



# CANADIAN PEACE CONGRESS

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## **Contribution from Canada to World Peace Council European Region and Secretariat Meeting Brussels, October 17-18, 2011**

First, I want to thank the Greek Peace Committee and Comrade Angourakis of the KKE for hosting and organizing this meeting, and for making it possible for Canada to participate. We have had another excellent report from each of the President and the General Secretary, and the discussion yesterday and today has been rich and rewarding. We always find these international meetings to be enormously helpful to our work in Canada against imperialism and for peace, and this encounter is particularly important to us as we approach some key tasks in the coming months.

I would like to give a brief report, updating you on events in Canada since our Executive Committee meeting in May in Cuba. Shortly after that meeting, Canada had a disastrous federal election, with the right-wing Conservative Party winning a majority in government. This government has been deemed by many to be the most reactionary government in Canada's history, and they now control both houses of the federal legislature. This severely diminishes the ability of the peace and progressive forces to pursue our struggle in a parliamentary context, and demands that we decisively shift our efforts to other avenues in the extra-parliamentary arena.

One very notable feature of the election is that virtually all sectors of capital in Canada supported the Conservatives, marking that party and its reactionary policies as the chosen vehicle, at the federal level at least, for capital to attempt to find a way out of the deepening economic crisis. This is a change from the past several years in Canada, when we saw that differing interests between the various sectors of capital meant that the two bourgeois parties – the Conservatives and the Liberals – each received a similar amount of support from the ruling class. While capital will almost certainly retain and rebuild the Liberal Party as an alternative conduit for its policies, this apparent consensus around the policies of Stephen Harper is extremely important to the peace movement in Canada.

Although the Conservative had a minority government prior to the May election, since winning a majority, they have moved quickly and aggressively to implement new imperialist policies. In addition to continuing their previous policies of increasing military spending, pursuing the war in Afghanistan, promoting deeper integration of military and foreign policy with the United States and NATO, and an aggressively pro-Zionist policy toward the Middle East, the new Conservative government has:

- Enthusiastically promoted and participated in the imperialist attack on Libya, with a shameful vote of support by the government that had only one member out of 308 opposing;
- Announced its intention to build military bases in other countries around the world;
- Indicated it will pursue a policy of militarization in the Arctic, combined with the development of shipping routes and resource extraction industries in that region;

- Overseen espionage projects by military intelligence against aboriginal peoples and groups in Canada;
- Announced the introduction of severe austerity measures – combined with massive military spending increases – that will eliminate thousands of jobs and reduce or eliminate social programs for millions of Canadian people, and accelerate the shift of taxation from corporations and the wealthy, onto working people;
- Intensified its campaign against trade union rights by interfering in high-profile labour disputes in both the private and public sectors, including taking the extraordinary step of legislating workers back to work and imposing a contract settlement that was worse than the terms the employer had proposed.

Many of the recent shifts in Canada's international policy have their roots in the geopolitical changes that took place in the 1990's and that were accompanied by economic developments marked by the increased globalization of trade and, subsequently, production. In the current context of deepening capitalist crisis – in particular one that has severely weakened Canada's most important trading partner, the United States – these policy changes have been accelerated. I will not discuss this in detail here, but I will mention some key trends that are emerging:

- A deliberate and dramatic shift away from UN-oriented multilateralism toward an “ad-hoc” multilateralism, represented by makeshift “coalitions of the willing” that amount to little more than gangster politics on a global scale;
- A heightened emphasis on NATO and identifying a new role for that military alliance;
- A more aggressive posture in foreign policy, with greater emphasis placed on military action, sanctions, terror lists, etc., instead of on development, diplomacy, cooperation, and peace;
- More frequent unilateral expressions of Canada's imperialist interests, different from but still in combination with the continuation of the longstanding policy of using US and NATO policy as cover;
- Increased and comprehensive efforts to identify, justify and promote new pretexts for imperialist aggression.

Alongside these developments, there are many examples of the Canadian people mobilizing against policies of imperialism in our country. The G8 and G20 meetings in Canada last year were met with huge protests, despite a massive police and military presence. The subsequent mass arrest and detention of protestors prompted broad and determined mobilizations for government and police accountability. Many cities across the country have held large and militant demonstrations against austerity plans, and the Occupy Wall Street effort in the US has recently been echoed by similar actions in several Canadian areas. One key role of the anti-imperialist and peace movement is working to draw these forces together and providing them with a clear analysis and tactical proposals that can focus the people's energy and anger against capitalism's militaristic agenda.

I will end by identifying some priorities for work for the Canadian Peace Congress in the present period:

- Continue our opposition to Canada's active involvement in wars in Afghanistan and Libya, working to immediately withdraw Canadian military and to end those conflicts;
- Continue and expand our campaign against military spending in Canada, which is at its highest levels since before World War 2 and continuing to rise;
- Continue and expand our campaign against NATO, demanding Canada's withdrawal and the military alliance's dissolution;
- Develop a new campaign to oppose the development of Canadian military bases in foreign countries, and to link this with the WPC campaign against foreign military bases;
- Develop a new campaign to oppose militarization of the Arctic, and to encourage cooperation and joint campaigning on this issue among WPC members organizations in circumpolar countries;
- Work toward the Third Trilateral Peace Conference, between the peace committees in Canada, the United

States and Mexico and with participation of the Cuban Movement for Peace;

- Hold a convention of the Canadian Peace Congress on November 25-26 of this year.

Slowly but surely, the anti-imperialist peace movement is growing in Canada, both in size and in influence. As this continues, we are better able to confront the policies of imperialism in Canada and also to contribute to the growth and strengthening of the World Peace Council.

For Peace and Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dave McKee". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Dave McKee  
President, Canadian Peace Congress