

Oppose Trudeau and Trump, the Canada-US alliance, and imperialist war!

For a working class counter-offensive based on socialist internationalism!|Part one

Socialist Equality Party (Canada)
30 November 2017

1. Two years ago this month, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU) and other Quebec-based unions, the Greens, myriad NGOs and pseudo-left groups, and the New Democratic Party (its own electoral debacle notwithstanding) celebrated the swearing in of the Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government. With one voice they claimed the return to power of Canadian big business' traditional party of government--a party which when it last held office carried out the greatest social spending cuts in Canadian history and deployed Canadian troops in a series of US-led wars and regime-change operations--constituted "progressive" change.

The Socialist Equality Party challenged the fraudulent "liberal-left" consensus. In an Election Day statement we warned: "A union-backed 'progressive' government whatever its exact composition--whether formed exclusively by the Liberals or NDP, or involving a formal coalition or informal alliance between them--would be an instrument of big business for attacking the working class."

2. This analysis has been more than vindicated. The "real change" delivered by the "gender-balanced," ethnically diverse, ostensibly pro-environment, pro-refugee and pro-"native reconciliation" Liberal government has proven to be a sham. Like Stephen Harper's decade-long Conservative government, the Liberals are pursuing an aggressive, militarist foreign policy and a domestic agenda aimed at making Canadian capitalism more globally "competitive" on the backs of working people.

The Trudeau government has further enshrined the reactionary fiscal regime of austerity social spending and ultra-low taxes for big business and the rich established by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. Under the guidance of BlackRock, Goldman Sachs, the McKinsey Group and other leading arms of global finance capital, the Liberals have launched a Canada Infrastructure Bank that is a mechanism for privatizing transportation, energy and social infrastructure. With just a few tweaks, they have imposed Harper's federal-provincial health care funding plan, which slashes funding for Medicare by tens of billions of dollars over the next decade, and they have approved new environmentally and socially destructive pipeline projects, while privately reassuring the oil companies that they are ready to use the army to suppress popular opposition.

3. The true character of the Trudeau government as a government of imperialist reaction is exemplified by its foreign-defence policy and drive to deepen Canada's economic and military-strategic partnership with Washington under the Trump administration, the most right-wing in modern American history.

Following on from the previous Conservative government and almost entirely behind the backs of the population, the Liberal government has

expanded Canada's role in the major military-strategic offensives of US imperialism--in the oil-rich Middle East and against Russia and China. These offensives have razed whole societies in the broader Middle East, from Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya, and now threaten to ignite wars with Russia and China, respectively the world's second and fourth largest nuclear powers.

The Trudeau government, as Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan recently revealed, is preparing to join a catastrophic US war on North Korea, citing as a pretext Canada's role in the US-led war coalition that waged the 1950-53 Korean War. Politically, Canada is already providing Washington with unflinching support. Trudeau and his ministers have repeatedly joined the US in condemning North Korea as a singular threat to world peace, even as Trump and US Defense Secretary James Mattis threaten the impoverished country of 25 million with annihilation, and the US and its regional allies stage military exercises aimed at goading Pyongyang into war.

4. Harper routinely boasted of Canada being a "warrior nation." Trudeau and his ministers try to cloak the predatory ambitions and interests of the Canadian ruling class in "progressive" rhetoric referencing international law and human rights. But their policy is, if anything, more belligerent.

In a keynote address last June, Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland declared war to be no less vital for securing Canada's "national interests" in the 21st century than in the 20th. The next day, the Liberals gave flesh and blood to their vow to use "hard power," unveiling a new defence policy. It commits the government to hiking military spending by more than 70 percent by 2026, acquiring new fleets of warships and warplanes, new drone and cyber war capabilities, and working with the Trump administration to "modernize" NORAD.

5. Four decades ago, the "Just Society" rhetoric of Prime Minister Pierre-Elliott Trudeau proved to be a cruel hoax. As the post-Second World War economic boom unraveled, the government of Trudeau *père* came into headlong conflict with the working class. It imposed wage-cutting "wage controls" and, three years before Ronald Reagan fired the PATCO air traffic controllers, threatened to fire postal workers en masse when they defied a strikebreaking law.

