

IMAGINE

ISSN 1710-5994



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IT'S DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN!

As the latest recession drags on, we are witnessing the usual effect of a 'downturn' in the economy. As production slows, stocks increase, and capital is withheld from investment until profitability returns, we note the devaluation of the means of production, of labour-power, and the cost of borrowing. All these factors will eventually combine to make investment worthwhile again and begin the upward movement of production to more prosperous times, however fleeting that may be.

As always, attacks on workers' wages and benefits has been stepped up and, this time, those attacks have benefited from the continuing trend of moving well paid, skilled jobs from the northern hemisphere to the South. The traditional tools of the workers to fight back – organizing, unionizing, collective bargaining, work to rule – have been blunted. Workers who lose their jobs as production flees, cannot move laterally and find similar work and pay elsewhere because there is nowhere to go and thus they are forced into lower paid jobs with no benefits and no security. It's tough to fight back from that position and shows the all-conquering power of capital.

Workers have fought from the beginning of capitalism to improve wages, working conditions, and standards of living. Each generation has benefited from those who fought before them and built on that to improve their lives even further. Thus, as capital accumulation increased for the capitalist class, workers were able to take a small percentage for themselves. Of course, compared to what the capitalists were making, the workers were taking peanuts, a fact that Marx noted when he predicted the continuing immiseration of the working class vis-à-vis the owners. As the gap between the rich class and the others continues to grow at an ever-faster rate, we agree with his point.

In the last few decades, however, this steady improvement has been halted. As free trade agreements came into play and organizations such as The World Bank and The World Trade Organization put their stamp on our trade, economies of all countries were thrown open to competition and capital attained world mobility. Thus, while capital and trade became global, workers' organizations remained essentially national in character leaving them toothless to engage a moving and more powerful target. Now, corporations can move away at will seeking greener pastures and more profits anywhere in the world and leaving workers and local economies devastated and without recourse. The industrial zones of North America have become rustbelts as skilled, well-paid jobs were moved to areas of low wages, lower restrictions such as safety, and lower taxes.

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The end result is that we now have a work force at the mercy of capital. Most unionized jobs have disappeared, and unionizing has been made more difficult by governments compliant with capital, leaving us with the lowest organized work force in recent memory. The stronghold of unionization and collective bargaining is now the public sector and the sights of capitalist firepower are fully trained in its direction. In the latest provincial election in Ontario, for example, the Conservatives consulted with the ultra Right Wing Republican Tea Party to learn how best to destroy public sector unions. The party's strategy was to create an American style Right to Work legislation, meaning workers must accept lower wages and benefits such as sick pay and pensions in order to attract corporations to locate in Ontario – in other words, accept the right to work for nothing as some workers in the USA call it, or accept unemployment and poverty. The Tories also promised to fire 100,000 public sector workers as a kick-start to their program. Fortunately, the voters turned them down, this time, but they will be back with a less blunt attempt to achieve their goals.

So what is to be done in the face of this power? We can start again with union drives in the Walmarts and McDonalds and continue the fight for raising the minimum wage and include benefit packages. This could meet with some success when prosperity returns and capital is keen to take full advantage to ramp up production and profits, but what happens when the next recession hits? The point is that the struggle against capital is ongoing and ever more difficult. The fact that we have two antagonistic classes with competing interests will never go away unless we make it disappear.

A better way, in our opinion, and one we have been advocating for a long time is to look at the big picture, to come to the realization that the fight against capital for a decent life will continue forever and that capitalism's constant tendency is to drive living standards down. Thus we must look at the cause of the conflict, the class system, a necessary part of the capitalist mode of production. The owning class will always use its clout to protect and maximize profits and working class living standards and services such as education, health, and social programs must always impinge on those profits – the more the workers get, the less the capitalists get and vice versa.

The only answer is to put an end to the system of private ownership of the means of production and distribution. Take a long look at what the World Socialist Movement is advocating and decide if you want the same old struggle, the same old problems, the same old insecurity or a new way of producing and distributing necessary goods that will take care of all mankind's needs wherever they may be.

FOR FRACK'S SAKE, STOP!

A new study explains how drilling at four wells for oil by forcing massive amounts of wastewater (not to mention other undisclosed chemicals) into the ground are shaking up Oklahoma. These wells have triggered more than a hundred small to medium strength earthquakes in the past five years, according to a study recently published by the journal, "Science". Many of these quakes were much further away from the wells than expected. Combined, those wells pour more than nineteen million litres of water a day into rock formations more than a kilometre underground, the study found. "That build-up of fluid creates more pressure that has to go somewhere," said the study's lead author, Katie Keranen.

