

Québec Solidaire renews offer to work with Péladeau-led PQ

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As anticipated, the press baron and arch right-winger Pierre-Karl Péladeau was elected head of the Parti Québécois (PQ) on the first of a possible two ballots last month. Considered the favorite throughout the leadership race, Péladeau enjoyed the support of numerous prominent party leaders, including former Quebec Premiers Bernard Landry and Pauline Marois, and a section of the union bureaucracy.

Péladeau's victory confirms—if anyone could still be in doubt—that the Parti Québécois is a big business party, totally dedicated to defending the interests of Quebec's financial and business elite.

The billionaire businessman is also an ardent proponent of Quebec's secession from the Canadian federal state—an eloquent commentary on the real class nature of the Quebec *indépendantiste* project.

For years Péladeau has played a prominent role in pushing Quebec politics further right. Through his Quebecor media-telecommunications empire, Péladeau has promoted the demands of the most rapacious sections of the ruling elite for the slashing of social spending, the privatization of health care, and massive tax cuts for big business and the affluent and super-rich.

At his own companies, Péladeau has destroyed thousands of jobs and imposed sweeping wage and benefit cuts, with lockouts a preferred means of imposing draconian concessions.

His populist tabloid newspapers, including the *Journal de Montréal*, have also heavily promoted anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim chauvinism and an exclusivist Quebec identity.

The PQ's embrace of Péladeau has once again exposed the pro-capitalist unions. For decades, the unions have promoted the PQ as a “progressive,” even “social-democratic” party. And while large sections of the union bureaucracy opposed Péladeau's leadership bid, no sooner had he taken the PQ's helm than they declared

their readiness to work with him in “opposing” the current Quebec Liberal government and its austerity agenda.

Quebec Federation of Labour President Daniel Boyer, for example, rushed to endorse Péladeau's calls for a tripartite Quebec government-business-union economic summit.

Péladeau's election as PQ leader has also provided a further object demonstration of the role the purportedly leftwing Québec Solidaire (QS) plays as an adjunct and prop of the PQ and its reactionary project for a capitalist *République du Québec*.

Following Péladeau's victory, QS feigned astonishment, as it does every time the PQ shows its true class character. After “congratulating” Péladeau, the joint spokespersons for the QS, Françoise David and Andrés Fontecilla, lamented that “the more progressive wing of the PQ lost out in the face of a vote that opted for a ‘savior’.”

Although the PQ has imposed savage social spending cuts and anti-worker laws whenever it has held office and openly whipped up anti-minority chauvinism with its Quebec Charter of Values, QS continues to promote the lie that the PQ is an historically progressive party and one which continues to contain a sizeable “left.” It even holds out the hope that Péladeau can be pressured to the “left.”

“Will he (Péladeau) listen to his social-democratic base or will he position himself on the right??” asked David. “I want to give him a chance, but I have serious doubts about him.”

Significantly, both before and after Péladeau's ascension to the PQ leadership, David, the QS's parliamentary and de facto leader, signaled that the QS is prepared to work with a Pierre-Karl Péladeau-led PQ.

“Québec Solidaire,” she declared in the midst of the leadership race, “is always open to dialogue, to discussion, especially when it concerns preparing for

sovereignty.? She then added, “We must have discussion, we will have discussion, no matter who is the new leader of the Parti Québécois.?”

Then last week in an interview with the Montreal-daily *La presse*, David repeated that QS has not closed the door on alliances with the PQ.

Responding to the call made by Péladeau and others following the death of former PQ Premier Jacques Parizeau for all Quebec sovereignists to converge under a single banner, David said there is no question of QS dissolving. But she then added that limited or conjunctural alliances (“*alliances ponctuelles*”), including an electoral seat-sharing pact, are possible. In the event of a referendum on Quebec independence, QS, David insisted, would “without fail” be part of the PQ-led “Yes” campaign.

If QS wants to keep a certain distance from Péladeau, this is so as to better maintain its pretense to be a “left” party and better provide a “left” cover for *ind épendantiste* Quebec nationalism, which has increasingly been exposed before working people as a project of a section of the ruling class.

Québec Solidaire’s criticisms of the PQ’s embrace of Péladeau as a “savior” echo comments made by former PQ cabinet minister Bernard Drainville and other PQ leadership candidates. They arise from concerns that with such a notorious capitalist as Péladeau leading the PQ, the sovereignist movement will be unable to rally workers and ordinary people in support of Quebec independence.

Péladeau, said David, has a “style”? that is “not likely to bring people together,? that is “polarizing.?” One “man alone will not be able to carry through independence.?” That, she claimed, can only be only won “through the mobilization of the people.?”

The fundamental problems facing Quebec workers—the defence of their social and democratic rights and an end to imperialist war—are those facing workers across Canada and around the world. They can only be resolved through a unified political movement of the international working class to put an end to capitalism and radically reorganize socio-economic life to meet human needs.

Quebec secession or separation is the political project of a section of the Quebec bourgeoisie that calculates an independent state will be a better lever for advancing its predatory class interests against its rivals within Confederation and internationally. It also sees independence as a means of dismantling public services, under the guise of eliminating “duplication,” and otherwise pressing forward with the offensive against the

working class in the name of “building the nation.”

Those like QS who strive to give a “popular” face to the Quebec independence movement are aiding the Quebec and Canadian ruling class in dividing Quebec workers from their class brothers and sisters in English Canada and internationally. They are also assisting the sovereignist faction of the bourgeoisie in cynically seeking to divert the anger of Quebec workers over a status quo of austerity and reaction behind the drive to rearrange the North American capitalist nation-state system for its benefit.

Québec Solidaire speaks for privileged sections of the middle class who believe that independence will give them access to lucrative positions staffing the apparatus of an independent Quebec or hope to benefit from its protectionist policies and restrictive language laws.

Despite its occasional “criticisms” of the PQ, QS is an integral part of the bourgeois sovereignty (pro-independence) movement and in the thrall of the Parti Québécois.

Since its founding in 2006, Québec Solidaire has repeatedly sought an electoral alliance with the PQ, even as the latter has moved further and further right.

Most revealingly, QS played a major role in channeling the mass opposition to the Charest Liberal government and its austerity program galvanized by the 2012 Quebec student strike behind the big business PQ.

At the same time as the unions, terrified that the strike could spread to the working class, came forward with the call “After the street, the ballot box,?” QS approached the PQ with the offer of an electoral alliance. Then just days before the September 5 election, QS publicly pledged that were it to hold the balance of power in a minority parliament it would provide unconditional support for a PQ government for at least one year.



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