The Historical and International Foundations of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada): Part 5

Socialist Equality Party (Canada)
17 November 2026

Delegates to the Socialist Equality Party's founding congress held in Montreal from August 22 to 24 unanimously adopted a comprehensive document outlining the party's Historical and International Foundations. *It is being published on the* World Socialist Web Site *in ten parts. Click here to access the first, second, third and fourth parts, respectively.*

The WSWS previously published a report on the congress, which marked a major milestone in the struggle to build the world party of socialist revolution, as well as the SEP Canada's Statement of Principles.

The mounting crisis in the SWP and the Dowson group in the aftermath of the Pablo split

89. The formation of the ICFI, and the Canadian Trotskyists' belated endorsement of the Open Letter and political victory over the anti-party, pro-Pablo faction could have become the basis for a fundamental reorientation of the movement. The need for such a reorientation was recognized by leaders of the American SWP, who had renewed their close collaboration with the Canadian Trotskyists during the anti-Pablo fight. "I am convinced that Pabloism, that is real Pabloism, has taken a deep hold in the whole organization up there," wrote an SWP leader on his return from a visit to Toronto in February 1954. "They don't fully realize it. They think they are all united in the work in the CCF. And they are, but on a Pabloite basis I'm afraid. They have become infected with the terrible disease of thinking that everything can be solved with fancy, endless manoeuvres in the CCF with 'deep' entry conceptions."[73]

Cannon, in underscoring the urgent need to politically rearm the world movement, emphasized the particularly acute dangers facing those sections like the Canadian that had to make tactical adaptations to politically hostile tendencies—whether Stalinist, social-democratic or centrist—to "facilitate the struggle against them." Such adaptations, he warned, invariably carried with them "the danger of *de facto* liquidation by a creeping process"—one which would "become irresistible," if it were "not consciously recognized and arrested either by an undisguised Trotskyist publication of our own, or—the next best thing—by the constant involvement of the rank and file of our organizations in a discussion of the big questions of principle which demarcate us from the Stalinists and the reformists. … The burning task now in England, as well as in Canada, is not merely to get a formal majority for the International Committee, but to see to it that this majority is developed into a homogeneous body of conscious Trotskyists."[74]

"Even if there were no liquidationist tendency of Pabloism to deal with," Cannon continued, "our 'entrist' sections would have to solve" the problem of how to combine "practical activity in the mass movement, which requires a certain *formal* adaptation," with "the deliberate work of ideological demarcation."[75]

After reviewing the problems that emerged in the American Trotskyists' own, on the whole successful, 1936-37 entry into the Socialist Party, Cannon concluded, "The question of whether a policy of entry will ultimately lead to a strengthening and expansion of our movement, or to its imperceptible liquidation, depends on the cadres; especially on the consciousness of the leadership and the deliberate measures it takes to combat the dangers while exploiting the opportunities."[76]

90. Although they rallied to the IC, Ross Dowson and the other leaders of the Canadian section fatally underestimated the issues involved in the fight against Pabloite opportunism. The split was discussed at the Canadian Trotskyists' August 1954 convention and a motion to adhere to the ICFI unanimously adopted. But the review of the 1953-54 split was not made the basis for a re-examination of the section's political line and work—this notwithstanding the Fourth International having suffered the greatest political crisis in its history, that any examination of the split showed that Pablo's admittedly ambiguous formulations had been accepted at the 1951 3rd World Congress, and that the RWP's dissolution had been politically motivated on the basis of Pablo's entryist perspective. The 1953 split was interpreted in a superficial fashion as merely a rejection of Pablo's war-revolution thesis and pro-Stalinist line. Dowson was soon writing to the British Trotskyist leader Gerry Healy in a thoroughly nationalist and parochial manner that the issue of Pabloism had been largely settled in Canada in 1951. This was a reference to the section's rejection, at the same 1951 party convention that voted to dissolve the RWP, of the positions of an opposition grouping that would go on to form the Committee for the Socialist Regroupment of Canada, in a confused dispute that was largely centred on organizational questions**.**

Dowson and other leaders of the ICFI in Canada saw no incongruity between denouncing Pablo "for seeking to liquidate Trotskyism into counterrevolutionary Stalinism" and declaring that "left CCFism is Trotskyism." Unquestionably, the post-war boom, the relative conservatism of broad sections of the working class and the witch-hunt of leftists within the trade unions created difficult conditions for the development of revolutionary work. Only by beginning from the fight for the perspective of world socialist revolution could a revolutionary orientation be developed toward the Canadian working class. But fearing nothing so much as to be "isolated" from the increasingly moribund CCF, the energies of the Canadian Trotskyists were expended on never-ending debates as to how much to water down their program so as not to offend the right-wing social democrats.

