

The proletarian movement we need

The following call is an invitation to all revolutionaries, activists, proletarians and all collectives or groups of the extreme-left in Canada who aspire to build a genuine proletarian movement. A movement that will oppose the bourgeoisie, the capitalists and their power; a movement that will push forward the class struggle on completely new foundations. It is an invitation to debate and discuss the proposals contained in this declaration and establish some common perspectives for the purpose of unifying and mobilizing in Canada in the coming year. The call, initiated by the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR-RCP Canada), will be discussed at the Canadian Revolutionary Congress to be held in Toronto on December 11th. All those interested in participating can register by writing to info@pcr-rcp.ca.

THE CRISIS IS THAT OF CAPITALISM... AND IT WILL CONTINUE!

Capitalism is exploitation and misery. This simple truth reveals and highlights the instability of the whole system: the crisis gave way to new crises, sharp declines in expansions that seem limitless, short-term progressions followed by spectacular falls.

Four years ago, the document submitted to the first Canadian Revolutionary Congress, held in Montreal, that led to the formation of the Revolutionary Communist Party stated: "A series of crises of overproduction will totter the most fragile equilibrium. Around the world, partial crises of overproduction will take place in the coming years. There is an overproduction of buildings in China; a real estate bubble waiting to burst in North America, an overproduction of manufactured goods ('overheating of the economy' in the developing countries). There's a dangerous increase in household debt loans and a drop in mass consumption; and a partial overproduction crisis in the forest industry and other sectors in Canada. There is the coming overproduction in raw materials that pay for investments in fixed capital, in buildings, public works and industrial production; an increase in demand and a rise in energy price; and then a slow-down in industrial production."

Two years later, the fragile and unstable equilibrium of the capitalist world has actually broken and has not spared the Canadian economy. To make history, the crisis would have to arise in the "heart of the beast," the strongest citadel of imperialism: the United States. Soon, the world economy collapsed and the possibility of a strong enough recovery remains highly unlikely. Clearly, the crisis has opened a period of disorder and turbulence which disturbs all alliances, breaks all benchmarks and all old habits.

We should not be blinded: what lies before us will be one of the most dramatic episodes of the class struggle around the world and here in Canada. Using the "recovery" and now austerity measures that are being implemented everywhere, the brotherhood of thieves that is the bourgeoisie has begun its offensive against the proletariat. They have basically declared war against the majority, against the proletariat, against the oppressed peoples of the world.

Already, beginning in Greece, Portugal and Italy, and now in France and Great Britain, the imperialist states have triggered the offensive and axed social spending. To successfully cope with future attacks, the Canadian proletariat must learn to fight back. To fight the bourgeoisie certainly, but to also struggle against its own limitations and illusions that still persist regarding the idea of the possible better distribution of wealth under capitalism; to fight illusions about the role of the state that will always remain an instrument in the hands of the ruling class. The state will never serve the cause of the people as long as the proletariat does not hold power. These illusions are but chains hindering the possibilities of proletarian organization and struggle and allow the collaborators of capital to maintain themselves in their place.

We cannot be surprised by the current weakness of the proletarian movement because capitalism does not only produce goods, it also produces ideas. Ideas and illusions that are realized in acts, practices, organizations, institutions and obviously in the way it represents itself.

One of these illusions is the belief that the world economy went into recession in 2008 following the U.S. housing crisis.

Analysts of the crisis naturally took as a starting point the collapse of the banking sector and securities markets as the cause and the epicenter of the crisis. While everyone agrees on the seriousness of the situation, it was seen as an isolated phenomenon restricted to problems in the financial sector. In doing so, almost without exception, they ignored the long and constant aggravation of problems in the real economy.

Unlike economists who talk about the crisis in terms of market dysfunctions, it is in the normal functioning of markets in which answers are to be found-

In the 1970s, we witnessed a reversal of the economic cycle in the advanced capitalist countries: after a long expansion starting with the post-World War II years until the mid-70s, the period that followed and that continues till today is characterized by a long-term and constant weakening of capitalism.

The most recent economic cycle was the weakest of the last 50 years in the U.S., Western Europe and Japan, all this despite state sponsored revival programs. Not having the capacity to stimulate the economy once the housing bubble broke, the entire economy went into recession. According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the average annual growth of world GDP in the years 2001-2007 was lower than any comparable period since 1950. One exception, the period between 1991-2000, but it never surpassed the results from the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s.

This inability of capitalism to restart the machine again can be verified by the situation in Canada. Long before the housing bubble, the economy had already entered a downward trend, whereas GDP growth was 4.06% in 1971-80, it had dropped to less than 2% for the 2001-2010 period. (*World Bank, World Development Indicators*, International Financial Statistics of the IMF, 2010)

According to an OECD report published in September 2010, the global economic recovery could be slower than expected, without knowing whether this “slowdown” will be permanent or temporary. The difficulty for the bourgeoisie to control its own economic movement confirms that the present crisis is more than a cyclical crisis of overproduction. It is an extension of the deep crisis of the capitalist mode of production.