Today, the crisis of global capitalism is vastly deeper. In the name of austerity, governments the world over are seeking to destroy what remains of the social rights workers won through the mass and revolutionary struggles of the last century. As in the Great Depression of the 1930s, the drive to make the working class pay for the failure of capitalism goes hand in hand with the striving of each nationally-based capitalist clique to improve its position at the expense of its rivals through protectionism and

trade war and by securing access to markets, natural resources and cheap labour through great power politics and war.

6. This agenda of class war and militarism is incompatible with the maintenance of democratic norms. Increasingly, the bourgeoisie is turning to authoritarian forms of rule and patronizing ultra-right forces that specialize in scapegoating immigrants such as the Front National in France and the AfD in Germany. In the name of the struggle against “fake news,” Western governments are moving to censor the Internet and social media, especially socialist and anti-war content. The *World Socialist Web Site* is one of the primary targets of this campaign.

In Canada, social opposition is increasingly being criminalized and the scaffolding of a police state erected. The right to strike--as demonstrated most recently by the outlawing of strikes by 175,000 Quebec construction workers and 12,000 Ontario college teachers--has been effectively abolished, at least whenever workers are in a position of strength. The Trudeau Liberals have retained all the key anti-democratic provisions of Harper’s police state law Bill C-51, including empowering the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to break virtually any law in “disrupting” purported threats to “public security” and giving the national security apparatus unfettered access to all government information on individual Canadians.

By refusing to abrogate or even suspend the reactionary Canada-US “Third Party Agreement” on refugees and rushing to put in place measures to dissuade refugee claimants from fleeing the US for Canada, the Trudeau government is helping enforce Trump’s anti-immigrant witch-hunt. No less politically revealing is Trudeau’s full-throated support for the Spanish government’s violent suppression of the Catalan independence referendum and imposition of de facto military rule on Catalonia.

7. The working class and the Trudeau government are on a collision course.

There is no popular constituency for Canada’s involvement in the military-strategic offensives of US imperialism. That is why Canada’s integration into these offensives is being carried out behind the backs of the Canadian people. None of the imbalances and contradictions that drove the world economy to the brink in 2008 have been resolved. The IMF and the Bank of International Settlements, among others, have repeatedly warned that Canada is especially vulnerable to a new financial crisis because ordinary Canadians, seeking to make ends meet under conditions of stagnant or declining incomes and skyrocketing housing prices, have run up unprecedented consumer and mortgage debt.

In Canada, as internationally, social opposition and anti-capitalist sentiment are growing. Recent months have seen strikes involving diverse sections of the working class including Quebec construction workers, General Motors CAMI autoworkers, Toronto airport baggage handlers employed by the transnational Swissport, and Ontario college teachers.

8. The same class logic that is impelling the working class into battle against the Trudeau government will bring it into headlong conflict with the trade unions and the social-democratic NDP. For decades, they have connived with big business in imposing concessions and dismantling public services and social protections.

The unions’ intimate collaboration with the Trudeau Liberal government marks a new stage in their tripartite “labour-government-business” alliance against the working class. The leaders of the CLC, Unifor, CUPE, the Steelworkers and CUPW quickly transitioned from stumping for Trudeau in the 2015 election as part of their “Anybody but Conservative” “strategic-voting” drive to formally pledging to work with the new government at a November 2015 meeting with the freshly minted prime minister.

The unions are working hand-in-glove with the Canadian government in the NAFTA re-negotiation and share its objective of fashioning a deal that reconciles the needs of Canadian big business with Trump’s aim of

forging a more explicitly protectionist North American trade bloc that will better serve American capital in fighting China, Germany and Japan for global markets.