Researchers originally figured the water diffused through underground rocks slowly but, instead, it's moving faster and further and triggers quake fault lines that were already likely to move at some future point. "You really don't need to raise the pressure a great deal," said Keranen, i.e. to trigger a movement. The waste water is left over from unconventional wells that drill for oil and gas with the help of high-pressure liquids (i.e., fracking) and from the removal of water from undiluted oil. These new methods mean much more waste water has to be discarded. While there are about 8,000 deep, injection wells in the region, the amount of water injected at the four wells has more than doubled since the drilling boom started about a decade ago.

From 1976 to 2007 Oklahoma averaged one quake of magnitude 3 per year, strong enough to feel locally but too weak to cause damage. From 2008 to 2013, the state averaged forty-four earthquakes of that size each year. Keranen tells us, "So far this year there have been two hundred and thirty-three," based on figures from the US Geological Survey database. This has led to some residents of Oklahoma pushing for restrictions on the use of injection wells. While past research has shown more quakes in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Kansas, and attributed them directly to injection wells, this study used computer simulations to identify the mechanism of how massive amounts of water travel as much as thirty-two kilometers from the well. The pressure then triggers existing small faults and previously unknown ones. In the past, scientists thought wells could only jump start quakes within five kilometres.

Austin Holland, a seismologist at the Oklahoma Geological Survey, said Keranen's study confirms what he is seeing in the field and will help to better understand what's happening in that state, "It's a study that needed to be done," confirmed Elizabeth Cochrane, seismologist at the US Geological Survey, "That changes how we might look at the hazard for a particular well."

What is significant is that at no time have any of the scientists called for an end to the practice of fracking. We know it causes earthquakes, that they are occurring more frequently, and affecting faults further and further away from the drilling and contaminating the land and water. The scientists obviously want to institute damage control, i.e. an admission that there will be damage. Clearly the practice of fracking in drilling for oil is causing some very worrisome problems. The solution would be to stop the practice until it can be made safe or abandon the practice if this is impossible. However, this is not feasible within the economic laws of capitalism that dictate that raw materials must be acquired as cheaply as possible to keep the machines and profits running, no matter what the cost to humans or the environment. To campaign specifically against fracking would be to miss the point. We advocate campaigning against the system that demands such practices and replacing it with one where common sense and concern for all parties involved is required.

WHERE CAN WE GO?

According to an article in The Toronto Star of July 23, a number of long-time tenants in a housing development claim the new owner of their fifty-four year-old building is delaying needed repairs in order to get them out so he can raise the rent, as mandated by the current rent act.

Such items as broken floorboards, water damage, mold, cockroaches, chipped counter tops, and malfunctioning freezers are common problems. The rental company claims it has completed 94% of the work orders it has received and denies it is trying to push anyone out. The company, Akelius, one of Sweden's largest property groups, jumped into the Toronto market two years ago. Industry insiders and tenants' advocates agree that Akelius is an aggressive landlord taking older buildings in established neighbourhoods and re-investing in them at a rate that is significantly more than the average investor. Founded in 1994, the company owns 42,811 apartment units in Canada, the UK, and Germany.

While the company owns three dozen rental properties in Toronto, totaling close to 1,600 units in many diverse areas, it is in the lower rental areas where the tension is greatest.

Allegations of landlords forcing tenants out in order to be able to raise rents goes back to the 1990s when the Tory government of Mike Harris amended tenancy laws and the term, "vacancy decontrol" was introduced. This allows landlords to increase the rent on a newly vacated unit. As Kenneth Hale, director at The Advocacy Centre For Tenants in Ontario, put it, "Vacancy decontrol is creating the incentive to abuse people. If that financial incentive were not there, then there would be no reason to force people out. Landlords would have to work with them to improve the properties and everybody would be happy."

At one building, twelve of the forty-seven units have been transformed into what Akelin calls 'first class' units. Photos show polished wooden floors, stainless steel kitchen sinks, and bright porcelain bathroom amenities. A bachelor suite goes for \$1,100 a month and a one bedroom, \$1,500. That's very pricey for that particular neighbourhood. These rents are beyond what most of the tenants who live in the rest of the building can afford. They are mostly Tibetan in origin and have poor English skills and are now paying about \$700 per month. Though going to the Tenant and Landlord Board is an option, most are uncomfortable doing so because of their backgrounds and language, a problem that lawyers for Akelin would not have.

If the accusations of forcing tenants out to increase rents are valid, the situation for the present tenants is bad as they will have to leave the area where they have friends and that they call home and have the difficult task of finding something in the city in their price range, not an easy task. If they are unable to do this, some may fall into homelessness. Unfortunately, under the capitalist system, the rental company is doing the right thing. They have invested an amount of money and must expect a return on that outlay. How this is accomplished does not really matter. If people are moved from their homes or even made homeless, that is the way of the capitalist system – can't pay, can't have. The fact that the rent act was amended in the landlord's favour shows that reforms cannot work and solve problems on a permanent basis. Much better would be for the tenants to have full control of the building themselves and organize its maintenance in a fair and proper manner without the antagonism that the present system creates of landlords and tenants in continual dispute.

