

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

The Socialist Equality Party (Canada)  
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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 geopolitical 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."

29. 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.

### **The trade unions and the Trudeau government**

30. The Trudeau government enjoys closer ties to the trade union bureaucracy than any federal government in decades. As Trudeau's Liberals pursue an aggressive militarist foreign policy and their closest provincial allies, the Quebec and Ontario Liberal governments, impose brutal austerity programs, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) President Hassan Yussuff and Unifor head Jerry Dias boast of their unprecedented access to Trudeau and his ministers. "Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government view us as a stakeholder," exclaims Dias. "A legitimate stakeholder with a voice."

The unions' partnership with what has traditionally been the Canadian bourgeoisie's preferred party of government is the outcome of a decades-long march to the right on the part of the unions and their allies in the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP). The unions have repudiated all traditions of independent working class struggle, integrated themselves into management and tripartite union-government-company structures, and developed new sources of revenue giving them a direct stake in the exploitation of the working class. With more than \$10 billion in assets, the Quebec Federation of Labour's Solidarity Fund is far and away the province's largest venture capital fund. The NDP has actively participated in the dismantling of the public and social services it once held up as proof that capitalism could be "humanized" or even "grow over" into "socialism," and it has abandoned even nominal opposition to NATO and Canada's participation in US wars of aggression.

31. This is part of a global process. The unraveling of the post-Second World War boom and the bourgeoisie's turn to employing new computer, telecommunications and transport technology to globalize production—to maximize profits through the coordinated exploitation of the resources and workers of the world—pulled the rug out from under the unions' and social democrats' national-reformist perspective of "restraining" capitalism through state regulation, collective bargaining and social-welfare measures.

Trade union resistance to big business has collapsed, and with it, the percentage of workers enrolled in unions. Membership in the British Trades Union Congress has been more than halved, from 13 million workers in 1979 to 5.6 million today. In the US, unions are the bargaining representatives for less than 7 percent of private-sector workers, and in Canada just 15 percent. The traditional reformist parties have become instruments for redistributing wealth from working people to the capitalist oligarchy. In Britain, it was the Blair-Brown Labour government that launched the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, privatized vast swathes of the public sector, and in response to the 2008 financial crisis, organized the largest bailout of the financial elite in history. In Germany, the Social Democrats enforced labour market reforms that created the largest low-wage sector in Europe and decimated the social welfare system, while at the same time organizing the first foreign intervention by the German

military since World War II.

32. The union-Liberal partnership emerged directly out of the unions' scuttling of the mass movement against the Common Sense Revolution of Ontario Premier Mike Harris and his Tory government. Fearing that the strikes and protests that had brought hundreds of thousands into the streets in 1996 and 1997 were escaping their control and becoming a direct challenge to the government's rule, the unions shut them down. Soon after, they founded a network, subsequently renamed Working Families Ontario, to promote "strategic voting" on behalf of the Liberals. Since 2003, the unions have helped elect and prop up a succession of Liberal governments in the country's largest province that have slashed social spending, outdone Harris in cutting taxes on big business and the rich, criminalized job actions by teachers and other workers and mounted a privatization drive.

In tandem with its union allies, the NDP also moved closer to the Liberals. Shortly after becoming federal party leader in 2003, Jack Layton appointed a high-powered "scenarios" committee, headed by party elder statesmen like former federal leader Ed Broadbent and Saskatchewan Premier Allan Blakeney, to explore opportunities for, and the logistics of, a "progressive coalition" with the Paul Martin-led Liberals.

The unions and NDP responded to the 2008 financial crash with an abortive attempt to create a Liberal-NDP coalition government, pledged to "fiscal responsibility," implementing a \$50 billion corporate tax cut, and waging war in Afghanistan through 2011. When big business made clear its support for Harper's proroguing of parliament so as to prevent the opposition from voting no confidence in his government (a de facto constitutional coup), the NDP and unions meekly acquiesced.

