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Matters of Concern to the Polity

BC Election Underscores Political Impasse

People are discussing how to vote in the BC election in a way that favours them. The electoral process is a contrived farce because no matter which political party forms the next government it will follow a pay-the-rich agenda according to the demands of the international financial oligarchy. Meanwhile, elections no longer function to sort out the factional fighting within the ranks of the ruling class which becomes ever more vicious as narrow private interests fight to directly take over decision-making power.

The leader of the ruling NDP government called the election to achieve a majority so as to be able to rule by decree under the exceptional circumstances declared necessary to deal with the COVID pandemic. However, an election will not overcome the cause of the political impasse which is the result of no party presenting a viable alternative for the BC economy.

The distribution of cartel party seats at dissolution of the Legislature were NDP, 41; Liberals, 41; Green Party, two; Independents, two; vacant, one. The NDP formed the government through a Confidence and Supply Agreement with the Green Party that was supposed to last until October 2021. The NDP, sensing a chance to win more seats, unilaterally broke the agreement and called an election for October 24.

The BC Liberal Party has difficulty defining a distinct persona for itself as its program takes up the

same neo-liberal agenda as the NDP. It will also endorse deficit financing, borrowing massively from private moneylenders and spending huge amounts on paying the rich, propping up private enterprise and providing some money to people to keep the economy moving, with the money people receive immediately spent.

The polls in the mass media favour the NDP winning a majority of seats. This concerns many as cartel parties with majorities tend to be even more violent in their attacks on Indigenous peoples and the working class and their rights and claims.

Within the situation, to block both the NDP and Liberals from winning a majority of seats, many people are said to be considering voting for the Green Party where it has a chance of winning the riding. In Chilliwack-Kent people could vote for the independent candidate Jason Lum.

If the Greens are wiped out on Vancouver Island this would be to the advantage of an NDP majority government. People on the island are being made aware of that fact.



The Greens by themselves cannot possibly win enough seats to stop an NDP majority if the Liberal Party falls to only 35 or so seats as the polls suggest. If there is to be any chance to stop an NDP majority government, this means people who live in ridings with close races between the NDP and Liberals would have to stay home and not vote for the NDP, or vote for a small party or independent. This is not to suggest voting for the Liberals but rather simply not voting or voting for a small party in those ridings in which the vote between the NDP and Liberals is expected to be close.

An Election Held During Pandemic and Economic Crisis

- K.C. Adams -



Indigenous youth and their supporters gather on the BC legislature steps during February 2020, holding discussions and other programs to work out how to have their voices heard and rights recognized.

BC Premier John Horgan has called a provincial election for October 24. By calling an election, the NDP minority government unilaterally broke an agreement with the Green Party to govern

until next year. The surprise election has been characterized as an NDP shock-and-awe attack to gain absolute control of the Legislature.

The election farce is designed to stop the movement of the people towards their empowerment. Suggesting an election of a certain cartel party will solve the problems the people and economy face is a massive disruption and fraud. The people must remain faithful to their own efforts in organizing actions with analysis to defend their claims and the rights of all and not fall prey to the deception of this election in the service of the rich. The ruling elite use election frauds to convince working people to see solutions to economic and social problems in voting for a cartel party rather than through their own empowerment and independent organizations dedicated to building the New.



The election during the pandemic and economic crisis exposes in a dramatic way the failings of the current electoral process. The election as it has unfolded reveals the absence of democracy for the broad masses of the people and their alienation from any possibility to participate meaningfully in choosing the candidates in the election or subsequently the members of the government.

Premier Horgan called the election on September 21. Anyone wishing to run in the election had to register with Elections BC by October 2. No other party was privy to the call of the election. This meant that the polity and their collectives had only eleven days to choose and register candidates. This fact alone exposes the outdated and backward method of choosing candidates, which effectively excludes the vast majority of people and their collectives from a process the state-financed political parties dominate. In a modern democracy the selection of candidates should be a most important process that directly involves the people and their collectives. Otherwise, the vote for a government representative becomes meaningless.

State-financed political parties and monopoly-controlled mass media dominate a corrupt electoral process where cartel parties of the ruling elite are brought to power not leaders chosen by the people and their collectives. The corruption is proved by the reality that only two state-financed parties, the NDP and Liberals, had enough money and employees to register a full slate of 87 candidates. Even the Green Party fell short with only 74 candidates. Other parties dropped out altogether or fielded a smaller number.

Ten parties in total will run at least one candidate, plus 24 independents, for a total of 332 registered candidates. The 10 parties participating in the election is down from 18 parties that presented candidates in the 2017 provincial election. The current 332 candidates are also fewer than the 371 candidates in the previous election.

During a press conference, Sonia Furstenuau, the new leader of the provincial Green Party, expressed dismay that her party was fielding fewer candidates than in 2017. She accused Premier Horgan of taking advantage of the NDP's position as governing party and its receipt of favourable media coverage during the pandemic.

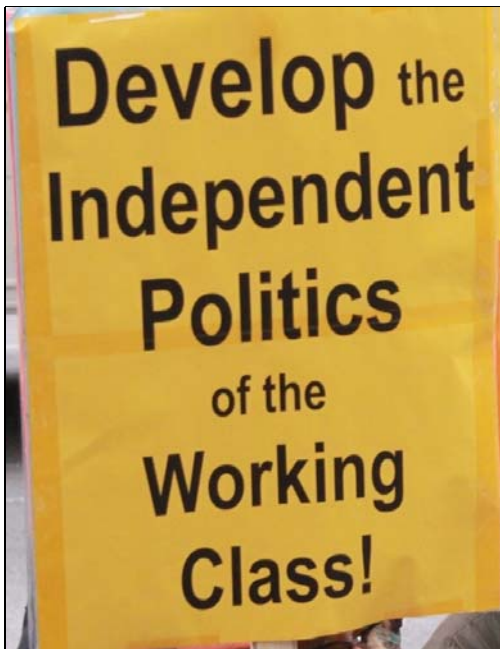
"We were blindsided by this unnecessary election call, we had exactly zero candidates nominated because we believed the Confidence and Supply Agreement and the legislation that ensures we were supposed to have an election on a fixed election date in October of 2021 -- we believed that

the NDP government would abide by their agreement and by the law. They didn't," said Furstenau.