GLOBALIZATION'S NEW BATTLEGROUND

So goes the headline in *The Toronto Star* (July 19, 2014). Actually, it's the same old battleground – labour versus capital with each side trying to win a larger share of the surplus value, or profit. The more one side gives up, the more the other wins in an antagonistic struggle that will last as long as the working class tolerates it. This time it involves Bombardier Inc. and its unionized workforce in Thunder Bay, Ontario. This company won early fame with its innovative machine, the ski-doo snow machine. Over the years it has expanded into making streetcars, subway cars, and coaches for the commuter trains run by the Ontario government. It is now the world's third largest maker of railway equipment. With \$3 billion in orders and the new Liberal Ontario government committed to spending \$29 billion for transit over the next ten years, the future looks bright indeed. The work force in that city has been doubled to 1,300 employees since 2010. So why is the company willing to endure a strike by nine hundred unionized workers and try to wring concessions from them? A company spokesman commented, "We're deeply disappointed that our Unifor employees have made the decision to strike as from the onset of negotiations we've really been committed to reaching an agreement that's fair and reasonable and one that in the long run would provide well-paid jobs. Obviously our positions are far apart, but we really want to make sure we get into a situation where we provide fair compensation for employees, but maintain our operational costs at a level that is competitive. If we want to bring more work to Thunder Bay we have to remain competitive." In other words, accept our cuts to your pay and benefits or you may not have a job at all! Obviously, what is fair and reasonable to the employer is not so for the workers. In fact, at issue is the company's demand that newer hires go on a high-risk defined contribution plan and cuts to many future retirees' medical and drug benefits. The national president for Unifor countered, "There's this incredible arrogance out there. Companies today, because of what we went through in 2008 and 2009, think people should just be happy to have a job so they come in and say we are going to get rid of your pension plan, I'm going to get rid of your post-retirement benefits. There's no rhyme or reason for Bombardier to say that. "This is the same union that had to cave in to the Big Three Detroit auto manufacturers with a two-tier pay system with new hires getting less money and benefits when General Motors was in bankruptcy protection.

The union president is wrong on one point – the company has many reasons for demanding lower wages and benefits. In a global market and ease of mobility for capital, the competition is fierce and having a 'flexible' work force is a necessity for a company like Bombardier that is in competition with companies with access to low wage countries like China. They are quite right when they say they have to cut costs to stay in

business and labour and materials are the first consideration. The new CEO, obviously brought in to trim costs will follow a hard line that labour will have a difficult time coping with. So, what is to be done? In the current capitalist mode of production, very little. Union action can help to slow the process but it's hard to fight when the alternative is for the company to outsource work to a Third World country or even pull up stakes and move there lock, stock, and barrel. The only real solution is to establish a system of common ownership where all production of necessary goods is carried out with the goal of satisfying all people's needs and profit and competition are not factors that dominate the process.

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION OR A TON OF CURE?

A few years ago in this journal we drew attention to the amount of debris that had been dumped in the oceans that could cause harm to marine life. Now a recent study published by the University of Cadiz, Spain, claims that the estimated amount of floating plastic debris in the oceans is between 6,350 tonnes and 31,750 tonnes. Andres Cozar, the author of the study remarked that it is a lot less than the 900,000 tonnes he had extrapolated from data reaching back to the 1970s. These figures are the result of a round the world- cruise by a research ship that towed a mesh net at 141 sites. This new estimate includes only floating debris, not plastic that may be found between the surface and the bottom of the ocean.

The net turned up fewer small pieces than expected researchers said. According to Cozar, "Perhaps the tiniest pieces are being eaten by small fish with uncertain effects on their health." This would explain why the amount of plastic in the oceans has decreased. Kara Law, who studies plastic pollution at the Sea Education Association in Massachusetts, said, "We are putting, certainly by any estimate, a large amount of synthetic material into the natural environment; we are fundamentally changing the composition the ocean. The impact on fish and birds is hard to gauge because scientists don't understand things like how much plastic animals encounter and how they might be harmed if they swallow it."

That the amount of debris in the oceans has decreased, if in fact it has, is no cause for celebration. Plastic debris from land reaches the oceans mostly through storm water run-off. This being the case and knowing so little about the harm it might do, wouldn't it make sense to have some type of filtering system to prevent it? Obviously it does, but capitalism does not always work on common sense. Logic and care for the environment are secondary to the realization of profit and therefore come low on the politicians' agendas, if indeed at all. The first task of a socialist society would be to clean up the mess left over from the capitalist mode of production that gets worse daily. This is an urgent need before it's too late to do anything about. We urge everyone to work for a clean planet and that means establishing a socialist society first.

