

# IMAGINE

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## The Middle East Turmoil

**A**s the Arab Spring stretches incredibly through Summer and into Autumn, the resistance, the street demonstrations, and even civil war, continues to be waged by these brave and determined people. Beginning in the well-publicized countries of Tunisia and Egypt that brought down their leaders, the unrest has spread to Yemen, Bahrain, and Jordan where the king fired his cabinet in response to the unrest. But isn't that the point of the protests, that autocratic rulers don't hire and fire their cabinets, the people should be doing that? Now the worst cases of human rights abuses are in Libya where NATO is helping the 'rebels' and in Syria, where government security forces are firing and killing peaceful demonstrators in the streets. The death toll there at the time of writing is estimated at 13 000. So far, after six months of effort and some success, there has been little in the way of noticeable reforms. In Tunisia and Egypt, the demonstrators have had to turn out again to voice their displeasure at the pace of reforms. There's obviously no hope for real change without a social and economic revolution. The usual police and army crackdowns have been invoked with the resulting loss of life in the hundreds and injuries in the thousands. In Egypt, the army is standing by ready to be used if things get out of hand, i.e. if anything should threaten the privileged position of the elite. The current government of any country, no matter how corrupt or autocratic, is in a legal position to control the army and police and use them against the street demonstrators, who are acting illegally. In the case of a legislature where a majority of representatives are socialist, then the socialists, the people, would legally control those forces.

It is clear that the demonstrations have, and will, eventually, achieve results. Even the autocratic governments of the region will be forced to bring in some reforms and, as mentioned above, some leaders will fall. To many, this represents a revolution and proves that taking to the streets is a successful strategy. However, at best, democratic reforms leading to a more Western type of democracy will result. How far these go will have to be seen. As we continually point out, reforms can be taken away as easily as they are given. Even if they attain Western style democracies, it should be noted that our democracies are flawed and easily manipulated with capital and media propaganda, but it would, at least, be a step forward if it brings the possibility of giving voters a socialist alternative.

So far, a socialist alternative, a revolutionary economic change, has not been mentioned by anyone, and when the dust settles, the class based, exploitive, system of capitalism will still be in tact, and the new leaders will continue to manage the economic system in the interests of the capitalist class. Business will go on as usual and little or no improvement in the economic situation of the working class will be evident. The end result, then, will be a small step forward but we will have to wait until a class-conscious majority acts politically, i.e. through their own party within the parliamentary system to bring about the real change to a socialist society.

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# Worker's Health and Safety Come Second to Profits

The Toronto Star, the city's leading newspaper, has for more than a century campaigned against the worst effects of capitalism, i.e. its whole social consciousness is that of reform of the system. Though socialists do not oppose reforms, especially those that can be of some benefit to the working class such as extension of the franchise, workplace safety, universal health care, nevertheless, we do not advocate pursuing reforms, but rather the replacement of the whole system with socialism. If we did have a reformist platform, we would win support, and votes, that we wouldn't want. A vote for socialism must be reinforced with socialist understanding. If a majority of socialists were elected to parliament, without that understanding, it would be pointless to introduce legislation to end capitalist property-owning rights. The electorate as a whole has to administer society with socialist principles, which they cannot do if they do not know what it is. This is why the companion parties of The World Socialist Movement say to electors, "If you do not understand our case for socialism, do not vote for us."

Still, it's refreshing to see a pro-capitalist, albeit reformist journal, investigate and expose some of capitalist society's worst effects and analyze them in relation to the profit motive, the very lifeblood of capitalism. On February 19<sup>th</sup>, The Star's exclusive story read, "Agent Orange Saturated Ontario Teens". Cancer-causing toxins used to strip the jungles of Viet Nam were also employed to clear massive plots of crown land in Northern Ontario, according to obtained government documents. The Star obtained spraying reports that clearly show that high school students and junior rangers acted as human markers for the Ministry of Natural Resources and timber companies during the spraying. This was during the 50s, before Agent Orange was made famous by the Viet Nam war, and during the 60s and 70s. The students and rangers would hold helium-filled balloons on fishing lines while low-flying airplanes sprayed thousands of gallons of chemicals on their area.

This was done to kill what the forestry reports called 'weed trees', which included birch and poplar. Timber companies and

the Ministry wanted to grow more of the economically viable spruce trees, which meant killing everything else that competed for soil nutrients and sunlight. This began in 1956 when, with the Ontario government's permission, Spruce Falls Power and Paper Company began the aerial spraying of chemicals in Northern Ontario. "The New York Times", who owned Spruce Falls jointly with Kimberley-Clark and "The Washington Star", printed its Sunday edition on paper made from the black spruce trees. Aerial spraying was thought to be a cheap way to kill unwarranted trees. The hormones in the spray caused the leaves to grow so quickly that they starved to death. Timber companies and the government worked together to increase the growth of white and black spruce and whatever was in their way had to go.

The star's investigators found hundreds of boxes of documents that showed the Ontario government began using a hormone-based chemical called 2,4,5-T which is the dioxin-laced component of agent orange. In the 1950s, planes were fitted with one hundred and forty gallon tanks containing the chemicals that were diluted in a mix of fuel oil and water. Ten Years later, the ministry, then called The Department of Lands and forests, authorized the use of a more deadly mixture of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T. A combination of the two created the same agent orange that was used in the Viet Nam war. Its purpose there was to clear large areas of jungle so the Viet Cong would have less space to hide.

