

Lower Island NEWS

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Families Against Cuts to Education (FACE) rally at Beacon Hill

Starla Anderson

A Families Against Cuts to Education (FACE) rally was held on Sunday afternoon, April 12 near the main playground in Victoria's Beacon Hill Park. Local parent organizers were motivated by Vancouver parents they met on a Facebook group page—BC Voters Supporting BC Teachers and Public Education—a group that was inspired by the 2014 teachers' strike.

Besides rallies in Victoria and Vancouver, hundreds of parents and other public school supporters turned out for FACE rallies in Maple Ridge, Kelowna and Nanaimo on the same day. The local organizers were parents of children in Greater Victoria's public schools: Bobby Arbess, "who led the charge", Sally Gilbert, Carolina Tudela, and Kim Toombs.

The local FACE rally was attended by families, other public education supporters, and politicians—MLAs Maurine Karagianis, Gary Holman, Carol James, and Rob Fleming; School District 61 trustees, chair Edith Loring-Kuhanga, vice-chair Diane McNally, Deborah Nohr, Jordan Watters, Rob Paynter, and Ann Whiteaker.

The rally was advertised primarily through Facebook and word of mouth; the Victoria Confederation of Parents Advisory Councils distributed a notice to parents, and mainstream media also gave it attention—



Photos by Peter Brunette

Families mingled with local school board trustees, MLAs, and teachers who came out to the rally in support of quality public education.

Arbess was interviewed on CBC radio and the *Times Colonist* had a short article informing the public of the rally.

The theme that ran through Victoria's line-up of speakers and singers' lyrics challenged Education Minister Peter

Fassbender's much reported comment that "there is nothing to be gained by perpetuating a myth that our public education system is underfunded and broken..."

Rally organizer and speaker, parent Bobby Arbess observed that "Teachers are reporting higher and higher stress levels, inadequate resources in the classroom, and inadequate support for students with special needs. Parents are put in the position of fundraising for basic supplies, subsidizing a system that should be adequately funded by the government and creating inequity between have and have-not school communities."

Other speakers reinforced the same message that the BC Liberal government does not have public education as a priority and, for the sake of the future of today's children and our social fabric, it should. Besides Arbess, speakers included: parents

Sally Gilbert, Ted Godwin, and Shelagh Martinusen; teacher and former SD61 trustee Catherine Alpha; present SD61 trustees Jordan Watters, Diane McNally, and Deborah Nohr; Greater Victoria Teachers' Association president Benula Larsen; and Opposition Education critic, MLA Rob Fleming. Singers included a trio of Raging Grannies: Freda Knott, Julie Coles, and Alison Acker; a duo of Carolyn Howe and Mike Demers; and singer-songwriter Brian Skinner.

While most speakers addressed the broad social and economic implications of underfunding public education, parent Shelagh Martinusen spoke passionately about how underfunding has affected the life of her autistic son and his family. "A district psychologist strongly recommended a psych assessment when our son was completely unravelling in grade one but it wasn't available for him because of a long

wait list. Kids caught in the limbo of not quite having an official diagnosis really struggle—despite obvious need, most support funding is tied to diagnosis. Despite struggling and obviously not thriving, our son has never had an assessment done through the schools because of waiting lists. We were told to arrange it privately [though] our extended health plan does not cover the \$2500. price tag of a private assessment."

Martinusen summed up the years of her son's journey through elementary and middle school by saying that "We have had to fight to get supports and to maintain continuous support. There are very few services for speech therapy and occupational therapy in the public education system and those therapists working in the system have unreasonable caseloads so that they just cannot see our kids regularly enough to be effective."

"There are teachers and education assistants who are really good people doing their best—they are capable and dedicated—but there are just too few of them and too little time and resources for our kids. For example, the reading recovery program at our elementary school had good evidence that it really helped those kids lagging in their reading skills and yet it got cut. Many kids with disabilities have to share supports as though their autism or Down's syndrome only exists between the hours of 9 a.m. to noon and the rest of the time they are without support."

Martinusen concluded, "There are so many kids with all kinds of learning disabilities and other challenges who sometimes fly under the radar and just don't get any support like they do in other provinces. Our son goes to high school next year. While I was excited about this transition for our daughter, I'm frankly scared for our son."

Those who were at the FACE rally in Beacon Hill Park left with renewed vigor

Please turn to page 2, Families against



Bobby Arbess, one of the main organizers of the FACE rally, says, "My main motivation for being involved in the growing campaign for fair and full funding for BC public education is that public education is a key cornerstone of democracy and social justice, offering each and every child an equal opportunity for a quality education, regardless of class, cultural or linguistic background, age, gender, or ability. With BC falling almost to the bottom of Canadian provinces in their per student funding, pay rates for teachers, and percentage of GDP allocated to public education, the BC Liberals are failing our kids."



Education critic, MLA Rob Fleming, refuted Minister Peter Fassbender's recent assertion that "It is a myth that BC public education is underfunded."

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Families Against Cuts to Education, from page 1



SD61 trustee Diane McNally: “The Minister of Education can fire me if my colleagues and I don’t comply with his demands. But he can’t fire parents. I look forward to building on the energy we have here today – for kids entering our classrooms in the future, and for the students who are in them right now.”

to try to educate the public—the voters—about the significance of teachers’ efforts to regain their right to negotiate class size and composition numbers that was taken away when the province’s Liberal government broke their contract in 2002. Since that time the issue has been fought in BC courts and judgments have twice come down in teachers’ favour with the province having one last appeal before the courts at this time—a judgment that is expected to come down within weeks.

But it is not only at the provincial level

that politicians need to be awakened about the importance of addressing the issue of class size and composition. Locally, four trustees defeated Deborah Nohr’s motion at their March 23 public Board meeting that would have given them Greater Victoria School District 61 class size and composition numbers; these numbers would have helped with budget decisions as well as in formulating a strategic plan going forward. Shelagh Martinusen’s son is only one of the many special needs children in SD61s classrooms who are not getting the support they need—and yet there are trustees who would just as soon not know the reality of the district’s classrooms.

Trustee Leonard argued that administration were already too busy with budget considerations to provide the numbers; district chair, Edith Loring-Kuhanga, said that she had wrestled with this question but after talking with family members who didn’t think children should be labelled, she would vote against the motion; trustee Tom Ferris who voted against the motion, asked, “Are we going backwards and segregating kids again?”; Anne Whiteaker also voted against the motion. (The motion was defeated with only four voting against it because trustee Peg Orcherton was not at this meeting and a clear majority of five votes in favour is needed to pass a motion.)

Organizers of the FACE rally have plans for on-going initiatives to bring parents and interested community members together to continue the advocacy for adequate funding for public education. The Facebook group—BC Voters Supporting BC Teachers and Public Education—is a good starting place for readers who want to become engaged in this cause.

Starla Anderson, Ed.D., is a retired educator and advocate for quality public education.



Ted Godwin, a candidate for chair of the Victoria Confederation of Parents Advisory Council, stressed that “VCPAC should be the strongest voice for parents and guardians of children in School District 61 (Greater Victoria). We must work together to be sure that our classrooms have everything needed to provide our kids with the best education possible.”

as

This following commentary was written and presented by Sally Gilbert at Victoria’s Families Against Cuts to Education (FACE) rally at Beacon Hill Park on Sunday afternoon, April 12, 2015. Gilbert, a parent of children in the Greater Victoria School District and one of the organizers of the rally, was responding to BC’s Minister of Education Peter Fassbender’s widely reported comment the previous week.

Fassbender wrote in an e-mail: “There’s nothing to be gained by perpetuating a myth that our public education system is underfunded and broken. We have a world-class education system — it’s well-funded, we have dedicated, talented teachers and administrators, and our students consistently shine on the international stage.”

It is NOT a Myth that...

Sally Gilbert

I am a parent of three amazing children here in School District 61. As many of us are aware, the Minister of Education came out with a statement last week that it is a “myth” that public education is underfunded in BC. Well, here are things that I know are indeed NOT myths:

It is NOT a myth that provincial spending on K-12 public education has dropped from 25% - 14% of the budget over the past 13 years.

It is NOT a myth that BC spends \$1000/student/year less on K-12 public education than the Canadian average.

It is NOT a myth that despite an increase in total dollars to Education, whatever the dollar figure is that Mr. Fassbender likes to throw around, this amount has not kept pace with costs such as inflation, Hydro rates, MSP premiums, carbon tax, and many negotiated salary increases.

It is NOT a myth that the ongoing actions by this government as well as rhetoric dished out about things like “the zone of affordability” and “low hanging fruit” have left many professionals in our schools feeling demoralized, stressed and disrespected. This in turn makes it more difficult for them to do a good job with our children on a daily basis.

It is NOT a myth that our schools are so underfunded that parents now fundraise for many in-school items. At my schools, the bigger items parents have fundraised for include playgrounds, gym equipment, musical instruments, ipads, smart boards and projectors, earthquake supply containers and contents.



Sally Gilbert

In addition, parent fundraised money is given to teachers to purchase items such as classroom supplies for art and science. Our monthly scholastic orders and book fair purchases add new books to our classrooms and libraries.

It is NOT a myth that in addition to purchasing the above technology items with fundraising dollars, parents also foot the bill for the salaries of the School District employees who install the technology and add wireless access to our 50 year old school building.

It is NOT a myth that the big fundraiser at my Elementary school this year is for Library chairs, tables and carpets. Next year the plan is for bookshelves and maybe water fountains. Since when did these things become frills in our children’s education?

It is NOT a myth that children who go to schools where parents are less able to fundraise do not receive the same quality of an educational experience that my children receive. It will never be perfect but I truly believe and expect that Public Education should provide as equal a playing field as possible to all students in our province.

Lastly, it is NOT a myth that we need parents, teachers, school and district administrators, and trustees to put aside our differences both amongst and between our groups and all come together and say to our provincial government:

- Fund public education to at least the national average
- Respect and listen to our professionals who work within the system and certainly
- No more cuts!



SD61 trustee Jordan Watters spoke at the rally with her son Harley at her side. Jordan said that “When the Minister of Education says that he hears parents’ concerns about the underfunding of education but that underfunding is a myth, he is denying the first hand experience of parents and children in BC schools. Not only that but Minister Fassbender is ignoring the recommendation of the Select Standing Committee on Finance which found that increased funding to K - 12 education was a top priority. Instead, the cuts keep coming.”

Esquimalt-Saanich Sooke New Democrats!
Notice of Annual General Meeting

Saturday, May 23, 2015, 2-4 p.m.
(doors open 1:30)

St. Peter and St. Paul’s Church Hall
1379 Esquimalt Road, Esquimalt

Come and meet with our MP, Randall Garrison,
and get an update on activities in Parliament.

Readers are invited to attend *Lower Island News*’ free

Forum on “The Changing Media Landscape” May 30

Lower Island News is pleased to invite you, our readers, to attend our important “**Changing Media Landscape**” Forum, on Saturday, May 30, from 2:30-4:30 pm, at the Oaklands Community Centre, 2827 Belmont Avenue..

The Forum will present a unique and interactive opportunity to understand the rapidly changing formats and delivery of news and information.

The discussions will look at how print and electronic media content and distribution is controlled today, and what checks and balances exist to ensure that transparency and the public interest is served in the media industry.

LIN will welcome speakers Randall Garrison, MP, Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca, Chris Cook of Pacific Free Press and Gorilla Radio, Victoria, and Janine Bandcroft, former publisher of the Street Newz and currently a programmer at CFUV.

All three speakers have a close understanding of the difficulties in presenting and distributing news and views that seem to be absent from a monolithic, for profit, main-

stream media industry, today.

Before being elected MP, Garrison spent 20 years teaching government and politics at Camosun College. In his role as Official Opposition Critic for Public Safety, he has been the lead Party spokesperson on the shortcomings and threats of Bill C-51. As Critic, Garrison also co- chairs the Public Safety Committee of the House of Commons which undertook a clause by clause analysis of the Bill . In that Committee dozens of witnesses voiced concerns about the threats of C-51.

Cook has produced and hosted more than 800 Gorilla Radio broad/webcasts from CFUV Radio at the University of Victoria, conducting more than 1600 live interviews, and covering scores of local events, demos and manifestations. The show has aired weekly since 1999, and featured people rarely heard in the state, or corporate presses; including: journalists, authors, jurists, educators, environmentalists, social justice activists, and even a few politicians. He’s also served as managing editor for www.PacificFreePress.com, a web news aggregate site

producing, since 2007, more than six thousand articles.

Bandcroft has been an activist for peace, a healthy earth, and social justice for over two decades. In 2004 she founded the Victoria Street Newz (closed in 2014) which examined the root causes and consequences of poverty, and she hosts the Winds of Change radio program at CFUV.

Lower Island News readers will have noticed 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 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 we 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.

The May 30 LIN Forum promises to shed some light on these important issues and offers the chance to contribute your thoughts and questions.

Check <http://lowerislandnews.com> for further updates, prior to May 30.

There is no charge to attend and light refreshments will be available. Donations in support of LIN are especially welcome.

The courts will not deliver smaller class sizes to BC

Tara Ehrcke

The April 30 BC Court of Appeal ruling against the BC Teachers’ Federation was a disappointment to teachers and parents across the province. Many hoped that the court would uphold the trial judge’s ruling that the actions of the BC government were bargaining in bad faith, and therefore unconstitutional, and therefore must be undone.

While the decision is a difficult pill to swallow, it should also be taken as a guide to strategy and tactics in how to protect and enhance our public services. While court rulings have sometimes prompted progressive change in how these services are administered, what they must provide, and how they are funded, they can just as easily defend and justify the actions of government.

Ultimately, they are not the solution to a political problem. And the lessons of the 13-year legal battle over class sizes in British Columbia should teach us that relying on the courts is not a winning strategy. After a decade of court battles, classes are as large as ever, funding on the decrease, and the teachers’ strike fund depleted from legal costs.

Even if the Supreme Court of Canada agrees to hear an appeal (and this is not at all certain, given last year’s statistic of only 10 percent of cases granted leave to appeal), and even if the Supreme Court of Canada were to overturn the BC Court of Appeal decision, teachers would still be left to try and win back the stripped contract language through a new bargaining round.

Given the disappointing results of the recent nine-week strike, it is hard to picture teachers engaging in and winning a new strike with a still depleted strike fund and without much stronger, broader and more organized public support from parents, school trustees and the public.

The simple reality is that courts may give governments a slap on the wrist for failing to bargain in good faith, but they are not going to unilaterally remake government policy. And unions and the 99%, if we are to save and improve public services, have to stop looking to the court system as a saviour. Not only will the courts not deliver, but by putting our faith in the court system, we seriously undermine our own movement for change.

A take-away from this court decision is that if we want to win back class sizes, teachers will have to do it ourselves and with our natural allies -- the parents and students and public who all benefit from a comprehensive, properly funded education system. Doing it ourselves means not expecting someone else to do it for us -- not the courts, not the NDP. Governments and state institutions will play some role in the evolution of public services, but they do not initiate progressive change -- they respond to the social movements and trade union movements that push them to do it.

The best thing about the recent teachers’ strike was that it planted the seeds for building such a coordinated movement that involves teachers, parents and the community. The recent FACE rallies across BC over education funding were to some extent the organizational offspring of those seeds of solidarity.

This is the trajectory we need to take to build a movement to win smaller classes, proper services for students with special needs, and a public school experience based on equity where every child gets educational opportunities as good as the best private school could offer.

Please turn to page 23, The courts will not deliver

Thursday
May 14th
6:30pm

VICTORIA CONFERENCE CENTRE
720 DOUGLAS STREET

ndp.ca/RallyForVictoria

After a decade of Conservative government, families on the Island are ready for change.

Tom is the only leader who has the experience to replace Stephen Harper – and the plan to repair the damage he’s done.

Join Tom for our big rally. Admission is free — and everyone is welcome.

Rally for
Victoria

with Tom Mulcair
NDP

Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom: it is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves.
--William Pitt, British Prime Minister, November 18, 1783

Migration – sombre reflection of a world to come

As Stephen Harper tightens his grip on Canadians and what they may do, say or think, it is significant to recall that the words in the quotation above were spoken by a British Tory Prime Minister more than 200 years ago. How Tories have changed in their metamorphosis to “Conservatives”!

Just a month ago, French populist politician Marine Le Pen said, “There is no left and right anymore – just nationalists and globalists.” Le Pen, despite her many faults, highlighted issues at the root of many of the crises beyond Canada’s shores which Stephen Harper and his cabal don’t seem to get, as the spin-masters in the PMO turn minds and debate to trivial domestic issues while the rest of the world marches to a different drum.

For Europe, Africa and the Middle East in particular, migration and refugees are one of the defining issues of our time. It is not just migration itself, but the underlying causes of war, climate change, globalization, and the commercialization of human life. Then there are the effects – violence, nationalistic reactions and the complete dislocation of entire societies.

The scale of the global refugee crisis is stupefying. Millions of people are displaced and living in chaotic, shattered and dislocated societies in a state of utter hopelessness. Imagine if the entire population of British Columbia had fled the province and were living in tents, in other parts of Canada, begging for aid. That’s the situation of the people of Syria right now – nearly 4million of them have had to flee.

The UN reports that more than 51 million people are forcibly displaced – the largest number since the World War 2. The Mediterranean is a sea of death, as desperate people take the most appalling risks to escape an existence – no one can call it a “life” – of utter hopelessness. Can any of us even imagine the misery and lack of hope that drives people to risk their lives, if only to reach the security of refugee camp in Italy?

When Canada joined the bombing campaign that toppled Muammar Ghaddafi in Libya, did anyone think about what would come next? Now Libya is a chaotic failed State, the base for people traffickers, responsible for the deaths of thousands. Now we are bombing in Iraq and Syria. Yes, we may damage ISIL, but might we be adding to the flood of refugees heading to Libya and then Europe?

After 10 years in Afghanistan, and the Libyan bombing campaign, did the highly paid help in Ottawa really think before embarking on their next overseas military adventure? Clearly, raising questions like this in the *Lower Island News* will place the editorial team under suspicion of un-patriotic behaviour. In the current climate of “if you’re, not with us you’re against us” and Bill C-51, questioning the change in Canadian foreign policy from diplomacy, peace-making and peace-keeping to belligerent and armed confrontation, may be perilous indeed.

But in Kabul, just a few weeks ago an Afghan woman named Farkhunda was (falsely) accused by a corrupt mullah of burning the Koran. She was beaten to death by a mob, driven over and dragged by a car, then set on fire. Police action – NIL. Government excuse – “We will have to work on teaching and training the police.” But isn’t that what 10 years of foreign intervention, loss of life and billions of dollars were all about?

On April 25, Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Turkey marked the sombre 100th anniversary of Gallipoli at a dawn ceremony at Anzac Cove in the Dardanelles. Gallipoli was a military fiasco causing thousands of deaths and untold suffering, alleviated only by the bravery and selfless heroism of those who served there. One hundred years later, politicians - who are rarely the ones to lose their lives – are still not thinking it through.

As we go to press, Bashar Al-Assad is still using chlorine gas against his own people and his fighters are still killing people, yet Stephen Harper and his cabinet decided to add to the general misery by extending the Canadian Iraq bombing mission to Syria. The last thing the wretched Syrian people need right now is more bombs and it is no good saying, “yes but we are bombing ISIL not Syrians”.

The situation in the Middle East is incredibly complex but 100 years of foreign intervention has brought no lasting peace. Things may even be a lot worse than they were under the Ottoman Empire. So for pity’s sake, enough of the blather in the West about “security” and “keeping us safe” and let us stop piling fuel on the raging fires of sectarianism.

One thing is for sure - even if we keep bombing for another hundred years, the “West” is not going to solve the problems of the Arab world. Likewise we need to be smart about Ukraine. It is not simply a matter of shouting at Vladimir Putin and sending Canadians to western Ukraine to do yet more “training”. Europe and the “West” need an iron fist, but also a velvet glove, of firm diplomacy, in case Putin decides to call our bluff. But in the end, Russia and Ukraine will have to settle their differences themselves.

Finally, to return to the migration crisis, do read Paul Theroux’s recent final African odyssey – *The Last Train to Zona Verde*. One sentence says it all. “No poverty on earth could match the poverty in an African shantytown and no other place was so bereft of hope..”

This, increasingly, is what the world looks like. That’s why people take the risk of drowning in the sea of death. -- **DJO**

The Lower Island NEWS

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As others see it

Another religion--corporate capitalism--has taken total control over social norms

Dale Perkins

“Charity is the instrument by which justice is denied” (Chris Hedges, The Real News)

All who consider themselves to be progressive are awakening to a discomfoting reality about one of the core values coming out of the civilized world. That is the private corporate world has orchestrated all governments to strip away civic, public services and deny programs which sustain the poorest of the poor, because charity is the one enterprise licensed to offer basic sustenance to the poor and the economically marginalized. To add salt on these wounds, these same large private corporations will only legitimize certain respectable institutions, such as institutional churches and faith communitie to offer charity. And in the process charity becomes a mask to legitimize predatory capitalism. Thankfully people like Chris Hedges have the courage and intellect to expose this travesty and the illusion that it’s the modern way to run the ”body politic” with its attendant service agencies operating openly in most countries and regions of the world. We are all told daily to just “trust the System”.

Hedges delves into a past manifestation of this phenomenon found in (all places) the Nazi regime in Germany during the 1930s. Citing the work of Claudia Koontz in her book - *The Nazi Conscience* - Hedges shows how Nazism attempted – successfully it appears – to convince Germans that they were being protected and defended by offering a moral philosophy that provided an ethic of universal human rights based on the “positive” values of community and ethnic purity.

Even Hitler preferred to portray himself as a “practitioner of virtue”, which was his justification for persecuting and killing millions of Jews, homosexuals and any other deviants he could identify and isolate. Hedges has shown that as our system becomes crueler it extinguishes all values and potential for democratic engagement by the poor and marginalized – they no longer are allowed to be a part of the equation, and for all purposes they really don’t exist as significant players in society. That only leaves charity as the one necessary social responsibility which is allowed to operate. And how easily and quickly the “helping agencies” fall into line. Coming from an institutional religious community, I see how readily and eagerly the Christian church has embraced charity as one of its most important functions. And central actors in our charity institutions become expert in milking the most out of the charity game:

they become very effective fund-raisers and can orchestrate gatherings and events that command rich benefits for their institutions. And small cells in every pastoral charge are formed that provide a cadre of volunteers to offer their services to these same worthy institutions, because they are doing good charitable works for the “poor” in our community.

