

In Memoriam Leo Panitch, 1945–2020

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Volume 88, Fall 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1084978ar>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2021v88.0003>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)
1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Whitaker, R. (2021). In Memoriam: Leo Panitch, 1945–2020. *Labour / Le Travail*, 88, 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2021v88.0003>

OBITUARY / NÉCROLOGIE

In Memoriam: Leo Panitch, 1945–2020

Reg Whitaker



Photo courtesy of Schuster Gindin

IN LATE 2020 THE CANADIAN LEFT, and indeed the left around the world, suffered a terrible loss when Leo Panitch died unexpectedly and tragically from COVID-19 in a Toronto hospital. It was not just the left that felt the loss; Canadian political science and academia lost a great scholar. Debates everywhere over the big questions of economy, society, and politics lost a compelling public intellectual with a distinctive voice that will be sorely missed.

Leo's politics began where he grew up: in working-class Jewish Winnipeg. The Jewish left produced passionate lifelong commitments, some to social democracy, some to communism. Leo was intellectually inspired by Marx and Marxism but throughout his life remained deeply skeptical of orthodox communism with its heavy-handed anti-intellectual party discipline and its record of police-state oppression in the name of proletarian revolution. Yet he was equally skeptical of social-democratic parties that too often saw as their

mission the integration of the working class into the capitalist state. There was a profound conundrum here that might have proved crippling to a young socialist academic.

Happily for Leo, his years of graduate studies at the London School of Economics provided a way forward, both politically and intellectually. The crucial influence was Ralph Miliband, who was his doctoral supervisor but so much more. A Jewish refugee from fascism who built a career in British academia, Ralph was the author of *Parliamentary Socialism* (1961), a critique of the postwar Attlee Labour government, which had laid the foundations of the welfare state yet failed to alter the preponderant power of capitalism over the British state. Leo undertook an ambitious thesis on the Labour Party and the trade unions, beginning where Ralph had begun, in 1945, but focusing on the Wilson Labour government (1964–70), which brought down an incomes policy designed to be a new social contract between government and the unions, setting what the Wilson government hoped would be a firm and stable relationship between the working class and the state and undermining the trade union militancy believed to threaten the British economy. Leo demonstrated not only that this policy largely failed on its own terms but that underlying the entire project was a deeper structural feature of the British Labour Party, which saw its fundamental mission not as the transformation of the state through class struggle but instead as the integration of the organized working class into the British “nation,” with all the limitations of perpetuating an inegalitarian status quo in the distribution of wealth that integration on capitalist terms entailed. It was a brilliant thesis, brilliantly argued, and was published in 1976 by Cambridge University Press as *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy: The Labour Party, the Trade Unions and Incomes Policy 1945–1974*, a remarkable academic debut.

Leo built on this early work a rethinking of Marxist theories of the capitalist state, going back to Marx himself and influenced by the work of contemporary Marxist theorists like Nicos Poulantzas, who argued a structural critique of Miliband’s *The State in Capitalist Society* that gave greater scope to agency. Here is not the place to recover the ground of these debates over the relative autonomy of the state or Leo’s precise place in them, but I would note that he never strayed far into the realm of high abstractionism that especially characterized much French Marxism of the 1960s and 1970s. *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy* was argued from a Marxist standpoint, but it was not about social democracy and trade unions in general across national and cultural borders or even the capitalist state in general. Rather, it was about the British Labour Party, the Trades Union Congress, and the British state, and it was in the detailed empirical examination of the convoluted relationship between party and unions, drawing extensively on the evidence of documents and interviews with participants, that he was able to craft such a finely wrought and convincing picture of how this particular capitalist state, this particular social-democratic party, and these particular unions at these

particular historical moments arrived at the particular place they did. This says something important about Leo's scholarly mission. He was a Marxist political scientist, a title that contains two interconnected but distinct terms. No one who ever heard him engaging creatively with the conventional literature on political parties could doubt that he was not only a great Marxist but a great political scientist.

Leo began his teaching career at Carleton University in 1972, moving to York University in 1984. As his international reputation grew, there is little doubt that he might have taken up a position at a prestigious European or American university. But, however much his intellectual and political horizons encompassed a broader global scale, he was always committed to his Canadian roots and deeply attentive to the future of his native country. A year after his first book was published, he followed up with the edited collection *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power* (1977), a seminal text in the launching of the new political economy school that had considerable impact on Canadian political science, economics, sociology, and history into the 21st century. His own lead essay in *The Canadian State*, "The Role and Nature of the Canadian State," was a crucial text for the new school. In the late 1970s, Leo was instrumental in the launching of the journal *Studies in Political Economy*, which quickly became the publishing venue for young academics, students, and activists rethinking Canadian issues from a critical political economy perspective. That this was not simply another academic journal was evident from its subtitle, "A Socialist Review," which it still carries today.

