



The Society for the Study of Social Problems

Publishers of the Journal *Social Problems*

901 McClung Tower University of Tennessee Knoxville, TN 37996-0490
Phone: 865-689-1531 Fax: 865-689-1534 E-mail: sssp@utk.edu
www.sssp1.org

OFFICERS (2020-2021)

Corey Dolgon, Ph.D.
Stonehill College
President

Noreen M. Sugrue
The Latino Policy Forum
President-Elect

Heather M. Dalmage, Ph.D.
Roosevelt University
Past-President

Pamela Anne Quiroz, Ph.D.
University of Houston
Vice-President

Sarah Jane Brubaker, Ph.D.
Virginia Commonwealth University
Vice-President-Elect

Glenn W. Muschert, Ph.D.
Khalifa University of Science and Technology
Secretary

Susan M. Carlson, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University
Treasurer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Yvonne A. Braun, Ph.D. (2021)
University of Oregon

Matthew W. Hughey, Ph.D. (2021)
University of Connecticut

Debbie A. Potter, Ph.D. (2021)
University of Louisville

Giovanna Follo, Ph.D. (2022)
Wright State University – Lake Campus

Bhoomi K. Thakore, Ph.D. (2022)
University of Central Florida

Lauren E. Eastwood, Ph.D. (2023)
SUNY College of Plattsburgh

Shirley A. Jackson, Ph.D. (2023)
Portland State University

Melissa R. Maxey, Student (2021)
University of Oklahoma

Lydia Hou, Student (2022)
University of Illinois at Chicago

Kristen M. Budd, Ph.D. (2021)
Miami University
Ex-Officio, Chairperson, Council of the Divisions

Giovanna Follo, Ph.D. (2021)
Wright State University – Lake Campus
Ex-Officio, Chairperson-Elect, Council of the Divisions

Annulla Linders, Ph.D. (2021)
University of Cincinnati
*Co-Editor of *Social Problems**

Earl Wright II, Ph.D. (2021)
Rhodes College
*Co-Editor of *Social Problems**

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.
University of La Verne (Emeritus)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Michele Smith Koontz
University of Tennessee
Administrative Officer & Meeting Manager

Kelsey Whitaker
University of Tennessee
Assistant to the Administrative Officer

Rachel Cogburn
University of Tennessee
Information Technology Specialist

Zaina Shams
University of Tennessee
Graduate Research Associate & Webmaster

May 24, 2021

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
Canada

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

The Society for the Study of Social Problems [SSSP] is an international professional organization of social scientists who believe our teaching, research, and publication should aid society in the pursuit of a better, more humane world. We are particularly keen to track and act on changes within our own institutions of higher education and do what we can to resist the degradation of our craft and our profession. We have followed the tragedy occurring at Laurentian University and feel the necessity not only to express our outrage at the undemocratic processes used to decimate the institution's mission but also to bear witness at the resulting human misery it has caused for faculty, staff and students.

After years of corporate-driven administrative mismanagement, Laurentian President Robert Hache blamed Laurentian's insolvency on the "high cost of faculty salaries," and "too many" programs. By now this neoliberal ruse is quite common: go into massive debt funding poorly planned building projects and bloated administrative expansion, and then blame workers whose ability to impact institutional decision making was simultaneously taken away from them. Unfortunately, in the Laurentian case, new forms of corporate banditry and neoliberal gore are on display. And we fear they will soon be knocking on everyone's ivy gates and ivory towers.

Using broad and opaque powers allowed under the CCAA (Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act) Hache engineered a radical restructuring of the University, resulting in the termination of almost one-third of full-time faculty (mostly tenured); 40 percent of the graduate and undergraduate programs offered; and dozens of unionized and non-unionized staff positions. According to Rahul Sapra, President of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), "At Laurentian, and other universities across Ontario, more and more decisions are being made behind closed doors, in clear violation of university acts and their own constitutions, circumventing existing democratic governing bodies that include faculty, staff, and students.... Crises such as the one that Laurentian University finds itself in are bound to happen again and again across the sector so long as the community-based and collegial model of university governance is eroded in favour of a corporate and secretive managerial model."

But maybe the lack of democratic transparency is the point. The CCAA was used not because it was the best tool in the box to fix the root causes of Laurentian's challenges, but because it allowed the president to reap the most benefits for himself and corporate benefactors regardless of the human misery it caused. Not only did workers lose their rights under collective bargaining and then lose their jobs, they also lost the dignity and respect and the safety net they had legally negotiated because the CCAA allows the university to ignore them. Workers don't have severance pay and now go to the back of line as other creditors (mostly banks) slink to the front. The CCAA even allows the University to freeze employees' ability to tap into retirement funds. Unchecked power and carnage now seem to be the point.

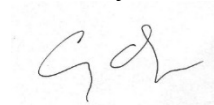
We ask that all public officials take the following immediate steps to reduce the suffering and insecurity caused by these actions while also adopting longer range plans to restore Canada's commitment to public education, democracy, and a society based on human rights, dignity, and well-being.

We urge you to:

- *Immediately restore the severance owed to all terminated Laurentian University faculty and staff;
- * Immediately reinstate the two cancelled pension benefits the Supplemental Retirement Plan ("SuRP") and Retiree Health Benefit Plan ("RHBP"), both of which have been cancelled by Laurentian. Past and future retirees desperately need their retirement benefits now;
- *Commit to upholding all legally negotiated contracts between the University administration and employees;
- *Restore tenure, faculty governance and employee rights and enforce administrative transparency in decision-making;
- *Guarantee stable university funding for all public universities into the future.

We appreciate your consideration and attention to this matter. We would be very happy to lend the relevant professional expertise of our members and would happily act as conduit should you seek their knowledge, research data and analyses.

Sincerely,



Corey Dolgon, Ph.D.
President, SSSP
Professor of Sociology, Faculty Director
Downtown Center for Community Engagement at Stonehill College