Agent Orange was one of the various chemicals that got its name from the colour of the barrels it was shipped in, the chemical itself being colourless. Agent Orange, according to the US military was called that 'because it was more sexy', though he didn't say sexier than what. Medical studies have shown that the chemical seeps into fat cells and can stay in the body for decades. Exposure can

lead to skin disorders, liver problems, cancer, impaired immune systems, bladder problems, and inability to reproduce. Four of the five men who supervised the spraying at Spruce Falls in the 50s and 60s have either been diagnosed with, or died from, cancer. The United States Department of Veteran Affairs conducted a survey and found fifty diseases and medical conditions linked to Agent Orange.

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## In Case of Injury at Work

**1** **+** **H**

**Worker:** Tell your employer about the injury

Get first aid immediately, if needed

**2**

**Employer:** Arrange and pay for transportation to get medical care, if needed

**3** **\$**

**Employer:** Report injury to WSIB within 3 days if it involves

**Employer:** Pay worker's wages for day of injury

- health care treatment, or
- time away from work, or
- lost wages

Supervisor/Department  
Report injury to Safety Office by next business day (LW Policy #34) ext. 3567.  
www.safetyoffice.ustratloo.ca

WSIB  
CSPAAT  
Workplace Safety & Insurance Board  
Commission de la sécurité  
et de l'assurance  
contre les accidents du travail

WSIB  
CSPAAT  
Form #7

Questions? Call 1-800-465-5606  
www.wsib.on.ca

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According to Paul Fawcett, who worked on the spraying program as a twenty-one year old balloon man, "There was no uniform, just jeans and a shirt, it was lots of fun. We would walk from station to station with red helium-filled balloons on fishing lines and planes would swoop down." Fawcett, who had no idea he was working with anything toxic, was recently told to take an ultrasound to investigate bladder problems. Pat Buchanan, whose job it was to pump vats of the chemical into the airplane sprayer by hand, has suffered from a variety of illnesses that doctors could not diagnose. These include hives, persistent bouts of dizziness, and a sperm count so low he was unable to have children. "We got soaked", he recalled. "I can't remember what we did with our clothes, but we stayed in the bush camp during spraying for weeks on end."

According to Don Romanowich, one of the supervisors who was recently diagnosed with a slow growing cancer that can be caused by the herbicide exposure, "We were saturated in chemicals. We were told not to drink the stuff but we had no idea." The Star's investigative reporter, Diana Zlomislac, seems to have started the ball rolling. The Star's issue of February 26<sup>th</sup>, informs us that from 1958-1968, Ontario Hydro used Agent Orange to spray every power line in Ontario. In fact, they sprayed enough chemical to cut a thirty metre-wide swath, four-fifths of the way around the surface of the earth. Since then, some of the young guys who sprayed have been diagnosed with Parkinson's, loss of feeling in hands and legs, skin diseases, heart problems, wart-like growths all over the body, and polyps in nasal cavities.

Now that the damage is done, the Ontario government is very concerned. They believe in the adage, 'An ounce of prevention is

worth a ton of care', only backwards. Linda Jeffrey, the Minister of Natural Resources said, "I can understand how worried some families may be. We are going to do a fairly large public information outreach to reach everybody we feel may have been exposed and may be experiencing symptoms." Her ministry is at present gathering information about where and when spraying occurred and what chemicals were used. "I'm committed to obtaining all the facts and I'm prepared to share all of that information in a very transparent fashion", said Jeffrey. One may well ask if they knew these chemicals did harm to unwanted shrubs and trees, did it not occur to anyone that people might be in danger?

One might conclude that the government officials and timber company operators were miserable, heartless people who did not care about their workers. Though that may be the case, to go on that assumption alone would miss the point that they cannot afford to care. The most significant sentence in the Star's report is, "Aerial spraying programs were considered a cheap, fast, and effective way to alter the landscape of Ontario's forests for maximum profit." For companies to remain in business, they must maximize profits regardless of social and environmental costs. This is the iron-clad, inflexible law of capitalist economics. Our well-meaning friends at the Toronto Star are as concerned as anyone can be to see this and other social ills redressed and some politicians will try to change capitalism to work in the interests of the workers, but they end up being changed themselves by the system. The whole point is that capitalism cannot be changed. The only solution is to replace the current system with a society based on production for use, not profit.

## It's Later Than You Think

A report recently presented to the United Nations emphasized that the destruction of the world's oceans has increased at a faster pace than was generally thought to be the case.

"Things seem to be going wrong on several different levels", said Carl Lundin, director of Global Marine Programs at the International Union for Conservation of Nature, who produced the report in association with the International Program on the State of the Ocean.

"Some of the changes affecting the world's seas, all of which have been warned about individually in the past, are happening faster than the worst case scenarios that were predicted just a few years ago", the

report said. The seas are under siege from pollution, overfishing, and their use as a garbage dump. Carbon dioxide from the



burning of coal and other fossil fuel ends up sinking in the ocean, which then becomes acidic.

