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Federal Budget

Exercise to Cover Up Paying the Rich and Disinform the Fight for Rights



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Exercise to Cover Up Paying the Rich and Disinform the Fight for Rights

The conditions across the country and across the world are such that millions upon millions of people are thinking about the necessity for a new direction for the economy which serves the people and not the rich. They aspire to nation-building projects which vest the decision-making power in the people, not narrow private interests.

Monday, April 19, the federal Liberal government brought down a 724 page budget which enunciates plans to pay the rich, one scam after another. Monies supposedly targeted for child care

programs or long-term care are relatively small portions of the budget which are projected to be spent spread over many years. Most of this kind of social spending is a future plan or contingent on provincial participation with a very small likelihood of ever seeing the light of day.

To see the real priorities of the Liberal government it is important to look at what is being implemented immediately. In this regard, the budget is an exercise to cover up the pay-the-rich scams. It is written in a manner which serves to disinform, which is to say wreck, the movement of the working people, women, youth and Indigenous peoples across the country which is imbued with the understanding that the fight for lives is the fight for rights. The Liberal tactics underscore the cynicism of the ruling class which thinks the people are gullible and can be silenced while they can control the competition for power between the cartel parties by satisfying the oligopolies which demand the pay-the-rich scams.

One of the immediate measures contained in the budget was announced by the Governor of the Bank of Canada on April 21. The central bank will continue to buy government bonds to the tune of \$3 billion per week with no end in sight, the governor said. This practice is called "quantitative easing." The governor emphasized that this practice which has been going on since the beginning of the pandemic, is now "more under control" and this is a great advance. The fact that since April 2020 the Bank of Canada has been injecting \$5 billion dollars each week into government revenues and now this is being reduced to \$3 billion is supposed to be somehow reassuring even though this is utter nonsense. It exposes the true character of a pay-the-rich economy in which no money is made available for investments in education or health care, or to make adequate transfers to the provinces for social programs.

The \$3 billion allotted in the budget under the guise of rectifying the disastrous situation in long-term care, may or may not be spent in the next three or four years and will ultimately be handed to the private monopolies who profit from the needs of the elderly for care, but injecting \$3 billion per week into the economy to satisfy private interests has continued without fail every week since the pandemic began and will go on indefinitely as far as the ruling elite are concerned. The burden of paying for this practice of manipulating the central bank plus the ongoing borrowing from foreign money lenders will fall on the workers who must produce this value for decades to come. Of immediate concern is the fact that it comes with all kinds of structural changes which put decision-making directly into the hands of the narrow private interests as well as ministers who use prerogative powers to announce regulations and impose measures which inhibit workers fighting collectively for their rights.

The budget's centrepiece program on child care is an example. Its aim is said to be to liberate women to join the workforce in pandemic conditions. Its real aim is to divert attention from the heart of the matter when it comes to that program and everything else the budget contains.

The thrust of the government claim that they are looking after the economy is to satisfy the obsession of the oligarchs with the labour participation rate of all workers and making sure they do not fight for improved wages and working conditions. That is why the budget begins to reduce worker pandemic benefits at the end of June and completely eliminates them in September. To increase the female labour participation rate, business wants some form of daycare with "affordable" user fees. The budget itself presents graphs showing that Quebec's \$10 a day daycare quickly improved women's rate of labour participation by four per cent, soon leaping above the countrywide average after its introduction in 1997, which at the time was at a rate of \$5 a day. Getting the same done across Canada is intended to help big business interests and government employers, not women *per se*, who will nonetheless be forced to fend for themselves to find spaces and make sure the conditions are regulated and proper wages and working conditions are enforced. The business elite is demanding the provinces follow Quebec's lead and meet the federal offer with equal funds to subsidize private, or "regulated," daycare, as the Liberals like to call it.



Not lost on young people is the budget's failure to deal with the crisis in post-secondary education by investing in education. The privatization of post-secondary education is eliminating standards of enlightenment and culture in favour of training cadre for big business interests at the expense of the trainees. Northern Ontario is reeling from the attacks of the moneylenders and government on Laurentian University. Youth throughout the country are either denied opportunities for post-secondary education or end up with mounting student debt. Opportunities exist for those able to participate in the cut-throat competition which exists for jobs, which are not considered a right

but a privilege granted those who remain silent about the exploitative working conditions, especially in the majority non-unionized workplaces.