What is missing in the process are prophetic justice initiatives that disturb the system and their tireless operatives who are charged with the responsibility to keep the wheels of the “System” working the way it was designed.

Were important players within these agencies allowed to operate “outside the box” they might locate other values and themes which aren’t being heard. For the Christian church community out of which I come, they might re-discover their real founder, Jesus of Nazareth, who was decidedly a revolutionary. He spoke out against the principalities and powers of his day – it got him killed in his mid 30s.

His birth parents fled into neighbouring Egypt soon after his birth, where as refugees they stayed until most of their oppressors died or faded away and they thought it safe to go back home. And there they lived in relative quiet and peace in a remote region of Palestine -- all devout Jews living the best life they could eke out.

Of course, centuries of apologists have emaciated Jesus’ life and message and adapted it to fit comfortably inside the dominant culture in each and every society they inhabited. However, they definitely changed Jesus’ radical message of love of enemy and the marginalized, into “Hallmark” sentimentality, individual private piety, holiness and prosperity which has become the bedrock of the institutional Christian church.

I imagine similar things happened with Buddha and Mohammed and all the other patriarchs who preached other brands of religion and spiritual practices in their time and place.

Now we are seeing the emergence of another religion – corporate capitalism and the so-called free market economy. And just as insidious, this religion has assumed total control over the social norms operating in our modern world. But one fact remains according to this religion – charity is good, and needs to be the norm for bringing everyone into the picture.

Most of us aren’t even aware of its influence and control. We’ve just allowed the System to set the agenda and run the show. Can there be an awakening? And how likely will it mean engaging most of us in the transformation?

Dale Perkins is an activist and retired church minister.

On the home front:

The Canadian Wheat board is gone; so is much of Ontario Hydro! What about our civil liberties?

David Olsen

As the debate over Bill C-51 swirled around the corridors of Parliament and across the country, another national event came and went with little fanfare. On April 15, described by NDP MP Pat Martin as “a day of infamy”, the iconic Canadian Wheat Board effectively ceased to exist after almost 80 years of operation.

Known to Canadians from coast to coast as the face of prairie grain farmers, it became the centre of a political tussle in 2012 when Stephen Harper got rid of the farmer-directors, put a board of government appointees in charge and told it to prepare for privatization. Prairie farmers put together a bid to buy it for \$250 million dollars – but this was rejected by the Harper government (too much like the CCF?). Instead, majority (50.01%) control passed to a group which most Canadians had probably never heard of – the G3 Global Grain Group. Not surprising, given that the G3 has only just been cobbled together as a joint venture between Bunge Canada and SALIC Canada.

This is something of a corporate maze. Bunge Canada is a subsidiary of Bunge North America (HQ St Louis), the North American operating arm of Bunge Limited, headquartered in White Plains New York but actually incorporated in the British colonial tax haven of Bermuda.

SALIC Canada gives its address as Vancouver, but is 100% Saudi Government owned through the Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment Company. The one page website of SALIC Canada shows the chairman and directors as being the same as the SALIC parent company in Riyadh.

This no doubt confuses many prairie farmers who, when their bid to buy CWB was rejected, were told that CWB would be “privatized”. They may be forgiven for wondering how privatization means having a joint venture partly run by government ministers of a foreign country and could think that Harper Canada Inc. is giving away the family silver.

No money changed hands in this deal. Instead the CWB and its assets have been turned over to the Bunge/SALIC joint venture in return for a promise of a \$250 million “investment”. That does not necessarily mean \$250 million in real money has to be spent on spanking new railcars, locomotives (no longer built in Canada), ships, docks and elevators -- existing assets could be transferred from the JV members.

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, who seems to inhabit a different world, trumpeted a “win” for the Winnipeg economy because the G3 JV (ex- CWB) office would stay in Winnipeg. The status quo is hardly a “win”!

And how many of the key decisions will be made in White Plains NY and Riyadh, with less people needed in Winnipeg?

Furthermore, although 49.1 percent of the new company will be in a trust for farm-

ers who sell grain to it, G3 has the option to buy back that stake after seven years. With Saudi Arabia (19th largest food importer in the world) a major and growing player in global agribusiness, the buy-back will probably happen. Goodbye family silver!

The president of the CWB – presumably soon to lose his job – said that the deal will give the Board (soon to disappear?) a “world-class presence”. Well, we all thought it was already known and respected worldwide – that’s why the Saudis and Bunge wanted it. No one can blame SALIC and Bunge for their actions – that’s what they are in business for.

The problem with Harper Asset Disposal Inc. is that they don’t think that Canadians should own their own vital infrastructure and assets. It’s globalization or bust and as Marine Le Pen said, it’s either nationalism or globalism.

This has been a bad couple of weeks for Canadian assets. In addition to the CWB, 60% of Ontario Hydro is to be sold off, while the BC government flogged off public lands at what the *Times Colonist* described as “fire sale prices”; meanwhile more oil assets are being sold to overseas buyers with plenty of job losses.

To cap it all, BC Premier Christy Clark came up with the most mind-stunning quote of the week on April 27, after the Vancouver Harbour oil spill, saying “somebody has to start looking after our coasts”. Successive (mostly conservative/right wing) BC governments have had that responsibility for 150 years and signally failed to do so – as witness most of the accessible coastline sold off for private waterfront developments, a process which continues unabated.

Joining in the corporate fun is none other than John Baird. The recently departed Conservative foreign affairs minister has been rewarded with a directorship at CP Rail -- reported by Canadian Press to be worth a minimum of \$235,000 per year – and also an appointment as special international adviser to mining giant Barrick Gold. With Barrick involved in contentious environmental law suits in Chile, New Guinea, Philippines and elsewhere, Baird should be kept busy.

As the federal election looms, two things stand out. One is that many Canadians are increasingly tolerant of invasive government decisions, and secondly we have not had any sensible discussion about coalition government. Justin Trudeau has excelled himself in talking nonsense about coalitions.

By the time you read this the UK general election on May 7 will be over, and this is what an Australian journalist said in *The Guardian* on April 29. “*For months the polls have been saying only one thing: that Scotland will decide who governs Britain. This is no time to be coy about Westminster. You exported it to the world. We know the rules. America made a terrible mistake right at the*

beginning by ditching Westminster along with the crown. Westminster works. And at times like these it works by doing deals, by building coalitions”.

Pity Canadian politicians don’t read this stuff!

Bill C-51, while given a rough ride by the NDP and Greens has not raised the concerns it should have among electors or the Liberal party. Letters to the *Times Colonist* have criticised “ill-informed hysteria” about C-51, while another was headlined, C-51 “no threat to honest Canadians”, inviting the authorities to “investigate me at any time or all the time”.

We had better be careful what we wish for. If you get pulled in for “investigation”, it is amazing what you might confess to after 48 hours of sleep deprivation, harassment, incessant noise and the like. Yes, there are threats to our safety and well-being and the more open our borders become and the more culturally and religiously diverse our society, the higher the risks that the marginalized and disaffected will turn to violent and extreme protest.

Certainly we need well organized and thoughtful security service, but safety and well-being are not enhanced by thoughtless and belligerent statements – usually uttered by the Prime Minister outside Parliament. If we declare ourselves to be “at war” with this or that organization somewhere in the world, they are likely to retaliate. But let us also not label every act of violence, especially by people who, like the murderer at the Cenotaph should have been in psychiatric treatment, as “terrorism”.

On April 16 we had the Canadian Press headline “Indian PM calls for global terror response”, which was nothing short of irresponsible. We do not need such ludicrous statements from Modi (who has a few skeletons in his own closet) or anyone else. If we go out looking for “global terror” – we will get it; there are plenty of unhinged zealots ready to oblige.

Speaking in Toronto with Stephen Harper, Modi, to thunderous applause, spoke of the Cenotaph murder as “a senseless act of terrorism”. In fact it was a senseless act of violence by a deranged person who should have been apprehended long ago.

Terrorism is more often a weapon of well organized disciplined groups with specific aims; for example, ETA in Spain, the IRA in Ulster and mainland Britain, the FLQ in Quebec and Chechens in Russia. Vicious non-stop violence and murder by groups such as ISIL has one major goal – to intimidate whole populations and make them compliant. The Spanish Inquisition used to do the same!

We would do well to carefully contemplate the differences between terrorism, nationalism and intimidation, despite the temptation to treat them as one and the same. Yesterday’s “terrorist” is often today’s “freedom fighter” and tomorrow’s political leader – as witness South Africa, Kenya, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Algeria. Iraq, Cuba and Israel.

Vote them out!

When it comes to spotting terrorists, this Harper government and its obedient servants are particularly astute (“Video seen as proof shooter was a terrorist” - March 7, 2015)

The accompanying audio of the cell phone message delivered by Michael Zehaf-Bibeau shortly before his rampage, revealed that he was especially enraged by PM Harper’s war actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Harper’s decision to deploy military personnel and equipment to kill innocent civilians along with armed warriors in those countries – first for six months and now extended indefinitely.

Michael Zehaf-Bibeau retaliated and the rest is well documented history.

War and military violence is abhorrent and those who perpetrate wars must be condemned by all who value peace and harmony among people of many faiths, ethnicity and race. Ignore the fact that Mr Harper lied to the rest of us, and his actions only compound what is becoming evident as another terrible example of war mongering. His Bills – C-51 in particular – have firmly entrenched the international message that Canada no longer is a “peace making nation”, but we’ve become inextricably tied in with the military industrial complex in the USA.

If Mr Harper and his Party really must search out and incarcerate sick or demented people with draconian ambitions he need look no further than any local psychiatric ward. And if he were really serious then he would prevent some Christian evangelical/conservative cells from meeting in local church halls, where radicalized young people are taught how to aggressively convert bad people wherever they happened to live.

Our safety and the safety of people like us is at risk in very unusual environments. Terrorism lurks everywhere, so Mr Harper & Co have a big task in hand. For those of us who detest violence and war, we at least have one remaining strategy – vote them out of office come next Federal Election.

Dale Perkins
Victoria

A councillor reports

My first year as a Cowichan Tribes councillor has been a very interesting and a rewarding experience. The journey has taken me to many homes and I have been blessed to be able to help people from the community including the elders in need.

These are some of the issues that face Chief and council and what I have been involved in:

Cowichan Watershed Board, Society & Cowichan River Flows working group: Drought in the Cowichan River and the issue with the Weir in Cowichan Lake, water governance keeping a close eye on fishing rights and title.

Housing: policy review, with input for a community meeting; we are reviewing housing options – multifamily homes housing feasibility studying findings. To participate in the online survey if you were unable to attend the meeting; go to <http://cowichan.makola.bc.ca/> Please note that it may take a minute to load this page to your computer.

Health Advisory committee: involved with the Health Advisory Strategic Planning session and attend monthly meeting.

Khowutzun Gaming Corporation: attend meeting with the GM of chances and DDBS

Also others: Community mobilization safety, Embracing Life community meetings, and HTG Leadership sessions.

External partners: CVRD (Flood/Dike works), Municipality of North Cowichan keeping a close eye on the developments within Cowichan Territories to ensure that our lands are protected. One was to ensure that docks not be built on the foreshore of Maple Bay Peninsula by Samsun Narrows.

Things worth celebrating: VIU students of the Welding class; the athletes that participated in the NAIG 2014 in Regina; the increasing graduating students and the Independent Opportunity Program.

Huy tseep q’u
Qwuliti’ stunaat

Debra Toporowski
Duncan

Friends of the Lower Island News

We are excited to tell you that the forum we mentioned in the last LIN is now coming together, and will be held on Saturday, May 30, at the Monteray Community Centre. Read more details in the newstory on page 3.

We hope that many of you will be concerned enough about the changing media landscape to come and hear our three knowledgeable speakers, and to offer your own opinions. Light refreshments will be available, and the event is free although we would appreciate donations to help with the costs.

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

Reds Hens	\$20
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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

We welcome your letters to the editor, as well as articles and reviews, photos, and anything else you think would be of interest to our progressive readers. Please mail them to the Editor, at Box 311-2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, email them to dale_young@telus.net, or phone 250-384-7621.

The next issue of the *Lower Island News* will be in early August. Deadline for submitting advertising and articles is tentatively set for Friday, July 24.

For further information and to submit articles and ads, email dale_young@telus.net.

Foreword:

Jonathan Lee

I recently attended an awards presentation at Trent University, Ontario, and had the pleasure of sitting with the recipient of Trent's Young Leader award for 2015, Ryan Heighton.

In conversation Heighton revealed his chosen profession, practicing as a defence attorney. It did not take long to understand

why Trent had chosen him for one of the evening's honours. He's clearly a humanitarian of distinction, albeit wrapped in a lawyer's gown.

Heighton explained many of his concerns with the path that Canada's criminal justice system has taken and with the proposed draconian amendments contained in Bill C-51. He also demonstrated an insight and humanity often missing in our justice

system.

At the end of the evening he agreed to write this article for *Lower Island News*. He describes some of his experiences guiding often mentally ill and indigent defendants, through a Kafkaesque maze of courts, fines, and incarceration.

His experiences described here amplify so loudly the brutal irresponsibility of federal, provincial and local governments

who fail to provide the most basic of support systems for disadvantaged Canadians and, instead, spend resources to attack and criminalize the most troubled of our populations.

Heighton's remarks make compelling and difficult reading, but if Canada is to preserve its respected place in the international order of civilized nations, then the injustices that he describes must soon be ended.

There can be no defence for a Justice system in Canada scarred by Bill C-51

Ryan Heighton

I am constantly asked the question of how I can "bring myself" to represent criminals. It is something that I never gave much thought to when I first went to law school. As someone passionate about both social justice and the limits of governmental power, it was just a logical decision. I suppose the easy answer is that I want to be sure that the criminal law powers of government are kept in check, and that criminal accused are ensured their civil rights as protected by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, the more important motivation behind my work is that I want to use my time and skills to help marginalized members of society.

Marginalization can take many forms, including just the inherent stigmatism of being criminally charged. However, as is far too evident in my daily dealings in criminal court, marginalization is more often in the form of clients who suffer from a spectrum of mental illnesses, addiction issues, and poverty (indeed, these are not mutually exclusive afflictions). Unfortunately, the criminal process can exacerbate these problems for individuals charged with criminal offences, and undoubtedly contributes to patterns of recidivism, creating a constant overrepresentation of marginalized individuals in the criminal courts.

Despite the ideal of a "presumption of innocence", which is guaranteed by the Canadian *Charter*, the cold reality is that investing in criminal justice does not win votes. The Harper Conservative government clearly understands what the politics of justice boil down to: the perception that the government is "tough on crime" and in favour of "victim rights". Indeed, they have masked many draconian pieces of punitive legislation under the guise of victim rights.

There is no debating that the rights of victims of crime are of paramount importance, but until criminal liability is fairly assessed, these rights cannot be protected. This is particularly relevant when someone has been found Not Criminally Responsible (NCR) by reason of mental illness. The NCR regime is somewhat analogous to the historical "insanity" defence. It is a way to ensure that all offenders are appropriately punished, based on their level of moral culpability and risk to society. For an individual to be found NCR, there is a very high medical threshold that must be met, and the result can be as severe as a lifetime sentence in mental health facility or as little as a brief stay under the supervision of medical professionals.

The system is well-developed, and balances the recovery of the "offender" as well as the public interest. The rate of re-offending among individuals found NCR is significantly lower than that of individuals otherwise incarcerated, yet the recent *NCR Reform Act* (enacted late last year) served to make the system increasingly punitive with no scientific basis - a true Conservative manipulation of the public's misinformation about people found NCR. It is stigmatizing, harmful legislation that does nothing to advance victim rights, but everything to increase the stigmatization of the mentally ill.

This pattern is also visible in provincial legislation. The Ontario *Safe Streets Act*,

1999 is a prime example (and an analogous act was enacted by the BC legislature in 2004). Created by the Mike Harris government in the late 1990s in response to the street problem of "squeegee kids", a group of youths who approached motorists, while driving, to wash their windows in exchange for change. The act was quite successful in eliminating this dangerous habit, but has now been a very useful tool to get homeless people off of the streets.

While there is no particular law within the legislation criminalizing poverty, by overcharging offences such as harmless panhandling, "encumbering the sidewalk", and trespassing or loitering (under separate but related provincial legislation), the police have been handed a very effective toolbox to get poor people off of the streets. Under quasi-criminal provincial legislation, the initial consequences of these charges are generally low level fines, but for the destitute and homeless, even a \$50 fine can be prohibitive. Combined with the frequency with which these offences are charged, and the risk of jail for non-payment, the result is far fewer impoverished and mentally ill individuals in the streets, but many more in our jails. Indeed, there is vast empirical evidence that there is a strong bidirectional relationship between mental illness and street involvement.

For many of the individuals charged under this provincial legislation, even just the logistics of navigating the court system can be overwhelming, which is itself enough to cause the tickets to pile up, undefended. I have represented many clients on large scale provincial appeals of these tickets when they finally find themselves in a position to seek help.

One particular client in downtown Toronto had amassed over \$30,000 in fines, and when he finally found his way off the streets and trying to improve his life, it was entirely prohibitive to his recovery. After working with me, I was able to appeal the tickets successfully (with my arguments centering on the systemic unfairness and stigmatization of the legislation) and his fines were reduced to \$1000, and he was set up on a payment plan of \$20/month un-

til everything was paid.

Despite my success in defending and appealing these charges, the reality is that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, more in similar situations, and the appeal process is incredibly labour intensive. There is absolutely no funding for this type of work, and for lawyers with hundreds of thousands of dollars in student debt, it is unfeasible to dedicate as much time as we would like to these worthwhile endeavours, lest we default on our own loans.

Beyond the provincial regime, the federal criminal system is just as dire. In Ontario, Legal Aid Ontario recently increased their financial eligibility cutoffs for the first time in 20 years. This is an encouraging step, but the standards are still so low that even a person charged with a criminal offence who is working a minimum wage job for more than 20 hours per week will not qualify for a government funded legal defence. This is not at all a reflection of the Legal Aid regime itself nor the people in it, but the governmental budgets that simply do not prioritize funding criminal justice.

It is an incredibly frustrating system for me, but I did not begin a career in criminal defence to get rich. So when people ask me the question of how I can defend "criminals" I quite calmly retort, "if you were ever accused of the crime, what would you do?". Beyond that, mental illness does not discriminate by social standing, and is a leading contributor to criminal activity.

To generalize that all people charged with a criminal offence are morally repugnant is to misunderstand human nature. Until we have a government that is willing to take a stand to truly defend human rights, rather than eroding them (see the current Bill C-51, but that is an entirely other piece), the problem will only get worse and our criminal justice system will regress to an American style of law and order. As a former scientist, my favourite quote eloquently summarizes my thoughts on these issues:

"If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin." – Charles Darwin



Ryan Heighton will be called to the Bar of Ontario in June 2015. He is a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School (J.D.) where he placed at the top of his class in the Criminal Law Intensive Program, and Trent University (B.Sc., Biology and Psychology; M.Sc., Environmental and Life Sciences with a focus on breast cancer research).

He is launching a criminal defence practice in Kitchener, Ontario, and will continue to focus on assisting marginalized groups.

A recent recipient of one of the highest Trent University Alumni awards for his work in social justice, he has led various student initiatives in attempts to bring awareness to social justice issues in the criminal justice system, and to provide direct advocacy services to those in need.

He is a frequent blogger about criminal justice issues, and has won various awards for his advocacy in the pursuit of social justice. He is also passionate about education, and is a frequent volunteer speaker and mentor with high school and university student groups.

Saanich Gulf Islands New Democrats Annual General Meeting & Fundraiser

AGM & CANDIDATE CONVENTION
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AGM 1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Candidate Nomination 2:15 p.m.

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for more information please contact us at:
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"In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

--Martin Luther King, Jr



It's time to act on a national aging strategy for Canada

Murray Rankin

New Democrats are proud of our cherished public health care system, the legacy of Tommy Douglas and his courageous leadership.

It was founded on the principle of universality: that all Canadians have access to health care regardless of income or background or where they live. Health care is a consistent priority for Canadians: we need a federal government that is willing to protect universality while bringing our public health care system into the twenty-first century.

As the New Democrats' new critic for health, I have been reaching out to the health care community and one thing is already clear to me: health care providers, academics, and the public all agree on one key point -- that the federal government must play a critical leadership and coordinating role in our public health-care system. While respecting the provincial role in health care delivery, we want to collaborate with provinces and territories to develop new agreements that ensure improved health outcomes and better use of health dollars.

In particular, Canada urgently needs a strategy to deal with our aging population. Evidence is mounting that the Conservatives are not doing enough to respond to the significant and growing challenge of providing accessible health care to our seniors.

With Canada's senior population expected to double over the next 25 years, there is simply no time to waste in implementing such a strategy. But we need leadership at the federal level to move forward.

In January, the Canadian Institute for Health Information released a survey of wait times and primary care access for older adults in 11 countries. Its findings reveal that Canada is performing poorly when it comes to providing timely and appropriate medical care to Canadians over the age of 55. Furthermore, it confirms that when older Canadians can't access the right type of care, they are forced to rely on more expensive types of care.

We know that providing medical care in a hospital is more expensive than providing care through a family doctor, home care, or long-term care, yet this problem persists. The survey showed that 1 in 3 older adults

are heading to the emergency room for care that could be provided at home or in the community.

Canada's family physicians have called on the federal government to develop a national home care strategy: it would allow seniors to live in their own homes longer, and save health care dollars that would otherwise be spent on emergency room visits. Despite a recent public opinion poll showing that over 75% of Canadians think the federal government could be doing more on home care programs, the Conservatives are not acting on this sensible proposal.