The state-financed political parties, the public relations marketing companies, the neo-liberal think tanks and biggest monopolies and cartels operating in the province control the choice of candidates and decide the issues that dominate the election and mass media. Within the electoral process itself and mass media, the polity and its collectives play no role in deciding the official issues of concern and what an elected government should do to uphold its social responsibilities to the people and society, and to hold it to account if it fails to do so.

Because of the provincial pandemic health restrictions, this election reveals the truly undemocratic character of the electoral process. No all-candidates meetings in the ridings are scheduled. Very little mass work can be undertaken. News of the election appears in carefully controlled sound bites and ads in the imperialist mass media. The only discussions surrounding the election take place within small collectives mostly outside of any direct connection with the electoral process.

Almost immediately after calling the election, the NDP began airing campaign ads on TV and elsewhere attacking the Liberal Party and telling the people the issues in the election. These were soon followed by an onslaught of ads from the Liberal Party attacking the NDP and presenting its own version of issues. The NDP and Liberal ads and news coverage, their attacks on each other, and their promises and policy objectives are aimed at disempowering and depoliticizing the people, turning them into voting cattle and negating their own organizing and fight for their rights and claims.



Members of the polity are reduced to consumers of a show to convince them to vote for this or that cartel political party. The defunct liberal-democratic institutions, including the electoral process, are incapable of mobilizing the people to discuss the concrete conditions, sort out what has to be done to solve problems, and come to some agreement and consensus on finding a new direction and aim for the crisis-ridden economy so as to meet the needs of the people and society, and to humanize the social and natural environment.

On the eve of the election call the BC government issued a report in which it decried the economic conditions and the insecurity of the people:

"In Canada, economic activity fell by an annualized 38.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2020 -- a record drop in such a short period of time. In BC, the unemployment rate increased to 13.4 per cent in May from 5.0 per cent in February.... The public-facing service sector was hit very hard, with employment declines concentrated in retail trade, information, culture and recreation, and accommodation and food services. Women and youth were especially affected [...] The result was a situation in which the most vulnerable people in the labour market bore the brunt of the slowdown.... Nominal retail sales in BC experience[ed] its largest monthly decline on record in April. [...] BC had] 149,600 fewer jobs in August compared to February."^[1]

The liberal-democratic election fraud cannot solve the very real problems facing the economy and people. The measures the government has taken and its promises and those of the opposition refuse to address the failed direction of the economy and engage the people in discussion and mobilization to defeat the pandemic and to find and implement a new direction to stop paying the

rich, increase investments in social programs and defend the rights of all.

The people are determined not to allow the election fraud to divert them from organizing to claim what belongs to them by right. Through uniting with their peers and engaging in actions with analysis to solve the problems of the failed economy and its liberal-democratic institutions, the people are determined to empower themselves to build the New.

Note

1. See "Economic Recovery Plan for BC: Restructuring State Arrangements to Strengthen Provincial Pay-the-Rich Economy," *TML Weekly*, October 3, 2020.

(Photos: TML, R. Gillezeau)



Strathcona Residents Step Up Their Demands for Safe Housing for All

- Roland Verrier -



Following a lively early morning demonstration September 29, in which residents of Vancouver's Strathcona neighbourhood -- which includes a homeless camp in Strathcona Park -- lined the streets and carried signs through the crosswalks, the community is continuing to advocate for a solution to the housing crisis. There are currently over 300 people camped in the park.

An organizer of the demonstration, speaking to CTV News, made their aim clear: "Homeowners and renters and housed members of this community believe and want to fight for the rights of people who are unhoused in our community.... The camp has kept growing, the support services have not come along with it, and the politicians have continued to ignore it. Members who are staying in this park are not enemies of ours.



People who are managing this camp are not enemies of ours. That is not the enemy. The enemy here is the politicians who aren't doing anything and seem to think it's just going to fade away."

Vancouver's housing crisis has been deepening for years and the pandemic has made things worse. The federal, provincial and municipal governments continue to 'study' the situation and

accuse and blame one another, with no decisive action taken to solve the problem which will become even worse as winter approaches.



Besides the actions of the Strathcona Neighbourhood Movement which organized the September 29 demonstration, other community organizations are active in demanding housing for all. On its website the Strathcona Residents Association (SRA) notes that the provincial government is essentially shut down due to the election and that the federal government's Rapid Housing Initiative funds are months off at best, so the "ball is currently in the City's hands." In response to a report by city staff issued on October 2, Mayor Kennedy Stewart put forward a motion to

allocate \$30 million to purchase vacant apartment buildings, hotels and single room occupancy sites which the SRA points out will take months and do nothing to alleviate the immediate crisis. The SRA called on visitors to its website to apply to address the October 8 city council meeting online and/or email city council to support a proposal from two councillors to convert the City's existing Winter Shelter sites into Disaster Relief/Navigation Centres as an immediate measure to provide safe housing before winter.

Residents are being encouraged to keep up the pressure on municipal, provincial and federal officials and for homeowners to join the tax resistance campaign by withholding property taxes to the City of Vancouver "by way of deferral, assessment appeal or other lawful means."



