



Supplement

No. 5

February 22, 2020

Canada's Relations with Caricom Self-Serving Definition of What It Means to Be a "Vital Partner"

- Tony Seed -



Thirty-First Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, Bridgetown, Barbados, 18-19 February 2020. (CARICOM)

The Lima Group meeting hosted by Canada this week came right on the heels of Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne's meeting on February 18 with leaders of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in Bridgetown, Barbados. He was sent as a substitute for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The 15-member organization^[1] has served as an effective block to attempts by the U.S. and its allies to use the discredited Organization of American States (OAS) as a political weapon against Venezuela. It has denied them the number of votes needed to take action against Venezuela in the name of the OAS. This led the U.S. and Canada to set up the illegitimate Lima Group outside the OAS for the purpose of advancing their illegal regime change project.

In March 2019, the online periodical *Misión Verdad* exposed a clumsy manoeuvre by the Canadian government in which it sent a low-level representative to a meeting of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), held on the island of Guadeloupe in January 2019. The aim was to facilitate a direct link between Venezuelan imposter Juan Guaidó's team and the prime ministers whose governments make up CARICOM. The leaders rejected the manoeuvre.

First, the envoy did not possess the appropriate diplomatic level necessary for such a meeting to take place.

Second, the sending of a low-level functionary to a ministerial meeting showed contempt for the Caribbean.

Third, CARICOM has stood for dialogue and peace, not aggression.[2]

This was the reason for the decision to send the Canadian prime minister to Barbados as the last stop of his recent African tour. Trudeau has had no trouble vacationing at luxurious resorts in the Caribbean but has never officially visited the region since his election in 2015. His visit was cancelled due to the crisis in Canada from the resistance of the Wet'suwet'en Land Defenders who are winning national and international support for their refusal to allow Canada to reject their law on their own lands and permit an oil pipeline to pass through their land despite a failure to get their consent.

A confidential Global Affairs Canada document tabled at the 2019 Guadeloupe meeting also contained the proposal of the Trudeau government, which at all times acted as representative of the Venezuelan opposition, to establish an organization parallel to Petrocaribe, a Venezuela-CARICOM energy partnership, called "Cooperation and Energy Stability Agreement." [3]

The Caribbean leaders at that meeting reminded the Canadian envoy of their full support for dialogue between the parties in Venezuela. They reminded Canada of the fact that Petrocaribe is being sabotaged by both U.S. sanctions and regional pressure against Venezuela, supported both by the Trudeau government and by the U.S.-financed and organized Venezuelan opposition headed by Guaidó.

During the conclusions of the recent Barbados meeting, Caribbean leaders rejected the U.S. blockade of the socialist island republic of Cuba. They reiterated their concern over the sanctions announced by the U.S. administration under Title III of the *Helms-Burton Act*, which intensifies the economic, commercial and financial blockade towards Cuba. They described the sanctions as extraterritorial measures that are contrary to international law.

For its part, Canada tried to hide its manoeuvring against Venezuela, all the while overtly stressing its alleged humanitarian motives. A Global Affairs Canada press release states:

"Together, Minister Champagne and CARICOM leaders agreed to launch an annual Canada-CARICOM dialogue to discuss political, trade, development and security priorities specific to the almost 20 million people who call the Caribbean islands home.

"Champagne highlighted new Canadian funding to support CARICOM efforts to counter the devastating impacts of climate change. These efforts range from emergency response and preparedness, to climate smart agriculture and the blue economy. He also offered to expand the scope of Canadian technical expert assistance in areas prioritized by CARICOM countries.

"In bilateral and group discussions at the CARICOM Inter-sessional Meeting, the Minister also underscored Canada as a vital partner in advancing shared regional and global interests, as it continues to pursue its candidacy for the United Nations Security Council in 2021-2022."

And that, says the vital partner, is that. The cheque book is out -- yet neither the amount of funding is mentioned, nor are the shameful results of Canada's alleged protection of the devastating impacts of climate in Haiti, especially since the earthquake ten years ago.