91. The 1953 split in the Fourth International had taken place at a time of gathering crisis in world Stalinism, to which the Pabloites responded by

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promoting claims that the bureaucracy could be pressured into "self-reform." This betrayal—which included claiming that the Soviet regime and its satraps in East Berlin would be compelled to grant "more ample and genuine concessions" even as they were bloodily suppressing the June 1953 East German workers' uprising—was a central issue raised by Cannon in the 1953 Open Letter. Citing their documents, Cannon exposed how the Pabloites filled "the orthodox Trotskyist program of political revolution against the Kremlin bureaucracy with a new content; namely, the revisionist position that the 'ideas' and 'programme' of Trotskyism will filter into and permeate the bureaucracy, or a decisive section of it, thus 'overthrowing' Stalinism in an unforeseen way."[77]

92. At the 20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev delivered his "secret speech" in which he admitted some of the worst crimes of the Stalin regime. Later that year when the Hungarian working class rose up against the Stalinist regime and formed workers' councils, Khrushchev deployed Soviet tanks to brutally crush the worker uprising. These events rocked the Canadian Stalinist party (still formally known as the Labour-Progressive Party), providing an opportunity for the Trotskyist movement to take the political offensive and clarify the fundamental political and historical questions relating to the program and strategy of world socialist revolution over which the Trotskyist movement had fought since its founding in 1923. The British Trotskyists, under Gerry Healy's leadership, mounted such an offensive in the CPGB. This entailed an intensification of the struggle against the Pabloites, who invariably painted every Stalinist maneuver in the hues of bureaucratic "self-reform" and incipient "political revolution."

93. The Dowson group, which now called itself the Socialist Education League, had a fundamentally opposed response. One that was in line with their increasingly opportunist adaptation to social democracy and that in its essentials mirrored the Pabloite line on the crisis of Stalinism. In a late 1957 article for *International Socialist Review*, the SWP's theoretical journal, "Canadian Stalinism in Shambles," Dowson had not a word to say about his organization's efforts to clarify the great political issues underlying Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism. Instead, he speculated in objectivist fashion about whether an opposition faction within the LPP led by J.B. Salsberg that subscribed to "peaceful co-existence ," Canadian nationalism, and the reformist "parliamentary road" would play a "catalyzing role" in "revolutionary-socialist regroupment" or whether it would be necessary to "await a turn in the class struggle to bring forward a new, more dynamic leadership."[78]

94. The SEL's response to the crisis of the Stalinist LPP was in line with the "regroupment" policy that the SWP adopted in December 1956. In the name of intervening in the Stalinist milieu, the SWP now advocated the building of an all-inclusive "socialist party," deliberately downplaying its Trotskyist identity and retreating from the conception that the SWP was ***the*** revolutionary vanguard of the working class and the only genuine representative of its historic interests. This perspective expressed a shift away from its traditional "proletarian orientation," and a turn to the radical petty bourgeoisie in North America and, on an international scale, to the Pabloite opportunists. In early 1957, Cannon, who had so powerfully articulated the need for irreconcilable opposition to Pabloite opportunism in 1953-54, initiated with the support of the SWP leadership steps toward an unprincipled reunification based on the false claim that the differences between the ICFI and the Pabloites had diminished. This was opposed by the British Trotskyists. At the June 1958 Leeds conference of the ICFI, they secured support for a resolution that declared any "regroupment of forces which are moving in a revolutionary direction [must be] coupled with an ideological offensive against Stalinism, social democracy, centrism, trade union bureaucracy and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships of national movements in colonial and semi-colonial countries."[79]