Summarily, this crisis had, in its early days, consisted of a rapid and catastrophic reduction, almost a complete collapse of economic activities which directly employed salaried workers, especially the proletariat. The crisis is primarily a crisis of absolute capital overproduction. Everything else, that is to say, the political (in parliaments, in domestic and international politics), cultural (intellectual, moral) and environmental disorders were caused by the crisis of capitalism. They are derivatives that end up adding to the general crisis which will further intensify.

THE BOURGEOISIE IS ON THE OFFENSIVE

With the crisis, each capitalist is forced to try to increase the rate of surplus-value and thus the rate of exploitation. The weaker companies are either bought or disappear. Prices for raw materials collapse temporarily or fall. Naturally, the tendency for wages is to diminish while the highest paid industrial jobs are replaced by lower-wage jobs. This phenomenon has worsened under the pressure of increasing unemployment. But this is not enough to get capitalism out of the crisis.

Thus, the States will initially adopt short-term plans to rescue the financial system and begin to implement policies to rectify the situation. Increasing the rate of profit is the main objective: this is the period before us. Indeed, bringing the situation in order and increasing the rate of profit (especially during crises) are the main concerns of all capitalists and therefore states must then ensure the reproduction of the society they organize by maintaining and protecting as much as possible their capital, profits, employment, means of production, etc. For each state it is essential to defend and ensure that its own capitalists are not those that will be eliminated by the crisis, but those of other states.

In Canada, this offensive motion on behalf of capitalists began in the 1990s before the crisis, whilst under the Liberal government the state has ceased to be in deficit and went from annual deficits (64 billion in 1992) to a new era of sustainable surpluses (28.6 billion in 2001).

The restructuring of the Canadian economy to generate surpluses is far from trivial. In fact it is at the heart of the general offensive of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. First of all, for capitalists, it has set up increasingly favorable conditions for capital to grow by ensuring the highest rate of return.

During the period in which it has flourished, capitalism has ensured its stability by its apparent ability to reconcile the benefits and economic prosperity for the larger community and for the bourgeoisie. However, such reconciliation has always been, at best, problematic for the bourgeoisie; as the impoverishment of the proletariat was a prerequisite for the continued prosperity of the capitalists, thus this illusion has proven increasingly difficult to maintain.

The multiple forms the capitalist offensive has taken are well known and affect all sections of society, beginning with the workplace to belt-tightening measures imposed on both public and private sectors; the restructuring of Unemployment Insurance and use of unemployment as a tool to fight against inflation; cuts and reduced public services and the introduction of new user fees have become widespread; new labor regulations and State intervention in significant industrial disputes to force people back to work and to prohibit in practice the right to strike.

While the State proceeds with these attacks, the proletariat sees its living and working conditions deteriorate. From 1997 to 2007, the growth in real wages was almost nil, the average hourly earnings rising by about 0.5% per year! The first 20% of the poorest workers suffered a net decline of 20% of salary (in constant dollars) between 1980 and 2005. For the second 20%, it was a meager increase of 0.1%.

A major consequence of the growth in low-wage jobs for the proletariat has been its being forced into increasing the number of hours worked. The average workweek for hourly employees averaged less than 31 hours in the first half of 1990. From 1997, it rose to 31.5 hours and has averaged slightly above this mark from 2007, to 32.9 hours in 2009.

Declining incomes for the majority of the proletariat has meant ever-growing personal debts. With a negative rate of personal savings, credit debt for consumption (excluding mortgages) rose from \$130 billion in 1996 to \$203 billion in 2001 (an increase of 56% over five years). This expansion in debt has only intensified. From March 2003 to March 2008, consumer credit increased by 65%.

Unlike the 1970s when the proletariat had experienced two decades of sustained growth in real wages combined with low debt, the proletariat in 2010 is in a far more fragile situation. The last 20 years have been years of impoverishment.

In order to redevelop the conditions necessary for the reproduction of capitalist society, the first move must be by the most complete valorisation of capital. The bourgeoisie will have to further cut what is not profitable for its reproduction: either through the wages of workers, and/or what it consents to “public expenditures.”

The Canadian bourgeoisie will thus use all of the machinery of the state whose role becomes paramount. As it is only the State that can use force to impose the changes that further aggravate the situation for the proletariat in Canada.

DEMOLISHING THE SMOKESCREENS

To respond to the extent of these attacks and more importantly, to move forward rather than endure more exploitation, the proletariat must clear the smoke screens that hide the reality of the Canadian bourgeoisie.

One of these screens is the idea that foreign multinationals decide the fate of the Canadian economy. There exists the idea that the Canadian State follows the dictates of the IMF or World Bank and is no longer able to take its own decisions. There exists this idea that Canadian capitalists are players who have little to do with the exploitation of poor countries. There is also the mistaken idea that the United States decides for us and that we must defend “our sovereignty” against them.

