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Matters of Concern to the Polity

**Pay-the-Rich Schemes to
"Revive the Economy"**

Time to stop paying the rich and move on to the New
with increased investments in social programs
and public services built and owned through
public enterprise with the working people in control

- **For a New Direction for the Economy**
- **Public Infrastructure Spending Programs to Pay the Rich
and Sustain Class Privilege and Control**
- *K.C. Adams* -
- **Shady Moves at Alberta Investment Management Corporation**
- *Dougal MacDonald* -

For Your Information

- **C.D. Howe Institute Communiqué #8**
- *Excerpts* -

Police Killings Require Redress

- **Dangerous Criminalization of Social and Political Affairs**
 - **Police Killing of Ejaz Choudry**
- *Steve Rutchinski* -
- **Protests Continue to Demand Justice in Choudry Killing**
- *Frank Chilelli* -
- **Ottawa Demonstration Against Police Brutality and Impunity**

U.S. Cuba Policy

- **The United States Is Naked Without a Fig Leaf**
- *Arthur González* -

Anniversary of the Defeat of the Meech Lake Accord

- **Political and Constitutional Renewal Has Never Been More Urgent**
- *Christine Dandenault* -

SUPPLEMENT

- **Protests Against Racism, Police Brutality, Killings and Impunity Continue**

Pay-the-Rich Schemes to "Revive the Economy"

For a New Direction for the Economy



The amount of debt the federal and other governments are incurring under the conditions of the pandemic is alarming as both the lenders and governments expect Canadians to pay back the debts incurred at great cost to themselves. Ruling elites can achieve this only if they succeed in disempowering the working people from having any say whatsoever on the decisions which affect their lives. Towards this end they are concentrating more decision-making powers in ever fewer private hands to increase their ability to dictate wages and working conditions, destroy unions and collective decision-making bodies and any remnants of public institutions at every level. At a time Canadians are demanding an end to "business-as-usual" post-pandemic, already governments are preparing to implement more so-called austerity measures and anti-worker restructuring because that is the neo-liberal mantra on the basis of which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

The brutal anti-social offensive unleashed in the early nineties of the last century after free trade was launched in the mid eighties has always been justified under the claim that there is no alternative to paying the rich. At the beginning of the wave of anti-social measures taken under neo-liberalism, the claim was made that deficits and the resulting debts were incurred due to bad policies of governments that were on a spending binge to finance the social welfare state. The logic was that Canadians were "living high off the hog" and that, as a result, they now had to pay for their middle class lifestyle. Today, the conditions of pandemic are cited to justify the borrowing and not a few are fooled into believing that the borrowing by the state is to finance "public spending on social programs." Some go so far as to say "Keynesian measures" are

required to face the current crisis which they compare to the crisis of the 1930s, or that we need a new "New Deal" to create jobs and save the economy and so on.

The fact is that deficits and borrowing were incurred in the past to pay the rich and programs to "eliminate the deficit and pay down the debt" had the same aim. Today both the lenders which represent colossal narrow private interests and the borrowers in their service consider the current crisis a windfall of unprecedented proportions for which they believe the people will happily pay.

In discussing the borrowing and new debt which is being incurred in conditions of the pandemic, it is useful to review why debts are incurred in the first place and what they finance.

The National Debt

The national debt is the total financial liabilities of the federal government. In 1998 it stood at over \$583.2 billion. This translated into a debt of \$19,250 for every man, woman and child in Canada. If the debts of the provincial governments are added to that total, then every child born in 1998 came into the world burdened with a debt of over \$26,000. Since 2007-08, combined federal and provincial debt has grown from \$837 billion to a projected \$1.5 trillion in 2019-20. This is equal to 64.3 per cent of Canada's Gross Domestic Product and represents a debt of \$39,483 for every man, woman and child.

From 1997 to 2008, through broad cutbacks in the financing of social programs and other measures of the anti-social offensive, the federal government managed to pay down its debt by \$92.7 billion. But from 2008 to 2019, it has nearly tripled the amount of debt that it repaid in the mid-1990s to late 2000s.

Since 1946, the government of Canada has paid more every year on debt servicing than the annual deficit. It has paid \$523 billion in debt service charges from 1946 to 1998 and an estimated \$620 billion from 1998 to 2017.

It will be important to go to the heart of the matter today as governments incur stupendous amounts of debt in the name of protecting the well-being of Canadians and saving the economy.



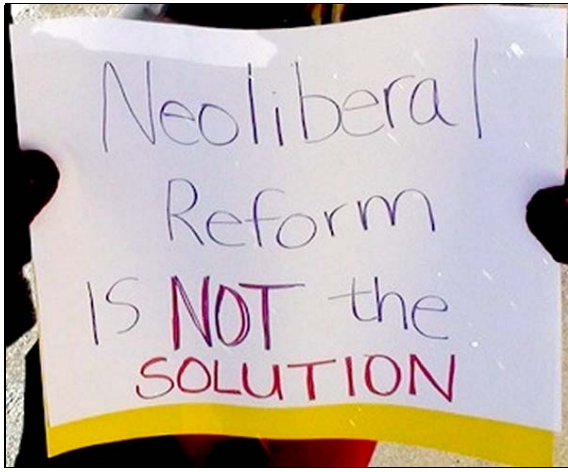
Public Infrastructure Spending Programs to Pay the Rich and Sustain Class Privilege and Control

- K.C. Adams -

Business pundits of the C.D. Howe Institute have been advising the federal government on how to defend the private interests of the rich during the pandemic. They formed a Crisis Working Group on Business Continuity and Trade and have now issued eight communiqués. The latest is called, *Accelerate Infrastructure Projects and Adapt Restructuring Processes*.

Their concern is based on their social class being as members within the ruling imperialist

oligarchy. No one could doubt their sincerity in serving their cause to preserve and defend the immense social wealth and class privilege of their peers and their control of the country's economic and political affairs. The President of the C.D. Howe Institute William B.P. Robson writes, "Among the highlights of the C.D. Howe Institute's work over the years are liberalization of trade and investment in North America."



Liberalization signifies imperialist globalization, the anti-social offensive against the well-being and rights of the people, and the greater integration of Canada's economic, political and military affairs into the U.S.-led imperialist system of states. A significant aspect has been the proliferation of pay-the-rich schemes giving public funds to the largest and most powerful private companies and cartels of the global oligarchy.

The C.D. Howe Institute says its "impact" is such that its writings are "a pre-eminent source of trusted policy intelligence" and "required reading amongst senior decision-makers from coast to coast." The C.D. Howe Institute boasts that its "policy intelligence has laid the intellectual ground for such achievements as the development of continental free trade and ending the unsustainable deficits of the 1970s and 1980s."

The C.D. Howe Institute is a loud and prominent voice amongst the ruling elite for the anti-social offensive of the last three decades in favour of the imperialist oligarchy and against the broad interests of working people. The C.D. Howe Institute provides arguments to dissuade intellectuals in particular from participating consciously in uniting with working people in acts of finding a new direction for the economy that serves the well-being of the people and leads to solving the contradiction between the socialized nature of the modern economy and its continued control by powerful competing private interests and the resulting recurring economic crises. The existence of the C.D. Howe Institute and its influence underscore the necessity for the working class to have its own institutions that encourage working people including intellectuals to participate consciously in acts to find a way forward for the people and society and develop their own thinking, theory and ideology by engaging in acts to build the New.

Infrastructure to Pay the Rich

Communiqué #8 of the C.D. Howe Crisis Working Group demands federal funds be forthcoming to "provide much-needed stimulus and help Canada's economy recover from the COVID-19 crisis." A persistent emphasis is on public funding of large infrastructure projects to pay the rich.

Infrastructure is an indispensable social means of production used by all sectors and enterprises in the collective economy. The value from infrastructure is distributed widely throughout the socialized economy and should likewise be fully and objectively realized.

Fixed infrastructure such as roads and bridges is similar to machines and buildings; it transfers its value over time to users. The fixed transferred-value arising from the use of infrastructure can be scientifically identified and related to those enterprises and means of production that need, use and consume the value.

Circulating infrastructure such as water and electricity transfers its value in identifiable amounts, which are used and fully consumed. The circulating transferred-value can be identified and related to those enterprises and means of production that need, use and consume the value. The

circulating transferred-value market value should be close to the price of production for the quantity consumed.

Communiqué #8 recommends amongst other things: "Stimulus through accelerated infrastructure spending -- specifically: the possible role of infrastructure spending to boost depressed aggregate demand...."