"Security Priorities," and "Emergency Response"

How Canada defines "security priorities" and "emergency response" is a serious matter of concern. First, instead of providing internationalist assistance on the basis of equality, mutual respect and benefit to the recipient nation, the Trudeau government thinks that small countries who are suffering from the global crisis of the imperialist system and seeking a way forward can be simply bribed. This is not only contemptuous of their suffering, imposed on them by the very countries doing the bribing, but is in total denial of the corruption such bribery encourages. Canada's view of the West Indies is unacceptable. It uses the language and techniques that shore up U.S. interests, descending to the humiliating point where, instead of taking an independent stand like CARICOM does, Canada imagines that the region is part of its "global backyard." Chrystia Freeland, when she was Trudeau's minister for foreign affairs, infamously stated to the press:

"The crisis in Venezuela is unfolding in Canada's global backyard. This is our neighbourhood. We have a direct interest in what happens in our hemisphere."

Secondly, it links this bribery with creating an institutional bilateral mechanism to "discuss" "security priorities" which are first and foremost posed by the U.S. and the financial oligarchy striving for world hegemony, including markets, resources, etc. In this context, "security priorities" and "emergency response" are simply code words for military integration, training and intervention.

The objective reality of the people of Haiti illustrates the pathetic fraud of "emergency response" and "humanitarian aid." Yves Engler noted recently that "Canada disbursed \$657 million from the quake to September 2012 'for Haiti,' but only about two per cent went to the Haitian government." In parallel, 33 per cent of U.S. aid went to the U.S. military occupying Haiti. All the countries that militarily occupied Haiti through MINUSTAH are today organized as the infamous Lima Group.

As a reminder, Canada sent arms to Trinidad in 1970 to crush a popular upsurge; and troops and RCMP forces to overthrow the Dominican Republic government in 1965, the Grenada government in 1983 and the Haitian government in 2004. It annually deploys warships to participate in sabre-rattling U.S. Southcom military exercises (e.g., Panamax, Tradewinds, Op Caribe), along with NATO bloc members France, Netherlands and Britain, which are aimed at Venezuela and its allies. The Canadian Forces are fully integrated into the U.S. Northern Command and Southern Command and the U.S. imperialist machinery of war.

It merits attention that since June 2012, Canada has operated a military hub in Kingston, Jamaica -- essentially access to facilities at a port, airport and military base justified at the time as providing quicker emergency response to hurricanes. Yet none of the activities of the Canadian Forces during 2017 Hurricane Irma used this base to provide assistance to the Bahamas and Martinique, possessions of NATO countries Britain and France, respectively.

Further, "climate smart agriculture and the blue economy" is code for neo-liberal economic penetration cloaked as an environmental "counter" to "devastating impacts of climate change."

"Banker to the Caribbean"

The financial oligarchy, through the summit of the big banks, has enriched itself enormously from the plunder of the Caribbean since the 1800s as part of the British colonial system and such banks as Barings, a stronghold of British finance capital and financial agents for Canada in London, and the Colonial Bank of the West Indies. The wealth of the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Royal Bank -- both of which were founded in Halifax, Nova Scotia -- was originally generated from the significant mercantile trade from the Atlantic fisheries to provide protein to the slave plantations and later in

the sugar trade and military adventures. They never invested a single cent in development of the immense human productive forces of the island nations, other than what was needed to satisfy the start-up of operations. All the profits were repatriated by Anglo-Canadian capital. Much of the profits of Barings, which enriched itself from slavery and the 1833 *Abolition of Slavery Act*, were re-exported to finance the railway expansion of the Canadian colonial state.[4]

Today Canadian banks control more than 60 per cent of the Caribbean's banking sector to the detriment of the Caribbean's economic development. This means that they conduct more than 60 per cent of the region's transactions. Nevertheless, over the past year, the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Royal Bank have been seeking new neo-colonial arrangements to minimize their risk. Whatever this oligarchy cannot control it seeks to destroy, which includes the human productive forces and anyone who stands in its way. Scotiabank, for example, holds over U.S.\$1 trillion in assets and reported a profit of CAN\$1.98 billion a year ago. It used to call itself the "Banker to the Caribbean" and operates 370 branches in 23 countries in the region. To maximum its rate of profit, it now seeks to transfer \$20 billion in assets it owns in the region to a new financial partnership headquartered in Trinidad.