The truth demonstrated by reality is that in Canada we are poor and Canadian capitalists are rich, immensely rich. The truth is that they are in full control of the Canadian economy and that they have more assets abroad than foreign capitalists do in Canada. The truth is that they now occupy a prominent role among the imperialists who destroy, plunder and exploit the world’s population from one end of the planet to the other. The truth is that the Canadian State and its parliament belong to *them*.

• The Canadian bourgeoisie’s imperialist offensive

With regards to the connection with the global economy, Canadian imperialism is far from being an innocent player: it has enormous interests to protect. Canadian firms have—and this is in over 62 countries—assets amounting to approximately the \$515 billion, whereas assets held by foreign companies in Canada are now valued at \$500.8 billion. This demonstrates the offensive character of Canadian imperialism: its companies own and control more assets in the global economy than foreign companies do in Canada.

Canadian capitalists hold an enviable position within the select club of exploiters of the world’s proletariat. In 2004-2005, Canada was home to 1,439 multinational companies which controlled 3,725 foreign subsidiaries that employ 1,029,000 workers abroad, and generates revenues of \$385 billion in sales of goods and services.

Canada is a major world producer. In 2007, Canada’s gross domestic product was about U.S. \$1,432 billion, making Canada the ninth largest economy in the world.

In international trade, Canada was ranked the ninth largest exporter of goods worldwide (3% of total exports), and ninth in terms of imports.

Moreover, there are 72 companies in Canada that rank among the five largest in the world within their specific areas of

expertise, as compared to 33 in 1985. These world-class companies have increased in number and size, with average annual revenues of \$3.7 billion, up \$2 billion from the early 1990s. According to *Forbes* magazine, in 2006, Canada ranked 5th in the list of countries with the largest companies in its annual “top 500.”

Canadian imperialism is a major exporter and concentration hub of capital. Canadian direct investment abroad surpassed foreign investment in Canada.

Canadian capitalist investment also demonstrates that it is strong enough to extend beyond regional markets and the economic bloc of the NAFTA zone while adopting a strategy and global approach of expansion and accumulation of capital.

Canada is also a concentration hub of capital in the formation of giant corporations:

- Barrick Gold Corp., the largest global mining company in the field of gold (27 mines worldwide on five continents).
- SNC-Lavalin, one of the leading engineering firms in the world (SNC has offices in over 35 countries and works on projects in over 100 countries).
- Bombardier is in the top 10 list for aircraft production.
- Suncor Energy, Inc., a Canadian company specializing in the extraction, processing and distribution of oil. It and Syncrude Canada are the only two large companies that exploit the Athabasca oil sands in Alberta.
- Canadian Natural Resources Ltd. (oil and natural gas), ranked 251st in the world;
- EnCana: in 2003 and 2004, was the Canadian company that posted the most benefits and reported nearly \$6 billion in profits in 2006.
- Petro-Canada and Suncor Energy announced the merger of their activities, giving birth to a global energy giant whose value will total approximately \$43.3 billion.

Canadian imperialism is both a hub for Canadian capital and a purchaser of companies around the world. In recent years, Canadian capitalists are net acquirers of foreign companies. Examples include the purchase of Centura Banks (U.S.) by Royal Bank, of Adtranz (Germany) by Bombardier, of Homestake Mining (USA) by Barrick Gold, Orion Gold (Australia) by Placer Dome (Canada now controls 25% of gold production in Australia), Wisconsin Central (USA) by Canadian National, etc.

Canadian imperialism’s financial capital is also powerful and highly concentrated. The global economy has transformed over the years, causing a reorganization of power relations between imperialist countries and within the ruling classes of each country. Although post-war industrial and commercial sectors still dominated the ruling class in the past, today it is financial capital that has the upper hand.

The major Canadian banks, which have integrated the majority of activities on financial markets throughout the 1990s

(trusts, mutual funds, investment banks, etc.), are now large concentrated financial groups. They centralize small capital to finance the expenses of external accumulation and also operate a centralized policy of decision-making within the Canadian bourgeoisie. These financial groups control assets of over \$1,700 billion. One-third of their income comes from outside of Canada.

This allows the highly concentrated Canadian bourgeois capital to have full control of the country's economy. According to Statistics Canada in 2005 (the last year for which data is available), Canadian companies controlled 87.4% of the mining sector, 61.1% of the production of oil and gas, 93.4% of public services, 95.1% of construction, 62.7% of wholesale trade, 79.1% of retail trade, 74.2% of transportation and warehousing and 84.9% in finance and insurance.

