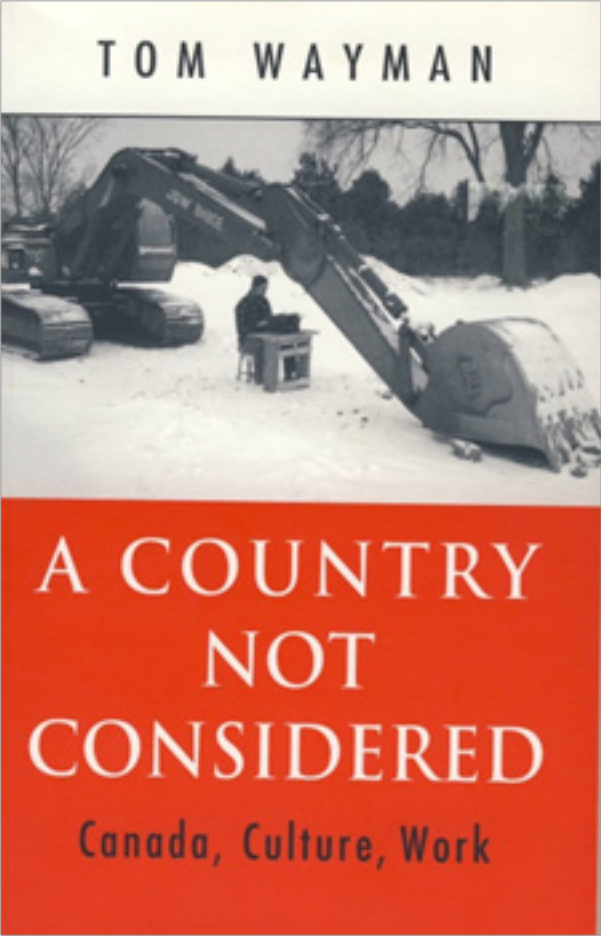
There he learned two basic truths that have remained with him and are even more important in now. He realized through poetry and activism that the US war on Vietnam and its neighbours was not an aberration, but a direct result of the US’s intention of global domination. Some people today think the US war on Iraq is an aberration – but nothing has changed.

Wayman also comes to the realization that work is the main structure of oppression in all societies. It is also a taboo subject – political poets don’t write about waitresses and loggers. He comes to the understanding that this taboo ensures that our society perceives our contribution to society as insignificant, for as he writes, it is our culture that establishes our system of values.

He sees this is important for social change because unless we see ourselves and our work as important, our willingness to act to change our lives and society is sapped and weakened. He quotes Bob Black who says, “Once you drain the vitality from people at work, they’ll likely submit to hierarchy in politics, culture and everything else.”

He writes, “We live in a society that hides from itself the basis of its existence, North American culture...presents almost nowhere the realities of daily work...Our jobs form the central and governing core of our lives...No other activity in daily life has more personal consequences for us than the work we do (or are looking for).”

Feminism is another major influence on Wayman’s life. It is from the women’s movement he learned that the personal is political and that a culture that ignores half its population is saying it is inferior and not worth attention. He then extrapolates that to include people of different races and other sub-cultures that we ignore.



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 Auditorium, 2994 Douglas Street, Victoria. All delegates are welcome to come to meet their executive, president Mike Eso, treasurer, Stan Dzbik, and secretary Michael Maloney.

WOMEN IN BLACK invite you to join them in their monthly vigil to remember Hiroshima 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.

ESQUIMALT-ROYAL ROADS NEW DEMO crats are invited to our annual Dinner’s On Us, an evening of great food and conversation with our MLA, Maurine Karagianis, on Tuesday, March 10, at Blue Nile Restaurant, 6-612 Head Street, Esquimalt. Doors open at 6:30 pm, with buffet dinner at 7 pm. For reservations or more information, contact Andrew Barrett at 250-891-6454 or esquimaltroyalroads@gmail.com. This is a fundraiser for Esquimalt-Royal Roads NDP.

