

# IMAGINE

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## SELLING SOCIALISM

Socialists of The World Socialist Movement quite rightly point out the major problems of the capitalist system that we all live under and are forced to deal with to earn our living and to survive. That problems exist within our current system is obvious to all by simply observing how people live (or not!) around the world and how they could and should live. However, socialism does not need to compare itself to a dysfunctional and insane system to look good. It can stand on its own merits quite well, thank you. Let's examine what socialism can do for the world and its people.

We hold that the establishment of socialism must be done by the will of a majority worldwide. It must be carried out by a class-conscious majority who understand and opt for socialism's goals. The first job of any elected socialist party would be to legislate the end of the private ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth. In its place would be common ownership, everyone becoming an owner and a producer thus ending the class system that justified a tiny minority owning and controlling wealth and taking a lion's share while the vast majority only get enough to survive and many not even that much.

Common ownership would necessarily open all the stores of goods and services produced to all humans on earth who could freely take whatever they needed whenever they felt it was necessary. It would be the end of hunger, poverty, and lack of essential human services such as health care and education. Since we would all be owners and producers, money would be superfluous – we would only be selling to ourselves. It also means that the competitive system that capitalism is would be replaced by a co-operative system of managing the world's resources for the benefit of all. A world UN-like elected body would be responsible for their fair, safe, and common sense distribution.

At the local level there would be, perhaps, an elected council charged with organizing production in their region to satisfy local and regional needs with self-sufficiency being a top priority. No need to send coals to Newcastle or cars from Japan or Germany to North America where the infrastructure to produce their own is already in place, if indeed we decide we need cars. No need to search out the lowest wage areas for cheap production and then send the products thousands of kilometers when they can just as easily be made locally. The savings in resources and environmental destruction would be enormous in that one simple, sane step.

With a cooperative world there would be no need for the arbitrary lines on the globe that mark out competing countries' territories. We could truly become One World. It would also signal the end of the competition for resources that is the major cause of war in the capitalist system. The jostling for alliances, the secret services, spying, and surveillance techniques, that countries so routinely use today, would no longer be necessary. Instead of sending armies of soldiers and machines to destroy and kill we would send armies of skilled workers and their equipment to teach the latest skills to those who need it.

So far, then, we have eliminated the whole infrastructure of the military-industrial complex, the whole financial system (banks, markets, stocks, shares, accounting, etc.), the state border organizations, and a considerable amount of government machinery as being unnecessary for human progress. A vast number of people would

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be without their current jobs, to be absorbed, on a volunteer basis, into work that is necessary – food and goods production for use, not profit, services, scientific research, (how about a few hundreds of millions of new scientists and technicians to help work out the best solutions the problems left by the capitalist system), and so on. This would greatly reduce the work- load of everyone else and, coupled with the end of the need to produce tremendous amounts of surplus value to satisfy profit, to just a few hours per week. For example, it was recently reported that the average worker for Apple created about \$400,000 of value per annum. Even a high estimate of \$40,000 per annum for the average salary means that the worker there is producing his own wage in about 48 minutes per day! The rest of the day is surplus labour going to satisfy the profit need.

Most importantly, socialism would bring a common sense approach to organizing resources and production to provide the necessities of life – food, shelter, health care, education, security – to all human beings and to take care of our beautiful and unique planet as we all know we should. The establishment of socialism would end our primitive period of competition and war and usher in a new stage in human development and progress. This idea will sell itself when it gets the widespread attention it deserves.



## THE BONOBO AND THE ATHEIST: IN SEARCH OF HUMANISM AMONG THE PRIMATES, BY FRANS DE WAAL, 2013.

For those who seek to better understand the natural basis of pro-social primate behaviour and people, one will not be disappointed reading Frans de Waal's, *The Bonobo and the Atheist*. For three decades de Waal and his research team at Emory State University have been demystifying and setting straight the wide-spread myth that nature functions fundamentally on conflict and competition.

De Waal demonstrates that contrary to this erroneous view that the 'reddest in tooth and claw' is the fittest to survive, mammals, especially primates and humans, thrive through mutual cooperation and relations of pro-social behaviour. Indeed, the most social and helpful in such species are in the best position to pass on their genetic traits!

Previous naturalists, such as Charles Darwin and Petr Kropotkin, also broached the topic of sociability and co-operation in animals as the prime motor of evolution, but their findings were drowned out by pundits of the competitive model well suited to capitalist ideology and hood-winking, and in Darwin's case, by one of his own well known spokesman, Thomas Huxley.

De Waal's book is a refreshing counter to such evolutionary orthodoxy of competition over co-operation. Backed with compelling evidence, and citing the ever-growing number of amateur and scientific photographs and YouTube internet uploads of animals engaging in pro-social acts of mutual-aid, de Waal's arguments are substantive.

Yet De Waal comments further on the origins of morality and this is a good thing; he levels the inanities and pervasive muddle-headed thinking coming from the fundamentalist theists and atheists, chortling primarily from the USA, that human morality stems, or does not stem, from a higher being. De Waal correctly identifies that this line of arguing is spurious and unscientific, and that what we should be looking to is nature herself as the basis of morality – something that socialists entirely concur with and have been saying for over one hundred years!