33. The Conservatives are openly hostile to the unions and champion measures such as eliminating tax breaks for union-sponsored investment funds that encroach on the privileges of the union bureaucracy. Trudeau's Liberals, on the other hand, are seeking to shore up the union apparatuses, the better to use them to police the working class. They calculate that the competitive position of Canadian imperialism at home and abroad can best be enhanced by incorporating the unions as "partners." In her bellicose June 2017 foreign policy address, Foreign Affairs Minister Freeland made a revealing point in this regard. She characterized the loss of popular support for the capitalist world order due to ever-mounting social inequality as one of the two principal threats, along with the loss of US global dominance, facing the Canadian bourgeoisie. The Liberals rely on their union partners to exorcise the spectre of social unrest.

34. The unions' and NDP's opposition to any genuine working class challenge to austerity was exemplified by their sabotage of the 2012 Quebec student strike. The unions isolated the students in the face of mounting police violence, while the NDP failed to offer so much as verbal support for the fight against university tuition fee hikes or to condemn the provincial Liberal government's draconian legislation outlawing the strike (Bill 78). Precisely at the point when the strike threatened to become the catalyst for a working class upsurge, with hundreds of thousands of working people taking to the streets to oppose Bill 78, the unions became their most adamant and energetic in shutting it down. Under the slogan, "*Après la rue, les urnes !*" (After the streets, to the ballot box), the unions smothered the incipient mass movement, while politically harnessing the burgeoning opposition to austerity to the big business Parti Québécois. Returned to power in September 2012 thanks to the backing of their traditional union allies, the PQ promptly and predictably continued the austerity drive of their ostensible federalist Liberal opponents.

35. No less revealing was the role that Unifor (the former Canadian Auto Workers or CAW) played in isolating and politically derailing this fall's strike at GM's CAMI car assembly plant, the first strike at a Detroit Three facility in Canada in more than two decades. Workers were eager to put an end to multi-tier wages and benefits and other concessions, but Unifor failed to raise, let alone fight for, their demands. Instead, it

declared the strike a fight for “Canadian jobs” and made the sole issue its call for CAMI to be named “lead producer” of the Equinox, so as to ensure that Mexican workers who produce the same model would be the first to be laid off come the next economic downturn.

This reactionary demand represented a doubling down on the ruinous Canadian nationalist strategy that CAW/Unifor have pursued since splitting from the UAW in 1985 and severing the organizational bonds US and Canadian autoworkers had forged in the militant struggles of the 1930s and 1940s. For the past three decades, CAW/Unifor and the UAW have greased the blades of the auto bosses’ whipsawing strategy, pitting workers against each other in a race to the bottom.

Unifor’s nationalism—its vehement opposition to mobilizing Canadian, US and Mexican autoworkers against *all* job cuts and concessions—rendered the CAMI workers defenceless. When GM signaled it would permanently close the plant and transfer all production to Mexico if the strike continued, Unifor immediately shut the strike down and imposed yet another concessionary contract on the CAMI workers.

36. The unions’ role as agents of Canadian big business is epitomized by their integration into the NAFTA negotiations. CLC President Yussuff sits on the Trudeau government’s NAFTA advisory council, alongside NDP apparatchik Brian Topp, ex-interim Conservative leader Rona Ambrose, and Linda Hasenfratz, the CEO of Canada’s second-largest auto parts manufacturer, Linamar. Unifor’s Dias and Steelworker President Leo Gerard are “stakeholders” in the negotiations, meeting regularly not only with Canadian officials, but also with Wilbur Ross, Trump’s billionaire crony commerce secretary.

The unions have welcomed the NAFTA renegotiation, hailing Trudeau and even the fascist-minded Trump as workers’ allies in securing “fair trade.” They share Trump’s objectives of making NAFTA a more explicitly protectionist bloc aimed at the European and Asian competitors of North American big business and punishing Mexico, advocating measures to boost Canadian manufacturing at the expense of the impoverished Mexican workers.

NAFTA is a reactionary bloc of the imperialist rulers of the US and Canada and the venal Mexican bourgeoisie for waging class war at home and trade war beyond North America’s shores. But it must be opposed by the working class from the standpoint of socialist internationalism, not economic nationalism.

