

Québec Solidaire intensifies its reactionary campaign for an independent capitalist state

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In a statement released with great fanfare under the title “Nouveau Québec—Construire un pays qui nous ressemble” (A New Quebec—Build a country that looks like us), Québec Solidaire (QS) has once again sought to give a “progressive” veneer to the reactionary *indépendantiste* program, that is the push to create a separate capitalist Quebec republic.

The document stands out for its banality and promotion of Quebec nationalist nonsense. In introducing it, the pseudo-left organization that is the third party in the Quebec legislature declares, “We want to transform Quebec, to build together a fairer, greener, freer country.” This type of empty rhetoric and phrase-mongering characterizes the entire statement.

While workers and young people around the world are confronted with the genocide in Gaza, the return of fascism, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ever growing social inequality and the danger of a third world war, none of these burning issues are so much as mentioned—let alone seriously addressed—by QS.

Nowhere in the document do the words “war,” “capitalism,” “fascism,” “worker,” “class,” “inflation” or “economic crisis” appear. Not a single working class struggle, whether in Quebec (which just witnessed the largest public-sector worker strike movement in decades), Canada or elsewhere in the world, is mentioned.

Scrupulously avoiding any mention of class struggle, Québec Solidaire refers, and in the most amorphous terms, to the promotion of “social justice.” It makes no concrete reference to the socio-economic situation, to the crumbling of public services, the housing crisis, or the spread of precarious employment and economic insecurity, revealing thereby the social gulf that separates the wealthy middle-class elements for whom QS speaks from working people.

QS seeks to convince Quebec workers that they have more in common with the Péladeaus, Desmarais and other French-speaking billionaires than with workers elsewhere in North America, who speak a different language but are subject to the same capitalist exploitation. It advocates the fiction of “national unity,” obscuring the deep class divisions that run through and characterize contemporary Quebec society, thus reinforcing the domination of the ruling capitalist class.

In reality, the unprecedented integration of the world economy, expressed most sharply in the objective unification of the working class on every continent through the globalization of production processes, means that there can be no “national” solution to the major problems facing working people in Quebec, Canada or anywhere else—be it the climate crisis, pandemics, mass poverty or the danger of nuclear world war.

Only the unification of the international working class in a common struggle against bankrupt capitalism and the outmoded system of nation-states in which it is historically rooted can offer humanity a progressive way out.

QS legitimizes ruling-class Quebec chauvinism

Québec Solidaire is promoting the separatist project at a time when the province’s Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government and ruling elite have whipped up a Quebec chauvinist fever. This finds its most acute expression in the Parti Québécois’ incessant agitation against immigration, and the province’s linguistic and religious minorities.

The specific political service QS renders to the ruling class is to provide a “progressive” or “leftist” veil to a program whose anti-democratic and historically retrograde character has long been manifest.

At their inception, over half a century ago, the Parti Québécois (PQ) and the mainstream Quebec sovereignty movement sought to associate their nationalist program with a “projet de société” (social project) and claimed that independence would open the door to progressive reforms. This claim has since been discarded and replaced by the language of ethnic nationalism.

It is precisely this chauvinist turn in the Quebec sovereignist circles, to which Québec Solidaire has been oriented since its foundation, that the QS seeks to camouflage with the fraudulent promise that an independent Quebec would be “democratic” and “inclusive.” This does not prevent QS from aligning itself with the PQ’s plans to hold another independence referendum on the basis of an openly right-wing, national-exclusivist “Quebec First” program.

This is part of an international process. In response to the intensification of class struggle, ruling elites everywhere are whipping up chauvinism and xenophobia to develop a social base of support for war and reaction, and to divide the working class.

In Quebec, this takes the form of a hysterical anti-immigrant campaign, led by the CAQ (Coalition Avenir Québec) and enflamed by the PQ. “Out-of-control immigration” is blamed for the housing crisis, deteriorating public services and myriad other social problems caused by the capitalist crisis.