In addition, "broadband connectivity is a critical 'backbone' for long-term national prosperity. [...] To guide future national infrastructure priorities, Canada needs a national strategic assessment to identify those infrastructure investments that would boost long-run economic growth...."

"In order to employ idle industrial capacity and trades, governments should consider accelerating spending on those public infrastructure projects that boost long-run Canadian productivity."

The C.D. Howe Institute recognizes infrastructure's role in boosting productivity and seeks to use that necessity as a means to enrich private interests writing: "Facing a protracted recovery in private-sector non-residential investment, Canada should seize this near-term opportunity to address its maintenance backlog for aging public infrastructure assets -- for example, repairing the large shares of bridges, roads and linear water infrastructure that are in poor condition (i.e., at or past projected life)."

This is all well and good but the C.D. Howe Institute fails to identify who will profit from this "near-term opportunity." These projects will all become public/private/partnerships under the control of some of the biggest private enterprises and cartels. This includes not only the private expropriation of added-value directly by the big private construction companies but the private financing of these infrastructure projects by the global imperialist oligarchy through their purchase of government securities. The Institute's policies seek to defend the control and ownership of the main sectors and enterprises of the Canadian economy by the imperialist oligarchy.



The C.D. Howe Institute does not concretely analyze the central role of critical infrastructure in the modern economy and the necessity of a new pro-social direction. Infrastructure serving the economy generates enormous value and is crucial to all sectors and enterprises. The building and maintenance of infrastructure must be through public enterprise under the management and control of working people accountable to the public. All public and private enterprises must realize (pay for) the value they use from infrastructure in a transparent way. For this to happen, infrastructure must be in the hands of the working people and under their control as public enterprise with the value they create and subsequently realize invested back in the infrastructure and in other ways to develop the local and national economy.

The imperialist oligarchy eyes infrastructure as a means to skin the ox many times. First the infrastructure is necessary for the economy and all its enterprises and institutions. Second, although ostensibly said to be public, the money is borrowed from the financial oligarchy and becomes part of the public debt to the imperialists. Third, the big construction cartels, many of them headquartered outside Canada profit directly from the construction of the projects. Those private enterprises are guaranteed payment and profit and do not have to wait to have the value in the infrastructure they build realized through sale or its protracted use. Fourth, the big private enterprises throughout the economy benefit from the cheap price they pay for the use of the

infrastructure under the hoax of "industrial" pricing to attract investors.

The Infrastructure Pay-the-Rich Virtuous Circle

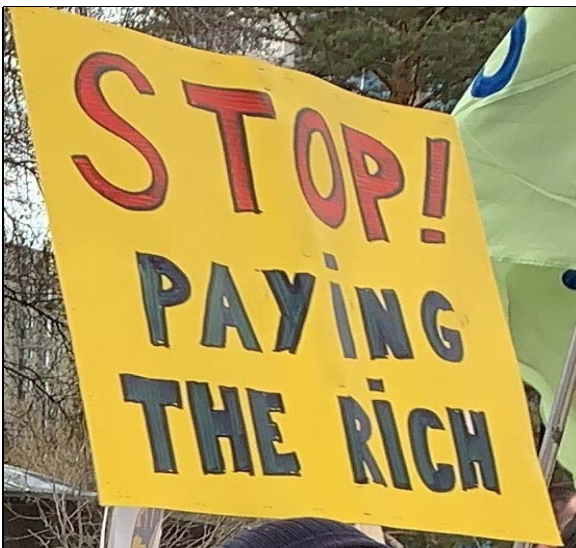
The federal government's infrastructure program to pay the rich, which the C.D. Howe Institute demands be expanded immediately during the current crisis, has four main components that can be summed up as follows.

1. The Bank of Canada begins the process with the purchase of securities held by the global financial oligarchy. Some of the corporate bonds contain mortgages and other loans owned by the private financial institutions and biggest corporations. Many of the mortgages and loans contained within the bonds are now coming under stress from the economic crisis and may collapse. The Bank of Canada has said the amount it may purchase could reach \$150 billion and will include the purchase of bonds held by provincial and other levels of government. In addition, the public Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has announced the purchase of \$50 billion worth of mortgages held currently by the big banks. The rationale behind all this public money pouring into the coffers of global oligarchs is that the private moneylenders will now invest in the troubled economy but in fact those same global financial institutions are buying guaranteed government securities.

2. The financial oligarchy takes the public money from the Bank of Canada and CMHC from the purchase of its securities and buys the now even more plentiful government bonds, as the federal and other government deficits have soared. These purchases become a safe haven for the social wealth of the oligarchs during the crisis where other investment opportunities have dried up or have become too risky. The guaranteed government bonds even pay interest.

3. The government takes the private money it borrows from the financial oligarchy through the sale of its securities and puts a portion of the money towards financing infrastructure projects. This becomes the seed money to begin construction.

4. The government enlists the private global construction cartels to build the infrastructure projects. Those companies do not have to raise the financing themselves or worry about selling the finished project. The government gives them the construction money as the projects proceed, which includes a healthy profit. This activity is all guaranteed by the government, including exorbitant prices the private construction cartels charge to complete the projects.



5. Once built, the main users of the public means of production (the roads, bridges, electricity etc), which are the big private enterprises in the economy, do not have to pay the full market price for the value of the portion of the infrastructure they consume, as they are given preferential concocted "industrial" rates.

This virtuous circle explains how the federal government's infrastructure plan called "Investing in Canada" pays the rich and contributes to the ever greater concentration of wealth and power in fewer hands. The federal government in 2019 committed \$187 billion in infrastructure funding over 12 years. The C.D. Howe Institute insists the recent crisis should

prompt the government to spend even more and more quickly not only on new projects but on maintaining and upgrading existing infrastructure.

Canadians are directed and browbeaten not to object to this direction for the economy, as it "provides jobs and the infrastructure" so sorely needed. But a new direction is exactly what is needed to bring the economy under the control of the people who do the work and prevent recurring crises and solve other social and natural problems. A new direction for the economy would prohibit government borrowing from private institutions. A new direction would construct, maintain and manage public infrastructure using permanent public construction enterprises. It would ensure that the value from the infrastructure is fully realized by the public and private enterprises that use and consume the value and that this value would be poured back into the economy and not be taken out by the rich to some tax haven or other place.

The C.D. Howe Institute Attempts to Justify Public Money Flowing to Private Interests

The communiqué says, "Public spending is economically justified where the net benefits to society exceed the costs of the outlays. The private sector is well equipped to deliver projects that will yield profits across the life of the asset. In contrast, governments justifiably deliver or contribute to capital investments when a project provides benefits for society that exceed the net present value that would accrue to a private owner."

This gobbledygook is totally self-serving. The "net benefits to society" are in fact pay-the-rich infrastructure schemes that benefit the financial oligarchy and guarantee their continued privilege and existence. A modern economy needs extensive infrastructure to exist. The C.D. Howe Institute wants public funds to be used when "the net benefits to society exceed the costs of the outlay" while the private sector delivers "projects that yield profits across the life of the asset." The C.D. Howe Institute posits "net benefits to society" in contrast to private profits. If the private profits were public profits would that not be a net benefit to society?

The public could justly argue that the expropriation of private profits benefitting a few oligarchs is a detriment to society and a drag on the economy especially within the current necessity to build a self-reliant all-sided local economy that is free of recurring economic crises, which could be characterized as a modern nation-building project. Those private profits are needed as "net benefits to society" for a vigorous all-sided economy that has the necessary means for increased investments in social programs, extended reproduction of the economy as a whole and to humanize the social and natural environment.

The C.D. Howe Institute attempts to justify the continuation of private profit in a situation where big projects and development cannot occur without public funds and pay-the-rich schemes. This outmoded direction for the economy ensures that no project of any size can proceed without a pay-the-rich component from the pooled funds of the state, which mostly come from taxes on working people and small and medium-sized enterprises. The C.D. Howe Institute does not want to move on to the New where public enterprise is the deciding and driving force in all the major sectors of the economy and the working people themselves are in control.

Shady Moves at Alberta Investment Management Corporation

- Dougal MacDonald -

Alberta Investment Management Corporation (AIMCo) has hired Mark Wiseman, a former BlackRock executive, as its new chairperson, effective July 1. AIMCo is the Alberta government-owned investment fund that manages over \$110 billion in assets on behalf of 30

Alberta-based pension, endowment, government and other clients. BlackRock is the world's largest asset manager, with \$7.4 trillion in assets under management as of the end of 2019.