37. Just as workers the world over have no interest in becoming cannon fodder in the wars the capitalists wage for markets, resources and strategic position, so they must reject the unions’ attempts to incite nationalist divisions with their class brothers and sisters and ensnare them in trade war.

Were Washington, or for that matter the Trudeau government, to abrogate NAFTA, it would be with the aim of strengthening the national capitalist elite economically and politically. The latter would include whipping up nationalism so as to deflect mounting anger over social inequality, legitimize a more bellicose foreign policy, and justify further attacks on the working class in the name of supporting “our” companies. The first casualties in the trade war and reorganization of North American capitalism that would ensue from NAFTA’s abrogation would be the workers of Canada, the US and Mexico.

38. There can be no “fair trade” under capitalism, a social order that rests on brutal exploitation and plunder. Nor can there be any national solution to the crisis facing working people. The outmoded nation-state system with its rival capitalist cliques and their armies, borders, immigration controls and tariffs is itself a fundamental cause of the crisis.

The global integration of production and the technological revolution that has propelled it have immense progressive potential. Indeed, they have created the objective prerequisites for a global planned economy under the democratic control of working people in which the labour and resources of the world are systematically deployed to serve human needs.

But under capitalism they are used to intensify the exploitation of workers the world over and to create more powerful instruments of war.

39. To defeat the transnational corporations, which scour the globe siting production where labour, taxes and other costs are the lowest, and the governments that act as their hirelings, workers need their own global strategy. Workers in Canada and across North America must unite with workers in Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia in a common struggle against austerity and war.

The allies of Canadian workers are not Canadian capitalists and CEOs and their political spokespersons, but US and Mexican workers who, like them, face an unrelenting employer-state assault on their social and democratic rights and often toil for the same firms. In opposition to all factions in the ruling class struggle over NAFTA, workers in Canada, the US and Mexico must mount a joint struggle for workers’ governments in Ottawa, Washington and Mexico City and the Socialist United States of North America.

40. Workers must beware: those who today wave Canadian and Quebec flags, inciting workers to align with their bosses against Mexican and Chinese workers, will on the morrow be the recruiting sergeants for war. The unions, like the NDP, are complicit in the revival of Canadian militarism. When NDP leader Thomas Mulcair sought to score some political points in the 2015 election by criticizing Canada’s \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, Unifor demanded he shut up.

### The pseudo-left and the NDP

41. With the unions and NDP increasingly exposed as pliant tools of big business, the pseudo-left plays an ever more prominent role in propping up their authority and, above all, preventing the development of an independent political movement of the working class. A key element in this is the pseudo-left’s promotion of identity (gender and “racialized”) politics, which, as the rhetoric and actions of the Trudeau government underline, have become a mainstay of bourgeois politics. Through Québec Solidaire they seek to breathe life into Quebec *indépendantiste* nationalism, which has been largely discredited as a result of the Parti Québécois’ imposition of savage austerity. The pseudo-left is indifferent and hostile to the struggle against imperialist war and Canadian militarism.

Whilst they mouth “radical,” even “socialist” rhetoric, the pseudo-left speaks not for the working class but for disgruntled layers within the top 10 percent of society. They seek a redistribution of wealth and power within the top echelons of society, including through the use of identity politics to secure a “fair share” of capitalism’s managerial and professional jobs. In tandem with these wealthy and egotistical layers, the pseudo-left has moved sharply to the right, integrating themselves ever more completely into establishment politics and emerging as a new constituency for “human rights” imperialism.

42. The pseudo-left functions as apologists and advocates for the pro-capitalist trade unions and are themselves oriented to and embedded in the trade union bureaucracy. They have systematically covered up the unions’ support for the Trudeau and McGuinty-Wynne Liberal governments. Organizations like Fightback and the International Socialists hailed the “Stop Hudak” campaign that culminated in the reelection of Ontario’s Liberal government and served as the dry run for the unions’ “Anybody but Harper” drive in 2015; and they blacked out any mention of the unions’ pro-Liberal “strategic voting” campaign, let alone their systematic suppression of the class struggle, from their appraisals of Trudeau’s 2015 election victory.

