

For an Independent, Socialist Canada

**A socialist
program for
Canadian
trade unionists**

Issued by the NDP-Waffle Labour Committee

SECTION I:

TOWARDS A SOCIALIST TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

As socialists in the trade union movement we recognize that the crisis in the Canadian economy cannot be solved by tinkering with the present social system. As activists in our unions, we believe that organized labour must become the vital centre of a movement to put power into the hands of all the working people of Canada. The cautious ways of the past do not remain an option for labour. We are under assault today as corporations and governments are determined to break our strength and force working people to pay the pay the price for economic readjustment.

The right wing establishment in the trade union movement leads us off the fields of battle. They have failed to mobilize our movement in the fight against the corporations. They have attempted to replace rank and file militancy with bureaucracy. They have tried to substitute submissions to the government for industrial action. Our task is to revitalize the labour movement by mobilizing for rank and file control.

CANADA AND THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

Our country has become a resource base and consumer market in the American empire. American corporations dominate our economy, deciding whether and where the people of Canada shall have jobs. The anti-labour decisions of the American government to hold down wages are supported with enthusiasm by cabinet ministers in Ottawa and in the provincial capitals.

The decisions of the corporations intervene in the lives of all our people. Today young Canadians face a bleak future in the midst of wealth and potential opportunity. Women are exploited by low wages and inequality on the job, and by male domination in their personal and social relations. French Canadians are held in a position of inferiority by American and English Canadian corporations, and subjugated as a nation. Our native peoples, the Indians

and Eskimos, are exploited and degraded. Immigrants receive second-class citizen treatment, even in many unions. Poverty and consequent illness, especially of children, affects many thousands of our fellow Canadians. Pollution afflicts our cities, threatens to destroy our lakes and rivers and the very environment which keeps us alive. These are but some of the problems which confront the overwhelming majority of Canadians.

Working people and students, farmers and middle class people, men and women are beginning to share a common cause. Canadians are beginning to organize in opposition to a social order in which they are doubly exploited, first by the huge American corporations, which have taken ownership and control of the key sectors of the Canadian economy. Second, by the junior partners of the U.S. monopolies, the Canadian corporate elite, which has been profiting directly through the sell-out of Canada. Canadian capitalists have betrayed the national interest — the interests of both the English Canadian and Quebec nations.

LABOUR MUST LEAD THE NATION

A new people's alliance must replace this ruling elite. Only the working class can establish and lead an alliance that will direct Canada towards a new future. The labour movement must lead our country towards independence from American corporations, towards a society freed from exploitation — foreign and domestic.

The time has come for the working people to take over the leadership of our nation. Workers in English Canada and Quebec should strive to achieve a voluntary socialist alliance against the domination of our two nations by the American Empire.

Labour must become the central force in the struggle for an independent, socialist Canada. An independent socialist Canada will combine public ownership of the resource industries, the financial institutions and major corporations with workers' control. This is the only way to transfer real power from the exploiters who have sold Canada to the American Empire and to end the rule of the American Empire within Canada. With the working people in the lead, other sections of society such as students and farmers, will join increasingly in the struggle to build an independent socialist Canada.

Labour must no longer be satisfied with the limited form of affiliation we have to labour's party, the NDP. Our affiliation must involve more than a platform for the right wing trade union leadership and a collection agency for the NDP. We know that the political

and economic struggles of workers are profoundly linked. That is why we must participate in the NDP both as individual members and as affiliates determined to make felt the voice of the rank and file in the councils of the party.

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY IN CRISIS

The current crisis in the economy, which imperils the future of the working people of Canada and threatens the very survival of the nation, makes it imperative that we come to grips with the immediate and long term aspects of our struggle.

Today we are again hearing about cut-backs, lay-offs and "belt-tightening" and again it is the same people whose belts must be tightened.

But history does not have to repeat itself, for Canadian workers are not helpless in the face of the threat against the living standards fought for and achieved over the years. A potentially powerful trade-union movement has been built in Canada and it is this movement that can become the focal-point for struggle now.

The Canadian trade-union movement was not built by the roadmen, the labour-lawyers, or the whiz-kid economists. It was built on the job, in the factories and picket-lines by the creativity unchained by ever-growing numbers of workers banding together to fight for their own interests.

