

November 14, 2000

A POSITION PAPER ON THE CANADIAN ELECTION 2000

VOTE FOR JUSTICE

VOTE FOR PALESTINE

We, in the Canada Palestine Association, call on all Palestinian and Arab-Canadians, Moslem and Arab Christian-Canadians, and all our supporters, to cast a vote for justice for the Palestinian people by voting for the New Democratic Party (NDP) in the next federal election. The NDP is the only party that is supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. At the same time we will be casting a protest vote against the Liberal and Alliance Parties, who are unconditionally supporting Israeli occupation and aggression against the Arab people.

The Liberal Party (the party currently in power)

This party is responsible for the biased Canadian position in favor of Israel ever since the UN Partition Plan was passed in 1947. The main objective of the Partition Plan was the creation of the "Jewish state". Lester Pearson, "the Balfour of Canada" (as the Zionists called him), played "an active role in securing its passage", according to a Canadian Senate report.

"Canada's Position on Key Issues", which was issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade on Dec. 1996, is clearly pro-Israel and unconditionally concerned only with "the security, well-being and rights of Israel as a legitimate, independent state". When it comes to the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their rights to self-determination, the right to statehood, their right to return and their right for freedom from occupation, these are conditional on the acceptance of Israel to any of these rights. It gives Israel a VETO power on these internationally recognized rights. Since Canada voted with UN Security Council 1322, the well financed and organized Zionist organizations have crudely threatened and blackmailed the Canadian government into maintaining a policy of serving Israeli interests and not the Canadian peoples' interests. Already, Canada has voted against a UN Human Rights Commission resolution denouncing Israeli actions as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Canada also abstained from a UN General Assembly motion denouncing Israel for using excessive force, and abstained on a UN Third Committee motion, which reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and called for this right to not be subject to any veto. All these motions were passed overwhelmingly.

The Canadian Prime Minister met with the Zionist organizations on October 17, 2000 and gave them a "direct link right to the Prime Minister's Office", according to the "Canadian Jewish News"(CJN, Oct. 26, 2000). The national chair of the Canada-Israel Committee, Mr. Joseph Wilder, commented on this direct link as a "'most unusual' but also 'a major step' that could help avert problems in the future." The CJN reported the PM as telling the Zionist delegation "I want to help you", adding that he will review Canadian aid to UNRWA "to ensure funds are being used as intended". The PM's implication of financial blackmail to the Palestinian PEOPLE was quite clear.

The PM on Nov.2, 2000, issued a statement following the car-bombing in Jerusalem, stating "All Canadians join me in expressing our revulsion at the cowardly and vicious act of terror perpetuated today in (J)erusalem." However, the Prime Minister did not express his revulsion, in the name of ALL Canadians, at the indiscriminate use of Israeli tanks and helicopter gun ships against centers of civilian population. He did not express his revulsion at Israel for carrying out the most cowardly acts against Palestinian children including killing, torture and ill-treatment (see Amnesty International, Nov.10, 2000, "Mass Arrests and Police Brutality"). We did not see his indignation at the indiscriminate acts of terror perpetuated on a regular basis by the illegal Jewish settlers who live on stolen Palestinian lands in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We did not see his revulsion at Israeli troops killing and injuring medical personnel, hindering them from carrying out their humanitarian work, and shooting at

and destroying many of their ambulances. We did not see him condemn the Israeli death squads. We did not see his revulsion at 33 years of brutal Israeli occupation of Arab lands. Does the PM really think that Jewish Israeli life is worth more than Arab Israeli and Palestinian life? For the PM to be credible and balanced, he should not have such double standards.

In a letter to the Canadian Zionist leaders dated Nov.3, and released by the PM's office on Nov.6, the Prime Minister and tells them; "We regret that Canada's vote on UN Security Council Resolution 1322 has added to (your) distress and frustration", and adds "Our commitment to Israel is longstanding and will remain a pillar of Canada's policy in the Middle East." Then he states how "Canada has opposed what we felt to be a grossly unbalanced resolution (#S-5/1) at the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. And we would not support a recent UN General Assembly Resolution (#A/ES-10/L.6) because it represented an unhelpful initiative in our collective efforts to move away from violence (sic) and back toward negotiations." The prime minister, in this same letter, also endorses old, tired Zionist myths, and goes on at great length as to how the Canadian government understands the "frustration expressed that the unprecedented risks taken and courageous compromises (sic) offered by the Israeli government in pursuit of peace have not been reciprocated." Does the PM and his government want the Palestinian people to compromise further on the scant 22% (the West Bank and Gaza) of historic Palestine that they have already agreed to, which also is just 50% of what the Partition Plan gave the Palestinian state in 1947? This is the optimum in absurdity!!! Again in this same letter, he shows his government and his party's true faces when they "express deep and understandable concern about the impact of the renewed bloodshed on the security of Israel." Notice the only concern here is for Israel. As if it is the Palestinians who are occupying Israel, as if the Palestinians are putting Israeli towns and communities under siege, and as if it is the Palestinians who are building illegal settlements, confiscating properties and demolishing houses.

