

Editorial

Working People Must Reject Narrow, Bourgeois Nationalism

As the federal election campaign gets underway, the candidates from every political party are vying with each other to convince people that their particular party is best able to protect Canadians from American bullying. Even Conservative leader Stephen Harper is trying to distance himself from the Bush regime. There is also a chorus of trade union leaders calling on Canadian workers to vote for the Liberals, NDP or some other party in order to save their jobs. Some candidates have gone so far as to suggest that there are some local monopoly capitalist corporations that are part of the social fabric of Canada and that it is in the national interest to ensure that they not only remain in business, but also that they remain out of the hands of their foreign competitors. Regardless of the political stripe of

those who are suggesting such things, they are all trying to sell the Canadian working class and people a bill of goods. The central tenet of this line is the myth that Canadian monopoly capitalism is superior to American monopoly capitalism, that Canadian capitalism is more humane, more pro-social and more pro-worker and that the interests of Canada are synonymous with the interests of the Canadian capitalist class.

Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no such thing as “good” monopoly capitalists and “bad” monopoly capitalists. They all have exactly the same motivation – the realization of maximum capitalist profit – and they will do anything to achieve it. There is no such thing as a patriotic Canadian

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Martin Steps Up Anti-American Rhetoric

Paul Martin is once more playing the anti-American card, this time in an attempt to win seats in British Columbia and Ontario on January 23. The opportunity to do so was handed to him on a silver platter - so fortuitous that one reporter even asked Martin whether he had paid the U.S. ambassador to Canada, David Wilkins, to lambaste Martin's government, in the middle of a federal election campaign, for criticizing the Bush administration.

Martin, in his 10-year campaign to replace Jean Chretien as the leader of the Liberal Party, often criticized other Liberals for America-bashing and promised a new, more cooperative relationship with the Americans. He even subtly criticized Chretien for his decision not to send Canadian troops to Iraq as part of the U.S. invasion and occupation, a position he dropped quickly as the Americans got bogged down and Canadian public opinion against the invasion

stabilized at around 80 per cent. Martin also obviously learned from Chretien the benefits of a tried and true Liberal tactic: push for closer integration with the U.S. while bad-mouthing the Americans whenever it is expedient.

Under Martin, legislation to further integrate security, immigration and economic policies with both the U.S. and Mexico, under the aegis of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has been introduced. Canada under the Liberals has been the Americans' strongest ally in their push to establish a hemispheric-wide trading bloc under their control through the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Martin has renewed the commitment Chretien made to send Canadian troops into combat (the first time since the first Gulf War in 1991) as part of the U.S.-led occupation of Afghanistan. He has stood by silently

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United Nations' Human Rights Committee Reports on Canada's Violations of Human Rights

In a report released recently, the United Nations' Human Rights Committee noted that Canada is violating various human rights as set out in the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights". The report opposes the contradictory attitude of the Canadian state towards human rights. On one hand, it states that the "positive aspects" of Canada's human rights record are that it has become a signatory to two more protocols – one relating to discrimination against women, the other to the rights of children – and that it "plays an important role in the promotion of human rights". On the other hand, the report notes that many of the recommendations that it addressed to Canada in 1999 "remain unimplemented" and that Canada is "reluctant to consider that it is under an obligation to implement the Committee's requests for interim measures of protection". In other words, while presenting itself as a champion of human rights, Canada does not live up to its commitments to implement the covenants it has signed.

The report also highlights the Canadian government's continuing efforts to extinguish inherent Aboriginal rights and its failure to settle long-standing Aboriginal land claims, as well as the widespread discrimination and violence against Aboriginal women in Canada. It also expresses concern about the Canadian state's use of the Anti-Terrorism Act and "security certificates" to violate the human rights of immigrants and refugees, including their deportation to countries where they face the risk of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The report specifically refers to the Canadian state's complicity in the illegal transfer of Maher Arar to Syria where he was subjected to torture. It expresses concern that the Canadian state has failed to supply the Committee with sufficient information on the cases of other Canadians of foreign origin who have been detained, interrogated and allegedly tortured at the hands of foreign security agencies. In addition, the report cites as violations of human rights Canada's practice of imprisoning persons under the age of 18 with adults if they are serving an adult sentence, as well as the large scale arbitrary arrest and detention of demonstrators in Montreal.

