

FOCUS

Published by Canadians for Peace and Socialism

Vol. 25, No 1

January 2006

by donation

Federal Election Notes: *From Don Currie, Chair, Canadians for Peace and Socialism*

WE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD ?

From the centre-right, Prime Minister Paul Martin's pitch for votes rests on the slogan; "we" never had it so good. For corporate executives and investor insiders, all respectable Conservatives and Liberals, feeding heavily off bloated defense spending (1) and rising energy prices (2), it is true; "they" never had it so good. For working Canadians relying on wages and farm income, facing job loss, falling purchasing power and living standards it's quite another story.

From the extreme right, Stephen Harper, arch conservative, whose hero is the Austrian anti-communist ideologue Friedrich Hayek (3), an ideological architect of the downfall of socialism, dropped his faith-based neo-con image and rushed to the political centre to engage Paul Martin in sham battles over who is now more able to defend Canadian sovereignty and the needs of "ordinary Canadians." The conversion is nothing short of a miracle and illustrates the capacity of the right-wing for treachery.

Stephen Harper and Paul Martin realize they cannot appear to move right as the public gravitates left. Their Liberal and Conservative rhetoric will even concede that Canadian workers and farmers can aspire to peace, economic justice and



"All they think about is money..."

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SOCIALISM

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Focus on Socialism is the organ of Canadians for Peace and Socialism. In it we address current national and international issues. We strive to bring a Marxist-Leninist viewpoint to the struggle of Canadians for peace, progress and socialism. **Focus on Socialism** is published four, sometimes five, times a year. Its publication is made possible through volunteer labour and the generosity of our readers and members through their donations. We appeal to you to help us continue to publish this newsletter in these turbulent times of rapid change throughout the world. The analysis it gives is needed now more than ever.

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national dignity but only if they continue to accept and support corporate dominance over the economy, Parliament and the state.

"I sit on a man's back, choking him and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all possible means – except by getting off his back" – Leo Tolstoy

In her latest book, *Too Close For Comfort* (4), Maude Barlow, leader of The Council of Canadians details the economic reality faced by Canadian workers and farmers. Here is a partial list from her team's well documented research;

1. 37% of all jobs in Canada are part-time, seasonal or contract
2. one in three workers lack basic benefits from their jobs
3. incomes in 2004-05 rose 1.9% while cost of living rose 2.3%
4. 38% of Canadians today qualify for unemployment insurance compared to 80% in 1985
5. the average Canadian household holds consumer and mortgage debt equal to 98% of their after-tax income
6. Canada is now spending just 18.9 per cent of GDP on social programs, 15% less than a decade ago
7. 15.6% of all Canadian children live in poverty
8. Canada ranks nineteenth on the world's child poverty list
9. the wealthiest 10% of family units hold 53% of the wealth
10. the wealthiest 50% of family units control 94.4% of the wealth
11. 5.6% of the wealth is shared by the bottom 50%
12. since FTA in 1989 net income for family farms has dropped by 24%
13. 16% of Canadian farmers have been forced off the land since 1989
14. corporate profits in 2005 were 8% higher than in 2004
15. the top 50 corporate executives took home \$700 million in 2004
16. Canada's corporate tax levels now match US corporate tax levels

REAL LIFE IN THE WORKPLACE

It is facts like these that are the root cause of class and social conflict. Workers and farmers are compelled to fight for economic, social and political justice in the workplace and in their communities to survive. It is not a matter of choice. It is a matter of necessity for their families.

Meat Packing: A bitter strike was forced on Brooks, Alberta meat packing workers who were denied union recognition and a living wage by anti-union US-owned Lakeside Packers, resulting in a partial victory for the union.

Public Sector: Public sector unions in BC, Quebec and Newfoundland -Labrador organized strikes and mass demonstrations against job cuts, wage roll backs and under-funding of health and education services by Charest's, Campbell's and William's neo-liberal governments. The

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struggles continue. CBC employees were locked out by right-wing management for refusing to accept contracting-out and a salary freeze resulting from Liberal government under-funding of the public broad-caster. Nothing fundamental has been resolved.

Auto Assembly and Parts: Auto sector workers led by CAW bargaining committees conducted intense, complex and tough bargaining sessions to prevent wage, health, pension and severance package roll backs by Ford and GM, who were trying to dump their profit losses on the backs of their workers. A new threat has arisen as Canadian auto-parts manufacturer metal-stamper AGS Automotive Inc., Swedish airbag manufacturer Autoliv, and Toronto-based Martinera International Inc. demand \$11/hour wage roll backs, and as Martinera closes plants or relocates operations to low-wage Mexico.