According to Lundin, "It was a more dire report than any of us thought because we look at our own little issues. When you put them all together, it's a pretty bleak situation." All this means the potential

killing of millions of species of fish and marine life that would rival the mass extinctions of the past. This could occur in a single generation, the report warned.

"However", Lundin said, "Some of these things are reversible if we change our behaviour." That's good to know, but first we have to reverse our thinking politically.



# IS WAR WORTH IT?

**R**osie Dimanno, in an article of The Toronto Star of July 9<sup>th</sup> asks the rhetorical question about Canadian Forces participation in Afghanistan, “Was the mission worth it?” – her conclusion being “Absolutely”.

Throughout her long rambling article, Ms. DiManno gives merely the vaguest clue as to why she believes the Canadian Forces went to Afghanistan – which is to stop the bad guys. So already the premise is laid down that wars are between the forces of good and evil. This is usually a tactic both sides use to get workers to fight. However, it seems that Di Manno believes it herself, “There are mostly good wars, defensible, and mostly bad wars, unpardonable. Sometimes only the passing of time can render a distinction or even provide a verdict: Who won? Who lost? And does it even matter?”

To the working class it doesn't matter but it does to Di Manno, “I believe it does matter. I believe there is far less gray in right versus wrong than proponents of moral equivalency would argue.” Furthermore, Di Manno believes, war is a normal part of being human, “War is part of the human condition, a vestigial tie. It will never be erased from our DNA...” If this were so, one wonders why the military draft, or the many enticements for young people to participate in wars, is necessary. Wouldn't they just come flocking to enlist?

The whole tenor of Di Manno's article is, to say the least, high-handed – she is the professor and we are the students. To quote, “If you still don't know why Canada was in Afghanistan, then you're not paying attention, or you don't actually want to be informed, merely have your perceptions enforced.” Yes, ma'am, pardon me if I don't stand to attention. And on the ball as ever, Rosie says, “This is not quantum physics, people, Everything else was an add-on or optics pitch – reconstruction and redevelopment, opening schools, building roads, alleviating the misogynist misery inflicted on females, all that humanitarian stuff that makes Canadians feel so good about themselves and, frankly, superior.”

If we are being frank, it's possible Di Manno's editors are themselves feeling superior. The Toronto Star has had a century of campaigning for all that is best in the world, as they see it. Their world- view is, of course, is capitalist.

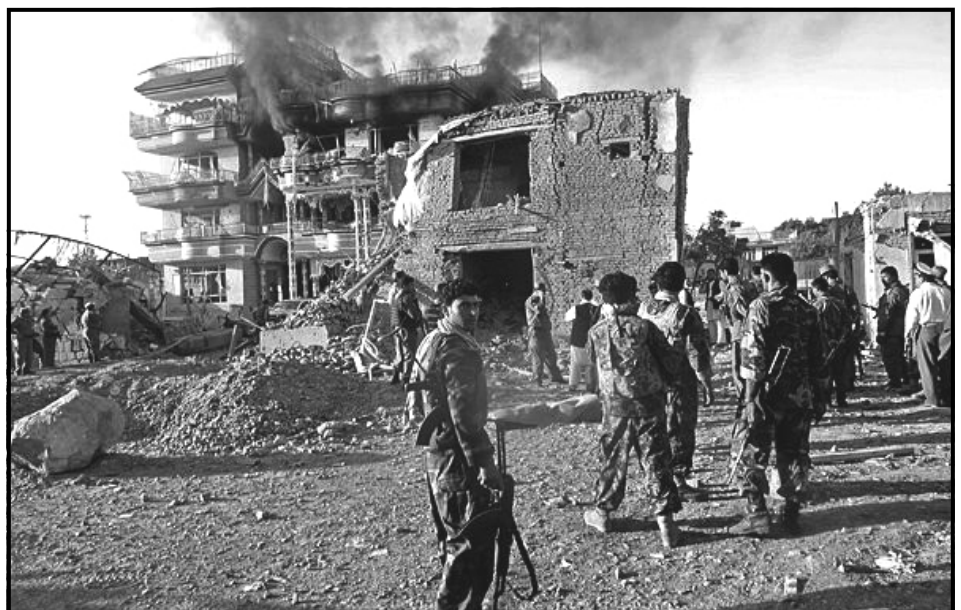
Besides campaigning for reforms, which merely perpetuate capitalism, The Star also, both as part of the capitalist class and as a propaganda organ for it, will advocate support for the interests of capitalism in North America, which means giving the job to a brilliantly perceptive worker like Di Manno, as long as she promotes the company line.

Whatever reforms “Our Boys” may have accomplished in Afghanistan is of no significant value to the Afghan people. Members of the Canadian working class are there as soldiers to defend the interests of American and Canadian capitalists, since our economy is closely bound to that of the US.

Di Manno praises Canadian troops for holding the line against the Taliban and preventing them from seizing Kandahar. Neither Di Manno nor any member of the working class has a stake in any of this war. It is in the interests of capitalism in North America to gain access to the region's deposits of natural gas and oil to prevent their competitors in the world markets from doing so, and no amount of fighting and killing by either side will change that. Wars in capitalism are about control of resources, trade routes, or trade agreements caused by its competitive nature and are thus disputes between groups of capitalists. They in no way are in the interests of the working class who are encouraged or forced or duped into fighting and dying for one group of capitalists or the other.