(Photos: TML)

Decrees Will Not Control COVID-19 Contagion

Mobilize the People Not the Police to Solve the Problem of COVID-19 Contagion

- Normand Chouinard -

On October 1, the Quebec government issued a decree setting new containment measures in

response to the numerous outbreaks of COVID-19 throughout Quebec. These outbreaks confirm that the second wave of the pandemic has begun and several "red zones" have been identified.



Quebec youth have taken up their responsibility to the future of their society, as shown in this climate march May 17, 2019. They demand social and political solutions to the problems of society, including how to deal with the pandemic, not to have their behaviour criminalized.

These measures are accompanied by new police powers announced separately by Premier François Legault and Security Minister Geneviève Guilbault. The police interventions are mainly threefold:

- If they have reason to suspect that gatherings that exceed the confinement standards are taking place in homes, the police will intervene in the homes to stop the gathering and can impose a \$1,000 fine.
- If people refuse to allow the police to enter their dwelling, the police can quickly obtain an online telewarrant from a judge to enter the dwelling and issue a statement of offence.
- Anyone participating in a demonstration must now wear a mask. Police officers will also be equipped with the means to quickly issue \$1,000 tickets. The same measure applies to gatherings in parks.

Coming on the 50th anniversary of the invocation of the *War Measures Act* on October 16, 1970, the offensive character of these measures is particularly regrettable. The youth point to the irony of using criminal measures to sort out social problems. Previously they were criminalized for wearing masks at demonstrations and now not wearing a mask is a criminal offence. They point out that then and now the youth are demanding political and social solutions to problems. They oppose the criminalization of all of life where people are blamed for the problems and the state and its governments and agencies gets off scot-free.

The current measures announced by Premier Legault are similar to those in other provinces. They serve as an indication that the liberal democratic institutions have become ineffective in creating public opinion to persuade the population about the necessity of something.

In this case, most people do not appear to be opposed to safety measures such as wearing masks, but they do not see the necessity to treat it as a police matter. They deplore the government's refusal to ensure that safe conditions exist in the schools, hospitals and seniors homes where the pressure on the staff is very great. This is because the overall thrust of the governments in Canada is not to protect the people but to pay the rich and blame the people when things do not go according to their schemes. The inability of the state and governments to mobilize the people in the fight against the pandemic will not be solved by giving more powers to the police. In fact, this will only exacerbate the problems and will not solve the crisis of the institutions.

As well, media promote what they call "conspiracy theorists" who claim that orders to wear masks, or stay home, or not gather in large numbers are an infringement on the right to conscience as well as rights enshrined in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The claim is that they pose a danger to the security of the population and deserve to be criminalized. It is doubtful that their claims would sustain a *Charter* challenge given that the limitations imposed during COVID-19 would likely be considered "reasonable" by any court of law. What this propaganda does achieve, however, is to confound how the issue of rights poses itself, the role of the state and governments in using police powers to dictate the direction they want society to take and the fact that the people are deprived of access to the decision-making power.



How could upholding the right to conscience be juxtaposed with putting the lives of others in danger? Looking at matters this way, there is a problem when the state demands that people support imposing "reasonable limits" when they play no role whatsoever in deciding what is reasonable.

A serious problem governments face is that a majority of people are dissatisfied with the political system. They have no confidence in the institutions. This disillusionment with the political system and distrust of the institutions has been deepening for decades. Instead of solving the problem by affirming the role of the people in decision-making, the ruling elites resort to diversions to justify activating their police powers.

At the moment there are tens of thousands of teachers fighting every day to guarantee their safety and that of their students, but the government prevents them from playing the decisive role which belongs to them in deciding how to proceed. It is refusing to even listen to the demands to fund enough personal or safety measures or ventilation even though problems such as COVID-19 are likely to become more common in future.



Quebec health care workers demonstrate outside the national assembly in Quebec City, May 19, 2020. They demand that ministerial orders not be used to curtail their rights and prevent them from taking measures to protect their safety and that of their patients during the pandemic.

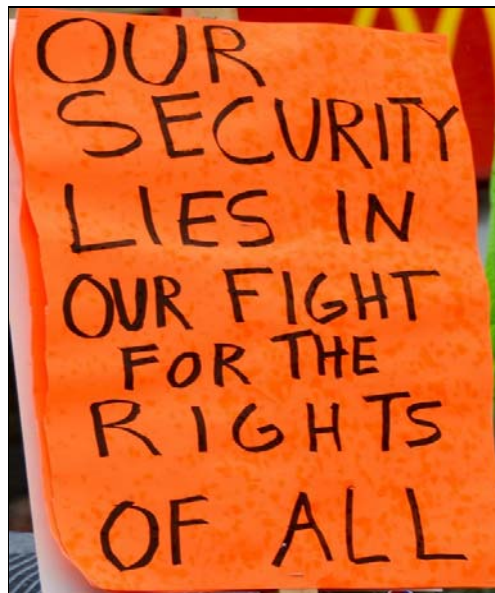
There are tens of thousands of workers in the health system who are putting their lives on the line to treat the population and find solutions to the crisis. The government responds with ministerial

orders so that it can treat workers like pawns on a chess board and thinks it can keep control of the situation that way.

There are currently hundreds of thousands of industrial workers fighting to maintain the measures they have put in place to protect themselves, but management has been given license to run enterprises with no regard for the needs of the work force. They are blocking the workers outright and overturning their initiatives despite the fact that the coronavirus does not obey their orders.

The great mass of youth want nothing more than to be responsible toward society but they too are not respected.