Basic Steel: Stelco workers in Hamilton have been locked in a difficult and complex political struggle for over a year to prevent a foreign takeover, abetted by the McGuinty Liberals, and the gutting of hard won union wage and pension benefits. There are media reports that Dofasco may be headed in the same direction.

Mining and Smelting: Smelter workers at Trail, BC struck Teck Cominco all summer after the company reneged on a promised wage increase while boasting of record high profits. A modest wage increase was won.

Manufacturing: In the last year another 150,000 manufacturing jobs disappeared due to the rising Canadian dollar.

Rail and Transportation: Via Rail workers, without a contract for five years, had to threaten a Christmas strike to restart contract negotiations. The Via Rail pension issue is still unresolved. The CN takeover of BC Rail has resulted in a series of rail derailments and the deaths of rail workers, destruction of private property and massive environmental damage to rivers and lakes.

Owner-operator truckers in BC and Ontario, hit hard by rising energy prices parked their trucks, blocked highways and refused to move containers until brokers coughed up some fuel subsidies to prevent rising debt from throwing the truckers out of business and into bankruptcy. High fuel costs remain.

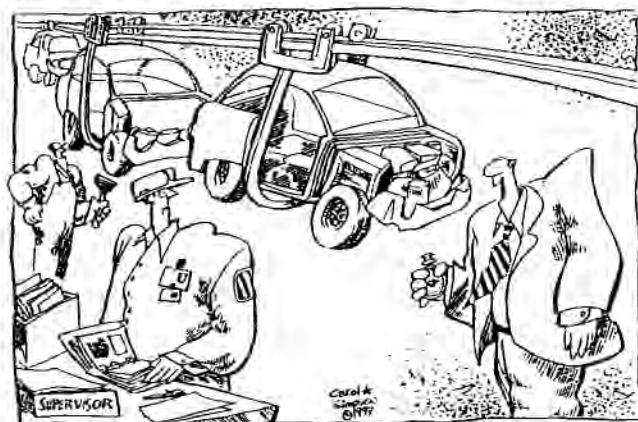
Pulp and Paper: Workers in the pulp and paper industry are losing thousands of union jobs as Domtar Inc., Abitibi-Consolidated Inc., US owned Weyerhaeuser Co. and Tembec Inc. shut down paper making machines and plants in Saskatchewan, Thunder Bay, Dryden, and Newfoundland. The cutbacks are taking place in spite of billions in sales, a

\$1.6 billion Liberal Federal government subsidy and rising newsprint prices. (6)

Soft Wood Lumber: The 27% soft wood lumber duty, undoubtedly the most high profile issue in a rash of US-Canadian trade disputes, compelled the Canadian Government to challenge the Bush administration's defiance of NAFTA rules. What is not reflected in the headlines is the rationalization underway in the industry that has reduced the overall workforce, and has resulted in speed up, and a high accident rate among mill workers, fallers and truckers.

Textiles: Hundreds of textile workers in Quebec are seeing their jobs vanish, as Canadian textiles are frozen out of the marketplace by WTO trade rules. Government subsidies have been promised but workers are still unemployed.

Construction: The major job growth for the combined construction trades is in the Alberta oil sands. The skilled labour shortage attracts workers from all over Canada who live in deplorable camp conditions in Fort McMurray. Cost of living is high and hours of work long. Non-union construction companies employ poorly trained workers to compete with the Unionized Trades to suppress wages. Accident rates are high. The major employers are on a collision course with organized labour in the oil patch.



You haven't had a serious accident in 8 months, so I know the employees could be working faster!

The accompanying housing boom in Edmonton and Calgary has spawned an anarchic workplace where unionized construction trades workers compete with non-union sub-trades, resulting in everyone in the industry working long hours to make up for low wages. This is defined by Conservative Premium Ralph Klein as the 'Alberta Advantage.'

Retail, Hotel and Restaurant Workers: WalMart, in defiance of Quebec labour laws shut down its operation to stop a union drive in the province. WalMart is allowed by

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the Charest Liberal Government to continue to defy Canadian labour laws. Service workers at Mont Tremblant, Quebec shut down ski hill operations for decent wages.

Youth : There is a large reserve army of under-educated youth desperately seeking jobs. For hundreds of thousands, their only option is low paid unskilled labour. Working long hours at several jobs to make a living is common. Poverty among youth is rampant. A *Globe and Mail* poll in December reported that Canadian youth considered the three main issues confronting the country to be education, jobs and peace.