The NDP, due to its function as an electoral rival of the Liberals and political safety valve for the bourgeoisie, is nominally in opposition to the government. But the social-democratic politicians are no less beholden to big business or vehemently opposed to any working class challenge to the Liberals than their traditional union allies. The Alberta NDP government is a close partner of the federal Liberals in working with, and for, Big Oil. With their deafening silence on the Liberals’ defence policy review, the social democrats are lending vital support to the Canadian ruling class’ plans for rearmament and war.

9. In the US, Europe and everywhere around the world, the working class confronts the same fundamental problem. The political parties and organizations, above all the trade unions, traditionally identified as left have systematically suppressed the class struggle and emerged as open advocates for imperialist war. This applies no less to Britain’s Labour Party, the Socialist Party in France and Germany’s Social Democratic Party than it does to Canada’s New Democrats.

If the working class is to mount a successful counter-offensive against the Trudeau government and the Canadian ruling class’ assault on its living standards and democratic rights, and the ruling class’ reckless drive to war, a new political perspective and new organizations of struggle are necessary.

This statement addresses key questions of working class strategy, including: how to oppose war, develop a counter-offensive against the big business assault on social and democratic rights, and mobilize the working class as an independent political force capable of imposing its own solution to the capitalist crisis. The axis of this strategy is socialist internationalism. Canadian workers must link their struggles with their class brothers and sisters in the United States, Mexico and internationally in the fight to put an end to capitalism and make fulfilling social needs, not further enriching a tiny clique of capitalists, the animating principle of socio-economic life—in other words, to replace capitalism with socialism.

The growth of Canadian militarism and the danger of world war

10. As 2017 draws to a close, humanity has not faced a greater threat of a global conflagration since the end of World War II. The “unthinkable”--a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula or with Russia or China--is now openly being discussed in the media and frantically prepared for.

Trump, employing language not heard from a major world leader since the rants of the Nazi Führer Adolf Hitler, threatens North Korea with “total destruction,” while the US Pacific Command, which would spearhead any war with North Korea or China, boasts that it is “ready to fight tonight.”

11. American imperialism responded to the Stalinist bureaucracy’s dissolution of the USSR in 1991 by embarking on a drive for world hegemony. It sought to offset its already pronounced relative economic decline by employing its military might, launching a series of ruinous wars and rapidly expanding NATO across Eastern Europe.

These wars, which have targeted the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa, have manifestly failed to reverse the erosion of US global power. In response, the Obama administration launched military-strategic offensives directly targeting Russia and China.

12. The Canadian bourgeoisie has been completely complicit in this criminal enterprise. This is because it views the maintenance of US global dominance and its own privileged partnership with the US, through

NAFTA, NATO and NORAD, as vital to the assertion of its own imperialist interests and ambitions.

Indeed, under conditions where Canada's relative importance to the US as an economic partner has declined due to the growth of US commercial ties with China and Mexico and its new reserves of shale oil and gas, Canadian big business has seen the expansion of the Canada-US military-security partnership as a pivotal means of retaining influence in Washington and securing a share in the spoils of imperialist war.

The Canadian Council of Chief Executives (now the Business Council of Canada) issued a series of policy documents in the century's first decade demanding that Ottawa develop the means to deploy "credible force" anywhere in the world. Such "global reach," it argued, "will preserve our ability to have influence on the world stage." The CCCE, the country's most powerful business lobby group, also worked with the Chretien-Martin Liberal and Harper Conservative governments to elaborate plans, since largely but not completely realized, to create a North American "economic and security perimeter."

13. Canada has been at war almost continuously since 1999. The Chretien government's deployment of Canadian warplanes to join the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia was followed by the Canadian Armed Forces' ten-year-long role in invading and waging a counter-insurgency war in Afghanistan. In 2004, Canada's military participated in the toppling of Haiti's democratically elected government. A Canadian general led the 2011 NATO regime-change war in Libya, which, in the name of "human rights" and the "responsibility to protect," killed tens of thousands and left the country in turmoil. The CAF returned to war in the Middle East in 2014 in an operation embracing Iraq and Syria that continues to this day.