At a time when neo-liberal globalization will give free rein to even more pandemics and contagions, liberal democratic institutions are in crisis. To believe that real problems can be sorted out without the all-out political and ideological mobilization of the human factor/social consciousness is foolish. Turning social and political problems into law and order problems is not only foolish, it is irresponsible. When lives are at stake, it should be considered criminal. It is certainly diversionary and the working people should respond by demanding that adequate measures be put in place to ensure the safety of the population in all aspects of life.



For governments to accuse individuals of being socially irresponsible when the people have no mechanisms to hold them to account shows that the main problem facing the working people is how to organize themselves socially and politically to renew the democratic process. A political process worthy of the name democratic would not bring governments to power which pay the rich and wield the decision-making processes in their interests.

Social and political problems require social and political solutions, not the criminalization of the people. No to Rule by Decree! Police powers only concentrate decision-making in fewer hands. New social and political forms have to be created to vest the people with decision-making power.

(Translated from original French by TML. Photos: TML, Climat jeunes, M-H. Nadeau, FIQ)

Letter to the Editor

Re: Quebec Government's Latest Order-in-Council

The Quebec government's new Order-in-Council which it claims it is imposing to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Quebec uses police measures to guarantee enforcement while the government continues to ignore the role of the working people and youth in providing what is required.

The situation is becoming more serious and people want clear guidelines based on ensuring that all efforts are a contribution to keeping the pandemic in check. This is the responsibility of the government authorities and it is precisely what they are reluctant to do. Instead, now the government has issued another decree and fines for non-compliance. But the emphasis on police measures sidelines all those in health care and other sectors who have been demanding measures

consistent with the conditions and have been organizing since the pandemic began. As well, the youth are considered a problem instead of a major part of the solution.

For weeks since the re-opening of schools and bars and other places where people gather socially, the official line has been to "wait and see." Now that the pandemic is again out of control, Orders-in-Council, Ministerial Orders and other special powers are being used to attack the working conditions of frontline health care workers, teachers and others. Authorities must provide all the information people need, and especially those on the front lines, to become conscious participants in keeping the pandemic in check.



On a related matter, many people are now finding out the hard way that with the backlog in the hospitals and clinics, they are offered a "choice" -- they can either wait for an opening in the public system or pay a private agency to put their name on a waiting list, something all recent governments said they would never do. And it is done in the most dishonest manner.

Callers are sent to a website which operates like a scam. First, all their personal information is required and then they find that the service costs \$18.95. If they agree to proceed, they are told that besides the \$18.95, they will have to become a member which costs \$5.95/month, for "starters," and \$12.95 for a "family." If you click on that option, what charges will follow is unknown.

Santé-Québec (Info-Sante 811), says this method is "one of the solutions" because in this crisis "all available help should be used."

If the government of Quebec really had the well-being of the people as its priority in this pandemic, it would have outlawed such practices a long time ago. "External services" should only be authorized if they serve the health needs of the people without the payment of fees. More importantly, if more investments were made to social programs, these private services would have no role to play. Why are governments not fined when they pay the rich to run these services?

[signed]

A Reader in Ste. Rose, Quebec

Moves to Destroy Alberta's System of Higher Education

Fighting for the Future of Alberta's Universities, Colleges and Technical Institutions

- Dougal MacDonald -

Against the setting of vicious budget cuts to higher education by the United Conservative Party (UCP), many Alberta universities are engaging in comprehensive downsizing. Details differ across institutions but proposals and policies include raising tuition fees, merging faculties, cutting programs, deleting courses, firing staff, expanding class size, increasing online courses, closing

libraries, demolishing residences and so on.



Rally against Kenney government cuts to education funding at the University of Calgary, November 21, 2019.

These anti-social changes will negatively impact the education of future generations of Albertans, threaten the livelihood of the many people employed in and around the post-secondary education (PSE) sector, and undermine the academic research upon which the economic, social, and cultural future of the province depends. The University of Alberta's new president shamelessly congratulated a U of A researcher for sharing a Nobel prize in virology, just after announcing plans for massive layoffs at the university.

Specifically, the Kenney government announced it will slash PSE funding for the current financial year by five per cent, with further cuts of five per cent projected for each of the following three years. Those cuts, taking inflation into account, mean that 21 of Alberta's post-secondary institutions will lose one-quarter to one-third of their public funding over the four years, an unprecedented amount.



Strange to say, not a single post-secondary institution in Alberta has launched a fight against these damaging cuts. Instead, all administrative responses are essentially "Yes, Master Kenney, we'll just have to do more with less," as if the cuts were pre-ordained instead of the result of conscious anti-social, anti-education UCP policy decisions. Meanwhile the UCP government, which says it "must" cut PSE, is throwing billions of so-called job-creating dollars in handouts and tax cuts at energy companies such as Shell and Suncor that in turn are shutting down their projects and firing thousands of their workers.

While the PSE cuts and lack of institutional resistance are very harmful in and of themselves there is also the very important issue of how the compliant institutions are specifically deciding the details of their "restructuring." Many staff, students, and support workers have publicly complained about the outrageous manner in which upper administrations are shutting them and their collective organizations out of any meaningful democratic involvement in these decisions. Decisions are simply taken arbitrarily by handpicked, closed-door committees, then inflicted on the masses. Meaningful public engagement is non-existent. Instead sham consultations are held where pre-determined agendas are railroaded through. Only those at the top have actual input into decisions; everyone else is simply to rubber stamp them.