WHO SPEAKS FOR LABOUR?

The reality of workers' lives is remote from Paul Martin, millionaire and Stephen Harper, neo-con ideologue. They are in the business of enticing the electorate with carefully crafted versions of what corporate 'think tanks' assert working people should think and really deserve. On December 9, (s) Stephen Harper called for the defeat of the Liberals because that was the way "the priority issues for ordinary working Canadians, accountability, cleaning up crime and the G.S.T." could be redressed. (our italics)

Who advised Harper what are the priority issues 'for ordinary working-Canadians'? He certainly wouldn't know from his own experience. Was it the Canadian Labour Congress, the Quebec Federation of Labour, the National Farmers Union or the Council of Canadians?

Canadian workers and farmers have not authorized the Fraser Institute and the National Citizens Coalition where Stephen Harper gets much of his advice, to speak on their behalf. Canadian working people long ago established their own organizations where they formulate their own policies and proposals.

Why then doesn't Parliament and this election campaign resound with discussions about what worker and farm organizations say their members want and need? Is there a contradiction between what working people advocate for themselves and the good of the country? Labour and farm lobbyists are routinely rebuffed and cold shoudered by Liberal and Conservative caucuses and dubbed 'special interest groups,' while corporate lobbyists, many of them former cabinet ministers, are 'good old boys' with ready access to the corridors of power.

THE MEDIA EXCLUDES THE MAJORITY - DEMOCRACY IS DIMINISHED

The mass media is programmed to underreport and trivialize labour's vision for Canada. Dailies no longer employ labour reporters. Not a single question concerning the standpoint of organized labour and farmers was put by media moderators in the recent leaders' TV debates. Not a single media inter-viewer on the hustings asks Paul Martin, Stephen Harper, Gilles Duceppe or Jack Layton to comment on the Parliamentary demands of organized labour and farmers.

Democracy is diminished when it is stage-managed by media spin. Organizations of working people, the peace movement and patriotic groups, representing the largest combined memberships of citizens in the country, are excluded from the mass media. This fact explains the oft heard lament: "*politicians don't tell the truth and they don't keep their promises.*"

THE GREAT DIVIDE

There is a divide in Canadian politics and it's not between the Liberals and Conservatives. The divide is between the people and corporate power. It is between the desire for peace and the profiteering of arms merchants and militarists. It is between the neo-fascist ideology underlying Bill 36 and the support of the people for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is between the greed of Big Oil and the needs of the whole country. It is between the democratic mass organizations of the working people and the corporate lobbyists that corrupt Parliament. It is between the investor classes who would rather see mass unemployment than a decline in stock prices. It is between the growth of agribusiness and survival of small farmers. It is between all Canadians who derive great benefit and peace of mind from public health care and a small clique of Canadian and US investors who seek to privatize the system and profit out of illness. It is between the vast majority of Canadians who have not given up on the dream of an independent and sovereign country and the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and their ilk who would sell out Canada for profit as accomplices in US imperialist expansionism.

WORKERS DEFEND CANADA'S FUTURE

Canadian working people retain a core belief in peace and Canadian sovereignty. They uphold national dignity and reject US imperialist intrusions into the internal affairs of Canada. No capitalist politician in this election dares to openly advocate endorsing the Bush Doctrine of the New American Century. This is something new in Canadian politics. It was not always so.

Lawrence Martin, Canadian journalist and biographer of
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Jean Chretien (6), relates an incident when Doug Roche, Canadian UN Disarmament Ambassador met George Shultz, US Secretary of State. Shultz, reacting angrily to some aspect of the Mulroney Government's policy said, "Look, let's get one thing straight, that land that you people occupy up there, north of the forty-ninth parallel, geographically speaking, is part of the northern United States." (our italics).

Twenty years later the public mood has changed. US Ambassador David Wilkins reacting to Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin's demand that the US adhere to NAFTA rules, said, "It may be smart election-year politics to thump your chest and criticize your friend and your number one trading partner constantly. But it is a slippery slope, and all of us should hope that it doesn't have long-term impact on the relationship." (our italics). The intrusion by David Wilkins into the present election created a public backlash and compelled even Stephen Harper to distance himself from such crude interference in Canada's internal affairs.

Lloyd Axworthy, former Canadian Liberal Foreign Minister, said in the October 2005 issue of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives *CCPA Monitor*, "The reality is that we are dealing with an American political system currently steeped in the ideology of 'empire.' It recognizes few rules, adheres only to those treaties that are expedient to its basic interests, and believes that the only political currency that counts is the exercise of raw power." (our italics).