14. The battle orders have been issued by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. But the entire political establishment has embraced militarism and the phony "war on terror," which has been used to justify imperialist aggression abroad and sweeping attacks on democratic rights at home. The NDP has endorsed every Canadian imperialist intervention since the war on Yugoslavia, supports increased military spending, and upholds the Canada-US military-security partnership that is the cornerstone of Canadian imperialist strategy.

The Bloc Québécois and Parti Québécois, the sister Quebec sovereignist parties, have been even more bellicose. The BQ has repeatedly criticized the NDP for not being sufficiently full-throated in its support for Canada's wars and, in tandem with the Conservatives, the PQ and BQ have been in the forefront of promoting the anti-Muslim sentiment that is serving as ballast for the revival of militarism.

15. During the 2015 election campaign, Trudeau talked out of both sides of his mouth, promising to expand Canada's strategic partnership with the US while criticizing the Harper government's "combat mission" in the Middle East. Predictably, the latter proved to be an election ruse, with the Liberals announcing multiple extensions of the Mideast deployment, tripling the number of Special Forces in Iraq, and expanding Canada's contribution to the US-led war coalition's strategic command and intelligence operations.

Similarly, the Trudeau government has expanded Canada's role in both of the other major US military-strategic offensives. The Canadian Armed Forces has assumed responsibility for leading one of the four "forward" deployed battalions NATO has menacingly stationed on Russia's borders in the Baltic States and Poland, and it is training Ukrainian Army and National Guard forces to, in the words of Trudeau, "liberate" eastern Ukraine.

Building on a secret 2013 agreement the Harper government signed with Washington on military cooperation in the Pacific, Canada under Trudeau's Liberals has stepped up its involvement in Washington's war planning and provocations in East Asia. The Canadian navy recently conducted exercises in the South China Sea and Malacca Strait to test its

readiness to participate in a US-led economic blockade of China in the event of a war crisis, and with the South Korean Navy further north. In explaining why the Canadian Navy is training for operations in the strait that links the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Chief of Defence Staff Jon Vance declared, "If one wants to have any respect or gravitas you have to be in that region."

16. Both Washington and Ottawa view China as the real obstacle to continued US dominance over the world's most rapidly growing economic region and the Trump-incited North Korean crisis as a means of placing pressure on China, long Pyongyang's principal ally.

Canada's ruling elite, led by the military top brass, is also using the Korean crisis to try to stampede the public behind participation in the US Ballistic Missile Shield. Its name notwithstanding, the BMD is aimed at developing the means for the US to wage a "winnable" nuclear war and thus goes hand-in-hand with the Pentagon's plans to spend \$1 trillion on "modernizing" its nuclear arsenal.

17. To broad applause from the political and national security establishment, including Conrad Black and the neo-conservatives of the *National Post* editorial board, Freeland in her June foreign policy address outlined an aggressive "hard power" strategy for Canadian imperialism under conditions where the US-led international order is unraveling. She called for building up Canada's independent military capacities so as to help shore up a US partner that can no longer bear the cost of "world leadership" alone, but also to ensure the ability of the Canadian bourgeoisie to assert its own "national interests" globally and as the junior member of the bilateral partnership of North America's imperialist powers. For its part, the *Globe and Mail* has declared that Canada must be behind Trump's "walls."

Canadian imperialism and capitalist breakdown

18. The coming to power of the billionaire, fascist-minded Trump epitomizes the turn of the international bourgeoisie to reaction. With his "America First" agenda and calls to "make America great again," Trump advances only in a more brazen and crude manner the response of all the rival national capitalist cliques to capitalist breakdown. In a struggle of each against all, each is ruthlessly striving to assert its interests both against avowed strategic rivals and ostensible allies.