Caribbean leaders are denouncing the manoeuvre which is being carried out behind their backs without even elementary consultations with the Caribbean countries and indigenous banks. This has aroused great concern. Sir Ronald Sanders, Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the Organization of American States asks, "Is this another demonstration of the persistent contemptuous behaviour that small countries confront in the international arena -- the doctrine of 'might is right'?"[5]

Old Program in New Colours

The Trudeau "security" program is an old program of the former government of Trudeau senior, dressed in new environmental colours.

In the early 1980s, as part of the Caribbean Basin Initiative of the Reagan administration, the Canadian government gave special importance to the training of "cadres" -- mostly young people, recruited from Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Bermuda, amongst others from the British West Indies -- within the framework of its "military assistance and co-operation" program to this region. In 1980, the federal cabinet approved a paramilitary program to "assist" Caribbean countries with training for coast guard and police marine units. These recruits were equipped to operate the marine police forces, which were being set up and expanded along the coastal zones of these countries, as well as for customs control and coast guard patrols. The head of the Canadian Coast Guard was Rear Admiral Andrew Collier, former head of Maritime Command.[6]

Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, speaking on the island of St. Lucia in February 1983 to the leaders of 16 Caribbean Commonwealth countries, stressed among other things that this program would be increased and extended. Youth recruited from Trinidad and Tobago, after being processed in a Toronto high school, were then trained at the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario. There, besides acquiring military skills, young people were taught the methods of coping with demonstrators, along with specialized, inhuman, "commando" skills. Following their training in Canada, these youth returned as agents in the form of front-rank officers in the armed forces of the island nations.[7]

At that time, *People's Canada Daily News* published by the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), pointed out: "Far from having 'no strings attached,' the Canadian military-economic 'aid' and initiatives are of the same nature and made with the same aims as those of U.S. imperialism itself. It is in order to achieve these nefarious aims that the Canadian government and its armed forces are increasing their activities in Central America and the Caribbean." This is what they are

doing yet again, this time through the Lima Group and other fronts as a self-styled "vital partner."

Notes

1. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is a grouping of 20 countries: 15 member states and five associate members, representing a region that is home to approximately 16 million citizens. It was created on July 4, 1973, with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, which transformed the Caribbean Free Trade Association to create a Common Market. It includes countries considered to be "developing," and all members and associate members are island states, with the exception of Belize in Central America, and Guyana and Surinam in South America.

The organization says it emerged as a product of 15 years of efforts to promote regional integration and was constituted with the fundamental objectives of raising the standard of living and working conditions in the region's nations; reducing unemployment; accelerating, coordinating, and supporting economic development; and promoting trade and economic relations with third countries and blocs of nations.

CARICOM's principal governing bodies are its Conference and Council. The Conference is the highest authority of the regional organization and includes the heads of state and government of member countries. It is responsible for establishing policy and authorizing the signing of treaties within the Caribbean Community and with other integration organizations. The Council, for its part, is composed of Foreign Ministers and is responsible for the implementation of strategic plans, coordinating the integration of different sectors, and promoting cooperation among members.

CARICOM points out that it is the world's oldest regional integration movement, and although often unrecognized, its accomplishments have been many, especially in concrete cooperation in the areas of education, health, culture, and security.

2. "Exclusive: CARICOM Rejects Canada's Proposal to Undermine Petrocaribe," *TML Weekly*, March 23, 2019 - No. 10.

3. Petrocaribe is an oil alliance involving Caribbean member states. The alliance was founded on June 29, 2005 in Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela, Venezuela offered the other member states discounted oil supplies based on a concessionary financial agreement. Petrocaribe, which the U.S. imperialists and Canada seek to destroy, has been part of the trend in Latin America and the Caribbean, seeking to achieve post-neoliberal development in the region.

4. Baring was founded in 1810 with origins dating back to 1720, from investments it received from human trafficking in the Atlantic slave trade reaping enormous profits. Baring owned numerous sugar plantations in St. Kitts and in British Guiana, and received some £10 million of the total £20-million in "compensation" from the British state in 1839 for the emancipation of their "property" -- all in all, 655,780 human beings of African descent that they had enslaved, brutalized and exploited. This represents £76 (US\$117) billion at today's value. None of the money went to the enslaved Africans, who still had to do unpaid work for their owners under an "apprenticeship program" of indentured servitude that ran for another four years.