Ask your local librarian for a copy of the book, or visit de Waal's web-resources at: TEDx Frans de Waal: Moral behavior in animals, [www.ted.com/talks/frans\\_de\\_waal\\_do\\_animals\\_have\\_morals.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals.html);

Frans de Waal - Public Page, [www.facebook.com/pages/Frans-de-Waal-Public-Page/99206759699](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Frans-de-Waal-Public-Page/99206759699) ; & Center for the Advanced Study of Ape and Human Evolution, [www.emory.edu/LIVING\\_LINKS/](http://www.emory.edu/LIVING_LINKS/)

## WHAT DO FACTS HAVE TO DO WITH ANYTHING?

Socialists contend that the modern nation state with clearly defined and defended boundaries, a strong central government, and the legal and enforcement bodies to back up their legislation, is a creation of the capitalist system necessary to its maintenance. The government, of whatever stripe, is bound to putting into place measures that protect the capitalist class and its profit-making activities inside and outside the state. Thus the workers inside the state boundaries are bound by a system of laws that force them to produce surplus labour (profit) for their survival, and the government must work to make international laws and trade agreements favouring its capitalist class, even going to war if necessary.

Given that, the recent news that our Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries had closed five of seven research libraries across Canada at a time when most people would think that knowledge of the environment would be of the utmost importance, is quite understandable. The ministry also removed \$80 million from the budget of those libraries. The current Tory government is in austerity mode trying to balance the budget in short order. The closing of the libraries will save \$443,000 that is probably less than the cost of closing the facilities and is, in any case, a drop in the ocean compared to the size of total governmental spending.

On a closer look, however, two disturbing facts emerge. Firstly, none of the scientists working at the libraries was informed of the action, or even consulted. Secondly, thousands of books, periodicals, and research papers have been trashed and thrown into dumpsters. One union official commented, "A lot of employees were really shocked. There is concern that research will be lost forever." Just days before Christmas, traditionally a prime time for governments to sneak through unpopular legislation, the public was invited to grab anything left behind. What was available, and left strewn around in disarray, was research and materials that cost millions of dollars to produce, (no concern for cost there, then!) including atlases, environmental assessments, studies in toxins in fish, and baseline environmental data crucial for present day comparisons.

The Fisheries and Oceans Minister, Gail Shea, countered that there is 'serious misinformation' being spread, that most of the material will be digitalized, (at what cost?) and that only a dozen non-employees visited each library in a given year. The last point would not, of course, diminish the scientific significance of the material. A picture accompanying the article (Toronto Star, Jan 12, 2014) showed a dumpster full of books and papers.

The conclusion must be drawn that the Harper Tories are simply trying to muzzle the researchers and make it harder to

find the truth about environmental degradation that might challenge their related legislation and policies. Canada is already well known throughout the world for its opposition to progress on environmental issues at the international conferences. A former government scientist commented, "It's a travesty. It's a real blow to the ability of people to do research." A lead researcher with Manitoba Wildlands, an environmental protection group, sees the closings as a government bid to limit criticism of controversial plans including pipelines to expand the Tar Sands production in Alberta. He commented, "If you restrict public access to information on fresh water by closing libraries, then you limit people's ability to understand the environmental impact that kind of industrial development will have."

The president of the Professional Institute of Public Service of Canada, representing federal scientists said, "This is a government's attempt...to do away with any of the evidence that might counter its political ideology." Perhaps, you might say that this is all sour grapes by employees, some of whom will be losing their jobs and/or job satisfaction. However, this government has previously moved to control scientific research being made public by requesting that scientists in its employment submit research papers to the scrutiny of government officials before being published in the relevant scientific journals, a move that prompted the rare sight of scientists to demonstrating on Parliament Hill. In addition, world-renowned programs such as the Great Lakes project and long-term lake studies have been starved of funding or cancelled altogether. Then the story recently broke that environmental charities critical of the Tar Sands are being bullied by audits and threatened with a loss of charitable status for any political activity. Meanwhile, a right wing group that is 100% political in support the Tar Sands and the Tories' agenda, retains its political status. At the same time, Ottawa is desperately trying new ways of selling the heavy, costly-to-process, and dirty oil to the European Union. A \$180,000 study into the EU's Fuel Quality Directive suggests that if the Tar Sands oil is not used and refined in Europe, then the most efficient shipping routes will be disrupted causing excessive and needless greenhouse gas emissions. The logic is hard to follow but logic never was a part of the profit system, but it does explain somewhat the government's actions re the environment. It is desperately trying to get five pipeline projects underway to continue and expand production in Alberta as thirty per cent of the provinces revenues are derived from that source and the income for the federal government is huge.

This particular government in power now is quite crude and clumsy in its actions in protecting profit over the environment, but the end result of any government of the other major parties would be much the same. No party would contemplate shutting down the Tar Sands project or any other resource extraction that was profitable and necessary to the continuance of the capitalist system.

## OBSCENE & HEARD

Capitalism is an insane system at the best of times but it can even outdo itself in that department sometimes. Read on ;-

In discussing the holy grail of flu vaccines, i.e. one that would give lifetime, or at least longer, protection, Carolyn Abraham writes in Zoomer Magazine (Dec 2013/Jan 2014), "Why would manufacturers invest millions to make a vaccine that protects longer and is given less often if we keep giving the current vaccine to more and more people and repeat that process every year. Where is the incentive to change?" Insanely, in a for-profit system, there is no incentive to improve health in this case.