Forced to concede that workers are alienated from the unions, the

pseudo-left seeks to corral them into futile efforts to pressure the union apparatuses to the left. They are viscerally opposed to the SEP's call for workers to build rank-and-file committees independent of, and in opposition to, the ossified pro-capitalist unions so as to give organizational expression and politically leaven workers' striving to assert their class interests.

43. The pseudo-left has responded to the growth in anti-capitalist sentiment by seeking to politically rehabilitate the NDP. Placing all blame for the NDP's "Harper lite" 2015 election fiasco on Mulcair and a small coterie of his advisors, they used the race to choose a new federal NDP leader to promote the lie that this wretched social-democratic party can be an instrument for opposing austerity and even fighting for socialism.

Fightback, Socialist Action and a myriad of other groups promoted the candidacy of NDP frontbencher Nikki Ashton. They claimed she could be "Canada's Corbyn"—a reference to the left-talking leader of the British Labour Party—and revive the NDP's electoral fortunes. When Ashton finished a distant third, they swiftly transitioned to promoting the supposed virtues of the winner and favourite of the party establishment, Jagmeet Singh. Fightback thundered against any break with the NDP, saying Singh is not "a rightwing Blairite" and can be pressured to the "left," while the International Socialists enthused that Singh's victory will "raise the confidence" of "racialized activists."

44. Corbyn's evolution graphically demonstrates whose class interests are served by the pseudo-left's attempt to revive illusions in social democracy and a national-reformist perspective. Elected Labour's leader in 2015 on the basis of false promises to roll back austerity, oppose war and tackle social inequality, Corbyn has conceded to the Blairite right wing on every major issue. He allowed Labour MPs to vote for war in Syria, ensured that the party backed the renewal of Britain's nuclear weapons arsenal, and ordered Labour-controlled local authorities to implement austerity programs in cooperation with the Tories. The essence of Corbyn's agenda was summed up recently by his closest ally and Labour's shadow finance minister, John McDonnell. To fervent applause, McDonnell told a meeting of Labour officials and pseudo-lefts that the party's principal task is to "save capitalism."

45. An even more devastating exposure of the politics of the pseudo-left is provided by Greece. In Canada, as around the world, the pseudo-left hailed the January 2015 election of their co-thinkers in Syriza (the Coalition of the Radical Left) on a program that combined pledges to end austerity with support for the European Union and NATO. Utterly opposed to the mobilization of the Greek and European working class against austerity and the big business EU, Syriza turned viciously against the working class when the EU spurned its appeals for modest changes to the Greek debt repayment schedule. Six months after coming to power and just days after workers had massively rejected the EU's austerity measures in a referendum vote, Syriza imposed a program of draconian social spending cuts and privatizations that went far beyond the austerity measures imposed by all previous governments. Underscoring their role as defenders of capitalism from any revolutionary threat from below, Socialist Project leaders Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, who acted as advisors to Syriza in 2015, staunchly defend the Syriza government to this day as an uncompleted "experiment" in "alternatives to neoliberalism."

46. For decades, the pseudo-left has promoted Quebec nationalism, labeling as "progressive" the program of creating a capitalist République du Québec that would be a member of NATO, NORAD and NAFTA. Under the banner of Québec Solidaire (QS), they seek to provide a "left" face for the PQ-led Quebec independence or sovereignty movement. A "new left" party that touts Syriza as an ally, QS makes no pretense to being socialist or a party of the working class. Rather it defines itself as a feminist, environmentalist, pro-sovereignist and anti-globalization "citizens party."