The question should be, “Is the struggle for socialism worth it?”

The answer being, “Absolutely!”



# THE PROBLEM WITH THE TRUTH

Port Hope is a nice town of about 15 000 people nestled on the north shore of Lake Ontario, about one and a half hour's drive east of Toronto. It boasts Ontario's best-kept Victorian main street that has been used for movies and TV series depicting that era. Unfortunately, it has a problem – nuclear waste – and that problem received nation-wide attention recently when Dr. Helen Caldicott, an anti-nuclear activist, made the national newspapers by calling Port Hope “a toxic time bomb” and suggesting the town be abandoned and the population moved elsewhere.

Soon after World War Two, a crown corporation, Eldorado Nuclear Limited, set up a nuclear processing facility supplying raw material for the US nuclear weapons program. It resulted in soil that became contaminated with nuclear waste and heavy metals that was then used as fill within the town. An estimated 2.1 million tons of the radioactive soil will be excavated and removed over the next ten years. The current owners of the plant, Cameco Corporation, manages the plant much more carefully than Eldorado, but there are still emissions of uranium, fluorides, and ammonia.

Dr. Caldicott, a pediatrician and Nobel Prize nominee, was invited by ‘Friends of the Port Hope Clean up’ and FARE



(Families Against Radiation Exposure), but when her comments hit the headlines, the venue holders, St. Mark's Church, cancelled the talk. Reverend Margaret Tandy commented, “We found her language to be divisive and inflammatory.” The presentation was moved to the City of Oshawa. Caldicott's comments also

unleashed a storm of protest from the business community concerned about the damage to the town's image and the resulting economic impact. Mayor Linda Thompson found the doctor's comments ‘damaging, cavalier, not providing facts, and misinformed’, and said, “These types of comments have an immediate economic effect on our community and an unwarranted negative impact.” Some real estate agents reported house sales not going through, but no number or details were given. Chris Levitt, the president of the union at Cameco said that he had not seen a rise in the health concerns of the workers. Jay Sherwin, a radiation technologist, called Caldicott ‘alarmist, and irresponsible’ and added, “It does huge damage to Port Hope, to the realtors, property values, real estate in general.”

Doug Prendergast, communications specialist at Cameco called Dr. Caldicott ‘a full-time paid anti-nuclear activist who is on a book tour.’ It's not clear just who is paying Caldicott, if anyone, but given Prendergast's position, you could say that he is a full time paid activist for the nuclear industry.

As with many aspects of our civilization, such as global warming, the effects of smoking, or the effects of the myriad of chemicals to which we are exposed today, getting at the truth is not a simple proposition. Scientists bring forward the results of their research and, if deemed economically detrimental to business interests, face a barrage attacks from any corporation or industry concerned. Huge amounts of capital are expended in discrediting the person, refuting his/her findings and filling the media, easily accessible for them, with their propaganda. In a money/profit society, everyone has an economic interest that is pursued even if it means ignoring the truth and doing what common sense tells us should be done. The concerns of the nuclear industry are loss of profit and the loss of the image of providing clean, green energy. The town business community and the town council want to avoid adverse publicity that would impact on the location of new businesses and the number of visitors to the area. The town is, after all, in competition with many other towns to attract capital investment. The union and the workers want to protect their jobs and livelihood. Homeowners want to protect the value of their homes as the only valuable asset they are likely to own by retirement time. Health Canada says that they have done several studies over the years and have found no significant adverse health effects. They, however, do represent the federal government that has been involved with the problem from the beginning and could be held responsible should anything negative arise. Dr. Caldicott does have books for sale at her presentations but whether this or the dissemination of information is the main motivator for her is not known. Six Months later, the Port Hope council announced the creation of a new town position, municipal communications coordinator. The new employee stated, “We will educate our community on policies and processes, and will continue to promote Port Hope as a safe, healthy, and prosperous place to live, work, and play.” There are no plans that we know of for the town to hire scientists to look carefully into the potential or existing problems of nuclear waste contamination.

The whole point is that while everyone is trying to protect his/her economic interests, the truth is the main casualty. In a society based on common ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth in the interests of all mankind, with free access to all goods produced for all people, a non-monetary society of production for use, the emphasis would be on finding the truth and serving the best interests of everyone, monetary considerations would no longer be a factor in hiding or denying the truth. The only thing that will matter will be assembling the scientific evidence, the facts, and solving a problem in the interests of all parties.



## Security and Prosperity - An Unlikely Duo

A few years back, Japan was looked upon, by apologists for capitalism, as a perfect capitalist success story. Then, it was second only to the US in industrial production with a high standard of living, low unemployment, and a guarantee of a job for life with some companies. “Look,” they said, “Capitalism really works, the Japanese have proved it.

Now there is trouble in Paradise. Corporations are holding back on investments, banks are reluctant to loan, jobs are vanishing, companies are cutting back on spending and delaying expansion plans. According to Richard Koo, chief economist at Nomura Securities, “Millions of individuals and companies see their balance sheets going under water, so they are using their cash to pay down debt instead of borrowing and spending.” (The New York Times, Oct 24, 2010). Recently, Japan’s \$(US)1.4 trillion pension fund called on the government to rein in its massive \$10 trillion debt as further downgrading of its credit rating could result in measures seen in Greece – higher taxes, lower pensions and lower social expenditures. All this is a far cry from the 1980s when Japanese companies seemed poised to oust American ones from auto and computer markets. For a time, they dominated the business world, buying up Hollywood studios and lucrative real estate.