It is very clear to many that what is going on in higher education is totally bogus. Albertans have had decades of experience with Con-initiated fake consultations. The pattern is familiar. Decisions are made in advance; committees of those who are likely to agree with the decisions are

handpicked; a few "town halls" with predetermined agendas and strict speaking rules at a handful of microphones are held as window-dressing; input contradicting the predetermined decisions is ignored; and the "consultation" winds up with those in power announcing with great fanfare that 1) they consulted, and, 2) everyone in Alberta agreed with their predetermined conclusions. Surprise, surprise.

Of course, the phony processes in the PSE sector are facilitated by the fact that on August 19, 2019, the UCP government replaced eleven sitting board of governors' chairs and 32 other board members of post-secondary institutions with their own hand-picked appointees. Many sitting board members had not finished their terms. Many newly appointed chairs are energy executives (e.g., Nancy Laird, a director of Trinidad Drilling and a former Encana and PanCanadian Energy executive is Athabasca University's new board chair). Contrary to the Minister of Advanced Education's limp denials, the UCP appointments were very partisan and a direct attack on the foundational principle of university autonomy.

The lack of real consultation over the current funding cuts is the continuation of a long history of the deterioration of so-called collegial governance in the PSE sector. At Canadian universities, the main arenas for policy consultation are meetings of the General Faculty Council (GFC) and the Board of Governors (BoG). The GFC, sometimes called the Senate, supposedly has the last word on academic matters and the BoG has the last word on financial and administrative matters. Actual policy setting is left to the BoG, a small body usually composed of a majority of outside businesspeople (euphemistically called 'public members') and the president, plus an additional minority of academics, staff reps, and student representatives added for show.

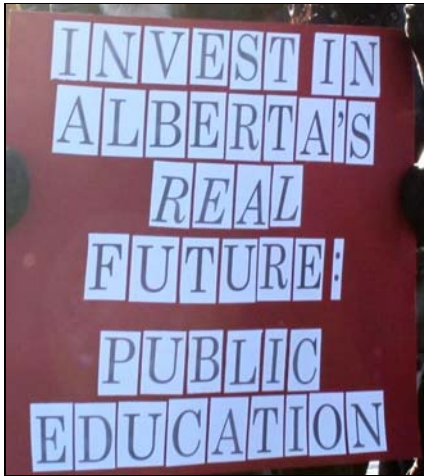
This bicameral GFC-BoG approach to collegial governance is a much-criticized model. More and more it is the BoG, dominated by political appointees from the corporate sector, which makes all the important decisions. Various manoeuvres are used, for example, claiming that a clearly academic decision is really financial. Another trick is to control GFC-BoG meetings with bureaucratic rules that, for example, keep certain items off the agenda, railroad through a "consent agenda," and rule people out of order if what they say threatens the BoG agenda. This is facilitated by the fact that the university president chairs the meetings and makes the final ruling on all such matters. Finally, there is also the lurking presence of certain wealthy private donors who can use their financial leverage and connections to exert backroom influence on university decisions.

Other models of university governance exist. At the University of Cambridge in Britain, for example, the official governing body, known as Regent House, consists of academic and academic-related staff of the University's colleges and departments, numbering over 3,000. A similar model is in place at Oxford University, where the Congregation, as it is called, numbers about 5,500 members of academic and administrative staff. This is said to be the sovereign body of the university. On March 6, 2018, university lecturers, striking to defend pension rights, were denied the chance to vote in the Congregation meeting and voted outside.

Consultation is generally defined as "an exchange of views." However, just exchanging views is not enough. If, in the final analysis, the subsequent decisions are based on the views of only one party then the consultation is phony. Genuine consultation must begin with the participation of everyone in setting the agenda. Setting the agenda is key. The discussion of an agenda preset by those in power is not consultation because a preset agenda ensures that what is discussed will only be of concern to the party setting the agenda. Other contending perspectives are excluded from the get-go.

The first genuine consultations at the Alberta post-secondary institutions should have focused on what should be their responses to the UCP cuts. As noted, there was zero public discussion of this. Upper administrators from the post-secondary institutions fell over each other trying to be the first to pledge their loyalty to the UCP austerity program. One wonders why; perhaps it is the fact that

post-secondary institutions' BoGs are controlled by the corporate sector. Or perhaps it was believed that those who caved in first would receive more favours from the UCP. No matter, without consultation all the post-secondary institutions made the arbitrary decision to accept the cuts without a whimper and then focused on figuring out who and what to eliminate from their institutions to accommodate them.



The current situation at post-secondary institutions is problematic but there is still time to build resistance. We must end phony consultations, secret meetings, arbitrary decisions, hand-picked committees, meaningless online input, and the shutting out of unions and associations. We must expose misleading messaging about so-called engagement, inclusion, and listening, and the diversionary warnings about "the need to act quickly." With meaningful public engagement, all affected can have a say to ensure that decisions reflect the broad interests of all university people impacted, as well as the interests of the larger society.

It is not too late to fight for our post-secondary institutions. Working together, faculty, staff and students and their organizations can still initiate and build a powerful movement for a sustained democratic exchange of ideas and follow-up actions. Collective action with analysis is what will counter the UCP's vicious cuts and create a positive future for the post-secondary institutions moving forward.

(Photos: TML, AUPE)



Permanent Resident Status for All Migrant Workers and Refugees, Now!

Oppose Canada's Role in Exploiting and Abusing Migrant Workers!

- Diane Johnston -



Canada creates many irregular migration programs to satisfy first and foremost the needs of the biggest exploiters of labour as well as a few small producers. These programs are the playground

for human traffickers of every description, including agencies that mercilessly abuse and mistreat those workers that do not agree to submit to conditions of living and work which are unacceptable.