RAILWAY SAFETY – A FOLLOW-UP

In the Fall 2013 issue of "Imagine" - we asked the question, "Railway Safety – Can Capitalism Deliver?" We concluded, "Obviously not, and never will be, owing to the competitive exigencies of the system." By that, we meant that capitalist enterprises are in competition with each other for their share of the profit available. The more they cut costs, the more the surplus-value produced by the workers is kept in the company's pockets. The competitors with the largest returns on investment are able to attract more capital and use that power to shove smaller, weaker, competitors to the margins of economic activity or take them over and eliminate them completely. Spending on things such as labour costs, workers' benefits, and safety must be kept to a minimum, within certain limits, as these costs must come from profits.

Governments, of course, set standards that all enterprises must adhere to, but socialists hold that state governments are the executive branches of the capitalist class of that country and, as such, must work in the interests of capital. Corporations can circumvent regulations by using the power of their capital to make sure the legislation does not encroach too much on their ability to produce profit through lobbying and through party donations. Secondly, they can make sure that monitoring and outside inspection is kept to a minimum.

In the case of the Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, rail disaster, a whole series of cracks in the system of inspection combined, from just one person being responsible for the whole train to using outdated and inadequate tankers to transport the oil, to make an accident inevitable at some juncture.

On August 20, The Toronto Star published the Government of Canada's response to a scathing report on the crash that had destroyed the business core of the town and left forty-seven people dead. The Transport Minister argued, "Blame a rule-breaking company, blame ineffective train inspectors, but don't blame the federal government for the deadly Lac-Mégantic train disaster." In fact, the government is responsible for the regulations and inspection regimen that is in place to maintain safety standards in factories and transportation of all types. "Who else could it be," the minister continued, "We need to remember that in terms of safety, the government puts the rules in place. The companies are expected to follow the

rules." - An amazing statement coming from a government minister in obviously trying to deflect culpability.

The Transportation Safety Board's definitive account of the accident was closer to the truth when it wrote that the crash was caused by a marginal railway company that puts profits before safety." They would have been closer still if they had said that in doing that, the company was following the golden rule of every capitalist enterprise! Incredibly, the minister pointed the finger at three employees of the Montreal, Maine, & Atlantic Railway who are now charged with criminal negligence. Who are the real criminals? The Star asks the question, "Who was the guardian of public safety?" It surely wasn't, isn't, and will not be, the companies maximizing profits. As a cadre of high-ranking and government officials and corporate bigwigs swap jobs with one another and fraternize socially and regularly, the results can be seen in all areas of production from pharmaceutical testing to the meat industry inspection standards. More and more, government is cutting inspection and allowing companies to police themselves and test their own products.

Finally, although safety inspections of the rail company found defective equipment, problems with locomotives, and sections of rail lines so run down that trains could not exceed speeds of 16km/h, Transport Canada is blocking the release of information in the reports. It says the reports cannot be released in full because the information is 'third party' i.e., confidential and belonging to the rail company, or was prepared or obtained in the course of an investigation. To a casual observer, the government's collusion and culpability in all this would beggar the imagination, but to a socialist it's as clear as a bell. Under capitalism, governments work in the interests of capital. Thus the system cannot fully deliver safety whether it be on the railways or in the factories. Examples of this are legion throughout the history of capitalism and still, today, tens of thousands of workers are killed every year world-wide. The very nature of the system means the slaughter will continue until a better system that can put the safety and well being of all humans first can be installed. That system is socialism.



LIES, LIES, AND MORE DAMN LIES!

The capitalist mode of production is defined by many indicators such as the private ownership by a small elite group of the world, its resources, the production of these resources into useable goods for profit; wage labour; a class system; massive inequality, and so on. To pull off this incongruous theft from the masses of humanity requires another system, one that propagates lies and propaganda to keep those masses under control and keep them from revolution. The use of the owning class's capital controls all major media and therefore news and opinion, buys lobbyists to put pressure on governments, funds think tanks that provide biased articles to the media and refutes truths that can hurt the profit system, and buys political parties and sets their agenda. Though their numbers may be tiny compared to the total population, the use of large amounts of capital is able to maintain the status quo and persuade the majority that this is normal and even gives a semblance of democracy.

Tight secrecy is another tool in the capitalists' toolbox. Corporations, whether manufacturing or financial or commercial, guard their information closely and try to find information about their competitors. Patents lock information away from others who might improve on an idea. Industrial spies are employed by all nations on behalf of their capitalist class to try and give them an edge over capitalists of other nations.