Today, Japan’s economy is where it was in 1991, a gross domestic product of \$5.7 trillion, whereas, in the same period, the US doubled in size to \$14.7 trillion. Economists said deflation is pushing companies and individuals to survive by cutting costs and selling what they owned, instead of buying new goods and investing. Shumpei Takemore, an economist at Kieo University in Tokyo, said it best, “Deflation destroys the risk-taking that capitalist economies need in order to grow.” (Toronto Star, Oct 24, 2010). Nor does the future look brighter, with a shrinking population and rising rates of poverty and suicide.

All this has created a downward trend of deflation, which has sapped the confidence of most of the population, particularly the young. They refuse to buy expensive products, like cars and TV sets, preferring to save their money for when it may increase in value. A typical example being Yukari Higaki, a young single woman, employed part-time in a furniture store, who buys clothes at discount stores, makes her own lunches, and doesn’t travel abroad. She says that she and her peers are in a defensive crouch ready for the worst.

One may naturally wonder why an economy, which was doing so well, has taken such a fall, and the answer is very simple – competition. The last twenty years have seen the rise of China, India, and South Korea competing for their share of global markets. If one power is doing well, it means another isn’t.

If this proves anything, it proves that, within capitalism, prosperity is fleeting and therefore security is an illusion. In the 1960s, when the economy was buoyant in North America, this writer was often asked, “Why do you want socialism, there’s jobs for all who want them and the standard of living is so high?”

As if that’s all there was to it and as if it would last forever. The expansion and contraction of markets means that prosperity is temporary and comes with great disillusion, disappointment, and demoralization for all who think it will last.

The working class in Japan has made the same mistake that the working class has made everywhere. They have, under the disguise of patriotism, identified their interests with those of the Japanese capitalist class and are now paying dearly for it. A country (and all countries are the same in this respect) is a means whereby a minority of the population, those who own the tools of production, live well at the expense of the majority, who own only their ability to work for wages or salaries. “Produce for the good of your country” really means, “Produce for the good of your employer”.

The working class everywhere has no country; a worker in Japan has more in common with a worker as far away as South Africa than with a capitalist in Japan. The sooner the workers all over the world realize this, the sooner we’ll have socialism.

Since the above was written, Japan has been hit with the triple whammy of an earthquake, a tsunami, and a nuclear meltdown. Furthermore, since March 11<sup>th</sup> there have been five hundred aftershocks of 5.0 magnitude or more in northeastern Japan.

Of course, a sane person would wonder why something as potentially dangerous to a population as a nuclear plant would be built in a region so obviously prone to earthquakes, if such a power were to be used at all. A sane society would have chosen a different path, but, with capitalism, we are not dealing with sanity.

Yet again, the true nature of the severity of the damage to the nuclear reactors was revealed only very slowly leading us to believe that the private company that owned the plant was withholding valuable information in the hope that the damage and risks could be minimized.

Ironically, bad as the situation is, some are viewing the tragedy as a way of kick-starting the Japanese economy and the solution to the problems related above. CIBC’s chief economist, Peter Buchanan, said, “But the people of Japan are very resilient. Every effort will be made to rebuild and companies are good at managing supply chain operations.” (Toronto Star, April 15). Davis Malpass, who heads the economic research firm, Encima Global, said in the same issue, “A lot of Japan’s wealth was destroyed but its ability to produce new wealth has increased. Rebuilding the energy infrastructure will add to the GDP in spite of the losses.” In other words, Japan will be a good investment again just as after the WWII, some economies took off with the rebuilding of the massive war destruction. The United States emerged from the war with \$26 billion worth of new factories and \$140 billion in savings and government bonds to invest. Obviously, curing the boom and bust cycle in capitalism is easy, just destroy everything in sight and start again! It is a terrible indictment of capitalism that people have to experience such losses with its attendant misery for the economy to go up a few notches – another excellent reason to abolish it.



# The Purpose of Governments

To many citizens it appears that their government is operating in their interests. Seemingly at the stroke of a pen it can order new roads, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure to be built; it pays out pensions and other social security such as welfare and unemployment benefits; it lays down the laws that govern the way our society works. If we ignore the astounding rate of poverty, high unemployment, the necessity of food banks, and the ever-increasing gap between rich and poor, we, in Canada, do not seem to be doing too badly, especially compared to the woeful conditions experienced by folks in the southern hemisphere. Government by the people, for the people, right? Not exactly. While we have universal suffrage and therefore the potential to elect any type of government we want, the choices are carefully limited and real access is limited to those who can command large amounts of money and the support of the media. Our choice of parties to vote for – Conservative, Liberal, NDP – turns out to be a choice between capitalist party #1, #2, and #3. We live in a society of the private ownership of land, resources, and the means (factories) to turn these into commodities and, therefore, wealth. The system, being privately owned by a small minority, is, no surprise, run in their interests. Political parties of all stripes and governments must fall into line and serve the system. The parties operate in a narrow band-width that varies little from that line so real meaningful change is impossible, not even contemplated.



