

Canadian unions line up behind government of Liberal ex-banker Carney

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The trade union bureaucracy has responded to the victory of Prime Minister Mark Carney and his Liberal Party in Canada's April 28 federal election with statements pledging to cooperate with the new government as it guts public spending to pay for a massive increase in the military budget and the protection of Canadian capitalism's profits in the trade war with the US.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), Unifor, and other unions issued effusive praise for the ex-central banker and multi-millionaire investment fund manager, making clear that they will serve as his police force within the working class as the new Liberal government presses ahead with an agenda of austerity and imperialist war.

The election campaign was dominated by US President Donald Trump's global trade war and his threats to use "economic force" to annex Canada as the 51st state. All of the establishment parties responded to Trump's threats by rallying around the flag and boosting economic nationalism in the name of defending Canadian "sovereignty." While Carney's Liberals promised to build "Canada Strong," the Tories' far-right leader Pierre Poilievre promised to put "Canada First."

The Liberals profited from widespread hostility to Trump, overturning a 25-percent deficit in the polls against the Conservatives in the space of little more than three months. The fact that many workers mistakenly viewed the Liberals—the Canadian bourgeoisie's preferred party of government for much of the past century—as an alternative to Trump's far-right program of oligarchic rule, imperialist war, and a savage assault on the democratic and social rights of the working class was above all due to the despicable role played by the unions and social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP), which championed reactionary Canadian nationalism and have claimed for decades that the Liberals are a "progressive" ally in the fight against capitalist reaction.

The unions have led the way in promoting Canadian nationalism among workers, with Unifor and the CLC demanding that the government fight to "protect Canadian jobs." The reactionary nationalist orientation of the union bureaucracy serves to split workers across North America, who in many cases work for the same companies and/or are bound together by common production networks, and in the United States, are sometimes members of the same unions.

Congratulations to the former central banker Carney were not long in coming from the leading organizations of Canada's "labour movement."

The CLC declared in a statement published the morrow of the election, "Canada's unions, representing over 3 million workers, stand ready to work with this government to deliver real progress. We

know that by working together, we can take on the challenges ahead and build a fairer, more resilient economy that works for everyone."

Lana Payne, the president of Unifor, Canada's largest private-sector union with over 315,000 members, followed suit, stating, "Unifor's plan to build a resilient economy always called for an all-hands approach, and our union will work with the newly-elected government to push for the protection that Unifor industries, our public services, and our country, needs."

Workers should take these statements as serious warnings. Carney and the Liberals have made no secret about their class war agenda. They are committed to increasing military spending to 2 percent of the GDP by 2030, which will require tens of billions more annually for war and rearmament. These sums can only be raised by slashing spending on health care and all social programs, and launching an assault on public sector workers, whether they are employed federally or in the provinces. Carney's minority government also plans to shred numerous labour and business regulations in the name of "free trade" between the provinces by Canada Day, ensuring that all workers bear the burden of deteriorating working conditions, increased workloads, and weakened protections to foot the bill for corporate Canada in its trade war with the US.

What Payne and the CLC are saying to their "partners" in Canada's corporate boardrooms and government is that when the inevitable working class struggles erupt in opposition to this savage onslaught on worker rights and living standards, they will do everything in their power to smother and confine it to the pro-employer "collective bargaining" straightjacket, and use every trick in the book to ram concessions down the throats of the workers they claim to represent.

Moreover, the union bureaucracies' statements make clear that their sponsored political mouthpieces in the NDP will support the government in parliament as needed, notwithstanding their substantially reduced presence in the House of Commons. The NDP's seven remaining MPs would be more than sufficient to secure Carney's Liberals, who fell three shy of a majority, the necessary votes to stay in power and pass legislation.

Under Trudeau, Unifor President Payne, like ex-CLC President Hassan Yussuff, eagerly took up a position on the Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Canada-United States Relations, where she has worked with representatives of big business and government to elaborate Canadian capitalism's trade-war strategy. She has maintained her position on this corporatist board under Carney and appeared alongside the Prime Minister to praise his government's retaliatory tariffs in the midst of the election campaign.

