Citing Jan. 6 storming of US Capitol, Canada's parliament demands banning of far-right Proud Boys

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Canada's parliament unanimously adopted a non-binding motion Jan. 25 that calls on the Liberal government to declare the far-right Proud Boys a terrorist group. The initiative was spearheaded by the New Democratic Party, which is promoting the dangerous illusion that right-wing extremism can be fought through the Canadian capitalist state—the very same state that covers up the activities of far-right members of the military and collaborated with the fascistic ex-president Donald Trump throughout his term in office.

The motion presented by NDP leader Jagmeet Singh was intended as a recommendation to the Liberal government's Minister for Public Safety, the former Toronto police chief Bill Blair, and touted as a response to the violent storming of the US Capitol building on Jan. 6 by Trump's far-right supporters. The Proud Boys, which was founded by a Canadian and is part of a growing cross-border network of far-right organizations, was prominent among the insurrectionists.

Like the entire political and media establishment in Canada, NDP leader Singh presented the assault on the Capitol as merely the action of far-right white supremacists whom Trump had, or so the story goes, incited with inflammatory rhetoric.

In reality, the storming of the Capitol building was part of a conspiracy led by Donald Trump and facilitated by the Republican Party leadership to illegally nullify the result of the 2020 presidential election. It was timed to coincide with the Republicans' challenging of the Electoral College result on fabricated claims of electoral improprieties, and was aimed at taking congressmen and senators hostage so as to prevent the inauguration of Joe Biden as president.

Leading Democrats have revealed that they only narrowly escaped being captured, and trembled for their lives. Yet rather than expose this political conspiracy, they are seeking to cover up the pivotal role the Republican Party leadership played in preparing Trump's coup attempt and the support it received from sections of the state apparatus. Biden has personally gone out of his way to praise former Vice President Mike Pence and Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell, who promoted Trump's spurious claims of electoral fraud, and has proclaimed his support for a strong Republican Party. In so doing, the Democrats are creating the best political conditions for the further strengthening of the far right and their integration into the structures of American politics.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has demanded that all those involved in Trump's coup attempt be exposed and held to account. This must include criminal prosecution of those like the Proud Boys who led the storming of the Capitol building. However, what is above all required is a full and open public investigation to lay bare all aspects of the conspiracy before the American people, including the complicity of Republican leaders like McConnell and Ted Cruz.

The NDP's motion will do nothing to accomplish any of these urgent tasks, nor to heighten awareness of the social processes and political forces that lie behind the international resurgence of far-right politics. Anyone who thinks otherwise should consider the fact that it won unanimous support from the Conservatives, many of whose leading personnel were open Trump supporters and have close ties to right-wing extremist outfits like Rebel Media. The latter, it should be recalled, favourably covered many of the Trump-backed fascist mobilizations throughout his presidency, including the neo-Nazi rampage in Charlottesville in 2017. The NDP motion was also endorsed by the separatist Bloc Quebecois, which for over a decade has indulged in Islamophobic tirades and anti-immigrant agitation.

More fundamentally, the motion's appeal for the Trudeau Liberal government to "use all available tools to address the proliferation of white supremacists and hate groups" intentionally ignores how the capitalist state and its institutions, including the military and police, are emerging ever more openly as incubators for these very far-right and fascistic forces.

With its call for the Proud Boys to be labelled a terrorist organization, the NDP, which represents the "left" faction of the Canadian bourgeoisie, was trying to superficially distance the ruling class from the most visible far-right actors in the Jan. 6 coup, while preparing the groundwork for closer collaboration with the Biden administration.