Canadians want to see home and community care services recognized as essential medical services, just like treatment in a hospital. These services are not luxuries: all seniors should have access to high-quality care. That's why New Democrats have proposed a national strategy on aging, which includes ensuring immediate attention to the spectrum of continuing care, including caregiver support, training, infrastructure and affordability. The federal government must work in partnership with provinces to meet the needs of Canadians who need home care, long-term care, or palliative care in a timely and accessible way.

We have also sought support from all parties in Parliament to develop a national strategy to deal with the growing issue of dementia -- Canada is the only country among the G-9 countries without one. Approximately 740,000 Canadians are currently, living with Alzheimer's or a dementia-related disease, a figure set to double within a generation. Millions of Canadians are forced to quit their jobs or reduce their working hours in order to take care of loved ones.

Every day, somewhere in Canada, dedicated health professionals and researchers are leading reforms that result in better outcomes for patients and better value for money. They are asking the federal government to provide leadership on scaling up best practices and ensuring better coordination, but this opportunity is constantly ignored. New Democrats welcome a robust debate on the future of health care in our country: we are ready to work in partnership with the provinces and territories to deliver better health care services to Canadian families.

Murray Rankin is Member of Parliament for Victoria.



In the House of Commons, Victoria MP Murray Rankin speaks with thalidomide survivor Mercedes Benegbi (centre) and NDP Leader Tom Mulcair. Rankin is the NDP's new critic for health.

There is a better way to protect our communities than Bill C-51

Jean Crowder

Safety and freedom are not mutually exclusive. There is no doubt the protection of public safety must be a top priority of any government. But the security of our shared values and freedoms is equally important. That is why the NDP is opposed to Bill C-51

There is a better way, one that builds our communities while protecting them. The White House has begun work with at-risk groups to help make them more resilient against the lure of radicalization. By engaging with community and faith leaders, as well as counter-radicalization experts, they are working to find solutions at the neighbourhood level.

Canada should be following a similar path, instead of making our already broad terrorist laws even more far reaching. Anyone who is genuinely inciting violence against others must be stopped, of that there can be no doubt. But we need not wait for someone to become radicalized -- we can act sooner.

We don't protect our free and democratic society by suppressing our rights and freedoms. Canadians can count on New Democrats to continue to hold their principled stance against this Bill that erodes basic values of Canadian society.

When our Leader, Tom Mulcair, spoke against Bill C-51 he raised many of these issues. I'm including an edited version of his speech here but you could also go to www.parl.gc.ca and look at his speech on February 18, 2015.

"Mr. Speaker, I rise today as leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition to indicate that the New Democratic Party of Canada will oppose Bill C-51.

"I do so with a deep sense of responsibility, because, as members know, over the last several months, horrific terrorist attacks have shocked the world. However, at the same time, mourning those events has brought people together and strengthened our resolve to defend our way of life against cowardly attackers who seek to intimidate us and erode our freedoms.

"Canadians came together in grief and defiance the day after the Parliament Hill shooting, pledging that violence would not, even for a day, halt the work of our democracy. That day we were united. We were resolved to keep this land strong and free, to protect our freedoms, to stand by our principles.

"The NDP believes that the laws that exist today enable police and intelligence officers to do their work properly. Providing new legislative tools is not the only solution. First and foremost, we must ensure that our officers have the financial resources they need in order to better enforce the law.

"The Prime Minister should know that it is not either the environment or the economy. It is both. It is not either free trade or human rights. It is both. It is not either public

safety or freedom. It is both.

"The Prime Minister could have decided to put forward concrete measures to make Canadians safer and protect our freedoms. Instead, the Conservatives have once again put politics over principle and have introduced a bill that is so broad it would allow CSIS to investigate anyone who opposes the government's economic, social, or environmental policies.

"Experts who are starting to write about this, those highly respected individuals, are warning that the broad measures in Bill C-51 could lump legal dissent together with terrorism and lump strikers together with violent anarchists. Bill C-51 proposes to make it an offence to advocate or promote terrorism "in general".

"Can the minister even explain what the words "in general" are doing in a legal text?

"Canada already has strong laws that make it an offence to incite a terrorist act. That is why the Conservatives cannot give a single example of what is taken care of by this new bill that is not already taken care of by existing legislation.

"Anyone who is genuinely inciting violence against others of course should be stopped. However, we need measures that keep Canadians safe without eroding our fundamental freedoms.

"The bill also comes on the heels of cuts to our security agencies, cuts that sideline other public safety priorities, and the Prime Minister has yet to offer a plan to support Canadian communities that are combatting radicalization on the ground.

"Bill C-51 is silent on one element that we feel is essential to attacking terrorism at its root: Canada needs a strategy against radicalization right here at home. We want more measures to help communities. That is what communities are asking for. They want to be able to carry out major educational campaigns.

"It is our duty as legislators to implement intelligent and effective policies to protect Canadians. We cannot make any compromises when it comes to safety and freedom. We need to protect both of these things at the same time and at all times.

"In closing, I would simply like to say that if we give in to fear, the terrorists are the ones who win."

Jean Crowder is Member of Parliament for Nanaimo-Cowichan.

Removal of ban on citronella is a victory for citizens

OTTAWA -- Health Canada's decision to reverse the ban on citronella bug sprays is a victory for consumers and for science-based decision-making. The NDP had strongly urged the conservative government to reconsider its verdict on citronella because it wasn't supported by scientific evidence.

"Canadians deserve to have options that don't involve synthetic chemicals, like DEET," said the NDP Health Critic, Murray Rankin (Victoria). "We're so pleased that Health Canada listened to pleas from the NDP and from Canadians and took another look at this ban."

Last year, Health Canada implemented

the ban on citronella despite a finding from its own expert panel that citronella was safe. The panel also highlighted flaws in the research the government was relying on in deciding that citronella was unsafe. Despite the fact that there is no new scientific evidence on citronella, Health Canada has opted to convene a new expert panel.

"It's disturbing that this government made multiple decisions here that haven't been based on science," added NDP deputy Health Critic Christine Moore (Abitibi-Témiscamingue). "The Minister should review how important decisions are being made in her department."

Murray Rankin

murrayrankin.ca

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Two bills to protect Colquitz and Sooke river systems introduced in House as Private Member Bills

Randall Garrison

In late April I introduced two Private Member Bills, Bill C-667 and Bill C-668 to restore federal environmental protection for the Colquitz River and Sooke River by adding them to the Schedule of the *Navigation Protection Act*. This is protection that was removed for all rivers, lakes and streams on Vancouver Island by the by the Conservative Government in 2012 when they passed their omnibus budget Bill C-45.

The Colquitz River system drains a watershed of some 49 square kilometres in Greater Victoria, largely in the new riding of Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke. It begins in Elk and Beaver Lake, but also includes Swan and Blenkinsop Lakes on its way to Portage Inlet. As a heavily urbanized watershed the quality of the watershed is under constant threat. A wide variety of volunteer groups have undertaken efforts to preserve and enhance the Colquitz system and have had success in restoring a run of between 200 and 400 coho salmon and dozens of chum salmon in the river.

Restoring federal environmental protection to the Colquitz would support the important work of the Friends of Cuthbert Holmes Park, the Peninsula Streams Society, Friends of Swan Creek Watershed, the Habitat Acquisition Trust, and the Colquitz Watershed Stewardship Project in restoring the important role of the Colquitz in our local ecosystem.

The Sooke River system drains a watershed of some 403 square kilometres near the southern tip of Vancouver Island. The rock falls at the Sooke River Potholes divide it into the Upper Sooke River system and the Lower Sooke River system.

Protection of the Sooke River watershed is particularly important for two quite separate reasons. The Upper Sooke watershed is the source of drinking water for the Greater Victoria area. The Lower Sooke River is becoming crucial for the restoration of local salmon runs, including chinook which are critical to the survival of the Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Two volunteer driven organisations, the Sooke Salmon Enhancement Society with its Jack Brooks hatchery on Rocky Creek and the Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration

Society with its Charters River Salmon Interpretive Centre and demonstration hatchery are doing key work in salmon habitat restoration and enhancement of wild stocks.

Restoring federal environmental protection will play an important role in ensuring the long term health of the watershed so important to Greater Victoria's drinking water supply and to the continued success of salmon enhancement projects.

On the budget front

The long awaited Conservative budget offered few surprises. The Conservatives are stubbornly proceeding with their policies that generate disproportionate tax breaks for those who need them least. This is especially true of their plans to expand income splitting and raise the ceiling on contributions to tax-free savings accounts. Middle class families have very little to look forward to in the next year. From \$36B in cuts to healthcare funding, to cuts to coast guard, to no new investment in affordable housing and no commitment to reducing poverty. Canadians families will continue to scramble for childcare spaces and Canadian workers will not see a fair federal wage of \$15/hr.

First Nations are particularly unlucky with no investment in basic services for young First Nations for things like education, child welfare and health.

Astonishingly, the Conservative budget does not mention the word "climate change" even once throughout the whole document. This budget is as short-sighted as Minister Oliver's quote: "I heard by 2080 we may have a problem. Well why don't we leave that to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's granddaughter to solve that problem."

Canadians were waiting for a budget that would help make life more affordable for the middle class and those who would like the chance to join them and one which would create good sustainable jobs. Instead we got a budget that gives tax breaks to the wealthiest, and keeps tax loopholes for CEOs.

Canadians deserve better.

Bill C-51 updates

The fight over Bill C-51 is not over and



Photo by Linda Carter

Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca MP Randall Garrison (standing) chats with guests at the 4th Annual Earth Day Local Food Dinner held at the beautiful Horticultural Centre of the Pacific.

public support for this bill continues to drop. Most recently, 60 Canadian business leaders signed a letter opposing Bill C-51. Signatories include "heads of many Canadian tech start-ups, including Ryan Holmes, founder and CEO of Vancouver-based Hootsuite; Tobi Lutke, CEO of Shopify; and Tim Bray, principal at Textuality Services and a co-founder of OpenText, Canada's largest software company."

Signatories state that "most importantly, we ask for data security. We know that many of our clients, including our government, will only host services in Canada because of the invasive privacy issues in the US. The US tech industry has already lost billions in revenue because of this, and we don't want it to happen here [in Canada].

We also know that the US National Security Agency has been targeting Canadian businesses, including Rogers and Royal Bank of Canada, with the full knowledge of the CSE and our government. We can't

even get a clear understanding of the details, due to the lack of independent oversight of our spy agencies."

New Democrats have worked very hard to defeat this bill and I have been proud to lead this effort in the House of Commons. We believe that our civil liberties are at stake if this Bill becomes law. The BC Civil Liberties Association also opposes this bill for a number of reasons, including "drastically expand[ing] the definition of 'security'... and criminaliz[ing] speech acts that have no connect.

This bill must be scrapped and I encourage you to continue writing to Liberal and Conservative MPs asking them to oppose this bill at third reading.

Randall Garrison is currently Member of Parliament for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca. (Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca will officially become Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke when the 2015 election is called later this year, to reflect the redistribution of residents into this riding.)

A Tale of Two Cities

Alistair MacGregor

Communities are often defined by the regions they inhabit, which in turn are usually defined by the geography of the area. In spite of geography, artificial boundaries are sometimes constructed that include two very different communities within the same political unit.

Cowichan-Malahat-Langford, our new riding created in 2013, has within its borders two major population hubs that are separated by the formidable Malahat Mountain, a place sometimes referred to as "where the ocean meets the sky". Indeed, the riding's name aptly describes the layout of the area it represents – Malahat is in the middle and separates the communities of Cowichan and Langford.

When it was considering how to add a new riding to Vancouver Island, the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission had a tough job. They had a target riding population to achieve, and the natural contours of the land did not allow for easy lines on a map. As a result, Cowichan-Malahat-Langford, with a population of almost 100,000 people, includes two very distinct communities that have almost no relation to each other.

The Cowichan region, a place where I have been a resident for 25 years now, boasts some of the richest and most productive agricultural land in Canada. The Coast Salish people named the area Quw'utsun' or Cowichan, which literally means "land warmed by the sun". The City of Duncan is the region's main urban hub, but the whole region has seen steady population growth, buoyed by an influx of people seeking a different pace of life.

The City of Langford is the Westshore's commercial and industrial hub. Langford experienced a population growth of 19.2%

between 2001 and 2006, and is, by some reports, growing at an estimated 4% a year. It is the Capital Regional District's fastest growing municipality – the city's population is now just over 25,000 and it has attracted many young families who are seeking more affordability from the high real estate prices in Victoria and Saanich.

In the beginning of this article I referred to the fact that mountains have traditionally acted as barriers or obstacles. However, as a new federal riding, we are now all in this together. For this reason I prefer to see the Malahat as more of a bridge (symbolically and physically) between two distinct and diverse communities that both face a similar range of problems and issues. It will be my challenge, in my attempt to become the new riding's first MP, to find solutions that will unite and bind our two communities together into a single voice in Ottawa.

Charles Dickens' great book, *A Tale of Two Cities*, was in some respects a comparison of the similarities of the plight of poor in Paris and London during the French Revolution – two very different cities but a set of similar social ills. I borrowed Dickens' book title because I want to make a similar point. Langford and Cowichan are two very different communities, especially in relation to each other, but there are similar problems and issues the residents from both are facing.

For every problem and issue, there is usually a solution. I truly believe that it is the NDP who can deliver the much-needed change we need to see in Ottawa, and I am ready to be the first Member of Parliament for this new riding and bring effective representation for all of its constituents.

Alistair MacGregor is the federal NDP candidate for Cowichan-Malahat-Langford, and you can view his website at www.AlistairMacGregor.ndp.ca.

Garrison hosts local food dinner

On April 18 MP Randall Garrison and the Esquimalt Saanich Sooke NDP hosted the 4th Annual Local Food Dinner. Dozens of guests enjoyed the dinner, the beautiful grounds of the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific, and the highly entertaining and informative speeches by Randall and special guest Linda Duncan, MP from Edmonton.

The beautiful spring blossoms and gardens at the Horticultural Centre thrilled and entertained visitors before dinner. Especially impressed was guest speaker Linda Duncan who immensely enjoyed the full spring, warm weather garden in Victoria as a contrast to ongoing late winter in the rest of Canada.

Lovingly prepared and served by staff from onsite restaurant Nourish, the 4th Annual local food menu featured fresh, local salmon, fantastic salads, delectable vegetarian options and a tasty dessert. Nourish remains an impressive destination – especially for those just starting or finishing a tour of the Gardens.

Garrison started off the evening speeches with some anecdotes about the year just past and the importance of preparing for election 2015 – when citizens will finally get a chance to kick Stephen Harper out of office.

Garrison also talked about the dangerous erosion of personal rights and freedoms at risk from Bill C-51, the anti-terror bill. And he spoke passionately about his ongoing work to protect and enhance the survival of Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Duncan, the evening's special guest speaker, was very entertaining. She spent some time talking about the thrill of being a New Democrat from Alberta today – and how now, with Rachel Notley and the Alberta NDP doing so well, it is probable the NDP will become the Official Opposition or, as unbelievable as it sounds, the premier of Alberta.



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MLA Report:

Students deserve better

Carole James

Our public education system plays a vital role in growing and sustaining a healthy society. It helps us to raise strong, active, thoughtful, engaged citizens who seize the opportunity to reach towards their potential and succeed in life.

Sadly, here in BC, we have a government and a premier that, for years now, seem more intent on picking fights with teachers and schools, than strengthening such a critical part of our society. At the conclusion of the longest education dispute in B.'s history, the premier said it was time to rebuild the relationships.

Such talk gave reason for hope, but words appear to be just words. Mere months after that huge disruption to the lives of children, families and educators, the government has introduced Bill 11, the Education Statutes Amendment Act. It is a piece of legislation that gives the province the authority to force boards to cut budgets, close schools and sell off assets.

This is not the way to nurture a strong society or a healthy economy. Government should be investing in education and treating those who run the system with respect. By building real partnerships, we all gain.

But instead this government wants to claw more fees out of parents while delivering less education in the classroom. Premier Christy Clark and the Liberals are taking \$29 million dollars out of the K-12 system this year and \$54 million by the end of next year.

Each one of those dollars removed will

hurt our children. The premier says this money can be cut out of administration, and that these tens of millions of dollars each year are "low-hanging fruit." After years of cuts, there is no more "low-hanging fruit," and to say it is to insult the staff and trustees who have worked so very hard to be prudent with public resources.

In our community, this funding reduction will mean budget cuts of up to \$1.8 million. The Greater Victoria School District says it cannot deliver on these cuts without impacting the classroom.

School boards around the province are also reeling from increased fees and costs, like the April 1 hike in BC Hydro rates. According to figures from the BC School Trustees' Association, the increase in Hydro rates cost school boards \$4,118,000 last year, accumulated \$6,877,060 this year, and nearly \$30 million over five years.

All of it means school boards are going to have to make tough choices based on the problems the government has dumped into their laps. It's a terrible way to expect our school boards to function, and it's simply not smart or sustainable.

We need a government that believes in our children and in a strong future. That means investing in our public schools. To do otherwise is to fail.

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: 250 952-4211 or by email at Carole.James.mla@leg.bc.ca. Vissit my website at www.carolejamesmla.ca



MLA Carole James and Victoria's Chief Constable Frank Eisner have a big smile for the camera between their duties as they serve Easter dinner at Our Place in Victoria.



Carole James, MLA for Victoria-Beacon Hill, Rob Fleming, MLA for Victoria-Swan Lake, and Maurine Karagianis, MLA for Esquimalt-Royal Roads, join forces to visit businesses during Chinese New Year.



Victoria-Beacon Hill MLA Carole James speaks at a public forum on the BC Budget at James Bay New Horizons.

Carole James, MLA VICTORIA-BEACON HILL



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MLAs Maurine Karagianis (centre left) and Carole James, together with John Horgan, Leader of the BCNDP, standing behind them, meet with representatives of Wounded Warriors Canada, who were raising awareness of the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder.

MLA Victoria-Swan Lake

Rob Fleming



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NDP moves to protect Salish Sea from plastic pollution

OTTAWA – With their latest Opposition Day motion, the NDP is taking action to protect Canada's lakes, rivers and oceans from plastic microbead pollution. A study by scientists from the University of Victoria and the Vancouver Aquarium found that high levels of microplastic particles in waters off the BC coast are threatening local marine life.

"The first step in tackling pollution is prevention," said Victoria MP Murray Rankin. "Removing unnecessary microbeads from everyday products is a simple step we can take to protect our waters and marine animals."

Microbeads are small manufactured

pieces of plastic used in consumer products like facial scrubs, shower gel and toothpaste. With microplastics found in higher concentrations downstream of major cities, researchers point to urban wastewater as an importance source.

The motion is as follows:

"That, in the opinion of the House, microbeads in consumer products entering the environment could have serious harmful effects, and therefore the government should take immediate measures to add microbeads to the list of toxic substances managed by the government under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999."

Many are one

Birth of the South Island Regional Council

Allan Collier with Marilyn Callaghan

The provincial general election of 2013, with its victories and disappointments, seems a long time ago.

A simple idea from that time became a reality at the NDP Provincial Council meeting on January 31, 2015. At that meeting, a coalition of NDP constituency associations, federal electoral district associations and the UVic NDP Club on South Vancouver Island was formally approved as the South Island Regional Council of the BCNDP.

It is only the second such regional council in BC, the other being the South Interior Regional Council. Coincidentally both share the same acronym, SIRC.

This Council owes its existence to the foresight, skill and commitment of many; chief among them are Marilyn Callaghan (Victoria Beacon Hill), Bruce Kilpatrick and Trish Richards (Victoria Swan Lake), Marianne Alto (Victoria Councillor), the presidents of each provincial and federal NDP association in South Island and regional reps, Darcy Lindberg and Barbara Riggs.

Back to the beginning

The lead up to the 2013 campaign demonstrated the promise of regional collaboration. Election Planning Council chairs from several south island constituencies worked together on communication and organizational plans that were followed up during the campaign. This initiative began the process of moving leadership for regional action to constituency executives.

Following the election, Marilyn Callahan invited the presidents of the seven provincial constituencies to discuss the longer-term promise for regional initiative. The discussions were wide-ranging with varying degrees of skepticism and enthusiasm for regional work.

In the fall of 2013 the group expanded to include presidents of the three Federal Electoral Districts. An early initiative was to discuss constituency responses to the Election Review Panel. Conversation also focused on sharing constituency resolutions and delegate selection processes for the upcoming convention. Throughout, presidents made connections with one another and their regional representatives to an extent not seen before, strengthening their resolve to work together going forward.

Provincial Convention, November 2013

Bruce Kilpatrick, the VP of Victoria Swan Lake and an early proponent of regional collaboration, proposed to south island delegations his plan to formalize the “presidents group”. Kilpatrick identified clauses in the BCNDP Constitution enabling regional councils and obtained verbal consensus to pursue formal organizing.

The Hard Work

Work began in January 2014. Marianne Alto, a former vice-president of the BCNDP, a Victoria Councillor and a constitutional aficionado, offered to take the lead on drafting by-laws for the regional council. Her skill and patience proved essential to achieving an effective process and a simple but clear set of by-laws.

Striking a balance between constituency independence and regional collaboration became the focus of the discussions and was key to any future success of the council. Presidents also wanted to include meaningful Federal Electoral District representation; something outside the scope of the BCNDP constitutional clauses defining regional organizations. Practical matters of reporting and financing also needed to be resolved. At each stage revisions were taken back to each constituency executive, debated and returned. In December 2014, by-laws and a covering memo were submitted to Provincial Executive and approved at their meeting of January 30, 2015.

Focus

The goals of the Council are fourfold:

1. Coordinate activities of the seven South Island constituency associations in areas of common interest
2. Provide a forum to discuss and act on regional information, issues and needs
3. Enable collaboration among all NDP associations within the South Island
4. Provide a forum for BCNDP re-

gional reps to report on provincial executive and council matters and to carry regional concerns back to those bodies

Examples of successful collaboration to date include unified NDP presence at 2014 Earth Day, Pride Festival, Saanich Fair, a coordinated response to the initial revenue sharing formula proposed by BCNDP, a series of local training workshops for constituency members, establishment of a common calendar of events and an inventory of fundraising events and ideas.

The South Island Regional Council meets monthly with Constituency and Federal Electoral District presidents or their designates attending.