The source of strength of the movement does not lie in the broadloomed offices of the "Canadian Directors" and "Regional Vice-Presidents" or in the hands of the labour "civil service" created to serve the bureaucracy of the labour statesmen. Our strength lies in the devotion, determination and spirit of the rank-and-file militant. *Our aim is not to summon-up the past but to express confidence based upon the radical, militant traditions of the Canadian working class.*

RIVALRY AMONG THE GIANTS

Today, we are witnessing resurgence of rivalry among the chief capitalist countries of the United States, Japan and Western Europe.

American capitalism is in serious trouble at home and abroad. As a dependent economy, we bear the brunt of these troubles. The fundamental cause of the crisis of the American dollar is not the unfair practices of other countries, but rather U.S. military spending abroad, particularly in Indo-China and the outflow of U.S. capital in buying out the economies of other countries.

Nixon's economic moves affect Canada in a highly selective fashion. The ten per cent surcharge strikes at Canadian exports of manufactured goods to the United States, but does not affect the export of raw materials. The surcharge and American legislation to encourage multi-national corporations to shift production from branch plants abroad to the United States further reduce Canada to the level of a resource and extractive economy. This means plant shutdowns and lay-offs in the industrial sector of our economy. It means permanent high unemployment in Canada.

The surcharge simply adds further pressure on the Canadian economy to continue to move in the direction desired by American capitalism. Whether the surcharge remains or not, the effects of the branch plant economy will continue to be our most serious problem.

Two significant steps remain before the economic takeover of Canada is complete: the conclusion of long term agreements to achieve complete American security of access to Canadian resources and the removal of all remaining barriers to the sale of American manufactured goods in Canada. The immediate agenda is clear: the completion of the continental energy deal between Canada and the U.S. and the removal of the protective clauses for Canada in the Canada-U.S. auto pact.

So clear is the direction of the current economic crisis that even the Prime Minister and his leading ministers have admitted what the American policies mean for us. As trade unionists we must do more than recognize the situation; we must organize to prevent disaster from striking the working people of our country.

WHO PAYS THE PRICE?

The crisis has a direct meaning for all Canadian working people — organized or unorganized, employed or unemployed. High unemployment invites corporations to use strike-breakers and to heighten speed-up on the job. And of course, professional strikebreaking companies, capitalist governments and the courts make their services available to the corporations. On the picket lines we face scabs, goons and police while injunctions seek to disarm us. On the job, the company does what it likes with us. In Sudbury, when Inco workers in the smelter with bleeding noses refuse to continue work in an atmosphere poisoned by sulphur dioxide, they are sent home and penalized. Communities that we have built can be destroyed or crippled by decisions made by corporations with distant head offices. Our labor has built the productive capacity and the

communities of our nation, but those who appropriate the profits decide our future.

The labour movement must face the crisis head-on. We must recognize that our movement has not done that. When in the midst of an economic crisis, we see some unions engaged in raiding during strikes with the approval of high-level officials in the movement, we know how profound the changes must be.

The labour movement must fight the immediate battles that lie ahead as part of the longterm struggle for an independent socialist Canada.

STOP WAGE FREEZE

It is already perilously late for us to begin to fight wage controls. We know that government spokesmen in Canada are awaiting the first opportunity to copy the American wage controls.

We must oppose a wage freeze because it is class legislation whose purpose is to heighten profits and to render the labour movement impotent. The chief cause of inflation is the drive of the corporations to achieve their targeted profit rates. In Canada we have been victims of the inflationary rise in U.S. commodity prices because of the war in Indo-China. Our resource deals with the U.S. also tie the Canadian price to rapidly rising American prices for resources, thus raising consumer and production costs in Canada.

And yet the labour movement is exposed on the question of wage controls because two thirds of Canadian workers remain unorganized. *To defend the labour movement, we must extend the labour movement.* Organization of the unorganized will allow all workers to fight for a decent standard of living. Workers must fight wage controls through *political* action and should the government attempt to impose such controls, through *direct industrial* action.

We recognize that under capitalism even in the best of union contracts, we receive only a fraction of what our labour produces. For this reason, we must never allow our wages to be tied to productivity. We should refuse to have our incomes frozen at the present limited percentage of our labour's worth, no matter what the productivity level is.