Gross Domestic product (GDP) is a very important indicator of a country's wealth to the economists (= cheerleaders for capitalism). For them, the higher the GDP the better because it shows productivity and all the supposedly good things for the system. Conversely, in, "Notes From A Big Country", Bill Bryson writes, "None of this (GDP) really matters because GDP is in any case a useless measurement... Any kind of activity adds to the gross domestic product. It doesn't matter whether it's a good activity or a bad one. It has been estimated, for example, that the O. J. Simpson trial added \$200 million to America's GDP through lawyers' fees, court costs, hotel bills for the press and so on...in fact, bad activities generate more GDP than good ones. I was recently in Pennsylvania at the site of a zinc factory whose airborne wastes were formerly so laden with pollutants that they denuded an entire mountainside. From factory fence to the top of the mountain there was not a single scrap of vegetation. From a GDP perspective, however, this was wonderful. First there was the gain to the economy from all the zinc the factory had refined and sold over the years. Then there was gain from the tens of millions of dollars the government must spend to clean up the site and restore the mountain. Finally, there will be a continual gain from the medical treatment for workers and townspeople made chronically ill amid all those contaminants."

How about this for the possible 'quote of the year'? Pope Francis, in his New Year's Message for the Catholic world, said, "The grave economic and financial crises of the present time have pushed man to seek salvation, happiness, and security in consumption and earnings out of all proportion to the principles of a sound economy." We wonder what His Holiness considers a sound economy. We can be sure he would never consider giving up any of the wealth of the Catholic Church to make it any sounder.

"Canadian physician, William Osler, known as the father of modern medicine, once soared into the heavens of rhetoric in the early 20th century to describe work...'It is' he said, 'the open sesame to every portal, the great equalizer, the philosopher's stone which transmutes all base metal of humanity into gold.'...Today, for more and more people - in

particular immigrants, older workers, the young, and women - work brings anything but equality, hope, confidence, and repose. Rather it is becoming the fearsome cave of economic insecurity." (Toronto Star, Dec 15, 2013). Socialist believe that meaningful work is a necessary and fulfilling part of the human experience and is the reason that voluntary work will succeed. Why does capitalism deny so many the experience of work? Obviously, because the unemployed are no longer profitable. This shows the incredible waste of human talent and industry in a system that touts efficiency above all else.

Many farmers in western England have had their lands waterlogged in the recent floods. They claim the rivers that burst their banks had not been silt cleared for years so the rainwater could not run away. The local governments say they haven't got the money to do the job. No one is to blame save for the lack of money being received by the various government levels to operate properly. The money to do so can only come from profits but that is fought tooth and nail by the owning class or, rather, by those they hire. So everyone is chasing everyone else in circles and nothing gets done properly!

In China they are planting millions of trees in an attempt to prevent the encroachment of the Kubugi desert. Windstorms threaten the air 1,300 kilometres away in Beijing and send plumes across the Pacific to the US west coast. Thousands who suffer from asthma and weak hearts have gone to hospital in Beijing. Shades of the dust bowl in the American mid-west in the thirties - under capitalism, little changes.

The following are captions for articles in the Toronto Star business section, January 25th.

- Higher gas prices pump up December inflation rate.
  - Samsung profit growth slows (making profit is not enough. It must constantly grow)
  - Stocks fall on emerging market fears.
  - P & G see earnings slip on flat sales.
  - Coca-Cola and Nike grapple with climate change threats.
  - Blackberry's turn around lacks strategic details.
- Shouldn't so much doom and gloom tell people something is wrong with contemporary society?

## ENOUGH, ENOUGH!

Everyone, whatever their political views, can, and probably will, agree with the comment that the world is in one heck of a mess. Wars and social protests are everywhere and unemployment, homelessness, famine, and death by preventable diseases affect millions. Small businesses and many big ones are going bankrupt or being bought out forcing us all to shop at Walmart. Cities, provinces, states, and state governments are in debt up to their ears, sometimes so enormous that they will never be repaid. The air, water,

and land are polluted and the effects of global warming are causing extreme weather events reported on a daily basis.

It costs the American government one million dollars per soldier per year to fight for the interests of the nation's capitalist class overseas while people are starving, jobless, or homeless. Governments, though, can always find money for wars. Poverty, endemic to the capitalist system, creates a fertile breeding ground for crime that is so rampant that it is reported as if it were the latest stock market figures or sports scores.

Our culture is mostly garbage. Good human-interest stories have given way to special effects, disaster epics, and vampire movies. Television focuses on the bizarre lifestyles and zany behaviour of weird characters, endless reality shows, or comedy shows that rely on canned laughter. Our literature is devoid of real depth. Membership in cultural clubs where people can delight in the company of those with whom they share common interests are declining all over the world. Young people are so plugged into their own electronic world that they have ceased to learn how to converse just as children have ceased to learn how to play. Their music is amplified noise and their clothing, jeans and tee shirts, is a stereotypical uniform.

Everywhere, one senses a feeling of alienation and hopelessness, reflected in low voter turnouts at elections. Many have given up belief in the main political parties' abilities to make any kind of a difference that, given the facts, is not at all surprising. At President Obama's first inauguration, he said, "... the problems we face will not be met soon, but know this, America, they will be met." After five years in office no one believes that any more. This is not to suggest that he does not care. Men like Obama, and our Prime Minister, Harper, would certainly solve the problems noted if they were capable. Like all politicians elected, they are in power to run the affairs of capitalism and as such are primarily responsible to the needs of capitalism in their countries.

So the world is in a mess and if we can't rely on the people at the top to get us out of it, who can we count on? The answer being, ourselves. We, the world's working class, can and need to, act pretty damn quickly. The problems that are destroying life on this planet are direct result of the actions of capitalism, i.e. ownership of the tools of production in the hands of a small minority using their power to manipulate the system in their own interests, profit, and more profit. As such, it is impossible to have capitalism without poverty, war and conflict, unemployment, homelessness, etc. Since these are world wide problems, it is necessary for the world's working class, all those who work to survive, to organize politically and consciously for the abolition of the capitalist system altogether and its replacement with a socialist society of common ownership and free access for all human beings.