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE LEFT

The cold war limited the campaign of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) to resist US imperialist pressures and for Canadian independence to a relatively small audience within the working class. Today, that audience has grown immeasurably and made the Communist viewpoint more relevant and deserving of serious study by all of the forces concerned about Canada's future.

Thirty-five years ago Tim Buck wrote the following: (7)
"Public discussion of the issue of independence and of its inseparable relationship to the struggle against the drive of the United States imperialism to war, brought forward the question: 'If Canadian capitalists prefer that Canada be absorbed by the United States via the path of integration of capitals, how can the economy of this country be maintained and developed further without United States capital?' In various forms that question is being asked all over Canada. The Communist Party proposes that the democratic answer is nationalization." (our italics).

In August a public opinion poll found that 49% of Canadian respondents(a whopping 60% in Quebec), favour public ownership of oil and gas resources. Almost as many, 43%, wanted to see the oil corporations nationalized. The realization that the future development of Canada as an independent country now largely depends on regaining public control over all forms of energy development is beginning to dominate all serious public discourse. The left cannot ignore this fact. Its unique contribution, indeed its duty, is to resurrect and elevate the issue of nationalization to a matter of urgent necessity. It is the most powerful counter-punch that can be dealt to neo-liberalism.

Notwithstanding the constitutional barriers (8) to a national energy policy, the outrage of the investors reaping mega profit (9), and the threat of US retaliation including direct intervention, the following reality must be placed squarely to all Canadian workers and farmers and their families.

If the current ruinous exploitation of the Alberta oil sands and natural gas resources continues, with its primary purpose the satisfaction of insatiable US demand for energy at the expense of Canada's long term energy needs (10), the end result can only be the ruin of Canadian industry, manufacturing and agriculture, resulting in permanent job loss and denying Canadian consumers affordable life sustaining energy needs.

On the other hand, if the Canadian people will take up the struggle to regain control of Canada's rich energy resources and compel Government to develop these resources for the benefit of the planned economic up-building of the whole country, Canada will have both energy self-sufficiency and the capital required to replace our current dependency on foreign investment.

The left has an opportunity. There is a convergence of the objective political necessity for, and a growth of understanding of, a national democratic people's alternative to NAFTA that upholds national dignity and provides for a path of planned development of the economy. Our organization, Canadians for Peace and Socialism (CPS), believes the core issues of such an alternative are:

1. Abrogation of FTA-NAFTA
2. Nationalization of energy and water resources
3. Ending Canadian membership in NATO and NORAD and involvement in the BMD, and enacting an independent Canadian foreign policy of peace.

The sub-set of issues flowing from these central demands is already well developed in the programs of the Communists

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ist Party, patriotic groups, the organized labour and farm movements, the peace movement and the many excellent journals, writers and thinkers who work every day to keep us informed and armed with exposures, analysis and information for the struggle. **What is needed is an agreement to unite and fight together for their implementation.**



AN ALLIANCE IS AN AGREEMENT THAT IT CAN'T BE DONE ALONE!

To unite means also to learn, especially from the experience of those who are victorious. In a short passionate speech entitled 'I Believe Only in the Power of the People' (1), Evo Morales the recently elected President of Bolivia has some profound words for fighters for justice. Here are some excerpts: The full speech is available on the website of the World Peace Council.

"This uprising of the Bolivian people has been not only about gas and hydrocarbons, but an intersection of many issues: discrimination, marginalization, and most importantly, the failure of neoliberalism...."

"And I want to tell you, compañeras and compañeros, how we have built the consciousness of the Bolivian people from the bottom up..."

"It has been very important to organize and mobilize ourselves in a way based on transparency, honesty and control over our own organizations. And it has been important not only to organize but also to unite..."

"It must be said, compañeras and compañeros, that we must serve the social and popular movements rather than the transnational corporations..."

"...I realized that politics had once been the science of serving the people, and that getting involved in politics is important if you want to help your people. By getting involved, I mean living for politics, rather than living off of politics..."

"We have coordinated our struggles between the social movements and political parties, with the support of our academic institutions, in a way that has created a greater national consciousness. That is what made it possible for the people to rise up in these recent days." (our italics)

The Bolivian experience cannot be duplicated in Canada. Canada will find its own path to political and economic independence. But the need for unity, coordination and mutual support among all anti-imperialist, pro-peace, and labour forces is universal and undeniable.

