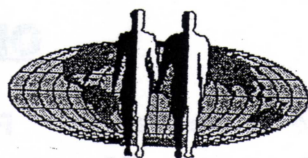


# Common Ownership



APRIL 2010  
Vol 3 Num. 1

www.worldsocialism.org/canada

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

## HOW CAPITALISM WORKS

Coal River Mountain is a 1,000 metre giant situated in the coal mining region of West Virginia. Local environmentalists were hoping to see a wind farm on the top to replace the energy from the twenty years' worth of coal sitting below it. Just before Halloween, Massey Energy Company, the face of Big Coal in these parts, began blasting the top off the mountain. This is the prelude to open pit mining, which is much more cost-effective than tunneling that has helped to reduce the work force from 150,000 to just 17,000 today. Either way, the promised prosperity from coal mining never arrived, at least, for the workers. West Virginia is about dead last among the fifty states in reducing poverty after 120 years of mining.

Valleys and streams get filled with toxic leftovers from mining, much of it held in slurry dams containing as much as 34 billion tons. Residents fear the breaching of the dams from blasting, as happened in Martin County, Kentucky, when 300 million gallons escaped, twenty-five times greater than the Exxon Valdez spill.

Where is the government in all of this, you may ask. Suffice to say that this year Big Coal

spent \$47 million on 2,800 lobbyists in Washington.

In Ontario, a representative of Highland companies, backed by a \$14 billion hedge fund, began quietly buying up farms above market price Northwest of Toronto. This is prime potato country, but just below the surface lies another "crop", aggregate limestone, gold for the building industry, (Ontario uses 175 million tonnes per year). Only after buying up 2,400 acres did Highland reveal that it planned to quarry the aggregate. Local residents and farmers fear for the loss of the water table and the ability to irrigate properly and use the wells, not to mention the loss of arable land.

These examples illustrate what capitalism is all about. As you work, you produce more value than the amount of your pay. That surplus value is the source of profit. In other words, you work part of the day to make your wage, and the rest of the day you work for free to create profit that goes to whoever owns the enterprise - generally many large investors. That surplus accumulates and has to be re-invested somewhere to start the process all over again.

This has to be predicated on constant growth, which is why we see all kinds of strip malls, box store malls, hotels, condos, etc. mushrooming in every corner of our world, gobbling up land and resources at a fantastic rate. Capital doesn't have feelings and those charged with paying dividends are under tremendous pressure to out-perform their rivals. This is the source of the trampling of rights and the environment by Big Capital wherever a profit can be made. It is the way capitalism must operate and will continue to operate until we realize that we are capable of instituting a better system that can work for everybody.

It starts with the COMMON OWNERSHIP of the world's riches and its use to create and distribute wealth in such a way that all mankind has good food, clean water, shelter, health care, education, all for free. It's time for the majority to stand up and take charge and tackle the world's problems with common sense and real science, and retire the 'leaders' who profess to work in our interests but whose only aim is to perpetuate the profit system that brings the problems. We may not have a lot of time to change the course of man's history. Look into it NOW!

## COMMON OWNERSHIP

Means that the resources of the world and the means to produce useful goods from them would be owned by everyone and, therefore, by no one.

All humanity would be producers meeting as equals to decide what, how and where to produce based solely on mankind's needs.

Distribution of goods and services would deny no one access to what they needed.

This system would end the present class system and render money, trade, employment, exploitation, want and war obsolete.

\*\*\*\*\*  
We welcome correspondences with our readers. Send email to: spc@iname.com Or... write us at: Box 4280, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8

## **OBSCENE and HEARD**

The lead article in the May 2 Toronto Star, "Generation Why Me?", said it all. It continued, "They grew up being told that if they studied diligently and worked hard, they could have it all: a good job, a comfortable home, a family. But, then the world shifted and everything changed. Now "Generation Y" is scrambling to adjust to the new reality." Examples were given such as the immigrant from India where he studied at the University of Mumbai and then completed another diploma in Toronto. He is now handing out 25 - 30 resumes a week and living from hand-to-mouth. Those who uphold capitalism can say what they want, but if the economy is in a slump and capital doesn't want you, not even university degrees can get you a job.

\*\*\*\*\*

Recently, Michelle Obama showed up at a food bank to show her support. Nice gesture. The press focused, however, on the \$540 sneakers she wore. It may be a bit catty of the press, but it does show the incredible inequities inherent in a capitalist society when thousands have to line up to beg for a hand-out of food while someone present can afford to spend that kind of money on casual shoes. Just one shoe would feed a family for a month. Heck, the laces would probably feed them for a week!

\*\*\*\*\*

Pregnant women are being fired in Ontario by employers claiming that hard economic times are to blame, but it is a convenient way of not taking them back. "Most firings seem to occur soon after women announce they are pregnant", according to the manager of Client Services for Ontario Human Rights Legal Support Centre, an independent agency funded by the province. Nor is this happening only to women in low-paying jobs, but senior positions too. Women need 600 hours of work to qualify for maternity benefits within the fifty-two weeks before filing. Similarly, injured workers, especially those on 'light duties' are being targeted for lay-offs. Recently, a Peterborough auto parts company was investigated when all eighteen workers laid off in January had claimed disability benefits or were on modified work assignments. Meanwhile, eighteen 'healthy' workers were called back. No matter how humane a law seems to be, there are always those who find a way around it in the interests of profit.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **A TALE OF TWO APPLES**

About one hour's drive east of Toronto lie the rolling hills of Northumberland County. An abundance of apple orchards there has given rise to its promotion as "The Apple Route". It is somewhat surprising, then, to encounter apples

from New Zealand among the local produce in the supermarkets of the area. Given that the living standards of the two countries are similar, and labour, land, and machine costs would be similar, how can apples from the other side of the world compete with ours? The answer helps to explain why our planet is in so much environmental trouble. The New Zealand apple growers are able to take advantage of governmental grants and tax breaks that negate the transportation costs. From a profit point of view, this all makes good sense, as apple growers can expand their market and their profits. To the discerning observer, it looks like madness. For the sake of that extra profit, society must waste the labour and materials for the ships, rail and trucks needed for their transportation. In addition, unnecessary amounts of carbon are produced and ever-scarcer oil resources used up at a time when we are trying to figure out how to reduce our carbon footprint, reduce global warming and mitigate the effects of climate change. Multiply this operation by one million and you get some idea of the magnitude of the problem, because it's a lot more than apples that are distributed in this way. That there is no consideration for waste that the producers do not have to pay for, or for the environment, in their pursuit of profit, is just business as usual in capitalist production.