Looking Ahead

With Sharon Wilkinson, president of the Juan de Fuca Constituency Association as chair for 2015, the Council will focus on actions to support NDP candidates in the upcoming federal election, extend the profile of the NDP throughout the South Island and Gulf Islands, enhance the capacity of local constituencies to elect New Democrats and join together as New Democrat activists to trumpet the value and values of an NDP future.

Nanaimo NDP choose new executive for 2015 election

Nanaimo Ladysmith NDP candidate Sheila Malcolmson outlined her campaign priorities as she welcomed newly elected executive members of the Nanaimo Ladysmith Electoral District Association at the federal NDP’s annual general meeting February 22.

“We will protect the coastal environment, create jobs and support small business by implementing a \$15 minimum wage, and care for families with programs such as the national childcare plan,” said Malcolmson. “Today we are electing a Nanaimo-Ladysmith executive that can win the election campaign and make those priorities a reality.”

The new president of the executive is Kip Woods, a 49-year-old teacher, and former president of the Nanaimo Teachers Association. The new vice-president is 17-year-old Avery Valerio, a full time student and two time member of the provincial riding executive, while long time executive member Bob Smits was re-elected as financial agent, as was union activist Penny Kanigan, who remains as executive secretary.

Newly elected members at large include Natasha Bob, a Nanaimo School Trustee and Nanoose First Nations councillor; Terre Flower, a feminist and activist

Fleming on education dispute ruling: BC Liberals still not delivering public education families need and its time for that to change

VICTORIA – New Democrat spokesperson for education MLA Rob Fleming (Victoria-Swan Lake) released the following statement on the Appeal Court ruling in the dispute over class size and composition bargaining:

“Premier Christy Clark and the BC Liberals are not delivering the public education system students and their families across this province deserve, and this court ruling doesn’t change that.

“Premier Clark’s confrontational approach with teachers began when she ripped up their negotiated contract in 2002, and continues to this day with Bill 11.

“Premier Clark oversaw the longest school strike in BC history and failed to fully fund the agreement that was finally reached with teachers, like she promised she would. During the dispute she said class composition was her number one


priority, but government’s own reporting shows class size and composition issues haven’t improved at all.

“If Premier Clark wants anyone to take her at her word that she’s ready to work with teachers, she should start by withdrawing Bill 11 from the legislature, or refer it to the Standing Committee on Education as the Opposition has proposed.

“Bill 11 shows Premier Clark’s Liberals haven’t learned a thing about how to work with their partners in education. This bill is a continued attack on the teaching profession, and an attack on elected school trustees.

“Parents and students have endured disruption and uncertainty in schools under Premier Christy Clark and the BC Liberals, and it’s time for that to change.”

Bill Routley, MLA
Cowichan Valley



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who works for social justice for indigenous peoples; Trevor Dickinson, a 29-year-old VIU student and Fair Vote Canada organizer; Matt Bowes, a VIU professor and green business owner; and Tim Leadem, a retired environmental lawyer.

Staying on for a second term on the executive as members at large are Rob Helenius, a 44-year-old media consultant and union activist, and Bill Woolverton, a retired meteorologist and long-time NDP activist in BC and the Yukon.

Outgoing Executive President Ken Pearce reported that the Nanaimo Ladysmith NDP will be entering the campaign in a strong position.

“Our candidate, Sheila Malcolmson, has proven her ability to work for the people of Nanaimo and the region over the past 12 years as the elected chairperson of the Islands Trust,” said Pearce. “And we have an enthusiastic grassroots membership that has grown from 500 to 1500 members in the last year alone.”

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OTTAWA – The NDP welcomes a new report authored by the Environmental Law Centre at the University of Victoria that raises serious questions about the clarity of the rules governing political activities for charities and steps that can be taken to protect charities from political interference.

“Given the Conservative government’s attack on charities that disagree with their policies, I think we should be looking closely at modernizing Canada’s charity laws,” said NDP MP Murray Rankin (Victoria), NDP Deputy Critic for National Revenue.

“We need the rules to be clear and applied fairly so we can have a thriving charity sector and a civil society where organizations can freely contribute to public policy debates.”

The report, *Tax Audits of Environmental Groups: The Pressing Need for Law Reform*, prepared for DeSmog Canada, also examined practices in other jurisdictions, including the United States, Australia, New Zealand and England, and made five recommendations for reforming the law governing charities.

“The report’s recommendations warrant serious consideration,” said Rankin. “In the meantime the NDP is calling for an independent review and immediate suspension on audits until there is transparency and a credible assurance that they are not politically motivated”.



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Federal budget creates surplus instead of jobs: think tank

OTTAWA—The federal budget, released April 21, will do little to revitalize Canada's sluggish job market and slow economic "growth due to collapsing corporate investment in the tar sands, says the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). The federal government could be proactive to mitigate Canada's fragile economy, but has chosen to create budget surpluses instead of jobs," says CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald. "In order to boost the economy and create jobs, we need a real commitment to infrastructure today, not in five years time."

"The government delayed the budget, claiming it needed to assess the impact of the plunge in oil prices, but there is little in the budget to suggest the wait made any difference," says Macdonald. "The government is clearly still crossing its fingers and hoping for an economic miracle."

The tax cuts in the April 21 Federal budget overwhelmingly benefit the wealthy and do little to meet the needs of those living in poverty. In addition, the family tax package is insufficiently focused, with a great deal of money being spent but very little delivered to those with the greatest need.

"With the economy slowing and population aging staring us down, this government decided to deliver an Economic Distraction Plan—purporting tax cuts, trade and fighting terrorism as the best way to manage the challenges facing our economy," says Armine Yalnizyan, Senior Economist. "That's like putting lipstick on a pig."

The budget measures for seniors, including doubling the Tax Free Savings Account (TFSA) and lowering the mandatory withdrawals from the Registered Retirement Income Fund, will primarily benefit wealthier seniors. Only 13% of seniors maxed out their TFSA at the pre-doubling

rate, and more than half of seniors don't even have a TFSA. Sixty-five percent of seniors have less than \$50,000 in an RRIF or RRSP.

"Like so many other measures in this budget, the majority of the benefits from the TFSA and RRIF changes go to those who need it least. A better way to help seniors would be to cancel the increased age of eligibility in OAS or expand the Canada Pension Plan," says Yalnizyan. "Let's not kid ourselves into thinking that either of these measures will have any impact on senior poverty or the retirement savings crisis."

The federal government will spend \$7 billion on the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and income splitting this year—untargeted programs that won't create a single child care space. That \$7 billion could pay for a national \$7/day child care program. Forty-nine percent of qualifying families will receive nothing from income splitting, with the greatest benefit going to families that earn over \$200,000 a year.

"This budget provides choices for those who already have them—families earning over \$200,000 a year. It does nothing to address the real challenges facing the average family in Canada—stagnant incomes, record high household debt, and a lack of affordable child care spaces," says CCPA Senior Researcher Kate McInturf.

The CCPA calls on all parties to review its Alternative Federal Budget, which proposes solutions that connect with what matters to Canadians: income inequality, job creation, health care, and climate change.

For more information contact Kerri-Anne Finn, CCPA Senior Communications Officer, at 613-563-1341 x306

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City of Victoria votes to support Downtown Community Centre

At its April 16 Council meeting, Victoria City Council voted 8:1 in favour of providing annual funding of \$50,000 to the Downtown Community Centre (755 Pandora Avenue), which is operated by the Victoria Cool Aid Society. The motion was introduced by Councillor Ben Isitt and supported by the mayor and all but one councillor.

"We are absolutely thrilled that the City of Victoria has recognized the important contributions to the downtown made by the Community Centre," said Kathy Stinson, executive director for Cool Aid. "We have been operating with an uncertain budget for many years, and this support will allow us to provide ongoing programming for people living, working and playing in the downtown core."

Uniquely, almost all programs offered by the Downtown Community Centre are free of charge, so that cost is not a barrier to the healthy recreation and lifeskills programs offered. Some of those programs include:

Open weekdays for drop-in access to courtyard, washrooms, staff, referrals, computer room

- Community Kitchen workshops: hands-on learning about nutrition and food skills
- Weekly drop-in floor hockey
- Kindergym: every weekday during the school year; rental by independent day-care operators
- Knitting classes
- Every Step Counts very popular daily running and walking program, with free, nutritious food
- Nordic pole walking
- Voicemail service is available for \$6/month
- Community Outings: experience parks, ocean walks, community events and clean ups
- Cross Fit: strength-based fitness training program for all ages and fitness levels
- Food hamper: a pick-up location for food hampers from the Mustard Seed
- Yoga: a gentle approach suitable for all age and experience levels
- Gym, kitchen and courtyard rentals evenings and weekends at very low rates (e.g. Fringe Festival, government employee groups, small organizations, fairs, elections)
- Computer basics training workshops

Creative expression classes, such as mandala drawing, watercolour painting, crafts, drumcircles.

Council also voted 8:1 in favour of a one-time, \$750,000 contribution to the Victoria Housing Trust Fund (Housing Reserve), in addition to their annual \$250,000 commitment. "This \$750,000 could be the seed for an additional 75 homes for people experiencing homelessness in the region, at Council's usual contribution of \$10,000 per apartment," said Stinson. "The province will not support any housing development without local and regional dollars on the table, so this is a huge step forward."

These new housing funds are great news for the community and also for Cool Aid, who are preparing to break ground on Cottage Grove, supportive housing for 45 seniors who are homeless. Altogether, with both private gifts and government contributions, Cool Aid plans to build (or re-purpose) 360 more apartments for people who are homeless through their Help End Homelessness campaign. (Currently the society operates 374 apartments.)

The Downtown Community Centre focuses on healthy living, health promotion and social diversity. The Centre provides free, healthy, recreation and life skill programs for adults and youth living and working in the downtown core. Low-cost rental opportunities are also available to diverse groups seeking an open, welcoming and centrally-located venue to host their events or community programs. Facilities include a mid-sized gymnasium, a non-commercial kitchen, a courtyard, computer access and voicemail services.

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.

For more information visit www.CoolAid.org/dcc or phone or email Kathy Stinson, at 250-414-4792 or kstinson@CoolAid.org

Bottle donations and refunds will benefit Cool Aid's REES program in May

A large recycling bin in front of 1509 Douglas Street, in Victoria, will be available for downtown residents and workers to pitch in their beverage containers to help Victoria Cool Aid Society's REES Program.

For the whole month of May, bottle donations for Cool Aid can also be made at any Bottle Depot location, using the yellow and blue charity bins shown below, or by letting the staff know you would like to donate your proceeds to Cool Aid.

"Every day we see people in need at the Bottle Depot," said Kelly Gorman, Operations Manager. "In addition to accepting empties from these hard-working men and women, we wanted to do something more to help."

Throughout the month of May, Bottle Depot will donate all refunds from bottles placed by the public in the large yellow "charity donation bins" to the Victoria Cool Aid Society's REES Program.

Every month Bottle Depot supports a local charity through these charity bins, which have raised over \$120,000 since they started the project in 2010. "These donations mean we can continue to help women and men who are living with a mental health or addiction challenge," said Lori Ferguson, Coordinator of REES (Resources, Education, Employment & Support). "We provide employment opportunities and help with housing, income supports, volunteer op-

portunities and more, for about 100 people every day."

Other charities supported by Bottle Depot over the years include CFAX Santos Anonymous, Mustard Seed and many more. "Our staff and management team are 100% behind the charity bottle drive," says Gorman "If it weren't for our customers and staff backing it, we wouldn't have \$120,000 to give."

Bins are available 24 hours a day outside two Greater Victoria locations: 4261 Glanford Avenue and 3961 Quadra Street; and 655 Queens Avenue is available 8-5:30 Monday – Friday and Sunday 10-5. As well, bottle returns can be credited to Cool Aid's account at Bottle Depot throughout the year, simply by letting the teller know your wishes.



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Raise welfare rates, diverse crowd tells government

Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories – Chanting, “What do we want, raise the rates,” and “Tax the rich to feed the poor,” over 150 people took their colourful signs and positive energy on a loud march down Hastings Street to the government offices at the foot of Howe Street, in Vancouver, March 31.

“People are tired of chasing food lines all day,” Bill Beaugarde of the Aboriginal Front Door told the crowd. At \$610 a month the welfare rate means that people don’t have enough to both pay rent and eat nutritiously.

“We really need a massive increase,” Harold Lavender explained. The disability pension for a single person like Harold is a mere \$906 a month.

“It’s good that we’re getting more allies,” said Lavender, noting the wide range of union, student, community and faith groups and people on welfare in the boisterous crowd. “We need to unite and really push this forward.”

“I have a long list of illnesses includ-

ing diabetes,” said Tracey Morrison. “The amount of money we get is not enough for a proper diet. I work really hard to survive on welfare. I sit on the phone [with the Ministry] for an hour and a half just to talk to someone who makes me feel like dirt.”

Fraser Stuart, called the “passionate cockroach” because he was wearing a cockroach costume, suggested that roaches like low welfare rates because they mean that roaches have lots of crummy housing to roam in. “You can reduce health costs in BC a lot by raising welfare, talking poverty could save \$1 billion a year” said Stuart.

“We need students, profs, and everyone from all walks of life to tell Christy that we need a raise in welfare,” said Sheila Avisso, a UBC student who joined other students on the march.

“Welfare means being hungry. Welfare means being homeless,” said Trish Garner of the Poverty Reduction Coalition. “We need to start treating people with dignity.

We need a net to bounce people back into the full life they deserve.”

Raise the Rates organizer Bill Hopwood said that the government’s announcements earlier this month would impact only a few thousand of the 174,000 people on welfare. “But it shows they are feeling the pressure and that we need to keep it up.”

Hopwood added that poverty costs the province about \$8 billion and year, while it would only cost \$4 billion to end it.

The march was held to mark eight years since the last increase in welfare. No one else in BC has had no increase in income over that long. Over the same time the premier of BC’s pay has gone up 53%.

Hopwood stated that the government has choices, “BC is a rich province. The government chose to give no increase to 174,000 people on welfare, a 20 cent increase in the minimum wage and \$227 million to the richest people in BC. Government policy seems to be to starve the poor to feed the rich. We need to build the pressure to make them change policy.”



Sympathetic home owner in Vancouver supports “Raise the Rates” campaign with easyh-to-read lawn sign.

Agency leaders ask minister for substantial welfare rate increase

Vancouver-Unceded Coast Salish Territories – In an open letter released March 30, leaders of numerous BC agencies, including the Poverty Reduction Coalition, with over 40 members and almost 400 supporting organizations, the Carnegie Centre, the Aboriginal Front Door, Atira Women’s Resources Society, the Hastings Crossing Business Improvement Association, and Gordon Neighbourhood House, have asked the Minister of Social Development to “raise welfare rates substantially to ensure that the 174,772 people on social assistance and disability can meet their basic needs.”

April 1 marked 8 years since the last increase to welfare rates. Single people on welfare in BC are expected to survive with a mere \$610 a month, receiving only \$375 for shelter. People with recognized disabilities are expected to survive on only \$906 a month with \$375 for shelter.

The open letter to Social Development Minister Michelle Stilwell stated:

“This April marks the eight year in a row that welfare rates have remained frozen despite our provincial government acknowledging the need for an increase. The rate for single people who are expected to work, \$610 a month, is literally not enough to pay rent and buy food, let alone meet other necessary expenses. According to the Dietitians of BC the cost of nutritious food for a month for a single man was

\$290 in 2011. The average rent for a one bedroom apartment in Vancouver is over \$1,000. Families and people with disabilities are also suffering.

“We urge the provincial government to raise welfare rates substantially to ensure that the 174,772 people on social assistance and disability can meet their basic needs.

Trish Garner, speaking on behalf of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, with over 400 member groups throughout BC, said, “The current income assistance system in BC is fundamentally broken. People in desperate need are being denied assistance, and if lucky enough to navigate all the structural and administrative barriers to welfare and have their application accepted, they are subjected to a life of ‘survival’, struggling to meet the most basic needs of shelter and food. Welfare is only \$610 for a single person and \$906 for a person with a recognized disability, and has not been raised since 2007. It wasn’t enough to live on then and it definitely isn’t enough to live on now. We support a significant raise in welfare and disability rates!”

Thelma Jack, interim director, and Bill Beaugarde, community coordinator, Aboriginal Front Door, added, “With higher rates people could afford better accommodation, other than SRO’s, which can be bad for their health. People could have the dignity of choice of buying their own food and

not standing in line for free food.”

Wes Regan, executive director, Hastings Crossing Business Improvement Association, said, “Raising welfare rates will increase the spending power of the residents who live alongside our merchants, better enabling them to shop locally and enjoy the range of goods and services available here. This better enables small businesses and social enterprises to create further jobs, including jobs for those with barriers. In short, increasing welfare rates is good for business as it puts money right back into the local economy, where it can do its work to create a healthier community.”

Janice Abbott, CEO, Atira Women’s Resource Society, commented, “The biggest impact of an increased support allowance will be increased access to more food and better nutrition, resulting in better health, better decision making, better/improved interpersonal relationships including relationships with children, greater independence and increased dignity. For some women it may also allow for increased participation within their neighbourhoods, including greater civic engagement and the opportunity to give back to their communities. Children who are able to stay in their families and be nurtured physically and emotionally are also far less likely to experience the same indignities their parents may have experienced, including homelessness,

struggles with substance use and mental and spiritual wellness. This is a long-term investment in all our futures.”

Ethel Whitty, director, Carnegie Community Centre, added, “With the shelter portion of income assistance at \$375 and the average rent for a one bedroom apartment in Vancouver at over \$1,000, people who need welfare can’t afford to rent a place to live in Vancouver unless they get into social housing. Tenants often wait years before a social housing unit becomes available. If welfare rates went up substantially people would have options other than homelessness or being forced to live in tiny hotel rooms and share washrooms with strangers.”

Paul Taylor, director, Gordon Neighbourhood House, ended with this comment, “Community organizations across the province are seeing an increase in the number of people on welfare accessing community-based charitable meal programs and the like. The growth is not sustainable for community organizations that struggle to meet the growing demand. People on welfare struggle to meet their food needs each and every day, as they navigate the web of emergency/charitable -- this is not a solution to poverty.”

All these leaders urged the BC government to take immediate action and raise welfare rates substantially.

Raise the Rate’s welfare facts

A single person on regular welfare receives \$610 a month for everything. The average rent for a privately-owned SRO in the Downtown Eastside (the cheapest non-social housing rent in Metro Vancouver), is \$485. The Dieticians of Canada estimate that an adult male needs to spend about

\$250 a month for a basic healthy diet. So a person on welfare can’t afford even rent and food, let alone clothing, a phone, transit, laundry, and goods for personal hygiene.

BC’s welfare rates were last raised in April 2007, nearly 8 years ago. The BC

premier’s pay has gone up from \$126,638 to \$193,532 in the same period, an increase of 53%.

Next year, 2016, the richest 1% in the world will have more wealth than the entire 99% of humanity (Oxfam).

BC is the most unequal province in Canada. The richest 10% own 56% of the wealth and the poorest 50% own only 3% of all wealth.

This is what the BC government did about this rising inequality in its 2015 budget:

- Gave \$227M in tax breaks to the richest 2%
- Ignored the need for a substantial welfare rate increase for BC’s poorest 174,000 people

Poverty costs BC over \$8 billion a year. A full poverty reduction program would cost around \$4 billion and save about \$4 billion, an average of about \$900 a year for each person in BC.

part of this by cutting \$4 million from the Family Maintenance Program.)

Increasing the earnings exemption from \$200 to \$400 for families with children and increasing the earning exemption for families with a “severely disabled child” from \$300 to \$500 and allow 2 parent families also to claim this. Helps less than 600 families; costs \$1.4 million

Allowing single parents to stay on welfare while they go to an approved course for “in-demand jobs” for a maximum of one year. The government doesn’t say how many single parents will be able to use this program but if it paid \$10,000 for tuition, transportation and childcare for one year for one person, only 500 single parents per year would benefit, as the program is supposed to cost less than \$5M a year.

So, of the 174,772 people on income assistance in January, 2015, thousands surviving on a mere \$610 a month, these government changes will probably help less than 7,000 single parents and children.



Photo by Tony Sprackett

Victoria Labour Council members, along with Victoria MP Murray Rankin, and other supporters were at Douglas and Finlayson outside Mayfair Mall to promote Fight for \$15 in April. The Fight for \$15 promotes raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

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Battle lines and battle scars - FGM: Education 101

Diane Walsh

The last two weeks of April, 2015 saw the ground break in the global fight against Feminine Genital Mutilation.

The regressive, and (many argue) regrettable article in *The Atlantic*, “Why Some Women Choose to Get Circumcised” has caused nothing short of a serious outcry, reverberating on both sides of the ocean, from the hidden depths of the #EndFGM movement to the ears of Melinda Gates who, (perhaps unwittingly), endorsed Olga Khazan’s piece in a tweet.

Justifiably, an angry firestorm erupted across twitter.

This has had the effect of galvanizing efforts for a united front to press for FGM Education in the US, needless to say, Canada and elsewhere. Understandingly so; FGM survivors were gobsmacked by *The Atlantic* piece. The bottom line is a learning curve that clearly must be overcome! (follow @RCObsGyn)

**Joint statement on story about women choosing to be circumcised
News April 23, 2015**

The Intercollegiate FGM Group, along with the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) and International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) have read the article on why some women choose to be circumcised published on 8 April 2015. We are extremely concerned by the way FGM is treated in the article.

While we welcome new social scientific research into the complex reasons why FGM occurs across societies, since it helps us to better understand the phenomena and thereby enable us to prevent it, articles such as this are retrograde.

This is our collective position:

- **We agree that FGM is child abuse and a severe form of violence against women and girls.**
- **We agree that FGM is a violation of the rights of the child and a violation of the rights of women and girls.**
- **We agree that the medicalization of FGM must stop.**

We know that in some communities, FGM occurs because it is regarded as a tradition, a rite of passage. On the surface, it may appear that the girls themselves willingly subject themselves to be circumcised, with their families’ blessing.