On what political and economic reality will unity be built? Both Harper and Martin support NAFTA, arguing that the US is Canada's largest trading partner and without NAFTA Canada's economy will fail. There is another reality about the US economy about which Canadians must become aware in detail because it can drag Canada into a deep economic crisis.

This observer was privileged to represent Canada at the November 11-12, 2005 meeting of the Secretariat of the World Peace Council, and to present credentials for a revived Canadian Peace Congress to rejoin the World Peace Council. In his address to the Secretariat of the WPC, Fernando Fundora Lopez, President of the World Peace Council and MovPaz (11), the Cuban Committee for Peace and Sovereignty, made the following sober observation:

"By the end of 2004, the value of foreign investments in the United States exceeded by \$2.5 billion the value of the investments of the USA in the rest of the world. In addition, US assets abroad secured that year \$30 billion more than what foreign assets in the USA produced for these investors in the United States."

"Thanks to that enormous disparity in the coefficient known as 'margin of exploitation of the country,' i.e. the relation between the investments of the country abroad and those of other countries in the US, the enormous deficit of current account of the United States was comfortably financed year after year."

"This year (2005) the situation has changed. This year everything seems to indicate that the 'margin of exploitation' of the USA will be negative. And this deterioration will determine that the US government will have to pay each time [year - DC] a higher amount to foreign governments, which could bring about serious consequences for the US because it will increase the deficit of its current account."

"For the first time since World War 2 the United States will have a negative margin of exploitation of its net assets"

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and this would also make profitability negative. It will represent a significant blow to the credit of the dollar according to many outstanding economists and scholars from that country.

"...the Iraq war is the most expensive war that humanity has ever known during the last 60 years. Its average monthly cost is greater than for the Viet Nam War, even if the value of the US dollar is put on the same level in both periods of time. It is estimated that the war in Iraq costs the US \$5.6 billion a month, while the average monthly cost of US operations in Viet Nam was \$5.1 billion."

President Fundora went on to argue that even if the profits made out of the war by the likes of Kellogg Brown and Root and the military industrial complex are taken into account, the fact that taxes on these firms are being simultaneously reduced, the crisis of budgetary deficits will increase.

"In August 2005, the Budgetary Office of the Congress estimated that if the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan keep going at current levels, the cost would double the deficit of the federal budget foreseen for the next ten years." (our italics)

The Bush Government is attempting to manage rapidly growing debt by promoting a low wage policy, slashing expenditures on environmental programs, privatizing social security, cutting back on public education, cutting programs for alternative energy production, low-cost housing, and veterans, and such notorious cut backs as the budget allotment for strengthening the levees protecting New Orleans. Falling purchasing power among US consumers was accompanied by a rise in consumer debt which reached \$2.16 trillion at September 2005. (12)

The above facts explain why Venezuela, led by President Hugo Chavez has decided to pull its assets from the US and invest them in Euro dollars, why President Putin of Russia is doing likewise. This is why even some Canadian investment advisors are reducing holdings in US assets. If the US dollar continues to fall, and the US current account deficit continues to grow, such heavy investors in the US as China, India and Japan will be forced to consider their options, **and so should Canada**. Thoughtful Canadians are beginning to seek an alternative to having all of our trade eggs in the US basket.

The above reality also explains some of the inter-capitalist struggles that have split the Liberal Party, led to the demise of the Reform-Alliance Party and the re-emergence of the Conservatives under the leadership of Harper. Exposure of Paul Martin's sinister corporate history is necessary. So are exposure of Harper's neo-fascist inclinations,

and also the reformist illusions of Jack Layton. However if we call ourselves Marxists we have to go beyond exposure and answer the question as to what underlies the divisions among capitalist parties in order to convince workers and farmers of what they must do to take advantage of them to advance their cause. That is why we have been reluctant to jump on the anti-Hargrove band-wagon. We will explain our thinking later on.

BREAK THE CORPORATE STRANGLEHOLD OF PARLIAMENT

We are also cautious about any tendency to minimize the importance of Parliamentary politics. Elsewhere in this issue we print a large extract from Lenin's work *Political Parties in Russia* (13), as a contribution to the discussion and to keep our collective feet planted firmly on the side of defending with all of our energy electoral and parliamentary democracy.

That concern is reflected in the current federal election campaign. There is an appetite in the land, especially among the youth for a new progressive, truly democratic and people's governance. Beneath the surface there is a realization that the corporate stranglehold over Parliamentary politics must be broken and a working people's program enacted into law.

