

Trudeau says Trump's push to annex Canada is "real thing"

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Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told last Friday's emergency "national economic summit" that US President Donald Trump's threat to use "economic force" to annex Canada is a "real thing."

Trudeau tied Trump's push to "absorb" Canada to America's drive to secure "critical minerals"—that is the minerals that are essential for the production of both high-value commodities, from cars to computers, and the making of the advanced weapons and weapon systems needed to wage global war.

Addressing the assembly of business leaders and trade union bureaucrats after he thought all reporters had been ushered from the conference hall, Trudeau said: "Not only does the Trump administration know how many critical minerals we have, but that may be even why they keep talking about absorbing us and making us the 51st state."

"They're very aware," he continued, "of our resources, of what we have and they very much want to be able to benefit from those. But Mr. Trump has it in mind that one of the easiest ways of doing that is absorbing our country. And it is a real thing."

Trudeau's remarks are a staggering admission from the head of a G-7 imperialist government. One, moreover, that has been a key military-strategic partner of Washington for more than eight decades, is America's single biggest trading partner, and has long been touted as its "best friend" and "closest ally."

His comments are symptomatic of the extent to which inter-state relations have broken down as Washington under the fascist Trump and the banner of "America First" leads an increasingly frenzied struggle for the imperialist redivision of the world. This struggle is pitting the imperialist and great powers against each other, rivals and nominal "allies" alike, to seize hold of resources, production networks, pools of labour to exploit, and strategic territories.

As in the two imperialist world wars of the last century, Canada's capitalist ruling class is a protagonist in this conflict. With the aim of securing its own predatory imperialist interests, it has integrated Canada ever more completely into the US drive for global hegemony, including in the developing world war that Washington is waging on three fronts. Canada has played a major role in helping instigate and prosecute the US-NATO war against Russia, has staunchly supported the US drive in conjunction with its client Israel to create a "new Middle East," and is an integral part of the US economic and military-strategic offensive against China.

But to the dismay of Canada's capitalist elite, predatory Canadian imperialism has now become prey for US imperialism under Trump. He is pushing to annex Canada as part of a drive to establish unbridled US domination over North America in preparation for world war with Russia and China, and intensifying trade and geopolitical conflict with Washington and Wall Street's European NATO partners and rivals.

This process is akin to Hitler's push for *Anschluss* (the joining of Austria to his Third Reich) and subsequent dismemberment of Czechoslovakia—pivotal preparatory steps to Nazi Germany's launching

of a broader European war. Trump aims to "reorder" US imperialism's "near-abroad" and thereby gain unfettered control of its strategic territories and abundant resources.

Toward this end, he has threatened to militarily seize Greenland and the Panama Canal, and, in keeping with his inaugural vow that America will resume its territorial expansion, repeatedly declared that Canada should become the "51st state."

Trump's global trade war

Trump has also launched a global trade war, whose primary target is China, and which will be waged at the expense of the jobs, living standards, and working conditions of workers around the world.

However, far from sparing Washington's ostensible North American free trade partners, Trump has chosen to put them in the trade war's frontlines. He is seeking to exploit their extreme dependence on the US market—Canada sends 78 percent of its exports to the US, and Mexico more than 80 percent—to extort sweeping economic, foreign policy and geostrategic concessions. By targeting Canada and Mexico, US imperialism is also signalling to all and sundry that it intends to restructure the world economy and redraw the map of the world at the expense of "strategic rivals" and longstanding "allies" alike.

On Feb. 1, Trump effectively abrogated the US-Mexico-Canada trade agreement (USMCA), which he himself negotiated. On the outlandish claim that Canada and Mexico constitute "national security" threats, Trump imposed 25 percent tariffs on all imports from America's neighbours, with the exception of energy imports from Canada, which were to be subject to a 10 percent tariff. Two days later and just hours before the tariffs were to take effect, the White House "paused" them for 30 days, after Ottawa and Mexico offered demonstrable concessions on border security that serve to materially support and lend political legitimacy to Trump's fascist, anti-immigrant witch-hunt.

The Trudeau government called Friday's summit on two days' notice to brief corporate Canada and the heads of the country's largest unions on the crisis in Canada-US relations and plot their response.

Following a brief public portion, the summit was held behind closed doors with the participants instructed to keep the proceedings secret. However, various news media have learned that Trudeau provided additional details about the two tense conversations he had with Trump in the hours before the tariffs were "paused." He reported that Trump had raised a whole host of new grievances and demands, above and beyond those relating to border security. The US Commander-in-Chief mocked Canada's military spending and contribution to NORAD, the joint US-Canada aerospace and maritime defence command, and complained that US banks can't operate in Canada.

The latter claim is false. However, Canada's banking sector is highly protected, with the five big banks functioning as a quasi-monopoly, charging exorbitant fees, and using their dominant position within Canada as the basis for lucrative operations that encompass the world. In announcing his intention to go after Canada's banking sector, Trump is again declaring that he is more than ready to attack what the Canadian bourgeoisie considers its core economic and strategic interest.

Trump also reportedly mentioned an obscure 1908 treaty reached between the US and Britain, when Canada was still a Dominion within the British Empire. It either established the border or provided a mechanism for doing so between Canada and the US in a number of contentious areas. Trudeau told the closed session of the summit that he and his aides interpreted Trump's raising of the treaty as a threat to abrogate it.

In announcing its "pause" in imposing 25 percent tariffs on Canada, the White House said the subsequent 30 days would be used to attempt to negotiate a new "economic framework" with Ottawa. This language underscored the fraudulent character of Trump's claims about Canada presenting a national security risk due to the inflow of immigrants and drugs, and that what is really at stake is the president's determination to force Washington's junior partner into a more subservient position or, in Trudeau's words, "absorb" Canada.

