

The Parti Québécois' “Blue Book” on Independence—chauvinism, austerity, rearmament, and military-strategic alignment with Washington

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The Parti Québécois published its Blue Book on independence last June—a 500-page document that details its plans for a future *République du Québec*. The Blue Book is part of the PQ's campaign for the October 5th provincial election, and for a third referendum on Quebec's secession from Canada's federal state.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the PQ presented “Quebec sovereignty” as a popular project that would foster the growth of the welfare state. But it discarded this demagoguery long ago.

The Blue Book lays bare the reactionary character of the drive to carve out a third imperialist state in North America, advocating for Quebec's secession on the basis of national exclusivism, anti-immigrant chauvinism, massive social cuts, and an even more pronounced economic and military-strategic alignment with US imperialism under the leadership of the fascist, would-be dictator Donald Trump. An independent Quebec, the PQ vows, will drastically increase military spending and adhere from its birth to NATO and NORAD (the North American Aerospace Defense Command).

Nationalism and Anti-Immigrant Chauvinism

With the Blue Book, PQ leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon is intensifying his use of right-wing and openly far-right appeals to rally the support of Quebec's capitalist elite and the most chauvinistic sections of the middle class. He accuses the federal government and the Liberals under Justin Trudeau and Mark Carney of “wasting” public money and racking up immense deficits that weaken Quebec. He also accuses Ottawa of prioritizing the “interests” of Ontario and Alberta over those of Quebec.

Barely veiling the “Great Replacemen” theory advanced by far-right ideologues such as Mathieu Bock-Côté, the PQ accuses the federal Liberals of conspiring to “erase Quebec's culture and language” through “massive immigration,” “multiculturalism,” and “wokism.”

The Blue Book argues that immigration is leading to the “political, cultural, demographic, and linguistic marginalization of Quebec,” and blames immigrants for a panoply of social problems—from the housing crisis to overcrowded schools and hospital emergency rooms. The PQ's Blue Book attacks immigrants for allegedly refusing to “integrate” into the Quebec nation, adding that there is “strong evidence to show that a plain, outright rejection of francophones prevails among some young people from immigrant backgrounds.”

It should be noted that St. Pierre Plamondon has repeatedly voiced

support for the Alberta separatist movement, which for decades has been associated with the far right and today openly touts its support for Trump's MAGA movement. The PQ leader has also frequently declared his affinity for the policy prescriptions of Éric Duhaime and his Parti conservateur du Québec.

The PQ boasts of being a better ally of Washington than Canadian imperialism, which it depicts as too much in conflict with Trump, to the detriment of “Quebec's interests.” In reality, Ottawa—with the support of the Quebec ruling elite—has supported and continues to actively support the wars waged by the United States across the globe over the past three decades.

The Carney Liberal government is eager to continue Canadian imperialism's longstanding close economic and military-strategic partnership with Washington, with the prime minister repeatedly expressing his readiness to join a US-led “Fortress North America.” But he has pushed back against Trump's barrage of tariffs and threats to annex Canada, for they threaten the profits and core strategic interests of the most powerful sections of Canadian capital.

To curry favor with the Trump administration, St. Pierre Plamondon denounced the limited trade agreement Carney concluded with China last January, emphasizing that an independent Quebec would refuse to do business with this “communist and totalitarian dictatorship.”

Using chauvinist appeals and demagoguery, the PQ seeks to channel growing popular anger over vast social inequalities and ever-increasing economic insecurity into support for Quebec sovereignty. It claims that, unlike the other parties, it favors a “rupture” with the status quo in the form of a “break” with the Canadian federal state and its political establishment.

In reality, independence would leave the existing capitalist social order—which is at the root of all the inequalities and injustices that mar and demean the lives of working people—entirely untouched.

Far from a progressive “rupture” with the dominant federalist political establishment, it is a right-wing project based on the most virulent chauvinism and nationalism that will be used to intensify the assault on the working class.