Another of Leo's important contributions to Canadian political economy and Canadian politics was in collaboration with Donald Swartz (a close friend and colleague coming from Leo's own Winnipeg Jewish left community). Their co-written article "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism: Coercion and Consent in Canadian Industrial Relations" (*Labour/Le travail*, vol. 13 [Spring 1984]) announced dramatically that "we are witnessing today the end of the era of free collective bargaining in Canada" that began during World War II but was in the 1980s being replaced by a greater reliance by both capital and the state on coercion – "on force and on fear" – rather than obtaining the consent of unions and workers to their participation as subordinate actors in Canada's capitalist democracy. This article had an immediate impact and the following year was turned into a book, *From Consent to Coercion: The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms*, which went into two subsequent updated editions, the last in 2003.

Canadian left politics also engaged Leo after his return from Britain. Already interested in the possibility of a left that might challenge the integrative mission of the British Labour Party (he developed a close relationship with Tony Benn, who led the Labour left in the Thatcher era), Leo looked in Canada to the NDP, where he found some hope in the Waffle, which despite being denounced as a "party-within-a-party" mounted a significant challenge

in the 1971 NDP leadership convention: Waffle leader Jim Laxer took David Lewis to the fourth ballot before losing with 37 per cent of the vote. However, the following year Stephen Lewis along with the Ontario leadership and the old-line trade union leaders forced the expulsion of the Waffle. After a brief but fruitless effort at running candidates independently in a few constituencies in the 1974 federal election, the Waffle disbanded. Leo rallied Ottawa members and helped organize the Ottawa Committee for Labour Action, which became a base for left labour politics in the Ottawa area for years.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Leo was amassing a formidable academic reputation in a series of widely cited articles, many of which were collected in his 1986 Verso collection *Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labour and the State*. Particularly notable in this period was his work on corporatism in liberal democracies, which, as he ironically suggested, had become a “growth industry.” A theory previously associated with fascist regimes was being resurrected to claim a new relationship between capital and labour forged along corporatist lines but without the overt trappings of fascist authoritarianism. Co-operative mutual interaction between producer groups and the state at the élite level would be matched by social control at the mass level. Leo’s critique of corporatism drew on Marxist class analysis, but its particular strength came from his ability to engage critically with non-Marxist theorists on their own terms: as always, Leo was good Marxist but also a very good political scientist.

In the 1990s, the British Labour Party went in a direction that dashed Leo’s hopes around the Bennite Left. Tony Blair arrived as leader and rebranded the party as “New Labour.” This was much more than a marketing exercise, instead representing a full-scale buy-in to the Thatcherite neoliberalism that had dominated the 1980s and early 1990s. With another close collaborator and friend, Colin Leys, Leo published *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour* (1997), bringing Miliband up to date. Just how darkly Leo and Colin viewed Blair’s self-estimation that his rebranded party was destined to become the natural governing party in Britain was evident in the title of their chapter on Blair’s ideology: “Tony Blair: From Socialism to Capitalism.” And this was before Blair joined with George W. Bush in the bloody and catastrophically misconceived invasion of Iraq.

As the Cold War gave way to the “global war on terror” and neoliberal capitalism appeared to survive even the financial crash and the Great Recession of 2007 and 2008, many on the left succumbed to pessimism. But it was characteristic of Leo’s deep political commitment that he consistently refused to surrender the dream of a socialist society. In 2001 he published *Renewing Socialism: Democracy, Strategy, and Imagination*, on rethinking revolution and reform in capitalist societies in light of the demise of communism and the rise of globalization. The last chapter was “Transcending Pessimism: Rekindling Socialist Imagination,” which captures beautifully Leo’s personal political project.

Another important element of Leo's academic and political role was his editorship of *The Socialist Register*, which he first shared with his old mentor Ralph Miliband and then took over, sharing later with Greg Albo, York colleague and another Winnipeg alumnus. Under Leo's guidance the *Register* became a remarkable meeting place for Marxist and socialist intellectuals and activists from around the world to publish on a wide variety of current issues. His contacts on five continents were astonishing, and the force of his person such that a request to contribute was almost never turned down: coming from Leo, a request for an article was an honour and a challenge.