At BlackRock, Wiseman served as global head of active equities making him a potential successor to CEO Larry Fink, BlackRock's founder. However, BlackRock fired Wiseman in December 2019 for violating a company rule against in-house relationships. It is not surprising that AIMCo's new chair comes from the omnipresent BlackRock which has "assets under management greater than the GDP of any country... and is a major shareholder in most of the top 300 corporations in North America and Europe and a co-owner in 17,309 companies and banks worldwide." [1] BlackRock is the world's largest investor in fossil fuels and paying the energy industry with public money is the United Conservative Party's (UCP) main economic strategy.



"BlackRock's power and authority come not just from its sheer size, but from the fact that it constitutes, as one analyst puts it, a virtual 'fourth branch of government.' From the beginning, a key part of BlackRock's strategy has been to recruit top state officials from around the world on an 'in and out' basis. One year they might be working for government, the next year for BlackRock." [2] Wiseman is a clear example. He previously served as CEO of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board from July 2012 to May 2016. He was also a member of the Advisory Council on Economic Growth, chaired by Dominic Barton which was created in 2016 ostensibly to counsel Canadian Finance Minister Bill Morneau. Barton is also closely linked to BlackRock, as well as to global management consulting firm McKinsey, hired June 13 to review Alberta's post-secondary education system.

On April 30, 2020, AIMCo's CEO shamelessly confirmed AIMCo had lost \$2.1 billion due to an ill-advised bet on market volatility. A key factor in that huge loss was AIMCo's significant investments in the volatile and risky energy sector. Progress Alberta found that AIMCo had invested \$1.1 billion from public service workers' pensions in oil and gas firms since 2016. Most of those companies had lost significant value long before the COVID-19 crisis and the fall of the oil price to record lows.

AIMCo manages a portfolio of roughly \$110 billion, representing hundreds of thousands of Albertans' pensions and investments for Alberta Heritage Trust Fund, Alberta Health Services (AHS), and the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP). On January 2, 2020, the UCP government passed omnibus Bill 22, transferring control of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF), along with funds for the Workers' Compensation Board and AHS, to AIMCo. Workers heavily criticized the transfer, especially those whose pensions were directly affected.

Alberta teachers were not consulted about Bill 22 even though about \$18 billion would be moved from the ATRF to AIMCo by the end of 2021. Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling said the losses underline why teachers were concerned about the transfer. "[With the ATRF], we have a say when it comes to these sorts of things," Schilling said. "When our asset management is moved to AIMCo, we would no longer have that say." Schilling could have gone further and asked why should teachers' retirement security depend on the vagaries of the stock market which is manipulated by the financial oligarchy in their own interests? Teachers and other workers should be guaranteed their pensions under any and all circumstances so they can retire securely at a Canadian standard of living.

The pension money move to AIMCo is another example of how the UCP is trying to capture control of as many large pools of capital as possible and use them to pay the rich, particularly in the energy monopolies. This is the core of their plan to "revive" the Alberta economy. A stark example is the March 31 announcement that the Alberta government was handing over U.S.\$1.1 billion in public dollars to TC Energy's Keystone XL pipeline as well as providing a \$6 billion loan guarantee. This makes Albertans responsible for about 85 per cent of the cost of the pipeline which many have judged as both risky and unnecessary and which may never be built.

The UCP government unconvincingly claims that AIMCo is "arms-length" from the government and that the government has no influence on its policies. This flies in the face of such facts as that recent laws introduced by the UCP give the provincial finance minister the power to reassign portions of AIMCo's portfolio to a manager of the government's choice. At present, BlackRock alumnus Mark Wiseman is that choice.

Notes

1. "BlackRock -- The Super Cartel" by Peter Ewart, *TML Weekly*, June 13, 2020.
2. *Ibid.*

For Your Information

C.D. Howe Institute Communiqué #8

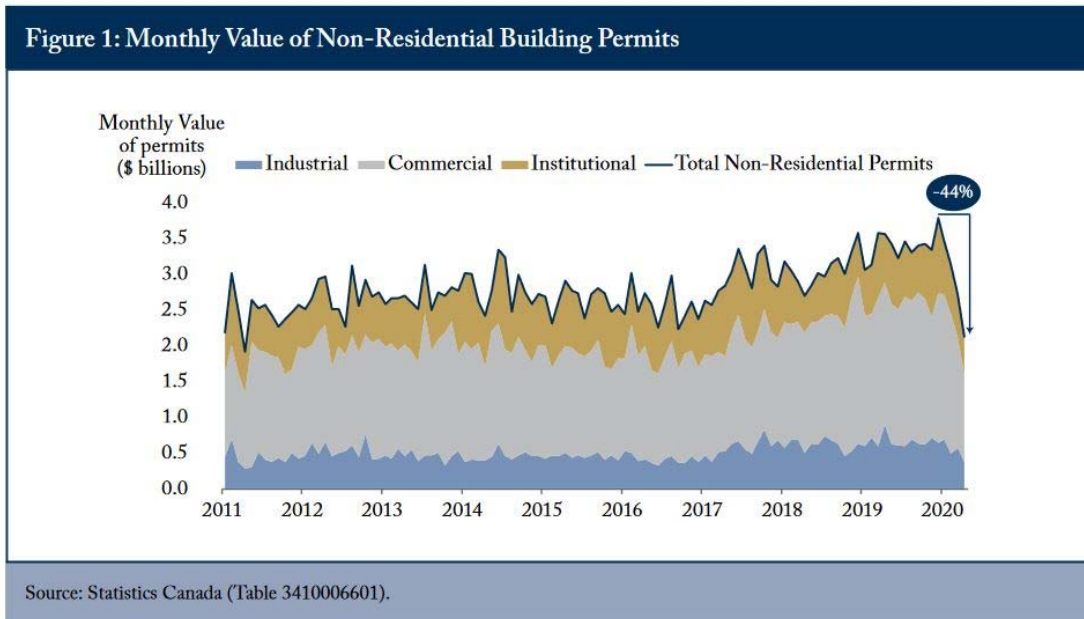
- Excerpts -

"Working group members pressed that government should focus spending on 'framework' infrastructure or assets with clear positive externalities -- for example, inter-regional power transmission or demonstration-scale projects for new technologies like small modular nuclear reactors, hydrogen production or carbon capture, utilization and storage. The pandemic has also underscored the value of digital infrastructure in enabling economic activity -- from work-from-home to agricultural production to education -- particularly in rural and remote communities. The working group emphasized the deployment of broadband connectivity as a critical 'backbone' for long-term national prosperity. While connecting outlying regions may not be presently profitable for private investment, government should consider support to accelerate capital outlays on digital infrastructure for remote communities where long-term social benefits exceed public costs."

"Working group members supported accelerated delivery of infrastructure projects to support recovery, provided spending is targeted effectively to boost productivity or align with social and environmental policy objectives.... Working group members see the post-crisis recovery as a key window for governments to accelerate delivery of infrastructure projects that will enhance the productivity and resilience of Canada's economy. ... As well, the size of public spending to move the needle on aggregate demand would be significant. For example, \$20 billion in spending is equivalent to 1 per cent of Canada's GDP and any outlays in a small open economy involve 'leakage' (i.e., purchases of imports)." [...]