Actions are ongoing across the country for the regularization of the status of all precarious migrants as well as to ensure that no undocumented migrant is deported. In that context, an action was organized in Montreal on September 23 outside federal government offices at Complex Guy-Favreau in Montreal. Organized by Solidarity Across Borders and the Immigrant Workers Centre in defence of all undocumented persons, participants were informed that 37-year old Mamadou Konaté, originally from the Ivory Coast, was apprehended by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) on September 16 and has been detained at Laval's immigration detention centre pending deportation to his home country.



Mamadou Konaté

Accompanied by his lawyer Stewart Istvanffy, Mamadou, an undocumented worker, voluntarily presented himself that day to federal immigration authorities in an effort to have his removal order suspended until his application for permanent residency under humanitarian and compassionate grounds is re-examined. His lawyer wants to submit new evidence pertaining to his work in three different residential and long-term care centres (CHSLDs) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The response from immigration officials was to have him immediately apprehended and incarcerated at Laval's immigration detention centre.

At the height of the pandemic, Mamadou was hired by a placement agency to work in CHSLDs -- COVID-19 "hot zones" -- where he cleaned rooms and corridors contaminated by the pandemic. At the end of April, he himself contracted the coronavirus. Once recovered, he returned to work in the CHSLDs until being brought to the immigration holding centre.

In an email to the *Huffington Post*, CBSA spokesperson Louis-Carl Brissette Lesage wrote that "detention must only be considered under exceptional circumstances, when no reasonable alternative to detention can be implemented." However, Mamadou's lawyer insists that "no exceptional circumstance was mentioned" during his detention review and that he is mainly being kept because he is considered a flight risk.

"It seemed like the CBSA agent did not want to hear anything about COVID-19 or the fact that he worked [in the CHSLDs] during the pandemic," his lawyer reported to the media. "It's really heartbreaking to see humans being treated with so little consideration," he said.

On September 23 at an Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) hearing review, Mamadou's detention was upheld. At the hearing, a CBSA representative confirmed that deportations have restarted, a decision that has not been made public but is, apparently, the reason behind Mamadou's continued detention. His next appearance before an IRB judge is scheduled for October 19.

In response to an inquiry from Radio Canada International as to whether or not the removal of refugee claimants had recommenced after being placed on hold because of the pandemic, the CBSA responded that before the establishment of reinforced border measures back in March, it had attempted to remove people as soon as possible in accordance with the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA). The pandemic had resulted in changes at various levels, but that other measures, such as removals, were carrying on based on need, CBSA said.

Since March 15, Radio Canada International points out, the CBSA has continued to execute a more limited number and type of removals. It was informed by CBSA spokesperson Louis Carl Brissette Lesage that: "The removal of serious cases of inadmissibility (criminality, security, international or human rights violations, and organized crime) continues on a case-by-case basis, after assessment, as well as the removal of those wishing to leave Canada voluntarily despite the current global pandemic. Removal executed at entry points and through the normal administrative channels by virtue of section 240(3) of the IRPR [Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations] are also ongoing."

The CBSA also noted that the removal of a person from Canada "takes place following a complex series of appeal processes and mechanisms that grant foreign nationals the right to due process" and that it is only after all these procedures have been exhausted that the CBSA removes a person from Canada.

The federal and Quebec government's temporary special program conferring status to some migrant workers is restricted to those who provided direct care to patients in long-term care facilities. Those working in COVID-19 infected seniors' residences preparing food or cleaning, often working through temp agencies for less than minimum wage, such as in the case of Mamadou, are now facing the very real threat of deportation. Attempts to justify such treatment shows the unprincipled role the government of Canada plays in permitting the abuse of vulnerable workers.



Mamadou's Story

Mamadou first arrived in Quebec in February 2016 after fleeing the Ivory Coast, where he had been imprisoned during a military conflict that followed a 2002 failed coup. According to court documents, he was "beaten, mistreated, perhaps even tortured, during his detention" at the hands of Forces nouvelles, a rebel group, between 2004 and 2005. He had been involved with the group

in 2002-2003. He claims that after he defected, he was imprisoned by them and now many of those responsible for the rebellion are in positions of influence in the present Ouattara government and Mamadou fears retaliation.

His asylum claim was denied because of his involvement with the group. Article 34 (b.1) of the IRPA, passed under the Chrétien Liberal government in 2001, stipulates that a foreign national is inadmissible on security grounds if "engaging in an act of subversion against a democratic government, institution or process as they are understood in Canada."

In a 2018 application for judicial review of the decision, his lawyer argued he was forcibly recruited by the rebels, which would not make him a "member" in the eyes of the law. However, that application was denied.

Two days before his scheduled July 9, 2018 removal, his request for a stay was heard. A doctor who had been treating him testified that he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and insomnia, as well as other ailments, and that he feared he would be "tortured and killed by the army." The stay was granted.

Since the end of September, Québec Solidaire Members of Quebec's National Assembly as well as Alexandre Boulerice, NDP Member of Parliament for Rosemont--La Petite-Patrie, have been pressing both Quebec Immigration Minister Nadine Girault and federal Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister Marco Mendicino to intervene in the file, but have been unsuccessful thus far.

"The refugee claimant and removal processes are exclusive federal government jurisdictions," Quebec Minister Girault said. "The issuance of a CSQ [Quebec Selection Certificate] besides running counter to [the Canada-Quebec Accord on Immigration], would have no effect on the current removal procedure," she said. Her press secretary Flore Bouchon added that the Quebec government is "appreciative of all essential workers who contributed to the collective effort in combating the virus." As for Immigration Minister Mendicino, no response has been forthcoming.

As of the morning of October 8, more than 37,500 people have signed an online petition calling on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his government to annul Mamadou's deportation order, regularize his status by providing him with permanent residency and put a full plan in place for the regularization of all undocumented persons.