These conflicts are rooted in the very foundations of the profit system. As the International Committee of the Fourth International wrote in its 2016 statement calling for the building of an international working class-led movement against war and imperialism, "The essential cause of militarism and war lies in the deep-seated contradictions of the world capitalist system: 1) between a globally integrated and interdependent economy and its division into antagonistic national states; and 2) between the socialized character of global production and its subordination, through the private ownership of the means of production, to the accumulation of private profit by the ruling capitalist class. Powerful consortia of capitalist banks and corporations utilize 'their' state to wage a commercial and ultimately military struggle for control of the raw materials, oil and gas pipelines, trade routes and access to cheap labor and markets that are critical to the accumulation of profit."

19. All the imperialist powers are aggressively asserting their global interests and rearming.

Germany, with French support, is pressing for the development of a European military so it can assert its interests independently of and, if need be, against the US.

Japan is eagerly supporting the US war drive against North Korea, using the flaring up of war tensions as the pretext to get rid of the last

constitutional impediments to its pursuing an aggressive, militarist foreign policy.

Australia--a second rank imperialist power whose development and strategic orientation have many parallels with Canada's--is playing a major role in Washington's preparations for war with China. Both major parties of the Australian elite forthrightly declare that Canberra will join Washington in any war it launches on the Korean Peninsula.

20. The revival of such openly militarist policies, which twice in the last century resulted in a global conflagration, arises out of an historic breakdown of world capitalism. The 2008 global economic crisis was not a mere cyclical downturn, but rather the eruption of a systemic crisis. The inability of the imperialist powers to restore pre-2008 growth and profit rates is imbuing the struggle for markets and profits with an ever more fractious and venomous character, fueling economic and geopolitical rivalries the world over.

21. The Boeing-Bombardier trade conflict sheds light on the real state of commercial and inter-state relations, specifically on how, under conditions of increasingly frenzied competition, the transnational corporations are working with their respective governments to defend and expand market share.

In the run-up to Washington's imposition of a 300 percent tariff on Bombardier's C-Series jet, the Liberal government brokered negotiations between Boeing and Bombardier, hoping to get the giant US manufacturer to withdraw its trade complaint in exchange for a stake in the C-Series or a joint agreement to refashion North American trade rules at the expense of their competitors.

But Boeing suddenly withdrew from the talks, no doubt after learning that the Trump administration was going to give it tariffs far in excess of what Boeing had sought so as to send a bellicose "America First" message to the world. Bombardier then struck a deal with Boeing's arch-rival Airbus, with the Trudeau government again playing a central role, both to prevent the collapse of a Canadian manufacturing "jewel" and stop it from allying with a Chinese state-owned company.

22. In his seminal work *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin speaks of "a small number of financially 'powerful' states" that "stand out among all the rest" and are at the centre of imperialist intrigue and aggression. Canada is such a state.

Canada was a major belligerent in the two world wars of the last century. While the wars constituted an unprecedented catastrophe for the world working class, the Canadian bourgeoisie profited from the slaughter. The wars proved to be the periods of Canadian capitalism's most rapid industrial expansion and resulted in a significant strengthening of the Canadian bourgeoisie's world position.

23. Over the course of the past quarter-century, Canada has become a major exporter of capital, stretching the tentacles of Canadian imperialism across the globe. Whereas in 1971 Canadian Foreign Direct Investment totaled \$6.8 billion, by 2002 it had swelled to \$435 billion and by 2016 to more than one trillion (\$1,050 billion), the equivalent of just over 50 percent of Canada's total GDP.

Canada's banks and other financial institutions and its energy, mining and infrastructure companies are especially active on the world stage. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where Canadian capital has had a significant presence for more than a century, Ottawa has played a major role in pressing for privatization, foreign investor guarantees and other neo-liberal policies. The Canadian ruling class is also determined to be an economic power and military-strategic player in the Asia-Pacific region, and its heavy involvement in the world's mining and energy sectors is propelling it to play an increasingly active role in Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

The Canadian bourgeoisie also covets the natural resource wealth of the Arctic, which, due to the perverse effects of climate change, is becoming more readily accessible. This ambition increasingly figures in its geo-

political and military strategy and is a factor in the aggressive stance Ottawa has adopted against Russia.