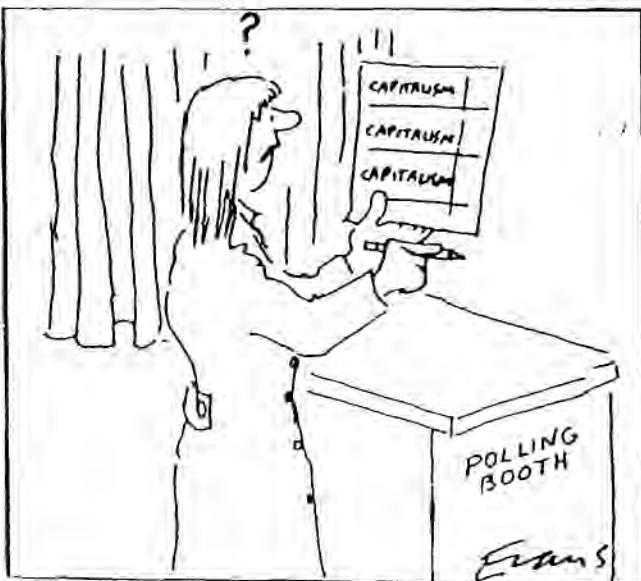
To state this task is not to diminish the complexity of achieving it. It is complicated by the fact that all major parties conceal their vital class interests by advancing a version of what working people deeply desire, and campaign vociferously to convince them to accept **their** particular corporate version as the best that can be hoped for.

CUTTING THROUGH THE CONFUSION OF WHAT'S 'LEFT'

Capitalist parties don't require *capitalist* votes to get elected; they require *working class and middle class votes* to get elected. They cannot win the votes of working people by openly advocating the cause of the capitalist class. The knack, especially of the Liberals, for 'campaigning from the left and ruling from the right,' of turning nationalist rhetoric up or down as required is crassly opportunistic. This is what neo-liberalism is all about, the method used by corporate investors to convince working people that their needs can be met only by making capitalism more capitalistic.

What should be done when workers, caught in desperate struggles for economic survival are tempted to support a

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capitalist version of what they want? This issue broke wide open when Buzz Hargrove leader of the Canadian Auto Workers Union embraced Paul Martin in a photo op and called for the election of a Liberal minority government with the NDP holding the balance of power to prevent the Conservatives from forming either a minority or majority government.

I recommend that the CAW endorse the sitting NDP Members of Parliament, and individual NDP candidates in potentially winnable ridings...in other ridings the CAW will not endorse any specific candidates; rather individual voters will have to decide what best contributes to electing a Liberal minority with NDP balance of power and stopping the Conservatives. (our italics)

Some on the left, like Murray Dobbin, board member of the CCPA Monitor (14) and Sam Hammond, Communist Party Labour Secretary (15) are in high dudgeon about the support of the CAW's 900 member Council for Hargrove's strategy. Dobbin goes so far as to call upon CAW members to "repudiate their rogue leader..." and Hammond after listing Martin's unsavory corporate record says, "to endorse Martin is to endorse this legacy." Hammond goes further and asks Hargrove, "Does this mean that an NDP opposition in Parliament would see itself not as an adversary, using its clout to defend working people and blackmail protection of social programs, independent foreign policy etc.[sic], rather as the 'stabilizer' of a capitalist government already committed to 'deep integration' with US imperialism and the corporate agenda?"

Sam Hammond has the right to ask the question but as a Communist he has a greater responsibility to answer it. Dobbin and Hammond's argument contains the 'leftist' notion that organized labour must make the leap, on command, from life and death economic struggle in defence of

jobs to full political understanding and support for reformist and Communist parties in elections. What both Dobbin and Hammond imply is that the CAW National Council let down their 'leadership teams,' that is the leadership provided by the NDP and the Communist parties. Dobbin, when asked by this observer, evaded comment on how workers should respond to instances when the NDP had let down 'labour's team,' as in the case of the Hospital Employees Union and the teacher's strike in BC, and their unpardonable blunder of joining with the Campbell Liberals to attempt to vote themselves a large pay raise. Dobbin dismissed as "just dead wrong" Hargrove's concern about a possible Conservative minority or majority. We shall see what January 23rd unfolds for Canada. (16). We can only hope that Dobbin is right.

LEADERSHIP INFALLIBILITY

The notion of leadership infallibility is a bourgeois trait that often afflicts working class leaders. Dobbin excludes Layton from this affliction. When Sam Hammond gets around to answering his own question he will, we are certain, acknowledge that while some workers support the NDP there are also workers with serious misgivings about the NDP, misgivings that stand in the way of labour unity at the polls, and those misgivings are not attributable to Buzz Hargrove and the CAW.