ESQUIMALT SAANICH SOOKE FEDERAL NDP will hold its Fourth Annual Earth Day Local Food Dinner on Saturday, April 18, at the beautiful Horticultural Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road (off Beaver Lake Road). Local food buffet dinner and dessert auction. Entry to the gardens (included in ticket) 5-6 pm. Doors open and reception 6:00 pm. Buffet dinner 7:00 pm. Featuring Randall Garrison, MP Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke and a surprise guest speaker, Tickets: General - \$100; unwaged/students \$50 (tickets and donations are tax receiptable). For tickets and information, call 778-676-4033 or email home@hiigli.com. Payment by credit card or cheque only. NO CASH. A fundraiser for the campaign to reelect Randall Garrison.

SAANICH NORTH AND THE ISLANDS NDP will hold their Annual General Meeting on Sunday, April 22, at St. Andrew’s Anglican Church Hall, 9691 Fourth Street, Sidney, starting at 1:30 pm. Special guests will be Joe Akerman and Rhianne Bennett, who will speak on the Fight to Save Grace Islet.

4th ANNUAL CREATIVELY UNITED FOR the Planet Earth Week Festival will be held April 25 and 26 at the English Inn, 429 Lampson Street, in Esquimalt. This gorgeous five-acre garden and tweed property will create a wonderful background for our popular free all-ages community event

Why so much ado about “The Interview”?

Review by Barry Weisleder

Hollywood, Wall Street, and the White House are celebrating the release, albeit delayed and via the internet and small cinemas, of the third-rate comedy “The Interview.” The film is about a plot to assassinate the leader of North Korea. Pyongyang took exception to the idea, and threatened to retaliate, which set off a spate of verbal and cyber warfare.

While there’s much ado about “freedom of expression”, this has little to do with the case. In fact, thoughtful defenders of freedom will avoid getting caught up in the question about whether the film “deserves” to be shown. That’s a subordinate point in the real world drama.

The larger issue is actual Hollywood and Washington bullying. It is the reality of their ceaseless efforts to economically punish, and militarily intervene, against any country or any people who defy the Empire—and who try to exercise national sovereignty.

As much as we find the North Korean regime abhorrent, we should insist that it is the task of its workers and farmers to replace it with a socialist democracy. Clearly, that’s not the agenda of Sony, Obama, or Wall Street. Our task, in the west, is to expose why the latter are making such a big fuss about the distribution of this film. Our job is to try to deprive their campaign to resuscitate the blood-soaked image of imperialism of any legitimacy it might have in the public mind.

Corporations like Sony censor artists all the time. They rarely depict anything, much less a “good cause,” unless they can pervert it to their priorities, especially profit-making. You don’t have to think way back to McCarthyism and recall the hundreds of artists who were purged and blacklisted in the 1950s. Consider today’s cinematic landscape: How many Ken Loach films get the funding or promotion that Seth Rogan comedies enjoy, much less the largesse bestowed upon productions like the Terminators 1, 2 and 3, or Transformers 1, 2, 3 and 4?

Socialists defend freedom. We make no apologies for Stalinism or totalitarianism of any kind. But many freedoms in our world are at risk, and many have been brutally crushed. So, what issue should our priority be? Where do we start?

Start by opposing what our rulers, and what their compliant media, “choose” to do. With regard to Korea, keep in mind that our capitalists, the Canadian establishment, in alliance with all the partners of the UN-sanctioned war, led by the USA, wrecked havoc on the Korean people in the early 1950s. Chinese sources estimate that North Korea suffered 290,000 military casualties, 90,000 captured, and a “large” number of civilian deaths. Over a million people overall died in the process. And that’s no comedy punch line.

Since then, Washington has threatened



to use nuclear weapons against North Korea. This gave the DPRK the incentive to obtain such weapons as a deterrent. That seems to be working.

I like Canadian-born Seth Rogan and his screwball comedy, in small doses. But that’s beside the point. What should be our attitude towards those “cultural” institutions that celebrate imperialist war, that defend Israeli apartheid, that justify sexism and homophobia, and excuse the exploitation of humanity and the plunder of nature?