However, this does not make the practice acceptable. It is wrong to suggest that children can chose to undergo FGM. Many of these girls are underage and therefore they are not in a position to give informed consent to a practice that has lifelong physical and psychological consequences. Similarly, they may be under intense social pressure to have FGM and may also be unaware of what the procedure truly entails and the long term impact on their sexual and reproductive health.

There is no compelling argument to excuse FGM. The long-term physical, psychological and emotional trauma from FGM (not fully addressed in the article, some of which are transgenerational) which healthcare professionals and the women themselves are only too aware of, mean that there are no benefits but significant harm attached to the practice.

Notes - The Intercollegiate FGM Group comprises the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Royal College of Midwives, Royal College of Nursing, Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association (CPHVA) and Equality Now.

Spearheading a unified response which in part led to the above action, is one of the movers and shakers on the FGM front. Hibo Wardere is a formidable anti-FGM activist based in London, UK. She helped lead the courageous response; as did @FGMSilentScream (Integrate Bristol Charity) and many others in Europe, the US and Canada who presented themselves on the spot in solidarity and, since, without hesita-

tion.

Having covered the subject and worked in the field myself, I too chimed in, on twitter. Coining the term “anthro-apologists” and shouting out, Saying No to Anthro/Apologetists, this very second!

In other words I join in challenging any apologist anthropologist bleating female genital cutting (FGC)/female circumcism (FC) messaging.

It’s Female Genital Mutilation, for goodness sake. We are taking the bull by the horns as the United Nations has done, tackling the practice as an FGM. No excuses.

On the damaging and poisonous message that the title of the article--*Why Some Women Choose to Get Circumcised*-- communicates, *The Atlantic* is advised to issue a retraction and/or “fuller” explanation as arguably they could be seen to be guilty of a subterfuge in condoning the use of overt apologetic language and using the “choice” defence antic.

FGM is everyone’s fight. And so it represents the worst of human-rights violations, especially when the mainstream media posits the issue as a “choice”. No worst evil than, its condoning, in this sneaky, way.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) according to the undisputed definition by the World Health Organization, refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or injury to the female genital organs for non-therapeutic reasons. (clitoris, labia lips). Artistic rendition here.

Be mortified, as I am, that a longstanding, high-currency American publication in Washington DC would brazenly publish disinformation. The UN Resolution against FGM passed in 2012 and the breadth of the world-wide movement is moving against justifying slicing off girls’ private parts. Using “choice” rhetoric as a means of suggesting, a deeper-understanding, is beyond the pale.

Interestingly, and of note; when you click the Twitter share-button for *The Atlantic* article, it takes you to this sentence, “What many people don’t understand about [Female Circumcism] sic”. A nuance, noticed by careful watchers virulently opposed to the title of the article in the first place which still remains, as “Why Some Women Choose to Get Circumcised despite survivor’s protestations.”

Thank you Hilary for your words:

<http://hilaryburrage.com/2015/04/22/anthropological-studies-of-fgm-as-cultural-excuses-for-fgc/>

UK sociologist and writer, Hilary Burrage eloquently frames the current narrative in her blog post “Anthr/Apological Studies Of FGM As Cultural Excuses For ‘FGC’ published April 22, 2015.

“And so we find ourselves confronted by yet another anthropologist ‘explaining’ why women ‘choose’ to have themselves ‘cut’. This time (again) it’s Prof Bettina Shell-Duncan of the University of Washington, reporting. ‘. She invites us to consider ‘common misconceptions about female genital cutting, including the idea that men force women to undergo the procedure’. When will this comforting denial of the truth finally become a matter of shame for those who promote it? FGM is vile, patriarchal child abuse.”

“It’s time to be clear; the softly-softly approach, earnest ‘explanations’, and appeals for patience have run their course. The Anthr/Apologetists have had their chance for the past three or four decades, and it didn’t work. Every ten seconds or so, every hour of every day, somewhere in the world a small child, girl or woman undergoes female genital mutilation (FGM),” concludes Prof. Shell-Duncan.

In the words of Dr Morissanda Kouyate, executive director of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children:

“We cannot continue to beg parents who, in full knowledge and ignoring all the information given to them about FGM, continue to submit their daughters to FGM. Such parents and relatives should find the law in all its rigour confronting them,”

(By which, as Tobe Levin explains in her excellent blog, is meant, it’s time to stop “asking” communities, and start “telling” them: No More FGM.)

And Tobe Levin goes further, having previously provided a critique of the work of Bettina Shell-Duncan which highlights the extraordinary nonchalance demonstrated within some schools of Anthropology about the suffering of defenceless children and coerced women.

FGM (on minors) is child abuse and serious harm to which the child is legally unable to consent – as has been formally proclaimed in almost every country in the world:

- the concept of “consent” is meaningless and irrelevant whatever the age of the person concerned, if refusal may result in being outcast, perhaps penniless and abandoned and
- in the case of minors who are accorded “adult” status post-mutilation, this can be very harmful to their health and futures – they believe they have licence to do what they wish; but the reality is, they will probably get pregnant and put their own lives and their babies’ at risk, and they will lose out massively on education.

The contexts of these tragedies are however perceived differently in different places, even within the Western world such as the USA and UK, and in some respects the UK may be edging ahead in tackling the issues (albeit that some observers have reservations about various current UK strategies, at least the issues are being acknowledged) – as indeed the 2014 UK Parliamentary Inquiry on FGM and the subsequent ‘*Vaz Report*’ demonstrates. (For those interested in the detail, the evidence sessions which preceded the Report are very informative).

But it’s important to recognize that, proportionate to population, the USA probably has approximately the same size of FGM challenge as the UK – very many thousands in each case.

And all these observations offer substantial grounds for concern about the views which some Anthropologists continue to promote.

Particularly, use of the term ‘FGC’ (Female Genital Cutting, or ‘Circumcision’) as a euphemism for what is in reality criminal mutilation needs to be robustly challenged. Perhaps in some contexts «cultural» apologists (Anthr/Apologetists) who employ this term can even be construed as complicit in FGM as a crime – they provide a comfort blanket and rationale which hides sometimes homicidal horror.

And they also offer a wriggle-out from the idea that FGM is patriarchally inspired. «Pointing to the fact that the ‘procedure’ is often (not always) carried out by women is, they suggest, ‘proof’ that men are not responsible. It’s extraordinary that this claim has credence.

Whatever the current situation, FGM has over the centuries been the ultimate way to convert women into chattels – to be sold by their fathers as «brides» (domestic and sex workers) for the best price their «proven» «purity» can secure, and to be good value as guarantors of the male line (or as slaves) because they could not – it was believed – become pregnant unless their intimate shackles were removed.

Ultimately, FGM is about economics and power, and so is patriarchy. How the *status quo* concerning FGM is perceived by anyone as having no connection with patriarchy is a mystery to many.

It matters a great deal then that we call FGM for what it is, «mutilation»: **FGM is the ultimate in physical patriarchal oppression.**

That’s why in 2013 some of us produced the *Feminist Statement on FGM*; and, much more importantly still, it’s why the African-led *Bamako Declaration of 2005* brooks no quarter on its insistence that the word to use is... **mutilation.**

But still the apologists – organizations like Tostan in the USA, weak British politicians who steer clear of the most challenging aspects of FGM, some of those around the world in their ivory towers – prefer the terms “cutting” and “circumcision”, even in formal discourse.

To them we must address this question: *Is there a connection between the use of the term FGC and the failure to stop FGM?*

Could there be a connection between (a) the outcomes of programs which adopt the softly-softly euphemistic approach, and (b) tortuously slow eradication in those places of FGM?

The wide-reaching global 2012/13 report of the UNICEF leads us to consider that this might be so. Despite a counter-response citing Tostan’s 2009 research partner, the Population Council, evidence suggests that program effectiveness in Senegal, where Tostan operates, is at best patchy – it seems to be better at securing education and advancement for girls (good, of course), than at stopping FGM (its declared ambition).

The triggers for/indicators of readiness for successful FGM eradication are complex. Tostan’s much-promoted – and photographed – Alternative Rite of Passage (ARP) can only work under certain circumstances. That’s why research programs such as REPLACE2 are important; they offer a more sophisticated analysis of «readiness» to abandon FGM in specific and diverse communities.

And so we return to the specifics here, *The Atlantic* post on anthropological observations about FGM.

It is a matter of serious regret (and hurt to survivors) that Melinda Gates, a generous woman and health benefactor, commended the Shell-Duncan article on Twitter. The Gates Foundation has undertaken excellent work on, eg, neonatal health and maternal malaria. Commendation of the Shell-Duncan analysis contrasts dismally with these positive global contributions to women’s health.

Doubtless, Ms Gates intended no disrespect to FGM survivors, nor – as she emphasized – does she condone “the practice”; but she has surely been poorly briefed. She should be strongly encouraged to reconsider her position in the light of the evidence cited here and elsewhere.

Any apparent academic or journalistic diminishing of the harm of FGM, intentional or not, can cause great distress to those who have had to endure it. The Anthr/Apologetist approach is ethically void and academically objectionable.

Of course medical and social anthropology is fundamental to understanding how to eradicate FGM; but so are medicine, economics and straight politics. Seeking to “explain” FGM via “culture” without full reference to the ultimate grimness of FGM, to the harm it imposes on its pressured, powerless and/or uninformed victims, is not a route to eradication.

FGM is very rarely a “choice” in any meaningful sense of the word. And it is always, as the United Nations declared in December 2012, a clear violation of human rights, and an act of grievous child abuse when inflicted on minors.

It is critical in reporting anthropological research on FGM to be crystal clear about the impacts it will have, both on survivors and on any future possibility of girls being, not «cut», but mutilated.



Dr Morissanda Kouyaté, executive director of Inter-African Committee (IAC), on traditional practices affecting the health of women and children, reacts to the discussion raised about FGM from an anthropologist.

It doesn’t have to be like that: a social anarchist looks at the world

Ron Duffy

At the University of Calgary in the mid-1960s, the geographer Dr David Jones used to stand at Speakers’ Corner in the Students’ Union and try to instil in impressionable young minds the ideas and ideals of anarchism. His was no easy task, especially in a city like Calgary. To most of his audience, and to most of the population outside the university, anarchism stood for violence and destruction and terrorism.

But I was impressed. There had to be more to anarchism than throwing bombs and murdering archdukes. Then I discovered Paul Goodman. In those days everyone was reading Goodman. He became one of the most influential social critics of the 1960s after he published *Growing Up Absurd*. One of the most popular books of the decade, it looked at the problems of youth in the “organized system” of modern American society.

In his many less well-known writings Goodman inspired the dissident youth of that tumultuous era with provocative, insightful, incisive pieces that analysed citizenship and civil disobedience, decentralization and the organized system—all while still mindful of the long anarchist tradition and of the Jeffersonian democracy that resonated strongly in his own political thought. I became a believer.

The failure of our modern way of life, as Goodman made clear, was a failure of society. Human beings are social animals, and reach their fulfilment when cooperating with one another. Society is natural, the anarchist declares; the State is not. The State is a relatively recent development in human history, going back no further than ancient Egypt, 5,000 years ago. In its development to the present it has become an artificial agency through which human beings, instead of cooperating with one another, exploit and corrupt each other. The anthropologist Marvin Harris wrote that “In many ways the rise of the state was the descent of the world from freedom to slavery.”

In its short history on Earth the first law of the State has been “self-preservation at any cost”. Self-preservation depends on power, and power is acquired by weapons and war. The defining characteristic of the State is, as all political geographers are taught, “the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force”, a concept first expounded by the sociologist Max Weber in 1919. Weber claimed that the State is any “human community that successfully claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory”.

In other words Weber describes the State as any organization that succeeds in holding the exclusive right to use, threaten, or authorize physical force against residents of its territory. This caused Ghandi to comment that ‘the State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence.’

The State has ousted “traditional” society, and anarchists do not like it. The Canadian anarchist and writer George Woodcock defined anarchism as “a system of social thought, aiming at fundamental changes in the structure of society and particularly—for this is the common element uniting all its forms—at the replacement of the authoritarian state by some form of non-governmental co-operation between free individuals.” To the Italian Errico Malatesta, the goal of anarchism was “the complete destruction of the domination and exploitation of man by man”.

Social or socialist anarchism is that branch of anarchism that sees individual freedom as depending on mutual aid and cooperation, placing emphasis on unrestricted liberty, community, and social equality. Like libertarian socialists, social anarchists believe in converting present-day private property into “the commons” or public goods, while retaining respect for *personal* property.

In the ranks of social anarchists stands

Mikhail Bakunin, the anarchist foil to Marx’s communism within the radical politics of the 19th century. The intellectual clashes between these two opened the rift between anarchists and communists that continues to the present. Though both desired the same end—an egalitarian society without classes or government—Marx advocated using the State to achieve revolution, while Bakunin advocated the abolition of the State. Marxism is inherently totalitarian; it recognizes no moral limits on the State. According to Bakunin, ‘Marxists maintain that only a dictatorship—their dictatorship, of course—can create the will of the people, while our answer to this is: No dictatorship can have any other aim but that of self-perpetuation, and it can beget only slavery in the people tolerating it; freedom can be created only by freedom, that is, by a universal rebellion on the part of the people and free organization of the toiling masses from the bottom up.’

The classic case of anarchism versus communism occurred during the Spanish Civil War. When Orwell arrived in Spain to fight against fascism, he joined the communist P.O.U.M. because it was the first militia he ran into. In his book *Homage to Catalonia* he wrote, “As far as my purely personal preferences went I would have liked to join the Anarchists.” On what it was like in anarchist-controlled Spain, Orwell wrote, “when one came straight from England the aspect of Barcelona was something startling and overwhelming. It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle. Practically every building of any size had been seized by the workers and was draped with red flags and with the red and black flag of the Anarchists ... Every shop and cafe had an inscription saying that it had been collectivized ... There was much in this that I did not understand, in some ways I did not even like it, but I recognized it immediately as a state of affairs worth fighting for ... so far as one could judge the people were contented and hopeful. There was no unemployment, and the price of living was still extremely low ... Above all, there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom.”

This experiment in Spain during the Civil War is the best-known example of successful anarcho-syndicalism, a form of socialist anarchism that spread through revolutionary Spain—Aragon Andalusia, Catalonia—before being crushed by the combined forces of the regime that won the Civil War, by Hitler and Mussolini, by Spanish Communist Party repression (backed by the USSR), as well as by economic and armaments blockades from the capitalist countries and the Spanish Republic itself. An attempt to create a society of free men was destroyed by those who fear freedom most. The best traditions of socialist anarchism, exemplified by pioneers of anarchism like Bakunin and Kropotkin, and embodied in the Spanish collectives and the libertarian workers’ movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was annihilated by overwhelming forces. At its peak, the CNT, the Spanish confederation of anarcho-syndicalist labour unions, had one million members.

Capitalism, the arch-enemy of social anarchism, now rules the world. Our capitalist world is itself ruled by huge, global corporations and their multi-billionaire executives, the uber-selfish super-rich.

What a mess they have made of the world they now control: a world of salacious greed and obscene poverty; a world of terror and torture, of war and slaughter; a world of putrid pollution, and habitat rendered unliveable for species rapidly becoming extinct—including almost certainly our own. Surely we can do better than that.

Henry David Thoreau, claimed by social anarchists as one of their own, asked the same question over 150 years ago: “Is a democracy, such as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards organizing and recognizing the rights of

man?”

The vaunted democracy of capitalism is a sham. In a democracy the poor should have more power than the rich, because they are more numerous, and the will of the majority is supreme. Isn’t that the way it works? The will of the majority? Not in today’s repugnant world. It is in the interests of global corporations and their political lackeys to keep people poor, to underpay for labour, to turn workers into slaves, to abolish or disallow unions and the right to negotiate for fairness in the workplace. Too many exploited workers in factories and fields, in supermarkets and fast-food outlets, in rich countries and in poor, live in squalor, in filth, in crime, with hope and joy gone, a homeless, soulless army of human prey.

It doesn’t have to be like that. The Spanish anarchists showed that a better world is possible. The anarchist principle is by and large true. Tolstoy wrote; “The Anarchists are right in everything; in the negation of the existing order, and in the assertion that, without Authority, there could not be worse violence than that of Authority under exist-

ing conditions. They are mistaken only in thinking that Anarchy can be instituted by a revolution.”

Ay, and more’s the pity.

Such pessimism did not stop David Jones from making his polemical orations at the University of Calgary in defence of anarchism. In doing so he was joining a list of more famous men—and women—going back to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a French philosopher and politician who was the first person to call himself an anarchist, the first to give a name to beliefs that have been around for as long as people opposed rule and rulers and struggled to govern themselves democratically. To those I have already quoted in this essay, I could add men like Oscar Wilde, Albert Camus and Franz Kafka, and two of my own “idols” Bertrand Russell and Noam Chomsky; and influential women like Emma Goldman, Rosa Luxemburg, Hannah Arendt and Ursula Le Guin. And these are only the best-known. First attracted to socialist anarchism by my old friend David Jones, I like to consider myself a member of that august company.

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Harper’s agenda: Fear and loathing in the Great White North

Barry Weisleder

The move by Canada’s Conservative government to extend for a year the bombing mission in Iraq, and expand it into Syria, won’t make much difference in the US-led war on the Islamic State. But it will appease the arms industry, mobilize the party’s right wing electoral base, and poison the political climate.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s *foreign* policy is largely about re-shaping the *domestic* agenda -- for years to come. War in the East helps to fuel the flames of hatred and bigotry at home, and strike fear in the hearts of working people, especially social justice seekers.

By spending \$122 million and bombing 53 targets, Ottawa is no closer to eliminating ISIS. Instead, it is treading the path that turned Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya over to ruthless, sectarian, reactionary forces. It also ensures more costly contracts for makers of military hardware and surveillance technology.

The ideological offensive, however, is priceless -- for Canada’s ruling elite, that is. By distracting huge swaths of the population with security paranoia and islamophobia, the Conservatives sidelined discussions about job insecurity, tax giveaways to the rich, rising economic inequality, eroded pensions, long ignored child care needs, and the scourge of climate change. The diversion worked, for a while, and now shows signs of waning.

Harper continues to inflate the “jihadist monster” -- even as the Canadian Security Intelligence Service says that Muslim terrorists are less of a threat than white supremacists. Lone wolf attackers are more likely to be radical right wingers than radical Islamists, according to CSIS. But Arabs and Muslims fit the profile Harper prefers to employ to rationalize more police powers and longer jail sentences.

His so-called *Anti-Terrorism Act* (C-51), condemned by the 36,000 member Canadian Bar Association for curtailing liberties without increasing public safety, casts a widening net. Its vague wording is a gaping snare, potentially for anyone who engages

in protest that “undermines national security”. Workers on strike, indigenous land defenders, and so-called “anti-petroleum ideologues”, take note.

Meanwhile, greater police spying, more frequent use of cop agents to disrupt social movements, and arrests increasingly made without due process, combined with mounting civilian casualties from CF18 air strikes abroad, will likely help ISIS to recruit -- and round and round it goes.

This is the political treadmill for more war, more austerity for the vast majority, and many more lies. Remember the *Fair Elections Act* that made elections less fair? The *Access to Information Act* that made information inaccessible? The *Privacy Act* that invaded your privacy? The noncombat mission in Iraq that put Canadian troops in combat, leading to the death of one soldier, and the maiming of three others from “friendly fire” on an Iraqi battle front line in March?

To his credit, New Democratic Party leader Tom Mulcair condemned the extension of the war. He said in Parliament that an NDP government would end Canadian intervention in Iraq and Syria, and bring the troops home. If only he would similarly denounce the Zionist occupation of Palestinian territory and reverse his stridently pro-Israel stance.

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau opposed Harper’s expanding belligerence, mostly on the dodgy basis that the mission lacks clear objectives. However, Trudeau and his Liberals are voting for repressive law C-51, they say, for fear of handing Harper an election issue. Such a principled opposition.

Fortunately, the parliamentary critics increasingly echo the changing mood of the population, which is questioning permanent war abroad, and challenging repressive legislation at home.

On March 14 over 90,000 people rallied and marched across English Canada and Quebec against Bill C-51. More protests are in the works. That is the best bet for changing the channel on Harper’s “fear and loathing” agenda.

WAM it to the bosses

The Workers’ Action Movement -- a fledgling, new, positive force for change, inside and outside the ranks of organized labour -- has an ambitious goal. It is determined to break the hold of capitalist austerity and to end the downward spiral of concessions bargaining.

The founders of WAM seek to establish a cross-union, class struggle caucus that is anti-capitalist, anti-austerity, anti-concessions, and pro-union democracy.

WAM strives for change based on policies, not on personalities; to replace misleaders on political grounds; to affirm union democratic principles from the bottom up; and to build an independent, class struggle movement from below that is inclusive, transparent and accountable.

That means changing the overall direction of unions, and supporting union activists who battle concessions and anti-democratic practices. Not confined to unionists, WAM aims to work with social justice movements, and welcomes all workers and activists from those movements.

This body of union radicals emerged from the Take Back the CLC campaign that sought to elect Hassan Hussein to the position of president of the Canadian Labour Congress in May 2014. Although Hussein did not win, the cross-country organizing effort contributed significantly to the defeat of Ken Georgetti -- the first time an incumbent president lost.

Take Back campaigners decided to convene a grassroots labour assembly at the

People’s Social Forum in Ottawa in August 2014. Over 150 activists attended. They agreed to form an anti-capitalist, pro-democracy body in the unions, and to include civil society organizations and individuals in that effort. Over 20 people volunteered to serve on a temporary steering committee. Via telephone conferences and e-mail, they formulated a Basis of Unity and set WAM in motion.

The campaign to save home mail delivery is one of its current priorities. Why? Because the attack on public services is at the forefront of the corporate agenda. The plan to eliminate home mail delivery would eliminate over 8,000 good jobs and weaken one of Canada’s most democratic unions. But mass action is needed to win. Unfortunately, the union leadership required is not forthcoming.

The Workers’ Action Movement is trying to make a difference, but cannot substitute for the mass organizations. Their ideas are strong, but their resources are meager. That is why they are trying to change the leadership and overall direction of existing unions. Potentially, militant and democratic unions are the key to unlocking the power of the working class to create a better world for all.