There are other left commentators such as John Conway, well known Saskatchewan socialist, who has weighed into the fray with a pithy opening to an article on the election: "Paul Martin set the trap and Stephen Harper and Jack Layton sprung it on themselves" (17). Conway summed up in a simple phrase what many of us felt when the NDP joined the Conservatives in Parliament to bring down the Liberal Government and to bring on an election that most Canadians felt was unnecessary. How were the optics of Layton standing with Harper to defeat Martin somehow less offensive than Hargrove standing with Martin to defeat Harper?

The Hargrove incident is useful because it exposes the need for an ongoing discussion about what constitutes a winning strategy for the left in elections and what is a principled basis for unity. In his book, *Speaking Out, Ideas that Work for Canadians* (18), Jack Layton elaborates at length on his 20 year experience in municipal struggles for low cost housing, free school meals, transit reforms, combating poverty, dealing with Toronto's garbage, restoring the health of the Humber River Valley, and many other worthy causes. His long service to urban struggles merits respect. In every instance, he points out that *wherever there was a victory it resulted from a broad*

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community alliance of activists. (our italics)

Elsewhere in his book, Jack Layton said just prior to the 2004 federal election (19): "To be clear, I do not wish for continental security perimeters or joint Canada-U.S. command, or even a massive increase in defence spending. Nor do I support draconian anti-terrorism or security laws like those that have already ensnared hundreds in the American prison at Guantanamo Bay, detained without access to justice." (our italics) Since Layton wrote those words in 2004, he has sent mixed messages about the Canadian Government's role in Afghanistan and Haiti, and on Canada's membership in NATO and NORAD. Layton endorses the general direction of the federal government's Canadian foreign policy as it is outlined in Canada's International Foreign Policy Statement. Layton in the last election leaned towards support for the right of Quebec to self-determination and condemned the Clarity Act but since has changed his mind and now supports the Clarity Act. Many on the left, including members of Canadians for Peace and Socialism, are dismayed at Layton's reluctance to vigorously attack the Conservatives both in the House and on the hustings, and his compulsion to attack the Liberals even when Martin makes statements that coincide with public concerns for peace and Canadian independence.

Layton's living experience in united action at a municipal level is in contrast to the sectarian attitude of the NDP regarding coalition politics at a federal level. The NDP is the largest single electoral expression of the desire of the Canadian people for peace, economic and social justice. This is the reality in spite of the fact that the NDP has no united front policy. The NDP leadership mistakenly believes that it is entitled to electoral support because of its reformist program when in fact it often receives support from the left in spite of its reformist program. This happens because for many on the left there is no other electoral alternative to the Liberals and Conservatives. The NDP leadership has never considered it necessary to address this contradiction and admonishes the left to just be quiet when the NDP moves right to win middle class votes and when in power moves even further right to placate nervous investor classes. This type of social democratic opportunism is no more palatable than Liberal opportunism.

The NDP leadership clings to the reformist illusion that the system is fixable without a mass struggle. The NDP on its own, not in past elections, nor in this election can break the Parliamentary stranglehold of the old line parties. What is preferable is that the NDP begin to work with labour, including the CAW, with the peace movement, the Council of Canadians, the Communist Party, and others to build a progressive block on a limited program that would present

a serious challenge to corporate domination over Parliament.

The Communist Party's election statement declares: "By electing a large progressive block of MP's to Parliament, including NDPers, Communists, left-minded Greens and all those committed to democratic progressive reform, working people can curb the power of the transnational corporations. Another minority government would create the best conditions for the democratic labour movements to push for important concessions benefiting working people and strengthening our collective national sovereignty and independence."

Who 'all those committed to democratic progressive reform' are, is not defined. Presumably it cannot include any Liberals on a CAW list. The Communist Party also approves of a minority government and without saying so, appears to be indifferent as to whether it is Conservative or Liberal. In spite of this fuzziness, the fielding by the Communist Party of 22 candidates is an achievement that merits respect and support, including financial support. We in the CPS will do what we can to help their campaign.

LABOUR MUST LEAD THE COUNTRY

The January 23, 2006 federal election is a continuation of a long parliamentary crisis that began in 1989 when Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, acting for a section of the Canadian capitalist class, signed the Free Trade Agreement and set Canada on a course of accelerated deep integration with US finance capital that now threatens the very existence of Canada as an independent country.

