

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Global Climate Action

- Speaking About the Environment -- What Is Relevant and What Is Not

Photos of Climate Actions September 20

- Canada
- Around the World

### Global Climate Action

## Speaking About the Environment -- What Is Relevant and What Is Not



## GLOBAL CLIMATE STRIKE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

To respond to questions received by readers on matters related to the environment, *Renewal Update* spoke to youth leading the climate strike in Quebec, Dr. Dougal MacDonald, MLPC spokesperson

on matters related to the environment, *TML Weekly* journalist K.C. Adams, and Pierre Chénier, Secretary of the Workers' Centre of CPC(M-L), on the topic: *When Speaking about the Environment -- What is Relevant and What is Not?*

***Renewal Update:*** We will start with the youth. Tell us about the actions you are organizing in Quebec for September 27.

***Answer:*** We will be many many people, that is for sure. Actions are taking place in cities and towns all over Quebec. The Montreal organizers are planning for some 350,000 people. In the Outaouais, which is western Quebec, we will cross the river to the Parliament and put the government of Canada on notice.

***Renewal Update:*** What are the central demands?

***Answer:*** Everyone speaks in their own name and puts their demands on their placards. They are there for all to see. Beyond that, we can say that as a collective we are quite clear that when it comes to matters related to the natural environment, the damage that is done every day is mainly the result of the pursuit of greed by the people in business and governments in their service. The science exists to have a sustainable world.

Many of us as individuals pay attention to being ecologically conscious in the way we live but damage to the environment is not the fault of individual behaviour. We have no say when it comes to setting the direction of the economy or power to hold the polluters to account. This raises an important underlying issue -- the need for people to sort out how to empower themselves because without that how do we guarantee the future for ourselves? It is a fantasy. The youth in their discussions are addressing who, where and how decisions are taken. The fact is that the huge demonstrations worldwide tell us something about what people power looks like and the youth are spearheading this. What the majority want cannot be denied. They just need to organize to get what they want!



**Student Climate Strike, Montreal, March 15, 2019**

***Renewal Update:*** Indeed! Even as various forces try to lay claim to this movement of the youth, the demonstrations are proof of people power. Keeping the majority in check is a full-time job

**for those who are determined to perpetuate their stranglehold on the decision-making power. This brings us to the next question: When it comes to matters related to the environment, Canadians are being wooed by what is called a Green New Deal (GND). What does the MLPC think about this?**

**Dougal MacDonald:** When looking at the GND, people must remind themselves that the crucial issue of safeguarding the natural environment must be taken up keeping in mind who controls the economy and the decision-making processes. Certainly, all investments must be made taking into account their impact on the environment and some are definitely more environmentally friendly than others. However, so long as the discourse on these matters is not in the hands of the people, the outcome is not in their hands either.



In Canada, what protects the environment is the resistance of the people to pay-the-rich schemes and the theft and plunder of the land and resources. The Indigenous peoples' involvement to uphold their hereditary rights as the keepers of the land is fundamental, as are the initiatives of young people to build a bright future for themselves.

Everyone wants a healthy natural environment and the MLPC opposes all attempts to divide the ranks of the people on how it can be safeguarded.

**KC Adams:** I concur which is why I would like to begin with some observations about the Green New Deal (GND).

The GND is aspirational in overall tone. It seeks to carve a niche in climate change and Indigenous rights. It contains a broad basket of policy objectives and calls on the cartel parties and official politicians to implement the GND. The language is highly dramatic to the point of being melodramatic.

**Renewal Update:** Please elaborate what you mean by an aspirational document.

**K.C. Adams:** As an aspirational document it calls on the people to join together to pressure governments and the cartel parties and their political activists to combat climate change and bring Indigenous peoples into the mainstream of economic and political life. Most importantly, it signals a broader movement to bring the people into line behind the movement of the financial oligarchs for green investment to gain acceptance within all the cartel parties. All indications lead to the conclusion that it is part of a public relations campaign of the financial oligarchy to open up new areas of investment opportunities for those who own and control social wealth. The public relations campaign is to create public acceptance of pay-the-rich schemes for private investment in alternate energy sources and affiliated sectors such as electric vehicles and green construction. This would also include public/private/partnerships in all the various sectors of what is broadly known as green investment. Who benefits from these public/private partnerships is an issue Canadians are tackling at this time because so far, in the name of high ideals, they have been massive pay-the-rich schemes which also serve to distract the attention of the workers from the fight for the respect of what belongs to them by right.

Green investment exists within a climate of disinvestment in the carbon fuel energy and use sectors

or at least its downturn. Many big banks and other financial and insurance cartels and pension and investment funds now have selective and even restrictive policies regarding carbon investment. It is part of an internecine dogfight within the ranks of the ruling class.

**Renewal Update:** The main party pushing for investments in alternate energy and forms of transportation and other aspects of the green economy has been the Green Party while the Liberals and NDP vie to show that they too have green credentials. Can you comment.