## CAN CAPITALISM DELIVER?

In January, Ontario's Premier, Kathleen Wynne, authorized the minimum wage to rise from \$10.25/hour to \$11. It had been frozen at the former amount for four years while inflation rose 6.7%. This increase affects 535,000 people who are now stuck at the new rate until a further increase is reluctantly granted who knows when.

As to the question, 'who wouldn't be delighted with such generosity?' the answer is plenty of people on both sides of the divide. Labour groups, such as the Workers Action Centre, claim that while the seventy-five cent raise is better than none, it requires \$14 per hour to live above the poverty level. According to a spokesperson, " Even at \$11 per hour, workers would still be sixteen per cent below the poverty line. We need the premier to show leadership. This is her chance to implement a decent work agenda. Condemning workers to a poverty trap, sixteen per cent below the line seems to be falling short of what her vision was when she became premier." A similar refrain has been heard of everyone who ever became premier. In fact, Wynne's predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, made a big deal of reducing poverty 25% in five years, but that was abandoned as the recession hit.

Small businesses, that employ many at the minimum wage, and the Tory opposition have argued against any increase saying that higher wages would kill jobs. They neglect to mention that wages are only a small part of the costs of a product. The paradox is that both sides are right. Almost anyone would agree that working a full time job should bring the necessities of life and a few extras such as money for holidays and other recreational pursuits. An increase in wages will force some small businesses to drop employees and/or cut staff as they struggle to keep their heads above water. By far the biggest employers of minimum wage employees, though, are large companies such as Walmart and McDonalds making billions in profit. Here we have the contradiction of capitalism. Because all companies are in competition with each other, they have to produce as much profit as possible to send dividends to the investors. Their hands are tied by the system, as are the small businesses living on the edge. Thus those with the least clout, the workers, must endure forever the possibility of being in a minimum wage job and struggling at or below the poverty line. And, make no mistake, there are more and more workers falling out of good paying jobs and ending up in low-wage positions, and the greatest job increases we are seeing are in the service industries where the minimum wage is common.

Those fighting for better wages need to realize that they are on a treadmill to nowhere. The Toronto Star reported (Feb 22, 2014) that this increase actually falls short of the \$11.50 minimum wage of the 1970s, adjusted for inflation. That's forty years of fighting and going backwards. Obviously, the increase won't enable its recipients to drive Cadillacs and labour must fight for a living wage and safe conditions of work, but the most disappointing aspect to a socialist is that labour groups do not spend time and energy in working for a world without wages and where everyone can take what they need from a common store and minimum wage be damned!

## HOME SWEET HOME

With the ruthless winter the citizens of Toronto have been experiencing, the number of homeless people dying on the streets has increased. Since 1985, when figures were first kept, 733 homeless people have died on the streets of Canada's largest and most prosperous city. The death rate for homeless people is eight to ten times higher than housed people of the same age.

According to the Toronto Star (Jan 22), a recent study found that nine out of ten families living in Toronto's low-income high-rise apartment buildings are at risk of becoming homeless. Toronto has a shortage of affordable housing with 90,788 households on the waiting list. There is, however, no waiting list for those looking for houses in the one million dollar and up range.

In Toronto, the Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF) helps to meet the emergency needs of people receiving social assistance. The HSF can help cover housing costs for several reasons including domestic violence, health problems, avoiding eviction, or moving from an emergency shelter. In short, the HSF can make a difference between having a roof over one's head or the sky.

The ice storm of December showed the need for support programs like the HSF. People turned to it to recover from the effects of burst pipes and flooding. So, to cut the funding to HSF will mean turning people away in times of emergency, and this is precisely what the city intends to do. The draft budget has slated a \$4.3 million cut to HSF while admitting the cut, "...will reduce the city's capacity to assist residents who are facing housing related crises." In other words, 'If you become homeless, we can't help you.' Nor can the homeless or those about to be, look to the provincial government. In 2013, it eliminated the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Bill that had helped people receiving social assistance to pay for large and unexpected housing costs so they could remain in their houses.

The province passed the responsibility for homeless prevention programs to the municipalities but passed on only half the money. This underfunding, obviously, has contributed to Toronto's budget woes. After considerable pressure, the province scraped together \$42 million in transitional funding to municipalities in 2013 and that is about to expire. Twenty-seven community organizations across Ontario are calling on the provincial government to make the transitional funding permanent but, so far, the province has refused.

It is clear the municipalities cannot afford to cover this funding cut, but the cold bleak fact is that if, in the unlikely event the province resumes funding and the HSF does not face cuts, the housing problem facing Toronto and other municipalities will not be solved. Homelessness is increasing too rapidly for any government to cope with. The best that can be expected is some decrease in homelessness and related deaths. It will

be a matter of degree, not elimination. Five years ago, the provincial Liberal government promised to reduce poverty with its '25 over 5' program, i.e., 25 % reduction in poverty rates in five years. The program has been abandoned in the austerity atmosphere of today. Four years ago, Mayor Rob Ford and his conservative council were elected on a 'cut the waste' program. Cutting homeless programs and other vital services is part of his 'waste'.