In light of these facts and the current crisis, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. On the international scene, the Canadian state, far from being at the mercy of foreign multinationals, defends its own interests, which are those of a strong Canadian bourgeoisie that is a concentrator and holder of staggering wealth, here and abroad. In doing so, Canadian capitalists play a significant role in the exploitation of millions upon millions of workers and peasants around the world. As exemplary imperialists, they plunder the economies of dominated countries by appropriating natural resources through their huge capital, turning a blind eye to the damages they cause whether it be the environmental or human costs of their activities.
2. That force—always relative because it is based after all on volatile financial capital—enables it to act as a “referee” in the currency war now raging in the G20.
3. In this country, this enrichment of the financial bourgeoisie has already resulted in a deterioration of conditions for the proletariat and the exploited, be they young, old, immigrants or refugees. And the enrichment of Canadian capitalists will continue to leave behind a growing number of depleted workers. By centralizing its capital in areas that generate the highest added value, the Canadian bourgeoisie has systematically abandoned sectors considered least “profitable” for it (manufacturing, textile, automotive) and decreased the number of stable and full time jobs. The capitalists do not want to “create jobs,” they want “productivity”. This productivity is gained through methods that require a more specialized, but less labor-intensive, workforce. For most of these workers, it means less work, more uncertainty, constant job change, lower wages and an overall deterioration in living conditions.
4. The redeployment of Canadian capital in sectors such as energy and mining will have crucial consequences, particularly the issue of territorial control, not only in relation towards other imperialist powers, but also in Northern Canada when dealing with the First Nations. They (the

First Nations) may suffer further attacks from the Canadian state that is seeking to guarantee the possession and exploitation of natural resources buried in their territories. In other words, we can expect a genuine offensive to plunder the North by Canadian capitalists.

Faced with these all-out offensives by the bourgeoisie, how can we not ask whether we really have the movement to resist? All of us that come to the defense of the proletariat and who want a just, egalitarian, classless society and aspire to be free from exploitation must ask whether we have the movement needed to completely transform this nightmare and overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie which operates and controls everything? When we look closely, it must be noted that no change will come if we stick to the current movement.

THE FAILURE OF THE CANADIAN LEFT

In Canada, while strengthening itself, the bourgeoisie has not solved the political crisis it has faced for several years. This crisis, which has recently resulted in the election of two successive minority governments, can be explained both by the difficulty for the ruling class to develop and implement a common policy that reflects the common interests of its various factions (while taking into account their specific interests), and by the loss of credibility of the major bourgeois parties.

This “political disorientation” of the bourgeoisie particularly affects its left flank, which includes the various Social Democrat strands posing as alternatives to the major bourgeois parties.

In Europe, the experience of social democratic governments has been disastrous for the proletariat and the toiling masses. Despite its claims to be different from the traditional bourgeois parties it has attacked the working class as fiercely. In the name of “national security,” it applied the same racist policies. The Social Democrats have shown unwavering solidarity with the big bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries involved in wars and occupations, whether in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Of course, this betrayal is not new: it has been a century since the Social Democrats have joined the bourgeois camp. Nevertheless, it still has some influence on the proletariat, especially on the more privileged sections within it, since they could still appear to be able to contain the “excesses” of capitalism and defend a certain idea of the “common good”: this is why, in fact, the bourgeoisie supported them as a realistic and credible alternative. But for the Social Democrats to play this role, it was necessary that capitalism provided them with the opportunity to do so.

But the need for a greater profitability of capital, in the context of imperialist globalization and inter-imperialist competition, and the intensification of economic warfare between the various national bourgeoisie have greatly reduced the possibility for a Social Democrat alternative. It is harder for Social Democrats to claim that they are capable of

“civilizing capital” and giving a “human face” to the bourgeois power. All they can offer is to act as better managers of capital and the state apparatus.

In Canada, even though the New Democratic Party succeeded in achieving its second highest electoral results in the 2008 federal elections (with 37 seats out of 308), they have ceased to show progress. Having been in power in five Canadian provinces the NDP has had ample opportunity to demonstrate, despite its claims to rule for “ordinary people”, (if they still pretend to do so) that they are at best illusory and at worst hypocritical.

Due to its willingness to serve as a refuge for disillusioned Liberal voters, the NDP no longer appears to be the bearer of a social project qualitatively different from the traditional Canadian model. More so than ever before, the NDP is positioning itself as a party capable of leading the bourgeois state and promote the “Canadian way” of doing things. The problem they face is that they have no chance of winning an election and gaining power in Ottawa for the foreseeable future. The best scenario that they can hope for is a coalition with the Liberal Party, and perhaps eventually the Bloc Québécois, in which they would play a minor role as a junior partner, like the one that fizzled out in December 2008 under the tutelage of then Liberal leader Stéphane Dion. This demonstrates just how bleak the future is for this party.

The NDP is forced to use the same themes as those traditionally used by the Tories: law and order, good management of public funds, promotion of “Canadian values,” etc. On June 26, during the G20 summit in Toronto, its leader Jack Layton was one of the first public figures to condemn the “unacceptable and criminal vandalism” of protesters and to provide support to Police Chief Bill Blair, just before he gave orders to his hordes of pigs to hunt for youth dressed in black. That says a lot about what happened to the Canadian branch of the Socialist International.