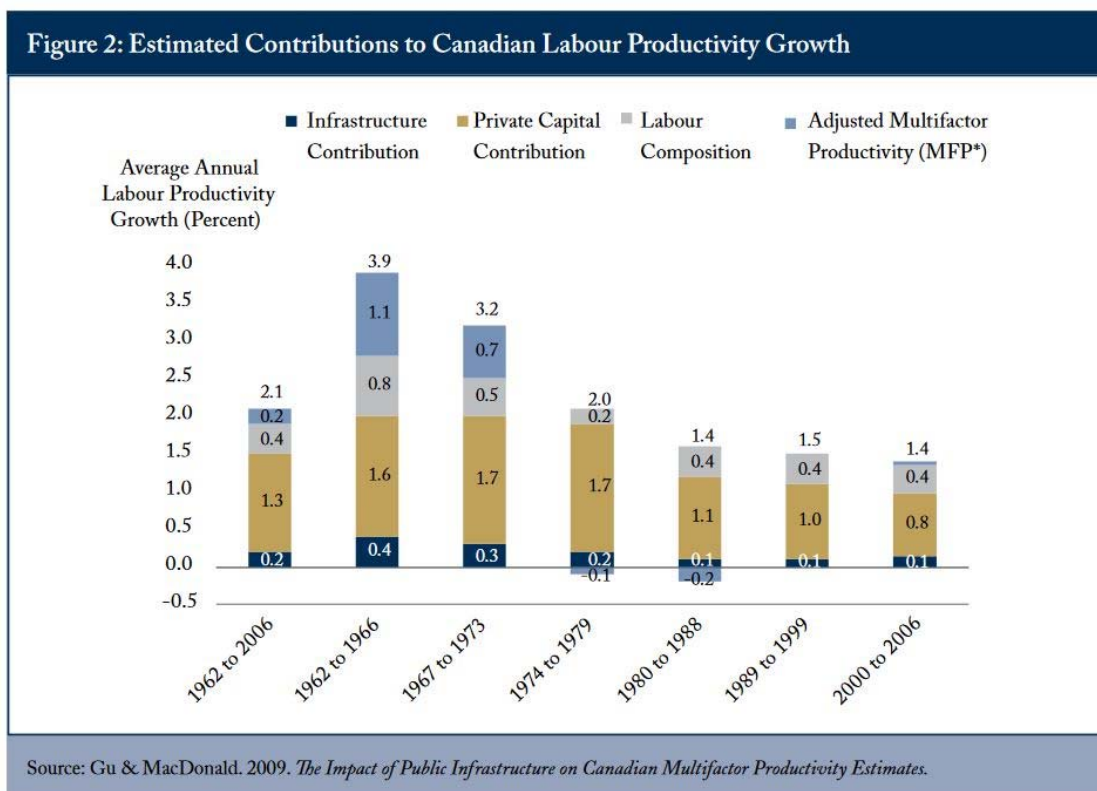
"Government capital spending can substitute to some degree for a downturn in private-sector non-residential construction. Construction activity has significantly contracted during the crisis, as shown by the 16 per cent decline in construction employment between February and May 2020. While many job losses may be driven by activity restrictions, dampened investment intentions also play a role. Non-residential building permit applications have declined dramatically: the seasonally adjusted value of permits plunged by 44 per cent from December 2019 to April 2020 (see Figure

1). This pull-back anticipates continued weakness in non-residential construction activity.

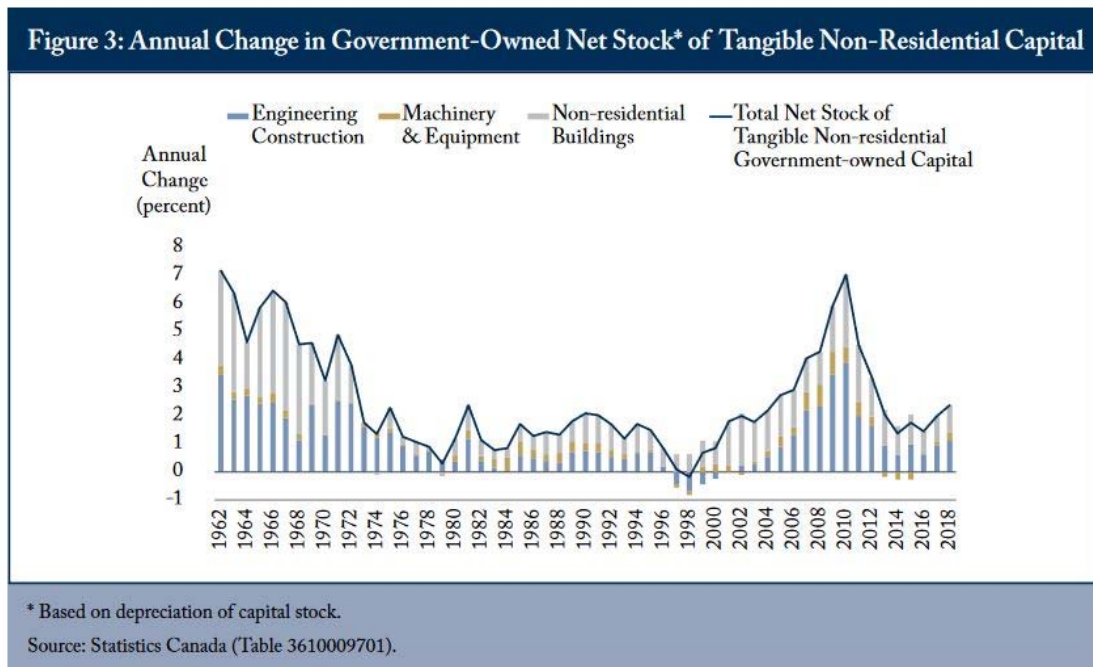


"Looking ahead, aggregate private capital investment in key export-focused sectors (e.g., petroleum and manufacturing) could remain depressed given an uncertain outlook for demand. Commentators have also observed that pandemic-driven delays and associated cost overruns may force construction firms into insolvency and risk the failure of in-progress projects." [...]

"Canadian construction firms face a significant risk of falling behind and displacement if they cannot seize this moment to learn by doing and adapt to intensified competition. Large-scale and sustained capital investment programs could provide opportunity for Canadian engineering and construction firms to reinvent themselves." [...]



"Historically, spending on public infrastructure has delivered significant benefits for Canadian productivity. A study by Gu and MacDonald (2009), published by Statistics Canada, estimated that investment in public infrastructure had contributed to approximately 10 percent of growth in labour productivity between 1962 and 2006 (see Figure 2). The period from the 1960s to early 1970s saw significant government outlays on tangible, non-residential capital (see Figure 3) -- particularly engineering construction (e.g., the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway). The delivery of this public infrastructure complemented intensive private-sector capital investment and contributed significantly to the rapid growth in labour productivity during this period.



"Working group members stressed that access to high-quality and reliable infrastructure is a major factor in the location decisions for many activities. For example, in developing new processing or manufacturing facilities, companies are highly attuned to access to transportation, power, digital connectivity and water. Such infrastructure determines a region's competitiveness by influencing the costs and speed of accessing upstream inputs and getting product to downstream markets.

"Working group members stressed that aligning infrastructure spending with economic benefit occurs at the project level and requires rigorous evaluation of the returns on particular projects. Public spending is economically justified where the net benefits to society exceed the costs of the outlays. The private sector is well equipped to deliver projects that will yield profits across the life of the asset. In contrast, governments justifiably deliver or contribute to capital investments when a project provides benefits for society that exceed the net present value that would accrue to a private owner.

"A potential opportunity for rapid roll-out of spending may be a backlog of maintenance and repair on aging infrastructure. Retrofits to extend useful service life of existing assets should be more rapid to plan and execute than new projects. The 2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card, based on responses for the 2016 year through the Canadian Core Public Infrastructure Survey, found a significant share of public infrastructure assets at significant or advanced states of deterioration and approaching or beyond expected service life. In particular, the survey found that 16 per cent of roads, 12 per cent of bridges and tunnels, 11 per cent of wastewater and stormwater pipes, and 16 per cent of roads and tracks for public transit were in poor or very poor condition.

"Ramping up infrastructure spending could be viable through repair and maintenance initiatives,

for which governments should have prioritized inventories and execution plans. Working group members highlighted that governments may tend to focus on 'ribbon cutting' for new projects and neglect the ongoing funding required to maintain assets. If so, the depreciation of these assets will diminish the productivity contribution from the earlier investment.

"The pandemic has also underscored the value of digital infrastructure in enabling economic activity -- from work-from-home to agricultural production to education -- particularly in rural and remote communities. The working group emphasized the deployment of broadband connectivity as a critical 'backbone' for long-term national prosperity. While connecting outlying regions may not be presently profitable for private investment, government should consider support to accelerate capital outlays on digital infrastructure for remote communities where long-term social benefits exceed public costs.

"Working group members also agreed that the recovery presents an opportunity for 'no regrets' acceleration of investments in projects that will be required to meet anticipated social service demands, such as affordable housing and long-term care facilities. However, choices around projects must be made carefully and avoid displacing the role of market forces." [...]

"Working group members agree that government does have a potential role to play in the sort of 'framework' infrastructure that enables decarbonization. Infrastructure that links markets is distinct from assets used for commercial production. For example, infrastructure for long-distance interconnection can help integrate electricity markets between regions, increase the viability of expanded renewable generation and reduce costs for power consumers. By providing a critical link between producers and consumers, such transmission infrastructure may provide wider economic benefits than would accrue to a rate-regulated private owner. Government could provide the funding needed to meet private hurdle rates for projects with public benefits. Indeed, subsidizing the incremental social benefits of private projects is the exact role that the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB) should play. Additionally, government can play an important role in supporting demonstration-scale facilities to pilot transformative new technologies and provide learning-by-doing for future industry-wide deployment. The development of steam-assisted gravity drainage (SAGD) by the publicly funded Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority (AOSTRA) provides an example...." [...]

