

Voices from the Floor

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Special points of interest:

- The Next General Meeting will be in Victoria, BC on Saturday, June 22, 2002. If you are in the Lower Mainland and you would like to attend please contact the Office asap.
- The Local is working to keep vehicle insurance rates down for more info contact Brother Harry Moon at the Local's Office

Editorial Policy: Letters and submissions are encouraged. The opinions expressed may not be those of either Local or the National Union.

Editorial Board:
Darcy Suehn and Gavin McGarrigle

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NDP: Enter stage left?

By Brother Buzz Hargrove, CAW National President.

From The Globe and Mail, Friday, June 7, 2002 – Page A19

The timing of Alexa McDonough's resignation as leader of the NDP was unusual, to say the least -- coming smack in the middle of the Liberal Party's most difficult political week in a decade. But though Ms. McDonough's resignation was over-

shadowed by the feuds within Liberal ranks, the timing of her announcement reminded us of one crucial and optimistic fact.

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Photo from the CAW website. Basil (Buzz) Hargrove, CAW National President, centre, making a presentation to the Romanow Commission on Medicare in Ottawa. For more info visit www.caw114.bc.ca and follow the link to the CAW website.

Local hero honoured

By Brother Darcy Suehn.

As part of the April General Meeting Brother Bill Gaucher, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 114, was given a surprise award for 25 years of membership in the union.

President Todd Romanow made the presentation of an engraved plaque after a short speech that clearly moved Brother Gaucher. Although, all members with 25 years in the union are given a

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While Canada's left faces huge political challenges, it also faces huge opportunity. The Liberals' position as the natural governing party in Ottawa is suddenly in question. The right remains divided; the political appeal of hard-nosed neo-conservatism has clearly peaked. And millions of average Canadians express deep and growing concerns about their health care, the state of their kids' schools, the crumbling of their cities, and the decline of their environment.

The environment is ripe for a forceful political challenge from a party that speaks to the concerns of working people and their families. In short, there are acres of political room on the left of the Canadian political spectrum, just begging to be filled. The challenge facing the NDP, and its new leader, will be to convert that political potential into concrete political progress.

Leadership has certainly been a major factor in the NDP's flagging political fortunes. But at the same time, the NDP's troubles clearly run much deeper than its leader.

And so this leadership race will be a crucial test for the party -- not just of its ability to choose an effective leader, but of its ability to reshape itself into a more effective and credible political vehicle.

The federal NDP squandered a similar opportunity at its so-called "renewal" convention last November. Facing calls for a fundamental political restructuring, the NDP opted instead for a tame, internal reform process.

Not surprisingly, this official renewal hasn't amounted to a hill of beans. The committee charged with implementing the party's lofty "revitalization" hasn't had a single face-to-face meeting since the convention. The party continues to look inward, and is more invisible than ever in federal politics.

Meanwhile, a whole new generation of left-wing activists wanders the political wilderness, because for them the NDP -- and electoral politics in general -- holds no relevance.

With this leadership race, the NDP has a second chance to take on the monumental rebuilding that is essential to its survival. The NDP's next leader will have to position his or her campaign as the opening chapter in a historic remaking of the party itself. In short, the new leader needs to be committed to building a new party -- whether we still call that party the "NDP," or we eventually call it something else.

Here are some of the key changes the party's new leader will have to implement.

A Clear Political Mission: Some still believe the NDP's fortunes would be enhanced by embracing a middle-of-the-road, business-friendly ideology, often called "the third way". But the electoral arithmetic that has rewarded parties like Tony Blair's New Labour -- whose policies are indistinguishable from Canada's Liberals -- clearly doesn't apply in Canada. We already have three staunchly pro-business parties competing in English Canada. We don't need another one.

Voters need to know what side of the fence the NDP is on. And contrary to the claims of the pundits, a left party can indeed speak forcefully about the need for fundamental social and economic change in Canada, without consigning itself to the political margins. We cannot promise instant utopia. But we can propose smart, concrete policies to roll back the power of business over our lives, in incremental but important ways.

Those reforms can be advanced as part of a long-run evolution toward a more balanced, democratic society. For this to work, however, the party needs to dispense with the pretense that it speaks for "all Canadians," in some grand, mushy consensus. The party must be the voice of poor

and working Canadians, and organize itself to lead a struggle against those who exploit them.

An Inspiring, Unifying Movement: Business parties run on financial donations from a rich and powerful elite. But the lifeblood of a left-wing party is the voluntary enthusiasm and passion of its grassroots partisans. I meet thousands of Canadians, many of them young people, who are as committed and hopeful about building a better future as ever. But the NDP has exhausted its credibility as a force for progressive change with these constituencies. Most have switched their allegiance to other parties (like the Greens), or abandoned electoral politics altogether.