Good education and a healthy workforce are essential factors in any system for its efficient operation, and therefore any government's priority. That governments act essentially in the interests of the owning class is obvious to any thinking person from their daily actions. A recent example among many is the case of asbestos production in Quebec and its export to other countries. Chrysotile (white asbestos) has been mined in that province for decades. It was used in construction here until considered toxic under Canada's laws and removed from many buildings, including parliament and MP's offices.

According to The World Health Organization, more than one hundred thousand people die from asbestos diseases every year. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has designated asbestos as a group one carcinogen. The Rotterdam Convention is a UN agency that lists pesticides and industrial chemicals that have been banned or severely restricted because of toxicity. Chrysotile has been considered for the list several times only to be blocked by the Canadian government, in 2006, 2008, and recently this year at the meeting in Geneva. How one

country can achieve this is baffling, but may point to the fact that these agencies set themselves up for failure by design.

Health Canada supports adding the mineral to the Rotterdam Convention list. Listing wouldn't necessarily mean an outright ban, but would oblige trading countries to exchange crucial information concerning its toxicity. This listing would, in the eyes of the manufacturers and our government, inhibit sales and profits. Sort of like administering drugs without any warnings of the side effects – and that has been done before!

Canada, one of the few exporting countries, maintains that chrysotile is safe if handled properly and if workers are adequately protected. However, as most exports are to the 'Third World', especially India, where it is added to concrete as a strengthening agent and used to upgrade tin and cardboard shacks, worker protection is minimal at best. PM Harper pledged his support for the mineral during the recent election campaign by visiting Asbestos, Quebec (yes, there is such a place!) whose economy is dependent on asbestos mining, "The only party that defends the chrysotile industry is our party." His government's stance re the Rotterdam Convention ignores all health and science concerns and is widely condemned and ridiculed around the world. Protestors' signs read, "Canadian Asbestos – Buy Now and Die Later." The US comedy program, "The Daily Show" traveled to Asbestos to perform a segment of their show, "Does 'asbestos' mean something different in French than in English?" the actor quipped, "Because in English it means slow, hacking, death."

PM Harper and his ministers steadfastly maintain that chrysotile fibres are much less dangerous than other forms of asbestos. In the House of Commons, NDP MP, Romeo Saganash, pointed out to Industry Minister, Christian Paradis, that asbestos has been removed from the prime minister's office and asked if Paradis would like to have chrysotile installed in his own office. There are only five hundred mining jobs in the industry in Quebec at present, so why the stubborn denials and refusals? Huge, proven, resources can still be found in Quebec and a move is afoot to finance large mining operations that could export chrysotile to India for another fifty years. The government, no matter what party is in control, is virtually compelled to throw its support to profit making even over people's safety and welfare. The modern nation state grew up to support and maintain the capitalist mode of production. It is an integral part of the system, the executive arm. It makes property laws, establishes and polices boundaries that mean nothing to the average worker, creates a law/penal system to deal with dissenters, and sets up or supports propaganda machines such as the educational system and the media. Without this, the capitalist system would not survive. It's worth your while to take a good independent look at the way the system and government works and in whose interests.

**G**reetings, welcome to the first issue of *Common Ownership*. Why the title, and what's it all about? Quite simply, common ownership of the world's resources and productive capacity is the basis for a reorganization of society that would ensure plenty of the necessities of life for everyone on the planet – no more starving, malnourished people, no wandering homeless, no senseless deaths for the want of easily affordable medical care and medicine, no more poverty, unemployment, or inequality. How can this be so? Surely, if it were possible to eliminate these scourges we would have done it long ago. Aren't we working on these problems anyway?

At present we live in a world where the resources of the earth and the products made from them, the processes needed to make them, and the transportation systems to get them to you, are all owned by private individuals. A company proposes to extract resources or manufacture commodities. It needs money in order to do this. Wealthy people loan the company the necessary capital, but they don't do it for nothing. They will expect a healthy return on their money every year of say, 10%, or \$100 000 on every million dollars loaned. If this return is below expectations, then the lender will withdraw his funds and look somewhere else to invest. This puts every enterprise in a competition for capital to fund their operations and for expansion. Thus all companies must compete and strive to do whatever is necessary to create profit to pay dividends to lenders. If a company fails in this, capital will dry up and production will stop, rendering its physical assets as junk or sold at a fraction of its value, and its employees will be out of work. In other words, commodities are only produced for the purpose of profit or they are not produced at all.

As we have seen, profits go to a tiny minority of big investors of capital to enhance their already vast fortunes that allow them to live in luxury while contributing no work whatsoever. We believe that the earth's resources are the common heritage of all mankind and should be managed for the benefit of all. Those resources are easily abundant enough to feed, clothe, and house everyone on earth and provide medical care, education and everything else necessary to ensure a full and happy life for every one.

The establishment of common ownership would eliminate the competition for resources and for capital. It would

eliminate production for profit only. It would eliminate the need for states and their central governments that exist to serve today's competitive system. It would even eliminate the need for money and trading as goods and services would be produced solely to meet the needs of humans who would have free access to those goods and services, taking them as needed. Competition would be replaced by cooperation, eliminating conflict and war and because everybody and therefore no one person or group would own the means of producing wealth, everyone would stand equal to the powers of production – no owners and non-owners, no exploiters and exploited, no employers and employed, and therefore, no classes.

