

## Editorial

### The Way Forward for the Working Class

Various trade union leaders are using the occasion of Labour Day in an attempt to line up the Canadian working class behind Canadian capital and U.S. imperialism. They are suggesting that Canadian corporations, and therefore Canadian workers, stand to gain profits and jobs if Barack Obama is elected president of the United States. They are going so far as to suggest that Obama will put an end to the policies of neo-liberalism, which have wreaked havoc on Canadian workers, and that any party except the Harper Conservatives will do likewise in Canada. They would like Canadian workers to believe that neo-liberalism is not the preferred policy of the biggest corporations in the world, especially those in the U.S., Western Europe and Canada, but is an ideological aberration brought in by some “right-wing” politicians like George Bush and Stephen Harper.

At the same time that these trade union leaders are making grand speeches about the necessity for a “militant fight-back” against concessions and concessionary bargaining, they are signing deals with the capitalists granting massive concessions and no-strike clauses in the name of “saving jobs”. The futility of this approach can be seen from the case of Ontario auto workers; literally days after they ratified a concessionary agreement to save their jobs, General Motors announced the elimination of thousands of jobs. Is it any wonder that workers are becoming disillusioned with their trade unions? Is it any wonder that trade union membership in Canada is dropping when the trade unions have proven over and over again that they are increasingly incapable of defending even the simplest economic interests of their members?

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## Commentary

### What Does This Election Mean to the Canadian People?

Harper has now rolled the dice, hoping to win either a renewed minority or even a majority government before the economy takes a nose dive. While another minority government is the most likely outcome, a majority Conservative government is within Harper’s reach, depending on how the Quebec working class decides to vote. They do not even have to vote for the Conservatives for this to happen. Any shift away from the Bloc Quebecois towards the NDP, Green Party or, in some cases even towards the Liberals, could result in a dozen or more Quebec seats going to the Conservatives.

It is clear that a Conservative majority, or even a renewed Conservative minority government, will not

benefit the majority of Canadians. It would lead to the almost certain elimination of the last remaining public institutions in Canada – the CBC, the Canadian Wheat Board and probably Canada Post. However, it cannot be said that a Liberal minority or majority government would benefit the majority of Canadians either, or that those institutions would necessarily be saved.

Since the early 1990s the Canadian political system has been in perpetual disequilibrium. This disequilibrium has an economic basis, which is the shifting balance of wealth and power away from the eastern monopoly capitalists, especially the

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So, faced with both ideological and financial bankruptcy, various Canadian trade unions are calling on their members to put their faith in the hands of the capitalist-imperialist system. This is not the first time they have done so. They did the same in the years leading up to the First World War and again in the years leading up to the Second World War. They called on workers to support the aims of U.S. imperialism in Korea in the 1950s and in Vietnam in the 1960s. They hailed Lech Walesca as the savior of Polish workers in the 1980s, then looked the other way when his government destroyed social programs, privatized everything and assisted U.S. capitalists to loot the country. While it is not as easy today for trade unions to openly support imperialism and war the way they once did, they have become very sophisticated in doing it covertly, hiding the content of their calls behind flowery phrases about “peace” and “new directions”. They call on governments to take punitive economic measures against countries such as China, Japan and South Korea because “their” companies are unfairly competing with “our” companies, while neglecting to point out that these are often one and the same company operating in both countries. Significantly, they do not issue such calls against the United States when its companies, like General Motors and Ford, shut down plants in Canada and move their operations elsewhere.

Such trade union leaders and the labour aristocracy of which they are a part are the main “fifth column” of capitalism and imperialism within the working class. It is they and their brand of class collaborationist trade unionism which has largely eliminated the militant fight-back that they routinely

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manufacturing and financial sectors, and towards the western-based oil and resource extraction monopolies. The challenge by the oil monopolies to the control of the political system by the eastern monopoly capitalists resulted in the destruction of the Mulroney conservatives and the weakening of the Liberal Party, especially in western Canada.

Over the next decade the Conservative Party was resurrected as an instrument of the Alberta oil barons and the election of a minority Conservative

call for at their conventions and in their Labour Day speeches.

