

NDP proposes “made in Canada” rearmament plan to ready Ottawa for world war

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Canada’s social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) is campaigning for the April 28th federal election on a program of massive rearmament. It is following a war-path already well trodden by social democratic parties in Europe, serving as a key advocate for imperialist war and the corraling of workers behind Ottawa’s predatory global interests.

In a series of statements, the NDP has trumpeted a “Made in Canada” plan to pour tens of billions of dollars into new war spending. Attempting to exploit the belligerent threats of the fascist US President Donald Trump to annex Canada as the “51st state,” leading NDP figures have pitched their “made in Canada” rearmament plan as a way to resist American domination of Canada and pursue a more “independent” foreign policy.

The NDP frames its rearmament campaign as a “Fight for Canada.” In reality, the NDP is fighting alongside the entire political establishment to pour tens of billions of additional dollars into the Canadian imperialist war machine, and to ensure that the working class pays the price for it. This marks a continuation of the party’s record over recent years, which has included propping up Justin Trudeau’s pro-war Liberal government since 2019. During this period, and especially following the conclusion of a “confidence-and-supply” agreement with the Liberals in 2022, the NDP supported massive increases in military spending, Canada’s prominent role in the US/NATO-instigated war with Russia, and the government’s full-throated endorsement of Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza.

In a March 16 statement, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh announced the NDP’s commitment to spend 2 percent of Canada’s GDP on defence. Singh declared, “Too often we have left our Armed Forces without the equipment they need, without the supports they deserve. It’s time to change that—to recruit, protect and respect Canadian Armed Forces members.”

Singh is pushing the lie that billions in new war spending could benefit the working class. Diverting production to Canadian defence contractors will create “good unionized jobs” for workers, he claimed, while adding his intention to increase pay for soldiers.

The NDP is trading in a political fraud. Canada’s Parliamentary Budget Office calculates that an additional \$20 billion in military spending per year is required to meet the 2 percent threshold. The MacDonald-Laurier Institute, a leading pro-imperialist think tank noted, “Ottawa can only reach the 2 percent target by shedding some of its programs, including its new housing, daycare, dental benefits, national school food, and pharmacare programs.”

Other analysts have pointed out that when the growth in population and GDP over the coming years is taken into account, military spending increases would have to be even higher. One calculation suggested that by 2033, when Singh has pledged to meet the 2 percent target, Canada would have to spend over \$80 billion on defence, effectively double the \$41

billion spent last year.

The final moves of the NDP’s “confidence and supply” Liberal partners indicate that together with rearmament, a regime of intensified class warfare and attacks on workers will form the agenda of any new federal government. The week before the election call, Liberal Prime Minister Mark Carney announced, to the cheers of Bay Street, the repeal of the promised hike in the capital gains tax, heralding the transfer of billions in socially created wealth to the rich. Carney also declared his intent to balance the budget on “operational spending”—social programs for the working class—while running a deficit to build oil pipelines and purchase new weapons systems.

The NDP’s main concern is that budget cuts could harm the military’s fighting capacity. Singh declared, “Canadians believe in protecting our military service members, caring for our Veterans and creating more good Canadian jobs while we do it.... But Prime Minister Mark Carney is straying from those values by putting budget cuts first. His plan to balance the budget within three years will strain CAF operations and CAF members.”

“Canadian-made” European fighter jets in preference to American ones

Faced with Trump’s threat to annex the country, all of the established political parties have indicated their support for reviewing a \$19 billion deal with US arms manufacturer Lockheed Martin to buy 88 F-35 fighter jets. Outgoing Liberal Defence Minister Bill Blair stated that Canada will hold discussions with alternative aircraft producers, among them Sweden’s Saab, which builds the Gripen fighter jet.

The NDP has assumed a leading role in urging Canadian imperialist policymakers to purchase European fighter jets in preference to US made ones.

In 2022, as a condition of its “confidence and supply” agreement with the Trudeau Liberals, the NDP voted for the Liberal budget which committed the funds for the F-35 jet, while complaining impotently about their expense.

Now, together with pseudo-left groups such as the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute, the NDP is demanding a halt to Canadian participation in the F-35 program. They are not doing this because the F-35’s primary purpose is to murder workers in other countries and destroy the fruits of their labour, but because the plane’s mission control software is controlled by the United States, which has emerged as a grave threat to the independent interests of Canadian imperialism.

Nothing in the NDP's opposition to the F-35 purchase gives expression to the objective interests of the working class in opposing imperialism and imperialist war. Rather, the NDP's calculations are based upon the same considerations as the Liberals and Conservatives—how best to advance the “national security interests” of Canadian imperialism.

As Singh put it, “It’s a matter of national security that our defence technology not be controlled by the United States. That’s why we’ll cancel the F-35 contract, and build the fighter jets Canada needs in Canada, using Canadian workers.” As Saab said it would do in its runner-up bid in Canada’s fighter contract competition. “If Canada buys its F-35s from the United States,” continued the NDP leader “that government will retain complete control of the software and hardware upgrades required for continued operations of the planes—a strategic vulnerability that could even ground the jets.”

The NDP has long been a strident proponent of Canadian imperialist violence around the world, supporting every war Ottawa has joined since the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999. But it is now intensifying its commitment to uphold “national security” and ensure Canadian imperialism has a war machine over which it has “independent” control under conditions of an accelerating breakdown of world capitalism. The collapse of American democracy and the elevation to power of a rapacious, fascistic oligarchy has dramatically accelerated the drive to war, as the oligarchy asserts its desire for world conquest and plunder at the expense of its former allies. Trump’s demands to seize Greenland, Gaza and the Panama Canal, and Ukraine’s minerals and nuclear power plants have driven the other imperialist power to assert their own belligerent interests, in a race for geostrategic trade routes, pools of labour, and resources.