Today, this is quite obviously not the case. We have constant conflict and war, vast inequality, poverty, malnutrition, starvation and deprivation amid wealth and plenty. Workers produce all the wealth in the world and perform all the work, yet are only allowed to take home a small share of that wealth to enable them to exist so they can show up at work the next day to produce more profit that goes to the already wealthy. And they are only allowed to do so at the whim of that tiny minority of owners. Today, nobody starves or goes hungry because we lack food. Nobody is homeless because we lack building materials or builders, nobody lives in poverty because we lack wealth. People suffer these scourges because they are unable to pay and thus realize a profit for some enterprise or other.

In one fell swoop, in one simple action, production for profit could be replaced with production to satisfy the needs of all. That action is the establishment of **COMMON OWNERSHIP!**

We welcome correspondence with our readers. Send email to [spc@iname.com](mailto:spc@iname.com) or write us at BOX 4280, Victoria BC, V8X 3X8, Canada

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# How can a system of common ownership be established?

*Is Common Ownership a utopian dream? Is it practical? At least we know our present system works, don't we?*

Firstly, Common Ownership is a practical alternative to capitalism because it would rely on all necessary goods and services being produced by exactly those people who are doing the job now. It is only the capitalist class, the owners of capital, who presently do nothing in return for their financial rewards. The rest of us, the vast majority, go to work every day and earn our living by producing those necessary items. We are capable of doing that with or without the capitalist. The capitalist class, along with all those who now perform jobs that would be unnecessary in a system based on Common Ownership (soldiers, military industrial workers, financial and insurance industries, salespersons, advertising, accounting, law and court workers, and so on) would become producers, too, reducing greatly the current workload of the rest of us.

Common Ownership would mean voluntary labour, no wages or employment, and free access for all to all the goods and services produced. Some say that in such a system many would choose not to work or take too much from the common store – that's human nature, isn't it? Actually that's human behavior learned and acquired under capitalist economic relationships, not human nature. If anything is free today that we normally pay for, we have to grab it because we know it won't be free for long. But if it were free and available forever, we would soon learn to take only what we needed – like the air we freely breathe but take for granted. And if you had voted for such a system, why would you want to abuse it? Of course, a social revolution such as a change to Common Ownership would have to be the desire and democratic choice of the vast majority in order for it to work, but once that majority has been attained and the change completed, we would all want to make it work.

Secondly, how well does capitalism work today? Very well, if you are a capitalist and receive the wealth to live a luxurious life style for no contribution to the common good. We acknowledge that capitalism is a system that has advanced human knowledge and the production of goods remarkably. Unfortunately, although capitalism is quite capable of producing enough for everybody, it is not capable of delivering. The kicker is that commodities can only be produced if there is a reasonable chance of profit so the supply is limited to match those who can pay, not all those who need. No money? Go without! No profit? No production! This means that the system doesn't work for that half of humanity that must exist on \$2 a day; or the almost 1 billion that go to bed hungry every day; or the

tens of thousands of children who die every day from malnutrition; or the millions who live in poverty in the midst of incredible wealth and plenty; or the millions of unemployed, underemployed, underpaid, or food bank users even in our rich country.

Capitalism doesn't work at all well for a lot of people. Since power is invested in the state, and since capitalism is legitimized through the laws of private property, created and passed in state legislatures and upheld by the state police and army, then it becomes clear that control of the law-making bodies is a key element to effect change. A majority of representatives in the legislature in favour of social revolution could institute laws establishing Common Ownership safely and legally. A political party with a platform of Common Ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth democratically, in the interests of all humankind, would be the one to bring this change about.

This is precisely what The Socialist Party of Canada proposes, and all it proposes. No promises of a higher minimum wage, tax the rich, carbon taxes etc., just the establishment of Common Ownership which will address all the major ills afflicting society under capitalism such as war, poverty, and deprivation of food, housing, and medical care. The Socialist Party of Canada is a companion party in The World Socialist Movement, a federation of parties promoting Common Ownership. All we need to succeed is for you and your family, friends, and neighbours to read our literature to understand the incredible possibilities that establishing Common Ownership would have on all humanity. It would lift us to a higher form of social organization that would benefit mankind. Why wait any longer? Check us out!

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## Exploding The Myth

For many people, capitalism is considered the best of all economic systems but that, to socialists, is a myth. Now with China, capitalism's fastest growing economic power that many feel will dominate the twenty-first century, the evidence suggests that there is trouble in paradise.

According to Bill Schiller's article in "The Toronto Star" of August 20, farmer Liu Ming-suo has trouble with his watermelons. Having injected them with a growth hormone to maximize profits, Liu found that they exploded on him. As he put it, "I used a chemical on the sixth (of May) and found the exploded watermelons on the seventh. I found more than eighty exploded watermelons in the morning and more than one hundred in the afternoon. More and more then exploded on the eighth. And don't mention the tenth to me. I didn't count any more because I couldn't bear it."