Finally in 2012 came the publication of the capstone of Leo's academic achievements, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, which was awarded the prestigious Isaac and Tamara Deutscher Memorial Prize, given annually for a new book published in English that "exemplifies the best and most innovative new writing in or about the Marxist tradition." Written in close collaboration with Sam Gindin, who came out of the trade union movement, an intellectual comrade whose relationship with Leo again went all the way back to Winnipeg, *The Making of Global Capitalism* represented something of a break from the earlier focus on social democracy, labour, and the state, turning instead to a detailed historical analysis of how American capitalism in close conjunction with the American state built a world in its own image. This involved a rethinking of American history, showing how, for instance, the New Deal represented a crucial development of state capacity that by the late 1930s permitted a "Grand Truce" with capital, which in turn led through war and postwar to an "internationalization of the New Deal" in a new global order of "informal" American Empire.

Ironically perhaps, given the impressive picture Leo and Sam had drawn of the hegemonic facility with which the American state and American capital organized and ruled the global order, the book went to press in the wake of what Federal Reserve chair Ben Bernanke called "the worst financial crisis in global history," the financial collapse of 2007–08 and the subsequent Great Recession, which, appropriately perhaps, had begun in the US economy with the subprime mortgage meltdown and then rapidly globalized. The penultimate chapter in *The Making of Global Capitalism* described the Obama administration's first-term actions to cope with the crisis, which successfully headed off the worst potential impacts but left the power of financial capital largely unimpaired, despite new state regulation of financial markets. It is difficult to miss a growing sense of ideological incoherence among the economic and political élites coming out of the crisis, an uneasy awareness that the controls once so confidently exercised were no longer working as expected. Policymakers were returning to familiar neoliberal austerity measures with no assurances they would work in the changed global environment.

Importantly, Leo and Sam concluded their account – as Leo always concluded critical analysis of capitalist democracy – with a look at what

opportunities the situation they had described held for the future of socialism. They contrasted the contemporary crisis with that of the Great Depression in the 1930s. The latter era had led to heightened competition and rivalry between nation-states, the rise of fascism, and a world plunged by the end of the decade into global war. By contrast, they argued, “the conflicts that have emerged today in the wake of the greatest capitalist crisis since the 1930s are taking shape, not only in Europe but much more generally, less as conflicts *between* capitalist states and their ruling classes than as conflicts *within* capitalist states.” That fault lines of global capitalism now run within states rather than between states holds considerable political significance for the renewed possibilities for radical politics. This was prescient indeed, when we consider political developments since 2012, which drew Leo’s close attention and his political hopes in what was to prove the last decade of his life.

Many of these developments, like grotesque echoes of the fascism of the 1930s, are hardly encouraging. The rise of right-wing populism across the Western world, drawing upon deep roots of exclusionary racist nationalism, resulting in the election in 2016 to the US presidency of an authoritarian demagogue manifestly unfit for the office, or any public office, was frightening enough at the ground political level, but it also signalled the ideological discomobulation of American global leadership. Leo was by no means dismissive of the grave potential for 21st-century variants of fascism to undermine the democratic elements in liberal capitalist states. I remember a lengthy conversation I had with Leo near the end of the Obama era. I was guardedly optimistic about the direction of American politics, arguing that the Democrats, for all their limitations still the more progressive force, carried all the rising demographics, while the impossibly reactionary Republicans were left with all the declining demographics. Leo was more pessimistic, seeing the threat of the rising backlash mobilized in the white, male working class against the very demographics the Democrats relied upon. Trump in the White House decided that argument, at least in the short run.

For a while, there were hopeful signs of left-wing resistance to both neoliberalism and nationalist authoritarianism, and Leo eagerly devoted himself to the revival of the Labour left; the rise of Syriza, a vital socialist movement in Greece; and the Bernie Sanders phenomenon in Trump America. None succeeded in the end, but each is worth attention for what it says about the basis for Leo’s persistent optimism about the future.