95. A key turning point in this process was the SWP's response to the coming to power of Fidel Castro and his July 26th movement in January 1959. Initially, the SWP defined the Cuban regime as "bourgeois nationalist." But after it expropriated the holdings of US corporations in response to pressure from Washington, the SWP, under the political leadership of Joseph Hansen, proclaimed that Cuba was undergoing a socialist revolution and that the Castro regime had created a "workers' state"—despite the absence of any identifiable organs of working-class power. The then Canadian section of the ICFI joined the SWP in its adulation of Cuba's bourgeois nationalist regime, which declared itself "Communist" after receiving support from the Soviet bureaucracy. They declared Castro to be an "unconscious Marxist" who had been transformed by the sheer force of objective events into a revolutionary socialist leader, and claimed that the Cuban events demonstrated that a socialist revolution could be accomplished by a "blunted instrument." In embracing Castro and his claims to be building "socialism," the SWP and its Canadian allies adopted the same position as the Pabloites, who were simultaneously promoting a long list of similar bourgeois nationalist leaders and movements throughout Africa and the Middle East, including Algeria's Ben Bela, Ghana's Nkrumah, and Egypt's Nasser. The SWP began to speak of the "convergence" between the positions of the SWP and the Pabloite International Secretariat, making clear that it was renouncing the struggle it had launched against revisionism in 1953.

The SLL's Fight Against Reunification

96. The British Trotskyists organized in the Socialist Labour League (SLL) took a principled stand against the headlong rush of the SWP and its Canadian co-thinkers to unite with the Pabloites. In a January 2, 1961 letter from its National Committee to the SWP's Political Committee, the SLL explained that the period since 1953 had witnessed a further shift to the right by the Pabloite revisionists: "The greatest danger confronting the revolutionary movement is liquidationism, flowing from a capitulation either to the strength of imperialism or of the bureaucratic apparatuses in the Labour movement, or both. Pabloism represents, even more clearly now than in 1953, this liquidationist tendency in the international Marxist movement. In Pabloism the advanced working class is no longer the vanguard of history, the centre of all Marxist theory and strategy in the epoch of imperialism, but the plaything of 'world-historical factors', surveyed and assessed in abstract fashion."[80]

The letter proceeded to stress, "Any retreat from the strategy of political independence of the working class and the construction of revolutionary parties will take on the significance of a world-historical blunder on the part of the Trotskyist movement. …

"It is because of the magnitude of the opportunities opening up before Trotskyism, and therefore the necessity for political and theoretical clarity, that we urgently require a drawing of the lines against revisionism in all its forms. *It is time to draw to a close the period in which Pabloite revisionism was regarded as a trend within Trotskyism*. Unless this is done we cannot prepare for the revolutionary struggles now beginning."[81]

97. In another document written in May 1961, the SLL refuted the common position of the SWP and the Pabloites on Cuba, which it correctly characterized as a repudiation of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution: "An essential of revolutionary Marxism in this epoch is the theory that the national bourgeoisie in under-developed countries is incapable of defeating imperialism and establishing an independent national state. This class has ties with imperialism and it is of course incapable of an independent capitalist development, for it is part of the capitalist world market and cannot compete with the products of the

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advanced countries...

"While it is true that the stage of 'independence' reached by countries like Ghana, and the national independence movements led by men like Mboya of Kenya, acts as a stimulant to national liberation movements in other countries, the fact remains that Nkrumah, Mboya, Nasser, Kassem, Nehru, Sukarno, and their like, represent the national bourgeoisie of their own countries. The dominant imperialist policy-makers both in the USA and Britain recognize full well that only by handing over political 'independence' to leaders of this kind, or accepting their victory over feudal elements like Farouk and Nuri al-Said, can the stakes of international capital and the strategic alliances be preserved in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

"… It is not the job of Trotskyists to boost the role of such nationalist leaders. They can command the support of the masses *only* because of the betrayal of leadership by Social Democracy and particularly Stalinism, and in this way they become buffers between imperialism and the mass of workers and peasants. The possibility of economic aid from the Soviet Union often enables them to strike a harder bargain with the imperialists, even enables more radical elements among the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaders to attack imperialist holdings and gain further support from the masses. But, for us, in every case the vital question is one of the working class in these countries gaining political independence through a Marxist party, leading the poor peasantry to the building of Soviets, and recognizing the necessary connections with the international socialist revolution. In no case, in our opinion, should Trotskyists substitute for that the hope that the nationalist leadership should become socialists. The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves."[82]