A constitution and an elected steering committee will be put in place over the coming year. To become a voting member of WAM send \$2 a month, or \$24 a year to: www.workersactionmovement.com

The Incredible Shrinking “Right to Strike”

Barry Weisleder

Nowadays, the mere threat of back to work legislation is enough to prompt labour leaders to submit a dispute to arbitration.

In sectors of the economy where job action can instantly cost the bosses dearly, workers for over a century were accustomed to flexing their industrial muscle to win, or at least before feeling the hammer blow of Parliament.

As the latest dispute on Canada’s railroad shows, the anguish of thousands of workers who suffer extra-long shifts is cruelly side tracked. The lack of adequate rest time increases the risk to public safety. But who is held to account? Arbitration can take months, and rarely finds a solution to fundamental problems like work overload and dictatorial supervisors.

That appears to be the fate of 3,000 locomotive engineers, conductors and other workers represented by Teamsters Canadian Rail Conference. Their one-day strike against Canadian Pacific on February 15 was ended abruptly. The company had no incentive to bargain, knowing full well that Conservative government anti-strike legislation was waiting in the wings.

Equally significant was the fact that no

other railroad workers’ union, much less the umbrella 3.2 million member Canadian Labour Congress, expressed a willingness to back defiance of the boss class law.

That sad situation was duplicated when 4,800 Canadian National Railway workers represented by UNIFOR reached a deadlock in negotiations. The company actually threatened a lockout, and the union agreed to binding arbitration.

The labour-based New Democratic Party spoke in Parliament against the Tory government’s anti-worker stance. But NDP MPs certainly didn’t encourage defiance of the law -- not even in the interest of protecting public safety.

And this is only the tip of the iceberg.

The right to strike, except in the case of tiny, marginal units, has become a mirage.

Consider the strikes of postal workers, teachers in Ontario, and public sector workers in Nova Scotia, British Columbia and Saskatchewan that were ended virtually before they began.

The old adage -- if you don’t use it, you lose it -- is tragically confirmed.

It is yet another reason rank and file workers urgently need to shift gears and replace push-over leaders, in order to get labour back on track.

“Pick and pay” cable TV: Much less than meets the eye

Will long suffering consumers of cable TV in Canada at last be getting some price relief?

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the federal regulatory body, ordered cable and satellite television providers to offer cheaper starter packages and introduce a pick-and-pay channel selection system by next year.

The giant telecoms, Rogers, Bell Media, Cogeco, Shaw, and Videotron, are crying that the CRTC’s call for a basic package capped at \$25 per month will hurt their bottom line. What big crocodile tears they are shedding.

In the first place, the CRTC compensated the telecoms *in advance* by relaxing Canadian content rules. That move will hurt domestic artists and producers in the face of the corporate media behemoth in the US.

More importantly, the big broadcasting companies will be able to charge unlimited fees for every single channel outside the basic package that a consumer may want.

As one angry Bell subscriber told a CRTC public hearing in Ottawa, “If I’m (currently) paying \$80 (a month) for 257 channels, I should be able to not spend over \$80 to get 30 channels.”

Unfortunately, that will likely not be the

case. The telecoms will force many consumers to stay with their over-priced TV packages by charging astronomical rates for individual popular channels under the ‘pick and pay’ system.

Clearly, the corporate criminals are still running the show -- which demonstrates the futility of the latest cable TV “reform” plan. In fact, the changes underway are largely a response, not just to consumer complaints over price-gouging, but to the loss of cable subscribers who’ve shifted to Netflix and the internet generally for entertainment and news.

Is there a solution that would address the concerns of the 13,000 people who complained to the CRTC last year, mostly over the “big, unwieldy and expensive” bundles which have driven the cost of TV well above the inflation rate?

Yes. Nationalize the telecoms -- Rogers, Bell, Shaw and all the media giants -- under democratic workers’ and community control. Support artists and back cultural production that speaks to the experiences and needs of the vast majority, the working class and small producers. Devote the media to human cultural enrichment and personal enjoyment, not to the pursuit of private profit.

-- Barry Weisleder

Saanich South
New Democrats

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State of Extraction: Corporate Imperatives, Public Knowledge, and Global Struggles (held March 27-29 Vancouver-Coast Salish Territories)

Story and photos by Heather Tufts

Following local tradition, attendees at the State of Extraction Conference in Vancouver were welcomed to Coast Salish territory by the unity heartbeat of Musqueam, Tslel-waututh and Squamish drummers.

Visiting speakers were invited to offer a few words of how they hoped to contribute to the local territory. This fresh approach to protocol was introduced to set the stage for a cooperative weekend with a shared vision.



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Carleen Thomas, Taylor George-Hollis and Bea Newton welcome everyone to the State of Extraction Conference in Vancouver-Coast salist Territories.

The mission of the conference was to bring together Indigenous leadership, academics, artists, land defenders and activists engaged in struggles related to resource extraction with representatives of mining-impacted communities from the global north and south. It provided a forum to examine the ubiquitous nature of resource capitalism in Canada and its impacts on the world stage.

Canada is home to three quarters of the world's mining companies, and our country also heralds the world's single largest mining project: the Alberta tar sands. Canadian-based, unregulated companies are constantly embroiled in disputes, often with Indigenous peoples, related to the social and environmental impacts of their activities in Canada, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

"In every corner of the world, communities affected by Canadian extractive projects report conflict, environmental devastation, water toxicity, violent repression and violations of indigenous rights," said Mining Justice Alliance spokesperson Beth Dolaga.

During the weekend we walked in unity through the streets of Vancouver in an organized *Toxic Tour* to view the offices of some of the worst extractive corporate offenders, including Imperial Metals, Petronas, Chevron, China Gold, El Dorado, Goldcorp and Barrick Gold.

The emotive street demonstration shattered the myth that Vancouver is slated to be the *"greenest city in the world."* Greater Vancouver is the base of operations for several hundred global mining and mineral firms, including two of the world's largest mining companies. Eloquent and passionate speakers from Mexico, Ecuador and Guatemala told moving stories of violent abuses related to Canadian mining companies.

These powerful and courageous words spoken in front of the offices of Goldcorp reminded us all of why we were gathered and the tears flowed amongst us.

"My name is Angelica Choc, and I am indigenous Mayan Q'eqchi' from El Estor, Guatemala. My husband, Adolfo Ich Chamán, was killed by security forces employed at the Fenix mining project in Guatemala; a mining project owned by Canadian company HudBay Minerals. In the afternoon of September 27, 2009, I watched my husband leave our house for the last time. I later learned that mine security forces had surrounded my husband, dragged him through a gap in a fence and hacked at him with machetes."

Members of Angelicas community have

filed three related lawsuits in Ontario courts against Canadian mining company HudBay Minerals over the killing of Adolfo Ich, the gang-rape of 11 women, and the shooting and paralyzing of German Chub. This court case is the first of its kind to be heard in a Canadian court and could set a precedent for holding Canadian mining companies accountable for harms committed under their management overseas.

In Canada the negative impacts of the extractive industry are also meeting great resistance.

"Indigenous peoples have faced toxicity in mind, spirit, body and emotions since first contact," said Sacheen Seitcham from Ahousaht's *Ancestral Pride*.

The relationship between Indigenous peoples and the lands and waters is fundamental to any movement for environmental change. Land defenders from several Indigenous communities emphasized that qual-

ity of life is not only measured in economic terms, but rather through the strength of cultural knowledge and traditions. We were told that we must *"find a way to fall in love with the earth again"* because that is where the healing solutions lie.

"We have the right to subsist on, develop, and act as stewards of our traditional lands, in accordance with our inherent Indigenous rights and with historical treaties, including treaties signed between Indigenous nations prior to contact with Europeans. In particular, we have the inherent right to hunt, trap, fish, gather plants, engage in ceremonies, and build shelter and other structures on our lands, in ways that respect our cultures and are meaningful to contemporary Indigenous economies and cultural renewal,"--Defenders of the Land.

Meanwhile, concerns over anthropogenic climate change in Canada remain centered around the Harper government's determination to exploit and subsidize its fossil fuel industry without any plan to transition to sustainable alternatives. This is unacceptable.

Chris Williams from the group *System Change not Climate Change* (SCNCC) offered a well-researched analysis of how capitalism promotes unsustainable extraction. SCNCC is a joint Canadian and US coalition of eco-socialists who have united in the belief that capitalism is driving climate change and that only a radical international grassroots movement can stop it. The climate justice movement needs to unite with labour and other social justice movements to create alternatives to a world shaped by corporate power and the fossil fuel industry.

It is clear that the current economic system is driving us to an unsustainable future and we need to make a radical shift if we are going to attain significant change. We need to move beyond our resistance to status quo austerity or industrial development in order to consider viable alternatives of



Angelica Choc speaks with passion during the Toxic Tour.

systemic replacement models. Greening the future within capitalism is flawed because it negates the inter-relationship between ecological and social justice.

When the extraction of energy becomes the primary force behind economic growth, then those who resist or interfere with these "opportunities" become enemies of the state. Bill C-51 is partially designed to restrict and monitor opposition to the oil and gas industry, referred to in official RCMP documents as *"anti-petroleum extremists."* The real target, as Grand Chief Stewart Phillip suggested in his opening remarks, are Indigenous peoples defending the land.

The need to shift to a world view which is largely based on Indigenous ideas of stewardship and reciprocity was the thought-provoking debate spearheaded by The State of Extraction Conference.

We seek ways to challenge capitalism, mitigate the impacts of climate change and prevent environmental harms within a process of transition to a sustainable, ecologically and socially just nation.

Heather Tufts is a member of the Mining Justice Action Committee (MJAC) in Victoria. MJAC is a supporter/associate with Mining Watch Canada.



Victor T. Thompson drums a welcome at the conference.



Kanahus Freedom and Sacheen Seitcham denounce the extractive industry for its toxic impacts.

Angélica Choc: A very Canadian concern

Story and photo by Theresa Wolfwood

Angélica Choc, a small Mayan woman, dressed in her beautiful traditional dress, stood before over one hundred people in Victoria in March to tell her story of murder, rape, destruction and a Canadian mining company. As she wiped away her tears she remembered that her husband, Adolfo Ich Chamá, a community leader, who was murdered on Sept. 30, 2009 by a private security guard employed by Compania Guatemala de Niquel, a subsidiary of Manitoba's Hudbay Minerals. The guard has been charged and the murder case is now before the court in Guatemala.

High in the remote hills of Guatemala, Hudbay reopened the largest nickel mine in the region with the blessing of the President of Guatemala, a former army general, Otto Pérez, But the communities of Mayan people around the Fenix Mine were not consulted. Most local residents do not want the mine; outside workers are brought into to work for the company and local activists are threatened and abused.

Angélica, featured in the film, *La Defensora*, told of the environmental destruction to the land and water caused by the mining process; she said that all Guatemalans drink the same water. Rooted in her ancient culture, she said that her ancestors expect her to defend the land for the Mayan people and their descendants.

She is strengthened in her struggle for justice by their presence around her even when her son was injured by those who support the mine, and when she faced a phalanx of Canadian corporate lawyers who cross-examined her at a preliminary hearing, she was not afraid; her grandparents were beside her.

She has charged Hudbay in an Ontario court in a civil case for her husband's murder. Also part of the case are his companion, German Chub, who was shot and is now a paraplegic with permanent lung damage, and 11 local Mayan women who were gang-raped when they resisted eviction from their homes.

In a precedent setting decision, the courts decided to hear the cases against a Canadian company's actions in another country, deciding that it was a Canadian legal responsibility to hear cases against Canadian companies operating outside Canada.. In all three cases, Hudbay is accused of negligence, Hudbay denies all the accusations.

This is indeed a very Canadian concern; the Canada Pension Plan and most funds in Canada have shares in Hudbay:



Angélica Choc

Canadians are complicit in the violence and injustice inflicted abroad by Canadian companies.

The events and court case have gained world attention; Hudbay sold the Fenix Mine in September 2011 for \$170 million to the Russian owned Solway Group, headquartered in Cyprus. But these violent acts happened under the ownership of Hudbay.

As well as the film *La Defensora* which is available in Canada and has been widely viewed, on a video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSGuDk4cnz4>, Rosa Elbira Coc Ich tells the story of gang rape. Speaking near the community of Lote Ocho in her native Mayan Q'eqchi' language, she says, "I thought only one of them would rape me but it was all nine men," she says. "They left me completely battered, like a crushed orange."

These women were some of the many local citizens forcibly evicted from their lands and homes at the request of Skye Resources (a previous owner of Fenix which later merged with Hudbay).

The Guatemalans are supported in their case by many human rights and solidarity groups in Canada, including Victoria's Mining Justice Action Committee. It is a hard struggle for these people, constantly threatened and mistreated in their own community. But as Angélica says, she has told her ancestors she is a stone in the road of injustice and environmental and social destruction. She will continue to be that stone with support and solidarity of many. She thanked her Victoria supporters saying that all our struggles are related and it is important to her and to us that we stay united and determined.

La Lucha Continua!

Vancouver parents with young kids want less driving, more transit, cycling, walking: study

VANCOUVER -- As the Metro Vancouver transportation and transit plebiscite continues to dominate public discussion, a new study offers insights into how parents of young children travel from place to place within Vancouver, and how they'd like to see their experience improve.

"Parents with young kids have lots of reasons to prefer cars over public transit," says study author Arlene McLaren, a sociologist specializing in families' use of transportation. "What surprised us with this research is how many parents are nevertheless trying to reduce their car use in spite of how difficult it is." McLaren cites tired children, bulky strollers, bad weather and safety concerns as just some of the barriers confronting parents who want to get their families out of the car.

McLaren's team interviewed 52 parents of young children in four diverse areas of Vancouver — Downtown, Grandview-

Woodland, Dunbar-Southlands and Sun-set. The study, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, includes these findings:

- Most parents use a combination of different modes of transportation, including car, public transit, walking and/or cycling.
- Parents are generally well aware that over-reliance on cars contributes to problems like traffic congestion and climate change, and that children's health would benefit from cycling or walking instead.
- A few parents choose to live without a car, but many parents can't afford to own a car at all.
- Low-income families tend to live in areas with more dangerous traffic for walking and cycling with children. These areas generally have greater public transit availability, but the service is often not adequate, child-friendly or affordable.
- Higher income parents live in ar-

eas with traffic that's less dangerous but have less available transit.

McLaren points out that decreasing car use will benefit the environment as well as families' health, but adds that significant changes are needed before that can happen. Her recommendations include three strategies:

- Develop more "complete communities" across the city: dense, mixed use environments with commercial, school, employment and transit services in close proximity to residential areas.
- Reduce car use and encourage other modes of transportation:
- Create child-friendly transportation options throughout the city, prioritizing walking and cycling.
- Expand the availability of car-sharing programs to provide more flexibility and choice for parents' mobility options.
- Improve public transit

- Address key problems like unreliable service, crowded buses, poorly designed routes and scheduling, and inadequate accommodation of large items like strollers.
- Introduce more affordable ways for families to use public transit (e.g. subsidized transit passes, free transit).

"Many parents told us that they want to reduce their car use," says McLaren. "Better public transit will help them do that, and it will also help those who do not own a car. A yes vote in the current plebiscite is one way of getting more accessible and reliable transit — and we also need to continue to work for more affordability."

Download Beyond the Car: Families and Transportation in Vancouver, BC at policyalternatives.ca/familiesandtransportation

Citizen groups unconvinced by pipeline regulator's PR push

NGOs call on BC government to withdraw from flawed Kinder Morgan review

VICTORIA — Citizen groups representing more than 300,000 concerned British Columbians emerged from a closed-door meeting with National Energy Board Chair and CEO Peter Watson unconvinced that the pipeline regulator has the power to conduct fair or meaningful reviews of crude oil infrastructure in the province.

Staff from Sierra Club BC, Georgia Strait Alliance, Dogwood Initiative, ForestEthics Advocacy and Canadian Parks, West Coast Environmental Law and Wilderness Society expressed their concern to Watson, who has led the NEB since June 2014, that the board's ongoing review of Kinder Morgan's TransMountain expansion proposal is so flawed as to discredit the eventual result in the eyes of the public.

"The NEB is on a cross-Canada tour to hear from Canadians about pipeline spills and safety yet they are only in BC for a week and local residents were shut out of

today's meeting with mayors of the capital region," said Caitlyn Vernon, Sierra Club BC campaigns director. "If the NEB really wanted to hear from British Columbians, why didn't they design a process where our voices could be heard? That's why the BC government needs to step in and create a review that includes local voices, respects municipalities and First Nations, and considers the full impacts of Kinder Morgan's proposal — especially its contribution to climate change."

The groups are calling on Premier Christy Clark to withdraw from a 2010 equivalency agreement that signed away power over pipeline reviews to Ottawa. It's a position echoed by the Union of BC Municipalities, the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities, both opposition parties in the provincial legislature and Coastal First Nations in a lawsuit filed in January. The BC government can

cancel the agreement with the NEB at any time.

Senior staff from the NEB and Canadian Coast Guard are on a "public engagement" tour to discuss oil spill safety and regulatory issues. Between 2012 and 2014 the federal government moved to streamline oil pipeline reviews, removing public hearings and oral cross-examination and handing veto power over NEB decisions to cabinet. The federal government has also cut marine safety budgets by 27 percent since 2009.

"The bunker fuel spill in the Vancouver Harbour this month showed us just how

prepared the feds are to deal with accidents involving oil tankers," said Kai Nagata, Energy & Democracy Director at Dogwood Initiative. "That was 17 barrels of oil. An Aframax tanker can carry 800,000 barrels of diluted bitumen, which sinks in water. It's good to hear that the NEB and Coast Guard want to engage with the public, but actions speak louder than words."

For further information readers may contact Caitlyn Vernon, Sierra Club BC: 250-896-3500 or caitlyn@sierraclub.bc.ca, or Kai Nagata, Dogwood Initiative: 250-858-9990 or kai@dogwoodinitiative.org

Conservative failure to prepare for oil spills putting Canadian coasts at risk

OTTAWA — The early April bunker fuel spill from a vessel off the coast of Vancouver should serve as a wakeup call for Canadians. The Conservative government must do more to improve Canada's ability to respond to spills in the marine environment.

"It's been almost five years since the Auditor General warned that Canada is not prepared to respond to major oil spills," said NDP Environment critic Megan Leslie (Halifax). "Yet the Conservatives continue gutting environmental protections and slashing resources tasked with monitoring and responding to spills."

Instead of following recommendations from the Auditor General's 2010 report, the Conservatives cut Environment Canada's 2012 budget. The cuts resulted in the closure of the spill response office in Vancouver, due to the consolidation of Canada's regional spill offices.

"The Conservatives must take protecting our coastal communities more seriously," said NDP Fisheries and Oceans deputy critic Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody). "The Conservatives' broad cuts to the Canadian Coast Guard, including the Kitsilano base here in Vancouver, and its Marine Communication and Traffic Centres across the country have only set the stage for an unthinkable disaster."

Nothing for indigenous peoples in budget

OTTAWA — Not surprisingly, the Conservative budget contains few new measures and investments to improve the lives of Canada's First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities, says the NDP.

"The Conservatives continue to refuse to allocate the necessary resources to combat violence against Aboriginal women and girls and while refusing demands for an inquiry into this national tragedy," said Aboriginal Affairs critic Niki Ashton (Churchill).

The budget also contains no additional funding for Nutrition North. As for investments in education, the government missed its mark. The funding won't do anything to bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, which the Conservatives committed to last year.

"While the Conservatives turn a blind eye to real problems, the NDP is proposing concrete solutions such as fixing Nutrition North, launching a public inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and building a new nation to nation relationship based on respect," said deputy critic for Intergovernmental Aboriginal Affairs Romeo Saganash (Abitibi-Baie James-Nunavik-Eeyou).

New Democrats ramp up campaign to reverse Harper's Coast Guard cuts

VANCOUVER —New Democrat MPs and candidates ramped up their campaign April 14 to reverse the Harper government's reckless cuts to BC Coast Guard services.

"An NDP government will immediately re-open the Kitsilano Coast Guard base, re-open the Marine Communications and Traffic Service Centre in Ucluelet, and stop closures of these centres in Vancouver and Comox," said NDP Fisheries and Oceans deputy critic Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam).

"But these steps to protect our coast are too important to wait until the next election," Donnelly said, at the site of the former Kitsilano Coast Guard base. "That's why we're urging Prime Minister Harper to listen to the public and act now. Last week's oil spill in Vancouver Harbour illustrated just how much is at risk."

BC's 12 NDP MPs wrote a joint letter to Harper APRIL 14, asking him to take immediate action to reverse cuts to Coast Guard services. The New Democrats have also launched a petition campaign. Donnelly urged BC's Conservative MPs to also speak out. "Instead of denying there's a problem, I hope they will stand with British Columbians to demand greater marine safety," he said.

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Winning a nuclear war--the prize--extinction

Bo Filter

Don't expect the concept of extinction or omnicide to roll off the lips of nuclear warriors. Their brains focus on the win-ability of nuclear war to the exclusion of all other possibilities. Let's take a minute to examine the myopic mindset of nuclear strategists and what we should be doing about it.

The story of nuclear weapons begins with the dropping of an atomic bomb named *Little Boy* on the city of Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945. Since then, many authors have written and exposed this event as being more about starting a new war with our ally Russia than about ending WWII, more about continuing war so that the vast fortunes made by the US arms industry from WWII could continue indefinitely into the future.

Ever since *Little Boy*, the US has threatened Russia with nuclear bombs, and even had Russia ringed with nuclear weapons by 1951. [Caldicott, 69] Today the US is parading its nuclear arsenal in Ukraine along the Russian border in an unimaginable display of blatant aggression. Note that Russia is not posturing the same way by having Russian troops lined along the border of Canada or Mexico. The US claim that Russian aggression forces them to Russia's doorstep with nuclear weapons is patently false. The Russian army remains in Russia, while the US military and its many mercenary armies are not only in Ukraine but run rampant across the planet.