The NDP has always been a bourgeois party, whose will for social change never exceeded the horizon of capitalism. But there was a time when it could claim—at least to some extent—to reflect the aspiration of many people for an egalitarian society, more or less akin to socialism. This is really not the case anymore.

The NDP’s evolution is similar to that of the trade union movement, with whom it shares the same social and organizational basis. For many years now the major Canadian unions [we are not necessarily talking about all trade union locals] no longer defend the interests of workers. In a detailed study published in 1994¹, the Action Socialiste Group (forerunner of the RCP) had already showed how the Canadian labor movement had become an auxiliary of big business. Fifteen years later, this is now obvious.

We are still looking for a shadow of an embryonic response, worthy of the name, to the emergence of the recent crisis,

¹ *Perspectives pour le prolétariat canadien*, November 1994. Online: <http://www.pcr-rcp.ca/pdf/perspectives.pdf>.

which has yet again upset the living and working conditions of hundreds of thousands of workers throughout the country. Complete industrial sectors have been damaged and hundreds of thousands of workers lost their jobs. The capitalists have used the crisis to impose major setbacks onto workers: wage cuts; longer work hours; requirements of increased flexibility and job insecurity, etc. But not once have the big unions opposed the will of the capitalists by refusing to bear the burden of their crisis on the backs of the workers. Quite on the contrary, they have supported the so-called “economic action plans” of bourgeois governments which consisted mainly in diverting billions of dollars in taxes coming primarily from workers’ wages as a gift to the capitalists.

The idea that workers share a common interest with capitalists—that the plight of wage slaves depends on the good fortunes of their masters—is so ingrained in the minds and speeches of the trade unions leaders that it never occurred to them that the crisis could be an opportunity to break with the capitalist system.

The lack of a decent workers response to the crisis and the utter inability of the trade union movement to formulate such a response confirm the view expressed in the RCP Programme to the effect that the Canadian labor movement, as a whole, no longer represents the fundamental interests of working people and that it has become an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie to control and suppress the working class.

Overall, the Canadian left is deeply marked by bourgeois nationalism. The idea that Canada is a sort of “colony” in relation to U.S. imperialism, that it is a “small country” whose social and economic policies are distinct from the ones of its big neighbor and that the main enemy of Canadian proletariat is somehow “foreign” (nothing is further from the truth, as we have seen) has always wrecked havoc within the Canadian left. This idea pushed the Canadian left to position itself as an auxiliary of Canadian imperialism. It marked the evolution of the Communist Party of Canada in the 1930s from a revolutionary party to a reformist one and continues to base itself on this revisionist policy. During the 1960s and 1970s, the New Left inspired by Cultural Revolution and the anti-revisionist struggle failed to get rid of this defect (see the influence of the Three World Theory on the Workers Communist Party and the support it gave to the strengthening of the Canadian military, in order to reinforce “Canada’s independence”). The same idea also heavily influenced the left currents within the NDP, especially the Waffle, whose real name also showed the primacy of that goal: Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada.

In Quebec, the left has traditionally suffered from the same defect. But because of the influence of the national question, its support to the national bourgeoisie took the form of support to the French bourgeoisie and the Quebec state. The political space occupied by the NDP in the rest of Canada has been filled by the Parti Québécois, though the PQ has never really defined itself as a social democratic party—at best it claimed to have a “bias in favor of working people” in the aftermath of its election in 1976.

As was the case with the NDP in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia, the experience of the Parti Québécois in power revealed its true nature. Between 1976 and 2003, the PQ led the Quebec government for two successive periods of nine years each, during which it has clearly shown which side it stood on: implementing massive cuts in social programs, adopting anti-union laws, giving support to free trade and globalization, etc. In 1990, when it formed the official opposition, it was even the first party to call for the deployment of the Canadian army against the Mohawk Nation during the uprising in Kanehsatake.

Bourgeois nationalism—be it Quebec or Canadian—that characterizes the left throughout the country has led it to the adoption of a social-imperialist standpoint with regard to indigenous nations, to whom it has always denied the right to self-determination (which must necessarily include the right to secession). A new and genuinely proletarian revolutionary left must break with this deviation and instead uphold that basic right if it wants to overturn the Canadian state and achieve its goals of liberation and emancipation.

A huge political vacuum

Currently, the Canadian working class suffers from a huge political vacuum caused by the marginalization of forces that have traditionally spoken for it. Till date no one has yet managed to fill this vacuum. Although it is neither systematic nor widespread, there exists a will to fight among the proletariat—a willingness to fight the capitalists and their system. But this will has had a hard time expressing itself as it lacks a vehicle of political expression.

More and more workers are rejecting this fake bourgeois democratic framework and the parties that are working within it. The need for an alternative, comprehensive and coherent response to the bankruptcy of a system that is destructive and moribund has never been greater than now.