The question of human rights has been a central issue in the world, especially since the end the Second

World War. It has been an issue both separate from and linked together with the question of social systems. The capitalist states, led by the United States, waged an unrelenting ideological campaign to equate socialism and communism with fascism and totalitarianism, while equating capitalism with democracy and human rights. This ideological campaign complemented an all-round economic, political and military pressure to undermine socialism and communism. The degeneration of the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe into pseudo-socialist societies, with hybrid features of both capitalism and socialism, gave further ammunition to all of the enemies of socialism and communism, who attributed all of the ills of these countries to socialism and communism.

Even though the regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe collapsed in the 1989 to 1991 period, the pressure against socialism and communism persists. Just recently, on November 9, U.S. president George W. Bush declared "World Freedom Day" to mark the sixteenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. His proclamation was filled with the Cold War jingoism – that freedom and democracy had prevailed over communism and tyranny. If this were true then the past 16 years should have witnessed a renewal of peace, prosperity and human rights as 99 percent of the world's population lives under the capitalist system. However, this is far from the case. Rather, the world has gone in the opposite direction in the past 16 years.

The working class and people aspire for a society without the exploitation of persons by persons. Such a society would have as its overriding principle the recognition of the human rights of its citizens and residents. It would recognize that people have human rights by virtue of being human. Human rights could not be given as privileges or taken away as punishment. They would exist as an intrinsic quality of being a human being and as a claim on society, and on the governments that represent that society, for all that is required to exist as a human being. These needs are economic, political, social, cultural. They include health care, education, culture and other necessities of

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Is Full Employment Possible in a Capitalist Canada?

One of the great contributions of Karl Marx was to prove that the scourge of unemployment could never be eliminated under capitalism. In fact, he proved that a constant army of unemployed workers is absolutely essential for the capitalist system to function, both to drive down wages and maximize capitalist accumulation, as well as to provide an adequate supply of workers during the “boom” periods of the capitalist business cycle. Furthermore, as the period of the building of socialism in the former Soviet Union and countries of people’s democracy showed, unemployment is not automatically eliminated with the overthrow of capitalism, but requires the most careful economic planning to ensure that, on a continuous basis, more wealth is invested in a country’s economy than is taken out.

In recent weeks, one political commentator has postulated that by mobilizing the will of the nation this economic law discovered by Karl Marx can be overcome. This commentator points to the experience of the Second World War as evidence that when the full resources of the nation are mobilized the rate of unemployment can be drastically reduced. Of course, the commentator ignores the fact that during the Second World War the full resources of the nation were not mobilized to solve the problem of unemployment. Rather, the full resources of the nation were mobilized in order to ensure the supremacy of one section of monopoly capital in its

competition for world domination with another section of monopoly capital.

In the course of this inter-imperialist conflict, which also had the aim of destroying socialism in the Soviet Union, over 50 million people – mostly non-combatants – were killed and tens of millions more were left maimed and destitute. In addition, the industrial capacity of whole nations was reduced to rubble and hundreds of millions of people were left without a means of earning a livelihood. On the “bright side”, unemployment was virtually eliminated in Canada, or at least until a million young workers returned from overseas.

The experience of the Second World War does not prove that the scourge of unemployment can be eliminated through the mobilization of the nation. On the contrary, it proves that under capitalism unemployment can only be eliminated on a temporary basis in certain countries through the militarization of the capitalist economies and the destruction of vast amounts of labour and capital through war. (Which, in less polite terms, means the murder of tens of millions of workers and the bombing of their factories.) In fact, many economists and historians have argued that the capitalist crisis of overproduction which gave rise to the Great Depression of the 1930s could not have been overcome except through a world war and the resulting massive destruction of the world’s excess productive capacity.

Given the current crisis of overproduction that is gripping the entire world the real lessons of the Second World War should be remembered. As this crisis develops, not only will the inter-imperialist contradictions become more and more exacerbated, but the necessity to destroy the world’s excess productive capacity will also intensify. Just as a world war became necessary during the 1930s and 1940s for the survival and renewal of the capitalist system, so too today such conditions are emerging on a world scale. This underlines the dangers inherent in presenting the Second World War as a model for the elimination of unemployment.