**Pierre Chénier:** The perception of where the Liberals and NDP stand on matters related to the environment is tainted by deeds seen to be opportunist while the perception of what the Conservative Party stands for is also skewed by public relations campaigns which present it as a defender of jobs and the economy at the expense of the environment. The fact is that the workers have reason not to trust any of them because they all pander to special interests one way or another. Attempts to "balance the economy and the environment" or which pit one against the other are irrational. An economy and the environment in which it exists are parts of a whole. The relationship of parts to whole can be cognized and acted upon but the aim has to be pure.



The deeds of governments at different levels betray their hypocrisy as in the case of Trudeau's purchase of the Trans Mountain Pipeline for \$4.5 billion to bail out Kinder Morgan and the Trudeau government's betrayal of the aim of environmental assessment requirements and promises to restore nation-to-nation relations with the Indigenous peoples who are the keepers of the land, and so on. Not so long ago, after the Vancouver Island federal by-election win for the Green Party, in response and seemingly in a panic to stop the rise of the Green Party, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh immediately withdrew his erstwhile support of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) \$40 billion globally controlled project in northern BC that relies on fracking for its natural gas. Many labour unions and the provincial NDP expressed anger with this sudden change of position. Yes, people are angry, unions were angry, but all of it hides that it is not the workers who control the stands which are taken by these parties, or by most of the unions for that matter. It underscores that the main issue when it comes to the environment is who decides what is done and to be done? It reveals the need for people's empowerment.

As for the Green Party, the BC Green Party forms part of the provincial minority government that supports the foreign LNG investment and is providing millions of dollars in pay-the-rich schemes to it.

**K.C. Adams:** The GND can be used to safeguard actual and potential carbon fuel investment by promoting what are called less carbon intense extractive measures in existing projects such as in the oil sands, and investments in carbon capture and "less carbon intense" carbon fuels such as natural gas. This has been a feature of the NDP/Green BC government promoting its involvement and pay-the-rich schemes for the \$40 billion LNG foreign investment in northern BC and the fracking for natural gas in the northeast as well as the building of the Site C dam and hydroelectric project. It may also signal renewed investments in nuclear power as a green source to



power electric vehicles or driverless trucks which will become common soon on the transportation corridors which are being built. While we deliberate on investments in hydro power versus fossil fuels we cannot forget who sets the direction of the economy and who it serves. Workers in Quebec are fighting against Quebec hydro-power being given away to international interests practically for free.

### ***Renewal Update: What about the involvement of private deals said to be Indigenous?***

***Dougal MacDonald:*** The way ruling elites are pandering to the Indigenous peoples and Canadians by claiming they respect Indigenous rights is sickening. It has become fashionable to apologize for crimes of expropriation and genocide and then carry on business as usual. The Lubicon in Alberta experienced what it means for the federal government to have the power to create bands and dissolve bands according to who it can get to agree with it. This is how the band council system was established from the beginning when the Mohawk were expropriated. The demands of the First Nations for consultations are treated in the most perfunctory manner, with utter disrespect. A company can call itself Indigenous, be private or public - which means it trades on the stock market for private gain not that it serves what Canadians generally understand to be "the public" -- it can be for profit or non profit, the issue still is who controls decision-making and who the decisions serve and how social responsibility is defined and enforced. This is the problem posed for solution in the 21st century.

***K.C. Adams:*** The GND emphasis on Indigenous involvement appears to be an initiative to bring Indigenous leaders into the campaign for green and other investments, open up territories where they have a legal existence, blunt the resistance of the people and their demand for nation-to-nation arrangements, and bring them into the mainstream of joint investment possibilities under the control of the financial oligarchy. Three of the largest current real estate development projects in Vancouver are investments of the financial oligarchs on Indigenous First Nations urban territory they control outside the authority and bylaws of Vancouver City Council restricting height, density and other issues. Certain oligarchs are also keen to bring in Indigenous investors or partners to participate in the Trans Mountain Pipeline and other pipelines and projects.



As Dougal said, the GND shows that the crucial issue of safeguarding the natural environment must be taken up keeping in mind who controls the economy and the decision-making processes. When Canadians consider what investments are made, the MLPC calls on them to take into account their impact on both the social and natural environment. Some investments are definitely more environmentally friendly than others. However, attempts to establish what's what basically put us into an irrational pursuit because even the information about the investments and who owns what is not public information. The definition of what it means to qualify as pro-social is not in the hands of Canadians. So long as the pertinent information on the matters in question is not in the hands of the people, the discourse and the outcome are not in their hands either.

In Canada, as is also the case in the United States, the role played by the resistance of the Indigenous peoples to their expropriation and attempts to extinguish their rights on their territories is what

protects the environment. Their principled opposition to pay-the-rich schemes and the theft and plunder of the land and resources and their fight for justice and for their hereditary rights to be given a guarantee with consequences are heroic and deserve everyone's support.

**Pierre Chénier:** The voice of the Indigenous peoples as the keepers of the land is fundamental, as are the initiatives of young people to build a bright future for themselves and so too the concrete support industrial workers provide when Indigenous peoples and young people are fighting. Workers of Indigenous nationalities make up the vanguard of the Canadian working class. In the construction sector, the iron workers are models in every respect. We are one class, one people and we need to establish one nation-building project which upholds the rights of all.