Some want to fill this political vacuum by trying to recreate that which has already existed. The NDP is not what it used to be and seems to be more and more disappointing? Then we should create a sort of “new and improved NDP” that will fight more seriously for Canada’s independence, for the extension of bourgeois democracy and to return to “welfare state,” within the electoral and parliamentary framework. The Parti Québécois no longer has the same influence over the masses? Then we should go with a new party (Quebec Solidaire), which proposes to make the current bourgeois state an independent state of Quebec—an independent state that will serve the common interests of all classes.

These projects rely on the same old illusions that have proved to be so damaging for the Canadian proletariat and have contributed to its weakening and even its political disappearance. They do not take into account what has changed in Canada and around the world, nor of the developments of the global capitalist system that demonstrate that the era of the welfare state is well and truly over.

In fall 2000, over 700 Left activists from Ontario gathered in Toronto, as part of the *Rebuilding the Left* conference. The organizers of this event wished for the emergence of a new type of anti-capitalist movement, “a ‘structured movement’ of the Left,” “a novel type of political organization” that would be “something more than a coalition but less than a Party.”²

In Quebec, a similar process was underway with the “Rassemblement pour l’Alternative Progressiste” and the “Parti de la Démocratie Socialiste” (which subsequently gave birth to the “Union des Forces Progressistes”) and with Françoise David’s “Option Citoyenne.” Unlike “Rebuilding the Left” in 2006 this process, resulted in the creation of a new party, Québec Solidaire. Furthermore, unlike the NDP, this party presents itself as being a little different from traditional parties: it claims to be a party “from both the ballot box and the streets” and aims to provide a political expression for various social movements.

Those who want to rebuild the left must obviously take into account the various resistance movements that have emerged since the late 1990s with the emergence of the anti-globalization movement. So they are talking (well, not always openly for electoral reasons...) of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism and fighting against patriarchy. But basically, their perspective remains the same as usual: a political alternative that will act in the electoral arena and within the current system with the objective of “conquering” the bourgeois state and doing something better than the bourgeois parties themselves by trying to go back to the “good old days when the state was caring for everyone, not just the rich” (sic).

This idealistic view is still present in the ranks of the Greater Toronto Workers’ Assembly—a gathering of Toronto militant left that was established in Autumn 2009. A bit like the former Rebuilding the Left project, the group seeks “to move beyond coalition and network politics” and wishes create “a new politics”.³ Some of its supporters are already dreaming of a new municipal or provincial party, while conceding that this is actually premature in Toronto or Ontario context.⁴

Proponents of these various “alternatives” confuse “genres”: while they rely on and promote a traditional conception of the state, they also want to “revitalize the social movements.” This makes possible a certain convergence with anarchist currents for whom the movements are the end-all be-all and do not want to fight for a new kind of state.

² Sam Gindin, “Comment: Rebuilding the Left: Towards a Structured Anti-Capitalist Movement”, *Studies in Political Economy* 64, Spring 2001, P. 91.

³ Greater Toronto Workers’ Assembly, *Vision Statement*. Online: <http://www.workersassembly.ca/vision>.

⁴ Xavier Lafrance, “Fondation de la Greater Toronto Worker’s Assembly: vers un renouveau de la gauche militante torontoise,” January 26, 2010. Online: <http://www.pressegauche.org/spip.php?article4204>.

But the question remains: why and for whom social—or resistance—movements exist? What the workers need now is not to recreate what has already existed and failed. We need a **break** with the strategies of the past. We need a new class movement based on the most exploited among us—a movement that will unify all the oppressed, that will attack the roots of the ruling system and will adopt the forms of action that meet the requirements of the moment and thereby **will raise the question of power.**

The new class struggle in Canada: A new and revolutionary proletarian movement

In Canada, the political power of the bourgeoisie is materialized in the government. The parliament, including all parties there, are first and foremost united behind the defense and protection of the capitalists and of the Canadian capital. The apparatus of democracy that the bourgeoisie has endowed itself with doesn't serve any other purpose. Its army, whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere doesn't serve any other purpose. Its police—as so obvious at the G20 in Toronto!—doesn't serve any other purpose. It's justice, when it treats refugees, Native people, anti-imperialist opposition as if they were criminals, while the bankers and fraudster capitalists are left free, doesn't serve any other purpose. Parliament, which votes in these unfair measures, doesn't serve any other purpose.

The proletariat, the exploited class, is trying to oppose, defend itself against, resist, and ultimately, change the system. Whilst what we need a Canadian working class that is combative, powerful and dynamic, it currently is weak, poorly defended, passive, and pessimistic. Even the most organized among them: the trade unions, left reformist organizations, most people's organizations and even, most communist groups, Trotskyists, Marxist-Leninists—cannot imagine acting outside the legal framework imposed by the bourgeoisie. This fraction, although organized, is sticking to bourgeois politics.

Because of the inability to act outside the framework imposed by the ruling class, the proletariat has no political autonomy when facing the bourgeoisie. There exists no proletarian party at the national level, very low-levels of political action and even less revolutionary action being done within these mass organizations.