The old social democratic parties and their sponsors in the trade union bureaucracies are among the most enthusiastic war mongers in Britain, France, Germany, Australia and elsewhere. All of them have daubed themselves in war paint—to advance the interests of the ruling class in each country—against the working class. Last September, Unifor, the country’s largest industrial union, released a lengthy document proposing a national “aerospace” strategy for Canadian imperialism based around securing long-term contracts for and building an industry around Canada’s aircraft and defence equipment manufacturers.

Together with the Canadian Labour Congress, Unifor sits on the government’s Canada-US advisory council alongside business representatives plotting how Canadian imperialism should respond to Trump’s trade war and threats to take over the country. That is, they fully support the ruling elite’s drive to make workers on both sides of the border to bear the burden of trade war and imperialist militarism.

The NDP’s historical relationship with the trade union bureaucracy means that it plays a critical role for the ruling class in the containment of working class resistance to war and austerity which is already emerging. Just as Joe Biden referred to the AFL-CIO bureaucracy as “my domestic NATO,” the Canadian ruling class counts on the services of the Canadian Labour Congress, its member unions, and Unifor to prevent the class struggle from leaping across the borders artificially separating Canadian, American and Mexican workers.

The NDP’s Defence Critic, Lindsay Mathysen, exemplifies the party’s corporatist role. Mathysen represents London-Fanshawe, where more than 12,000 workers are employed in the armaments industry, in more than 45 enterprises. These include the General Dynamics plant that has supplied Ukraine with 50 Light Armoured Vehicles (LAV) and is now retrofitting 25 more.

In a March 16 statement she demanded “immediate steps to ensure the brave women and men in uniform have the equipment necessary to uphold our sovereignty...”

Mathysen declared, “For decades, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have prioritized the needs of the American Military-

Industrial complex over Canadians. Our broken military procurement system has used convoluted and flawed requirements that have failed Canadian workers and has seen billions in investment sent to the United States.”

Mathysen conveniently omitted the NDP’s official “confidence and supply agreement” with the minority Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government from March 2022 to September 2024. Throughout, the NDP served as a key pillar of Canada’s ever-deeper integration into Washington’s drive for global hegemony, including through NORAD expansion, Ottawa’s leading role in NATO’s war with Russia, and its rapidly expanding participation in the US military-strategic offensive against China.

If the NDP is now balking going further down this path, it is only because the Canadian ruling class is reconsidering its options under conditions where Trump is refusing to accord it the status of duly recognized junior partner in a US-led “Fortress North America,” and is threatening to strike a ceasefire deal with Russia over the heads and at the expense of its NATO “allies.”

With Trump championing “America First” at Canadian capitalism’s expense, up to and including its annexation, the social democrats are now trying to elaborate an alternative path whereby Canadian imperialism can secure its global interests. The NDP has joined Carney and Conservative leader Poilievre in attacking Trump for “abandoning” Ukraine. It is supporting Ottawa’s efforts to strengthen ties with Germany, Britain, France and the other European imperialist powers, which are implementing a massive crash rearmament program so that they can conduct military operations in pursuit of their predatory global interests independently of, and if necessary against, the US.

NDP advocates for the Canadian Military-Industrial complex

Mathysen’s opposition to the “American Military-Industrial complex” is thus not against war or imperialism, but only to American domination of war production and the potential threat it represents to Canadian imperialist interests.

The NDP MP speaks, quite literally, for the Canadian Military-Industrial complex and its interests. “An NDP government,” pledged Mathysen in her March 16 statement, “will immediately replace these projects (the F-35 fighter and the Boeing PA Poseidon aircraft) by engaging with competing bidders and ensuring they can deliver the Saab Gripen fighter jet and a Made-in-Canada Multi-Mission Aircraft, as well as demanding maintenance on these aircraft are (sic) done at home with good, unionized jobs... We will ensure that all eligible bids with at least 50% of value created in Canada will be given preference.”

As the economic and social crises from the eruption of global trade war and world war escalate, the NDP’s warmongering demands and cynical nationalist appeals will find little purchase with the working class. Its assertion that war spending will benefit workers flies in the face of all of its historical and recent experience.

Though the economic shock from the trade war has only begun to make itself felt, the working class is already experiencing severe economic strain. Income inequality rose last year to its highest ever level on record, according to Statistics Canada, and millions of people across the country already rely on food banks to make ends meet.

A *Globe and Mail* article on Sunday, March 23 exposed the fact that young people simply cannot afford to participate in the ruling class’s reactionary “Buy Canadian” campaign, which the NDP is promoting just as vociferously as its “made in Canada” rearmament plan. Declared one student, “I’m at the point right now where if the difference between

something being made in the US and being made in Canada is a dollar, I'm going to go with the thing that's the cheapest." Canada is dependent upon US agriculture for much of its fresh fruit and vegetables, especially during the winter.

The only way forward for workers in the struggle against Trump's annexation threats and the intensification of Canadian and American imperialist militarism is through the building of an international anti-war movement based on a socialist program. The social power of the working class must be mobilized to put an end to imperialist world war and the capitalist profit system that is its root cause. A precondition for developing this movement is a relentless struggle to free workers politically from the debilitating influence of the NDP and their trade union sponsors, who specialize in selling Canadian nationalism and a pro-war agenda to the working class in alliance with their big business Liberal allies.



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