At the same time as we resist the idea of wage controls, we must also beware of heightened pressures to return to the ten-hour day, even if it is on the basis of a four-day week. Some companies in the United States have started a ten-hour day as a means of combatting "absenteeism" because of its effect on peak efficiency

and profits. Unfortunately some union leaders support the longer work day.

Absenteeism is the result of speed-up, boredom and indignity that most workers experience on the job. We must vigorously defend our immediate interests by fighting speed-up and by protecting our working conditions which are constantly being undermined between contracts. *Above all, we need to shorten, not lengthen the working day.*

WOMEN : DOUBLE EXPLOITATION

In addition to these battles which directly affect all working people, women workers face a double exploitation. Over 30 percent of the Canadian labour force are female workers and over half of these women are married. Women work for the same reason men work — because they have to and because they are used as a cheap labour pool, in much the same way as are immigrant workers.

They face low wages, low job categories, and for the most part, wage discrimination and restricted occupational opportunities.

The power of women to affect their conditions of work is even less than that of men. The vast majority of women workers are unorganized — only 17% belong to trade unions. Not only has the trade union movement seriously neglected organizing women workers, it has accepted society's view of women as less capable leaders and organizers. The result has been male domination of unions with a large female membership.

It falls on the labour movement as a whole to make the issue of equality for women one of its chief concerns. Clearly, demands for job equality, equal educational and employment opportunities, child care facilities must come to the forefront. At the same time workers must bring to an end the secondary position which women occupy in their own institutions. Failure to do so will only weaken and divide working people.

THE BRASS

Before the labour movement will be able to mobilize its great strength for immediate and long range battles, we must realize that under a right-wing bureaucracy, the official trade union movement has become a major institution buttressing private corporate enterprise.

Through years of experience it has become clear that the right-

wing establishment of the unions automatically accept basic capitalist assumptions about society and how workers should relate to it. Because they accept these premises, they lend support to the capitalist system and those who run it for the big corporations.

The right-wing establishment believe that corporate capitalism, with all its weaknesses is the best, most "democratic" society for the workers; that there is really no full alternative society that could be devised to better meet our basic needs. They deny that there is a fundamental conflict of interests between corporations and workers. They say that goodwill, reason and skillful bargaining can resolve all conflicts to the mutual advantage of "management and labour." They believe that the capitalists are essential to the productive process and will not challenge their right to own and control the economy and make the basic decisions that determine the shape of workers' lives.

Not only that. The right-wing leadership accepts the multi-national corporations as the best form of economic activity in the world. They believe that Canadian well-being is dependent on our ties with the American economy and on American leadership. At bottom, they have no stomach for the struggle to free Canada from the American empire.

For the present establishment in the labour movement, the task of unions is restricted to improving workers' incomes and fringe benefits, within the existing system of corporate ownership. They oppose any challenge by unions to the capitalist system itself and to domination by the American Empire.

The right-wing leadership defends a trade union structure in which Canadians do not ultimately control their own labor movement. They defend this unparalleled situation by appealing to the natural inclination of workers everywhere to meet in common struggle across oceans and international boundaries. They maintain that the Canadian working class is incapable of standing on its own feet, and of organizing and controlling the affairs of its own unions. They oppose the re-structuring of the Canadian labour movement to suit its own needs, sovereign and independent — which is the only basis by which international ties can be in the interests of workers in Canada and abroad.

With such a set of assumptions it is not hard to see why unions are being reduced to "business" organizations. From such premises it is evident why unions are being robbed of their militancy, rank-and-file control, and strong motivation to organize the unorganized as being too costly and unbusiness-like. From such a philosophy of support for private corporate enterprise it is not hard to be seduced

into support for wage controls (even if it includes so-called price controls), a ten-hour day, or even wages which are tied to productivity.

THE CHOICE: "BUSINESS UNIONISM" OR WORKING CLASS POLITICS

To combat such corporation-inspired propositions and even more to defend the many-sided political, cultural, human as well as economic interests of the working people, requires an entirely different approach. It requires a socialist analysis and a full socialist alternative.

That is our objective. We offer and will fight for a complete socialist alternative to the policies of the right-wing establishment.