In another collaboration with Colin Leys, Leo published *Searching for Socialism: The Project of the Labour New Left from Benn to Corbyn* (2020), a book that allowed him to recap many years of his own active involvement in left-wing Labour politics. After the Blair/Brown debacle, there was growth potential for a more radical vision for the party. The first lurch leftward proved to be a misfire, which was particularly discomfiting to Leo because of the involvement of the Miliband family. After Gordon Brown’s departure, Ralph’s two sons, David and Ed – both of whom had served as ministers in the

Blair and Brown governments, David in the high-profile Foreign Ministry – decided to run for the leadership, with Ed victorious with strong trade union support. Leo was always close not only to his mentor Ralph but to both sons and remained so to the end of his life. Yet despite his leadership endorsement by Tony Benn, and despite echoing many of Leo’s policy ideas, Ed was unable to move the Labour Party substantially leftward and was soundly beaten by David Cameron’s Conservatives in the 2015 election; he subsequently resigned the leadership. That was dispiriting, but instead of rebounding back into Blairism, Labour went yet further left with the wholly unexpected leadership victory of Jeremy Corbyn.

Leo was very excited by the Corbyn phenomenon; he was close to Jon Lansman and the grassroots group Momentum that Lansman had founded, supporting Corbyn by bringing enthusiastic young people into the movement for a genuinely socialist Britain. Momentum was unlike the earlier sectarian Militant Tendency that had been divisively “entryist,” instead backing the leadership against Blairite attempts at overturning the left’s triumph. The election of 2017 saw a stunning rising tide of support for Corbyn-led Labour that fell just short of turning Teresa May’s Tories out of office. At the annual Glastonbury pop music festival later that year, Corbyn was received like a rock star by adoring young fans. All this despite a venomous right-wing media slander campaign against Corbyn and his supporters that was quietly supported by the Blairite Labour establishment. For a lifelong socialist like Leo, this was heady stuff, but he was too realistic to overlook the pitfalls that still lay ahead. Within three years, the Corbynite program lay in ruins, with the Labour Party in full retreat back to the past. In the 2019 election, the clown Boris Johnson led the Tories to a successful assault on the “Red Wall” of working-class constituencies in the Midlands, taking batches of seats that had been monopolized for generations by Labour.

This is not the place to debate the rise and fall of the Labour left, except to note the lethal impact of Brexit. Not that Leo was ever a Brexit enthusiast, but he recognized that Europe was a deeply divisive issue *within* the party. By taking a strong stand either for Leave or for Remain, Corbyn risked splitting the party down the middle. Leo defended Corbyn’s somewhat ambiguous stance and did not agree with the argument (one that I myself advanced) that by waffling indecisively Corbyn appeared as a weak compromiser, rather than the principled and courageous figure who had so energized young people in 2017. But 2017 was a non-Brexit election (the Leave referendum had been a year earlier, negotiations were underway with the EU, and the issue barely surfaced during the campaign); the public could focus on party policy and the Labour Manifesto found wide support. In contrast, 2019 was about nothing but getting Brexit done. Perhaps there was no practical way out of Corbyn’s Brexit dilemma, but the elemental power of Little England nationalism to destabilize working-class support for a socialist program that spoke to the economic needs rather than the symbolic cultural aspirations of working-class people

(along with the power of Scottish nationalism, which was virtually wiping out traditional Labour support in Scotland) was surely a lesson for socialists to ponder deeply. Even as I differed from Leo on the implications of Brexit, I would have welcomed the thoughtful and interesting way in which he would surely have debated the post-Brexit direction for the left. Alas, it was not to be.

In the aftermath of the 2019 defeat and Corbyn's resignation as leader, the counter-revolution of the Blairites and the Labour Right left Leo deeply saddened. Worst of all was the witch hunt against alleged anti-Semitism on the Labour left whipped up to fever pitch in the Tory media (some of which, like the *Daily Mail*, had a long history of anti-Semitism) but ultimately weaponized by the post-Corbyn Labour leadership to discredit the left. This touched something rooted in Leo's own identity as a secular Jew, deeply proud of his cultural inheritance but profoundly critical of the state of Israel and its suppression of the Palestinian people. Leo was enraged at the anti-Semitism campaign's failure to distinguish between genuine anti-Semitism, which was utterly deplorable wherever found, and support for Palestinian rights and national self-determination, which Corbyn had rightly insisted upon. I think he was also quietly distressed by the recognition that some on the Labour left had gone over the line into overt anti-Semitism and that Corbyn himself, justifiably proud of his own decades-long record of standing up for human rights and antiracism, had failed to identify and isolate these outliers. In any event, the charges of anti-Semitism were just part of a broad campaign by the old one-nation Labour elite to discredit the entire left wing from Benn to Corbyn. In my last conversation with Leo on this, just after Corbyn had been temporarily suspended from the party for not admitting personal guilt over the anti-Semitism charges, Leo was very angry, saying that the party establishment was "vomiting out" the left and all that the left had brought to rejuvenate and democratize the party.