Their demand to Premier Legault and his government is that everyone working in CHSLDs at the present time be included in the special regularization program, not just those working as orderlies.

It is our social responsibility to protect these workers, who are used by governments as a source of cheap labour with no consideration whatsoever for their lives. Here in Canada, the lives of many like Mamadou are rendered a living hell. They work so that they and their families can survive, and face the denial of rights and the threat of removal.

It must not pass! No one is illegal! Permanent residency status for all now! It's a matter of human dignity for all!

To sign on to the petition [click here](#).

A fundraiser for Mamadou has been organized by Solidarity for Mamadou Konaté on the website Go Fund Me. To date, over \$11,000 has been collected. To contribute, [click here](#).

(Sources: Solidarity Across Borders, Huffington Post, CBSA, Radio Canada International, Québec Solidaire, Go Fund Me, change.org. Photo: Solidarité avec Mamadou, Migrant Rights Network, N. Jiminez)

Actions Demand Justice for Indigenous Women and Girls

Thousands Respond to Death of Joyce Echaquan

- Christine Dandenault -



Montreal, October 3, 2020

In an outpouring of immense solidarity and social love, more than 5,000 Quebecers of all ages from all walks of life gathered in Montreal on Saturday, October 3 at Émilie-Gamelin Park to pay tribute to Joyce Echaquan and to support her husband, her children and the Atikamekw community. On September 28, Joyce Echaquan, a young Atikamekw woman from Manawan, a mother of seven children, the youngest barely seven months old, lost her life under inhumane circumstances at the Joliette Integrated Health and Social Services Centre.

At Émilie-Gamelin Park, speaker after speaker demanded justice for Joyce. They were: Marie-Ève Bordeleau, Commissioner of Indigenous Affairs for the city of Montreal; Viviane Michel, President of Quebec Native Women; Ghislain Picard, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador; Sipi Flamand, Vice-Chief of the Manawan Atikamekw Council; Jennifer Brazeau, Executive Director of the Lanaudière Native Friendship Centre; and Manon Massé of Québec Solidaire, accompanied by Jennifer Maccarone, the Quebec Liberal MNA for Westmount-Saint-Louis.

Emotions ran high as the demonstrators demanded justice for Joyce. The speakers also demanded justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, an end to the indignities and injustices committed against Indigenous peoples, the implementation by governments of the 142 calls for action of the Viens Commission as well as those contained in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. They demanded accountability and that immediate action be taken to turn those recommendations into reality. They also recalled the 2019 UN report decrying the abhorrent living conditions of Canada's Indigenous peoples. The protesters then marched through downtown Montreal, greeted by passers-by and encouraged by the honking of car horns.

Vigils, healing marches and rallies also took place on October 3 and 4 across Quebec: in Victoriaville, Quebec City, Roberval, Rimouski, Sept-Îles, Val-d'Or, Odakan and Shawinigan; as well as in Toronto, Vancouver and elsewhere across Canada. In addition, many health care unions, Indigenous communities, rights advocacy organizations and student associations issued public statements. Thousands of individual and collective messages of support inundated social networks.

Numerous Quebec artists, poets, songwriters and music groups launched a call for solidarity on Facebook. Messages, poems, drawings, songs and live performances have been posted there in

support of Joyce Echaquan's family, the Atikamekw community of Manawan, the First Nations, the Inuit and the Métis. Expressing the demand for justice for Indigenous women and peoples, well-known Quebec songwriter Ariane Moffatt wrote: "As a non-Native ally, I am marching with you and will continue to do so for as long as it takes to finally end all the forms of injustice you have endured for far too long."

On October 4, the 15th annual commemorative Sisters in Spirit Vigil was held online and in communities across the country to pay tribute to the more than 4,000 missing and murdered Indigenous women and to demand justice for them and for Joyce. The vigils included one organized in Montreal by Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The hundreds of participants reiterated their determination to fight all forms of discrimination and violence against themselves and their Aboriginal sisters.

Full support for the family of Joyce Echaquan! Support the Atikamekw community! All-out to end racism and indignities committed against Indigenous peoples!



Final tribute to Joyce Echaquan by the Atikamekw community of Manawan, Quebec, October 4, 2020.

Quebec City, QC





Montreal, QC





First Nations Museum, Wendake, QC; Shakhikan Centre, La Tuque, QC



Shawinigan, QC; Senneterre, QC



Toronto, ON



Vancouver, BC





Victoria, BC



(Photos: TML, CSN Quebec City-Chaudière-Appalaches Central Council, K. Brahma, Nuage Eelav, Mouvement d'éducation populaire et d'action communautaire du Québec, E. Worraps, M.J. Weizineau, UBCIC, M. Laquis, Red Cedar Woman, R. Grondin)

Indigenous Rights in the Philippines

Stand with the Igorot People of the Cordillera

- Steve Rutchinski -



Protest against the entry of energy projects and large-scale mining applications in the Cordillera, led by Indigenous women in Baguio City on the occasion of International Working Women's Month, March 9, 2020.

The Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) has launched an international campaign to gather support for the almost 50-year battle of the Indigenous Igorot people to assert their Indigenous and hereditary rights. Canadian mining companies are amongst those accused of widespread abuse, of causing environmental degradation and supporting killings in order to continue their exploitation and theft of the mineral riches of the Philippines that belong to the Indigenous and working people.

The Philippines is the world's fifth most mineral-rich country with reserves estimated at more than U.S.\$1 trillion in gold, silver, copper and zinc. Under the *Philippine Mining Act of 1995*, foreign mining monopolies are provided "incentives" such as paying less than five per cent royalties and no taxes, along with land ownership rights for more that 25 years with the possibility of extension. Armed Philippine military support their theft and plunder.