QS has repeatedly sought electoral alliances with the PQ and has lent

support to the PQ's ever-more explicit promotion of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim chauvinism, declaring the PQ's antidemocratic Quebec Charter of Values "legitimate," albeit poorly formulated. It played a significant role in the unions' derailing of the 2012 Quebec student strike with its appeal at the strike's height for a PQ-QS electoral alliance. It assisted the unions in ensuring that the 2015-16 Quebec public sector struggle was contained within the straitjacket of collective bargaining and did not become the spearhead of a mass challenge to the austerity measures of the Couillard Liberal government. As a bridge to still closer ties with the PQ and the pro-PQ trade union bureaucracy, QS is currently finalizing a merger with Option National (ON), a tiny rightwing split-off from the PQ that urges QS to abandon "social issues" so as to focus exclusively on the push for an independent capitalist Quebec.

Québec Solidaire is the political voice of petty-bourgeois strata that are in the thrall of the faction of the Quebec bourgeoisie eager to secure greater autonomy from Ottawa and Bay Street so as to make its own deals with Washington and Wall Street. But its politics serve to bolster the Canadian bourgeoisie as a whole. QS supported both the abortive 2008 NDP-Liberal coalition and the 2015 "Anybody but Conservative" campaign. More fundamentally, with its promotion of nationalism, with its claims that Quebec workers should define themselves politically as Québécois and align with Quebec capitalists like Pierre-Karl Péladeau rather than workers in English Canada, QS helps quarantine the struggles of the Quebec working class and perpetuate the political divide between Québécois and English-Canadian workers that has always served as an important mechanism of bourgeois rule in Canada.

While championing an independent Quebec, QS is thoroughly provincial, seldom commenting on international questions. Nevertheless, it has repeatedly endorsed Canadian imperialism's foreign policy and wars, including the neocolonial war in Afghanistan, the US-led regime-change war in Libya, and its denunciations of alleged Russian aggression in Ukraine.

47. Over the past quarter-century, the pseudo-left in Canada, as internationally, has emerged as an increasingly explicit pro-war and pro-imperialist tendency, as exemplified by their labeling of various US regime-change operations from Libya and Syria to the Ukraine as "revolutions." They conspired with the NDP top brass to keep the issue of war almost entirely out of the leadership campaign. Fightback was outraged when the *World Socialist Web Site* revealed that Nikki Ashton had shamelessly lied about twice voting, along with the rest of the NDP parliamentarians, for Canadian participation in NATO's war on Libya.

### **Oppose war and nationalism! Build the Socialist Equality Party!**

48. In the coming struggles, workers in Canada, as around the world, must be guided by the lessons of the immense revolutionary struggles of the last century, above all the October 1917 Russian Revolution. One hundred years ago, the Russian workers, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, demonstrated in practice that the working class could provide a way out of imperialist war and capitalist exploitation: that it could conquer state power, establish a workers' government, and organize society on socialist principles.

The Russian Revolution arose out of the breakdown of world capitalism and triumphed because, under the Bolsheviks' leadership, it was infused with a socialist internationalist perspective. World Socialist Revolution was the answer of the working class to the impasse and failure of capitalism, to a breakdown that would convulse the world for the next three decades and give rise to the Great Depression, fascism and a second world war. That the first workers' state remained isolated and political

power was subsequently usurped by a privileged bureaucracy led by Stalin in no way lessens the revolution's historic significance, nor the contemporary relevance of the program that animated it.

49. The bourgeois pundits seized on the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the Soviet Union to declare the "end of history" and the impossibility of any alternative to the profit system. A quarter-century later, the fatuous claims of a new golden age of capitalist progress stand as a mockery. World capitalism is mired in systemic crisis. The imperialist bourgeoisies, Canada's among them, are lurching ever further to the right, reviving militarism and recklessly steering a course toward a third world war. Bourgeois democracy is breaking down, as the rival ruling elites, unable to find a popular base of support for their program of war and austerity, turn to criminalizing social opposition and stoking bellicose nationalism, xenophobia and all forms of social reaction.

But as a century ago, capitalist breakdown is also producing the objective conditions for socialist revolution. Millions of people are being thrust into bitter class battles to defend their jobs and hard-won social and democratic rights. Hostility among working people to the squandering of vital resources on rearmament and the war intrigues of the capitalist elite is palpable. The globalization of production has been associated with a dramatic increase in the size and social power of the world working class and has created the technical means for coordinating the international struggles of the working class as never before. It is the political task of socialists to translate these objective tendencies into a revolutionary program and organization that can guide the working class in the struggles ahead.