When these organizations exist, they have few other prospects than to oppose the very worst. And with only 30% (4.5 million) of workers in Canada being organized—including a significant proportion of the public sector—it means that more than 10 millions workers do not have any organization to regroup and defend themselves with in their workplace.

The more traditional movements, whether trade unions, grassroots groups, community groups are becoming more institutionalized, co-opted by the state, or worse, more and more “interested” by capitalism: Some unions have become themselves managers of investment funds, and have put their financial performance before the defense of workers' jobs.

In all cases, the labor movement has become... motionless. They are unable to act outside the framework imposed by the bourgeoisie. They defend the law instead of defending the workers; bourgeois “democracy” instead of the right to rebel. They defend capital, instead of defending labor. Community groups are so overwhelmed by “front line” services they give to an increasing number of unemployed and poor people that they don't even consider political struggle. Clearly, their current structure and mode of organization are not designed to educate the proletariat for revolutionary action, or any action that would allow them to truly transform the current balance of power in which the bourgeoisie retains all benefits. Even the Communists who work among the mass organizations are sticking to traditional trade union or community work.

In the political sphere, it is even worse. It is as if the only possible horizon for politics is the parliament and the institutions of the capitalist system which we already know, are fully controlled and managed by the bourgeoisie. Yet never in the history of the Canadian parliamentary system, have the proletariat—the most numerous class in society—been able to exist as a political force. When they did, it was always marginal, almost by accident thus making any change to “parliamentary democracy” impossible. For the bourgeoisie, there was nothing to fear. On the contrary, it lent peoples' support to this regime—a dictatorship! —And gave it a “democratic” veneer. The numerous “radicals” in the NDP's history has done nothing else but that; Amir Khadir from Quebec Solidaire party can do nothing else but that. The 1-2% of votes that Marxists, Trotskyites and Communists may get is doing nothing else... but that.

There is no place in the Canadian parliament for the poor, the immigrants, the exploited and even less so for Native people. When looking at the parliamentary history in this country one can see that bourgeois democracy is the name given for the bourgeois dictatorship over the proletariat. Between 1867 and 1921, only property owners, religious, professionals and teachers were entitled to vote. It is this section of the population that has forged the two parties of government in Canadian history and the current parliamentary system.

Women, workers, and indigenous people were excluded. After women and white workers, Asian Canadians only got the right to vote in 1948 and Aborigines in 1960!

By integrating the farmers' demands, by disciplining leaders and organizations of the proletariat and by repressing the workers, their struggles and their party—the Communist Party at that time—the bourgeoisie has managed to adapt to universal suffrage since the 1920s. Let us remember that the Communist Party of Canada—now non-existent, peaceful, harmless—was illegal then! This was simply because they resolutely defended the proletariat at the time. The revolutionary organizations of the working class were repressed and banned under the War Measures Act because they led the struggle against the bourgeoisie. These organizations conducted their struggles, their strikes and their demonstrations outside the framework imposed by the

bourgeoisie. Even if they were not coordinated by an organization that could conduct a real political struggle, these struggles and strikes are still a legacy 100 times more heroic and inspiring experiences that all parliamentary elections that have followed since.

In imperialist countries such as Canada, the electoral process has been and continues to be a dead end for the workers and they are increasingly aware of this. The steady decline in the rate and historical turnout in advanced capitalist societies expresses much of this reality. In 2000, while the rate reached a historic low of 61%, Elections Canada commissioned a study to Decima Research. It noted that the vast majority of non-voters interviewed gave the following reasons: a negative attitude toward politicians, government officials, candidates, parties and/or leaders and a lack of competition thus making their participation futile.

How can one, especially among those who claim to work for the exploited and the poor or who call themselves revolutionaries, blame them for that?

In fact, we must support this just feeling, which is based in the lived experience of the masses. But instead of turning it into passive defeatism, we must direct this feeling towards an active political force. We must use it to serve a movement for change, rather than bring people back into the bourgeois trap. Through involvement in immediate struggles and the struggle for revolution and social change, we must build proletarian political activism and break with bourgeois political action.

In that sense, every gesture, every action being waged by those who struggle together with the proletariat and the Native nations, must break with all forces that strengthen the ruling class. Our role as revolutionaries and activists who side with the proletariat is to support, organize and develop slogans and actions **that can weaken the bourgeoisie and build unity with all sections of the proletariat and the First Nations**. The essential starting point is to break with the bourgeoisie and its apparatus of domination. This is the first thing we must do to make revolution and end to capitalism.

Based on these key breaking points, **we must wage today a new class struggle in Canada**.

The bourgeoisie has already started this new fight against us. It has done so for a long time, through attacks by the capitalists, through politicians and parliamentarians, senior officials, judiciary, through the police, and the army. Today powerful and dominant, they control and manage the whole capitalist system.