Continuous aggressive nuclear posturing by the US over the years was memorialized in a military strategy called *escalation dominance*, wherein, rungs on a ladder of aggression escalate violence incrementally up the ladder until full domination is achieved. The principle of this stratagem was Dean Acheson, who laid out this plan in a now declassified top secret National Security Council Memorandum: NSCM-68,

Britain fell from the top position of colonial power, the aristocracy, although now in the back seat, remained in the lead limousine of a new arising phenomenon called globalization—turning the world into a singular vast colony for elite domination.

The Council produces an influential magazine called *Foreign Affairs*. Council director Isaiah Bowen wrote in 1942 that the US must secure areas “strategically necessary for world control”. *Foreign Affairs* editor Edwin Gay wrote, “When I think of the British Empire as our inheritance, I think simply of the natural right of succession.” America was on track to take over the world, country after country, in domino fashion. British imperialism reaching around the globe using American muscle would be distasteful to the American people, who thought they had escaped British influence through their revolution, so the creeping dominoes of world control had to be blamed on some other targeted enemy, still ally at the time, Russia.

Professors Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod summarized the new state of affairs:

The advent of atomic warfare gave a new twist to the plans to assume the mantle of the British Empire: just as the British used the battleship as an ultimate weapon of intervention, the US would use the atomic bomb. According to the Council's study groups, naval superiority, which protected and expanded British investments around the world, would be replaced by atomic superiority. Gunboat Diplomacy would be replaced by Atomic Diplomacy. Pax Britannia would give way to Pax Americana. [64]

A US new world order was rising out of the crumbling British, French, and German colonial empires. Financial barons from Wall Street were eager to be the architects of this new world order. About 100 senior bankers and lawyers jelled into what was called the “old boys” network or “national



Bo Filter

world order, the new internationalists.

Back home, Constitutionally-minded Republicans and Democrats were not keen on American expansionism, as imperialism emanating from any country is anathema to a global plurality of democracies. Non-interventionist Congressmen wanted the US to remain isolated, sovereign, and independent, leaving other countries to fend for themselves, choosing their own destinies in the spirit of freedom. This friction came to a head when a fistfight broke out in a Senate chamber between internationalist Dean Acheson and his arch-enemy, Senator Ken Wherry from Nebraska.

Acheson was an impeccable member of the Eastern Establishment, growing up as a member of the upper class. His father became an Anglican minister then bishop of Connecticut after serving as a British Army Officer. His family was steeped in the traditions and mores of British colonialism. His mother grew up in a wealthy banking family with business interests in England and Canada. As part of the old-boy network, he attended colleges like Groton and Yale, “where it was considered the birthright and perhaps even the duty of his social class to intervene in the affairs of other nations.” [Kaku, 67]

Acheson saw most Americans as his social inferior, including the low-class haberdasher from Missouri, President Truman. Acheson hated the right-wing Republican isolationists who opposed the interventionist policies of the Council. In his typical condescending manner, he called the isolationists “sub-humans” and “apes”, [Kaku, 69] unenlightened by his own troglodytic tendencies of greed and selfish acquisitiveness through ruthless means.

Like Acheson, the Dulles brothers, John Foster and Allen, were sons of a well-to-do clergyman. As boys, they tagged along with their grandfather to conferences around the

world that introduced them to international power politics. They, too, attended exclusive schools like Princeton, which were modelled after aristocrat-controlled Cambridge University in England. John Foster travelled extensively during WWII, making intimate friends with members of the British Colonial Office.

Lord Cranbourne argued that Britain could no longer run its Empire alone, and that US elites should join and help lead a new bigger British world empire. America supposedly had escaped the grip of the British Empire, only to have the likes of John Foster Dulles aspire to yoke Americans right back into the ranks of British servitude. No wonder there was a fistfight in the Senate chamber.

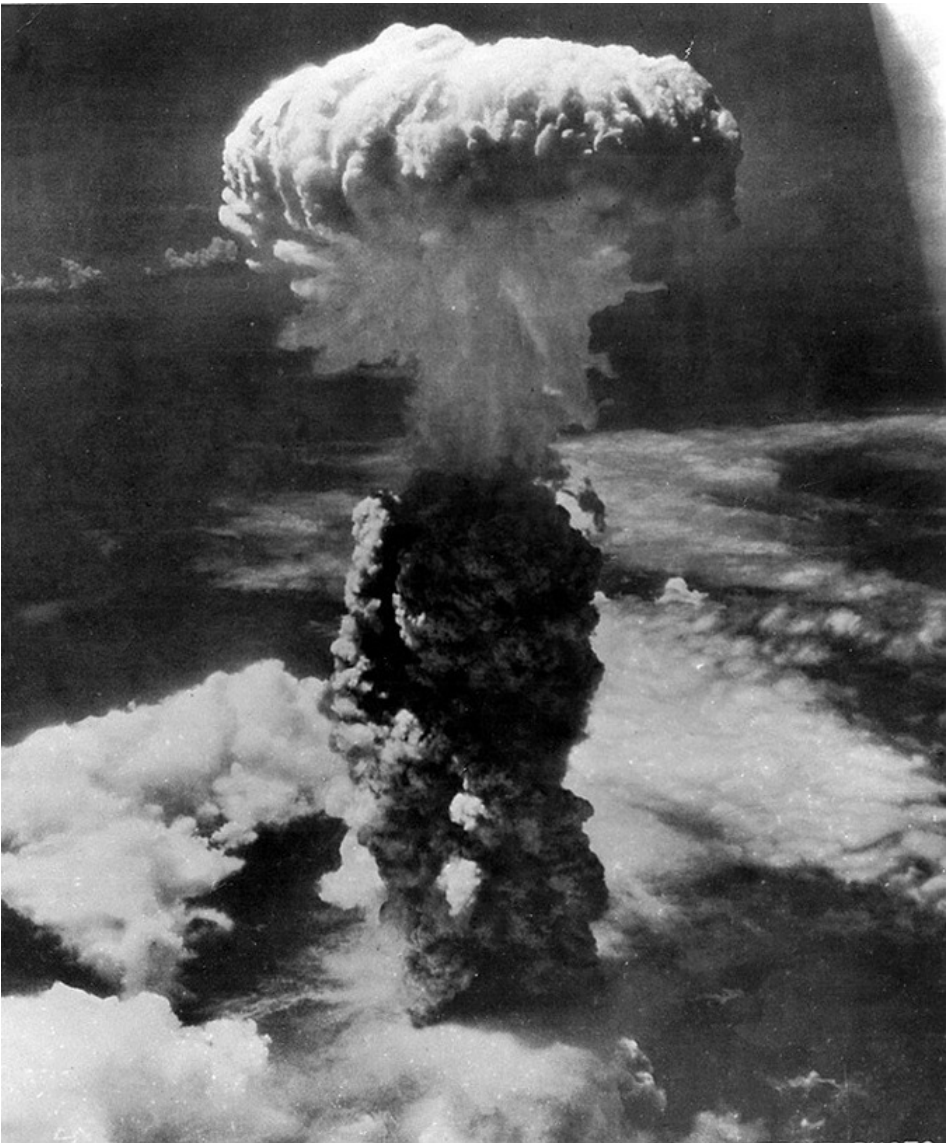
The Dulles brothers' father, Allen Macy Dulles, reared his boys to embrace missionary Christianity. The world was to be led by a new imperial ministry and their weapon of choice for global domination was nuclear escalation dominance. Students at Groton even coined a name for it, *muscular Christianity*. The age-old “divine right of kings” seems to have changed only in faces and names. The new theological kings declare “onward Christian soldiers” with nuclear weapons at their side and an image of Armageddon as doable. President Reagan puzzled over the possibility of Armageddon, uncertain whether or not God was commanding him to destroy earth or to leave it in the hands of God.

Psychopathology in Aristocracy

Aristocrats commonly suffer from profound delusional thinking and *Severe Narcissistic Personality*. They live a seeming fairytale life style, floating above the normal mundane chores of life, like having to cook or clean, never having to wash dishes, clothes or toilets. Being raised like veal, as in a confined ideological world, lends itself to psychological anemia and disconnected thinking from reality, thus, setting the stage for delusional thinking. The unusual degree of pampering in their upbringing includes coaching them to believe that their station in life is above the masses, even elevated in some theocratic families to the status of demigod, born of and “chosen” by God to lead *lower classes*. By self-pronouncing, without question, that their power is derived by God, they *need not* defer to the people themselves. The masses are, in effect, irrelevant and completely disposable. History is rife with examples of the aristocracy amusing themselves with killing *lower* people, like in the Roman coliseums. Disconnection from reality causes some elites to become perplexed by the distaste of the masses being subjected to the cruelties of servitude.

In the nuclear age, profound consequences follow from a toxic brew of distorted, disconnected, and arrogant thinking. From secret minutes of the National Security Council, Allen Dulles repeatedly bewailed the *ignorance* of the American people, “who draw an ‘artificial’ distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons and cannot realize that atomic bombs should be treated like bullets.”[Kaku, 314]. By losing touch with the fire power difference of bullet that kills one person versus an atomic bomb, like *Little Boy*, that fell on Hiroshima and indiscriminately killed 100,000 plus civilians reveals a callous

Please turn to page 20, Winning a



Nagasaki atomic explosion

which was then received by President Harry S. Truman on April 14, 1950. It originated in the bowels of a secret meeting between the State Department and the Council on Foreign Relations in 1939 explicitly detailing the role of a US empire as a replacement for the British Empire. [Kaku, 63]

The Council was set up in 1921 as a bridgehead to bring America's emerging power under the umbrella of the British throne. This had already been partially accomplished by modelling the Ivy League colleges after Cambridge. Imperial-minded professors were given free range to preach the gospel of privilege for an elite few. As

security establishment”. [Kaku, 39] Like aristocracies of old, their enemy was any populist sharing of power. The people of America were to be left out, while the US Constitution was to be ignored or used only in limited cases to shore up the old boys grip on power.

The aristocracies of old Europe were now to be demoted to puppet dictators. For example, exiled White Russians and members of the Tsarist aristocracy who fled Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution would be allowed to set up a puppet government for Wall Street. Russia had to be dismembered to expose its vast resources to the new



Aftermath of atomic war

The People’s Senate – A Better Way

Introduction: Helen Forsey (pictured at right) is a writer and activist, daughter of the late labour researcher and constitutional expert, Senator Eugene Forsey. Her little book, *A People’s Senate for Canada – Not a Pipe Dream!* has just been published by Fernwood.



Helen Forsey

Imagine this:
...It’s a bright spring afternoon on Parliament Hill in Ottawa a few years from now, and there’s excitement in the air. Forty-eight new senators are about to take their seats in the Red Chamber for the first time, and the whole country is watching.
“Senators Michaëlle Jean and Severn Suzuki have just entered the Chamber,” the CBC anchor announces, “and there’s David Orchard of Saskatchewan walking in beside Mary Simon of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.” You can feel the buzz as people recognize Rick Mercer, Kim Campbell, Stéphane Dion, former Auditor General Sheila Fraser, and former Supreme Court Justice Louise Arbour. Other well-known appointees are already inside, including Olivia Chow, Calgary’s Naheed Nenshi, journalist Chantal Hébert, and Cree leader and former National Chief Matthew Coon Come.

But most of the faces are unfamiliar to the Ottawa pundit crowd. Because this is the People’s Senate, and these are the people’s senators. Together they constitute a truly honourable Upper House, one that provides the kind of “sober second thought” and check on government power that are so desperately needed in these challenging times.
Not reality, you say? Not yet. But Canadians can make it happen. In so doing, we will be part of the larger effort to restore our democracy and incorporate citizen participation into our system of government.
What stands in the way of creating a People’s Senate? Not the Constitution. Not the Supreme Court. Not even those pathetic partisan celebrities from the Red Chamber and the PMO who have managed to bring the present Senate to such a low point.
No, what stands in the way is public ignorance, inertia, fear and despair, and the shameless manipulation of all of the above by a Machiavellian government. And all of those are things we can do something about.

It is the manipulation of public ignorance that has allowed so many utterly impracticable (and mostly undesirable) ideas about Senate reform to flourish. The most drastic of these involve doing away with the Upper House altogether. Senate abolition continues to be urged upon us as a “solution” by people who ought to know better. It is, of course the perennial hobby-horse of the New Democratic Party, which clings to its simplistic official position with remarkable tenacity. A shared contempt for the Upper House represents an ironic bond between the government and the official opposition.
On the question of the Senate, the NDP’s Tom Mulcair and Harper cabinet minister Pierre Poilievre could almost be said to be “singing to one clear harp in diverse tones” – with the more moderate voice in this case actually that of the Conservative pit bull! While Poilievre sees abolition as a fallback if the provinces don’t go for the government’s reform proposals, Mulcair remains dogmatic in insisting that the Senate must disappear entirely, no matter what.
Some of the contradictions in having a progressive party advocating Senate abolition are pointed out in an article by Jennifer Smith, professor emeritus at Dalhousie University. Smith gives the example of Bill C-377, introduced by the Harper government in 2013 to compel labour unions to regularly disclose detailed statements of their finances to the Canada Revenue Agency and post the material online.
“As the official opposition party in the House of Commons,” Smith writes, “the NDP was unable to muster the slightest impact on the bill’s merry passage. In the Senate, by contrast, senators managed at least to slow its approval there, by demanding hearings and getting amendments made to it, necessitating that the amended bill be sent back to the House for further consideration. Without the opposition in the Senate, most Canadians would have no idea about the very existence of the bill, let alone its ramifications for unions across the country.”
And remember, it was a Senate committee which, despite the preponderance of Conservatives, proposed the amendments to the Unfair Elections Act that somewhat lessened the horrors of that outrageous piece of legislation.

Canadians might want to check out the reasons why the citizens of Ireland in 2013 rejected (by a referendum vote of 52% to 48%) a proposal by their government to abolish their Upper House, the Seanad. Many of the arguments put forward during the discussion leading up to the Irish vote will sound familiar. As one commentator noted, “Regardless of its motives, there are clear dangers in what our government is doing. By manipulating populist anger against politicians to boost its own support, it risks irreparably harming our already-fragile democracy.”

Does that ring a bell? In any case, after an intense and exhausting campaign, the Irish opted to keep their Seanad and work on reforms.
Here in Canada, the final word on the constitutional aspect of Senate abolition has now been handed down by the Supreme Court, confirming the opinion held by most authorities in the field that abolition would need the unanimous consent of the legislative assemblies of all 10 provinces as well as of both Houses of Parliament.
The Court’s ruling emphasized the fact that Senate abolition would alter the amending formulas, Part V of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, which “was drafted on the assumption that the federal Parliament would remain bicameral in nature.” To make it unicameral would mean that the House of Commons would reign supreme, enabling any government with a majority to do as it pleased, without even the possibility of further public review and consideration by a complementary legislative body. This would be an unprecedented transformation of our whole parliamentary system, with huge ramifications for the principles of federalism and democracy. The need for unanimous consent, then, is much more than a legal requirement; it is also a moral imperative.

One of the very few things that Stephen Harper and Eugene Forsey would agree on is that getting the consent of all 10 provincial legislatures to abolish the Senate would not be easy. Although the role of the Upper House in representing provincial and regional interests is no longer as crucial as the Fathers of Confederation expected it to be, the smaller provinces especially would be reluctant to give up whatever influence and protection their Senate seats provide, no matter how frail that bulwark may be.
Citizens across the country, whatever their initial inclination, will surely give the abolition idea enough “sober second thought” to abandon it. People may be disgusted with the

various political and personal antics that have brought the Senate into such disrepute in recent years, but they don’t necessarily believe that getting rid of it is the solution.
In fact, despite the pervasive anti-Senate propaganda from both right and left, large numbers of Canadians continue to see significant value in having a second chamber. Many knowledgeable people in the media, the universities and the general public have resisted the temptation to jump on the abolition bandwagon. They share a sensible Canadian reluctance – “conservative” in the true, original sense of the word – to demolish something that was built into our constitutional architecture for good reasons, and which, despite its faults, has proven its usefulness in many ways over the years.
Unwilling to admit defeat, various Senate detractors continue to push the notion of a national referendum as the way to pressure the provinces to agree to abolition. But referenda are expensive and often very divisive, and as in the case of the Irish vote, the outcome would be far from assured. Moreover, under our Constitution, as *Globe and Mail* justice writer Sean Fine notes, even if a majority favoured abolition, “such a vote would at most serve to put pressure on provincial governments and would not give Ottawa the power to enact any changes.” With the constitutional amending formula requiring unanimous consent, it would only take a single provincial legislature to stop the plan by refusing to sign on the dotted line.
Faced with the unanimous consent hurdle on the constitutional road to abolition, some less than knowledgeable individuals have suggested letting the Senate die by attrition or killing it by starvation. The NDP has actually moved motions in the Commons to reduce the budget of the Upper House to zero, while Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall has publicly proposed that the governor general simply fail to make any new appointments as more and more Senate seats become vacant over time.

But Wall was talking through his hat, and so was the NDP. Since all legislation, including budgets, must pass both Houses in order to receive Royal assent and become law, a Senate without senators or an Upper House without money would mean an end to law-making, taxation and spending. Without a Senate, government would simply grind to a halt.
“The federal government could not alter the Parliament of Canada through failing to appoint senators,” says University of Regina legal scholar John Whyte. “To cripple the capacity of a constituted structure of governance is illegal – it violates constitutional law. Under constitutional law the prime minister has a duty to nominate senators so that [the Senate’s] function may be performed. Filling Senate positions is not a discretionary power. The current failure to appoint is the second time that Prime Minister Harper has failed to meet his constitutional responsibility with respect to the legislative structure.”
Depriving the Upper House of funding would be, in Whyte’s words, “actions that are not explicitly forbidden by the amending rules, but that cannot be performed because of the injury to the constitutional order.” Not to mention the absolute paralysis of government functions and services that would result. Given both the legalities and the practicalities, it seems breathtakingly irresponsible for anyone to seriously make such a suggestion, let alone for a prime minister to consider implementing it.
In any case, it seems probable that Eugene Forsey was right 40 years ago when he wrote: “Unless the Senate takes leave of its senses and throws out some bill which a large majority of the people ardently desire, the question of abolition will remain purely academic.”
And that is fortunate, because there is a far better alternative – one that will take power away from the Prime Minister’s Office and give it to the people. The People’s Senate will complement the electoral aspect of our democracy with an independent legislative body where competence and commitment are the rule, and where big money, party lines, robo-calls, expense scandals and public relations “spin” have no place.



My father used to say that there are two ways of wanting a thing – *really* wanting it, and *un-really* wanting it. If we really want a democratic Canada – a Canada that can offer “peace, fairness and good government” to its people and true leadership to a threatened world – we need to take on the tasks involved in making it happen. Transforming our troubled parliamentary Upper House into a true People’s Senate is an important part of that.
And we can make it happen. There will be skepticism (rightly) from many thoughtful people, and opposition (less legitimate) from the established Powers That Be. But as my father said in another context many years ago, “If the politicians don’t like it, they can lump it. It is our Parliament, not theirs.”
All it will take is the political will. We the people can build that political will, and with it the determination to also take back the rest of our democracy from the clutches of the corporate elite and the shackles of cynicism and apathy.

Minister Duncan owes \$46,831 to taxpayers

VANCOUVER ISLAND – The NDP is calling on the Conservatives to put their money where their mouths are regarding the government’s proposed balanced budget legislation. Conservatives have added more to Canada’s debt than any other previous government and should therefore reimburse 5% of their ministerial salaries for each of the seven years their government ran deficits.
“This gives Conservative ministers the opportunity to stand behind their bill while proving to Canadians that they believe in its merit,” said NDP candidate Gord Johns (Courtenay Alberni). “Let Conservative ministers apply the legislation retroactively to their own fiscal record.”
In mid April, Finance Minister Joe Oliver announced the government’s intention to introduce balanced budget legislation. Under the new legislation, cabinet ministers would take a 5% pay cut in the event of a budget deficit. According to NDP calculations, this means that the current Conservative cabinet owes taxpayers 1.7 million dollars. Add another \$900,000 from Conservative ministers who have left office since 2006.
Minister of State and Chief Government Whip John Duncan owes \$46,831 to the Canadian government under the Conservatives’ Balanced Budget Bill.
“Minister Duncan should take this opportunity to repay the government retroactively for the Conservatives’ past deficit budgets,” added NDP Candidate Rachel Blaney (North Island – Powell River). “When the Conservative ministers pay back the government, Canadians will know the Conservatives are taking this new bill seriously.”

Love and Resistance, by Theresa J. Wolfwood, London, UK: Smallberry Press, 2014 ISBN 978-0993031502

Review by Sumeet Grover

These poems by Theresa Wolfwood are an historic contribution to our art of poetry, which is denied a place in the mainstream discourse on human conflicts, social justice, poverty and the bombing of civilians globally in the name of national security.

I first read her poem, *For Shaima*, a few years ago; it was written for an Iraqi girl who Wolfwood met in 2001 in Baghdad. Her verses have since remained in my memory for their humanism, fragile emotions and the blunt admission of the illegal Iraq war that was executed under global daylight.

She writes... *did my letter arrive / before the missiles? / did any plane carry a harmless cargo... only if / hope the letter comes / before the bombs...*

Wolfwood’s words create for the reader what I imagine to be the inner state from which she would have written those poems: a suspension of the outside world; a penetrating insight into the loving as well as destructive human nature; the untold reality of people’s lives in India, El Salvador, Palestine, Mexico, Nicaragua, Uganda, Lebanon, Chile and the First Nations people.