The Liberal party's response to our recent election questionnaire was patronizing and an insult to our intelligence. It did not answer any of our questions directly except for question # 7 relating to the sanctions on Iraq. They stated, "our government believes that sanctions must be targeted to impair operations of the offender while avoiding negative humanitarian impacts. Improving the effectiveness of sanctions was an integral part of our agenda during Canada's Presidency of the United Nations Security Council in April 2000." The Liberal Party is still defending these genocidal sanctions against the people of Iraq, they not only want to maintain these sanctions, they want to "improve" their effectiveness and "impair" the civil society in Iraq. They are callously disregarding the "humanitarian impact" of these sanctions on the Iraqi people, which have resulted in the mass genocide of one and a half million Iraqis, half of those children.

The Canadian Alliance (the official opposition)

The Canadian Alliance issued a press release on Oct. 9, 2000, which criticized the Canadian government for voting with UN Security Council Resolution 1322. "I am disappointed that the Chretien government appears to be openly taking sides in this crisis by passing Resolution 1322," said Mr. Stockwell Day, the opposition leader. "The resolution is clearly slanted with an anti-Israel bias" he added, and then concluded, "Israelis and Palestinians (sic) need to trust Security Council members like Canada to fairly assess the situation in the Middle East. By supporting resolution 1322 Canada risks eroding that trust". It is clear to us that the only "fair assessment" Mr. Day is concerned with is one slanted with a pro-Israeli bias. In the same release, the Opposition Foreign Affairs critic Monte Solberg stated "the resolution itself is unfair in referring to the holy site in question only as Al-Haram Al Sharif, as it is known by Muslims and not also as the Temple Mount, as it is known by Jews. The Canadian government has made a grave error in supporting this unjust resolution." Why should Mr. Solberg care about the name of "the holy site in question"? And is it "in question"? For Mr. Solberg's information, Al-Haram Al Sharif is in occupied territory, part of east Jerusalem which was occupied in 1967 and covered by UN Security Council Resolution 242.

According to the Oct.26/00 report by the Canadian Jewish News, a meeting between Canadian Zionist leaders and Stockwell Day “was a pretty straightforward, simple meeting where he expressed support and we thanked him for it on behalf of the Jewish community”. Mr. Wilder (Canada Israel Cmte.) said Day “announced firmly right off the bat that he was not in favor of any votes contrary to Israel. He was critical of the government for its vote. He made a point of saying that he stands with Israel on a matter of principle, not a matter of politics, and that his support is steadfast and constant.” This quote is quite clear and we will leave the principles and the politics of Mr. Day to your judgment.

MORE ROYAL THAN THE KING!!

These two parties have proven beyond any doubt that they are more loyal to Israel than former Israeli prime ministers, let alone the Israeli peace camp. They are even competing to be more loyal than Canadian Zionists.

For example, on Nov.9, 2000, the Israeli paper Ma'ariv reported that former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres (now Israeli Regional Cooperation Minister) “was angered that the IDF continued to shoot in the territories and mainly over Israel’s decision to surround Palestinian villages.” He told Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami at a security cabinet meeting; “Why do you continue the use of sieges? Why can’t we have even one day without funerals?”

It is also interesting to note Ben-Ami’s response: “We must have red lines. A forgiving attitude will bring us back to the ’67 borders.”

And on Nov. 10, 2000, the Zionist paper, the “Western Jewish Bulletin” in its editorial “Israel needs a new cast” stated, “Israel is losing the war of words yet again. Since the start of the current troubles, bundles of Israeli spokespersons, speakers and advisors have been taking turns at making jumbled statements on Israel’s striving to live securely. Yet, Israel’s information campaign is getting more confused and confusing.” It seems to us that the only ones who are not confused are Mr. Chretien and Mr. Day. The editorial went on to say, “... Israel’s various speakers appear at times as grim white men – mostly security types and power lawyers – mumbling monotonic vague statements that often sound like orders being issued.” It concluded, “In this propaganda war, Israel cannot compete with the Palestinians for the role of the underdog.”

Nonetheless, the leaders of the two major Canadian parties are trying very hard to show Israel as the underdog. They are making a mockery of our electoral system by competing shamelessly to win Zionist campaign financing and votes.

WHY ARE THE TWO MAJOR CANADIAN PARTIES COMPETING IN THEIR BLIND SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL?

Israel Shahak, a Holocaust survivor and an Israeli human rights activist, summed it up this way in his recent book “Open Secrets”, published by Pluto Press in 1997.

“Curiously Canada represents a case where influence of its organized Jewish community upon the country’s politics is even more palpable than in the U.S. The effect is that, although Canada’s interests in the Middle East are quite secondary, its dedication to Israel surpasses even that of the U.S.”