Since its founding in 1968, the PQ has represented a faction of the French-speaking Quebec ruling class that sees the creation of a new imperialist state in North America as the best way to pursue socio-economic and foreign policies focused solely on the needs of “Quebec Inc.,” including economic nationalist and protectionist measures. The aim is to more aggressively advance the interests of the Quebec ruling elite instead of balancing them against the interests of rival factions of the Canadian bourgeoisie. Through independence, Quebec, or so they argue,

can develop direct relations with Washington and Wall Street without going through the federal government, so as to better advance its own interests at home and on the global stage.

Workers have no interest in supporting the ruling class in this project for a new imperialist state in North America. It would only create a new obstacle to the unification of the Quebec, Canadian, and American working classes. The increased tensions between Quebec and the rest of Canada that would accompany secession—including squabbles over borders and the division of assets and the \$1.3 trillion federal debt—would be used to further divide workers, fuel the most toxic chauvinism, and intensify the assault on wages, jobs and democratic rights.

An “Entrepreneurial” project

The PQ does not hide that independence will be for the benefit of big business. St. Pierre Plamondon states loudly and clearly that it is an “entrepreneurial” project: Quebec must become one of the jurisdictions with the “most competitive taxation of businesses in North America” and “one of the places in the world with the best business environment.” This program can only be implemented through a major assault on what remains of the social gains of the working class.

The Blue Book emphasizes that the reorganization of the state apparatus that Quebec’s secession from the federal state would necessarily entail would provide a never-before-seen opportunity to slash public spending. Independence, boasts St. Pierre Plamondon, will end the *dédoublément* (overlap) of federal-provincial programs and services, thereby allowing for the “largest exercise in waste elimination” and “bureaucracy” in the province’s history. In reality, what Plamondon calls “waste” is nothing other than the entirety of the public services from which the working class benefits, as well as the wages and conditions of public sector workers.

In the past, the PQ tried to reassure Quebecers employed by the federal government that they would be integrated, come independence, into the Quebec state apparatus. But St. Pierre Plamondon, to emphasize the “efficiency” and “competitiveness” of an independent capitalist Quebec, has made a point of saying that this will not be possible. “There will be cuts,” he vows.

The PQ claims that the merger or abolition of federal agencies, and the elimination of thousands of federal jobs, would provide an independent Quebec with “savings of \$13 to 16 billion dollars” per annum. This is the Quebec version of the DOGE program in the United States, initiated by Trump at the beginning of his second term and initially led by the fascist multibillionaire Elon Musk. DOGE implemented massive cuts in public services and public sector jobs, to transfer billions into the pockets of the financial oligarchy.

Quebec imperialism and militarism

The PQ’s program of social cuts and tax reductions will serve not only to enrich Quebec big business and its financial elite, but also to equip a completely new “made in Quebec” war machine.

The Blue Book makes clear that an independent Quebec would assume its “international responsibilities,” by supporting US-imperialist domination of the continent. It commits Quebec to a war-ready military, including an army, air force, navy and Coast Guard, with a permanent staff of at least 20,000, similar to those of second-order imperialist

countries like Sweden and Denmark.

A sovereign Quebec would immediately apply for membership in NATO and NORAD and aim to increase its military spending to 5 percent of GDP to meet the trans-Atlantic organization’s requirements. This would require a massive diversion of society’s resources from social spending to the military.

Acknowledging that the Trump administration has plunged the aforementioned multilateral imperialist alliances into “uncertainty,” the PQ notes that an independent Quebec “should seek to fully participate” in any “new security architecture” with the United States.

It also sees its role as supporting Washington’s deadly adventures around the globe. Adopting the pacifist myth long invoked by Ottawa to camouflage Canada’s predatory interests, the PQ seeks to project the image of a Quebec that would act on the world stage as a “peaceful” and “democratic” nation. In reality, the imperialist powers have long used rhetoric about promoting “human rights” and defending “democracy” as political cover for regime-change operations and wars of aggression round the world.

