



Letters

Can the media be fixed?

Thank you to Marc Edge for describing the failures of past, feeble attempts to act on ongoing, seemingly continuous public concern for the increasing business and political bias of Canadian news sources and their concentration ("Can Canada's media be reformed," May-June 2016).

The emergence of digital newcomers like the *National Observer*, along with the *The Tyee* in Vancouver, testifies to the mainstream news vacuum where the impact of extractive industries on Canadian ecology and politics is concerned. In fact, the words "social democracy" never appear in Canada's "national newspaper," and its "science reporter," appearing ever more infrequently, forgoes mentioning the latest atmospheric CO2 readings or even climate change. The longtime reader has to go back to issues from the 1980s to find meaningful news or comment about concerns for the biosphere.

The late senator Keith Davey should also be mentioned as the last "activist" member of that now-tormented chamber, who brought

real concern to bear on the undemocratic state of Canada's news media. The shock and awe of American citizens and the world at large at a massive outbreak of neofascist opinion among the marginalized working class of America, and the threat to the nation's judicial system, is frightening evidence of what can result from years of cultivated ignorance.

George Burrett,
Cambridge, Ont.

The Nordic model works

I read with dismay the article in the January-February issue of the *Monitor* entitled "Sex Work is Work," which is most notable for what it does not say and for its complete lack of data. The article seeks to frame prostitution as just another way to make a living. There is no acknowledgement of the core issue: why does prostitution exist? Is it because so many women and girls are clamouring to join this glamorous profession? Or does it have more to do with desperation and the demand side—the (mostly) men who want to buy sex?

In Canada, according to a 2005 study in the journal *Transcultural Psychiatry*, most people in prostitution enter as adolescents (89%) starting before the age of 16, some 12 or younger. A majority of them (82%) were sexually abused as children. In the same study, Indigenous women were shown to be dramatically overrepresented—52% of those in Vancouver's sex trade were of Indigenous

background, though they made up only between 1.7% and 7% of the population. When asked about their current needs, respondents in the Vancouver study were most likely to list four: to exit prostitution (95%), to get drug or alcohol addiction treatment (82%), job training (67%) and a home or safe place (66%). Clearly, those involved in prostitution are not a typical cross-section of women in Canada, nor do they appear to be a group of people who have freely chosen the sex trade.

Let's now take a look at the demand side. In a 2009 study by the London, U.K. group Eaves, among 103 men interviewed about their use of trafficked women, the four reasons most often cited for buying sex were the immediate satisfaction of a sexual urge, entertainment or pleasure, the ability to seek variety in sexual partners based on physical, racial or sexual stereotypes, and lack of sexual or emotional fulfillment in a current relationship. In other words, buying sex, for men, appears to be simply the fulfillment of their sense of entitlement to have sex whenever they want. The evidence for the truth of this is being borne out in Sweden, where the number of men buying sex has been reduced from one in eight to one in 13, according to Swedish journalist Kajsa Ekis Ekman. Swedes overwhelmingly support the law, which criminalizes buyers but not sellers of sex.

Canada recently passed a law that follows the Swedish (or Nordic)

model in that the buyers, rather than the sellers, of sex will be charged as criminals. This type of legal framework has also been adopted in Norway, Iceland and, most recently, Northern Ireland and France. While it may be the case that the law needs to be strengthened, there is absolutely no acknowledgement in the CCPA article of the existence of the bill or of the Nordic model. The issue now in Canada should be to work to uphold the law as it exists, ensure there are rigorous exit and recovery programs available for those who wish to leave prostitution, and work with educating police forces so that they are fully committed to upholding the law.

Rosemary Dzus,
Deux-Montagnes, Que.

Banking reform clarification

I appreciate David MacDonald's article ("Ask the CCPA," July-August 2016) saying that provinces and municipalities in Canada could be saved money, without causing inflation, through receiving interest-free loans from the Bank of Canada. Mentioned, but not stressed, is the fact the federal government could benefit similarly. But try as I may, I cannot follow his argument that if the Bank of Canada made such loans, its participation in the private banks' cheque-clearing process would result in costing the federal government money (how much is not clear). The upshot of the article is an unenthusiastic

acknowledgement that such loans are possible, but perhaps inadvisable.