This is not the first time that the Canadian labour movement has been in crisis, facing bankruptcy and extinction. It is not the first time that the trade union movement has been in desperate need of renewal. Such renewals occurred in the late 1800s, again in the early 1900s and once again in the 1930s. Those renewals have many features in common. The first is that the old trade unions were totally incapable of renewing themselves. Rather, the impetus for renewal came from outside the trade unions, from the radical and revolutionary political movements which saw an organized working class as the most important instrument for social and political change. Secondly, every renewal was based, first and foremost, not on cajoling the organized workers to be more militant, but by launching massive campaigns to organize the unorganized.

There is no doubt that the Canadian trade union movement is in urgent need of renewal when its main leaders call repeatedly on workers to put their futures in the hands of the very capitalists who are systematically destroying any future for humanity. However, the trade unions are incapable of renewing themselves and becoming instruments of social change when they are tied hand and foot to the capitalist-imperialist system. Renewal of the trade unions can, once again, only be accomplished by those who reject capitalism as the future of humankind and whose aim is to forge the working class into an instrument capable of effecting revolutionary social change. Only such a revolutionary force can approach organizing the unorganized as a historical necessity rather than as a means to shore up a sagging bank account.

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government in 2006 resulted in a definite shift in federal policies to further strengthen them financially and politically. The abandonment of the long-standing low dollar policy which favoured the export of manufactured goods, coupled with the abandonment of the Liberal policy of subsidizing Ontario manufacturers, accelerated the closure of manufacturing plants in Ontario, while resulting in windfall profits for the oil monopolies. All environmental and other regulations which hampered

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## Commentary

# Harper's Contempt for Democracy

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has declared parliament to be unworkable and has asked the Governor-General to dissolve parliament, clearing the way for new elections on October 14. This is one more demonstration of Harper's complete contempt for the democratic traditions and institutions of the country. Less than two years ago, at a time when he thought that a fixed election date would help the Conservatives hold onto power, Harper pushed through a law setting federal elections every four years on the third Monday of October. The law specifies that the next election date should be October 19, 2009. However, fearful that a declining economy and a Democratic win in the U.S. elections could negatively affect Conservative fortunes over

the next year, Harper has seen fit to violate his own law and call an early election.

Since coming to power Harper has been responsible for a general and dramatic lowering of the level of politics in Canada. He has imported wholesale the right-wing populist politics of the American religious right into Canada, along with American-style attack ads. Like his mentor George W. Bush, he talks a lot about "defending traditional values" and "listening to the people", but in practice destroys anything which gets in the way of achieving his agenda and that of his corporate friends. His government broke the law at least three times in their desperate attempt to destroy the Canadian Wheat

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the oil monopolies have also gone by the wayside.

While there was a brief period in 1993 and 1994 when the working class and people had an opportunity to use the political disequilibrium of the bourgeois political system to seize the initiative and advance their own program of political and social reforms, by the mid-1990s the monopoly capitalists had regained the initiative. Since then, the political disequilibrium has not benefited the working class and people. Rather, they have been the victims of collateral damage in the financial warfare between the contending monopoly capitalist groups. During the 1990s social spending was slashed by the Chretien Liberals and now social and cultural programs are under attack by the Harper Conservatives. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs have disappeared in southern Ontario and whole communities, particularly in Newfoundland, have been uprooted and moved to the Alberta oil patch. It cannot be claimed that anything positive for the working class and people has come out of this crisis of the bourgeoisie.

There is a simple reason for the failure of the working class to exercise any initiative during more than 15 years of political disequilibrium. That reason is the lack of a working class party with enough influence to overcome the influence of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement. If such a party

had existed in 1993-94, the working class could have seized the initiative away from the bourgeoisie and implemented a program of democratic and economic renewal of the country. If such a party had existed in 1995-96, the working class could have used the Ontario Days of Action to launch a nation-wide movement of the working class for revolution and socialism.