The rich elite are also manipulating the discussion around pharmacare and the necessity for a human-centred solution that does not pay the rich and bankrupt the country. Complaints that the federal Liberals are not providing much needed pharmacare in this budget ring hollow given the fact that during the pandemic the Liberals introduced COVID-19 vaccine pharmacare to pay the rich. They are paying foreign Big Pharma billions of dollars for COVID-19 vaccines that could just as well be developed and manufactured through human-centred enterprises in Canada that ensure the new value workers produce is poured back into true pharmacare for all and does not pay the rich. The situation is so scandalous that negotiations and contracts with Big Pharma to buy COVID-19 vaccines are considered top secret classified information.

The Liberal budget follows the same old direction with regards to the disastrous situation in the long-term care sector. Instead of building a human-centred system without private profit vultures, the budget rewards them with \$3 billion even though they have failed so miserably to look after those in their care. The budget merely mouths some vague words that the money will go to "ensuring standards for long-term care are applied and permanent changes are made." What are these standards, many want to know. Thus far, governments have permitted standards that result in unprecedented misery and death. The country needs a new direction towards human-centred long-term care for all who need it which is humane and enlightened and not a business to fatten the pockets of oligarchs.

The budget makes no mention of those things the workers have been demanding such as paid sick leave. Workers and their organizations have long pointed out this is a necessary "no brainer" social program in a modern society. Without it, any talk about controlling the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is meaningless.

The regular funds for the military, policing and government bureaucracy are all rolled over in the budget without much ado. Also "rolled over" without much discussion are the inadequate health and education transfer payments to Quebec, the provinces and territories. Meanwhile, the federal government enters directly into business deals with health providers and banks, eliminating competing authorities so that theirs is the sole power which controls decision-making.

The budget contains only policy objectives and words to deal with the serious issues confronting Indigenous peoples. This is similar to what governments have mouthed for decades without any substantive improvement. It amounts to hot air while the plight of the Indigenous peoples continues to worsen. It is unconscionable.

The issue of corrupt government borrowing of funds from global moneylenders is not addressed. Government borrowing from private sources is simply glossed over with cheery words that interest

rates are low and the economy will grow, bringing prosperity back again. What the borrowing from private sources will do is allow the moneylenders to feast on the new value Canadian workers produce for decades to come. The deficit is \$354.2 billion this fiscal year, \$154.7 billion the next. By the end of that second fiscal year, the federal debt is expected to climb to over \$1.2 trillion. Much of this borrowed money will go to the many pay-the-rich schemes contained in the budget plus the many more that will invariably arise as the oligarchs demand money to "create or save jobs." The fact is that at this point nobody can predict where the pandemic is headed and what it will take to finally bring it under control. The one constant people can predict is that the government will continue to pay the rich. The other constant that the people can predict is that they will continue to fight for what belongs to them by right until they succeed in tuning things around and the crisis is resolved in a manner that favours them, not the rich. Government borrowing from private moneylenders must cease as a starting point to turning things around. Far from taking this measure, the federal government and Finance Minister are past masters at finding new ways to pay the rich! They equate the prosperity of the rich with that of the society even though the society is being ground under. This must be denounced.

All payments to the rich must be stopped and instead that money should be dedicated to establishing human-centred public enterprises and mobilizing millions of workers to operate them and thus produce new value for the common good and not the rich.



The Right to Child Care

The pandemic has exposed the failings of the prevailing system of private for-profit child care subsidized through government coffers yet still with large user fees. Quebec's ten dollar a day daycare is presented as better yet how inadequate it is is not discussed. It is a system heavily criticized for not providing daycare workers with the conditions, training and pay they need and demand. Furthermore, it fails to produce enough spaces and forces families to add their names to one waiting list to be put on another waiting list for a daycare space. Human resources are wasted on complicated tax calculations and the fend-for-oneseif dictate is not addressed despite the provision of this daycare system. Outbreaks of COVID-19 in Quebec daycare centres have now also become another cause for anxiety.