Missing from this article is any mention of the huge amounts of interest that governments at all levels across Canada have been paying on their debts to private banks and other private money lenders—some \$50 to \$60 billion each year, even with current low interest rates. Use of the Bank of Canada to provide interest-free loans could enable our governments to phase out their interest payments, to invest quickly in infrastructure with green jobs, and to overcome the devastating austerity agenda.

Also missing from the article is mention of the fact that about 97% of our money in circulation has been created out of nothing by private banks in their process of making loans. Bank-created money requires interest payments that add 30% to 40% to the cost of everything we—businesses, governments and ordinary folk—buy. If all these parties began responsibly to pay off their debts, the money supply would shrink, quickly bringing on depression. We need to have in circulation lots of debt-free Bank of Canada-created money in order to have a thriving, fiscally responsible economy.

Would Bank of Canada lending cost the federal government money? Perhaps. But would not its savings on interest payments, and its increased tax receipts from a stimulated economy, greatly exceed its costs?

Our Liberal government does not have to consult with Wall Street bankers (as I understand it has been doing) about how to establish an infrastructure bank, which would surely favour private banking interests. We already have our publicly owned Bank of Canada, which served us very well between 1938 and 1974, and could be used now for infrastructure and for all sorts of other public benefits.

George Crowell,
London, Ont.

Keep postal services public

I am writing to thank you for the excellent article on Canada Post by Erika Shaker ("Canada Post's reality check is in the mail," September-October 2016). While I agree with all the points Ms. Shaker made, I would like to raise an additional issue, and that is that there is no reason why Canada Post should be, or need be, making a profit.

Postal service should be a service that is available to all Canadians, no matter what their location. In geographical terms, Canada is the second largest country on the planet, and I think it is reasonable to say that all Canadians should have access to postal service. Just as we expect our health care system and CBC/Radio-Canada to be available and accessible by all of us, so also should postal services.

Postal delivery was never intended to be a money-making enterprise, rather a service that we all should expect as residents of this very large country. This

should be true of those of us who live in large cities, as well as those who live in remote communities in the North. The idea of funding this service through our taxes should be no more controversial than spending tax dollars on roads, other infrastructure and health care.

Marcia Almey, Ottawa, Ont.

Population and climate

I have just been reading the powerful article by Naomi Klein in the last issue ("Edward Said and the violence of othering in a warming world," September-October 2016). However, I am concerned that this article is similar to most commentaries on climate change in its failure to recognize the role of population growth.

It seems as if the population explosion is being accepted as inevitable rather than as another aspect of the crisis demanding our attention. The increased consumption of all resources due to this reality will be very measurable. A population of nine billion in 2050 will be much more of a threat to our survival than the current seven billion. We are rapidly filling up our spaces with human bodies, gradually taking up space needed by other flora and fauna, and for agricultural production. This is even true in Canada where we have a relatively small area of land suitable for agricultural production and are rapidly turning natural areas and agricultural land into urban or suburban development.

Do we even have the right to supplant populations of other species to make more space for ourselves? All these factors will contribute to not only a higher climate temperature but also an increased shortage in food supply, just as the needs increase. The increase in industrial-style agriculture promoted by some sources is, at best, only temporary. It borrows from the future potential of the land by mining it of its nutrients and befouling the soil with all sorts of chemical interventions. And, of course, these higher levels of population will need to consume ever-larger quantities of all our resources, both renewable and non-renewable.

I am not optimistic about the outcome and, in spite of my advancing age, I am distinctly unhappy about it. I think of the disturbing legacy we are leaving to our children and grandchildren. I see too few signs of society taking the draconian steps needed to bring the Earth back to a sustainable level of occupation and consumption of its resources.

Peter Moller, Almonte, Ont.

Correction

In the Good News Page of the September-October issue, it should have read that Salt Lake City hopes to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2040 (not 2014).

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