SECTION 2:

A PROGRAM FOR IMMEDIATE DISCUSSION AND ACTION IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

As a program for immediate discussion and action, we propose the following:

1. THE MILITANT ECONOMIC STRUGGLES

against the American and Canadian bosses. This includes economic struggles for improvements in all areas, especially the shorter week, voluntary overtime, plant working conditions, and a resolute battle against pollution. Unqualified opposition to a wage freeze;

2. THE DEMAND FOR WORKERS' CONTROL MUST BE PRESSED

This requires the systematic challenging of the prerogatives of management, now written into contracts — in such fields as firing and lay-offs, plant moves and shutdowns;

3. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE MOVEMENT TO COMBAT UNEMPLOYMENT

Full support to a program such as that adopted by the London Labour Council in April 1971. Such a program would emphasize the fight against plant shutdowns, through workers' occupation of

such plants, to force immediate government appointment of a public trusteeship and where necessary *public ownership* of such plants;

4. RANK AND FILE CONTROL

To mobilize for the battles ahead, we must breathe new life into the *movement at the local level*. The right wing has consolidated its hold by systematically removing power from the local level. *Rank-and-file control must be achieved by mobilizing in the locals to assert power there*. Workers in the locals must make the final decisions about strikes and contracts. They must have the right to recall bargaining committees. We must end the rule of bureaucracy that leads to non-involvement. We must build a *militant shop-stewards movement* as the backbone of militant unions under rank-and-file control;

5. TO PRESS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF THE BASIC AND STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES OF THE RIGHT OF CANADIAN WORKERS, AS AN INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS, TO DECIDE THEIR ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL POLICIES FREE FROM ANY CONTROL OUTSIDE THIS COUNTRY.

Canadian socialism requires a sovereign Canadian working class. The principle involved is the right of nations, including socialist nations, to self-determination. And just as we English-Canadian socialists recognize the right of the Quebec nation and of the working class of Quebec to self-determination, we claim a similar right for the Canadian working class as a whole (English Canadian and Quebec).

For the Canadian working class to keep itself in permanent political shackles, so that some of its most important decisions may require the formal agreement of trade-union officials in Washington or Detroit is to stifle initiative and self-determination in political and economic action. While emphasizing *international solidarity* with American and other workers it is inconceivable that Canadian workers can take the lead in *winning an independent socialist Canada when their largest mass organizations are controlled in the USA*. In the long run Canadian workers must achieve full control of their unions, which means completely sovereign and independent Canadian unions;

6. CLASS SOLIDARITY ACROSS BORDER

The best way Canadian workers can express international solidarity with American workers is by weakening and eliminating American Imperialist control of Canada. By taking control and ownership of our resources we will seriously weaken the American

military machine and make it more difficult for the U.S. imperialists to launch adventures of the Vietnam variety. A clear sharp fight to weaken American imperialist control in Canada will be the best contribution we can make to the struggle of American workers for their own liberation. The fight of American workers against the huge U.S. monopolies will be an important contribution to the struggle of the Canadian working people for liberation from these very same corporations. Our alliance with the American workers must be a voluntary alliance of equals; not the relationship of one class with inferior organizational rights to another with a superior status within the trade union movement. American socialists, with an understanding of the right of nations to self-determination have no difficulty supporting this basic principle. We must advance toward the day when the Canadian labour movement becomes a vehicle for genuine internationalism. This will be achieved through the expression of support for working people and their struggles throughout the world. Crucial to this will be our opposition to continued exploitation of working people abroad by Canadian capitalists, particularly in the West Indies and Latin America;

7. AN INDEPENDENT CANADIAN WORKING CLASS

Once the strategic issue of the right and the need of Canadian workers to have Canadian unions is formulated the question becomes one of determining the process by which this is to be achieved. Among the steps suggested are the following:

- (a) In "international" unions, to press for a Canadian convention prior to the American international convention. This convention to *set all policies* for the Canadian section of the union, to choose a Canadian executive board, and to elect all officers active in Canada. Workers in Quebec to decide how their special national needs will be met.
- (b) The Canadian district to *publish its own paper to deal with Canadian problems.*
- (c) All funds collected in Canada must remain under the control of the union in Canada.
- (d) Reverter clauses in union constitutions should be deleted in the interest of Canadian rank-and-file control.
- (e) In all constitutions governing Canadian sections of international unions, *the right of the Canadian section to secede must be recognized.*
- (f) Promote efforts to strengthen the trade union movement in Canada by uniting separate unions now operating in like or parallel industries. This would require the right of unions in

Canada to embark on such a rational program, whether or not parallel moves had previously been made in the USA.