Should Canadians at large allow the dictates of a small but influential minority, to shape Canadian foreign policy in a way that is detrimental to the strategic interests of the Canadian people? Should we allow our government to support aggression, occupation and human rights abuses? Should we allow politicians to sell themselves to the highest bidder? Is this democratic, principled, honest or decent?

WHY SHOULD WE VOTE NDP?

Since the start of the Intifadah, the NDP, represented by Svend Robinson, their foreign affairs spokesperson, courageously criticized both Israeli brutality and Canadian government complicity with Israel.

Two days before UN Security Council Resolution 1322 was passed, Mr. Robinson issued a statement on Oct. 5, 2000, condemning the weak response of the Canadian government: "Canada must condemn the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces. The government should also join calls for an international investigation into events leading up to and following Sharon's irresponsible provocation." He concluded by saying, "Prime Minister Jean Chretien has been appallingly silent. He must speak out to condemn this violence and urge the Israeli government to respond to Palestinians concerns about the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees."

On Oct. 13, 2000, Mr. Robinson demanded, as the NDP International Affairs spokesperson, that an emergency meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade be held with Minister Lloyd Axworthy regarding the escalating crisis in the Middle East. He stated in his letter to the committee's chair Bill Graham, "I commend the decision of our government to support UN Resolution 1322 in the Council. I believe that Canada should be urging immediate United Nations involvement in the Occupied territories, to help put an end to the violence and bloodshed which has plagued innocent victims, both Israelis and, in much larger numbers, Palestinians. We should also be supporting the call by Amnesty International and others for an independent international inquiry into the recent events which have led to the loss of life."

On Oct. 18, 2000, in the debates of the House of Commons, Mr. Robinson asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs a very specific question, "... can the minister explain to the house why Canada shamefully abstained on the vote to call a special session of the UN commission on human rights into the situation in the Middle East?" Mr. Axworthy replied by giving an irrelevant preamble and then said "I spoke yesterday to Syrian and Lebanese representatives to talk about the kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers and to see if we could have some return in those areas. We met with the Israeli envoy today to talk particularly about how we can assist as Canadians in trying to restore peace. This is the important thing." Mr. Axworthy has sent the message that the only thing that is important to him and his government is freeing Israeli soldiers, not Palestinian lives nor Palestinian human rights.

In response to our election questionnaire, Mr. Robinson stated; "Briefly, let me say how moved I was by Dr. Gabor Mate's piece in the Globe and Mail at the beginning of this month. As he so eloquently writes, there can be no true, lasting peace without justice. I believe that peace must encompass both a Palestinian State and the State of Israel, living in mutual security. Israel must withdraw from the territory illegally occupied since 1967, as the UN has noted on countless occasions. Jerusalem is sacred to both nations, and I believe that this must be represented in any final peace settlement. I despair for the future of the region if Ariel Sharon, the author of Sabra and Shatilla, is invited to play a significant role in the Israeli government. We have long supported the right of return as well. Finally, I support Resolution 1322, and believe that an international presence in the occupied territories, and a full independent inquiry into the recent deaths, are both urgently needed. You know our position on the immoral sanctions on Iraq...they should be immediately lifted."

Svend Robinson visited Iraq in January this year, and exposed the horrific impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people. He called them genocidal, and also successfully lobbied the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs to recommend to the government to withdraw from the sanctions regime, a recommendation that was obviously ignored.

It is also timely to recognize the tireless and principled efforts of solidarity by Libby Davis, NDP MP from East Vancouver, on behalf of the Palestinian people. She chaired the International Day of Solidarity meeting with the Palestinian people in Vancouver last year, and in fact has been a long-standing supporter ever since she was a Vancouver City Councilor. Among many other solidarity gestures, she condemned Israeli aggression on Lebanon in 1982, and chaired a meeting for Dr. Fathi Arafat when he visited Vancouver in the late 1980s.

A PRINCIPLED VOTE -- A PROTEST VOTE

Supporting the NDP in the next election is a principled choice in all of the Canadian provinces. Some

Arab voices have called for a protest vote in Quebec by supporting the Bloc Quebecois, and the community there should decide on the best possible strategy. However, we should not waste our votes on individual Liberal or Alliance candidates, even if they support us. A vote for these candidates is a vote for their party and a vote of confidence in their leaders. We must make our voices heard. Let us send the Liberal and the Alliance parties a protest message at the ballot box. **LET US VOTE AGAINST THE TWO MAIN PARTIES AND DENY THEM A MAJORITY GOVERNMENT.** We should not vote for a lesser evil as some apologists are spouting; a vote for a lesser evil is a vote for evil nonetheless. We are not as well financed as the Zionists, or as organized. Still, we can count on the support of the decent majority of the Canadian people, who eventually, once they are aware of our just cause, will stop this infamy. We must be united in our actions and responses. Let us be principled and not fall into the political patronage quagmire. Let us be true to our beliefs and to what we know is right.