Late last week, Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc said that Canadian government officials have no idea what the new "economic framework" being demanded by Washington entails. Everything indicates that Trudeau was unable to provide any more information about this behind closed doors to a veritable Who's Who of Canada's corporate elite. Trump, it should be noted, has on several occasions raised the possibility of an economic union between Canada and the US, although far less frequently than his call for Canada to become the 51st state.

Asked in a Fox TV interview on Sunday whether his ambition to annex Canada was a "real thing" as Trudeau had declared, the would-be dictator president replied, "Yeah it is. I think Canada would be much better off being the 51st state because we lose \$200 billion a year with Canada. And I'm not going to let that happen."

Also on Sunday, Trump announced the imminent imposition of 25 percent tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports to the US, again roiling Washington's supposed USMCA partners. Canada is the biggest exporter of both steel and aluminum to the US. China has been effectively excluded from the US market by tariffs introduced during the first Trump administration and maintained and broadened by Biden.

For class struggle, not tariff war! Unite Canadian, US and Mexican workers!

Workers in Canada must beware. The trade union bureaucracy and the social democrats of the NDP, the same forces that for decades have suppressed the class struggle and for the past five years have propped up the minority big-business Trudeau government, are trying to drag them behind Canadian imperialism in its reactionary conflict with its US rivals.

They have emerged as the most fervent advocates of "national unity," seeking to rally workers behind corporate Canada. They are also among the leading enthusiasts for retaliatory measures whose burden will fall on workers on both sides of the border.

Friday's summit, in which the union bureaucrats served as the supposed representatives of working people, was aimed at laying the political groundwork for the Canadian bourgeoisie's reactionary attempt to safeguard its profits and strategic interests. They plan to do so by pushing back against their American rivals and, above all, through a massive

offensive against workers' jobs, living standards, and social and democratic rights.

Two inter-related issues were central to Friday's deliberations. The first was big business' demand for the implementation of a so-called "growth agenda" to enhance the global competitiveness of Canadian capitalism, by slashing corporate taxes, removing environmental and other obstacles to mining, energy and pipeline projects, and eliminating barriers to inter-provincial trade. The second was the need to strengthen Canadian "sovereignty" by dramatically increasing military spending and reinforcing corporate Canada's control over economic sectors—like critical minerals—that are the focus of the global capitalist struggle to control key production chains, dominate new technologies, and mass produce new high-tech weapons.

The claims that Canadian workers and the capitalists who exploit them "are in this together" and have "common interests" in opposing Trump are a monstrous fraud, meant to politically bind the working class hand and foot to a ruling class never more determined to make it pay for the global capitalist crisis.

In so far as Canadian capital and its political representatives "oppose" Trump, it is only from the standpoint of securing for Canadian imperialism the most advantageous position within a US-led Fortress North America.

They all staunchly defend the Canada-US military strategic partnership—for it serves as the foundation for Canadian imperialism's pursuit of its global predatory interests—and are scrambling to convince Trump that Ottawa is ready to assume substantially more of the costs of America's drive for global dominance. Today, as the growing clamour for Canada to reach the 2 percent of GDP NATO military spending target by 2027 underscores, this means massive cuts to public and social services and the increasing militarization of socioeconomic life. Tomorrow, it threatens to transform workers and youth into imperialist cannon fodder.

Speaking to reporters at the conclusion of Friday's summit, Industry Minister François-Phillippe Champagne spelled out the government and the Canadian ruling class' aim to integrate Canada still more fully in Washington's Fortress North America and global war plans. They intend to use critical minerals as leverage, all the while making handsome profits. "Yeah, I would say this is a great leverage for Canada," said Champagne, "because the military folks understand that they cannot rebuild their industrial base, their defence, military industrial base, without Canada."

Flanking Champagne at the government's post-summit press conference was Labour Minister Steve MacKinnon, who over the past six months has emerged as the Trudeau government's strikebreaker-in-chief. On four occasions since late August, including most recently against 55,000 Canada Post workers, MacKinnon has banned strikes. He relied on a patently illegal and entirely cooked up "reinterpretation" of Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code to illegalize worker job action and facilitate the imposition of concessionary contracts.

Pointing to the participation of the country's top union bureaucrats in the summit, including Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) President Bea Bruske, Unifor President Lana Payne, Quebec Federation of Labour (QFL) President Magali Picard, and former CLC president and senator Hassan Youssouf, MacKinnon declared Canada "united": "The message I want to send to Canadians is this country is strong. Don't screw with us."

Later in an interview with *La Presse*, the QFL's Picard peddled the reactionary nationalism the ruling class is whipping up as the political-ideological spearhead of its offensive against the working class: "Everyone has to be united and everyone has to stand up to say to that man (Trump), Canada is a proud country, it is a country with natural resources, and they are not to be given away or sold. We do sell them, but in a responsible manner."

Trump's actions, which are rooted in the systemic crisis of global capitalism and the struggle for the imperialist repartition of the world to

which it has given rise, have staggered the Canadian ruling class and destabilized Canadian capitalism.

Workers must turn this to their advantage, by intensifying the class struggle against corporate Canada, and its agenda of austerity, increased worker-exploitation, rearmament and war.

Trump and all he represents—oligarchical rule, dictatorship, fascism, and imperialist war—can only be defeated in so far as workers in Canada fuse their struggles with those of their class brothers and sisters in the US and Mexico in a working-class industrial and political offensive for workers' power and a socialist North America.



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