All of this would seem farcical to the point of hilarity were it not so tragic. One positive aspect of this matter is that it focused attention on China's food industry that has produced other delightful chop suey. In Hunan Province, four hundred and seventy-eight guests at three different weddings were rushed to hospital after being poisoned. At one wedding alone, two hundred and eighty-six of five hundred guests had to seek emergency health care following the nuptial banquet.

Newscasters reported in Shanghai that restaurants were cooking with used, reprocessed cooking oil, some of which had been collected from sewers. Some experts believe that one out of every ten restaurant meals in China is prepared using reprocessed animal fat and vegetable oil. Worm eggs have been found in bottled water in Beijing. Tofu in Sechuan Province has been found to be laced with formaldehyde. A woman in Shanghai found some pork she had left in her kitchen giving off a blue phosphorescent light.

Nor is this China's first food scandal. In 2008, six children died and more than thirty thousand others were made ill by milk that contained melamine. This is an industrial compound that was used to produce plastics and present in milk and infant formula to increase protein readings and boost sales. Many in China believe that more children died and more were poisoned than were officially acknowledged. Though government has fired some and imprisoned others though to be responsible for the tragedy, it still continues. In Recent months, melamine was found in milk in the provinces of Shangxie and Hebei as well as the city of Chongqing.

One reaction to these scandals was the formation of Mothers' Green Alliance, a Beijing co-operative that sources and sells food from organic farms. These are reasonably well-off people who are dedicated and can afford to see that their children eat safely. They research the community of organic farms in the Beijing area and have them make deliveries two days a week to

the co-op's store. According to one of the founders, Liu Yeying, "We can't control the air quality or the environment in general, but this is something we believe we can control." If they can it would still pertain to a small percentage of China's massive population, the relatively 'well-off'.

Perhaps nobody said it better than another of the alliance founders, Zhen Rong, "Some people nowadays are no longer rooted to the earth. They're more interested in maximizing profit than in food safety." Since profit is the life-blood of capitalism – nothing can get produced no matter how needed unless profitable – and death-blood for some, one need not expect any improvement in the quality of life within it. China and many Third World countries are the wild west of capitalism, accepting poor wages, a subsistence living, and poor health and safety standards for their workers in exchange for foreign investment. They compete for that capital with other like countries and whoever has the lowest standards is the winner. Capital flows to the bottom like water running downhill knowing that profits will be maximized. There is a better way to organize world production – common ownership.

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## The World Socialist Movement

The Socialist Party of Canada is one of a group of parties around the world that share the same goal and Declaration of Principles.

These parties are separate from all other parties, left, right, or center. They have the sole aim of helping to establish a world socialist system based on human need instead of private or state profit. We have no leaders. We are democratic organizations controlled by our members.

These members understand that socialism can only be established by a conscious majority of workers. Men and women must liberate themselves and cannot be liberated by leaders or parties. Socialism will not be brought about by a vanguard minority 'smashing the state'. Nor do the activities of paid professional politicians have anything to do with socialism – the experience of so-called labour/workers' parties (NDP) in government has shown this. Once a majority of people understand and want socialism, they will take the necessary steps to organize the democratic conquest of political power.

## Our Companion Parties

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commonownership@yahoo.com.au

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)  
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wspnz@worldsocialism.org

World Socialist Party of the United States  
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boston@wspus.org

The Socialist Party  
52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN United Kingdom  
spgb@worldsocialism.org

## Security Or Stupidity?

"Tories to Slash Nearly 700 Federal Jobs" ran the headline of Tonda MacCharles article in the Toronto Star on June 21<sup>st</sup>. According to MacCharles, three major unions have been notified that this job cutting, which will be spread over the next three years, is expected to save the federal government \$100 million. About 330 people will be let go this year starting with economists, policy analysts (one wonders if this figured in their analyses), auditors and their clerical and support staff.

Claude Poirier, the president of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, that represents some 14 000 government workers, said, "We are going to see more and more decisions made by this government on an ideological basis instead of on a learned basis. Having fewer skilled advisors means you are going to start making your decisions on other bases." Meaning, one assumes, that stupid decisions will be made on the advice of less skilled or non-skilled advisors. However, one stupid decision was already made that started the ball rolling, and that was to vote for a continuation of capitalism when its whole history clearly shows it to be a system of periodic booms and slumps.

When the economy is buoyant, far too many people think it will last forever only to find they were living in a fool's paradise. Years ago a government job did mean a certain measure of security but not any more. That includes extremely well-paid, highly responsible jobs. This is one way out of the deficit – fire workers and cut their benefits and social programs. Once again, those who produce the wealth and have no say in the way the economy is run will take the brunt of the economic pain. This will be repeated until the workers, the vast majority, wake up and vote for socialism where they will run the economy in their own interests.

## Job Security

job · se · cu · ri · ty

(noun):

- 1) a sense of protection from job loss
- 2) SOMETHING THAT NO LONGER EXIST!!!

### THOUGHT ABOUT JOINING THE SOCIALIST PARTY?

For further information about membership to The Socialist Party, return this form to: The Socialist Party, Box 4280, Victoria, BC, Canada V8X 3X8.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

## Declaration of Principles

### 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 a society as a whole.

### Declaration of Principles

1. 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, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working-class itself.
6. 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.
7. 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 seeing working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. 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.

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