Homelessness is one of the many problems endemic to capitalism. There is no shortage of housing it's just that in the profit system if you do not have the money, you do without. Reform bills like HSF are passed to help reduce the extent of the problem. When the economy goes down, companies go bankrupt, taxes aren't getting paid, so governments do not have as much money and therefore budget cuts have to be made. One can safely say that those attempting to administrate the affairs of capitalism, at any level, are not going to be overly concerned about unproductive workers who, due to the effects of capitalism, become unemployed and/or homeless.

These attempts at assuaging the problem, no matter how well meant are another example of reforms that, due to the insecurity of capitalism, cannot solve the problem they were created to deal with. You have to deal with the problem by rooting out its cause – capitalism.



## THE STAR SHINES, DIMLY

Many readers of "Imagine" or our monthly report, or our web site, "Wage Slave News", may have noticed the references to The Toronto Daily Star. In fact, one occurred in "The Socialist Standard", the journal of our companion party in Britain. This is due to the Star's constant attacks on many social evils. Does this then mean that the Star deserves an article of its own? The writer had to ask himself. The answer was yes, but barely so.

The Star was founded in 1892 by striking "Afternoon News" printers and writers led by the future mayor of Toronto and social reformer, Horatio Clarence Hocken. Though initial sales were poor, the paper prospered under Joseph Atkinson, editor and owner from 1899 until his death in 1948. Atkinson had a strong social conscience and championed causes that would become part of the modern day welfare state such as old age pensions, unemployment insurance, and health care.

For years, the Star was unique among North American papers in its constant advocacy of reforms that would be beneficial to the working class. Its early opposition and criticism of the Nazi regime saw the paper become one of the first North American newspapers to be banned in Germany.

Shortly before his death, Atkinson transferred ownership of the Star to a charitable organization given the mandate to continue the paper's liberal position. In 1949, the province passed a law, repealed in 2009, barring charitable organizations from owning large parts of profit-making businesses, and that required the sale of The Star. The five trustees of the charitable organization circumvented the law by buying the paper themselves and swearing before the Supreme Court of Ontario to continue Atkinson's principles, as follows – A strong, united, and independent Canada; social justice; individual liberties; community and civic engagement; the rights of working people; the necessary role of government.

Descendants of the original owners, known as 'the five families' still control the voting shares of the Star and the Atkinson principles continue to guide the paper today, for what it is worth. The Star is generally considered to be the most liberal of Canada's major newspapers. It has long been an advocate of Canadian nationalism, opposed free trade with the US in the 1980s, and recently expressed concern about US takeovers of Canadian companies. The Star opposed the Iraq war and criticized most of the policies of George W. Bush, but supported Canadian participation of the Continental Missile Defence System. Though The Star usually endorses the Liberal Party, there have been exceptions to the rule. The paper endorsed the Conservatives under Robert Stanfield in 1972 and the NDP in the 2011 federal election, stating, "Its platform puts people first."

Since these parties all stand for the continuation of capitalism, it hardly matters for whom The Star advises its readers to vote. By campaigning for 'a strong, united, and independent Canada' and 'the necessary role of government', it clearly stands for the modern-day industrial national state that is a means whereby a few will live in luxury at the expense of the many. By 'community and civil engagement' is meant a situation whereby the rich and poor can work together as if they had common interests. By 'social justice', 'individual and civil liberties', and 'the rights of working people', they obviously support and want to maintain, a modern democratic state where the rule of law prevails, albeit the rules of the class.

What, then, can a socialist commend about The Star? First, its attacks on the many social injustices that capitalism throws up during its normal operation; second, the fact that The Star exposes the contradictions and hypocracies within them. Here all praise must end because for one hundred and twenty-two years, The Star has suggested reforms to make life more bearable under capitalism. Even today, as I write, it is in favour of mental health programs in our schools instead of promoting a society that makes such measures unnecessary.

## NEED A JOB?

According to Statistics Canada, the economy lost 49,500 jobs in December and 2013 was the worst year for employment growth since 2009. The unemployment rate jumped from 6.9% to 7.2%. The first week in January brought some disappointing data with lower housing starts and a larger trade deficit. Average annual hourly wages of permanent employees rose 2% in December, lower than the predicted 2.3%. There were fewer jobs in agriculture, manufacturing, educational services, and public administration. The only age group that saw gains was the fifty-five and over group as more of them looked for work. That fact shows that they do not have adequate pensions or no pensions, period. For Canadians 15-24 years, the unemployment rate remained at fourteen per cent. Ontario was Canada's hardest hit province losing 39,000 jobs with unemployment rising from 7.2% in November to 7.9% in December. Some of this has been the result of the December ice storm that halted construction and many more activities.

The chief economist for The Bank of Montreal claimed that, "Provincial budget restraints, weakness in manufacturing, and a recent slow down in construction all pushed Toronto's jobless rates higher." The chief economist at The Conference Board said, "Canada's economy relies on the state of the US economy and its economic growth has been pretty slow." December was also a bad month in the US with just 74,000 jobs created in the entire country. The only way to improve these statistics at the moment is if a considerable number give up looking for work and come off unemployment insurance. Then they do not count as unemployed.

It is extremely gratifying that federal Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty, should say he sympathized with Canadians who had lost their jobs and that, "...the economic recovery remains fragile." We would like to know how Mr. Flaherty defines 'recovery'. Ontario's Economic Development, Trade, and Employment Minister, Eric Hoskins, said provincial figures, "... weren't what we had hoped for or expected." This was probably over 14, 000 new jobs and no increase in the unemployment rate, based on a survey by Bloomberg news. In Toronto, mayor Rob, another- day,- another -scandal, Ford refused to accept that Toronto had a high unemployment rate and when pressed on the matter, he said, "It's booming, Toronto is booming today. We're a global power house." Meanwhile, the federal Conservatives and the provincial Liberals each claimed that the economic policies of the other government were not working.