In this atmosphere, it is nearly impossible to find out the truth about health and safety concerns. For example, it took until the 1960s to discover that smoking is a direct cause of cancer, and even longer to get legislation to curtail its proliferation, even though Hitler's scientists knew of the link between smoking and cancer in the 1930s. Capital was used to suppress and deny the information that could have saved thousands of lives. Anything that might impact on profit making no matter what the consequences is covered over and suppressed.

About thirty years ago, genetically modified foods appeared from the laboratories and created a storm of protests and counter arguments. Who knows the truth?

In the July issue of "Popular Science", editor-in-chief, Cliff Ransom, and his staff weighed in. Two decades ago, Ransom began his scientific career working in a laboratory to produce genetically modified organisms (GMOs). His job was to alter the nitrogen-assimilation pathway in plants so they could grow in poor soils with less fertilizer. He writes, " Since GMOs were commercialized two decades ago, they have spurred hundreds of protests and millions of dollars worth of vandalism. Yet during the same period, they have helped raise global productivity, reduce insecticide use, and alleviate poverty" It's hard to agree with the last point he makes at least, since UN and other statistics routinely show poverty and hunger are at best staying at the same level and at worst increasing. However, hunger is not a function of the use of GMOs necessarily as we know that if food were produced on all the planets of our solar system and we had a great abundance of it, under the profit system people would still go hungry and lack the basic necessities of life.

In addition, Vermont has just passed a law that would require food producers to label GMO ingredients and eighty-five similar bills are in the works in the US – a reasonable thing to do given that we all have to eat the food, but secrecy and the lies of the owners make such laws necessary. France has banned GMO corn, the only modified product allowed in the European Union. A global march against Monsanto, one of the giants in the industry, is planned in the near future.

Given all this, "Popular Science" set out to find the science behind GMOs. We must give credit to Ransom for printing the following, " There are other issues – labeling, testing, regulation, and corporate control" – that just about covers all the bases for obfuscation of the truth. The magazine examined the most common claims and interviewed 'nearly a dozen scientists'.

Claim1. "Genetic engineering is radical technology"

Comments: Humans have manipulated crops and animals for thousands of years. Hardly a plant or animal that we consume today resembles its wild cousin. Genetic modification takes a piece of DNA material, modifies it, then puts it back, via bacteria, for new results. It can be more accurate than the old trial and error method of cross breeding and hoping for the desired result.

Claim 2. “GMOs are too new to know if they are dangerous”

Comments: Genetic modification appeared in labs thirty years ago. More than 1700 studies have been published and the scientific consensus is that GMOs are no more or less dangerous to human health than conventional crops.

Claim 3. “Farmers cannot replant GM seeds”

Comments: So-called terminator genes never made it out of the patent office in the 1990s. Agricultural corporations do require farmers to sign agreements that prohibit replanting in order to ensure annual sales. Large- scale growers typically do not save their seeds anyway.

Claim 4. “GMOs cause cancer, allergies, and other health problems”

Comments: It is possible for a new gene to express a protein that provokes an immune response but biotech companies consult with the Food and Drug Administration and administer extensive allergy and toxic testing. Recent studies in Italy found no danger in GMO foods.

Claim 5. “All research on GMOs has been funded by Big Agriculture”

Comments: Simply not true. Hundreds of independent researchers have published peer review studies. At least a dozen scientific groups, the WHO and The American Association for the Advancement of Science have stated that GMOs currently approved for market are safe.

Claim 6. “GMOs cause farmers to overuse pesticides and herbicides.”

Comment: Two relevant GMOs dominate the market. One enables crops to express a protein from the bacterium bacillus thuringiensis (Bt). That is toxic to certain insects and is the active ingredient in pesticides used by organic farmers. Bt crops have dramatically reduced the reliance on chemical insecticides. The second allows crops to tolerate the herbicide glyphosate so that farmers can and do spray entire fields liberally yet killing only weeds. Glyphosate use has skyrocketed but it is among the mildest herbicides available with a toxicity twenty-five times less than caffeine, and has reduced the reliance on stronger, more toxic alternatives.

Claim 7. “GMOs create super insects and super weeds.”

Comments: If overused, resistance is inevitable and that is evolution at work just as antibiotics create harder bacteria. The solution is to practice integrated pest management and crop rotation, as goes for any type of farming.

Claim 8. “GMOs harm beneficial insect species.”

Comments: Bt insecticides attach to proteins found in some insects’ guts, killing selected species. Generally, a field of Bt crops is safer for most insects than one sprayed with a chemical that kills indiscriminately. Unfortunately, monarch butterflies produce the same protein as one of the Bt targets and if they feed on milkweed sprayed with the this insecticide it will kill them.