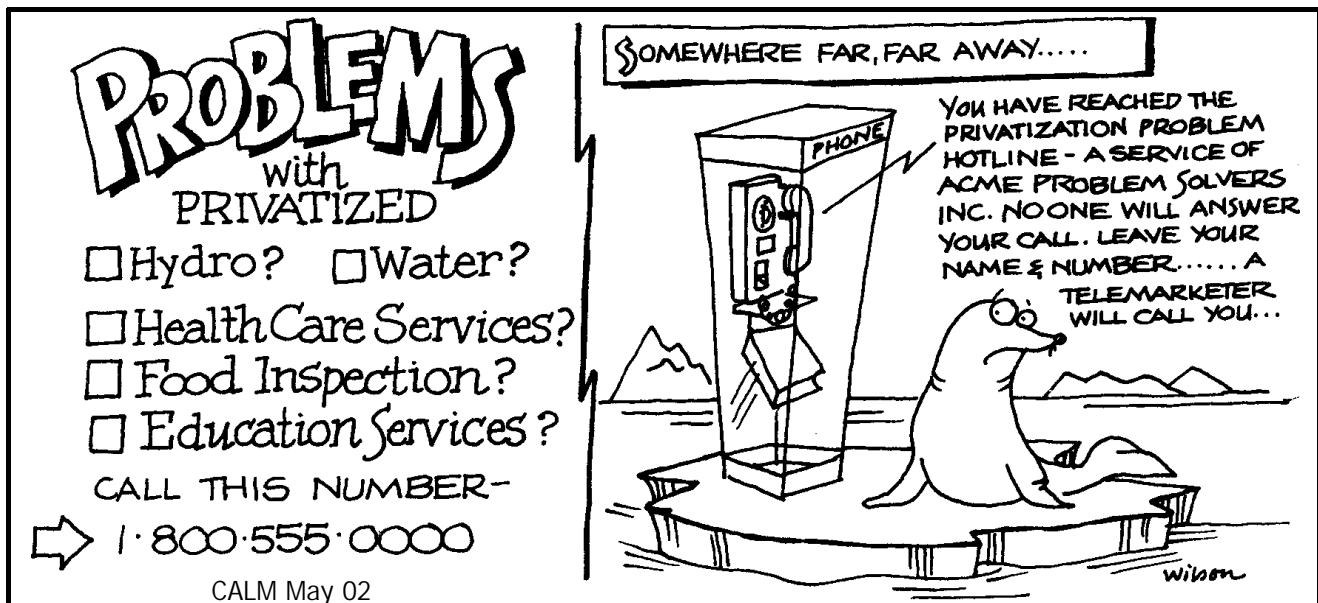
The NDP needs to win back the active support of those who believe most passionately in a better and more just society. Part of this will involve rebuilding the party's credibility on policy issues. But part must involve a dramatically new organizational approach. The party should initiate a new coalition with labour activists, students, women, anti-globalization campaigners, and environmentalists. The basis of this coalition must be an audacious and ambitious effort to change society -- not just to help some politicians get re-elected.

A New Relationship With Labour: The marriage

between the party and organized labour is in deep trouble. There is not a single union in Canada that can claim a mandate from its rank-and-file members for continued financial and political support for the NDP; union members are no more likely to vote for the party than the electorate at large. For their part, unions have used top-down NDP endorsements as a sorry proxy for the harder process of educating and organizing their members around political issues -- member by member, workplace by workplace.

The labour movement and the party will both be better off if we call an end to this fiction, and replace it with efforts to involve rank-and-file union members in more genuine and democratic forms of political action. The labour movement, with its organizational strength and its working-class credibility, must be a core partner in left politics, arm-in-arm with our social allies. But we need to find a completely new expression for that relationship.

A leader who delivers on these priorities is a leader who could make the party a relevant force once again in Canadian politics, a leader who could win great things for working people -- even if they never win a federal election. Who is the candidate who will take up this historic challenge?



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plaque this occasion was clearly significant in both its public nature and sincerity of the sentiments expressed. Brother Gaucher has been an important part of the Locals growth and will hopefully be a part of its' continued success.



Photo by Brother Darcy Suehn.
Brother Gaucher says thanks the at the April 27, 2002 General Meeting.

Enrons Problems

Briarpatch/CALM

Beginner Capitalism

You have two cows. You sell one and buy a bull. Your herd multiplies and the economy grows. You sell them and retire on the income.

Capitalism Enron Style

You have two cows. You sell three of them to your publicly listed company using letters of credit opened by your brother-in-law at the bank, then execute a debt-equity swap with an associated general offer so that you get all four cows back, with a tax exemption for five cows. The milk rights of the six cows are transferred via an intermediary to a Cayman Island company secretly owned by the majority shareholder who sells the rights to all seven cows back to your listed company. The annual report says the company owns eight cows, with an option for one more.