One may wonder what the economic geniuses, the banks, and the finance ministers suggest to reduce unemployment. Some believe that the plunging value of the Canadian dollar, already down 2.7% this year, "may provide more economic stimulus if it makes Canadian exports more attractive in its largest market, the US." One person who is not

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so optimistic is labour economist, Erin Weir, of the United Steelworkers, “ The notion that Canada has a stronger job market than the US rests on very thin ice.” Some economists do have a glimmering of an idea that governments can do a lot about getting the economy back on its feet. For example, Toronto councilor, Michael Thompson, said, “ The city will do everything in its power to bring the unemployment rate down.” He added that, at this time, he didn’t think the city actually has much influence on unemployment, which is much closer to the truth than any other politician has come.

According to the above-mentioned, Alan Arcand, “ Compared to broad economic forces and federal and provincial governments, municipal government plays only a minor role in determining the city unemployment rate. Local property tax rates, economic promotion activities, and development all matter but city hall’s decisions are far less significant than, for example, the state of the US economy.” It would seem that Mr. Arcand thinks that municipal governments can’t do much but provincial and federal governments can, whereas the plain fact is no governments at any level can. We are in a depression and in any downturn of the economy there will be higher levels of unemployment. Though the above reasons may contribute to the rate, the broad underlying reason is that capitalism is a market economy. Thus all production is done with a view to selling products on the market at a particular rate of profit to be able to stay in business. When, due to the anarchic nature of capitalist production, the market becomes glutted and the opportunity for profit diminishes, there is a slump, the factories slow or stop, and there will be unemployment and there is little that governments can do about it.

This boom and bust cycle has been evident since the start of mass production and will continue in this cycle because the seeds of the next boom are to be found in the slump and the seeds of the next slump are to be found in the next boom. Governments and their advisors have tried to solve the riddle but have been unable to find a solution because it cannot be found within capitalism. The establishment of a world wide socialist system with production based on the real needs of all humans and without the profit/money system, would not only get rid of the boom bust cycle, it would get rid of the idea of employment and working to make someone else, the owners, rich. It would bring life-long security and freedom from financial worries. Obviously, a system we need to establish to replace the current system that works well only for the minority.

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our readers. Send email to  
spc@iname.com or write us at  
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## **A WORLD WITHOUT WAGES**

A lot of media time has been devoted lately to the issue of the minimum wage. In Ontario, after four years of stagnation, the minimum wage has been raised from \$10.15/h to \$11.00/h. Of course, inflation in the ensuing four years means that it is still lower in real terms and that still leaves minimum wage earners below the poverty line, even if they work a full forty-hour week. Many work only part time so employers can avoid paying benefits. The provincial government’s plan is to tie the wage to inflation, thereby guaranteeing regular increases and also the fact that it will never rise in relative terms, something very attractive to employers.

Because of the competitive nature of capitalism, many small businesses are forced to pay their employees at the minimum rate in order to remain operating at a profit. However, most low wage earners are employed by corporations such as Walmart and McDonalds, who make billions of dollars annually in profit and could easily afford to pay a decent wage. They, too, are in a competitive market and must follow the capitalist tendency of pushing wages as close to absolute zero as possible in order to maximize profit. Remember Walmart’s shock at the uproar it caused when it put up notices asking employees to bring in food donations to help fellow workers survive? Capital has no conscience or loyalty, except to the bottom line, and those who serve capital really believe they were doing a humane thing - anything but pay a living wage.

Even if everyone were paid enough to live on, it would still mean that the wages system was in tact. There would still be the owning class that made the decisions in its interests and the working class that would be forced to go to work for the owners in order to survive, having no control over production and working only at the whim of the market; there would still be massive and growing inequality; there would still be a life of abject poverty for those whose skills were not needed; there would still be unemployment with its attendant social, mental, and familial problems.

Socialists have the only answer – abolish the wages system altogether! This will be achieved by establishing the common ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth. In that case, we would all be owners, producers, and consumers at the same time. Production would be geared to needs as determined by the consumption of all. Anarchic production, where each enterprise produces what they can think they can sell regardless of real need and what other companies are producing, would be a thing of the past, and, along with it, the overproduction and misery of regular crises. In such a system, as we would be selling to ourselves, money would be superfluous. Workers would produce what was necessary, plus a bit extra for emergencies. Consumers would take what they needed from a common store. Wages and the wages system would be consigned to the trashcan of history, along with capitalism, where it belongs, and there would be no more discussion about wages period, never mind raising the minimum wage.



# DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

## THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA HOLDS

That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

How are decisions about the operation of society made? What principles govern what goods will be produced in what quantity and quality, or what social programs and laws will exist?

If decisions were made based upon the needs of humanity then the food that is regularly destroyed by the truckload would instead feed the starving.

Decisions are made based upon the expectation of making a profit. The ecology of the world is being devastated, even though this devastation may wipe out the human race, because of profit. Poor quality goods are produced, not because people want to have junk, but because it is profitable to produce junk. The rich can get the best, the rest of us often have little choice. Anyone can think of dozens of examples of how decision making puts profit-making before the satisfaction of human needs.