We must ready the Canadian proletariat for the class struggle. Seek unity among the youth, the farm workers, the unemployed, poor students, poor women and workers, immigrants of all nationalities, refugees, undocumented workers and Natives. This unity is necessary in order to fight against the bourgeoisie and its system. It will allow the proletariat to exist as a conscious and active political force, which can truly threaten the capitalist order, undermine bourgeois power and replace it with a new, revolutionary communist rule by the proletariat.

We must restart a new class struggle in Canada in order to develop revolutionary proletarian actions:

- **By uniting proletarians all across the country** on the basis of breaking with bourgeois politics, on the basis of the revolutionary struggle against capitalism and for the goal of communism;
- **By supporting the struggles of the Native nations** against the Canadian state and by recognizing their unconditional right to self-determination;
- **By denouncing Canadian imperialism and its companies**, which loot and destroy the peoples and resources of the oppressed countries through economic exploitation and war.
- **By calling for the defeat of the imperialists all over the world** and by defending and supporting people's wars.

In order to develop these revolutionary proletarian actions and make them a reality, we call the Canadian Revolutionary Congress to adopt the following perspectives:

1. A Canada-wide boycott campaign during the next federal elections:

Boycott the Elections! is a slogan that is anything but passive. Driven by the forces of the militant proletariat, led by activists working for revolution and for the destruction of the exploitative capitalist system, this slogan is a call to fight against apathy and indifference, and against what will be an inevitable defeat otherwise.

This slogan is a call for unity among the proletariat, whether they be young, old, unemployed, immigrant or refugee.

This slogan is a call to unite with the most militant layers among the Native nations who refuse to recognize the Canadian Parliament, except than to be the organizer of their own oppression. This slogan when carried forward by the most conscious forces among the proletariat, can offer the proletariat a real political perspective: the actions of the revolutionary proletariat to transform society. This action must be first and foremost the expression of the rejection of bourgeois politics in a conscious and unified way. By organizing actions, through meetings and protests, through the massive distribution and publication of leaflets and newspapers throughout the country, these revolutionary actions represent **a real threat** to the apparatus of domination of the bourgeoisie. They reveal and expose to the eyes of many the deeply unfair nature of this system ruled by a tiny minority.

There will be those that will criticize us who boycott by saying that we are playing the game of the rightists. Some forces on the left often use this argument: "One can try to rebalance bourgeois parliamentarism by calling for proportional representation". In either case, whether it be two-headed or three-headed, it remains the party of the bourgeoisie. What really matters is that in all cases, the same interests prevail, both in government and in opposition. Regardless of parliamentary representation, the nature of Parliament itself remains the same.

2. A call for revolutionary May Day demonstrations in Montreal and Toronto in 2011:

For several years, the Revolutionary Communist Party, along with various radical forces, is actively participating in an anti-capitalist and revolutionary demonstration in Montreal on May Day. As the trade unions have given up with the revolutionary and internationalist tradition of May Day, the initiative must be spread to other Canadian cities as expressing the unity of the combative proletariat.

3. A Call to set up proletarian revolutionary action committees in Ontario and across Canada, wherever possible. These committees will do things like:

- participate in the writing and circulation of a Canada-wide newspaper to serve the proletariat and the oppressed masses;
- organize local campaigns put forth by the Canadian Revolutionary Congress (the Boycott the Elections campaign, May Day demonstration, distribution of leaflets and newspapers);
- support the peoples’ wars in India, in the Philippines and in Nepal;
- establish links with organizations and/or Native activists;
- and will be the embryo of a new proletarian movement which will unite different circles, among youth, women and workers of all origins, etc.

4. Make THE RED FLAG/LE DRAPEAU ROUGE newspaper a Canada-wide publication whose purpose is to spread communism and proletarian revolution all across the country:

For over 15 years, *Le Drapeau Rouge/The Red Flag* newspaper has sought to build and organize the working class by sharing in their struggles, by popularizing revolutionary and anti-capitalist slogans, by spreading communist views and defending people’s wars and people’s struggles from all over the world. This paper is essential to unite and organize the revolutionary forces around slogans and campaigns that will have a real impact across the country. The Political Information Bureau of the RCP, which publishes this newspaper, calls on all activists to contribute and to disseminate it throughout the country.

Support these proposals for creating a movement and for building the class struggle!

By adopting these proposals and slogans, the Canadian Revolutionary Congress will mark a real break with a leftist movement that no longer meets the needs of the struggle for the proletariat and the oppressed, whether here in Canada or elsewhere.

This struggle requires a movement that will learn to fight. This is what is meant by a movement to defend the oppressed masses, the proletariat and the exploited. This will be everything but bourgeois politics, where there is no democracy for the poor.

We will learn to fight, to organize, to act and to participate in revolutionary actions in whatever forms they may take.

We will no longer separate the immediate struggles from the political struggle of the proletariat, which is to make revolution against the bourgeois dictatorship of the capitalists.

We will go into the deepest strata of the proletariat through propaganda and by the revolutionary actions.

We will prepare a new class struggle in Canada!

(Text submitted by the CRC Organizing Committee)