Barings was also behind the forced union of the Canadas in 1841. R.T. Naylor remarked that Baring Brothers were the true Fathers of Confederation. The Bank acted as exclusive financial agents for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and Upper Canada along with George Carr Glyn, a big investor in the colonies.[8] By the last quarter of the 19th century, Baring Brothers was financing one quarter of all U.S. railroad construction, along with the Intercolonial, Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific railways in Canada. A railroad town in British Columbia was renamed Revelstoke in honour of the bank's leading partner.

The benefits of the monies from the slave system still exist in Canada today. For example, along with being a foundation of Canadian banks, they are also a basis of wealth for many leading Canadian families, among them the "father of Confederation" Sir John A. Macdonald who had a direct personal family link to slavery. His father-in-law, Thomas James Bernard, owned a sugar plantation in Jamaica and 96 enslaved Africans. He received £1,723 "compensation" from the government, a vast sum considering the annual salary for a skilled worker in Britain at the time was around £60. Macdonald married Bernard's daughter, Agnes, in 1867. Macdonald had to resign in 1873 when the Pacific Scandal exposed his receipt of campaign donations from the owner of the Canadian Pacific Railway. From Halifax, others include the Stairs family (providing six generations of directors of the Royal Bank and Harper's first chief of staff) and the Ritchie family (corporate lawyers and Mulroney's ambassador to Washington). The main street in Halifax, Spring Garden Road, bears the name of a sugar plantation in British Guiana owned by Francis Baring, partner in the firm between 1823 and 1864, who unsuccessfully claimed £3,421 "compensation."

Earlier, in the 1820s and 1830s, London-based slave owners played a significant role in the settlement, exploitation and expansion of Canada. The Hudson Bay Company, Canadian Land Company and British American Land Company all included British slave owners on their boards of directors.

5. For a discussion, see Sir Ronald Sanders, "[Withdrawal of Canadian banks: opportunity to remedy not repeat mistakes, December 12, 2019,](#)" and [August, 29, 2019.](#)

Of the manoeuvring by the Bank of Nova Scotia, Sanders writes:

"Scotiabank's decision not to discuss the sale of its holdings in nine Caribbean jurisdictions with the governments concerned, in advance of concluding an agreement, was extraordinary, particularly as, in Canada, no bank or bank branch can carry on business without obtaining the approval of the finance minister and the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. The Bank appears to believe that it could contravene in the Caribbean what it would be obliged to obey in Canada.

"Apart from ignoring the law in Antigua and Barbuda, and elsewhere, to first obtain the agreement of the governments for a sale in order to secure a 'vesting order,' Scotiabank's decision demonstrated a lack of good corporate judgment. It could not have been difficult to engage governments about plans to sell before concluding a sale agreement with RFH. Unless it assumed its clout would hammer acceptance of the sale.

"Equally disdainful behaviour by Scotiabank was the way in which it informed the nine Caribbean jurisdictions that it had settled the sale arrangement. That information came through a public announcement, issued to the media, on November 27, 2018. Governments of the nine jurisdictions and their Central Banks, the regulatory bodies for banking, learned of the sale arrangement simultaneously with the general public.

"Why would a Canadian financial institution that has been present and money-spinning in the Caribbean since 1889 and which reported a profit of CAN\$1.98 billion a year ago, treat the Caribbean region so disparagingly? Is this another demonstration of the persistent contemptuous behaviour that small countries confront in the international arena -- the doctrine of 'might is right'?"

6. In February 1998, *Shunpiking Magazine* discovered the presence on the staff of the Coast Guard College in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia of a former Nazi collaborator from Latvia, based on information from outraged Jamaican cadets who reported racist abuse to the RCMP detachment in Sydney. The young RCMP officer who filed the report was summarily transferred out of the Sydney detachment.

7. "Vigorously oppose the role of the Canadian bourgeoisie in Central America and the Caribbean," by Tony Seed, *People's Canada Daily News*, Volume 13, Number 178, August 26, 1983.

8. Stewart, Andrew, *British Businessmen and Canadian Confederation: Constitution Making in an Era of Anglo Globalization*, 2008, McGill University Press.



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