The owners of the production and distribution facilities are responsible to no-one but themselves. Governments pass laws that maintain profits for the owners as a group. Sometimes one owner or one sub-group of owners loses a bit, but overall, the class of owners always benefits in the long run. By focussing on the worst excesses, and legalizing the rest, their profits are protected from demands for significant changes.

While Canadians have generally seen the benefits of increased production in terms of material wealth, the decisions are made not to improve our lives, but to improve the lives of those who own the means of production. The gap between the very rich and the rest of us continues to grow.

That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

There are many different divisions in society. Divisions of hatred by sex, skin colour, national origin, religion or the amount of money that a person makes, among others. The insecurity of capitalism breeds these hatreds. We must eliminate their breeding ground, before they infect our children.

Socialists see a division of society based upon the means of acquiring wealth. If you must work for a living then you are working class, if your main income is derived from the work of others then you are a capitalist. This distinction clearly exists. Even though some of us own shares, workers do not

have the luxury to quit their jobs and live off investment income.

When you analyze society using this class division, many problems that otherwise defy understanding have obvious solutions. Profit is derived by owning. Wages or salary are derived by labouring, by expending our physical or mental energy working for those who own the means of production and distribution.

The owner of a particular factory may not even know that they own it. It may be just a part of an immense holding company that is administered by someone else. The workers in the factory, however, are directly connected to the production. It is the labour of these workers (including the plant management) that creates the profits that keep the capitalists rich. It is vital that the capitalists pay their workers less than the value that their labour produces. It is this difference between the value of what workers are paid and the value of what they produce that is the source of profit.

That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

As long as the ownership of the means of production and distribution rests with the minority capitalist class, this antagonism will continue to exist. The antagonism is caused by the necessarily differing interests of the classes. No matter how nice capitalists may be on a personal level, they will always have different interests than the working class. It is not a matter of good and evil or anything like that, it is inherent in any class system. Therefore the only way to eliminate the antagonism is to eliminate the class system and establish a system of common ownership where the previous antagonism has no basis.

That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

The hate and distrust that exists in society today is a direct result of the nature of societies past and present. A society in which we must compete to survive, in which our jobs are threatened by other workers, in which we do not feel secure, is fertile breeding ground for racism, sexism, nationalism and all the other hatreds that abound.

Even today, while this hatred is sometimes used to pit one worker against another, it appears that overall, these hatreds are being rooted out and made socially unacceptable. This is particularly noticeable in countries like South Africa where there is

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a shortage of white workers, and black workers must be brought into previously “white” workplaces without the major disruption that is caused by overt racism.

No society can meet our human needs as long as there are different classes of people. Every person has abilities that differentiate them from others, but we are all equal in our humanity. We all have strengths and weaknesses. What we need is a society that allows us to use our strengths, and that accepts and accommodates our weaknesses.

Socialism will be a society geared to meeting human needs, and the need to be accepted for what we are is probably the most basic of human needs. When the breeding ground for these hatreds has disappeared, people will naturally be able to eradicate them with all the other negative leftovers of capitalism.

That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into an agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.

It would be foolish to expect the capitalist class to voluntarily give up its privileged position in society. Governments exist solely to administer the society as it exists, in the interests of the ruling (capitalist) class, so governments will not end the privilege. Capitalism will continue as long as the working class accepts it. The working class will have to force the capitalist class to give up its position of privilege.

Socialism will be the result of workers democratically choosing a new, classless society based upon the satisfaction of human needs. And since capitalism is a global system of society, it must be replaced globally.

It is dangerous and futile to follow those who support violence by workers against the armed force of the state. Violent revolution has sometimes meant different faces in the capitalist class, always meant dead workers, and never meant the liberation of the working class. Unless workers organize consciously and politically and take control over the state machinery, including its armed forces, the state will be ensured a bloody victory.

Political democracy is the greatest tool (next to its labour-power) that the working class has at its disposal. When the majority of workers support socialism, so-called “revolutionary” war will not be required. The real revolution is for workers to stop following leaders, to start understanding why society functions as it does and to start thinking for themselves.

That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

Political parties of the left, right and centre, claim to be working for the betterment of society. Because society functions in the interests of the capitalist class, it is clear that these parties are then supporting the interests of the capitalist class. History shows us that no matter what these parties say, when elected they administer capitalism in the only way it can be administered - in the interests of the capitalist class.

Each of them has their own idea of how to run capitalism, often stealing the ideas of their supposed political opposites. The reforms that they implement must reflect economic reality. If they do not, they will not get re-elected - until the next party fails to reflect that reality. There is no way that capitalism can meet the needs of the majority, but all of these parties pretend it can if only they find the right plan. None of them have any really new ideas, only rehashed reforms that have failed in the past. Voting for any of these parties is voting for capitalism, forever.

Socialists are therefore hostile, not in the sense of committing violent acts against other parties or their members, but to the ideas of those parties which support capitalism.

The Socialist Party of Canada, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

The Socialist Party is part of a global socialist movement that believes capitalism cannot meet the needs of the majority of the people in the world. It does not today, and it never can.

In order to meet these needs capitalism must be replaced by socialism.

The only way to achieve socialism is for the working class to recognize this and consciously and politically work to replace capitalism with socialism. The Socialist Party of Canada does not support the idea of reforming capitalism and therefore does not work for reforms. There are plenty of other organizations that do and yet the problems remain. By relegating socialism to the future, it is relegated to never. Only a party dedicated only to socialism can promote socialism in any real, honest manner.

Among all the political parties in Canada, only the Socialist Party is dedicated to socialism as an immediate goal. It is this objective that makes the Socialist Party revolutionary - our dedication to peaceful, democratic and immediate change.