Turning to Cuba, the SLL declared, "Much of the current discussion on Cuba, it seems, proceeds in this way: The Cuban masses support Castro; Castro began as a petty-bourgeois but has become a socialist; the public pressure of imperialist attack and of popular struggle may turn him into a Marxist, and already the tasks confronting him in defending the gains of the revolution have brought him 'naturally' to positions indistinguishable from Trotskyism. In this approach, the fundamentals of Marxism are trampled upon."[83]

98. Far from heeding these prescient warnings from the SLL, the SWP and their Canadian allies intensified their efforts to reunify with the Pabloites. In a 1962 resolution, the SWP, with the Dowson group's support, praised Cuba as a model for revolutionary struggles around the world: "In addition to mobilizing support for the Cuban cause, as they are doing, the Trotskyists throughout Latin America should try to bring together all those forces, regardless of their specific origins, which are ready to take the Cuban experience as the point of departure for the revolutionary struggles in their own countries. …

"The future of Latin American Trotskyism depends on its ability to absorb the lessons of the Cuban revolution and to apply them in regrouping the authentic revolutionary forces. On this question the Latin American Trotskyists have made a good accounting. Through their own independent analyses, they came to conclusions about the Cuban revolution identical in all major respects to those of the SWP and our Canadian co-thinkers."[84]

99. The reference to "our Canadian co-thinkers" was in recognition of the foul role played by the Canadian group and Ross Dowson in particular in facilitating the unprincipled reunification of the SWP with the Pabloites. Dowson spent much of 1962 in Europe, where he effectively functioned as a spy for the SWP and a provocateur against the SLL. Dowson sought to whip up opposition to the SLL by distorting its positions, including with the slanderous claim that the SLL was not fighting to mobilize the working class to defend Cuba against imperialist intrigues and attacks.

The Founding of the LSA and the Pabloite liquidation of the first Canadian section of the ICFI

100. As they were maneuvering for reunification with the Pabloites, the SWP's Canadian supporters launched a new organization, the League for Socialist Action/Ligue socialiste ouvrière, in July 1961 on an expressly opportunist basis. The political conceptions that animated the LSA's founding were exemplified in the Dowson group's decision to organize its founding congress to coincide with that of the New Democratic Party, which they hailed as the greatest advance in the history of the Canadian working class. In a statement entitled "Join and build the New Party Now" published in the lead-up to both its own and the NDP's founding congress, the LSA declared, "The founding of the new labour party in Ottawa at the end of this month is the most important event in the history of the tumultuous struggle of the Canadian people for political and social justice. We say this with the full consciousness of the profound revolutionary character of this history … highlighted by the 1837 insurrections … the Winnipeg General strike, the rise of the CIO, and the Windsor auto barricade of 1946."[85]

101. The LSA's assessment willfully ignored the character of the New Party movement and the right-wing social-democratic NDP to which it gave birth. The New Party movement was a maneuver of the trade union bureaucracy, recently unified with the blessing of the AFL-CIO in the Canadian Labour Congress, and the no less virulently anti-communist CCF. It was launched with the express aim of enhancing the political influence of the labour bureaucracy by wooing "progressives" of all parties. Among those targeted for recruitment into the leadership of the new party on this basis was the future Liberal Prime Minister Pierre-Elliott Trudeau. Eager to shed any association with socialism, the CLC had called at its 1958 convention for a "broadly based people's movement, embracing the CCF, the labour movement, farm organizations, professional people and other liberally minded persons interested in basic social reform through our parliamentary system."[86] Welcoming the CLC's declaration, the CCF called for a movement uniting all those wanting to build a "society on moral foundations of social justice and human dignity."[87]

102. The LSA conceded, albeit in a mealy-mouthed manner, that the CLC and CCF "new party movement" was aimed at promoting a "liberal-labor coalition." However, it proceeded to claim that the force of objective events rendered the political program on which the NDP was founded and the counter-revolutionary character of its leadership irrelevant and that, irrespective of them, the NDP was the incarnation of working-class political independence. "The attempts of the CCF-CLC leadership, expressed in the loose formulations adopted at the Winnipeg CLC convention, to launch some kind of liberal-labor coalition, were dashed to pieces by the onrush of events, by the developing economic crises and the Tory-Liberal-S.C. (Social Credit) anti-labor drives. Regardless of any desires to the contrary the NDP enters the arena as a class party, a labor party."[88]