"In the present context of facilitating Canada's energy transition, working group members noted small modular nuclear reactors, hydrogen production, and carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) as examples of pre-commercial technologies where government could valuably support demonstrate-scale projects. As well, working group members agree that adaptation to climate change is an appropriate focus for public expenditures. Infrastructure that reduces risks from extreme weather events presents a classic 'public good' role for government. Climate change is expected to increase the physical risks from variable weather patterns. For example, infrastructure to mitigate floods and droughts will be important as communities potentially face increasing variability in weather patterns.

"Canada's lack of any regular and comprehensive assessment of strategic infrastructure needs is a gap in its ability to effectively target spending. Such an assessment would aim to identify broad classes of public investments to (1) enable incremental economic benefits (e.g., through productivity gains) that exceed the costs of delivery and upkeep; and (2) support those public services that align with societal preferences and government objectives. The United Kingdom has established a National Infrastructure Commission with a mandate to publish a National Infrastructure Assessment once during every Parliament. The Commission's inaugural assessment, published in July 2018, outlines a 30-year vision for the country's infrastructure needs, and is complemented by additional studies on specific classes of infrastructure and regional needs. Working group members agree that any national strategy must be reconciled with the local and regional needs that drive infrastructure priorities. As well, governments face major questions

about how working-life adaptations during the pandemic may accelerate certain trends -- such as remote work for certain occupations that could dampen use of regional transportation infrastructure and place an additional premium on high-speed digital connectivity...."

"Working group members agreed that infrastructure building in Canada faces a disconnect between governments' fiscal capacity and responsibility for infrastructure delivery. Working group members believe that, given immediate budgetary stresses facing provincial and municipal governments, the federal government likely will need to increase transfers for infrastructure if local and regional projects are to be delivered. Nonetheless, certain working group members see an immediate opportunity for using federal funds to 'break logjams' between different municipal and provincial governments that have slowed the delivery of certain projects."

For the complete Communiqué #8, [click here](#).

Note

Although dealing extensively with infrastructure, no mention is made anywhere in the entire Communiqué #8 of the necessity for the federal government to engage in nation-to-nation relations with Indigenous peoples to gain their permission for infrastructure or other projects that traverse or are located in their territories. This absence in the communiqué betrays a colonial mentality that is unacceptable in Canada.

(June 17, 2020)

Police Killings Require Redress

Dangerous Criminalization of Social and Political Affairs



Sign painted on the street outside Toronto Police Headquarters as part of actions demanding an end to police violence and impunity.

The increased numbers of police killings continue to be a matter of great concern to the polity. Calls for justice and for an end to policy impunity and the racist approach to policing are ringing out while governments continue to skate around the issue so as to preserve their rule.

The imperialist criminalization of life has deeply affected the country's economic, political and social affairs and society's institutions and social fabric. The criminalization of life has extended beyond politics into social conditions and lifestyle. Criminalization leads to police power being

employed to deal with problems such as poverty; homelessness; mental and other health issues and the right of all to health care; what people put into their bodies; the claims of workers in the sale of their capacity to work and terms of employment; problems and disagreements in education with methods and curricula and how to affirm the right to education; the opposition of people to big projects with which they may disagree on environmental or other grounds; domestic family and other disputes involving personal affairs and relations among the people; issues and struggles surrounding the direction of the economy, politics and society etc.

The list of problems, contradictions and disagreements in economic and political affairs, social relations and society generally is endless. Their criminalization is disastrous leading to ever-increasing police power and brutality and the political, social and economic problems never being resolved resulting in ever-worsening crises, anarchy, violence and war.



As the people struggle to empower themselves they know the antidote is to increase investments in social programs, public services and enterprise to deal concretely with the problems of modern society and relations among the people; to stop paying the rich; to strive for equilibrium in the social relation at the workplace between the working class and employers; to make Canada a zone for peace; and, most importantly to empower the people politically to allow the democratic personality to emerge and open a path to peace, freedom and democracy and a new pro-social direction for the economic and political affairs of society.

In this issue, *TML Weekly* reports on another police killing in Canada and calls for justice in Canada as well as the United States.



Vancouver protest against police violence and impunity, June 19, 2020.



Police Killing of Ejaz Choudry

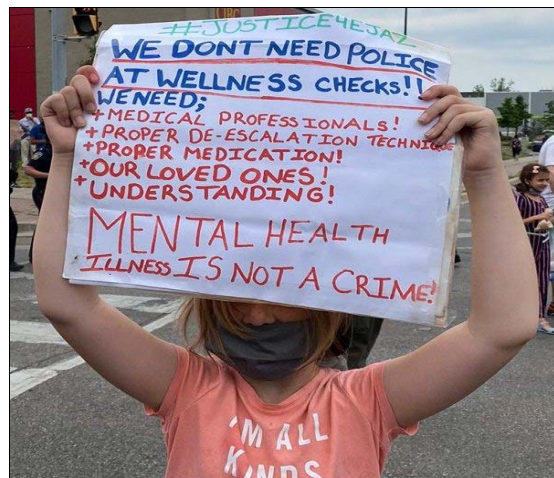
- Steve Rutchinski -



June 22, 2020 rally demanding justice for Ejaz.

Ejaz Ahmed Choudry was shot and killed on Saturday, June 20 by Peel Regional Police in Malton, a neighbourhood in Mississauga, Ontario. On the evening of June 22, about 2,000 people rallied at Goreway and Morning Star in Malton, to condemn the callous killing of Mr. Choudry by Peel Regional Police over the weekend. They came out as one, irrespective of nationality, race, language or religion, against the use of deadly force by police, to demand accountability and justice. Their signs read: "Father Killed by Police," "Father Killed on Fathers' Day," "Justice for Ejaz -- Murdered by Police," and "Defund the Police." Over and over they shouted "No Justice! No Peace!, No Racist Police!"

Choudry was 62 years of age and suffered from schizophrenia and other illnesses. He was in a crisis and required assistance. His family called a health services phone line to have paramedics come help him to take his medicine as they had done previously. Paramedics arrived at the scene but called police claiming they saw Mr. Choudry in possession of a pocket knife. After a period of shouting instructions at Mr. Choudry in English, which he did not understand, the police elected to kick down the door, discharge a stun grenade and shoot Mr. Choudry in one sudden burst of violence.



A Peel Police spokesperson said they "believed" he had weapons and that he was "a danger to himself." He was a frail man, at home, alone and posed no danger to anyone except perhaps himself. For the police to argue that they had a rationale to open fire and kill him shows the depth of the problem Black people and national minorities face in Toronto. Reports indicate that police rejected every attempt by the family to intervene to de-escalate the situation.

Hassan Choudry, the victim's nephew, spoke at the rally on June 22. He reiterated what he had told

reporters -- that his uncle was harmless, that he could barely take three or four steps. "You are telling me that a 62-year-old man who can barely breathe to begin with is going to run and attack you!?" He said anyone who has seen the video footage or listened to witness testimony knows that police did not do everything in their power to de-escalate the situation.

"Our political leaders, our chief of police cannot appease us. We are demanding that action be taken now," Hassan said, "We demand a public inquiry into what happened." He added, "We have no faith in an investigation conducted by the SIU [Special Investigations Unit] which has historically failed victims of police violence in this province. We also demand the officer involved in shooting our uncle should immediately be removed from the police... Those who could make the decision to shoot and kill him are not fit to serve [as police]. They should never again carry a badge or walk our streets."



All those who spoke at the rally raised the same demands: that the officers responsible be held to account and that police violence, racism and use of deadly force must end! Speakers also called for a change of direction to end years of cuts in education, health care and other social programs, not more policing and prisons.

The community of Malton consists predominantly of working class national minorities who continuously experience police brutality. In April, Peel Regional Police shot and killed D'Andre Campbell, age 26, who also suffered from schizophrenia. He had called for assistance to be taken to hospital. Instead of assisting someone in distress, police killed him.

Deadly force by police against victims suffering mental health conditions, particularly against Black and Indigenous people is all too common in Canada. Indigenous people make up just 4.8 per cent of the national population but account for 15 per cent of all fatalities at the hands of police. Black people make up 3.4 per cent of the population, but account for 9 per cent of the fatalities due to police violence.

A public funeral was held for Ejaz Ahmed Choudry on June 24.

A GoFundMe site has been set up to contribute financial assistance to the Choudry family [here](#).



Since the police killing of Ejaz Choudry daily protests are taking place at Goreway and Morning Star in Malton.

(With files from Frank Chillelli and Lorne Gershuny, CBC, and Mississauga News.)

