

May Day 2025

The socialist response to the breakdown in Canada-US relations

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This speech was given by Keith Jones, National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada), at the International May Day 2025 Online Rally, held Saturday, May 3.

The breakdown in relations between North America's imperialist powers, Canada and the United States, raises pivotal questions of revolutionary perspective, program and strategy for the international working class—above all the necessity of it rejecting all forms of nationalism, protectionism, and militarism and making socialist internationalism the axis of all its struggles.

Last Monday, Canada had a federal election. The campaign was dominated throughout by Trump's global trade war and his threats to use "economic force" to transform the country into America's 51st state.

After weeks of all the parties trumpeting bellicose Canadian nationalism, the Liberals, under their newly-minted leader, the former central banker and blue-chip corporate executive, Mark Carney, were able to retain power.

They did so by riding on a wave of popular hostility to the fascist, would-be dictator Trump.

That the big business Liberals, who just weeks ago were facing a crushing electoral defeat, were able to capitalize on working people's hostility to Trump, is entirely due to the reactionary politics of the organizations that claim to speak in the name of the working class—the trade unions and the social-democratic New Democratic Party or NDP.

For decades they have suppressed the class struggle, while telling workers that they need to ally with the Liberals, the ruling class' traditional party of national

government, to block the coming to power of the Conservatives, the most open proponents of capitalist reaction. Since 2019, the NDP, at the unions' behest, has propped up right-wing minority Liberal governments that implemented the ruling class' ruinous profits-before-lives COVID-19 pandemic policy, waged war on Russia, led the smearing and repression of anti-Gaza genocide protests, imposed inflation-driven real wage cuts, and criminalized strikes.

And the union and NDP leaders rushed to join the Liberal government's trade-war councils, giving their full-throated support to Ottawa's retaliatory tariffs targeting American workers' jobs and living standards.

The political-ideological cement of the corporatist partnership that the labor bureaucrats have forged with Canadian capital and its state is reactionary Canadian and Quebec nationalism, based on the lie that Canadian capitalism constitutes a more "progressive," "gentler, kinder" society compared to the rapacious dollar republic to the south.

As Trotsky observed, the labour lieutenants of capital always seek to dragoon the working class behind the bourgeoisie in its trade, geopolitical and military conflicts by claiming that the imperialist state to which they owe their allegiance and privileges is more "democratic" or socially "advanced" than that of the "enemy." So it was in the two imperialist world wars of the last century, so it is today.

In so far as Carney or any of the political representatives of the ruling class oppose Trump it is solely from the standpoint of defending the Canadian ruling class' profits, global geostrategic interests and first right to exploit the workers of Canada and its abundant resources.

Even now, far and away the preferred option of the Canadian bourgeoisie is to secure a duly recognized role as a junior partner of Washington and Wall Street in a Trump-led Fortress North America aimed at securing US global hegemony against China and all comers.

Workers are in for a rude awakening. The Carney Liberal government will quickly prove to be the most right-wing in Canadian history. It will be a government of austerity, rearmament and war, as already indicated by its cribbing of key policies of the Conservatives, who like the Republicans in the United States have increasingly morphed into a party of the far-right.

Trump is a menace to the workers of Canada and the world. But workers can't fight him and all he represents—oligarchy, dictatorship and imperialist war—by lining up with the Canadian bourgeoisie, any of its rival factions or political representatives.

Rather, they must assert their independent class interests by forging a movement for workers' power and fighting to fuse their struggles with the mass opposition to Trump now emerging within the American working class. As an essential first step in mounting a challenge to the decrepit world capitalist order, workers must repudiate the union-NDP-Liberal alliance and Canadian and Quebec nationalism, which for decades have been employed to bind them hand-and-foot to the ruling class.

As the Socialist Equality Party (Canada) explained in our election statement:

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 mass social struggles of the 1960s—galvanized support on both sides of the Canada-US border, including among the French-speaking workers of Quebec. The task today is to appropriate the best elements of these traditions [of joint struggle] and infuse them with a new, higher socialist content.

On May Day 2025, take up the fight to win the working class to the program of socialist internationalism and for a workers' North America, the

only progressive answer to war, oligarchy and dictatorship, by joining the ranks of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement, and its Socialist Equality Parties and affiliated sympathizing groups. Thank you.



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