Multiple CLC-affiliated unions have released their own statements assuring Carney of their loyal cooperation. Both United Steelworkers

Canada Director Marty Warren and François Laporte, National President of Teamsters Canada, welcomed Carney's victory. "The prime minister and all parties promised big results for workers," declared Laporte, who along with the rest of the Teamsters bureaucracy ordered Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City railroad workers to surrender to a government back-to-work order last August. "We expect them to work together and deliver. Now is not the time for political games that delay the help workers urgently need. Parliament must put workers first."

The Canadian Union of Public Employees, which campaigned for the NDP, similarly congratulated the Liberals, declaring that Carney "has won a mandate to defend Canadian jobs" from Donald Trump. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), which also backed the NDP—giving them, in a pre-election "Report Card," a grade of A+ in contrast to a C- for the Liberal government they had propped up in parliament—issued a statement declaring their intention to lobby the government for reforms. "We need to make sure the new government knows that there's a better way forward for Canada Post that includes service expansion," CUPW declared.

Workers must decisively repudiate the fraudulent assertions by the union bureaucrats that Carney's Liberals are "progressive" allies in the fight against capitalist reaction, who only need the advice of a few well-placed and well-paid union bureaucrats to see the error of their ways, and protect workers from corporate profiteers and far-right demagogues, like Trump and Poilievre.

To the extent that sections of the ruling class in Canada "oppose" Trump, they do so from the standpoint of demanding that Ottawa's position as a junior partner in a Washington-led "Fortress North America" be recognized so that continent's twin imperialist powers can jointly plunder the world. Regardless of the outcome of negotiations with Trump, which are set to begin Tuesday when Carney visits the White House, corporate Canada will seek to offload its crisis onto the backs of workers by implementing Trump-style policies.

Over the past decade, the unions have been a key source of support for the Trudeau Liberal government as it carried out a major rearmament program, waged imperialist war alongside the US against Russia in Ukraine, endorsed the Gaza genocide, repeatedly robbed workers of the right to strike, and bailed out big business during the COVID-19 pandemic before enforcing "post-pandemic" austerity and inflation-driven real-wage cuts. Carney's prime ministership marks a shift even further to the right, with his government already canceling a proposed capital gains tax and cribbing many other policy planks from the Poilievre Conservatives.

Under Trudeau, the Liberals repeatedly attacked the working class, utilizing a patently illegally, cooked up "reinterpretation" of the Canada Labour Code to unilaterally break strikes by railroaders, port workers and postal workers. The unions collaborated in this assault on the right to strike, enforcing back-to-work orders in the face of rank-and-file demands for their defiance. This is the precedent which the Carney government will rely on as it comes into headlong confrontation with the working class.

It is only a matter of weeks before postal workers will again be in a strike position, with their arbitrarily extended contract expiring on May 22. Postal workers should be under no illusions. They must anticipate that the CUPW leadership, working in close concert with the CLC, will pull out all the stops to prevent them from striking against the union bureaucracy's new "partner," Carney.

Trump's steep tariffs have exposed the profound interconnections in

the global economy, with workers handling the same commodities and parts across borders multiple times before a final product goes to market, as is the case in the auto industry and many other sectors of the economy.

As the US's largest trading partner, the Canadian economy is massively reliant on trade across its southern border. In order to combat Trump's trade war, Canadian workers must reject all nationalist appeals for them to rally behind "Team Canada" and the profit interests it defends, and develop a fighting strategy to unite with their class brothers and sisters across borders in the United States, Mexico and beyond in the fight to defend the jobs and democratic and social rights of *all* workers.

As we explained in analyzing the election results this week:

The same systemic crisis of global capitalism that is driving Trump to erect a fascist dictatorship in the US and redraw the map by seizing Canada, Greenland and the Panama Canal in preparation for war with China is compelling the Canadian imperialist bourgeoisie to resort to no less ruthless methods to intensify worker exploitation and secure its place in the barbarous redivision of the world that is already well underway.

The fight against Trump must be developed as the fight against American and Canadian imperialism, and for the unity of Canadian, American and Mexican workers in the fight for a socialist North America. This means repudiating all efforts to pit workers against each other in trade warfare and divide them along national, ethnic or linguistic lines, like those of the Quebec separatists.

It means coming to the defence of all workers' rights, including the right of immigrant workers to live and work wherever they choose without fear of state persecution. Above all, it means workers must take up the struggle to build the revolutionary leadership on the basis of the socialist and internationalist program demanded by the intractable world capitalist crisis.



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