Consternation has arisen in business circles that the economy, especially certain sectors, will not have enough workers to meet demand in the coming period. They claim the pandemic means the number of immigrant workers and temporary foreign workers that business regularly demands has fallen. The biggest private interests are nonetheless permitted to bring in contract workers unimpeded. Also, many women workers have had to drop out of the workforce to look after their children, either because daycare is not available, is too expensive or the kids have been forced into online learning and require supervision.

Business circles want more women in the workforce. To fulfill this demand, it has occurred to the elite that some form of child care will serve them to get women back to work. But of course, the business elite refuse to pay for the value child care and early learning workers produce and that is a major issue. They want payment to come from government tax revenue and user fees and not in a proper exchange for the value they receive and consume from both the workers freed to work for them in the present and the future workers cared for and educated socially.

Paying less for child care services is a dire need for families who cannot afford to pay the exorbitant fees child care currently costs them. However, to believe that under a vicious anti-social offensive whose aim is privatization and the dismantling of all public services this will create public services would be a serious mistake. It is like believing that private seniors' homes look after seniors.



A human-centred child care and early learning system is required which expands the right to education for all from birth to passing away. This requires new thinking to establish unity between aim and practice to serve the people and not the oligarchs. To build a human-centred education and child care system requires physical infrastructure and trained workers and educators.

Building infrastructure to serve the new requires human-centred construction enterprises where the value workers produce is poured back into the system for the common good and not captured in the coffers of the global oligarchs. Training child care and early learning workers in the necessary skills requires education infrastructure. Retaining workers requires conditions of work and pay that ensure their continuing commitment to the work.

A human-centred child care and early learning system could become an example and catalyst to fulfill the dream of the right to education for all and even the right to housing for all. This could result from the creation of permanent human-centred public construction enterprises across the country to build and maintain infrastructure without oligarchs sucking away new value from what construction and other workers produce.

Only the concerted collective actions of families and communities to affirm their right to child care will provide the people with what they require. The people of Canada must set the standards and make sure they are enforced. Any other approach will be to mark time, which Canadians cannot afford to do.

Depth of Liberals' Wretchedness

When the former Harper government started writing mega laws or mega budgets which were hundreds of pages and contained all kinds of hidden agenda, the Liberals cried blue murder. Now

they find it expedient to do the same.

The CBC report states: "[...] in 2015, the Harper government included a provision in a budget bill that retroactively rewrote Canada's access to information law to protect the RCMP from being charged by the Information Commissioner for destroying gun registry documents before legislation to scrap the gun registry was adopted by Parliament.

"The Liberal Party's 2015 campaign platform sharply criticized the practice, saying Harper's government had 'used omnibus bills to prevent Parliament from properly reviewing and debating' proposals.

"'We will change the House of Commons standing orders to bring an end to this undemocratic practice,' Trudeau's Liberals vowed."

This budget document includes, besides other things, "changes to Canada's elections act, new rules for judges' pension, retroactive authorization for First Nations to postpone elections during the pandemic, new powers for the immigration minister to issue instructions on express entry for permanent resident applicants."

"Budget 2021 proposes to introduce amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* to specify that making or publishing a false statement in relation to a candidate, prospective candidate, or party leader would be an offense only if the person or entity knows that the statement is false," reports indicate. It refers to a squabble between the cartel parties over whether to include the idea that the person making the false statement must know it to be false in order for the act to be an offense. None of it contributes to raising the level of political discourse in the country but, on the contrary, is a way to settle scores with rivals or "quietly" clean up the corrupt practices which exist within the liberal democratic institutions.

Media reports are quick to assure us that the practice started by the prior Harper government of including non-budgetary items in a budget is now a new normal without telling us what this even means for the polity. What they consider to be normal is to remain undefined but its anti-social content is evident. Both the budget, comments from the opposition cartel parties and media reporting, along with endorsements from big business all qualify as an attempt to stop any such discussion about anything rational, especially about what can be done differently. All of it is an exercise in making sure the stranglehold on power of the rich remains intact.

There is nothing "normal" about a society that equates the prosperity of the rich with that of the society which is being ground under because of the negation of the human factor/social consciousness. Their motive for the economy cannot be allowed to continue if the human and natural resources of the country are to be dedicated to the well-being of its people.

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