

Maxime Bernier lapsed security escapade: the nail in the Canadian Conservative Coffin.

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PEJ News - Joan Russow - Global Compliance Research Project - In the media frenzy over the Bernier Security lapse, we must not forget the numerous other Conservative government misdeeds. Harper must be recalled from Europe before he increases the perception of Canada as an international pariah. It is long past the time when a non-confidence motion must be passed, and the Conservative government must fall.

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The Canadian Conservative government, from its being investigated by the Chief electoral Officer's for violations of the Elections Act; through its failure to adopt the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, through its bombing and destroying of Afghanistan, through its violation of the Convention Against Torture by transferring prisoners; through its copy-cat establishing of "no-fly list; through its recently proposed increased espionage, misnamed 'Intelligence', in Afghanistan, through its reluctance to seriously address climate change, through its willingness to undermine environmental and health regulations and standards by its negotiating the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP); through its use of the WTO to undermine EU restrictions against Genetically engineered food and crops, and hormone treated beef; through its willingness to destroy biodiversity in its quest to satisfy the US demand for "reliable source of energy in the oil sands, and to protect the Canadian agribusiness industry; through its failure to support the human right to water, through its covenant with the Conference of Defence Association to promote militarism; to Maxime Bernier's Security risk escapade, must finally fall.

In the media frenzy over the Bernier Security lapse, we must not forget the numerous other Conservative government misdeeds.

CANADA'S 4 B CAMPAIGN IN AFGHANISTAN

The Canadian "new" conservative government euphemistically calls their campaign in Afghanistan a 3 D campaign: Defence, Diplomacy and Development. A more accurate description now would be a 5 B campaign: Bomb, Blast, Bribe, Bumble campaign. Maxime Bernier, the recent bumbling Foreign Affairs Minister, left a sensitive NATO/ISAF Afghanistan document in the home of his girl friend who claims that her apartment was bugged. While the

Conservative government can be faulted for numerous egregious policies, the Bernier Security lapse may be the nail in the Conservative government coffin.

CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS MISPLACED SPENDING PRIORITIES

The Conservative government is spending at least 18 billion a year on the so-called Defence budget, which is close to 10% of the 201 billion available to spend on Federal programs [In 2007-2008 revenue was 244 billion, with a outstanding debt of 501 billion, and after paying 33 billion on interest on the debt, Canada has about 201 billion to spend on Federal programs]. Other misplaced spending priorities are Federal Programs such as (i) 300 million on Atomic Energy Corporation Limited (AECL) and 30 million on the promotion of nuclear energy; (ii) millions spent on participating in US paranoia, including 30 million on the Security and Prosperity Partnership, 50 million on biometrics and 6 billion in enhanced drivers licences; 43 million for Communication Security Establishment) (CSE). (iii) millions spent on subsidizing the fossil fuel industry etc.

The Conservative government not only engages in misplaced spending priorities but also reduces the Federal revenue available for social programs by providing tax breaks for Corporations.

And it is difficult to assess the full cost of Canada's participation in the US action of revenge against Afghanistan. Apart from the military costs of engaging in an offensive intervention and occupation of Afghanistan, the Conservative government has budgeted one billion over a period of time for rehabilitation of the destruction to which Canada has contributed and continues to contribute. Thus the Media's exposing and sustaining reports on the "new" Conservative misdeeds is essential to the demise of this Conservative government.

THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS COVENANT WITH THE CDA AND CDAI

It was revealed on May 16, 2008 that the Department of Defence had entered into a "covenant" – a 500,000 grant- to the Conference of Defence Association (CDA) and its "charitable" wing the Conference of Defence Association Institute (CDAI) . The CDA is an umbrella group that includes as one of its members the Canadian Defence and Security industries. In the agreement between the Department of Defence and the CDA and CDAI , the latter is described as an "independent" group, The CDA and CDAI in exchange for the remuneration have undertaken to carry out "charitable work" such as the 13 point grant requirements:

The CDA (or the CDAI) will undertake the following activities in each fiscal year:

1. Provide tangible input into legislative and policy governmental work.
2. Secure a minimum of 24 extended invitations to CDA staff to participate in meetings or briefings.
3. Maintain a minimum of 12 member associations.
4. Maintain a minimum of 17 associate member associations
5. Maintain a minimum overall membership of at least 100,000 members.

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6. Attain a minimum of 200 requests for information. i
7. Attain a minimum of 29 media references to the CDA by national or regional journalists and reporters.
8. Attain the publication of a minimum of 15 opinion pieces (including op-eds and letters to the editor in national or regional publications).
9. Attain a minimum of 100 requests by media for radio television interviews and materials.
10. Secure a minimum of 25 extended invitations to CDA staff to participate in conferences, seminars, or round tables.
11. Secure the participation of the minimum following target audiences at CDA symposia, seminars or other related events:
 - .a. General Public/Members of Non-Governmental Organizations: 500
 - b. Media: 18
 - c. Members of Parliament Senators: 14
 - d. Academia: 80
 - e. Military and Government officials:150
12. Publish at least 4 issues of "On Track" each year with a distribution of 800 copies per quarter, and at least 1 major study per year with a distribution of 1500 copies, in addition to electronic distribution of all publications to a minimum of 750 targeted recipients.
13. Secure at least 20 submissions from non-CDA staff to "On Track".

CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS ARRANT INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOUR.

The Conservative minority government has seriously discredited any legitimate international reputation that Canada might have had in the past.

The Media should deal with the myth that Canada' reputation is increased with its overt bravura and macho military intervention and occupation in Afghanistan and covert participation in Iraq. Canada's international reputation will increase if Canada is perceived to be a state that supports true security and not brute force.

Under the Conservative Government, Canada is now known for being one of four states that refused to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; one of a few states that have been reluctant to seriously address the issue of Climate Change; one of the states that opposed, at the International Human Rights Commission, the proposal for enshrining the human right to water; one of a number of states that have been recalcitrant in fulfilling its longstanding commitment to reallocated .7% of GDP for overseas aid, and as recently reported Canada has "scoffed" at seriously addressing the food crisis. The "new" Conservative Government also has been strengthening the Security and Prosperity Partnership agreement, which is furthering Canada's disregard for international peremptory norms.

CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT MUST BE PREVENTED FROM FURTHER UNDERMINING THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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Harper will be attending the Bonn International conference on the Convention on Biological Diversity. Throughout the years, since the negotiation of the Convention on Biodiversity IN 1992, Canada has continually played the role of protecting the interests of Agribusiness. For example, Canada has failed to invoke the precautionary principle which could have been used to justify the banning of genetically engineered food and crops. The Canadian government has argued that under the Biosafety Protocol which is intended to not ban but monitor the transfer of living modified organisms (LMO), a high percentage of adventitious material- residue from the shipment of LMO should be permitted in crates which are used to ship non LMOs. The Conservative government must be prevented from further undermining the Convention and its protocol

IN CONCLUSION , CRUCIAL ROLE OF THE MEDIA

On the April 24, edition of CBC National News, there was a discussion on the “At issue” Panel about the “media agenda”: “Is the media obsessed with political scandal, and ignoring what really matters?” The pundits ruminated on whether the media preoccupation with Conservative misdeeds was relevant to Canadian citizens. The majority of the Pundits on the “At Issue” panel indicated that citizens were immune to Conservative misdeeds and more interested in economic issues that affected them personally.