

Editorial

The Struggle for Sovereignty is Inseparable from the Struggle for Socialism

While the federal Liberals wrapped themselves in the Maple Leaf flag to celebrate Canada Day, Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan, along with officials from the U.S. and Mexico, was busy wrapping the entire North American continent in the Stars and Stripes. Under the banner “Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America” the governments of the three countries have been negotiating the deeper integration of their economies and the synchronization of their security and trade policies. In practical terms, this means the further surrender of sovereignty by Canada and Mexico to the U.S. in order to enhance the profits of a handful of corporations, most of which have their headquarters in the U.S. This behaviour by the Liberals of claiming to stand for Canadian sovereignty while selling out

the country to the highest bidder highlights the growing rift between the Canadian political and economic elites and the vast majority of the Canadian people.

The Canadian economy, much like the economies of many other former colonies, has always been a dependent economy organized primarily to serve the interests of foreign powers, originally Britain and France and more recently the United States. It was developed as a supplier of raw materials – lumber, minerals, agricultural products and energy – to Britain and the U.S. and continues to play that role today. In general, raw materials are exported to the U.S. and manufactured goods are imported in return. Almost all

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Commentary

The Iranian Elections are the Business of the Iranian People

In the June 24 run-off presidential election in Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former mayor of Tehran, won a landslide victory over Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the president of Iran between 1989 and 1997, who was expected to easily win another term in office. Western analysts are claiming that the election of Ahmadinejad, considered a “hardline conservative”, represents a setback for the reform movement in Iran and the tightening of control by religious fundamentalists. With the election of Ahmadinejad, the conservatives now control all of the elected and appointed institutions of government in the country.

In the wake of Ahmadinejad’s victory, the Bush

administration and the U.S. news media immediately began ratcheting up their anti-Iran propaganda in much the same way that they did prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. On the one hand they are claiming that Ahmadinejad has no real power, while on the other hand asserting that his election spells the end to negotiations over Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program. In addition, they have been making dire predictions about an inevitable crackdown on civil liberties in Iran, suggesting that an American-sponsored “regime change” will be necessary in order to restore democratic rights in Iran. Of course, the entire history of U.S. interference in Iran to install and

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of the key sectors of the Canadian economy, including the petrochemical industry, lumber, auto manufacturing and, increasingly, the agricultural sector, are dominated by foreign, mainly American, monopolies. In fact, Canada has the dubious distinction of having the highest percentage of foreign ownership of any country in the world.

In the past, the foreign and domestic corporations which dominated the Canadian economy were able to profit from maintaining at least a nominal separation between the Canadian and American economies. However, with the rise of neo-liberalism over the past 30 years the monopoly corporations, whether foreign or domestic, have come to view national borders as an impediment to the flow of capital and the realization of maximum profits. The big imperialist powers – the U.S., Britain, Germany, France and Japan – have divided the world into huge trading blocs within which the economies of the weaker countries are subordinated to the interests of the monopoly capitalist multinationals of the handful of powerful countries. Within those blocs a concerted effort is being made to extinguish the sovereignty of the smaller or weaker countries through the use of trade agreements and other means. Since the events of September 11, 2001 the “security concerns” of the most powerful countries have also been used to further extinguish the sovereignty of the smaller and weaker countries and reduce the scope of operation of their national governments.

The Canadian working class is exploited and oppressed by Canadian and foreign finance capital, primarily U.S. finance capital. It is in the interest of the working class to take up and lead the struggles of the Canadian people for democracy and national sovereignty. Of all the classes and strata in Canadian society it has the most to gain by building a country that is genuinely democratic and sovereign. Therefore, it wages the struggles for democracy and national sovereignty in co-ordination with and subordinated to the struggle for socialism. In other words, the struggle for sovereignty is inseparable from the strategic program of the working class for socialism and communism.

This is not to say that the struggle for sovereignty is synonymous with the struggle for socialism. Rather, it means that the struggle for sovereignty will not get

very far without a vigorous struggle for socialism led by the working class, while the struggle for socialism will not amount to much if it is waged in the abstract and not linked to actually establishing socialism on sovereign Canadian soil. Socialism is not possible without sovereignty, while sovereignty cannot be defended without socialism. Of course, there are many Canadians who espouse support for sovereignty who may not agree with socialism and there are cases where sentiment for Canada has been manipulated to serve the interests of one or another section of the political and economic elite. However, in strategic terms the struggle for Canadian sovereignty assists the working class to emancipate itself from the bonds imposed on it by foreign and domestic capital, by both the Canadian monopoly capitalist class and U.S. imperialism. Therefore, the working class must not only find ways to advance the struggle for sovereignty, but must put itself in the leadership of that struggle. In the words of Marx and Engels, the working class must “constitute itself the nation” and, in so doing, overthrow the rule of monopoly capital and vest sovereignty in the people.

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prop up the brutal dictatorship of Shah Pahlavi and the CIA’s training of his security forces in the art of torture and assassination is conveniently forgotten.

The U.S. media has now gone a step further, accusing Ahmadinejad of actively participating in the 1979-1980 hostage crisis in which a number of American embassy officials and spies were held by Iranian students for more than a year. It is also reporting that he was involved in various terrorist activities, including the assassination of Iranian dissidents in exile abroad. It is clear from the reports that these accusations are not based on any real evidence, but are part of a systematic campaign of disinformation and character assassination undertaken with the purpose of preparing public opinion for further interference in Iran’s internal affairs. There is growing evidence that various European countries, especially Britain, France and Germany, are also part of this campaign to discredit Ahmadinejad.