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life. This is the kind of society that Karl Marx and Frederick Engels foresaw. This is the kind of society towards which the first steps were taken by Lenin and Stalin in the Soviet Union, and by Enver Hoxha in Albania. Despite the fact that these first steps towards building a society without exploitation suffered a setback, and these countries reverted back to exploitation, the material conditions still exist for this advance of society. The Canadian government, and George W. Bush, even though they present themselves as champions of human rights, do not want to create such a society.

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monopoly capitalist, a monopoly capitalist who puts the interests of the workers, the community or the country above the interest of maximum capitalist profit. Whether they have Canadian or American or some other citizenship, monopoly capitalists are “nationalists” only in so far as they can use a particular national state to advance their own narrow interests against the narrow interests of their competitors. If shutting down a factory in Canada and opening one in China, Mexico or some other country results in higher profits, then they will do so without a moment’s hesitation regardless of the impact such a decision may have on “their” workers or “their” community. To suggest otherwise is to create serious illusions about the fundamental nature of capitalism in its highest and final stage of monopoly capitalism.

The Canadian economy is dominated by monopoly capital. This capital is both domestic and foreign, and, regardless of its origin, monopoly capital in Canada has the motive of extracting maximum profit out of the land and labour of the Canadian people. Furthermore, all monopoly capitalists in Canada, whether domestic or foreign, see their interests served both by maintaining Canada’s dependence on and subservience to the United States and by maintaining the supremacy of the U.S. internationally. Put another way, the economic and social base for the domination of Canada by U.S. imperialism is the Canadian state and the Canadian monopoly capitalist class.

The Canadian people have gone through two decades of a most vicious anti-social offensive. It cannot be said that this anti-social offensive has been pushed by some “bad” American capitalists while various “good” Canadian capitalists opposed it. The Liberals and Conservatives, the main federal parties of monopoly capital in Canada, have been the main parties pushing this policy nationally, while every party in power provincially, including the NDP and Parti Quebecois, have pursued similar policies at that level. Similarly, regardless of what they say, every political party in power at the federal or provincial level is pursuing ever greater integration of the Canadian economy with the American economy.

In other words, the struggle of the Canadian working class and people for independence, sovereignty and pro-social policies is a struggle which must be directed against both “Canadian” and foreign monopoly capital. To suggest that the U.S. imperialist domination of Canada can be ended without simultaneously overthrowing the monopoly capitalist system in Canada is just as ludicrous as suggesting that “Canadian” monopoly capital can be overthrown without simultaneously putting an end to the U.S.

imperialist domination of Canada. The former creates illusions about “Canadian” capitalism and attempts to line up the Canadian working class and people behind “their own” capitalists, while the latter seeks to undermine the struggle against imperialism in general. Both views are united in defence of the status quo and in opposition to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the creation of an independent, sovereign and socialist Canada.

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while Canadian citizens have been apprehended by the Americans and have either been held indefinitely in prison camps in Guantanamo Bay or Afghanistan or have been deported to face torture in other countries. Only on one question – ballistic missile defence – has Paul Martin not been subservient to U.S. wishes and reportedly on that question only because his own caucus was split and signing on would most likely have triggered an election.

Publicly, however, Martin has criticized the Bush administration repeatedly for its failure to “live up to” its commitments under NAFTA, especially on the issue of softwood lumber, and, just last week in Montreal, on its refusal to comply with the Kyoto accord. The day after Ambassador Wilkins’ speech, Martin spoke from a B.C. community devastated by the illegal U.S. tariff on softwood lumber and claimed to be a champion of Canadian sovereignty. Each criticism means a bump for the Liberals in opinion polls.

It is quite possible that painting the Conservatives under Harper as pro-American may enable the Liberals to hang on to a second-term minority government, which would explain why Martin has stepped up the rhetoric once again.

Modern Communism

**Bulletin of the Manitoba Regional Committee
of the Communist Party of Canada
(Marxist-Leninist)**

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