Now do you see why a company with \$62 billion in assets is declaring bankruptcy?



Unstrike 2-the sequel

CALM

Baristas at 10 Vancouver Starbucks stores have launched an "unstrike" as they try to get the company to bargain. So far, the company, determined to break the union, has said no to every proposal.

The 140 members of CAW Local 3000 continue to work but are defying the company's dress code and are distributing leaflets to build community support. They're asking the public to not buy at Starbucks except for the unionized outlets in Vancouver and Westbank.

Health Care Watch!

We can afford medicare

NUPGE/CALM

Our health care system costs us less today than it did 10 years ago. Today, health care spending accounts for 9.4 per cent of GDP versus 10.1 per cent in 1992. The U.S. has the most commercial and most expensive medical system in the world. They spend 14 per cent of GDP on health care.

In 1998 Canada spent \$1,828 U.S. per person on health care, while the U.S. spent \$4,178 per person. Every Canadian has health care coverage while 43 million Americans are not covered and millions more are under-covered.

Study after study shows that Canada's universal health care system is more fair, more cost-efficient, and more effective than any private health care system.

Healthcare premiums

UNA/News Bulletin/CALM

Alberta and British Columbia are the only provinces that have premiums for health care. B.C. just boosted premiums by 50 per cent. Alberta's increase was far lower than had been proposed by the Mazankowski Report. The report noted that premiums cover only about 10 per cent of the total health bill and recommended they be doubled to cover 20 per cent.

Just last year, before the Alberta election, Premier Ralph Klein had been musing about abolishing the premiums altogether, a suggestion New Democrats and Liberals touted as a progressive tax reform measure.

But the people pushing to privatize health care believe it is important to keep paying a personal health care bill. When everyone is used to paying a health care charge it makes it less of a jump to paying a bill

for supplementary insurance, or directly for health services. Health care premiums are a key component in changing the way people view health care costs and making sure they see these costs as their personal costs.

The health debit card, also proposed by the Mazankowski Report, would make it easy to send everyone a statement on personal health care costs and would set up a system ready-made for user fees, like medical savings accounts.

But the strength and effectiveness of medicare is just the opposite of all this. With medicare, health care is a social cost, like roads or schools, a cost we pay through our taxes, preferably progressive taxes. We all benefit and we all have the security of a public system that is there when our family needs it, whether we can afford a personal bill or not.

Implementing user fees
is like using a bulldozer
to weed your lawn!

User fees don't work

NUPGE/CALM

Research has proven that user fees won't save the system money. A famous study is the U.S. Rand Health Insurance Experiment. Researchers found user fees did not shrink overall health costs and people got less care in plans with user fees.

The notion that patients abuse health services is wrong. As UBC health economist Robert Evans explains, medical procedures are not like free hot cakes; people aren't going to line up for heart transplants simply because someone else is paying for them.

In fact, most patient visits beyond the first one are requested by doctors, not patients. Patient-initiated abuse is estimated to be one to two per cent of total health care spending. Implementing user fees is like using a bulldozer to weed your lawn. User fees will cost the system more because of the higher costs of delayed care and the costs of administering payment.

Crisis in higher education: Finding a way out

Excerpt from an address in the House of Commons, May 10, 2002

by Dick Proctor, M.P./CALM

We have a growing crisis in our post-secondary institutions. Tuition fees have gone up by more than 120 per cent over the past 10 years. The average student debt load has tripled from \$8,000 on average to more than \$25,000. Indeed, we hear horror stories of student debt loads in the range of \$40,000, \$50,000 and even higher.