As a mid-sized imperialist power dependent on its alliance with Washington to pursue its predatory global ambitions, Canada's ruling elite virtually unanimously supports this orientation. This is why the NDP's motion received cross-party backing.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that the NDP was even more enthusiastic than Trudeau and his Liberals at the prospect of a Biden administration. In mid-November, an NDP-sponsored motion congratulating Biden on his electoral victory and inviting him to visit Canada gained unanimous support in the House of Commons. The motion also urged that Biden be granted the honour of addressing a joint session of the House of Commons and Senate, Canada's upper house, as a first step to further deepening the decades-long Canada-US military-strategic partnership. As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote at the time, "With its invitation to Biden to address Canada's parliament as soon as possible, the NDP is giving its stamp of approval for US imperialist aggression, above all its war drive against Russia and China. This is politically revealing, but not surprising. For over two decades, the NDP has been a cheerleader for every US-led war in which Canadian imperialism has participated, from Serbia/Kosovo and Afghanistan to Libya and, since 2014, Iraq-Syria."

The motion calling on the Canadian government to ban the Proud Boys aims to bolster the political-ideological propaganda used to justify the Canada-US alliance, which mounts provocations and military interventions, imposes trade war measures, and has dramatically ratcheted

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up tensions with China and Russia under the phony pretext of defending "democracy" and "human rights."

The reality covered up by the NDP is that Canada's ruling elite, no less than its US counterpart, is rapidly breaking with democratic forms of rule.

While Singh and the NDP laud the "unity" of the five parliamentary parties in condemning the Proud Boys, the fact is that the entire political establishment is engaged in concealing the extent of far-right activity in Canada itself. Just over six months ago, a far-right military reservist inspired by the right-wing extremist QAnon movement crashed his truck laden with firearms through the gates of Rideau Hall, Trudeau's current official residence, in what was an attempted assassination. The entire political establishment has sought to trivialize the incident, even as ever more information emerges that demonstrates that Corry Hurren, Trudeau's would-be assassin, was not a "lone wolf" in Canada's military.

Months after the Royal Canadian Mounted Police completed two investigations into the attempted assassination, their results are still being kept under lock and key, and no establishment political party, the NDP included, is calling for the information to be published. Only the Socialist Equality Party has raised this urgent demand. (See: **Stop the cover-up of Trudeau's attempted assassination! Release all internal investigations into last July's Rideau Hall attack!**)

The reason for this is clear. The NDP and its allies in the political elite have absolutely no interest in exposing the true extent of far-right activity in Canada's security apparatus, for fear this would discredit the military and intelligence agencies. On the contrary, their primary concern is to rally a sceptical population behind a further intensification of an aggressive imperialist foreign policy in alliance with the United States by vouching for the "democratic" credentials of the armed forces and the capitalist state.

The NDP has long made the case for a dramatic expansion of defence spending. During the 2019 federal election campaign, it assailed Trudeau's Liberals from the right, declaring that the government's decision to hike military spending by over 70 percent within a decade was inadequate. Tens of billions of additional dollars to purchase warships, fighter jets, and armed drones were necessary, insisted Canada's social democrats in their election platform. "Unfortunately, after decades of Liberal and Conservative cuts and mismanagement, our military has been left with outdated equipment, inadequate support, and an unclear strategic mandate," the party wrote.

This record underscores that, its public declamations against the far-right notwithstanding, the NDP supports a further shift of bourgeois politics to the right, i.e., a course that will create the best conditions for the growth of far-right forces and their integration into official politics.

This is true not only on the question of military spending. During the pandemic, the New Democrats united with the Liberals, Conservatives, Bloc Quebecois and Greens to hand over hundreds of billions of dollars to the financial oligarchy, while workers were left to make do with makeshift rations-style emergency financial support. The NDP's parliamentary votes have played a critical role in keeping the Trudeau Liberals in power, including last September when Singh and his fellow NDP MPs supported the Liberals' throne speech, the central thrust of which was to keep the economy open so big business could rake in profits as COVID-19 infections skyrocketed. The exacerbation of social inequality created by these policies is less and less compatible with democratic forms of rule.