As with the CAQ’s other chauvinist initiatives targeting immigrants and linguistic minorities, Quebec Premier François Legault claims this campaign is aimed at ensuring “social cohesion.” That is, it is necessary to maintain the ruling class’s political-ideological domination and divide the working class, so as to prevent it from launching a unified struggle against rotting capitalism.

By insisting that workers in Quebec politically define themselves as “Québécois” rather than a contingent of the international working class, QS contributes to the bourgeoisie’s attempt to divide Quebec workers along ethnic and linguistic lines and keep them isolated from their class brothers and sisters in the rest of Canada, the US and overseas.

The anti-immigrant hysteria championed by Quebec’s ruling elite is the logical continuation of nearly two decades of stoking chauvinism. This has included the manufactured crisis over so-called “excessive accommodations” to cultural minorities, the Parti Québécois’ defunct

“Charter of Quebec Values,” and the Liberal Party’s Bill 62, whose key provisions were subsequently integrated into the CAQ’s Bill 21. The latter, in the name of “state secularism,” discriminates against religious minorities, especially Muslim women, who are prohibited from accessing or providing public services when wearing face coverings.

QS has justified all these toxic debates as “legitimate” and “necessary.” And today, not only is it adapting to the xenophobic rhetoric of the ruling class, it is giving its own spin to it. Several of its high-profile leaders, including its chief spokesman Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, have echoed the rhetoric of the far right, saying that immigration is an “aggravating factor” in the housing crisis.

QS and the environment: A nationalist approach to a global crisis

The only economic or social issue about which “Nouveau Québec” has anything say to beyond mere banalities is the climate crisis. QS writes: “Why independence? Because it gives us the levers we need to protect our environment.”

The environmental crisis is a planetary problem, caused by the impossibility of coordinated international action due to the rivalries between different nationally based capitalist cliques and their socially destructive pursuit of profit above all else. Yet QS presents the formation of an independent capitalist Quebec state as a mighty progressive lever for tackling it.

In reality, Québec Solidaire’s nationalist approach to the climate crisis reflects the interests of the Quebec bourgeoisie, which seeks to use its vast hydroelectric grid and expertise in renewable energies to capture a larger share of the lucrative “green capitalist” market.

A recent example is the case of NorthVolt, a Swedish manufacturer of batteries for electric cars. It has received massive support from the CAQ government to establish its first plant outside Sweden in Quebec, including billions in subsidies and authorization to bypass the province’s own environmental regulations.

Faced with public outrage at this plundering of public funds and disregard for the environment, QS has only criticized the CAQ for “sabotaging the social acceptability” of the project. It has also deplored, in its typical nationalistic fashion, that the government is doing business with a “foreign multinational.”

For QS, as for the CAQ and the entire Quebec ruling class, the real objective is to seize the opportunities for profit and geostrategic advantage that the “energy transition” brings, while using “pro-environment” rhetoric to manipulate the working class and young people.

As part of its argument that independence would fight climate change, QS asserts “our sovereignty would guarantee us total control over commercial rights of way,” which “would enable us to greatly hinder certain polluting exports from Canada, including first and foremost dirty oil from the Alberta tar sands.”

This is a nationalist fantasy that serves to conceal the bitter reality: any break of Quebec from the Canadian federal state would lead to intense ruling-class economic, geostrategic—and quite possibly military—conflicts over such sensitive issues as the division of the national debt and the delineation of national borders.

Just as significantly, QS criticizes Canada only as an “oil state,” but never as an imperialist state; one that has participated in every war of aggression launched by Washington in recent decades, including in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Libya. Today, QS is complicit in Canada’s support for Israel’s genocidal assault on the Palestinian people, and openly supports its participation in the NATO-instigated war against Russia.

These wars had and have nothing to do with “human rights,” Ottawa’s favorite pretext for its aggressive assertion of Canadian imperialist interests and one that QS invariably repeats. Rather they have been waged to advance the economic and geostrategic interests of the Canadian ruling class.

The fraud of a Constituent Assembly

QS’s references to the environment are merely a façade behind which lie the commercial ambitions and predatory goals of Quebec big business.