It is true that the Kim Jun Un regime is abhorrent. It sits atop a repressive state that appears to be plunging headlong into a system of capitalist exploitation. And it is thin-skinned to boot. Yes, North Korea might have done better just to ignore the wretched, third-rate Sony flick. But Koreans have paid a very high price for imperialist domination over Asia. And they remember. So their outrage against foreign arrogance, vilification and bullying is understandable. Not so ironically, foreign threats, however they are “packaged,” tend to reinforce the authority of the abominable Kim Jun Un regime.

As movie reviewers have pointed out, many Hollywood films have been made that depict a plot to assassinate a US president. So what’s the big deal here? Well, I ask this: How many of those films have portrayed the would-be assassins of the U.S. president as the “good guys?” Or even as hapless stoners?

And by the way, according to experts in the field, the hacking of Sony was done by disgruntled ex-Sony employees, not by the DPRK.

So, what does promotion of *The Interview* now represent? Is it a blow for freedom of expression, or for imperial hypocrisy and bullying?

And about “freedom”, let’s keep in mind an old saying: Freedom of the press exists only for those who own one.” And finally, don’t forget the golden rule: He who has the gold, makes the rules.”

Not Exactly as Planned, Adoption, Secrets and Abiding Love,

Book review by Dale Perkins

Adoption is a high-stakes game. It is traumatic for everyone personally involved: the birth parent(s), the adopting parents, and the extended family members – everyone in the entire cosmos it seems. If the adopted child is “normal” then the likely outcomes are positive (of course there are always imponderables). However if the adopted child has a disability then the stakes are raised exponentially and the likely fallout can be challenging.

As an adopting parent I can readily identify with the trauma involved; however, reading Linda Rosenbaum’s book held me transfixed throughout the 250 pages. Her account is personal without being maudlin or self-serving.

Linda and her husband Robin adopted Michael as an infant, and brought him up in their Toronto Island home. Their decision involved close friends and neighbours. Michael was the son of a neighbour’s daughter. This relationship had a major role in subsequent interactions Linda and Robin had with their community.

Michael’s early life was difficult with ex-

cruciating crying spells and physical agony. The new parent’s mood alternated between pure joy and delight to hopeless resignation. Everything came into dramatic focus when medical practitioners finally decided that Michael was a fetal alcohol syndrome child (FAS). He was deeply affected and compromised by his birth mother’s binge alcohol drinking, which resulted in severe brain damage to this small innocent life. Both he and his adopting parents bore the brunt of its damaging effects.

I know of no other expose of FAS’s influence as explicit and revealing. Their experience and life together continue to this day.

Having adopted and welcomed a FAS child into our family and home, I can attest to how excruciating and poignant Linda and Robin’s experience has been, and I am grateful she has had the courage and tenacious spirit to share their story with us. I expect there are many adopting parents who have experienced a FAS child and welcomed him/her into their family constellation.

We all would be helped if we read Rosenbaum’s book – I’m sure of it.

A People’s Senate? Some pipe dream!

By Helen Forsey

As our Official Opposition in Ottawa struggles to cope with the latest string of outrages committed by Stephen Harper’s government, thoughtful Canadians might consider what else we the people could do to thwart tyranny and protect our beleaguered democracy. Obviously what we’ve been doing so far has not been enough.

A number of mechanisms are built into Canada’s Constitution to do those very things. When the Opposition in the Commons is unable (or, in some cases, reluctant) to do them, the Senate (yes, the Senate!) and, ultimately, the governor general, can stop the government from abusing its power. Both the Crown and Parliament’s Upper House have the potential to prevent or counteract the kind of elected dictatorship we have been subjected to for the past nine years.

Yet most citizens have no idea that this is the case. Aided by massive public ignorance – an ignorance mirrored on both sides of the House of Commons – Harper has managed to render both the Crown and the Red Chamber impotent in the face of his juggernaut agenda.