Since the 1979 overthrow of the Shah, Iran has

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For Your Information

Putting “Deep Integration” into Practice: The Liberals’ First Action Plan for Harmonization

On June 27, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Anne McLellan announced that Canada will be participating in a new “security and prosperity” plan with both the U.S. and Mexico to further synchronize a number of policies and procedures between the three countries. The plan was developed following the March 23 summit meeting of George W. Bush, Vicente Fox and Paul Martin in Waco, Texas, at which they agreed to look at further integrating North America under the title Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America.

This is the first in a series of action plans to be developed under this partnership and contains sweeping recommendations on everything from increasing shared policing and security services, to removing some of the barriers to cross boarder trade, to synchronizing regulatory systems in the three countries. Many of the recommendations in the plan on their own constitute a fundamental weakening of Canadian sovereignty; together, the plan goes farther than anything since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to subvert Canadian laws and systems.

Under the banner of “Making North America the Best Place to do Business”, the plan commits the three countries to streamlining their regulatory processes to improve the ability of companies to manufacture or sell goods on a North America-wide basis. For example, a trilateral Regulatory Cooperation Framework will be developed to “encourage new cooperation among regulators, including at the outset of the regulatory process ... [and] reduce redundant testing and certification requirements, while maintaining high standards of health and safety.” This will have a significant impact, particularly in Canada, which has much stricter regulatory systems in place for almost every consumer good than either the U.S. or Mexico. Drug approvals, for example, routinely take much longer in Canada than in the U.S. and Mexico. Food multinationals like Cargill and ConAgra are not required to publish as much information about their

products in the U.S. and Mexico as they are in Canada. Labour and environmental regulations in the three countries vary widely from industry to industry, with some parts of both the U.S. and Mexico operating as regulatory-free zones. The maximum number of hours workers can work in a week is much lower in Canada than in parts of the U.S. or Mexico. There are more stringent health and safety workplace requirements in Canada. These are just some of the hundreds of examples of these differences, but the aim of the plan is clear: eliminate them.

Under the heading “Security” the action plan describes how Canadian, Mexican and American security agencies will work more closely together to identify potential risks. This will include sharing intelligence information and creating even more trilateral security service teams. In addition, the plan commits both Canada and Mexico to develop systems that “prevent high-risk travelers from coming to North America, and facilitate legitimate travel to and within North America, by enhancing our ability to verify traveller identities.”

This section is an apparent reference to a new American policy which requires every airline company in the world to provide its passenger lists to the U.S. government if its airplane will be landing in the U.S or even flying in U.S. airspace. A number of global commercial airlines had been refusing to comply with this policy, asking the U.S. instead to provide them with lists of wanted criminals so they could vet their own passenger lists, but the Americans refused. The U.S. government has compiled a huge “no-fly” list which contains the names of individuals who have no connection to terrorist organizations, but who are active in various protest movements against U.S. government policies, such as the anti-war movement. The harmonization of Canadian and Mexican policies on this front will mean that the U.S. will be able to prevent Canadian and Mexican citizens from flying within their own countries or to third countries, regardless of whether or not their flights cross over U.S. air space.

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Other security measures in the plan include:

- establishing a North American biometrics standard for screening all travellers (ie., fingerprinting and eye scanning all entrants not just to the U.S. but to Canada and Mexico as well).
- “negotiating terrorist screening information agreements and examining other appropriate linkages” between the three countries;
- “completing the negotiation of the Canada-U.S. visa information sharing agreement within 18 months”;
- harmonizing border security screening measures, which would require Canadian and Mexican border guards to require the same information from travellers as American border guards require;
- “developing a comprehensive law enforcement strategy to respond to transnational terrorist incidents in North America”; and

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not committed acts of aggression against any of its neighbours and there are no indications that it has any intention to do so in the future. On the contrary, Iran has been the victim of aggression by the United States, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other countries allied with the U.S. in the Middle East. To its credit, Iran has resisted and repelled all of these attacks and has refused to back down in the face of the U.S. imperialist bullying. Regardless of which government has been in power in Iran, the country has taken consistent stands against imperialism and in favour of the sovereignty of those countries which are oppressed and exploited by imperialism. Given the history of the past 25 years, it is understandable if the Iranian government is convinced that it must develop nuclear weapons to defend its sovereignty.

The character of the government of Iran and whether or not it is developing nuclear weapons are the business of the Iranian people and nobody else. It is certainly not the business of the United States, which threatens the entire world with nuclear annihilation and has overthrown more democratically-elected governments than any other country in history, to determine who can and cannot possess nuclear weapons or what qualifies as an

- “ensuring interoperability of communications systems used in response operations”.

Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, McLellan dismissed as “ill-informed alarmist rhetoric” concerns that the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America threatens Canadian sovereignty. When asked by reporters what measures the Canadian government would take to ensure that intelligence information provided to the U.S. will not be used to violate the fundamental human rights of Canadian citizens, as happened in the case of Maher Arar, McLellan cited the 2004 Monterrey Protocol. Under this protocol, each country is supposed to consult the other before any of its citizens are deported to a third country. However, the Monterrey Protocol is not legally binding on either Canada or the U.S. Furthermore, U.S. officials have made it clear on a number of occasions that American “national security interests” take precedence over any international agreements the U.S. may have entered into, including the Geneva Accords.

acceptable form of government. In 1979 the Iranian people overthrew the U.S.-backed regime of the Shah despite the fact that that regime had the fourth largest army in the world as well as tens of thousands of U.S.-trained secret police. If the Iranian people decide in the future that they want to establish some different form of government they certainly do not require anyone to teach them how to do so, least of all the U.S. and the European powers that colonized the Middle East in the past.

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