

WE CAN'T WAIT: SHUT OFF THE OIL

Leonard Higgins was one of five climate activists who coordinated efforts to stop tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, from flowing over the Canadian-U.S. border. He cut two chains to enter a fenced enclosure in Coal Banks Landing in Montana to turn off the emergency shutoff valve on a Spectra Energy pipeline. The four other activists successfully shut off four pipelines in Minnesota, North Dakota and Washington state, thus temporarily halting the flow of Alberta tar sands oil into the U.S. After turning off the valve, Higgins stayed onsite, awaiting arrest.

During his trial, Higgins, an activist with Climate Direct Action, told a Montana district court that his goal had not been to cause major damage to the pipeline but to raise awareness about the threat of climate change. Higgins' defense attorney noted in court that Spectra had been notified about 15 minutes in advance that the valve shutdown was imminent. On Wednesday, a jury found Higgins guilty of misdemeanor trespassing and felony criminal mischief after just an hour of deliberation, reported the Corvallis Gazette-Times. The jury determined that Higgins had caused more than \$1,500 in damage to Spectra Energy (recently acquired by Enbridge Inc.).

Higgins had hoped to present a "necessity defense," which would have allowed him to argue before the jury that "his action was necessary in order to prevent climate harms much more severe than the consequences of trespassing and turning the pipeline emergency valve." However, Judge Daniel Boucher denied this motion without a hearing, saying that "the energy policy of the United States is not on trial." Higgins' sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 2. He faces a potential maximum penalty of 10 years behind bars and fines of up to \$50,000. Commenting on Higgins' verdict, valve turner Michael Foster, who is awaiting sentencing after being convicted on two felonies in a North Dakota court for his role in the protest, said he still feels optimistic. "We win even when we lose because we get stronger," -CONTINUED PAGE 16



REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN: WE PAY, THEY DON'T.

Tax plans are basically pictures of envisioned futures. On the face of it, the proposed Trump tax plan is marketed as something to help most earners receive some tax cuts. In absolute dollar amounts, however, here are some revealing figures: "In dollar terms, 53% of the cuts would go to the top 1% and 30% to the top 0.1% (those with expanded cash income of \$3.4 million or more). Put another way, the top 1% would see an average \$129,030 tax cut and the top 0.1% would save an average of \$722,510, while those in the middle quintile would save an average of \$660 per family." (Forbes magazine)

Clearly, the short-term benefits for most workers (all of which will disappear by 2027 at the latest) are minimal in terms of the extra purchasing power those tax savings can provide. Meanwhile, the top 0.1% will receive enough tax cuts to cover the costs of servicing and maintaining their yachts for a year. However, the reduced amounts in tax revenues as a result of the wealth gifted to the rich, amounting to trillions of dollars over the next decade, will necessitate reduced spending on social needs of ordinary people. Medicare and Social Security are the targets. Permanent losses are guaranteed to be enforced as severely as they are currently enforced in Greece.

The more social services are privatized, the more varied social services will be denied to the most vulnerable. In other words, this tax plan, if passed, will be the official codification into law of a higher social rent to be paid by working families. In the same process, the corporations and the top 1%, by the letter of the law, and speaking through their pliable representatives in the U.S. Congress, will give themselves a huge tax break (pay raise).

Since about 1944, we the individual taxpayers have steadily paid between 45% and 50% of all income taxes, while the corporations have seen a steady decrease in their tax contributions, from about 40% to 10%. The trend is clear. Corporations are winning the tax battles, and we the workers have been losing consistently, one tax 'reform' after another, for the last seven decades. **'Republican Taxes' continues on page 16**