Regardless of which party wins the federal election and regardless of whether there is a minority or majority government two truths are evident. First, the political disequilibrium gripping the bourgeois political system will continue to deepen and broaden as the inter-monopoly contradictions continue to deepen and broaden and the economic system goes deeper into crisis. Second, the working class and people will not be able to take advantage of the impending crisis of capitalism to advance their own interests until such time as they establish a revolutionary working class party capable of challenging capital for the leadership of society.

In other words, regardless of the outcome, these elections will once again result in a victory for the bourgeoisie and a defeat for the working class. Therefore, rather than getting caught up in this political drama being organized by the bourgeoisie, the working class has to begin discussing how it can provide itself with all of the instruments necessary to get rid of this anti-worker system once and for all.

## Commentary

# Labour Day – Lining Up the Working Class Behind U.S. Imperialism

In their messages on Labour Day 2008, certain Canadian trade union leaders have issued statements hailing the “winds of change” south of the border and calling on Canadian workers to pin their hopes for salvation on Barack Obama. With the expected election call in Canada, there will also be increasing calls from these same trade union leaders for workers to vote for the Dion Liberals in order to get rid of the Harper Tories. Those calls will also be couched in the language of “change”.

Historically, Labour Day was adopted by the Gomper-style Anglo-American trade union movement and the social democratic parties to promote class collaboration and opposition to revolutionary working class politics. The popularity of the celebration peaked during the 1950s and 1960s, corresponding to the rise to world domination of U.S. imperialism. During that period almost every Canadian city held an annual Labour Day parade in which workers received a half day pay to march behind their company and union banners and floats. Once Labour Day became a statutory holiday the parades dwindled to the point where today the only major parade occurs in Toronto. In most other Canadian cities May Day has supplanted Labour Day as the day of the working class in the consciousness of workers.

From the beginning, Labour Day embraced not only a culture of class collaboration, but of an alliance with imperialism, first British and, later, U.S. imperialism. This was not accidental, but the result of the labour aristocracy – the highest paid section of the working class and much of the trade union bureaucracy – being paid higher wages due to the super-exploitation of the peoples in the colonies, thus creating an economic basis for an alliance between that section of the working class and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

During and after the Second World War, many communist parties, particularly in Western Europe and North America, lost their nerve in the face of the colossal economic, political and military power of U.S. imperialism. In France, Italy, Greece and

various other Western European countries where the communists had waged several years of clandestine war against the Nazis and Fascists, the communist parties surrendered their arms to the U.S. army and, in many cases, were promptly imprisoned. Following their capitulation, these parties restricted themselves to parliamentary politics and became a bulwark of reaction against the revolutionary upsurge of the youth and students of the 1960s and 1970s.

In Canada and the U.S., the capitulation of the communist parties to U.S. imperialism came even earlier, during the war. The communist parties in both countries adopted a form of Browderism which postulated that the capitalist class in the “democratic” capitalist countries was split into a fascist section and a democratic section. In such countries, they claimed, revolution was unnecessary and socialism could be achieved through an alliance between the communists and the “democratic” section of the capitalist class. In Canada, that section was represented by the Liberal Party, while in the U.S. it was represented by the Democratic Party. In ideological terms, this meant that the main section of the communist movements of these countries merged with the labour aristocracy in opposing revolution and defending capitalism and imperialism. It is true that contradictions between these communists and the mainstream trade union leaders continued for many years, but they became more and more confined to a matter of which capitalists and imperialists to support, rather than a contradiction between socialism and imperialism.

As U.S. imperialism and Canadian monopoly capitalism slid into crisis during the 1980s, that crisis spilled over into the class-collaborationist trade union movement. The end of capitalist super profits also spelled the end of constantly increasing wages and benefits for that section of the working class organized into trade unions. Concessionary bargaining became the rule and the percentage of workers who are members of trade unions began to decline. In the U.S. the percentage has plummeted to around 12 percent, while in Canada it has dropped

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from almost 40 percent to less than 30 percent. Various unions have responded to this crisis by making even further concessions, including no-strike deals. Yet the exodus of high-paying industrial jobs continues unabated, especially in southern Ontario and Quebec.