Many of her poems are character sketches of people living on the front lines of a reality, which is not only different from

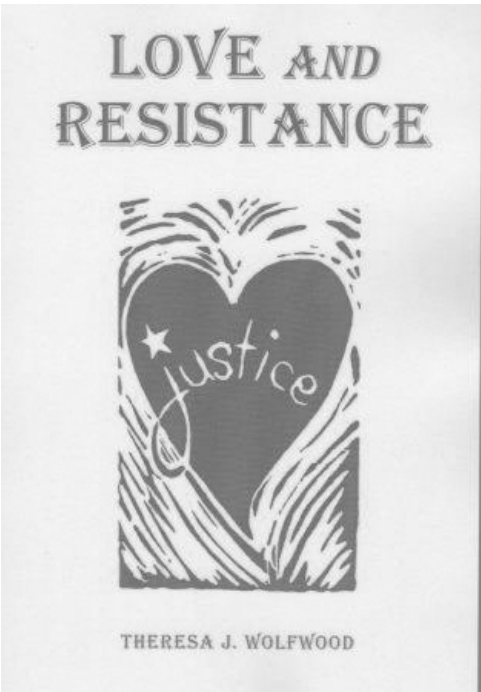
what consumerism and globalization have created for us in the West, but one that refuses to yield its cultural identity; one that is determined to preserve traditions; and one that is fighting to protect the local ecology as our beloved commodity producers, and colonizers continue to destroy their environment for increased financial profits.

In *City Night*, the gravity of her words pulls our hands so we walk with her in deep sleep and dream about the native Canadian women committing suicide on a highway... *when I sleep my dreams have voices / Star and banjo sing her / song about the lost women on / the north’s highway of tears...*

In *The Arpilleristas*, she writes about Chilean women whose husbands and sons were abducted by the Pinochet regime, as they decided to stitch artworks to send their stories to the world... *They open their veins to find thread to sew reality...*

On the other hand, her poems for Palestine draw from firsthand experience of being tear-gassed in the territory whilst carrying out peace work... *spring is a foreign country in Palestine where / grieving women go mad for the longing / of blossoms / their throats stopped with stones...*

As one continues to read her work, it is both heart-warming and astonishing to find



that Wolfwood does not merely understand other cultures, other people, she has the ability to perceive and feel their hearts like they do. It is this humanism and passion that speaks out of her poems, as she writes in the poem *Sandals* about a girl bombed

in a car in Lebanon... *summer vibrates from the pavement / Beirut shimmers in the fierce sun... later after the explosion / investigators find in the car rubble ... on the feet clean white sandals / buckles still gleaming in the light...*

The messages in Wolfwood’s poems surprise us and question us on different dimensions, whilst her command of words on the paper is bold and engaging. Her poems at times are so powerful that if they were printed in the next morning’s newspapers in some parts of the world, civil disobedience movements will rally to press for justice.

At last, the analysis of her work is incomplete without concluding that through the poems in this book, Theresa Wolfwood stands out as a Poet Laureate of Global Justice.

Sumeet Grover reviews frequently for various publications. He is the director of www.global-poetry.net/ and author of a forthcoming poetry collection, *House Arrest and Disobedience*.

Love and Resistance is available at Ivy’s books. There Wolfwood will be reading her poetry with the Gadian Group, June 7, 2-4 pm at the Martin Batchelor Gallery on Cormorant Street, in Victoria.

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate, by Naomi Klein, Toronto, Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2014

Book Review by Jim Manly

Although it has slipped off the best-seller lists, ***THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING*** by Naomi Klein continues to be essential reading for everyone concerned about the future of Planet Earth.

The book deals with a wide range of issues relating to the environmental crisis, from organized denial of basic facts and unworkable technological fixes to growing mass movements for positive change.

Based on a widespread convergence of evidence from around the world, 97% of the world’s climate scientists believe that human caused climate change is a present reality, a reality that is rapidly reaching a tipping point. Klein’s introductory quotation from the 2014 Report by the American Association for the Advancement of Science points out that “pushing global temperatures past certain thresholds could trigger abrupt, unpredictable and potentially irreversible changes that have massively disruptive and large-scale impacts.” (1)

Many huge corporations, particularly insurance companies, recognize this threat and build it into their own financial forecasts; at the same time, however, most have done little or nothing to change the economic system that drives this threat forward.

In fact many of these same corporations are helping to pour nearly \$900 million a year into think tanks like the Cato or Heartland Institutes which fund well-paid pseudo-science studies denying the reality, the seriousness or the causes of climate change. This “climate change counter-movement” explains and justifies the subtitle for Klein’s book: *“Capitalism vs. the Climate”*.

The dominating power of our capitalist system is shown by the close relationship of some large environmental groups with the fossil fuel industry, receiving millions in donations from corporations such as Shell, BP, Chevron and ExxonMobil as well coal and natural gas companies. In addition auto giants like GM and Toyota and companies like Monsanto, McDonald’s and Walmart have made some well-targeted donations. Representatives from the corporations also sit on the boards of some of these NGOs.

We should not be so naïve as to believe that these contributions reflect the goodness of a corporation’s “heart” – neither should we think that they did not have an effect on the messaging from these same environmental groups. As Jay Hair, former president of the National Wildlife Federation said, “Our arguments must translate into profits, earnings, productivity, and economic incentives for industry.” (191)

Klein’s most shocking, bizarre and al-



most unbelievable story relates to The Nature Conservancy which, according to *The New Yorker*, is the world’s largest environmental NGO with over a million members and \$6 billion in assets.

One of their professed priorities was saving breeding habitat for the endangered Attwater’s prairie chicken—some 2300 acres on Galveston Bay in Texas; this was owned by Mobil which was drilling on the edge. In 1995, Mobil donated the property to the Nature Conservancy, describing this surprise move as “the last best hope of saving one of the world’s most endangered species”. (192)

In an even more surprising move, although one that did not receive publicity till much later, The Nature Conservancy itself commissioned a new gas well, and now an oil well inside the habitat preserve. Today the prairie chickens are all gone but the oil well continues pumping money into The Nature Conservancy.

Klein reassures us that there are important exceptions to this unsavory collaborator process. Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network, Food and Water Watch and 350.org all have impressive records. Although the Sierra Club secretly took large donations from a natural gas corporation between 2007 and 2010, this policy has now changed under new leadership with pressure from the membership. But as the book points out, with dependence upon large foundations funded by wealthy corporations, “almost no one’s hands are clean”. (198)

Klein not only presents the facts about climate change, facts we all need to know,

she also places them in a human context.

As a result, we not only know about the threat of tankers, loaded with bitumen, on our coast line, we also learn what this means to the Heiltsuk people of Bella Bella. Quoting Jess Housty’s testimony to the review panel for the Enbridge Gateway pipeline proposal, Klein reminds us of the way that cultural practices are anchored in the surrounding landscape and ecology.

“When my children are born, I want them to be born into a world where hope and transformation are possible.... I want them to grow up able to be Heiltsuk in every sense of the word. To practice the customs and understand the identity that has made our people strong for hundreds of years.

“This cannot happen if we do not sustain the integrity of our territory, the lands and waters and the stewardship practices that link our people to the landscape. On behalf of the young people in my community, I respectfully disagree with the notion that there is any compensation to be made for the loss of our identity, for the loss of our right to be Heiltsuk.” (341-2)

This Changes Everything calls for a mass movement with a broad spectrum that includes not only opposition to fossil fuel extraction and use and support for green technology but also support for expanded social services in such areas as health care, education, public housing, transportation, parks and recreation.

Klein sees the beginning of such a movement in what has been called *Blockadia*. From Greece to Ecuador to the American Mid-west, from New Brunswick’s opposition to fracking to Washington and Oregon’s stand against coal exports British Columbia’s determination to prevent tanker traffic on our coast and opposition to Northern Gateway and the expansion of Kinder Morgan, people are standing together and linking with other movements. Some people might object that much of this reflects a NIMBY (Not in my Backyard) attitude. Fair enough, but with the growing realization that our present economic system, dependent upon endless growth and more devastating methods of extracting fossil fuels, threatens our entire planet, maybe we all need to become NIMBYs. The entire planet is our back yard!

An important slogan from the 1970s reminded women that “The personal is political”. Klein exemplifies this when she tells of the difficulty she faced getting pregnant and the painful feeling that she was somehow an “exile from nature”. This changed as she gained insight into the die-off of fish and other aquatic life at the larval and egg stages as a result of oil spills like the Exxon Valdez off the coast of Alaska in 1989 or the more recent BP disaster in the Gulf of

Mexico.

“I started to notice that if the earth is indeed our mother, then far from the bountiful goddess of mythology she is a mother facing a great many fertility challenges of her own.” (424)

Klein cites the encouraging example of Ecuador’s 2008 Constitution: “Nature or *Pachamama*, where the life is created and reproduced, has as a right that its existence is integrally respected as well as the right as the maintenance and regeneration of its vital cycles, structures, functions and evolutionary processes. Every person, community, people or nationality can demand from the public authority that these rights of nature are fulfilled.” (444)

***This Changes Everything* emphasizes that our environmental crisis cannot be solved within the present capitalist system with its emphasis on ever expanding consumerism, limitless growth and the constant search for profit. In spite of tremendous challenge, Klein is hopeful** without being blindly optimistic. In this she reminds me of the fable at the end of Leo Rosten’s *Captain Newman, M.D.*

“Destiny came down to an island centuries ago, and summoned three of the inhabitants before him. ‘What would you do,’ asked Destiny, ‘if I told you that tomorrow this island will be completely inundated by an immense tidal wave?’ The first person, who was a cynic, said, ‘Why I would eat, drink, carouse and make love all night long!’ The second, who was a mystic said, ‘I would go to the sacred grove with my loved ones and make sacrifices to the gods and pray without ceasing.’ And the third person, who loved reason, thought for a while, confused and troubled, and said, ‘Why, I would assemble our wisest men (and women) and begin at once to study how to live under water.’

“...When our cause seems doomed and the future lost, when despair becomes unbearable and the heart is on the edge of breaking, let (people) summon hope and honor and high resolve in yet one more stubborn affirmation: Come let us assemble our wisest (people) and begin at once to think, to study, to try to learn—even to learn if we must, how to live under water.” (Rosten, p. 272)

Klein grounds her hope in the possibility that the human race (that’s us—you and me) will wake up, pay attention to our wisest people, stand together and work for the necessary changes so that the Earth can continue to be a good place for ourselves and all living things to grow and thrive.

Thanks to Naomi Klein for such an important, well-researched and well-written book.

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 SAANICH SOOKE NEW Democrats will hold their Annual General Meeting on Saturday, May 23, from 2-4 pm (doors open 1:30) at St. Peter and St. Paul’s Churh Hall, 1379 Esquimalt Road.

Come and meet our MP, Randall Garrison, and get an update on activities in Parliament.

COWICHAN-MALAHAT-LANGFORD NDP EDA invites you to an election fundraiser and musical show Thursday, May 21, at 7:00 pm, at Quamichan Campus at Cowichan Secondary School, 2515 Beverley Street in duncan. Event: A political satire that puts the “ire” backin satire.: Stephen Harper: The Musical or How to Survive and Thrive in the Dying Days of the Empire of Oil by James Gordon. Tickets: \$25 (cash or cheque) at Gallowglass Books, 225 Canada Ave, Duncan or online at www.GigTix.ca For more information, contact Mary Annis at 250-929-3449, maryannis@shaw.ca, or Kera McHugh at 250-650-5425, tinshack-creative@gmail.com

SIDNEY CONCERT BAND, with players from all over the Peninsula and all ages, invites you to its “Swing into Spring” concert conducted by Rob Bannister. A variety of swing music, vocalists and more for an entertaining afternoon on Sunday May 24, at 2 pm, at the Charlie White Theatre in Sidney. Tickets \$15.00 available from the Mary Winspear Centre box office, 250-656-0275, ext. 4.

LOWER ISLAND NEWS invites you to its important ‘Changing Media Landscape’

Forum, on Saturday, May 30, from 2:30-5:00 pm at the Oaklands Community Centre, 2827 Belmont Avenue. The Forum will present a unique and interactive opportunity to understand the rapidly changing formats and delivery of news and information . Gues speakers will include Randall Garrison, MP, Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca, Chris Cook of Pacific Free Press and Gorilla Radio, Victoria, and Janine Bancroft, who developed the idea for of Street Newz. There will be no charge but donations will +be welcome.

OAK BAY-GORDON HEAD NEW DEMO-crats will hold their Annual General Meeting on Sunday, May 31, from 1-3 pm, at the Gordon Head Recreation Centre auditorium,4100 Gordon Head Way. Social/reception to follow at 3236 Carmen Street. For more information, contact OBGH executive president Keith Todd at president@obgh-newdemorats.ca or 250-598-8039.

SAANICH NORTH AND THE ISLANDS New Democrats are invited to Dinner with John Horgan, MLA and Leader fo the BCNDP, on Thursday, June 4, from 5-8:30 pm, at Glen Meadows Golf and Country Club, 1050 McTavish Road, North Saanich. Tickets \$125 per person; \$800 per table of 8. Tickets may be purchased on line at <https://ssecure.bcndp.org/event/443> or by cheque from Allan Collier at silcol@telus.

net (tax receipts provided for generous portion of cost). For further information, contact Allan Collier at 250-656-6063.

SAANICH-GULF ISLANDS NEW DEMO-crats will hold their Annual General Meeting and Candidate Convention on Saturday, June 13, in the Seaside Room, Cordova Bay Elementary School, 5328 Cordova Bay Road, with the AGM from 1:30-2:00 pm, followed by Candidate Nominations at 2:15 pm.For more information, contact them at ndpsaanichgulfislands@gmail.com.

SAANICH-GULF ISLANDS NEW DEMO-cratts will hold a fundraiser luncheon and silent auction on Sunday, June 28, at the Beach House Restaurant, 5109 Cordova Bay Road. Tickets \$60. For more information, contact them at ndpsaanichgulfislands@gmail.com.

VICTORIA-SWAN LAKE NEW DEMO-crats invite you to their Annual General Meeting and barbecue on Sunday, June 28, at Oaklands Community Centre, 2827 Belmont. Registration will lstart at 1:00 pm, with the AGM at 1:30 pm and the barbecue at 2:00 pm.Guest speakers will be Murray Rankin, MP for Victoria, and Randall Garrison, MP for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca. For more information, email victoriaswanlak-endp@gmail.com.

Market forces driving “Great Transition” to clean energy, says new book *Lester Brown’s latest highlights falling costs, rising adoption and failing nuclear, fossils*

WASHINGTON, DC – The global economy is now undergoing a transition from fossil and nuclear energy to clean power from solar, wind, and other renewable sources, according to the latest book from environmental analyst Lester Brown and his colleagues at the Earth Policy Institute (EPI).

In *The Great Transition: Shifting from Fossil Fuels to Solar and Wind Energy* Brown lays out the rapidly evolving global shift toward cleaner sources of energy, driven by economics, policy, and the hard realities of accelerating climate change. Brown and co-authors Janet Larsen, J. Matthew Roney and Emily E. Adams, stress that the shift taking place now represents a lasting change in the way we power the world economy.

“The worldwide transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy is under way,” said Lester R. Brown, EPI president and lead author. “As fossil fuel resources shrink,

as air pollution worsens, and as concerns about climate instability cast a shadow over the future of coal, oil, and natural gas, a new world energy economy is emerging. The old economy, fueled largely by coal and oil, is being replaced with one powered by solar and wind energy.”

The Great Transition details this evolving trend, focusing on falling prices and rising adoption for wind, solar, electric vehicles, geothermal energy and energy efficiency; and the emerging turn from coal, nuclear power, oil and traditional transportation that is happening faster than anticipated.

Chapter 1 of *The Great Transition: Shifting from Fossil Fuels to Solar and Wind Energy* is available online at www.earth-policy.org/books/tgt. Supporting data and a PowerPoint summary presentation are available for free downloading.

A few exciting trends:

- The price of solar photovoltaic panels has declined 99 percent over the last four decades, from \$74 a watt in 1972 to less than 70 cents a watt in 2014. Between 2009 and 2014, solar panel prices dropped by three fourths, helping global PV installations grow 50 percent per year.
- Over the past decade, world wind power capacity grew more than 20 percent



a year, its increase driven by its many attractive features, by public policies supporting its expansion, and by falling costs. By the end of 2014, global wind generating capacity totaled 369,000 megawatts, enough to power more than 90 million U.S. homes.

- National and sub-national policies around the world are shifting to support renewables and put a price on carbon. These include 70 countries with feed-in tariffs; two dozen countries with renewable portfolio standards (RPS); 37 countries with production or investment tax credits for renewables; and some 40 countries implementing or planning carbon pricing.
- US coal use is dropping – it fell 21 percent between 2007 and 2014 – and more than one-third of the nation’s coal plants have already closed or announced plans for future closure. Meanwhile the Stowe Global Coal Index – a composite index of companies from around the world whose principal business involves coal – dropped 70 percent between April 2011 and September 2014.
- For the world as a whole, nuclear power generation peaked in 2006, and dropped by nearly 14 percent by 2014. In the US, the country with the most reactors, nuclear generation peaked in 2010 and is now also on the decline.

- In China, electricity generation from wind farms now exceeds that from nuclear plants, while coal use appears to be peaking.

“The energy transition amounts to a massive restructuring of the global economy,” the authors write. “Initially this energy transition was driven by government incentives, but now it is also being driven by the market. With the market today favoring both solar and wind energy in many locations, the transition is accelerating, moving much faster than anticipated.”

“We are all stakeholders” in the Great Transition, the authors conclude. “In the broadest sense, everyone who breathes cleaner air, drinks cleaner water, and bene-

fits from a more stable climate will come out on top as the energy transition proceeds.”

For additional information: Lester R. Brown, author and president (202) 496.9290 x 11, lesterbrown@earth-policy.org ; Janet Larsen, co-author and director of research (202) 496.9290 x 14, jlarsen@earth-policy.org; and J. Matthew Roney, co-author and research associate (202) 496.9290 x 17, jmroney@earth-policy.org

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 earth-policy.org.

The courts will not deliver smaller class sizes to BC, from page 3

Yet why weren’t teachers out in the thousands for those education rallies? In part, because we have a mistaken belief that someone else is going to fix the problem for us. Our union has told us the courts will do it. The social democratic left tells workers to just get the right government elected, even though the NDP has never, in 13 years, even promised to restore class sizes. Many in the classroom think the union can do it if we just elect the right leaders, hire the right bargaining team. But we need to look to ourselves.

Understandably teachers and many education activists feel disheartened and disappointed with the outcome of the last election, the outcome of the last strike, and now the outcome of this court decision.

But the lesson has to be that we must do more of grassroots, community based, teacher/parent/public social movement building. We must focus more on the tactics in the trade union movement that actually have the power to force change -- the strike. And we must be sure that teachers and our union are so integrated with parents and community members that when we go on strike the combined pressure of teachers’ withdrawal of services and massive public outrage at the degradation of public services pressures the government of whatever ideological stripe to reinvest in classrooms because it would be political suicide not to.

Let’s not spend the next decade waiting for the courts to make smaller classes. They never will. Let’s put our union dues in our strike fund, not the court system.

Let’s keep up the connections we’ve built with parents and the public and turn these into active, engaged, community based organizations. Let’s build a new movement for smaller classes based on teachers, parents, student, school trustees and the public.

Pushing back neoliberal education reform is not going to be easy. But there are no shortcuts. It may seem daunting, tiring, and difficult, but the day to day work of grassroots, school and community based activism is what is necessary.

Tara Ehrcke is a teacher, education blogger and activist living in Victoria, British Columbia.

This article, reprinted with her permission, appeared April 1 in her rabble.ca blog, *Staffroom Confidential*, which covers education issues in BC, Canada and the world with a critical perspective of a classroom teacher and rank-and-file union activist.

Follow her on Twitter @[taraehrcke](https://twitter.com/taraehrcke).

Stephen Lewis, the smartest Canadian, has been attending CUPE Convention. Thinking about political action, Lewis said there’s a lesson to be found in the unexpected success of the NDP in Alberta.

“The gains we’re going to make in Alberta next Tuesday speak volumes to the nonsense about strategic voting,” he said. “You vote for principle and you vote for conviction, and then you elect a progressive government.”

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.maurinek-aragianis.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 emrogers@uvic.ca

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.

Cowichan -Malahat-Langford New Democrats (formerly Nanaimo-Cowichan): Contact president Anne Balding at 250-710-0351 or email her at a.balding@hotmail.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/ofyvb8.

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.policcyalternatives.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 Dzibik, treasurer, Kim Manotn, secretary Michael Maloney...

World Wildlife Federation: 410-245 Eglington 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.

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 Receive an email notice when a new issue is online: Visit http://www.dominionpaper.ca/ to view the paper and to subscribe.

Turn Left: Official magazine of the NDP socialist caucus, is published for each federal and Ontario provincial convention. It is written and edited and by SC supporters but also includes articles by and interviews with progressive activists from

Lower Island NEWS

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 classified ads. Newsdaily covers Canadian and world news, plus a focused look at British Columbia, Victoria, and the Islands.

www.ndpsocialists.ca/Issues.html

mai-not@globalproblematique.net--Originally set up to discuss the implications the Multilateral Agreement on on Investments, this website and related email list now discuss world-wide developments of concern to left wing readers.

http://pacificfreepress.com

www.pejnews.com--Peace, Earth & Justice News, a free email and web service, provides news, opinion and analysis of peace, environment (earth) and justice issues. Stay informed with postings often days, weeks and months ahead of the mainstream media, and often never covered in the mass market. PEJ News is produced entirely by volunteers, and is a project of the non-profit Prometheus Institute based in Victoria, Canada.

www.policyalternatives.ca--The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' webpage offers research reports, books amd opinion pieces on issues of social and economic justice.

www.rabble.ca--A cheeky site offering original stories, feature articles and columns from some of the progressive voices in Canada.

http://socialcoast.org

http://socialenvironmentalliance.word-press.com

www.straightgoods.ca--A watchdog working for Canadian consumers and citizens.

www.thetyee.ca--BC news and views from a non-corporate perspective.

www.truthout.org--US website with Real news.

www.victoriacarshare.ca--If you don't want to own a car, but still need to drive one sometimes, then this website may be for you.

www.vivelecanada.ca--The mission of Vive le Canada is to protect and improve Canadian sovereignties and democracy through education, dialogue, and advocacy, especially using existing and emerging communications tools. We believe that the direction of this country should be set by its citizens, rather than by corporations or corporate trade bodies/trade agreements, the United States, or a small number of Canadian corporate elites.

www.wsws.org--The World Socialist Web Site is the Internet centre of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). It provides analysis of major world events, comments on political, cultural, historical and philosophical issues, and valuable documents and studies from the heritage of the socialist movement.