Recently, when the new Champlain Bridge was inaugurated in Montreal, construction workers took the lead and said, because of us a virtual plan was turned into reality. We worked twenty-four hours a day seven days a week for four and a half years, in forty below and forty above, they said. A Mohawk elder gave the bridge the Mohawk Guarantee and, within this, the crane operators and all others are upholding their safety concerns, showing how socially responsible they are. It was a matter of great pride for all of us.

Nobody is confused about the interests we hold in common but those who control the political power do everything to stereotype people -- whether Indigenous peoples or Quebeckers or workers or everyone else. By creating this stereotype we are targeted in one way or another, criminalized if we do not go along with what is said to be good for us. We need to speak out against such things. Those who attempt to split the working class between this or that panacea, or get workers to attack the Indigenous peoples who are resisting should be opposed. Workers need to speak out against such things.

### ***Renewal Update: What then are the politics of the GND?***

**K.C. Adams:** To better grasp the politics of the GND and where it stands in relation to the important issues of the day, it is necessary to examine what is missing from its statements and website. The GND says nothing on the need for democratic renewal and for political empowerment of the people so that they can speak and act politically in their own name, resolve problems in ways that favour the people and open a path forward. The GND accepts the established political arrangement and electoral process designed to enforce the claim that elections provide the cartel parties with a mandate. It seeks to mobilize the people to put pressure on the cartel parties and hand over their authorship, their name, to others who claim to represent them. Under the current system, the vote means that others over whom we exercise no control are empowered to speak in our name. Many politicians speak in favour of the GND to give themselves credentials but the people do not control what they will or will not do.

For instance, GND also says nothing of the battle in defence of the rights of the people. In fact, it does not speak of rights at all. It has no comment on the anti-social offensive and how the financial oligarchy is using the period of the retreat of revolution to strengthen its overall control of the social wealth the working people produce and to attack the rights of the people in Canada and around the world and establish the global hegemony of U.S. imperialism. How does one defend the environment at a time nation-wrecking is the order of the day and people no longer exercise jurisdiction over their own land? The fight to protect the environment is really a nation-building endeavour on a new historical basis where the people are the decision-makers.

The GND says nothing on war, war preparations and the military-industrial complex of Canada and the U.S. within the U.S. imperialist system of states, not even with regard to their stupendous use of carbon fuels and effect on climate change. This is considered taboo, a divisive issue.



The GND says nothing of the constant U.S.-led attacks for regime change including the boycotts, blockades, threats of war and invasion, Special Forces operations and mercenaries active throughout the world to overthrow governments or destroy those states that U.S. imperialism cannot control. With the invasion of Libya the desert aquifers were destroyed. The military bases of the U.S. and other big powers create havoc on the lands and marine environments everywhere. Getting free rein to access the resources of the Amazon or Kashmir, Columbia, Venezuela, Cuba and other countries involves the commission of heinous crimes, including of clear-cutting which causes massive damage as do aggression and war. It does not bode well when these facts are MIA when speaking about what it takes today to defend the natural environment.

It is also relevant that the GND does not identify any social or political force that is blocking the change it says it wants to achieve. It does not identify any social class forces in Canada and what their positions are with regard to the economy and politics of the country and specifically the policy objectives of the GND.

A deliberation on the advisability of promoting the GND should keep all of this in mind. What is missing is very relevant to the deliberation.

***Renewal Update:*** Not a few might respond to the observation of what the GND is missing by saying that to raise such issues is to be divisive. The aim, they say, is to unite everyone on what they hold in common, not what divides them. What do you say to that?

***Dougal MacDonald:*** It is disingenuous. In fact, even the discussion on what the people hold in common is missing! This kind of argument merely seeks to cover up that the people have no role in discussing how issues pose themselves or in setting agenda. It is a feature of cartels and coalitions to be exclusionary. Those who see the need to discuss how things pose themselves tend to be called extremist and calls are made and actions taken to defame them and on this basis justify their exclusion. It is the new feature of the refusal of the ruling class to be political and instead get away with nation-wrecking.

Nobody wants to be exclusionary in this day and age so to accuse those who are raising the need to discuss of extremism and throw them into the same pot as ideological fanatics is as desperate as one can get.

***K.C. Adams:*** By not identifying what social class force owns and controls the socialized economy and its direction, and effectively controls the politics of the country or lack hereof, what is hidden is who a program serves. Canadians need to identify the constant fights for control among members of the financial oligarchy and the authorities at different levels which vie to serve one side or the other or both at the same time. It is important for those who come under the influence of the GND to not permit themselves to become embroiled in the internecine battles of the competing private interests of the financial oligarchy, siding with one against another.

***Pierre Chénier:*** The MLPC is a strong advocate for Canadians to speak their minds. The fight of those who call themselves environmentalists against being defamed as foreign agitators or terrorists

is also important. They have the right to speak their minds, express their desires and agitate for what they think will provide solutions to the problems we face without being criminalized. By participating in organizing their peers and providing problems with solutions, people empower themselves. Headway can be made and is being made.

(Reference: <https://greennewdealcanada.ca/>)

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## Photos of Climate Actions September 20 Canada



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## Around the World



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