Similarly, its incessant prattle about a “Constituent Assembly”—the subject of one of “Nouveau Québec’s” four sections—aims to give a “democratic” air to the Quebec independence project by using vocabulary associated with the French Revolution of 1789, that is by referencing a key event from an entirely different socio-economic epoch.

QS’s attempt to sow the illusion that the separation of Quebec would allow “the people” to freely choose a new type of society where “everything would be possible” is a subterfuge.

In reality, this promise of wonders is a huge trap for the working class in Quebec and across Canada. The creation of an independent capitalist Quebec would inevitably entail violent power struggles between the various factions of the ruling class across Canada. Competing capitalist cliques would seek to bind working people to their interests and shift blame for secession’s adverse economic fallout onto their rivals through the vehement promotion of opposed national and regional identities.

It is revealing that QS cites as a model for Quebec independence India’s Constituent Assembly, which was formed as part of the process that led to the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent, under the aegis of its departing British colonial masters, into an expressly Muslim Pakistan and a predominantly Hindu India. Partition led to mass communal violence that left up to two million people dead and caused 16 to 20 million people to flee their homes, Hindu and Sikhs for India and Muslims for Pakistan.

Working to disguise the ultra-reactionary implications of national separatism, QS timidly criticizes the PQ’s ever more explicit push for Quebec independence on an ethno-nationalist and exclusivist basis. It advises the PQ to eschew appeals rooted in “resentment” and to adopt instead a more “open” and “unifying” discourse.

What a fraud! As noted above, QS has adapted to and connived in the ethno-chauvinist campaign incited by the entire ruling elite. And it has signaled its intention to join with the PQ—with which it maintains channels of communication and collaboration—and the YES camp in any future referendum on Quebec sovereignty.

The socialist-internationalist alternative

Encouraged by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois *indépendantiste* circles, notably the pseudo-socialist elements that publish the *Presse-oui à gauche* website, QS is contributing to a new eruption of Quebec chauvinism by renewing its campaign for Quebec’s separation.

The program advocated by QS is the reshuffling of the borders of North America to create a new imperialist state that would intensify the dismantling of public services and participate in great-power aggression and war by seeking membership in NATO and NORAD.

This program corresponds to the interests of a section of the Quebec ruling class that believes it would be able to cut a better deal with Washington and Wall Street while using anti-immigrant, anti-English

Quebec chauvinism to divide working people.

This project runs counter to the most fundamental objective trends of contemporary society—first and foremost, the unprecedented integration of the global economy, which clashes with the historically outmoded system of rival nation-states. The capitalist cliques at the head of each country seek to overcome this contradiction at the expense of their geopolitical rivals, and by ruthlessly attacking the social position of the working class.

The creation of a new imperialist state in North America—advocated by QS as a “keystone for action on all fronts”—would only accelerate these reactionary processes and capitalism’s descent into the barbarism of a third world war.

The contradiction between the global economy and the nation-state system can only be resolved in a progressive way through the unified struggle of the international working class, the elimination of archaic national borders and the reorganization of the global economy under the democratic control of working people so as to make meeting social needs, not profit, its animating principle.

The fight for this program requires that the working class preserve its political independence and forge its class unity in opposition to all capitalist states, all sections of the ruling class and all their political representatives—including, in Canada, the federalist parties, Quebec *indépendantistes* and the other regionalist and separatist movements such as the promoters of Alberta independence.

This is why working people must firmly reject the Quebec sovereignists’ retrograde project to redraw borders and create a new imperialist state in North America.

This project has been discredited among broad layers of workers by the ferocious budget cuts imposed by the Parti Québécois every time it has come to power over the past half century. It is now up to class-conscious workers in Quebec and across Canada to draw the necessary conclusions.

In opposition to the efforts of the ruling class to divide them on an ethno-linguistic basis, workers must counterpose their own program based on class solidarity and international unity. In this way, they can prepare the overthrow of capitalism and the outmoded system of antagonistic nation-states and their replacement by world socialism.



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