103. The perspective on which the LSA was founded bore all the hallmarks of Pabloite opportunism, beginning with a contemptuous attitude to political program, the lessons of history, and the traditions of the Marxist movement. None of their documents so much as made a reference to the counter-revolutionary role social-democracy had played on a world scale for half a century. Like Pablo, they insisted that the Trotskyist movement must fully and unreservedly integrate its forces into the "mass movement." In its founding document, the LSA repeatedly stressed that it gave the NDP "unconditional support." Even assuming that Trotskyists should have conducted systematic entry work in the newly established party owing to its support among a section of the more politically advanced workers, as the British Trotskyists did in the Labour

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Party throughout the 1950s, such work could only be based on irreconcilable hostility to social-democracy and the labour bureaucracy. Any tactical adaptation would be aimed at exposing the contradiction between the objective class interests and socialist strivings of the working class and the right-wing, pro-capitalist character of the NDP leadership and their partners in the trade union bureaucracy. As Lenin had explained, the only "support" revolutionaries should give to a bourgeois workers party, which the British Labour Party or Canada's NDP were at the time, is the type of support that a rope provides to a hanged man.

104. In tandem with the SWP, the LSA severed relations with the International Committee of the Fourth International and in June 1963 participated in a "reunification" congress with the Pabloite organization, now renamed the United Secretariat. Underpinning reunification was an agreement that there should be no discussion of the political differences that had led to the 1953 split. The following month, at its July 1963 convention, the LSA explicitly repudiated the theory and strategy of permanent revolution. It adopted a resolution that hailed the Cuban revolution as "the opening stage of the socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere," and claimed the "splendid example" of revolutionary struggle given by Castro and Guevara had "assisted substantially in the emergence of new revolutionary forces moving in the direction of Trotskyism, as well as the actual growth of Trotskyist parties on [the South American] continent." "What the Cuban revolution has established, in our opinion," continued the resolution, "is that the seizure of power from imperialism in a colonial nation is possible without the existence of a Marxist vanguard party at that stage, that the leadership of such a revolution can originate outside the working class, and that the peasantry and agricultural proletariat can provide the initial forces."[89]

105. The LSA's repudiation of the ICFI and entry into the Pabloite International marked its definitive break with Trotskyism and the liquidation of the socialist-internationalist tendency in the Canadian working class that had been founded in 1928 as a result of the joint decision of Spector and Cannon to fight for the program of the Left Opposition against the national-opportunist politics of the Stalinized Comintern. During the course of more than three decades, the Trotskyist movement in Canada had been politically persecuted by the Stalinists, social democrats and union bureaucrats and repeatedly the target of state attack. Yet ultimately it was destroyed not by these blows, but by Pabloite opportunism.

The significance of the IC's struggle against reunification with the Pabloites

106. The life and death issues at stake in the IC's stand against reunification were demonstrated one year later when the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), the Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) section of the Pabloites' phoney international, entered into a coalition government with the country's leading capitalist party, the SLFP of Mde. Bandaranaike. This historic betrayal—the first time a party claiming to be Trotskyist had joined a capitalist government—had been prepared by many years of political backsliding, during which the LSSP engaged in popular front-type maneuvers and conciliated with anti-Tamil Sinhala populism, with the support of the Paris-based Pabloite International. In breaking with the "sectarian" IC, the SWP and LSA had specifically pointed to the LSSP as exemplary of the type of "mass Trotskyist party" they wanted to build.

107. The ICFI's fight to preserve the historical continuity of the Fourth International and develop orthodox Trotskyism against Pabloite revisionism laid the theoretical and political foundations for the creation of new sections in the US and Sri Lanka and subsequently Germany and Australia. Healy and the SLL worked patiently with a minority within the SWP, led by Tim Wohlforth, that declared in 1961 its support for the ICFI's struggle against the SWP's opportunist orientation. As the US SEP has explained, "The greatest strength of this tendency was its recognition that the political crisis of the SWP had to be approached as an international problem."[90] At the urging of the SLL, the pro-ICFI minority avoided factional conflicts over secondary political and organizational issues and focused on the fight for the political clarification of the SWP cadre. To do so, it remained inside the SWP after the 1963 "reunification congress." But events in Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) brought matters to a head. When the minority insisted on the need for a discussion of the roots and significance of the Pabloite betrayal, its members were summarily expelled from the SWP. In 1966, after two years organized as the American Committee for the Fourth International, the American supporters of the ICFI founded the Workers League based on the lessons of the struggle against Pabloite opportunism. Only through an unrelenting struggle against petty bourgeois radicalism could the political independence of the working class be forged. In his greetings to the Workers League's founding congress, Healy emphasized this point:

"The working class in the United States is the most powerful in the world, and it is within this class that you must build your party. This is a basic principle of Marxism and one which applies with particular urgency to the conditions existing inside the United States. It is not Black Power or the dozens of peace and civil rights movements which extend throughout the country which will resolve the basic questions of our time, but the working class led by a revolutionary party. It is at this point that we separate ourselves completely from the revisionists. We emphatically reject their idea that the Negroes by themselves as well as middle-class movements can settle accounts with American imperialism. Whatever critical support we are called upon from time to time to extend to such movements, the essence of our support must be based on making clear our criticisms of their shortcomings."[91])

The subsequent evolution of the Pabloite United Secretariat and the LSA

108. The betrayal of the SWP-LSA strengthened the Pabloites' efforts to wall off revolutionary-minded workers and youth from genuine Trotskyism as the post-war boom began to break up and the working class came forward between 1968 and 1975 in a powerful global offensive that in much of the world took on revolutionary dimensions. Literally on the eve of the biggest upsurge of the international working class since the years immediately following the October Revolution, the Pabloites declared that the "epicenter of revolution" had been transferred for a prolonged period to the backward countries. This was in keeping with their claim that the epoch of imperialism has been superseded by "neo" or "late capitalism." The Pabloites then hailed the student youth as the new vanguard, while working systematically to prevent any challenge to the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies which were desperately straining to keep the working class in check.

109. Through their boosting of Castroite/Guevara-ist guerrilla-ism, the United Secretariat and the Canadian Pabloites made a criminal contribution to the disorientation of a generation of Latin American workers and youth. The diversion of radicalized youth and young workers away from the working class and the struggle for its political independence into suicidal guerrilla struggles claimed thousands of lives, reinforced the paralyzing grip of the union bureaucracy and Stalinists over the workers' movement, and paved the way to fascist-military dictatorships.

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110. The promotion of guerillaism in Latin America was one example of how the Pabloites transformed into pseudo-Trotskyism all manner of anti-Marxist, petty bourgeois theories advanced by the "New Left" and related intellectual tendencies. The Frankfurt School and intellectuals like Herbert Marcuse advanced various alternative social forces as the real source of revolution in replace of the working class, from the peasantry to middle-class students, and prisoners. Marcuse went so far as to identify the working class as a "proto-fascist" element that had been integrated into capitalist consumerism. Others denied the very existence of the working class in modern society, which they proclaimed had changed in fundamental ways not anticipated by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. All of these tendencies denounced with particular vehemence the need for a revolutionary vanguard party to lead the struggles of the working class in the capture of political power, providing thereby the most telling proof of their hostility to the revolutionary struggle against capitalism based on a socialist program.

111. The social roots of the anti-Trotskyist positions embraced by the Pabloites and "New Left" lay in the post-war boom, which opened up possibilities for social advancement for broad sections of the middle class that would have been previously unthinkable. As the SLL's 1961 conference resolution "The World Prospect for Socialism," explained: "The opportunists of all varieties now rest not only upon the labour aristocracy of a few advanced countries but upon new layers of the world's population under modern state monopoly capitalism with its particular relation to the non-capitalist world. The advanced countries have gone through a gigantic concentration of industrial and finance capital, militarization and bureaucratisation of the economy and the state, growing reliance on state intervention in the economy, and the consequent creation of a new middle caste of executives, administrators, and bureaucrats of the big banks and the monopolies, the state, the military and security apparatus, 'social services' and the means of manipulation of 'public opinion.' The international needs of capital are faithfully administered by the middle caste. In the backward countries they find their counterpart in the nationalist petty bourgeois governing classes to which imperialism has handed office … There are thus objective reasons for the persistence of opportunism in the present critical stage of imperialism's development."[92]

112. Freed from the political and organizational constraints of adherence to the program of Trotskyism and the ICFI, the Canadian Pabloites moved sharply further right. Just 5 years after breaking with the IC and as massive social struggles were beginning to erupt across North America as part of the worldwide revolutionary working-class offensive, the LSA was touting both Quebec and Canadian nationalism as incipient "anti-imperialism." The Pabloites thus helped legitimize and promote political conceptions that over the next six decades would prove pivotal to maintaining the bourgeoisie's political-ideological hold over the working class and continue to dominate official left politics to this day.