The Blue Book’s comparison with Scandinavian countries is all the more telling, as these are playing an increasingly important and aggressive role in the NATO-instigated war against Russia over Ukraine.

The chauvinism and xenophobic agitation of the PQ—which is advanced and supported by the establishment as a whole—serves to divert attention from its right-wing program, while making immigrants the scapegoats of the social crisis. In its Blue Book, the PQ says it will massively reduce permanent immigration to approximately 35,000 people per year, and halve temporary immigration within four years.

The PQ reiterates its support for the chauvinist Bill 21 passed by the CAQ in 2019, which prohibits the wearing of religious symbols by state employees in “positions of authority,” including teachers and early childhood educators. The party argues, however, that Quebec must go further in using repressive methods to enforce the discriminatory provisions of Bill 21 as well as Bills 101 and 96, which assert the supremacy of the French language in Quebec.

The fact that the PQ was able to rise from the ashes after being practically wiped off the map between 2018 and 2023, only to put forward such a reactionary program, is not evidence of real support, especially within the working class. Rather it is the outcome of the efforts of powerful sections of the ruling elite to revive a political instrument that has always loyally served its interests, under conditions where Canadian capitalism and its federal state are being roiled by the intensifying inter-imperialist and great-power struggle for markets, profits and resources and by a growing global upsurge of working-class resistance.

However, the revival of the PQ and *indépendantiste* nationalism would not have been possible without the systematic suppression of the class struggle by the union bureaucracy and the pseudo-left Québec Solidaire, and their promotion of Quebec nationalism and complicity in the ruling class campaign scapegoating immigrants.

For more than a half-century, the Quebec unions have been a pillar of support for the Parti Québécois. They channeled the mass working-class rebellion of the late 1960s and early 1970s behind the PQ and the burgeoning sovereigntist movement; then supported the Lévesque-Johnson and Parizeau-Bouchard-Landry PQ governments of the 1980s and 1990s, as they imposed massive austerity and a battery of anti-worker laws. In 2012, the unions diverted the mass anti-austerity movement triggered by the Quebec student strike behind the election of a PQ government that imposed annual university fee-hikes, slashed social spending and sought to impose a chauvinist, anti-democratic ban on religious signs on more than half-a-million public sector workers.

The union bureaucracy are now working to resurrect this party and tighten their links with it as it shifts still further right. Last January, Magali Picard, the president of Quebec’s largest labour federation, the

Fédération des travailleurs du Québec (FTQ), attended the PQ congress as a guest of honor, and hailed its passing of a resolution that employed phony “pro-worker” demagoguery akin to that employed by the far-right leader of Canada’s Conservative Party, Pierre Poilievre, and Trump.

In his efforts to court the hard-line wing of the sovereigntist movement and promote the PQ as favoring a “rupture” with the status quo, St. Pierre Plamondon has insisted on the urgency of holding a third referendum on independence during the first term of a potential PQ government.

However, he recently amended this somewhat, in the hopes of reassuring big business and voters concerned about the Canada-US trade war and growing global crisis, saying he would not call a referendum on Quebec’s sovereignty as long as Donald Trump is in office.

Whether or not such a referendum is held, workers must firmly oppose the Parti Québécois and its program of independence. This position in no way implies support for the federal state or Canadian imperialism. Quebec nationalism and Canadian nationalism are in fact two sides of the same coin: they are part of the ruling class’ efforts to divide Canadian workers on an ethno-linguistic and regional basis, isolate their struggles from those of the international working class and subordinate them to one or another of the rival factions of Canadian capital.

What is necessary is the unity of the working class in Quebec, Canada, North America and internationally. In Quebec, this program must be advanced in the form of a rejection of all forms of nationalism and separatism, and a struggle for the unity of Francophone, Anglophone and immigrant workers. This is only possible within the framework of the independent political mobilization of the working class against austerity, rearmament and war and for social equality—that is, the fight for a socialist-internationalist program.



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