With working-class opposition to its class war and outright homicidal policies growing, ruling circles are building up the forces of state repression. The NDP's Proud Boys motion is significant in this connection, since it makes clear that the social democrats fully endorse the use of reactionary anti-terrorist legislation for explicitly political purposes. The demand that the Proud Boys be designated a "terrorist group" amounts to an acceptance of the entire framework of anti-democratic measures adopted in the wake of 9/11, including the comprehensive surveillance of the population, the undermining of core democratic rights like the right to remain silent and the presumption of innocence, and the creation of a new category of political crimes based on a vague and elastic catch-all definition of terrorism.

While this latter weapon is currently being turned against a violent far-right group, the precedent it sets is a dangerous one. Under conditions of growing working class struggles, these authoritarian powers will invariably be deployed to smother opposition from the left.

Long historical experience testifies to the fact that legislation adopted by the bourgeoisie ostensibly to curb fascism and the far right is ultimately turned, and generally sooner than later, against the working class. As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1938:

> Theory, as well as historic experience, testify that any restriction to democracy in bourgeois society, is eventually directed against the proletariat, just as taxes eventually fall on the shoulders of the proletariat. Bourgeois democracy is usable by the proletariat only insofar as it opens the way for the development of the class struggle. Consequently, any workers' leader who arms the bourgeois state with special means to control public opinion in general, and the press in particular, is a traitor. In the last analysis, the accentuation of class struggle will force the bourgeoisie of all shades, to conclude a pact: to accept special legislation, and every kind of restrictive measures, and measures of 'democratic' censorship against the working class. Those who have not yet realised this, should leave the ranks of the working class.

Socialists fully endorse the prosecution of members of the Proud Boys and other fascist groups for their violent and criminal activities. But the struggle against the threat posed by the far right cannot be contracted out to the capitalist state apparatus or conducted in alliance with the bourgeoisie, which fosters the far-right forces, and under conditions of capitalist crisis and intensified class struggle, deploys them as its shock troops. The experience of the rise of fascism during the 20th century demonstrates that only the independent political mobilization of the working class on a socialist program can defeat the far right, their enablers in the political establishment and state, and prevent the supplanting of a putrefied bourgeois democracy by authoritarianism and fascist dictatorship.

During the 1930s, Germany's Social Democrats claimed that the rise of Hitler could be blocked by appealing to capitalist state institutions, the Weimar Constitution, and the judiciary—the very forces that facilitated the fascists' rise. Later in the decade, the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy and its satellite Communist parties adopted the program of the Popular Front, which insisted that to defend democracy the working class must subordinate itself to the bourgeoisie, including avowedly right-wing parties. So as not to endanger the "unity" with the bourgeoisie in the struggle against fascism, the Stalinists insisted that workers' social aspirations and independent political activity had to be ruthlessly suppressed. Both policies had catastrophic results. While the SPD leadership refused to organize any working class opposition to Hitler's coming to power, which was arranged in a conspiracy behind the backs of the population by the highest levels of the state and big business, the Stalinist-led Popular Front line sabotaged revolutionary working class movements in Spain and France, clearing the way for the conquest of power by the fascist Franco and Vichy regimes.

As in the 1930s, bourgeois democracy is breaking down, as ruling elites turn to authoritarian methods of rule and employ far-right forces to intimidate and crush mounting working class struggles. In Germany, the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) has been built up as the official

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opposition in parliament by the ruling elite, whose parties have all adapted to the AfD's right-wing extremist agenda. In France, President Macron, who deployed security forces to viciously suppress Yellow Vest protests, hails Marshal Philippe Pétain, who headed the Nazi collaborationist Vichy regime, as a national hero. Right-wing extremist, viciously anti-worker regimes are also in power in India under Modi, in the Philippines under Duterte, and in Brazil under the fascistic president and Trump-acolyte Bolsonaro.

The capitalist crisis is not only driving the bourgeoisie toward the far right and fascism, however. The working class, which is objectively more unified internationally than at any time in history, is being propelled into revolutionary class battles by the disastrous social and economic conditions produced by world capitalism. The decisive task in opposing the fascist threat is the building of a revolutionary party of the working class to lead the fight for a socialist program and workers power in Canada, the United States, and internationally.

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