The year 2020 also saw another book on new left movements, this co-authored with Sam Gindin and another of Leo's grad students, Stephen Maher: *The Socialist Challenge Today: Syriza, Corbyn, Sanders*. The coming to power in Greece of the new socialist party Syriza, which had outflanked the discredited social-democratic party PASOK in the midst of the great Greek-EU debt imbroglio, drew Leo's close attention. His hands-on involvement in Greek left politics can be traced to yet another of his grad students, this time dating back to his years at Carleton. Michalis Spourdalakis wrote his doctoral dissertation under Leo's direction and has gone on to a distinguished career as one of Greece's leading political scientists. He was also a founding member of Syriza, offering Leo a direct channel of insight into the new Greek left politics – and of course Leo's advice came back in the other direction as well. Although elected to national office in 2015 for four years, Syriza was caught in the debt crisis and the brutal EU austerity program imposed upon the country. When it became apparent that there was no appetite in the Greek population for quitting the euro, Syriza had little choice but to act within the EU constraints.

Largely abandoning its socialist program by necessity, Syriza received little credit from the EU austerity enforcers for putting the Greek economy back on its feet. Nor from Greek voters: in the 2019 election, it was rejected in favour of the conservative New Democracy's return to power.

If neither Britain nor Greece offered hope of socialist advance, in Trump's America there was the emergence of Bernie Sanders – self-declared Jewish socialist in a country that had always seemed uniquely resistant to anything remotely smacking of socialism – as a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination challenging Hillary Clinton in 2016 and for a time leading the pack contending to challenge Trump in 2020. Like Corbyn, Sanders was the darling of the young who were increasingly ready to look at alternatives to neoliberal austerity – even socialism, no longer a Cold War scare word. The prospect of an unabashed socialist challenge to the reactionary Trump energized many and terrified all those clinging to the orthodox wisdom of the past that said Democrats had always to move to the right to placate conservative Middle America.

In the event, Sanders was overtaken by Joe Biden, considered by many, especially on the left, to be the epitome of the Democratic Party establishment. This might seem one more rebuke to Leo's hopes. And yet ... Biden in the White House came out of the starting blocks not as a "reassuring" conservative Democrat but as a would-be transformative president, an FDR for the 21st century. A \$2 trillion relief bill rammed past recalcitrant Republicans in Congress gained the unequivocal approval of Sanders, with much more still in the legislative queue, including a massive Green New Deal that seeks to address the existential climate crisis (something Leo had come to consider much more seriously than in the past). Of course, in light of Leo and Sam's acerbic Marxist critique of the original New Deal as the foundation for the globalization of American capitalist hegemony, socialists might remain skeptical of a reborn FDR. But in another sense that may miss the point of the present political turbulence that Leo had been analyzing so penetratingly. The double whammy of the financial crash along with the global pandemic has profoundly shaken the foundations of capitalist ideological hegemony. Left movements in Britain, Greece, and the United States may have faltered in their initial manifestations, but the collapsing legitimacy of the neoliberal agenda and the return of the state as a more proactive intervenor in the cause of equality and social justice as well as environmental protection has already begun to dramatically shift the horizon of political expectations in capitalist society.

Yogi Berra once said that "prediction is hard, especially about the future," and I will refrain from starting down that road. But I can say with certainty that Leo's voice in the conversations that will come over the shape of the political future of capitalist democracy will be very sorely missed.

One other aspect of Leo's academic life beyond scholar and teacher worth noting is his role as colleague. In good socialist fashion, Leo always looked to the workplace as well as to the wider world. For an academic the workplace is

the classroom, of course, but it is also the department and colleagues and the university faculty and student community at large. At York, Leo was elected by his colleagues as chair of the political science department. Academics do not always take well to administrative duties, but Leo not only devoted himself to the job but positively excelled at it. Competent chairs may keep things in order and put out fires but not bring in serious change. Leo could not possibly be content with presiding over the status quo, which he would consider a waste of time. In his tenure as chair at York he set out to completely remodel the physical structure of the Poli Sci “6th Floor”: new office spaces; a coffee room where faculty and students could mingle; and a classy new meeting room for seminars and departmental functions. In order to free up university resources for this restructuring of the working environment, Leo demonstrated political skills that any practising politician would appreciate, in particular, cultivating a personal relationship with the York president that proved very helpful. If he had been so inclined, he could have efficiently run an innovative business: capitalism’s loss was socialism’s gain.



