

Canadian Capitalism Will Cave

Only Workers Can Stand Up to Trump

Trump's threat to impose sweeping tariffs may have been put on pause but make no mistake: this marks a sea change in the relations between the U.S. imperialist behemoth and its Canadian junior partner. Trump aims to shore up the U.S.'s declining global dominance by confronting China, further immiserating neocolonies like Mexico and putting the squeeze on allies like Canada. Whatever the specific ebbs and flows, the long-term course of demanding submission and concessions from Canada and Mexico (and soon the EU) will not change.

In response, Trudeau and the premiers are rallying the population to "defend Canada" and threatening retaliatory measures. But puffed-up chests aside, the Canadian ruling class will bend a knee to Trump for one simple reason: they have no choice since their interests are tied to American imperialism. Only the working class acting as an independent force can wage a struggle against Trump.

It is American hegemony that underwrites the alliance between the U.S. and Canada, allowing the latter to strut as small-fry imperialists on the world stage. Trudeau begs Trump to honour the current terms of this "historic" relationship, but its foundations are being swept away as the U.S. demands new terms. The Canadian rulers will do whatever it takes to defend this "most successful economic, military and security partnership the world has ever seen."

Whether Liberals or Tories are in charge, they will cave and follow the Trump path of ruin as soon as they can. It's not just about tariffs. Surrendering to Trump will mean that Canada's ruling class will have to align itself with his foreign and domestic policies, i.e., a more aggressive and confrontational course for U.S. imperialism. And they will have to further squeeze the working class at home.

Workers here have plenty of reasons to hate what Trump is doing. The still-looming trade war will be devastating for workers, including in the U.S. In Canada, it will mean mass layoffs, plant closures, inflation and further slashing of social programs as the economy tanks. But the response of the union leaders and NDP to this crisis offers only disaster. They have locked arms with the Trudeau government and provincial premiers in a crusade for Canadian national unity, cheering on Ottawa's retaliatory tariffs in the name of "standing up for Canada." Such tariffs would only further intensify the drive to a catastrophic trade war, fueling inflation at home and hurting workers in the U.S. as well. Imperialist-sponsored trade barriers are a brake on the productive forces internationally and can only reinforce the parasitical nature of the U.S. economy

and that of its Canadian lackey. ***No to retaliatory tariffs!***

Trudeau, Doug Ford, Jagmeet Singh and the rest blather that "we're all in this together" and "Canada is not for sale." But the lame-duck Liberal government is already slashing social programs to pay for stepped-up "border security" at Trump's behest. As part of the deal to stall the tariffs, Trudeau announced that nearly 10,000 front-line personnel will be assigned to work at the border while a new "Canada-U.S. Joint Strike Force" will be set up. Much more, and much worse, will follow.

Faced with this situation, the working class needs to fight to defend its own interests. Preparations must be made for defensive strike actions against the coming layoffs and austerity attacks. Use the month of respite to build alliances among workers across the country and with unions south of the border. But that requires a struggle against the current union leadership, which is beholden to the capitalists.

Take the auto industry which faces massive layoffs and plant closures under the threatened tariffs. Workers will need to fight in defense of jobs, including through strike action. But rather than pointing to a road of struggle jointly with auto workers in the U.S. and Mexico, the Unifor leadership has allied with the auto bosses and the Trudeau government. With union president Lana Payne running point for the government on bodies like the Canada U.S. Trade Council, Unifor looks to Ottawa to "hit back hard and fast" against the Trump tariffs.

The workers cannot take a single step forward if they remain tied to the Canadian capitalists, who are not allies against Trump but class enemies who will surrender to Washington at the earliest opportunity. Instead, workers must struggle ***against*** the U.S. and Canadian imperialists, forging a fighting alliance of workers in Canada and Quebec with the Mexican and American working classes. A break with Canadian national unity is essential for the workers of English Canada to unite with the workers of Quebec, including by fighting for Québécois national liberation. And while of course Quebec should be independent, it is illusory to think that this would somehow make the Quebec capitalists independent from the American behemoth. The fate of workers of Quebec, no less than Canadian workers, will depend on organizing a real opposition to U.S. imperialism.

As we enter this new and dangerous political period, the question of working-class leadership is posed sharply. To go forward, the labour movement must be broken from the current pro-imperialist leaders of the trade unions and NDP and set on a course of internationalist class struggle.

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