- (g) All legitimate trade unions must have the right to belong to the CLC regardless of jurisdictional conflicts.

8. ORGANIZE THE UNORGANIZED

Undertake a Canada-wide drive to organize the five million unorganized workers in Canada. This drive to be co-ordinated on a national, provincial and local basis. The motive behind the drive is to bring all working people — those who work for a wage or salary — into the trade union movement. The objective is united economic and political action — for the immediate advancement of the interests of the working class and for the strategic objective of winning power for the working people;

9. PRESS FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCE INDUSTRIES

Raise the issue of public ownership of *financial institutions and major corporations*;

10. IMMIGRANT WORKERS AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The Labour movement must go into a concerted drive to organize the immigrant worker.

It must be clearly understood, in doing this, that immigrant workers have special needs and interests which must be considered. We must demand that institutions with which these workers come in contact (compensation boards, for example) eliminate language and information barriers. These barriers have too long resulted in gross discrimination against immigrant workers. At the same time, changes also have to be made in our unions, so that the composition of the leadership, and the language and form of union publications, properly recognize the number and importance of immigrant members. We must no longer expect immigrant fellow workers to accept token representation and token recognition of their interests.

11. WOMEN AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

We must take a hard look at our own unions, and accept a critical challenge — to transform our own thinking and the union structures so that women are seen and treated as equals in a common struggle. This means that women must be given proper representation in the leadership of our unions, and at our conventions. Only then will our political and trade union demands reflect their particular needs and problems. The labour movement must fight for equal treatment of women workers — in terms of wages, job classifications, job opportunities, and in providing facilities such as day-care to remove

the added burdens of women. (In fact, we might even begin by providing day-care at our own conventions!) These goals must become a top priority for organized labour — not just something we pay lip service to.

12. TO HEIGHTEN THE POLITICAL-CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE WORKERS

Through political action on such issues as: public ownership of Canadian resource industries; stopping the resource sell-out to the American Empire; the fight against unemployment and shut-downs; the fight against anti-labour legislation, injunctions and a wage freeze; for decent minimum wages (\$3.00 per hour); equal rights for women and abortion on demand; an end to Canada's complicity in the war in Indo-China; and stopping shipment of Canadian materials which are used by the U.S. military in this war;

13. JOINT ACTION

Such political action to be given its focus through *joint action of the whole trade union movement and the NDP, with which all unions should be affiliated*. Participation in the struggle to transform "*Labour's political arm,*" the NDP, into a true socialist party. To join with the rest of the left-socialist (Waffle) movement in the fight against right-wing policies and to engage masses of workers in socialist politics and socialist education.

This is an outline of a program that needs to be discussed and developed further by the broadest participation of socialist-minded workers in the trade unions.

JOIN THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN THE UNIONS

We have formed this socialist caucus, because Canadian working people need a broad socialist movement which will help organize the people to assume power and build an independent socialist Canada. Our objective is not an independent political party, separate from the NDP. Our political task is to help transform the NDP into a full socialist party — along with the rest of the left-socialist (Waffle) movement.

This is an appeal to all workers. We invite you to participate, to ask your questions and contribute to the development of a left-socialist movement in the trade unions. We recognize that many workers are disillusioned or turned off by the right-wing NDP leadership even though they give electoral support to NDP candidates. If you, too, are critical of the course adopted by the NDP and trade

union brass, join us and help formulate a strategy to change the NDP into a true "political arm of labour" and the unions into militant organizations of the working class.

Our criticism of the present leadership is not on the basis of whether they are nice guys — but on the basis of what they stand for. Our criticism is not personal, but on matters of principle and program. Our object as a left-socialist group is to convince a majority of trade unionists in Canada that we need to drastically change course away from support of corporate capitalism and towards an independent socialist Canada.

Join the movement for an Independent Socialist Canada — in the Unions and the NDP.



Join the Waffle Labour Caucus

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Check one

— I am a member of the NDP.

— I am eligible for membership in the NDP.