

Commentary

**The Stronach Defection and the Crisis of
Canada's Parliamentary System**

On May 17, Belinda Stronach, the reputed architect of the merger of the Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties to form the new Conservative Party, crossed the floor and became a Liberal cabinet minister. This move, plus the decision of two independent MPs, Carolyn Parrish and Chuck Cadman, to vote with the government, ensured a tie vote on second reading of the federal budget. The tie was broken in favour of the government by the Speaker of the House, thereby avoiding a June election. Although a summer election is still a remote possibility, the Conservatives are indicating that they may wait for Paul Martin to call

an election after the release of the Gomery Report. An expected Liberal victory in next week's Labrador by-election would make it even more difficult for the Conservatives to bring down the Martin government.

The Conservatives, the Bloc Quebecois and their supporters are crying foul about Stronach's defection, suggesting that she possesses too much ambition and too little integrity. They do not explain how that differentiates her from a host of other politicians, including Stephen Harper and Peter Mackay. Various other commentators have also been speculating on Stronach's motives and the full extent of the deal

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**Liberals Seek Base for Extended Deployment
of Troops in Afghanistan**

According to media reports, Canadian government officials are currently negotiating a long-term agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which will enable Canadian troops to remain in the country for years in support of the Canadian Forces currently deployed in Afghanistan.

The report underscores the Liberal government's commitment to assisting the Bush administration in its occupation of Afghanistan despite Canadian public opinion to the contrary. Opposition to the deployment of Canadian forces in Afghanistan reached its zenith after four Canadian soldiers were killed in a "friendly fire" attack by two U.S. pilots in 2002 and has remained high.

By creating a permanent support base in the UAE (Camp Mirage), Canada is essentially committing Canadian forces in Afghanistan for several more years. There are currently around 700 Canadian forces in Kabul as part of a NATO stabilization force. They are supposed to be returning to Canada within months. Another 240

Canadian troops are scheduled to be deployed to Kandahar in southeastern Afghanistan before the end of the year to serve with the 1,000 mainly American soldiers in a U.S.-led combat operation. There are another 250 Canadian troops stationed in the Persian Gulf for deployment to Afghanistan.

When the Chretien government failed to broker a deal between the U.S. and the United Nations in the run up to the American-led invasion of Iraq, and then refused to participate in the invasion, some people had illusions that the Liberal government was opposing U.S. imperialism. In fact, first Chretien and then Martin have bent over backwards to accommodate every other U.S. request for Canadian troops, including deploying forces to occupy Haiti after a coup organized by the Americans ousted the democratically elected Haitian president, Jean Bertrand Aristide. Establishing Canadian forces as a permanent part of the occupation of Afghanistan only underscores this.

Resolutions Adopted at the MRC Conference Marking the 35th Anniversary of CPC(M-L)

Below, *Modern Communism* is printing the resolutions adopted at the conference organized by the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L) to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist).

I. Resolution on the General Line of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist)

The Conference of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L), held from April 2, 2005 to April 10, 2005, hails the 35 years of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), considers the defence of its ideological, political and organizational line of utmost importance, and re-affirms its general line.

A. The Conference re-affirms that:

- 1) The present epoch is one of imperialism and proletarian revolution;
- 2) The strategic aim of the working class remains the overthrow of all conditions of exploitation of persons by persons on the basis of the constructions of socialism and communism;
- 3) The objective conditions are ripe for revolution and the subjective conditions have to be prepared;
- 4) The theory of Marxism-Leninism remains valid as a guide to the thinking and action of the Party.

B. The Conference recognizes that the revolution is in ebb during this period and re-affirms that:

- 1) This does not affect the strategic aim and the general line of the Party;
- 2) Three contradictions in the world today, the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the contradiction between imperialism and the peoples, and the contradiction among imperialist countries and between monopoly groups, remain at the base of modern-day development;
- 3) The working class remains the most thoroughly

revolutionary class;

4) With CPC(M-L) as its vanguard, the working class must lead the people out of this all-round crisis and open the path for progress of the society; and that

5) There is an alternative to capitalism, and that is socialism.

C. The Conference re-affirms that:

- 1) The elaboration of theory and the bringing forth of modern definitions is one of the most crucial tasks;
- 2) The strengthening of the inner-Party life and the strengthening of the organizations of the Party and their work is indispensable to the realization of all other tasks;
- 3) The building and strengthening of the basic organizations at the place of work, especially in the factories, is crucial to winning the advanced elements of the class and for developing the leading role of the working class over society, on the basis of the united front of the broad section.

D. The Conference re-affirms its full defence of the principles of:

- 1) Democratic centralism; and
- 2) Proletarian internationalism.

II. Resolution on the Work of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L)

The Conference of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L) considers the following work as permanent and ongoing and resolves to:

- 1) Study and popularize the writings of Hardial Bains and the documents of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), as well as the general line of the Party;
- 2) Strengthen the collective leadership of the

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Manitoba Regional Committee on the basis of democratic centralism;

3) Strengthen and develop the work of the Party and non-Party press;

4) Strengthen and develop the unity in action of the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist forces;

5) Further develop the technical base.