It is within this overall context that various trade union leaders, desperate to block workers from seeking genuine alternatives, have reduced themselves to cheerleaders for Obama and Dion. In the case of Obama (it is hard to tell what Dion actually stands for), it is not difficult to determine what attracts these trade unionists. While Obama talks endlessly about “change” and a “new direction”, what he is really talking about is a return to the glory days of U.S. imperialism, the post-war period when it went unchallenged as the greatest imperialist power and the Marshall Plan filled the coffers of the U.S. finance capitalists with loot from Europe.

In the unlikely case that Obama actually believes his own propaganda, he is doomed to failure. U.S. imperialism in the post-war period was a rising imperialist power. Its major competitors were devastated by war, while the U.S. remained unscathed, its vaults swollen with war profits. Today, it is a declining imperialist power, unable to defeat a relative handful of Afghan irregular fighters and bogged down in an unwinnable war in Iraq. China is challenging it on the economic front, while Russia is reasserting its military might in Central Asia. Europe is no longer dependant on American capital and has become a major competitor for markets and sources of raw materials. One after another, Latin American countries are asserting their independence in one form or another. The world does not want nor need Barack Obama’s new Marshall Plan. It is a pipe-dream being floated for gullible people, to buy a bit more time for U.S. imperialism to find a strategy that works.

This is not to say that U.S. imperialism is a spent force. Far from it, it is still the most powerful military force on the planet. This, in fact, is its main asset, something which was recognized early on by the senior President Bush. U.S. imperialism must find some way to translate its military superiority into economic superiority in order to restore its past

dominance. However, the history of past empires proves that this is an extremely difficult, if not impossible, thing to accomplish. Bush Senior found ways to offload the cost of his military adventures onto America’s allies with limited success. A decade later, Bush Junior failed to get any of his allies to pick up the bill and the American economy is suffering the consequences. Obama’s talk about “multilateralism” and a new Marshall Plan is an indication that he will try new tactics to offload the cost of U.S. imperialism’s endless wars onto its allies. However, he too will fail, because investments in war are like any other investments, the “investors” expect a share in the loot and U.S. imperialism cannot afford to share its profits with anyone. Regardless of his motives or principles (if he has any), Obama, should he be elected president of the U.S. will be the servant of U.S. imperialism and not its master. He will do what the U.S. monopoly capitalists dictate.

It should be clear to anyone who wishes to see that U.S. imperialism has long since opted for militarism to drag itself out of its crisis. Successive U.S. presidents have stated this more or less openly. Militarism fuels both the manufacturing sector (or a portion of it) and the energy sector. It is one of the main factors which maintains the flow of foreign capital into U.S. financial markets. For Obama to adopt a different strategy at this point would be suicide for U.S. imperialism. However, he has made it abundantly clear that he has no intention of going in that direction. Rather, he advocates cutting American losses in Iraq and concentrating on the more important war in Afghanistan, while stepping up the pressure on Iran to capitulate to U.S. imperialism. If the U.S. is able to defeat Afghanistan and control Iran, it will be in a position to challenge Russia for control of Central Asian oil and gas resources which, in turn would give it an edge in its competition with China and Europe. But that is a big “if”. The Afghan people show no sign of being defeated, the Iranian government shows no sign of backing down and Russia, China and the European imperialist powers have no intention of sitting around waiting for the U.S. to succeed. While a section of the American electorate and various Canadian trade union leaders may be taken in by Obama’s rhetoric, those

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## Imperialism with a Human Face

Much is being made of Barak Obama, with some trade union leaders in Canada going so far as suggest that, if elected, he will represent a break with neo-liberalism and imperialism. Of course this is nonsense. Barak Obama simply presents the best hope for U.S. imperialism at this time. He presents the same view of America as the global world power that the U.S. has pursued for the last 100 years, but cloaks it in the soaring rhetoric of freedom and social justice. *Modern Communism* is excerpting some of Obama's speeches below, in which he makes the case for U.S. domination in the world and offers a blueprint for U.S. imperialist domination in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

**From: "The War We Need to Win", August 1, 2007, Wilson Centre, Washington DC**

"After 9/11, our calling was to write a new chapter in the American story. To devise new strategies and build new alliances, to secure our homeland and safeguard our values, and to serve a just cause abroad. ... The tide of history seemed poised to turn, once again, toward hope. But then everything changed. ...