Protests Continue to Demand Justice in Choudry Killing

- Frank Chilelli -



Since the death of Mr. Ejaz Choudry at the hands of Peel Regional Police on June 20, the community of Malton in Mississauga, Ontario and citizens from across the Greater Toronto Area have been gathering to protest at the intersection of Morning Star Drive and Goreway Road on a daily basis. On Wednesday, June 24, the day of the funeral for Mr. Choudry, a contingent shouting "What do we want? Justice! For who? Ejaz!" made their way from the funeral procession towards the intersection at around 7:30 pm, where they were met by other protesters. At around 8:15 pm many of the protesters, predominantly youth, decided to march north on Goreway and block the CN railway tracks.



Family speaks at Ejaz Choudry's funeral June 24, 2020 (left) and photo of some of the many people attending (right).

As the protesters blocked the railway tracks, shouts of "Justice for Ejaz -- Now!," "Defund the Police, Increase Funding for Youth and Social Programs!" were repeatedly heard. Many of the youth who took part in the demonstration were Muslim and, at one point, knelt on the train tracks, facing eastward, to pray in silence. As a result of the blockade of the tracks, two CN Rail freight trains were stopped from entering the crossing. The train engineers approached the protesters to

get information about the duration of the protest. In the process of discussion, the engineers expressed their support for the protesters. The rail blockade lasted about two-and-a-half hours. During the last half hour, a family member of the late Mr. Choudry told the protesters that the police had notified the family about the possibility of arrests being made, given that the protesters were on private property.



Youth block railway tracks following Choudry's funeral, June 24, 2020.

Subsequently, the youth, who took the lead in the protest, began to discuss what direction or plan should be taken. It was decided amongst the protesters that, before complying with the police threats, that they would make counter demands, and if those demands were not met within 24 hours, then the CN railway track would once again be blocked the next day. Their demands were threefold:

- 1) that the name of the police officer who killed Mr. Ejaz Choudry be released to the public;
- 2) that an independent body investigate the killing of Mr. Choudry and not the Special Investigations Unit;^[1] and
- 3) that the family be given a different apartment from where Mr. Choudry was killed.

During the demonstration, many youth who reside in the Malton area spoke about the continuous police harassment and racial profiling that takes place in the community. Not a few expressed their personal experiences of police violence and brutality against them. The youth and protesters in general expressed anger at a system that is racist and made the link of racism being interconnected with a socio-economic system that they said does not work for them.

The intersection of Goreway and Morning Star in Malton continues to be blocked by the community on a 24-hour basis.

Note

1. The Special Investigations Unit "is the civilian oversight agency responsible for investigating circumstances involving police that have resulted in a death, serious injury, or allegations of sexual assault of a civilian in Ontario, Canada." (*Wikipedia*)

Ottawa Demonstration Against Police Brutality and Impunity



On June 20, a demonstration organized by Justice for Abdirahman Coalition gathered more than 1,000 people at Elgin Street police station in Ottawa. They then marched to Ottawa City Hall to denounce racism and police violence against Black and Indigenous people.

The organizers noted: "This march is organized to support the global and local protests against police violence on Black lives. We also act in solidarity with our Indigenous sisters and brothers who have been struggling against the same racist police violence in Ottawa and across Canada."

Hamid Ibrahim, a member of the coalition, spoke outside City Hall. He stated in part:

"In recent weeks, the senseless killing of George Floyd has galvanized the world. The horrific video of George's last moments at the hands of those tasked with his protection has truly laid bare a capacity for racist brutality that many in the United States and Canada have failed to acknowledge. Just as with Abdirahman Abdi's death and the recent assault of Obi Ifedi here in Ottawa, violence against Black people has been wilfully ignored by our institutions. The death of Greg Ritchie in Ottawa in 2019 and recent police killings of Indigenous people across Canada show us that this violence is deployed in equal force against our Indigenous brothers and sisters. Yet in our city and beyond, institutional and structural change has been slow, despite mounting video evidence of wildly disproportionate acts of violence, amounting to naked complacency in the face of summary executions.

"Extra-judicial killings of unarmed Black and Indigenous people at the hands of police has proven itself a pandemic. This pandemic requires the same attention, diligence, and far-reaching approaches established by public health officials in their fight against COVID-19. Demands for justice have reached a boiling point; they can no longer be ignored."

Ibrahim went on to articulate various demands to the City of Ottawa, Province of Ontario and Government of Canada. They include a demand to defund Ottawa Police Service by putting a "significant portion" of its budget toward services that provide alternatives to armed police response to ensure community safety and well-being. The province was called on to reinstate Bill 175, the *Safer Ontario Act, 2018*, to put in place measures for police accountability. The federal government was called on to investigate "entrenched racism within the RCMP."^[1]

The Justice for Abdirahman Coalition was formed in 2016. Abdirahman Abdi was a 37-year-old Somali-Canadian with mental health issues. He lived in Ottawa's Hintonburg community at 55 Hilda Street. Abdirahman died on July 24, 2016 during a violent altercation with Ottawa Police Service officers, recorded on one of the apartment's security cameras. Mr. Abdi had no criminal history, and there are no indications he posed a threat to the lives or safety of the officers at whose hands he died.

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU), an agency of the Ministry of the Attorney General, took on the investigation within hours of the incident. However, the SIU has yet to release a judgment on the case. Ottawa police Const. Daniel Montsion is currently on trial for manslaughter, aggravated assault and assault with a weapon in relation to Abdi's death.



Note

1. To read the entire speech, [click here](#).

SUPPLEMENT

Protests Against Racism, Police Brutality, Killings and Impunity Continue

U.S. Cuba Policy

The United States Is Naked Without a Fig Leaf

- Arthur González -

The Yankees, angered by their 60 years of failure in the attempt to destroy the Cuban Revolution, have made the big mistake of publicly declaring that all their actions are meant to strangle [Cuba's] economy and kill its people through hunger and disease.

The truth always comes out, this time exposed without masks or a fig leaf to cover its hidden

parts, in the new bill called "Cut Profits to the Cuban Regime Act" introduced on June 17, 2020 by Senator Rick Scott, along with Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz. The aim is to sanction countries that hire Cuban doctors through international collaborative medical missions, including the Henry Reeve brigades, specialized in dealing with diseases in cases of natural disasters and serious epidemics.



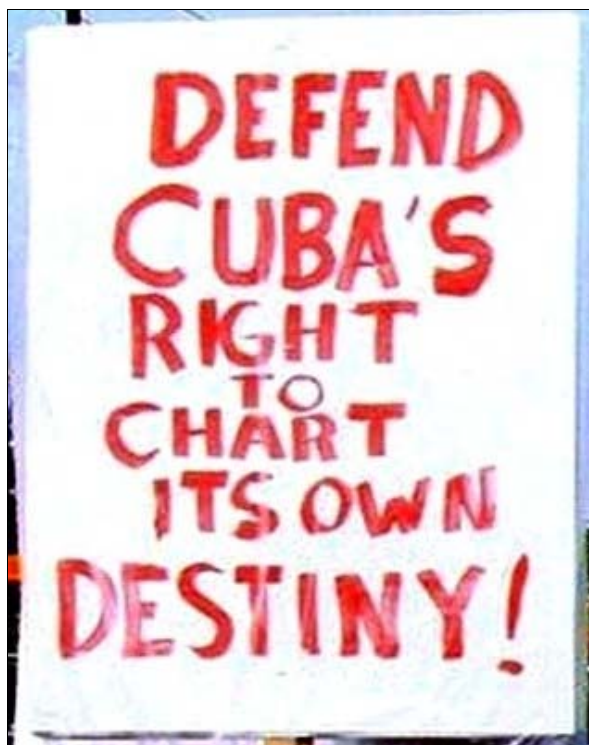
Members of the Cuban Henry Reeve Brigade prepare to go to South Africa to assist in the fight against COVID-19, April 25, 2020.

The blackmailing campaigns and pressures used by the United States for some years have been covered up under the supposed "concern" that Cuba sends them as "slaves," because it does not give them the full money it receives from the contracting countries.

It is known that this supposed "concern" of the empire is false, since the United States has never cared at all about the Cuban people, and this is demonstrated by its economic, commercial and financial war. The only aim they pursue is to further strangle the Cuban economy, with the old dream of destroying the socialism they hate so much.

A simple reading of Operation Mongoose, approved in January 1962 by President John F. Kennedy, proves it legally, by stating without the slightest feeling of humanity that:

"The objective of the United States is to help Cubans overthrow the communist regime in Cuba ... The operation is aimed at provoking a rebellion by the Cuban people ... The political action will be supported by an economic war, which induces the communist regime to fail in its efforts to meet the needs of the country, psychological operations will increase the resentment of the population against the regime, and those of a military nature will give the popular movement a weapon of action for sabotage and armed resistance in support of political objectives."



