

Don't Blame the Premier ---She's Fixing Klein's Mess

Naomi Lakritz, Calgary Herald

OMG! We're ruined! Alberta's fiscal future is down the toilet! Bob Rae, Bob Rae, Bob Rae! Aaargggghhh! Deficit! Debt! Doom! Pass the smelling salts! Our great-grandchildren who don't even exist — what will they think of us?

That's the chorus I'm seeing in online commentary ever since Alberta's first NDP government brought down its budget Tuesday. Just who are these people, though, who are complaining that Premier Rachel Notley's budget will be the ruination of us all?

I wonder if they are the same ones who have spent the years since the Klein era lamenting equally loudly that services were cut, hospital beds eliminated, a hospital blown up, a cancer centre deferred ad infinitum, roads not built, nurses fired, teachers laid off, schools not repaired, and on and on.

Had Notley opted to cut services, these folks would be griping about that instead. She can't win for losing. Most galling is the naysayers' attitude toward civil servants. Lay them off! Cut their salaries! Would those clamouring for salary cuts and layoffs volunteer to give up their own jobs and take pay cuts? Not likely. They'd rather insist that others lose their jobs, as if those other people, just because they work in the public service, aren't real people with families to support, mortgages to pay and food to put on the table.

There also appears to be zero recognition that the current public-sector salaries are the result of bargaining with previous Tory governments. You don't just go in and break legal contracts that were signed in good faith by both sides.

Notley inherited a huge mess and she could either perpetuate the mess or fix it. She has wisely opted to fix it. Let's not forget that the new Tom Baker centre was promised to Calgarians by successive Tory governments who dithered on it for a decade. Notley is going to build it.

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2015 Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to Haley Brett and Jane Rea, who were selected as the recipients of this year's scholarships. The following is an excerpt from Jane Rea's essay, on the topic of "The role of the labour movement in the global environment."

On behalf of the Public Relations and Education Committee, thank you to everyone who submitted an essay, and best of luck in your future studies.

"...Neoliberal-influenced policies favour corporations' global expansion, a de-regulation of the economy, reduction of expenditures for social services by the government, and an overall removal of any impediments to capital mobility, such as regulations on trade. A result of neoliberal economic and political policies has undoubtedly been massive growth of global production... Cheap labour, relaxed labour laws and low priced large-tracts of land make the developing world ideal for international corporations to take advantage of. As a result, those living in developing countries lacking strong legislation and organization are often subjugated to exploitation while working for foreign companies as cheap laborers in unsafe work environments...

Although historically trade unions have operated within their local communities to protect their country's workers, in today's global economy, they are now increasingly called upon to operate in a global context. They do this through advocacy, promoting intergovernmental cooperation to ensure protection of workers' fundamental rights, and by using the media as a platform to raise awareness...

The labour movement plays a large role in advocacy, both directly with international workers and on the home front with consumers. An example of such an organization that does this is Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union, which has its own Social Justice Fund (SJF)... [intended to finance] advocacy projects such as "campaigns to improve labour and human rights, development projects, humanitarian assistance, projects that promote women in leadership, and campaigns that promote peace and security..."

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Economic Briefs

8 hour day R.I.P.?

The campaign to achieve an eight-hour day was one of the most important formative struggles of the labour movement. But our increasingly connected life through smartphones and the Internet is blurring the lines between work and home. Sixty-one per cent of workers surveyed by Careerbuilder.ca said they check or respond to emails during non-office hours. Half said they are expected to in other ways outside of ordinary work hours. The majority of employers and employees now think the idea of working 9 to 5 is a thing of the past.



Stronger unions, greater equality, stronger economy



Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) now agrees: stronger unions lead to greater equality in society. Their analysis found that not only do unions increase incomes of low and middle incomes throughout society, but they also contain the income shares of the very wealthy. Others say that Canada's higher rate of unionization slow the growth of inequality in Canada compared to the U.S. Because the IMF, World Bank, OECD and most everybody else now agrees that rising inequality has been bad for the economy, this means that stronger unions not only lead to the greater equality, but also a stronger economy.

Canadians living paycheque to paycheque



According to a BMO survey, while the average amount Canadians have in emergency savings has increased to \$41,700, one-quarter are living paycheque to paycheque, 29 per cent have only enough to last a month and 56 per cent have less than \$10,000 available in potential emergency funds, while one in five have more than \$50,000 in emergency savings. As with income and wealth, the emergency savings held by Canadians has become increasingly inequitably distributed. That's why we need better universal social programs—including Employment Insurance, public pensions and social assistance.