The current election will not resolve that crisis. Until the left forces go beyond exposure and description of the consequences resulting from FTA-NAFTA and begin the process of building a unified left democratic alliance to abrogate it, the crisis will continue and Canadian working people will continue to be its main victim.

Remarkably the Canadian people are ahead of the politicians. Public opinion has hardened around a determination to keep Canada independent and out of US sponsored imperialist wars. The challenge for the left is to catch up to the people, to transform a mass national democratic peace sentiment into an organized political force for progressive change. Unless we do - extremist demagogues, masquerading as 'friends of the people' will fill the vacuum. Everything is available to the left to win. What is absent is agreement that it takes a struggle to win, and that to win, Labour Must Lead the Struggle!

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Footnotes on page 10

LENIN AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS



Following is an excerpt from Lenin's advice to Russian workers facing elections to the Duma in May of 1912. It is taken from Volume 18 of his Collected Works and entitled, Political Parties in Russia.

The general public – at any rate in the big cities, and trade centres – has long since become used to commercial advertisement and knows its worth. Unfortunately, political advertisement misleads an incomparably greater number of people; it is much harder to expose and its deceptions much more lasting. The names of some parties, both in Europe and in Russia, are chosen with a direct eye to advertisement, and their 'programmes' are quite often written for the sole purpose of hoodwinking the public. The greater the degree of political liberty in a capitalist country and the more democracy there is, i.e., the greater the power of the people and of their representatives, the more shameless, in many cases the self-advertisement of parties.

That being so, how is one to see what is what in the fight between the various parties? Does not this fight, with its fraud and advertising, indicate that representative institutions, parliaments, assemblies of people's representatives are in general useless and even harmful, as rabid reactionaries, the enemies of parliamentarism make out? No. In the absence of representative institutions there is much more deception, political lying and fraudulent trickery of all kinds, and the people have much fewer means of exposing the deception and finding out the truth.

To see what is what in the fight between the parties, one must not take words on their face value but must study the actual history of the parties, must study not so much what they say about themselves as their deeds, the way in which they go about solving various political problems, and their behavior in matters affecting the vital interests of the various classes of society, landlords, capitalists, peasants, workers, etc.

The greater the degree of political liberty in a capitalist country and the more stable and democratic its representative institutions, the easier it is for the mass of the people to find its bearings in the fight between the parties and to learn politics, i.e., to expose the deception and find out the truth.

The division of any society into different political parties is revealed most clearly of all in times of profound crisis shaking the whole country. For at such times governments

FOOTNOTES from page 9

- (1) The Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade (C.O.A.T.) has identified almost \$2 billion in Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board investments in 50 Canadian companies supplying the US military. *Toronto Star*, December 22, 2005
- (2) *Globe and Mail* November 18, 2005 and December 20, 2005
- (3) *Stephen Harper and the Future of Canada*, William Johnson, McLelland and Stewart Ltd. 2005 pp. 46-47.335
- (4) *Too Close for Comfort, Canada's Future Within Fortress North America*, Maude Barlow, McLelland and Stewart 2005, Chapter Five pp. 128-131
- (5) *CBC Newsworld*
- (6) *Iron Man, The Defiant Reign of Jean Chretien*, Lawrence Martin, Viking Canada 2003 pg 91
- (7) *Lenin and Canada*, Progress Books Toronto 1970 pp. 85
- (8) Part IV Section 92A – The Canadian Constitution
- (9) *Globe and Mail* December 20th , December 31st 2005
- (10) wpc-in@yahoogroups – Alfred Marder US Peace Council
- (11) Movpaz@enet.cu
- (12) *Globe and Mail* November 8, 2005
- (13) Volume 18, *Lenin Collected Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1963 pg 44
- (14) *Prairie Dog*, December 8, 2005
- (15) *People's Voice* January 1-15, 2006
- (16) *The Globe and Mail* mid-campaign polls show a rise in support for the Harper Conservatives
- (17) *Prairie Dog*, December 8, 2005
- (18) *Speaking Out – Ideas That Work For Canadians*, Jack Layton, Key Porter Books Ltd – 2004
- (19) Ibid. pg 28.

are compelled to seek support among the various classes of society; all phrase-mongering, all that is petty and extraneous, is brushed aside by the gravity of the struggle; the parties strain every nerve and appeal to the masses, and the masses, guided by the unerring instinct and enlightened by the experience of an open struggle, follow the parties that represent the interests of a particular class.

The epochs of such crises always determine the party alignment of the social forces of the country concerned for many years or even decades ahead.