Taking advantage of that ignorance, this Conservative government has used a combination of demagoguery and outright lies to impose its disastrous right-wing policies on our country and the world. Harper’s various attempts to hobble the Senate are an integral part of his plan to gut our democracy so that he and his clones can reign supreme. Sadly, many Canadians on both left and right have fallen for it.

My upcoming book, *A People’s Senate for Canada – Not a Pipe Dream!* is an attempt to counter that plan. The first chapter explores why we should have an Upper House at all; the second outlines what it could do for Canada.

The potential actions on my “to do” list for a People’s Senate include:

- blocking anti-labour and anti-environmental legislation;
- breaking up omnibus bills for proper study and voting;
- introducing electoral reform legislation to replace “first-past-the-post;”
- exposing government and corporate cover-ups and debunking their “spin”;
- defending minorities, human rights, and regional priorities;
- investigating issues (eg. climate change, disappearance and murder of Aboriginal women);
- using open public hearings to ensure participatory, evidence-based policy-making;
- protecting public institutions like the CBC and Library and Archives Canada;
- examining international agreements (eg. trade, investment) and exposing their flaws;
- combatting government attempts to abuse power (eg illegitimate prorogation)

Such a Senate is not a pipe dream! The book’s subsequent chapters examine the root causes of the current problems, and why various reform proposals – “Triple E”, fixed terms, and abolition – won’t work. The final two chapters get down to brass tacks – what steps are already being taken and what else we as citizens need to do to bring about the creation of a People’s Senate that will make us proud.

It is time for progressive Canadians to take off their blinkers and use all the tools our Constitution provides for protecting and restoring our democracy. Even our best hopes for the election cannot do the job by themselves.

Helen Forsey is a writer and activist, and the author of *Eugene Forsey, Canada’s Maverick Sage*. Watch for an excerpt from *A People’s Senate for Canada – Not a Pipe Dream!* in the next issue of *Lower Island News*.

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 Aldersmith Place, View Royal, BC, V9A 7M8, phone 250-479-8326, email maurine.karagianis.mla@leg.bc.ca or visit her website at www.maurinekaragianis.ca.

Juan de Fuca Community Office, John Horgan, MLA, 122-2806 Jacklin Road, Victoria, BC V9B 5A4, phone 250-391-2801, fax 250-391-2804, email john.horgan.mla@leg.bc.ca.

Saanich South Community Office, Lana Popham, MLA: 4085 Quadra 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 Deb Foster, at 250-510-0544 or by email at deb.foster21@gmail.com, or email 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 Keith Todd at 250-598-8039 or by email at keith.todd@shaw.bc.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-Saanich-Sooke New Democrats: Contact president Jared Butcher at 778-676-4033. or email him at jared.butcher2010@gmail.com 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 co-president Nox Gyes Edith Loring-Kuhanga, at 4169 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC V8X 1L3, or by phone at 250-881-1212, or by email at loringkuhanga@gmail.com, 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.. See also Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/SaanichGulfislands or website: http://alturl.com/ofyfb.

Victoria New Democrats: To contact president Deb Foster, 250-510-0544, 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.policypolicyalternatives.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: 203-391 Tyee Road, Victoria, BC V9A 0A9. Info@victoriacouncilofcanadians.ca and 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.

Cool Aid Society: www.CoolAid.org; phone 250-383-1977: Building homes, lives and community. Cool Aid creates opportunities for people who are homeless or living in poverty. We make a difference through housing, health care, support and emergency shelters. Founded in 1968, Cool Aid helps over 9,000 people in the Capital Region every year, at 14 locations in Langford, Victoria and Saanich. The Society's major new campaign is "Help End Homelessness", to build an additional 360 apartments for people in the community who have no home.

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 political 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 spokesepersons. 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

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 & Infoshop, Victoria, Dark Horse Books, Victoria, and Munro's Bookstore Ltd, Victoria.Or suscribe and Re-

ceive 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

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 classfied 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.wordpress.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.