The Powwow at the End of the World

I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after an Indian woman puts her shoulder to the Grand Coulee Dam and topples it. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after the floodwaters burst each successive dam downriver from the Grand Coulee. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after the floodwaters find their way to the mouth of the Columbia River as it enters the Pacific and causes all of it to rise. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after the first drop of floodwater is swallowed by that salmon waiting in the Pacific. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after that salmon swims upstream, through the mouth of the Columbia and then past the flooded cities, broken dams and abandoned reactors after that salmon swims through the mouth of the Spokane River as it meets the Columbia, then upstream, until it arrives in the shallows of a secret bay on the reservation where I wait alone. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after that salmon leaps into the night air above the water, throws a lightning bolt at the brush near my feet, and starts the fire which will lead all of the lost Indians home. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after we Indians have gathered around the fire with the salmon who has three stories it must tell before sunrise: one story will teach us how to pray; another story will makes us laugh for hours; the third story will give us a reason to dance. I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall when I am dancing with my tribe during the powwow at the end of the world.

Sherman Alexie, from *The Summer of Black Widows*

Drugged SALMON

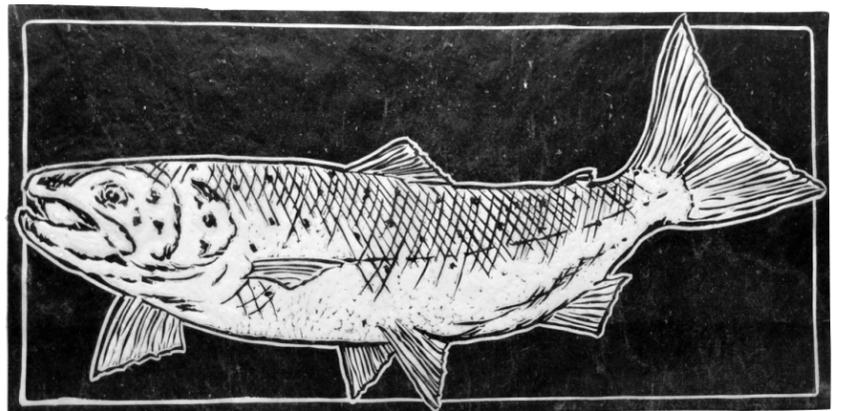
Salmon is purported to be one of the healthiest foods due to its high omega-3 content, protein, and essential fatty acids, but if the fish is obtained from the Puget Sound, it is anything but healthy.

According to a recent study, up to 81 drugs and personal-care products were detected in the flesh of salmon caught in the Puget Sound. Some of the drugs include **Prozac, Advil, Benadryl, Lipitor**, and even **cocaine**. *The Seattle Times* reports that the levels are believed to be so high because either people in the area use more of the drugs detected, or because waste water plants are unable to fully remove the chemicals during treatment. Another theory is that leaky septic tanks are contributing to the problem, as high fecal coliform counts were detected.

Said Jim Meador, an environmental toxicologist at NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle:

"The concentrations in effluent were higher than we expected. We analyzed samples for 150 compounds and we had 61 percent of them detected in effluent. So we know these are going into the estuaries."

Samples were gathered over two days for the study, and both migratory juvenile chinook salmon and resident staghorn sculpin were tested. Chemicals were found not only in the tissue of the fish but in the water. And, the researchers suggest, it is likely the study underreports the amount of drugs in the water close to outfall pipes, or in deeper water.



Some of the drugs and contaminants found include **Flonase, Aleve, Tylenol, Paxil, Valium, Zolof, Tagamet, OxyContin, Darvon, Nicotine, caffeine, Fungicides, antiseptics, anticoagulants**, as well as plenty of **antibiotics**.

Intriguingly, the researchers are not concerned about the effect the cocktail of drugs will have on the humans who eat the fish, but they are concerned about how the chemicals are affecting wildlife. Reportedly, Meador's other recent work has shown that juvenile chinook salmon migrate through contaminated estuaries in Puget Sound and **die at twice the rate of fish elsewhere**.

That seems like cause for concern. Unfortunately, it not likely the contamination will let up. According to one study, 97,000 pounds of drugs and chemicals could be entering the Puget Sound each year.