

Far-right ideologue Mathieu Bock-Côté inspires and eggs on Quebec government in its chauvinist offensive

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The *Journal de Montréal* (JdM), a right-wing tabloid owned by billionaire and former Parti Québécois (PQ) leader Pierre-Karl Péladeau, recently devoted much of one of its Saturday bumper issues to a series of articles denouncing a proposal from the Century Initiative think tank that Canada sharply increase its intake of immigrants. The articles labelled the scheme a “federalist plot.” One it suggested that enjoys the backing of Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government and is aimed at “destroying” the “Quebec nation” through “mass” immigration.

A key player in this right-wing provocation was columnist Mathieu Bock-Côté, who denounced the Century Initiative in the pages of the JdM as far back as January 2023. Bock-Côté wrote one of the main columns in the special issue, entitled “Two scenarios that herald the disappearance of Quebec.” In the days that followed, he published two additional columns on the subject.

Bock-Côté is a far-right ideologue who exerts significant influence on important sections of the Quebec’s political elite. He is known to have the ear of Quebec Premier and Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) founder-leader François Legault, who often echoes Bock-Côté’s comments in his tweets.

Throughout his career, Bock-Côté has distinguished himself as an ultra-nationalist. In 2001, while still in his early twenties, he was expelled from the Bloc Québécois (BQ), the sister party of the separatist Parti Québécois (PQ) at the federal level, for the publication of nationalist manifestos denouncing the “immigrant problem” and advocating a return to traditional French-Canadian nationalism. It was not his chauvinist orientation that led to Bock-Côté’s expulsion, but the fact that his manifestos quoted Charles Maurras, a notorious French fascist and anti-Semite who, as head of the far-right *Action Française*, supported the Nazi collaborationist Vichy regime during the Second World War.

After completing his studies in sociology, Bock-Côté

embarked on a career as an academic and media personality promoting Quebec nationalism with incessant and hysterical claims that the Quebec “nation” is under existential threat. According to Bock-Côté, the Quebec nation, Québécois culture and the French language in Quebec are all threatened with disappearance due to the prevalence of English and immigrants, particularly from the Middle East, whom he regularly refers to as “Islamists.”

Bock-Côté’s nationalist and anti-immigrant discourse has in recent years acquired a decidedly racist and fascist tone. Last April, he openly promoted the “Great Replacement” theory in the pages of the right-wing French newspaper, *Le Figaro*. “If things unfold as they are happening now,” he wrote, “by the end of the century, the historic peoples of Europe will be in the minority in their own countries.” This anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic conspiracy theory concocted by the European far-right claims that “mass” immigration is a plot hatched by an international elite to replace the “white Christian” population.

Bock-Côté currently spends part of his time in France, where he writes for *Le Figaro* and regularly appears on the Cnews television network (often compared to Fox News in the USA for its far-right positions). In the last French presidential election, Bock-Côté supported Éric Zemmour, a convicted fascist and racist provocateur who advocated the expulsion of five million immigrants. Bock-Côté also welcomed the rise to power in Italy of Giorgia Meloni, an avowed neo-fascist whose party honours the memory and traditions of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

Another of Bock-Côté’s favorite targets, on which he has written several books, is the “woke left.” The *World Socialist Web Site* has more correctly identified these forces—affluent sections of the middle class who deny the essential class divisions in society and promote identity politics to gain a greater share of privilege in academia, corporate boards, the union bureaucracy, and the state—as the pseudo-left.

Despite his obvious fascist sympathies, Bock-Côté has been welcomed with open arms by the Quebec ruling class, upon whose policies and discourse he exerts ever greater influence.

For example, the hysterical attacks in the JdM's anti-immigrant special issue were immediately picked up by the entire political establishment. Within days of their publication, Quebec's National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion put forward by the PQ denouncing the Century Initiative and calling on the Legault government to "officially oppose" it. Legault was quick to comply, essentially adopting the chauvinistic arguments of the JdM.

Similarly, in May 2022, Bock-Côté led the charge in calling for the closure of Roxham Road, through which thousands of migrants fleeing Trump and Biden's anti-immigrant policies have entered Canada to seek refuge. Just hours after the publication of his May 10, 2022, column entitled "Shut down Roxham Road," the PQ organized a press conference to call for the immediate closure of Roxham Road by Justin Trudeau's federal government.

This demand, initiated by Bock-Côté, taken up by the PQ and then by the Legault government, became a reality less than a year later. Last March, after a summit between Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and US President Joe Biden to coordinate the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, Trudeau reached an immigration agreement with his American counterpart that included the closure of Roxham Road.

Bock-Côté also exerts direct intellectual and political influence on the Premier of Quebec. Legault has listed Bock-Côté's books among his favorite readings and described the ideologue as "a great intellectual." Last Easter, he retweeted a Bock-Côté column that celebrated the role of the Catholic Church in Quebec history saying it promoted "social solidarity," and he has used Bock-Côté's favorite invective, "woke," against Québec Solidaire spokesman Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois on the floor of the National Assembly.

The fact that Bock-Côté inspires Legault and influences his government is a measure of how rapidly the Quebec ruling class is moving to the right as it whips up anti-immigrant and chauvinist sentiment with the aim of dividing the working class.

Since coming to power in 2018, the Legault government has pushed through a series of anti-democratic laws against minorities, enshrined a more extreme form of Quebec nationalism in state policy, and blamed immigrants for the social problems resulting from capitalist austerity. For example, Bill 21, in the name of "secularism" bars persons wearing religious head coverings from being employed in public schools—a measure calculated to principally impact and victimize Muslim women. Under Bill 96, the

government has reinforced the privileged status of French within Quebec and curtailed the rights of linguistic minorities and immigrants.

This is part of a national and international development that stems from the terminal crisis of the capitalist order. The official opposition in Ottawa is now led by Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre, a strident supporter of the far-right Freedom Convoy that menacingly occupied downtown Ottawa to demand the lifting of all remaining anti-COVID public health measures. In the United States, former President Donald Trump, after using neo-Nazi groups in his coup attempt on January 6, 2021, is doubling down on his fascist diatribes against socialism, as well as his anti-immigrant and racist appeals as part of his campaign for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

The ruling class in Italy, France, Germany and throughout Europe is likewise promoting far-right tendencies as a battering ram against the working class, which is entering into struggle on every continent against the destruction of its living standards and social rights.

Workers cannot fight the danger of fascism by relying on the capitalist state, which encourages far-right forces and turns to authoritarian methods to crush growing working-class opposition to capitalist austerity and imperialist war.

The virulent nationalism advocated by far-right ideologues like Bock-Côté—with the support of the political establishment—must be vigorously rejected by workers. They must build their international unity in the political struggle to overthrow capitalism, the source of fascism and war.



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