24. The Canadian bourgeoisie has historically been privileged, serving successively as a close partner (in some respects the closest partner) of the world's two most powerful capitalist nation-states--Great Britain in the 19th century and the US in the 20th.

Today, however, the US is at the very centre of the global capitalist crisis and Trump's "America First" policies are roiling the Canadian bourgeoisie.

25. Even as they extend their hands to Trump and strive to deepen Canada's military-strategic collaboration with the US, the Liberal government and Canadian bourgeoisie are seeking to work with the many elements within both the Democratic and Republican parties and US big business who fear Trump is undermining Washington's long-term imperialist interests around the globe with his efforts to radically restructure, if not outright repudiate, traditional US-led alliances, from NATO to NAFTA.

These differences may lead in the coming weeks and months to major political shocks and convulsions in Washington. But whatever the disagreements over the specifics of Trump's policies, there is no disagreement within the American ruling class over the drive for US world hegemony. It is an open secret that a Hillary Clinton administration would have ratcheted up the US military intervention in Syria as part of a more aggressive policy in the Middle East and against Russia. In anticipation of her election, the Canadian military prepared options for the Trudeau government to intervene in Syria. A not insignificant factor in Trudeau's subsequent naming of Freeland, an "anti-Russia hawk," as foreign minister was a desire to underscore Canada's dissent from any attempt by Trump to effect a rapprochement with Moscow.

26. Important elements of the Canadian ruling class' strategy are now in jeopardy. For the past quarter-century, NAFTA has underpinned its drive to create "global players" by providing corporate Canada with access to a large "internal" market and a platform from which to vie for markets in Latin America, Europe and elsewhere. While Trump has acted as an accelerant, the growing rift between Europe and the US and the fraying of NATO and more generally the trans-Atlantic alliance long predated his presidency. Ultimately, it can be traced back to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which, by removing a common threat, opened the door to the resurgence of inter-imperialist antagonisms. For the Canadian bourgeoisie, membership in the world's most important military alliance and close ties to the European imperialist powers have not only provided additional heft and influence on the world stage, they have served as an important means of offsetting the radical asymmetry in Canada's relations with Washington and Wall Street.

27. The Canadian bourgeoisie's response to increased US pressure will be to lash out more violently on the world stage--as with its threat to throw Mexico under the bus and seek a separate deal with Washington should NAFTA fail--and to lash out more violently against the working class at home. Already the Business Council of Canada, led by former Liberal Deputy Prime Minister John Manley, and a host of other big business voices are insisting that Canada match Trump's lavish tax cuts for big business and the rich. This would necessitate a further massive assault on public and social services.

At the same time, the ruling elite, with the support of the union bureaucrats, the NDP and Québec Solidaire, will use the frictions with its US rivals to promote Canadian and Quebec nationalism, the better to bind the working class to its rule and its aggressive policies.

28. The working class must oppose all of the rival bourgeois factions in the struggle for markets, profits and geo-strategic advantage, whether it takes the form of national protectionism, the strengthening of inter-state trade blocs like NAFTA and the European Union, or rearmament and war. In answer to the capitalists, who pit workers against each other in

commercial and military struggle, the working class must adopt the battle cry “Workers of the World Unite.”

Canadian workers must take their place in the building of a global movement against war. Such a movement, as the ICFI has explained, must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population. And it must be resolutely anti-capitalist. The only means of preventing crisis-ridden capitalism from plunging humanity into a global conflagration as it did twice in the last century is by disarming the bourgeoisie through socialist revolution.

Consequently, the new anti-war movement can be constructed only in irreconcilable struggle against all factions of the ruling elite and their capitalist parties. It must be linked to the defence of democratic rights and the mounting opposition to deepening economic insecurity and social inequality and serve as the cutting edge of the fight for the working class to become an independent political force.

Workers need their own independent political party, guided by the understanding that to stop war and all of the disastrous consequences it entails, a struggle against its source, the global capitalist order, is necessary. This can be accomplished only in a fight for a socialist program to place power in the hands of the working class.

To be continued.



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