Canadian mining monopolies make up close to 20 per cent of all mining operations in the Philippines. They have a history of forcible displacement of the Igorot people of the Cordillera in Luzon, the Lumad of Mindanao in the south and of others from their hereditary lands.

Barrick Gold, OceanaGold, TVI Pacific Inc. and other Canadian mining monopolies are among those enabled to act with impunity against the Indigenous people of the Philippines. Since the Rodrigo Duterte government came to power in June 2016, the Philippine regime has undertaken an aggressive plan to exploit mineral resources. U.S. and other private financial interests, working in tandem with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, are the main forces behind "developing the mining sector" in the Philippines. Canadian, Chinese, U.S. and Japanese private mining interests have expropriated fabulous wealth from the Philippines under the Duterte regime. At the same time, since coming to power, the Duterte government has been responsible for the deaths of close to 200 Indigenous and other land defenders.



The Canadian government legitimizes the activities of Canadian mining monopolies declaring they are operating within the law in the Philippines, ignoring what these laws are and who they serve. The Trudeau government has asked the office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) to investigate "claims of alleged human rights abuses arising from the operations of Canadian companies abroad in the mining, oil and gas, and garment sectors." Furthermore, CORE has no power to compel any Canadian monopoly to co-operate and has yet to undertake a single investigation

since it became operational in 2019.

The Cordillera People's Alliance is a political alliance of more than 120 organizations. The Indigenous Igorot are located on the island of Luzon in the north of the Philippines. They are resisting escalating encroachment, occupation and plunder of the mineral resources of their lands by global mining monopolies.

TML Weekly stands with the Indigenous Igorot people and supports the Global Pact to defend

them and the riches which belong to them on the Cordillera.

The appeal of the CPA can be found [here](#).

(With files from Cordillera People's Alliance, Mining Watch. Photos: Cordillera People's Alliance)



Venezuela's Right to Self-Determination

Important Legal Victory in Effort to Recover Gold Seized by British Government

- Margaret Villamizar -



Demonstration in London, August 16, 2020 demanding British government return Venezuelan gold.

On October 5, a Court of Appeal in London granted the Venezuelan government's appeal of a decision handed down in July by the British High Court that "unequivocally recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela." The decision that was overturned effectively blocked the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from accessing the country's 31 tonnes of gold reserves stored in the vaults of the Bank of England. The Venezuelan government's intent is to use part of the reserves, currently valued at around U.S.\$1.8 billion, for humanitarian purposes by exchanging gold for funds that will be channeled through the United Nations Development Program to import food, medications and other supplies which the government cannot obtain directly because of the criminal U.S. blockade.

The appeal was launched by the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) against what it called the "absurd" and "unusual" decision by the British High Court rejecting its right to repatriate the country's gold and denying the Venezuelan people access to the means they urgently need to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The perversity of the British government's legal-political operation in this case is revealed in the recently published memoir of former Trump National Security Advisor John Bolton who said that in 2019 British Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt expressed enthusiasm about participating in the U.S. economic war against Venezuela, offering to assist "for example [by] freezing Venezuelan gold deposits in the Bank of England."

In 2018 and again in 2019 the Venezuelan government asked the Bank of England for access to its gold for humanitarian purposes and was denied both times. The second request, made after the U.S., supported by Canada and others in their Lima Group, put Juan Guaidó up to proclaiming himself president, was refused on the basis that Britain recognized the imposter and not Nicolás Maduro as the legitimate head of the country. It was in response to this spurious and illegal action of the British that the BCV launched its legal battle on May 14.

The October 5 decision of the Appeal Court calls on the government of Boris Johnson to clarify who exercises the *de facto* powers of head of state and head of government in Venezuela before a decision is made on who is entitled to have access to the country's gold reserves. The court has directed the British Commercial Court to establish this before any decision on the disposition of the reserves is taken.

The BCV applauded the Appeal Court's decision, saying in a statement on October 5 that it trusts the court's investigation will confirm its argument that while Britain may have recognized Guaidó as head of state in 2019 in words it in fact still recognizes Nicolás Maduro as the person who exercises that role. Evidence of this is that the British government has not broken diplomatic relations with the Maduro government; both governments continue to maintain regular consular relations with ambassadors in each other's capitals. According to the Venezuelan legal team, the initial ruling ignored "the reality of the situation on the ground" in which the Maduro government is "in complete control of Venezuela and its administrative institutions."



The BCV said it would continue taking all actions necessary to safeguard its "sovereign international reserves and the sacred patrimony of the Republic, which belong to the people of Venezuela."

While it is premature to declare victory in this fight, winning the appeal is an important step in dismantling the imperialist fraud by which the U.S. puppet Guaidó is recognized as the "legitimate" president of Venezuela by the U.S. and a shrinking

handful of other countries, including Canada with its assigned role as gang leader of the cartel known as the Lima Group.

During the past week another blow was struck against the regime change operation. The new Ambassador to Venezuela from the Swiss Confederation, Jürg Sprecher, presented his credentials to President Nicolás Maduro in a televised ceremony held in Miraflores Palace. Switzerland had been one of the first countries to recognize Guaidó after he proclaimed himself "interim president" on January 23, 2019.

(With files from Venezuelanalysis, Andolu Agency, mppre.gov.ve. Photos: Radio Havana Cuba, Hands Off Venezuela.)

SUPPLEMENT
50th Anniversary of the War Measures Act Invoked in 1970

**The Significance of the Proclamation
of War Measures**

- Pauline Easton -

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