Claim 9. “Modified genes spread to other crops and wild plants, upending the ecosystem.”

Comments: Plants routinely swap genetic material by way of pollen that carries plant DNA. According to a University of Georgia crop geneticist, the risk for neighbouring farms is low and can be further reduced by staggering planting schedules, often already done by farmers abutting GMO fields. Even foods with the non-GMO label are allowed to contain 0.5% GMO by dry weight.

That’s the scientific look at GMOs and it appears that its use is safe and beneficial. However, it raises some questions. Firstly, we do not know who owns and controls the magazine itself and what their agenda is. Secondly, consulting ‘nearly a dozen scientists’ doesn’t seem nearly deep enough. However, with climate change and a growing world population, we may need all the technology and science we have to solve the future problems regarding food growth and distribution. GMOs will not solve the world’s food problems but it is another tool in the toolbox. The problem, as Ransom pointed out above is in the control of the technology. If it is controlled for profit, then we can expect labeling, testing, and regulation will be manipulated to maximize the profit at the expense of safety in production and marketing. It will be a continual fight to find out the truth of what is in the food that we eat and the lies will continue until a system of common ownership and control of the world’s resources enables us to have a transparent open system that works in the interests of all humanity.

OBSCENE & HEARD

Capitalism is a brutal system that tramples on anyone and anything to make profits but sometimes it really outdoes itself.

The Governor of The Bank of England, Mark Carney has come up with a solution to the many problems endemic to capitalism. In The Toronto Star of June 7, 2014, his opinion was published under the heading, “Worth Repeating”. Actually it’s something worth bringing up, literally. His idea is “Inclusive Capitalism” and he writes, “ Inclusive capitalism is fundamentally about delivering a basic social contract comprised of relative equality outcomes, equality of opportunity and fairness across generations. Different societies will place different weights on these elements but few would omit any of them.”

Capitalism delivers the most basic social contract it can get away with and equality and fairness have never got in the way of profit making and never will. The Governor of the Bank of England, formerly of The Bank of Canada knows this better than most.

A letter in The Toronto Star quoted Prime Minister Harper speaking with Australia’s Tony Abbott on climate change, “ We seek to deal with (climate change) in a way that will protect and enhance our ability to create jobs and growth – not destroy jobs and growth in our countries.” In other words, while action on climate change may impinge on profits, we will do as little as possible and damn the consequences.

In a world where global warming becomes more evident everyday, it’s lunacy to report that global growth in coal consumption rose 88% in 2013, mainly on the demand from China and India. Coal’s share of global primary energy consumption reached 30.1% in the same period, the highest recorded since 1970. The ‘clean coal’ scam from the American coal industry aside shows that this system, capitalism, is not doing much if anything to tackle the problem and will do anything to avoid doing the right thing.

In England according to a television news item, the Clergy are going to a stand-up comedy school. In a program aptly dubbed “Comedy for Clergy”, pastors et al can learn to make their sermons more interesting. Well, they certainly have mountains of comic material to work with!

Capitalism has a success story in Longyearbyen where no one is unemployed and crime is virtually non-existent. Whoops, as you read on you are told that unemployment is illegal – if you do not have a job, you cannot live there. That’s one way of solving the large jobless group that is endemic and necessary to capitalism – export it! As for a crimeless society, there are no roads out of the town so no one can commit a crime, steal a car, and ride out of town, and if no one needs a job, there’s a major cause of crime taken care of.

We now have a league of the most deforested countries. Indonesia has just taken over the top spot from Brazil. The Nature Climate Change Journal reported that Indonesia has now replaced Brazil as the world’s leading deforester. In 2012, Indonesia lost 840,000 hectares of natural forest compared with Brazil’s measly 460,000 hectares even though Indonesia’s forests are only one quarter the size of Brazil’s. According to Greenpeace, the destruction of forests are caused by the expansion of the palm oil and pulp and paper industries, pushing animals such as the Sumatran tiger to the brink of extinction and destroying the livelihoods of local communities that depend on natural resources, especially fishing. Tropical forest advocate, Glenn Hurowitz, a director of Climate Advisors, said the study is consistent with his observations during his visits to Indonesia, commenting, “ Tropical rainforests are one of the world’s richest carbon sinks. It’s the height of insanity, desperation or greed to destroy the peatland rainforest.” Did anyone think the capitalist system was sane?

In the US children are introduced to the gun culture early. In one incident, a nine-year-old girl was handed an Uzi submachine gun at a shooting range. She promptly shot her instructor in the head with it. The range owner defended giving the girl the weapon, “This was a very mature young lady. It was something high on her bucket list to do.” Of course, high on the list of the gun manufacturers, sellers, and ranges is the profit motive and like smoking, the younger you can get them, the better.