The Socialist Party is, therefore, engaged in a war of ideas against all other parties. Those other parties, no matter what they claim, are supporting the capitalist system and opposing the immediate establishment of socialism.

Only the conscious support of the working class will create socialism, and to this end the Socialist Party seeks to increase understanding of, and mobilize support for, socialism.

The Socialist Party calls upon every worker to support these efforts in any way that they can.

# MENTAL HEALTH IN OUR SCHOOLS

In January, the Toronto District School Board announced that soon every public school in the city will have its own mental health team and all staff will be trained as part of a four-year program to cope with the worry and anxiety Toronto students feel, revealed in a survey last year. Director of Education, Donna Quan, said in an interview (Toronto Star, Jan 28), “Mental health matters to all of us and the Board’s 36,000 staffers will also play a big role in the focus on student anxiety, depression, suicide prevention and addiction.”

In the survey of 103,000, students from grade seven to grade twelve were interviewed. It uncovered feelings of loneliness and bleak outlook and worry about their future, not surprising given the state of employment for young people today. A majority of students said they felt nervous or anxious all the time. In grades seven and eight, almost sixty per cent worried about the future all of the time, or some of the time. By high schools, grades nine to twelve, the percentage jumped to seventy-five per cent. Students reported feeling tired, losing sleep, difficulty concentrating, and making decisions. Roughly one in three grade seven and eight students (12 to 14 year olds) did not have an adult at their school that they felt they could depend on. At high school, about half the students felt the same way. Probably the worse revelation was that there were seven hundred known cases of attempted suicide by students last year.

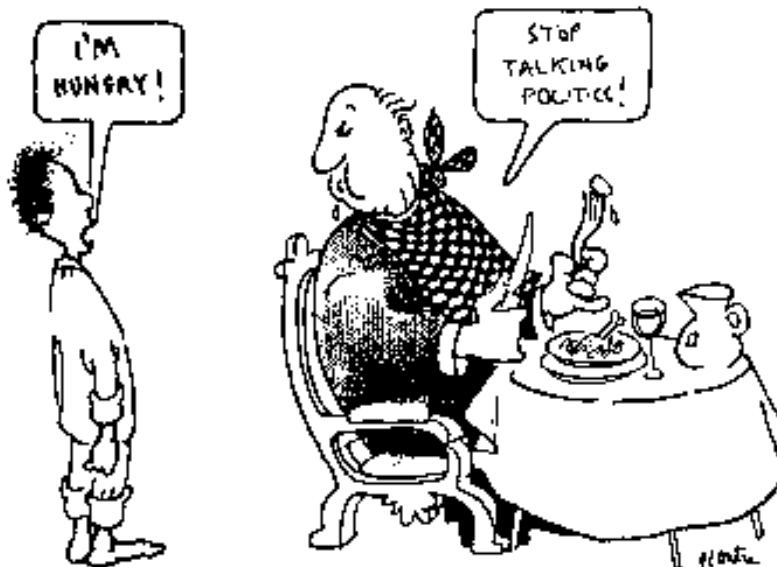
The Board’s plan includes requiring all schools to have a mental health team and training and professional development for all school staff on youth mental health, increasing the number of schools with programs that raise awareness about the social stigma of mental health issues,

increasing the number of partnerships with agencies and charities that provide mental health programming, and better information for parents about their children’s emotional well-being. A student trustee with the Board and a member of its mental health committee said, “These are issues students do not know how to approach and there is such a stigma many don’t want to. We will be connecting to students on a personal level, equipping students with education, empowering them to go out and recognize these conditions.”

All of this may be very comforting to parents with children at school. However, the enormity of the survey’s findings and the necessity to act on them are astonishing. Many students come from broken homes and many who do not have seen their parents struggle to make ends meet and therefore feel insecure themselves. Verbal and physical bullying that further creates anxiety and destruction of self-esteem was not included in the survey. The most obvious aspect of the survey is that young people who have a life ahead of them are already nervous wrecks before they join the workforce, if indeed they are able to do so after leaving school. These days many have to accept minimum wage jobs in the service industry.

This new program is a very fine thing, but only insofar as contemporary (and contemptible) society goes. If it helps students cope with the vagaries of life under capitalism, all well and good, but the whole subject points to the fact that life under capitalism is one stressful continuum throughout life. The competition, the insecurity, the constant search for enough money to do what one would like to do, create the stress found in a children’s survey. Quite an indictment of the system!

In a society where production is for use, where all could find useful work to suit their skills and interest and fulfill their ambitions, where money would no longer exist, where all would have access to the necessities of life, the above plan would not be necessary.



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## CONTACT

**THE SOCIALIST PARTY  
OF CANADA  
PO Box 4280,  
VICTORIA, BC V8X 3X8**

### BRITISH COLUMBIA

**John Ames**  
johnrmames@yahoo.ca  
**Tom Coles**  
tom@tomcoles.ca

### SASKATCHEWAN

**Mercedes Martinson**  
mercedes.scott@gmail.com

### MANITOBA

**Jaime Chinchilla-Solano**  
jaimech@gmail.com

### ONTARIO

**John Ayers**  
jayers4@cogeco.ca

### NEW BRUNSWICK

**Jeff Spicer**  
jeffspicerd1@hotmail.com

Visit us on the web at  
[worldsocialism.org/canada](http://worldsocialism.org/canada)

or

Email us at  
[spc@iname.com](mailto:spc@iname.com)

