# A Brief History of Science and the Left



# 1902

#### **ZOOLOGIST AND**

**ANARCHIST** Peter Kropotkin publishes his scientific studies on altruism in the natural world. "The war of each against all is not the law of nature. Mutual aid is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle."



# 1930s

#### CHARACTERIZED BY ITS

faith in the twin causes of science and socialism, a vocal and public scientific left emerges in Britain, closely tied to the Communist party. "In its endeavour, science is communism," writes J.D. Bernal in The Social Function of Science.



#### 1949

# "WHY SOCIALISM?" IS

authored by the world's most famous scientist, Albert Einstein. "We should be on our guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems; and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organization of society."



# 1968

#### A CAMPAIGN AGAINST

biological and chemical weapons research leads to the formation of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science. Supported by 44 fellows of the Royal Society, including Francis Crick and Bertrand Russell, the BSSRS publishes Science for *People* and launches the campaign "Science is Not Neutral."



# 1978

#### THE SOCIOBIOLOGY

"WARS" come to a head at a symposium featuring renowned biologists E.O. Wilson and Stephen Jay Gould. Protesters, accusing sociobiologists of racism, interrupt Wilson's talk by dousing him with water. Gould, Wilson's long-time antagonist, speaks up to condemn the "juvenilistic ideologues" and their "infantile disorder."



## 1996

#### PHYSICIST ALAN SOKAL

ignites the "science wars" with his prank publication of a nonsense article sending up postmodernist approaches to science. Sokal says: "I'm a stodgy old scientist who believes, naively, that there exists an external world, that there exist objective truths about that world, and that my job is to discover some of them."



## 1931

#### THE SOVIET DELEGATION

shocks the International Congress of the History of Science with Boris Hessen's iconoclastic thesis. Hessen argues that Isaac Newton's insights into the physical world had their roots in early capitalist development.



# 1948

#### AFTER MANY SCIENTISTS

had been executed or sentenced to labour, the Soviet Union discontinues genetics research in favour of T.D. Lysenko's agronomy. Genetics is officially declared a "bourgeois pseudoscience."



#### 1962

#### IN SILENT SPRING,

the marine biologist Rachel Carson explores the devastating ecological effects of uncontrolled pesticide use. *Time* magazine characterizes her "emotional and inaccurate outburst" as "one-sided and hysterically overemphatic." Carson is "probably a communist," says the former secretary of Agriculture.



## 1974

#### JANE LANCASTER'S

ARTICLE "In Praise of the Achieving Female Monkey" marks a shift underway in primatology as increasing numbers of female researchers begin to challenge gendered stereotypes and forms of data collection.



1990

RICHARD LEWONTIN GIVES

the Massey lecture on Biology

as Ideology. "Scientists do not

begin life as scientists, after all,

but as social beings immersed

in a family, a state, a productive

structure, and they view nature

molded by their social experience."

through a lens that has been

# SIXTEEN NATIONAL

2001

SCIENCE academies, including the Royal Society of Canada, issue a joint statement declaring the first report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change a scientific "consensus" and urging "prompt action."

GAME

# 2012

FAMED NASA CLIMATOLOGIST James Hansen declares that should Canada fully exploit its tarsands, "it will be game over for the climate."

Timeline by Ben Campbell Design by Jonathan Rotsztain