113. Traditionally, the dominant strands of Canadian and French-Canadian/Québécois nationalism had been explicitly right-wing, decrying the United States as too democratic and egalitarian and venerating, respectively, the British Empire and Roman Catholic Church. But in the 1960s both were reformulated and given left, quasi social-democratic colouring, drawing on indigenous "progressive" nationalist traditions promoted by the Stalinists and social-democrats, Third Worldism, underdevelopment theory, and other forms of New Left politics. Multiple social-economic and geopolitical factors underlay this reformulation, including: the global ascent of US imperialism and the parallel decline in Britain's world position; increased US investment in Quebec as across Canada to the detriment of indigenous capital; the rise of the "welfare state" and the expansion of the middle class. But a key motivating factor was the need to maintain the ideological grip of the ruling class over an increasingly combative working class.

114. At its 1968 convention the LSA claimed the use of the term "nationalism" to characterize the growth of anti-American sentiment was a "misnomer" for what was "elemental anti-imperialist sentiment—developing towards an anti-capitalist consciousness." This sentiment, the LSA resolution continued, did not and could not enjoy support within any section of the bourgeoisie, because the Canadian and American bourgeoisies had reached a "mutually agreeable" relationship that neither the growing crisis of world capitalism nor the development of class struggle would disrupt. The resolution went on to embrace the long-time Stalinist demand for Ottawa to adopt an "independent"—as opposed to a socialist—"foreign policy."[93] Four years later, the LSA Political Committee declared that as the term "Canadian nationalism" had been accepted by the left and "various radicalizing sectors," the LSA should unabashedly and unreservedly embrace it: "We identify with this developing consciousness because of its profound anti-imperialist and anticapitalist thrust and our use of the term Canadian nationalism is designed to clear the way for the intervention of our movement in this element of the radicalization."[94]

115. The Pabloites joint embrace of Canadian and Quebec nationalism was by no means unique. While the Quebec nationalist-*indépendantiste* (pro-independence) mainstream led by the former Quebec Liberal Party cabinet minister René Lévesque courted Washington's support, the more radical elements of the petty bourgeoisie attracted by Third Worldism held that Canada, like Quebec, was "oppressed" by US imperialism. Having become an unrepentant Canadian nationalist, Dowson ultimately left the LSA to found a Canadian nationalist group embedded in the NDP and now long defunct. The "mainstream" Pabloites, meanwhile, retreated from their overt embrace of Canadian nationalism, but only to more fervently promote Quebec nationalism and myriad forms of gender and race-based identity politics. In justifying their support for Quebec nationalism, the Pabloites rightly pointed to the SWP's parallel embrace of petty-bourgeois Black (African-American) nationalism, including the call for Black "self-determination" and a separate Black political party.

116. The Pabloites insisted on the "progressive" role of Quebec indépendantiste nationalism, claiming it was intensifying class struggle. In fact, Quebec indépendantiste nationalism was a central mechanism to deflect and derail the movement of the working class and harness it to the bourgeoisie ideologically and politically. It served to isolate the militant struggles of Quebec workers in the 1960s and 1970s from workers in English Canada, the US and internationally and politically subordinate them to the capitalist Parti Québécois. It subsequently provided the ideological-political foundation for the Quebec trade unions' corporatist integration with management and the state.

Staunch Canadian nationalists, the union bureaucrats outside Quebec and the NDP social democrats opposed the rise of Quebec indépendantiste nationalism not from the standpoint of the struggle to unite the working class against Canadian imperialism, but the unity of the Canadian capitalist state. At the same time, frightened that the militant mood of the Quebec workers would stimulate class struggle in English Canada, they colluded in the quarantining of its struggles.

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