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DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA HOLDS

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

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.

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.

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 common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their

democratic control by the whole people.

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.

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.

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.

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 that deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

THE ART AND BUSINESS OF WAR IS A TOP PRIORITY

One hundred years after 'the war to end all wars' the business of military supremacy is not only in full swing but continues to be ramped up to incredible proportions and limits. Apart from the massive outlays in wealth and manpower to the detriment of the social needs of mankind, the search is always on to find new and better ways to dominate and control resources and markets. In this cyber world, that search has naturally turned to hacking and controlling the enemy's computer systems.

In "Popular Science" (September 2014) the article, "The War of Zeros and Ones", author Peter Singer reveals the latest efforts. He writes that in 2006, agents from Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency were able to install a Trojan horse into the computer carelessly left in the hotel by a Syrian government official. Among the information gathered was a picture of the director of the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission and a leader of North Korea's nuclear program. The implication was explicit – with the help of a nuclear power, the Syrians were constructing a facility to process plutonium, a crucial step in producing a nuclear bomb.

...CONTINUED

The Israelis reacted with Operation Orchard carried out on the night of September 6, 2007. Israeli F-151 fighter jets invaded Syrian air space and flew hundreds of miles to drop bombs and level The Kibar nuclear complex. Not a shot was fired by the Syrians in self defence. It was not due to Syrian incompetence or sabotage. Prior to the bombing, the Israelis had invaded the Syrian army's computer network and were able to put in false images of a radar screen that showed no problems. In effect, the Israelis had turned off Syria's air defences.

Today, more than a hundred nations have cyber warfare units in operation. This is reshaping warfare just as the airplanes and new types of industrial power were unleashed on the battlefields a hundred years ago. In fact, such research and technology is growing so big – in 2012 the word 'cyber' appeared twelve times in the American defence budget, in 2014 that number rose to one hundred and forty-seven – there is now talk of creating a separate, new military service, just as one hundred years ago air-based units eventually became the Air Force. Today, there are more personnel employed at the National Security Administration and Cyber Command in the US than at the Pentagon. In Shanghai, the home of Chinese intelligence, hackers spend their time trying to get into US military communications, as the Americans are trying to reciprocate, to “destroy, deny, degrade, disrupt, and deceive” the enemies' computer systems.

In WWII the ability to crack the enemies' radio codes was vitally important to the Allies war efforts and aided their eventual victory. Today, the idea is not to simply gather information but, as the Israelis did with the Syrian strike, to get control of the enemy's systems. For example, more than one hundred American defence systems from aircraft carriers to missiles rely on GPS coordinates during operations. In 2010 a simple software glitch knocked ten thousand military GPS receivers off line for two weeks leaving everything from trucks to fighter jets that couldn't find their destinations. More recently, the Ukrainian forces in the Crimea were electronically cut off from their commanders and, isolated and facing Russian troops, they surrendered without a fight. The idea is to sew the seeds of doubt in the enemies' faith in their communications systems, making them question the orders they receive, create hesitation and confusion on the battlefield, taking forces back to pre-electronic times.

Drones have become useful and necessary tools in the cyber wars. In 2012 a surveillance drone passing over Austin, Texas, suddenly swerved off course. It was no accident. The Department of Homeland Security had challenged a team of engineers from the University of Texas's Radionavigation Laboratory to try to hack into an airborne drone's flight computer. As drones have become an important vehicle in gathering information and delivering weapons, and over eighty nations now have military robotic programs (the US has over eight thousand drones), the ability to control the computers of others becomes more and more important. All pilotless craft rely on a computer network for instructions and flight paths. If they can be co-opted by the enemy, they can be persuaded to do the opposite of their intended mission.

Not long ago, the US-Israeli cyber forces combined to use a Stuxnet virus to sabotage Iranian computer centrifuges causing machines to malfunction and sabotage the Iranian nuclear weapons program delaying it for months. In 2013, during the Pentagon war games, players experimented with trying the same kind of thing to send an enemy navy on a 'Carnival Cruise Line experience' setting the ships adrift without the power to reach targets or launch missiles. The potential for these kinds of attacks is limitless. For example, in 2009 an employee at the Shushenskaya dam in Siberia accidentally turned on an unused turbine with a few mistaken keystrokes. The result was a massive water release that destroyed the plant and killed seventy-five people. This is the type of thing that could be created by cyber attacks.