The new scheme of these senators is to cut off all inflows of money to Cuba, with the outdated

wish that the socialist economy will explode due to a lack of liquidity. Nothing could be more removed from the human feelings they say they have for Cubans, despite their pretend "concern" about the "human trafficking" of doctors and nurses.

The very name of the bill reveals that they only seek to cut off the revenues Cuba obtains from the contracts for its medical missions, which, according to their calculations, amounts to nearly \$7 billion annually, wanting to curb those earnings.

With Bolsonaro's arrival to the presidency in Brazil, they managed to cut off the Cuban presence there, something that the lackeys of Ecuador and Bolivia imitated and that the puppet Juan Guaidó wants to do [in Venezuela]. But in view of the need for health personnel to face the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 40 nations have requested Cuba's help, because neither the United States nor other countries of the "free world" have professionals willing to provide that help.

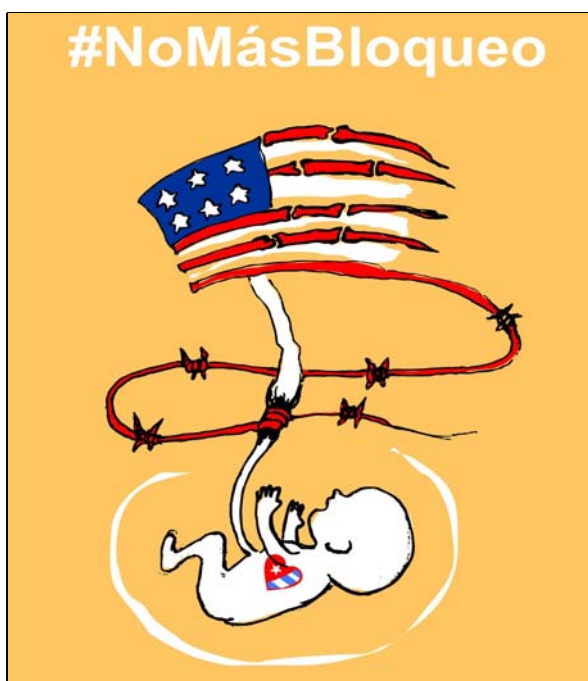
Faced with the challenge of governments that require the humane work of Cuban doctors and nurses, and are not paying attention to Washington's threats, these anti-Cuban politicians pounced with their bill, in another attempt to further strangle the island's economy.

Such action calls to mind what was revealed by the CIA in a report dated December 12, 1963, where it pointed out:

"To a large extent, the problems facing the Castro regime are the result of the United States' policy of economic and political isolation, as well as other measures of hostility and sabotage. [...] The main objective of the Covert Programs is to complete Cuba's economic, political and psychological isolation from Latin America and the free world... these measures have been largely responsible for Castro's current economic difficulties, but new and effective measures of economic warfare could be adopted."

It seems that 60 years without results are not enough for the enemies of the Revolution to understand that Cubans are a tough nut to crack.

Would they be unaware that not even the concentration camps created by the Spanish general Valeriano Weyler to starve the revolutionaries during the war for Cuba's independence in 1895 could defeat those who were fighting for independence from Spain?



Neither the CIA's Covert Actions plans, state terrorism, political subversion, nor the creation and financing of the counter-revolution, have been able to destroy socialism in Cuba.

Scott and his friends don't know history and should read some reports, to learn from the misfortunes of Yankee politics.

On February 6, 1964, George W. Ball, Undersecretary of State, had a conversation in Washington with the British ambassador, Ormsby Gore, to express the "annoyance" of the United States with the growth of trade relations with Cuba, where he stated clearly:

"The policy of President Lyndon Johnson is to impose economic sanctions on Cuba as a weapon against the Revolution; create economic difficulties and bring about the

elimination of the communist regime."

A day earlier, Ball had presented to the president a study carried out by the State Department and the CIA, on the economic ties of western countries with Cuba, to respond to a request made in Report No. 274 of National Security Action, December 1963.

That study contained 19 recommendations and the first one was that President Johnson let all government agencies know that the restriction and reduction of the economic ties of the "free world" with Cuba was a national policy objective.

They were all focused on the economic war, but Article 15 stands out, which suggested "the discreet use of the press, through the publication of articles which make known the government's rigorous controls on trading companies that deal with Cuba." Perhaps that was the start of the black list.

That is why the smear jobs published against the Cuban medical missions by the press today are not coincidental, echoing the campaign designed by the CIA, in conjunction with the State Department, that keeps re-emerging as a priority policy of the Yankee government against Cuba.

Currently about 28,000 Cuban doctors and nurses save lives in 59 countries of the world, facing COVID-19 in 37 of them, with total humanism, without caring about money or working conditions, because as José Martí said:

"The real man does not look for where one can live better, but for where duty lies."

(El Herald Cubano, reprinted from Boletín Por Cuba Año 18 Número 48. Translated from original Spanish by TML.)



30th Anniversary of the Defeat of the Meech Lake Accord
Political and Constitutional Renewal Has
Never Been More Urgent
- Christine Dandenault -

June 23, 2020 marked the 30th anniversary of the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord. Thirty years after its defeat, the issue of vesting sovereignty in the people through political and constitutional renewal remains the main issue to be resolved. The struggles of workers, youth, women, and the First Nations for their rights and the rights of all, including the fight against COVID-19, are coming up against the denial of their political power, which poses the block to their implementation of a nation-building project that defends the rights of all, provides a new direction for the economy and makes Canada a zone for peace.

Today, political power is concentrated in the hands of supranational private interests which collude and compete for narrow private gain and domination. Notably, to the detriment of the



well-being of all and the right of the people to determine their own affairs, they manoeuvre through states at their disposal, including Canada. Today, the Canadian constitutional system is the instrument of the factions of the imperialist ruling elite, who have no real ties with Canadians other than the economic and political power they have usurped and continue to wield against them. They operate through various governments, so-called democratic institutions, the cartel political parties of the Canadian parliament, the provincial legislatures and the Quebec National Assembly. Canada urgently needs a modern constitution that vests sovereignty in the people and guarantees the rights of all, including the Aboriginal and treaty rights of the First Nations and the right of the Quebec nation to self-determination.

The Failure of the Meech Lake Accord

On June 23, 1990, the Meech Lake Accord was defeated. It was a set of amendments to the Constitution of Canada negotiated behind closed doors in 1987 by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the provincial premiers. The failure of the Meech Lake Accord marked a deepening of the constitutional crisis which has now become an existential crisis due to Canada's all-sided integration into the U.S. war economy and state arrangements.

The Meech Lake Accord was signed as a result of the crisis which accompanied the 1980 Quebec Referendum on the place of Quebec within Canada and the refusal of Quebec to sign onto the Pierre Trudeau government's patriated Constitution of 1982. Trudeau had promised that he would draft a new constitutional agreement after the Quebec referendum was defeated. His promise was realized in the form of the addition of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and an amending formula to the *British North America Act of 1867 (BNA Act 1867)*. Called the *Canada Act*, it was passed by the British Parliament on March 29, 1982 and, on this basis, it was claimed that the Constitution was "patriated." While the claim is made that this ended Canada's formal dependence on Britain, the fact is that the Queen of England remains Canada's Head of State.

Canada's *Constitution Act* (1982) was the "Canadian equivalent" of Britain's *Canada Act* and its text was included in the *Canada Act* along with an amending formula and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, it did not recognize Quebec's right to self-determination and Quebec refused to sign it. This created a constitutional crisis which the Mulroney government attempted to resolve by commencing constitutional negotiations in 1985. These negotiations culminated with the Meech Lake Accord two years later on June 23, 1987.

Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa said the Constitution needed five modifications for Quebec to sign. On this basis, the following changes were laid out in the Accord:

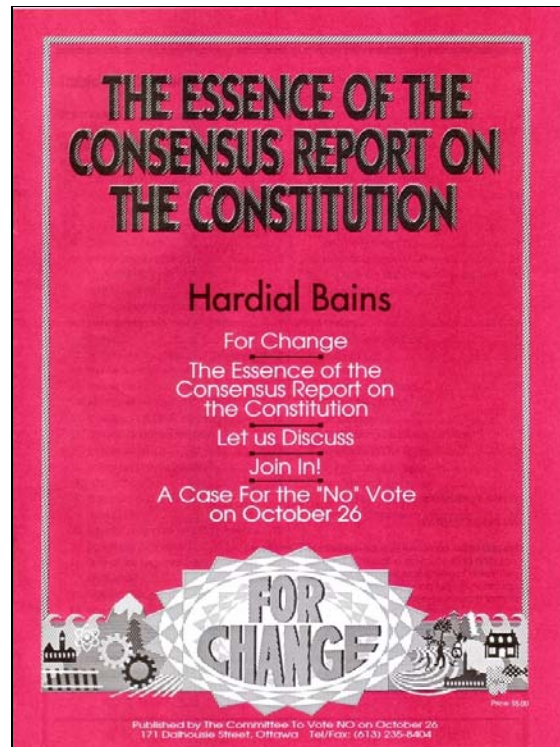
- constitutional recognition of Quebec as a distinct society;
- a constitutional veto for Quebec over constitutional change;
- a role for Quebec in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court of Canada;
- a constitutional guarantee of increased powers in the field of immigration; and
- a limitation of the federal spending power.

These amendments and the agreement did not address the causes of the constitutional crisis. These include: the need to guarantee nation-to-nation relations with the Indigenous peoples so as to end colonial injustice and provide redress for all the wrongs committed against them; the need to end all notions of rights based on privilege and so-called reasonable limits; the need to vest sovereignty in the people and not a fictional person of state, let alone one who is a foreign monarch; and the need to enshrine equal rights for all citizens and residents. Finally, it requires recognizing the right of the people of Quebec to self-determination, including secession if they so decide -- something the Meech Lake Accord refused to do.

Instead, the Meech Lake Accord seeking to maintain the status quo, declared Quebec a "distinct

society" within Canada; it gave Quebec a constitutional veto; increased provincial powers with respect to immigration; extended and regulated the right to reasonable financial compensation for any province that opted out of any future federal programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction; and provided for provincial input in appointing senators and Supreme Court judges.

Because the Meech Lake Accord would have changed the Constitution's amending formula and modified the Supreme Court, all provincial and federal legislatures had to consent to it within three years. The 10 provincial premiers soon agreed but, as the three-year deadline for consent of all legislatures drew near, the consensus began to unravel. To try to save Meech, a First Ministers' Conference was held 20 days before the signing deadline, resulting in an agreement for further rounds of constitutional negotiations. During that conference, Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells attacked the secrecy of the whole process of decision-making. On June 23, 1990, the deadline date, Elijah Harper, a First Nations Member of the Manitoba Legislature, signaled his refusal to give approval by holding up an eagle feather. This blocked the motion required for the Manitoba Legislature to vote on the Accord. Wells then cancelled a proposed vote in the Newfoundland Legislature and the Meech Lake Accord was officially dead. That is what was called the failure of the Meech Lake Accord.



Two years after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord another constitutional deal was reached behind closed doors in the form of the Charlottetown Accord on which a referendum was called. The first of three books written by Hardial Bains during the campaign (above) provided the only real information on the contents and significance of the Accord which was rejected by the Canadian people in the referendum.



Demonstration against Meech Lake Accord outside the Manitoba Legislature, June 21, 1990.

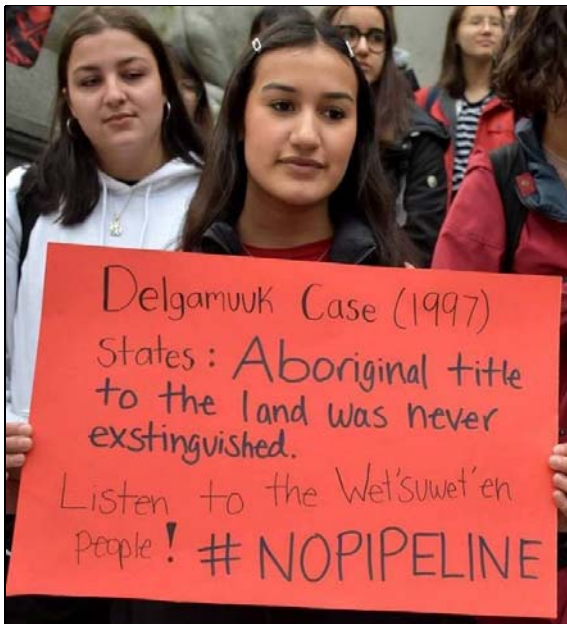
The Problems Inherent in the Accord

A main feature of the Meech Lake Accord was its failure to clarify what was meant by "distinct society" when referring to Quebec. It stated that Quebec was a "distinct society" and declared that the role of the Legislature and Government of Quebec was to "preserve and promote the distinct

identity of Quebec." The term "distinct society" remained undefined in the documents and the "distinct" features of Quebec were not enumerated, nor were any guidelines given by which these features could be preserved and promoted. "Distinct society" was subject to many interpretations, but the predominant one that emerged was the old fiction that Quebec was distinct simply because the people spoke French. By making language the only issue, the Meech Lake Accord formulation of a "distinct society" denied that the Quebec people comprise a nation that has historically evolved with a common economy and territory, language, culture and psychology that have the imprint of this development. Further, it denied the Quebec people the right of self-determination. Telling the Quebec Legislature what it was to do also did not go over well.

Another significant feature of the Meech Lake Accord was its overall promotion of national disunity and inequality. Defining a nation by language alone leads to the theory that Canada is populated by a large number of different "language-nations," all of which should or could supposedly have independent status, but only two of them -- the "English" and "French" -- are given pride of place.

The Meech Lake Accord also created disunity by devolving federal powers to the provinces, suggesting the existence of 10 small nations (the provinces) and one big one, the federal government. The two territories (Nunavut did not yet exist) were not invited to Meech Lake (they participated by video conference) because Mulroney considered they had insufficient power to affect any decisions. This was seen to imply that the regions of Canada each had different status. The Accord also gave each province a veto to block legislation and it was clear that each province would use its veto to promote the narrow interests of its own regional economic and political power-brokers rather than to advance an overall national interest or aim.



A third main feature of the Meech Lake Accord was its failure to affirm or even address the hereditary rights of the Indigenous peoples, which amounted to a suppression of those rights. The rights of the Indigenous peoples are not a peripheral issue but should be enshrined in the Constitution of Canada. They have a rightful claim to the territories of their ancestors and to the determination of what must be done with them. As sovereign peoples they have the right to determine not only their own affairs but to participate in determining the affairs of Canada as a whole. In the proposed modifications to the Constitution, the Meech Lake Accord did not deal with any of this. Indigenous leaders also raised two other issues. One was their exclusion from the entire Meech Lake proceedings. The other was the potential transfer of federal

services to the provinces implied by the clause calling for compensation to provinces for opting out of federal programs. This could have led to the dismantling of programs very important to the well-being of the Indigenous peoples.

A fourth main feature of the Meech Lake Accord was the anti-democratic nature of the proceedings. All consultations were held behind the backs of the people. In fact, people referred to the process as 11 white men in suits dealing with the future of the country behind closed doors. Once the Meech Lake agreement was reached in secret, the 11 First Ministers then tried to impose it on the people without any discussion or deliberation. There was no broad consultation of the people at any time, the agenda was not set according to what the people wanted, and the items discussed and included in the Accord were only those that the First Ministers wanted.

Meech Processes and the Spicer Commission

The people's extreme displeasure with the Meech Lake proceedings was captured by the 1990 Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future, commonly referred to as the Spicer Commission. Mulroney, who was forced to convene it just after the Meech Lake Accord was defeated, claimed that his government wanted to hear the opinions of Canadians. The Spicer Commission published its findings in 1991 with many Canadians expressing their acute awareness that something was lacking in the Canadian political process, that politicians were not to be trusted, and that mechanisms were required to empower the people. Many called for the formation of a constituent assembly which would enable the people to deliberate and decide on their own constitution. All of the proposals and recommendations of the Spicer Commission were subsequently ignored by the Government of Canada.

Problem Posed and to Be Solved

People today want to be the arbiters and decision-makers. This is the battle that is being waged everywhere on the question of who decides. Canadians, Quebecers and Indigenous peoples rejected the Meech Lake Accord because today history demands that power be transferred to the people who act on their own initiative and in their own interest.

The Meech Lake Accord confirmed that in the form of political power inherited by Canada, absolute power today resides in the financial oligarchs and their political representatives. This absolute power is not the defender of the rights of the people and is not at the service of the people's well-being and the resolution of the problems they face. The reality is that public authority has long since been destroyed and narrow private interests have directly usurped public institutions, which are now their preserve.

Today, no government has the consent of the governed and the need for democratic renewal is more urgent than ever.



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