"And so, a little more than a year after that bright September day, I was in the streets of Chicago again, this time speaking at a rally in opposition to war in Iraq. I did not oppose all wars, I said. I was a strong supporter of the war in Afghanistan. But I said I could not support 'a dumb war, a rash war' in Iraq. I worried about a 'U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences' in the heart of the Muslim world. I pleaded that we 'finish the fight with bin Ladin and al Qaeda.'

"...It is time to turn the page. When I am President, we will wage the war that has to be won, with a comprehensive strategy with five elements: getting out of Iraq and on to the right battlefield in Afghanistan and Pakistan; developing the capabilities and partnerships we need to take out the terrorists and

the world's most deadly weapons; engaging the world to dry up support for terror and extremism; restoring our values; and securing a more resilient homeland....

"I will not hesitate to use military force to take out terrorists who pose a direct threat to America. This requires a broader set of capabilities, as outlined in the Army and Marine Corps's new counter-insurgency manual. I will ensure that our military becomes more stealth, agile, and lethal in its ability to capture or kill terrorists. We need to recruit, train, and equip our armed forces to better target terrorists, and to help foreign militaries to do the same. This must include a program to bolster our ability to speak different languages, understand different cultures, and coordinate complex missions with our civilian agencies."

**Speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Chicago, Illinois, March 2, 2007**

"...At the same time, we must preserve our total commitment to our unique defense relationship with Israel by fully funding military assistance and continuing work on the Arrow and related missile defense programs. This would help Israel maintain its military edge and deter and repel attacks from as far as Tehran and as close as Gaza. And when Israel is attacked, we must stand up for Israel's legitimate right to defend itself. Last summer, Hezbollah attacked Israel. By using Lebanon as an outpost for terrorism, and innocent people as shields, Hezbollah has also engulfed that entire nation in violence and conflict, and threatened the fledgling movement for democracy there. That's why we have to press for enforcement of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which demands the cessation of arms shipments to Hezbollah, a resolution which Syria and Iran continue to disregard. Their support and shipment of weapons to Hezbollah and Hamas, which threatens the peace and security in the region, must end."

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**Speech in Chicago, April 21, 2007**

“I still believe that America is the last, best hope of Earth. We just have to show the world why this is so. This President may occupy the White House, but for the last six years the position of leader of the free world has remained open. And it’s time to fill that role once more.

“I believe that the single most important job of any President is to protect the American people. And I am equally convinced that doing that job effectively in the 21st century will require a new vision of American leadership and a new conception of our national security - a vision that draws from the lessons of the past, but is not bound by outdated thinking.

“In today’s globalized world, the security of the American people is inextricably linked to the security of all people. When narco-trafficking and corruption threaten democracy in Latin America, it’s America’s problem too. When poor villagers in Indonesia have no choice but to send chickens to market infected with avian flu, it cannot be seen as a distant concern. When religious schools in Pakistan teach hatred to young children, our children are threatened as well.”

**Renewing America’s leadership in the Americas – speech in Miami, Florida, May 23, 2008**

“In many ways, Miami stands as a symbol of hope for what’s possible in the Americas. ... Since the Bush Administration launched a misguided war in Iraq, its policy in the Americas has been negligent toward our friends, ineffective with our adversaries, disinterested in the challenges that matter in peoples’ lives, and incapable of advancing our interests in the region.

“No wonder, then, that demagogues like Hugo Chavez have stepped into this vacuum. His predictable yet perilous mix of anti-American rhetoric, authoritarian government, and checkbook diplomacy offers the same false promise as the tried and failed ideologies of the past. But the United States is so alienated from the rest of the Americas

that this stale vision has gone unchallenged, and has even made inroads from Bolivia to Nicaragua. And Chavez and his allies are not the only ones filling the vacuum. While the United States fails to address the changing realities in the Americas, others from Europe and Asia – notably China – have stepped up their own engagement. Iran has drawn closer to Venezuela, and just the other day Tehran and Caracas launched a joint bank with their windfall oil profits.