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Remember those heady days when Ralph Klein was crowing about slaying the debt? At what cost, fellow Albertans? Did amnesia arrive along with the flu this fall? It was at the cost of schools, health care, infrastructure maintenance and construction, and services to the most vulnerable — children, the sick, the elderly, the disabled and the poor.

Let's drop the obsession with what future generations will think of us if we don't focus exclusively on the twin monsters of debt and deficit. Rather than worry about people who are not yet born, and who will anyway be subject to the unknown whims and policies of the government of their day, why don't we focus on providing services to people who are alive now?

We, the Albertans of today, are the future generations for the folks who lived here in, say, the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. When was the last time anyone grumbled about the fiscal state the Albertans of those times left us? Who's even aware of what those long-ago governments presented in their budgets?

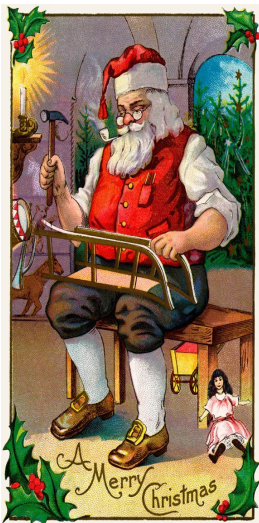
All Klein did when he cut back spending and services to slay the debt was to lay the groundwork for the catch-up game the Notley government must now play. Klein wasn't leaving a debt-free paradise to future generations; he was leaving them a province in which deep cuts to services and spending were going to hamstring them in terms of education, timely health care and crumbling infrastructure.

As Finance Minister Joe Ceci: "We believe Albertans want their services, their hospitals, their schools, their human services protected. To do that ... it's going to take some borrowing ..."

Right on, Joe. It's not rocket science. In a welcome change from good old boy conservative tradition, the NDP has opted not to further deprive people of those services.

Wildrose Leader Brian Jean says the Notley budget is a "complete fantasy." Wrong, Brian. Given the long-term fallout, which Notley must now deal with, it's obvious that the notion of a debt-free paradise with zero repercussions for its citizens was the real fantasy all along.

Reminder of Children's Christmas Party



The 2015 Children's Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, December 5th, 2015 at the Red & White Club, 1833 Crowchild Trail NW from 9:00—11:00 am.

If you have sent in your application we look forward to seeing you on December 5th.

For those who registered but are unable to attend the event on December 5th, gift pick up will be at the Local 38 office at 1439-9th Ave SE from December 7-10, 2015 between the hours of 7:30 am—4:00 pm. If coming over a lunch hour (between 12:00-1:00 pm), please call the Union office at 403-233-2700 to ensure someone will be able to assist you. Gifts not picked up by 4:00 pm on December 10th will be donated to charity.

2015 Scholarship Winners

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Another tactic that the labour movement uses to create social justice for international workers is through campaigning and using the media as a vehicle to raise awareness...An example of such a campaign is the non-profit organization, Fashion Revolution, which advocates for ethical clothing production through the supply chain. This is done through an online campaign and annual event on the anniversary of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, where people wear their clothes inside out to bring awareness to unethical clothing production.

...A grassroots movement that gained momentum and created massive change through use of the internet and campaigning is the Zapatistas, a revolutionary leftist group based in Chiapas, Mexico. Since their 1994 uprising, the Zapatistas have been successful in rallying the Mexican people, and gaining international support through a successful Internet campaign in resisting neo-liberalism by maintaining horizontal autonomy and self-governance...

Without a doubt, the labour movement still has a long way to go in the global environment. Their mission to create social justice in a global economy run by neo-liberalism is no easy feat... Through their continued efforts, they will be able to encourage and support international workers in gaining momentum as they fight back for social justice in the workplace."

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH



The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.

~William Arthur Ward

Connect with CUPE 38

Email: office@cupe38.org

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Online: cupe38.org

Get involved!

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

All CUPE 38 Members Invited to Attend



When: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

Where: CUPE 38 Office, 1439-9 Avenue SE

Business: Regular & Elections

Elections:

- 1. One (1) member to the Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) Committee**
- 2. One (1) member to the Social Committee**
- 3. Eighteen (18) eligible Delegates to the CUPE Alberta Convention, March 16-18, 2016 in Edmonton**