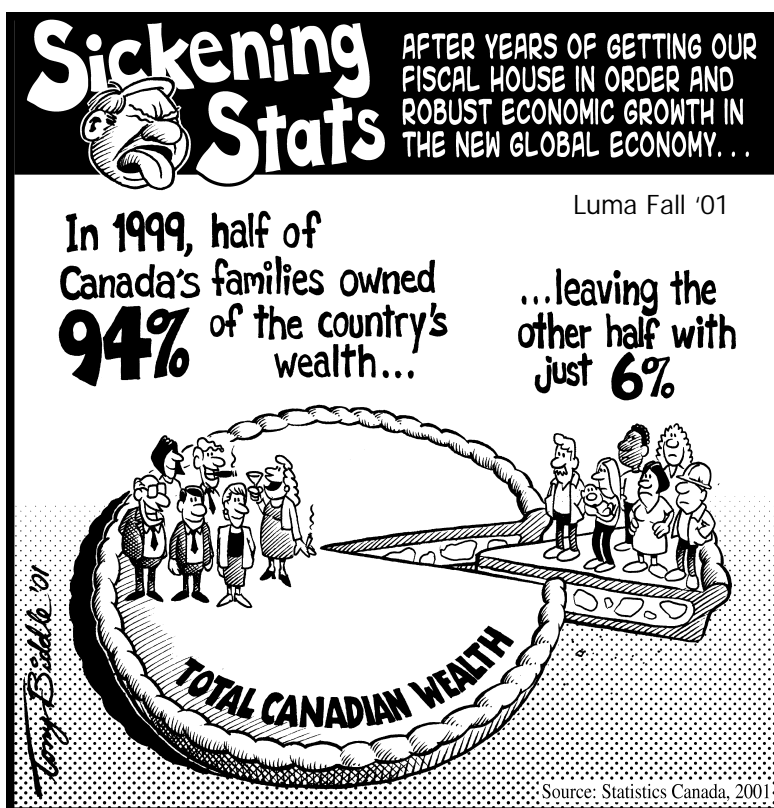
How did this crisis come about? How did it develop so rapidly? We can look at a couple of reasons, including the end of the Canada Assistance Plan and the beginning of the Canadian Health and Social Transfer program instituted a few years ago. As a result of the end of CAP and the beginning of CHST, some \$7 billion has been removed from federal transfers in post-secondary education. That amounts to a drop of

cent. This has to be territories and also by the students as That is why there is a One consequence is accessibility for low students. Statistics high-income families two and a half times sons and daughters to tutions than low-reason given most fre-holds with \$30,000 or lack the financial re-to discrimination, pure Education must be a the federal govern-equal partner in it. term, stable funding is national grant pro-the Canadian Federa-

advocated. Canada is the only industrialized country without a national grant program.

The real catch-22 is that with tuition fees 126 per cent higher than they were 10 years ago, many students are unable to choose post-secondary education. This in turn threatens our competitiveness in the international arena.

The manager of the Canada student loans program says federal efforts have missed the target. He says people are not qualifying in the magnitude that had been anticipated. It would therefore be debt forgiveness in name only. In the meantime, 350,000 students rely on federal loans worth a grand total of \$1.6 billion.



more than 17 per met by provinces and has to be absorbed higher tuition fees. crisis.

that we are eroding and moderate-income Canada shows that are now more than more likely to send post-secondary insti-income families. The quently is that house-less of total income sources. It amounts and simple.

national priority and ment must be an This means that long-essential. We need a gram, something that tion of Students has

Fifteen years ago there was virtually no difference between low and middle-income earners who planned to send their children to post secondary institutions. By the mid 1990s, pollsters could discern a seven per cent gap between low and middle-income earners in terms of their ability to send their children to post-secondary education.

The gap has continued to grow. Some 80 per cent of parents with household incomes of less than \$30,000 hope their children will go on to post-secondary education. The reality is that less than 20 per cent of them are able to save to assist their children. In contrast, virtually all parents with a household income of \$80,000 or more not only hope to send their children on to post-secondary education but more than 60 per cent of them can put money aside for the opportunity.

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, introduced after the 1997 election by the current Prime Minister, has not been a great success. It has often gone directly to provinces. It has been applied to existing debt. It has not assisted cash strapped students in the way that was envisaged when it was announced.

We need to work toward eliminating college and university tuition fees altogether. We need to establish a national grants program and national standards for accessibility. We need to lower tuition fees, provide interest free student loans, and ban private, for-profit universities. We need to insist on affordable education and research in the public interest. They are an important part of developing a better Canada.



Photos and Article by Brother Darcy Suehn

Just like Victoria, this Anti-Liberal Rally held in Vancouver May 25, 2002, saw a good showing of CAW members that formed part of the estimated 30,000.

While the Liberal try to pretend that these demonstrations are nothing more than “special interest groups” it was clear to those who attended that this rally had an even wider diversity of groups and people. But then we just need to remember that as opposition to the Referendum built the Liberals referred to the Anglican Church as a

“special interest group”. At least we know which direction we will be heading in the afterlife.



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differnece!"**

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Know someone in a non-union job who needs justice and dignity? Tell them to make the call: Murray Gore, CAW 114 Organizer 604-951-2306 (home), 604-645-7100 (pager), 604-524-9457 (pager) or email: mgore@telus.net



Wing Guts in action



By Brother Darcy Suehn.

While they may have an odd name and method no one doubts their commitment. The Wing Guts are helping to raise

workers from Prince George, BC are eating as many chicken wings as possible. If you know of some wing guts

money for charity. This wacky group of Mayne Logisticks, formerly Loomis, send us the scoop. If you would like to help out contact the Local.