50. The imperative of revolutionary leadership was demonstrated by the Russian Revolution and the role the Bolshevik party played in actualizing the creative power of the working class. Mighty as the revolutionary explosion in 1917 was, a vanguard party armed with a scientific Marxist perspective was needed to reveal the revolution's class logic in the struggle for workers' power and to guide and organize that struggle.

The Socialist Equality Party is dedicated to building such a party today—the Canadian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. The SEP bases itself on the historic struggle of the Fourth International, founded by Leon Trotsky and led since 1953 by the International Committee. The ICFI has conducted a decades-long struggle to defend the heritage of orthodox Trotskyism, opposing all efforts to mislead the working class through the promotion of Stalinism, bourgeois nationalism, social democracy and the anti-Marxist, subjective idealist conceptions associated with postmodernism and the Frankfurt School.

51. We fight to rally the working class to the program of world socialist revolution. This requires an unrelenting struggle for the political independence of the working class from all the capitalist parties and organizations. This includes those like the pseudo-left who seek to keep workers in the thrall of the pro-capitalist unions and NDP and who promote Canadian and Quebec nationalism and identity politics. In conjunction with our comrades in the ICFI, we place the struggle to build a working class-led international movement against imperialist war at the centre of our political work.

The SEP fights for the unity of the working class—English and French-speaking, immigrant and First Nations—and to fuse all its struggles—against the dismantling of public services, job cuts and concessions, police violence and attacks on democratic rights, and the predations of Canadian imperialism—into a mass mobilization for a workers' government committed to socialist policies.

Into all of the struggles of the working class, we systematically strive to infuse the understanding that Canadian workers must link and coordinate them with the mounting resistance of the international working class.

52. Flowing from this socialist internationalist perspective, the SEP insists, in opposition to the entire official and pseudo left, that a strategic orientation to the struggles of the American working class must be a

fundamental element in Canadian workers' class strategy.

The defeat of US imperialism, which emerged from the world wars and the Great Depression of the last century as the banker and policeman of world capitalism, is a strategic task of the world working class. By fighting intransigently against their "own" bourgeoisie and to fuse their struggles with those of their US class brothers and sisters, Canadian workers can make a mighty contribution to the development of the American working class as an independent political force and protagonist for power. Likewise, Canadian workers will be enormously strengthened in their struggles against war and the assault on their social and democratic rights by the eruption of class struggle in capitalism's greatest bastion.

As the US Socialist Equality Party has explained in a recent statement, "Class Struggle or Palace Coup," the "relentless deterioration of the conditions of life for the working class within the United States, and the pointless violence of the endless wars waged by the ruling class" are producing a "profound change in the social consciousness of masses of people... The decades-long suppression of the class struggle by the trade union bureaucracy, the Democratic Party and the affluent sponsors of various forms of identity politics is coming to an end. The social counterrevolution of the ruling elites is about to encounter an upsurge of the American working class."

53. The possibility for joint revolutionary action by the North American proletariat is lodged in its history and social being. All the major upheavals of the working class in North America—from the Knights of Labor through the sit-down strikes of the 1930s and the social upheavals of the 1960s—galvanized support on both sides of the Canada-US border, including among the French-speaking workers of Quebec. During the past half-century, there has been a concerted attempt, spearheaded by the union bureaucracy and pseudo-left, to denigrate and efface this history of common struggle. In implacable opposition to this, and as part of its systematic exposure of Canadian and Quebec nationalism as the main ideologies of the Canadian bourgeoisie, the SEP fights, in collaboration with the US SEP, for the objective unity of North American workers in a highly integrated continental economy to become a conscious revolutionary strategy.

54. The SEP urges all our supporters, WSWs readers and those looking for a means to oppose war and reaction to study this statement. We invite questions and comments. Those in agreement should make haste to join and build the SEP as the revolutionary party of the Canadian working class.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**