FOR THOSE OF US who were privileged to know Leo personally, his death was deeply wounding in a way that those who knew him only from his writings or from public presentations could never fully grasp. The story of my own half-century friendship with Leo is telling, not because I am important to this tribute but because, as all who knew him understood, Leo had a very special gift for friendship. Friends meant everything to him, from the very oldest to those with whom he had only recently become acquainted. With the oldest, he kept up, never losing touch. From high school and university undergrad days in Winnipeg through his grad studies in London to his lengthy teaching career, Leo accumulated and cherished friendships.

I first met Leo in London in the summer of 1972. We had both been hired by Carleton University to entry-level positions in the political science department. My wife and I were visiting relatives in London and I was given Leo’s address by my new department with the suggestion that it might be useful to meet in advance as we would be sharing a course that fall. I met Leo at his flat for lunch. We hit it off immediately; Leo invited us both to dinner where we met his life companion, Melanie. A half-century relationship between our families, broadening with children and grandchildren, began in Ottawa and moved to Toronto in 1984 when we were both hired by York University. One memorable annual event over the years was Christmas dinner together. (Q: How do secular Jews and Christian agnostics celebrate Christmas? A: With turkey and gefilte fish.)

Leo was never just about politics. Culture was always central, and exchanging thoughts on novels, films, plays, art, etc., was always a central topic of conversation. We shared a great interest in jazz. Late in life Leo acquired a saxophone, which he never mastered despite his serious aspiration. At one point he read Geoff Dyer's *But Beautiful: A Book about Jazz*, which he excitedly declared was the best thing ever written on jazz. He was so insistent that I read it too that he bought a copy for me.

No account of Leo's life can omit his devotion to baseball and the Toronto Blue Jays, whose games we often attended together. I recall one such game when we were joined by an alarmingly precocious fourteen-year-old Ed Miliband (who lamentably turned out to be a Boston Red Sox fan). We shared membership in a somewhat unusual group known as the Toronto District Labour Council Blue Jay Boosters, mainly leftish union bureaucrats and a handful of academics, all united by the Field of Dreams; every Tuesday home game we sat behind the Blue Jays bullpen. Political victories for the left may have been few and far between, but there was recompense in 1992 and 1993 when the Jays won back-to-back World Series. Leo was there (I was not, unfortunately) when Joe Carter hit his series-winning home run for the ages in 1993. This was one historic moment Leo had witnessed that he cherished for the rest of his life.

So important was friendship to Leo that he would never let mere political differences get in the way. Unsurprisingly, we had differences over the years, but it never entered his mind to cut off something as precious as a friendship that had endured for decades because we happened to find ourselves on different sides of an issue. This might have been tested when York was riven with repeated labour disputes and strikes of both faculty and CUPE graduate student unions. Passions were enflamed, polarization intensified, and we found ourselves finally on opposite sides of picket lines. There are a few of my former colleagues who to this day will not speak to me, but to Leo this was nothing but raw material for further discussion. Our friendship continued without skipping a beat.

In 2001, I left York for Victoria but we kept up, even at a distance, with emails, phone calls, and occasional visits to each other's respective city. When *The Making of Global Capitalism* was published and Leo came out to Vancouver to launch the book on the West Coast, he inscribed a copy to my wife and I: "*To Reg and Pam, dear friends forever, Leo.*" A host of others were in the same position.

We continued in communication right up to his hospitalization and diagnosis of myeloma, a deadly blood cancer. Once the diagnosis was made, he was remarkably upbeat, despite the limited future that now lay before him. In a last telephone call I remember him laughingly recounting conversations with a fellow patient who turned out to be a gambler and a bit of a con man. Always interested in other people, Leo took delight in this eccentric figure. Then came word that he had come down with pneumonia and, shortly after, the terrible news that he had succumbed to COVID-19, contracted in one of

Toronto's finest and most prestigious hospitals. We had all been confined and intimidated by this global pandemic, but now it had struck down a figure as seemingly indestructible as Leo.

All who knew Leo, and indeed all who knew of him, knew that he had always been a larger-than-life figure. In the legacy of his writing, his students, his friends, and his unwavering commitment to a better world, he will prove larger than death as well.