“It’s time for a new alliance of the Americas. After eight years of the failed policies of the past, we need new leadership for the future. After decades pressing for top-down reform, we need an agenda that advances democracy, security, and opportunity from the bottom up. So my policy towards the Americas will be guided by the simple principle that what’s good for the people of the Americas is good for the United States. That means measuring success not just through agreements among governments, but also through the hopes of the child in the favelas of Rio, the security for the policeman in Mexico City, and the answered cries of political prisoners heard from jails in Havana.

“The first and most fundamental freedom that we must work for is political freedom. The United States must be a relentless advocate for democracy. ... Throughout my entire life, there has been injustice in Cuba. Never, in my lifetime, have the people of Cuba known freedom. Never, in the lives of two generations of Cubans, have the people of Cuba known democracy. This is the terrible and tragic status quo that we have known for half a century – of elections that are anything but free or fair; of dissidents locked away in dark prison cells for the crime of speaking the truth. I won’t stand for this injustice, you won’t stand for this injustice, and together we will stand up for freedom in Cuba.”

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Board and hand over control of Canadian agriculture to the huge multinational grain monopolies. He has set up a review committee designed to begin the privatization of Canada Post, while ensuring that the public knew nothing about it, let alone have an opportunity to participate in the debate. During the past several weeks he has slashed spending on a wide array of cultural institutions for the simple reason that most cultural workers do not share Harper's mean-spirited religiosity or his prostration before the biggest monopoly corporations. Since day one he has demonstrated total contempt for parliament, using bullying tactics to push through legislation and instructing his members to obstruct and frustrate parliamentary committees.

Of course, parliament and the other institutions of Canadian democracy were established as instruments of the capitalist class to sort out their

internal contradictions and keep the working class in line. These institutions have never really served the interests of the vast majority of the people. However, in spite of this there is a certain benefit to the people from having stable institutions which operate according to a system of rules and laws. Such institutions establish some limits to the arbitrary abuse of power which is the norm in many countries. The attacks by Harper and others on these institutions not only brings politics into disrespect, but it also creates a serious danger to the working class and people. If the prime minister does not respect the institutions of bourgeois democracy, how can he possibly be trusted to respect the human and civil rights of the people?

The law of the jungle benefits only the most powerful and ruthless members of society; it does not benefit the vast majority of the people.

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imperialists eagerly waiting to strip the flesh from the carcass of U.S. imperialism are not so gullible.

Of course, those Canadian trade union leaders who are calling on Canadian workers to place their trust in the hands of Barack Obama are also not that gullible as to believe what he has to say. They know that, just like George Bush (senior and junior), he stands for aggression and war. The "change of direction" that they are hoping for is not a strategic change but a tactical one. The U.S. war in Iraq has not been profitable for many Canadian corporations, especially those in the manufacturing sector. The leadership of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) has been beating the drums for a trade war with China, Japan and South Korea for years. They would like to see Obama do some real damage to the manufacturing sector in those countries to lessen the pressure on Canadian manufacturers. This, in turn, would relieve some of the pressure on these "leaders" to fulfill their decades-old promises of prosperity for workers under capitalism.

In other words, neither is Barack Obama serious about setting the U.S. in a new direction, nor are the trade union leaders serious about the "new" direction that they are advocating. Both are beating the same

old drum. Obama is promising the American people a new era of prosperity based on the looting and pillaging of the rest of the world, while these trade union leaders are urging their members to seek their salvation by cashing in on the same ill-gotten gains. As they have been doing for more than a century, they are calling on the working class to line up behind their own capitalists domestically and behind U.S. imperialism internationally. There is nothing but war, destruction and tragedy for working people in that direction. It is a direction which must be rejected by the Canadian working class and people.

## **Modern Communism**

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