War is terrorism and cyber warfare is likely to target civilians just as by the end of WWII, bombing civilians was deemed the best way to end the war. In fact, war casualties in the last two decades have been ninety percent civilian. Basic infrastructure such as railways, roads and ports would continue to be targets in the wars of the future, e.g. changing bar codes on shipping containers, especially those destined for the military use would send the wrong materials – toilet rolls instead of ammunition to the wrong destination. The internet may have started out as a Defence Department project but it is now and will become ever more so a very important tool in the arsenal of any military organization.

The article concludes, “ War, even one fought with zeros and ones, will still remain a bitter waste of resources.” We could not agree more and it is a major reason we promote an alternative system that will eliminate the need for war.

OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR

As everyone knows, This year marks the centenary of World War I, a horrific global conflict. Therefore, it is timely to give an overview of its causes.

In Europe during the feudal system and into the pre-industrial period, countries were not defined as we know them today, but often loosely federated groupings of provinces, states, principalities, duchies, etc, all supposedly owing allegiance to a king or some higher authority. This sometimes did not mean much, in fact, throughout most of the medieval period, the Duke of Burgundy, for example, had more power than the king of France owing to his control of the woolen trade.

Each of these regions within countries had their own laws, currencies, standards of weights and measures, and armies. This state of hodge-podge affairs may have worked well for the feudal ruling class but was not compatible with the interests of the rising bourgeoisie and mercantile classes. They required all these small diverging regions to be integrated into larger countries with a strong central government responsive to their interests. They needed one currency, one standard of weights and measures, and one legal code that favoured private property rights above social rights.

From the early seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century a series of wars, revolutions, and compromises brought about the modern nation-state necessary to the capitalist mode of production. Italy and Germany were latecomers in this process and herein lay the seeds of WWI. The capitalist class has two vital needs above all others – raw materials to be turned into manufactured goods, and access to markets for those products. By the time Germany and Italy emerged as unified countries and major powers, Britain, France, Spain, Holland and Portugal had colonized vast areas of the world where they could blatantly steal and exploit raw materials and human labour. For Germany, the pickings were slim.

The German capitalist class, knowing war was inevitable at some time if they were to be able to compete, had built a powerful navy, fully aware that the British navy patrolled the oceans and ‘ruled the waves’ protecting British trade routes and strategic positions. By 1914 there were two alliances, Germany, Italy, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire allied against Britain, France, and Russia. The focus of attention was the Balkan Peninsula. Germany wanted to move through the Balkans to the Middle East and access its oil reserves, vitally important to the industrial machines of the world but now largely controlled by Britain. The proposed Berlin-Baghdad railway clearly shows Germany’s intent and determination.

The move would have meant severing the Suez Canal and therefore British access to the Indian Ocean. By controlling the Dardanelles, Germany would be able to prevent Russian ships from entering the Mediterranean and trading with the Balkan countries. France, with its African colonies was as concerned as Britain to stop this German incursion on what they considered their rightful territory.

With such a clash of commercial rivalries, war became inevitable. When it began, Italy deserted the German camp on the promise of a share in the spoils of victory – a promise that was never kept. Once war was declared, the capitalist class in all of the combatant countries had a problem that was easily solved – they needed a fighting army to look after their interests and only the working masses could supply one. The significant factor for a socialist, isn’t what they said but what they didn’t say. Never was the protection of capitalist property such as resources, factories etc. mentioned for the obvious reason that it would attract no one. Instead the jingoistic flag waving card of fighting for king and country, for freedom of speech, and religious worship was trotted out as in all wars before and since. The working class was persuaded to believe once again that the interests of the capitalist class and their own interests were one and the same. The reality is, of course, that workers in all countries have more in common with each other than with the capitalist class in their own country.

Then began a sickening, senseless four-year slaughter, that, to paraphrase our companion party in Britain, “...did not justify the shedding of a single drop of working class blood.”

The most senseless part was the glorification of British General Haig for sending hundreds of thousands of young men to their deaths in Northern France. The right honourable gentleman, Winston Churchill, never one to shrink from a conflict when bullets were coming his way, sent another 30,000 to their deaths in a botched operation in Gallipoli. It would be easy to call Haig, Churchill, and others war criminals for their cavalier attitude to their soldiers’ lives but that depends on the definition used. Were not some of the leaders of the British Labour Party, like Keir Hardie, who opposed the war before it was declared, and later campaigned for conscription, also war criminals? Are not all who stand for an economic system also responsible for war deaths?

From the start to the finish of WWI, there were only two groups of people who were in no way, shape, or form supported the war. The socialist parties of Canada and Britain, each issuing anti-war manifestos within days of the outbreak of war and at no time supported either alliance. If WWI proved anything, it was in the words of Charlie Chaplin, “Patriotism is the greatest insanity the world has ever suffered.” (“Charlie Chaplin” by Peter Ackroyd, Chatto and Windus, London 2014)

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