III. Resolution on the Immediate Tasks of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L)

The Conference of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L) undertakes the following immediate tasks:

1) Assist the revolutionary youth to develop the movement for communism;

2) Develop the Hardial Bains Library to make the writings of Hardial Bains and documents of CPC(M-L) more accessible;

3) Establish the Hardial Bains Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies;

IV. Resolution on the 2005 Revolutionary Chautauqua

The Conference of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L) resolves that the Manitoba Regional Committee host a Revolutionary Chautauqua in Wasagaming, Manitoba from July 17 to 24 and further develop the movement for revolutionary culture.

V. Resolution on the International Struggle Against Imperialism

The Conference of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L) re-affirms its support for all peoples struggling for their national rights and for their social emancipation against imperialism, exploitation and oppression. In particular, the Conference re-affirms its support for:

1) The people of Cuba who have been fighting for more than 40 years in defence of their revolution, their sovereignty and their right to determine their own social system;

2) The Palestinian people who have been fighting for more than 50 years against imperialist-Zionist aggression and occupation;

3) The people of Iraq who are currently struggling to rid their country of the U.S. and British imperialist occupiers.

VI. Resolution on 2006 Consultative Conference of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L)

1) The Conference of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L) resolves to hold a Consultative Conference of the MRC on the occasion of the 36th Anniversary of the Founding of CPC(M-L) in 2006.

VII. Resolution on Publishing the Proceedings of the Conference

The Conference of the Manitoba Regional Committee of CPC(M-L) resolves to publish the proceedings of this conference as a pamphlet for public distribution.

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offered to her by Paul Martin. However, there is a virtual absence of any substantive analysis on the subject.

Stronach's father Frank Stronach, president of Magna International, a major auto parts manufacturer, is a long-time Liberal. He ran as a candidate for the Liberal Party in 1988 and was a vocal critic of the Mulroney government's free trade policies. When Belinda Stronach began her efforts to "unite the right" she openly stated that her objective was to save the Canadian parliamentary system. As every political system based on the British model, Canada's parliamentary system relies on a governing party which holds power and an opposition party which is capable of taking over when the governing party becomes discredited. In order for such a system to function, both the governing and opposition parties must be national parties and, regardless of their rhetoric, both must support similar policies once

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in office. Thus, when the Mulroney Conservatives were discredited over their free trade policies, the Chretien Liberals replaced them with the promise to scrap the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). However, once elected the Liberals implemented identical policies to the Mulroney Conservatives.

The problem confronting the Canadian parliamentary system is that the traditional parliamentary opposition, the Progressive Conservative Party, was decimated in the 1993 federal election. The avowedly separatist Bloc Quebecois emerged as the party with the second greatest number of seats and, therefore, became the official opposition. However, it could not play the traditional role of an opposition party on two counts: first, it is opposed to Canadian Confederation, at least as it is presently constituted; and, second, it is a strictly regional party with no possibility of forming a national government.

The Reform Party, which had the next greatest number of seats, also could not play the role of a traditional opposition party. It too was a regional party, based on Alberta oil capital, with no support east of the Manitoba-Ontario border and its “social conservative” agenda ensured that it could never become anything more than that.

The 1993 federal election also reduced the governing Liberal Party to a regional party, with almost no seats west of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border. However, it had a large enough majority that it was able to rule for over a decade as if it actually were a national party.

It was this problem which Belinda Stronach, according to her own words, set out to solve in 2003 when she organized a series of backroom meetings between leaders of the Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties to discuss a merger. When the merger became a reality, she also campaigned to become the national leader of the new Conservative Party. If she had succeeded, the Conservatives may have been able to make some headway in Ontario because Stronach’s positions on almost everything were identical to the positions of the Liberal Party. However, she was unsuccessful precisely because her positions on social issues were too “liberal” for

the majority of the members who came from the Alliance Party. Over the past year, the “social conservative” faction of the Conservatives, with the support of Stephen Harper, has emerged as the dominant force in the party, thereby making a breakthrough in Ontario highly unlikely. In other words, the Conservative Party is still incapable of playing the traditional role of an opposition party. Since it cannot elect a single MP in Quebec, the Conservative Party would need to take a large number of seats in Ontario in order to form a government. Apparently, Stronach realized that a breakthrough in Ontario could not be accomplished with Harper as leader of the Conservatives and that there was no role for her in that party other than as window dressing.

If there had been an election in June, the Liberals would have undoubtedly lost a number of seats, especially in Quebec, while the Conservatives would not have gained enough to form a majority government. They would have been forced to rely on support from the Bloc Quebecois to form a minority government, further exacerbating the political crisis. By crossing the floor and joining the Liberals, Stronach bought some time for the Canadian ruling elite to sort out its differences and find a way out of the political crisis gripping it. However, barring some totally unforeseen developments, it appears that a major crisis has been averted for only a matter of a few months, at best.

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