

OPPOSE THE CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICAL LIFE IN QUEBEC

Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), May 15, 2012



Students face the riot police at Lionel Groulx Cegep May 15, 2012 (L) and Rosemont Cegep (R) May 14, 2012.

The failure of the Quebec government to impose its dictate on the students has now led it to criminalize even further the political life in Quebec in a manner that harbours serious dangers for not only Quebec but also the entire country.

The blame for the failure of the democratic institutions to earn the respect of the students lies squarely with Jean Charest, his government and the entire ruling class and their media. Those institutions are focussed on paying the rich and using the state apparatus to achieve that aim. Their program to usurp all the assets of society to ensure the rich make big scores is behind the program to raise student fees and the students have rightly pointed out this fact.

Students have called for a reasonable discussion on how the universities could be managed differently. They explain that the inquiry they have done thus far indicates no problem of underfunding *per se* but rather mismanagement of the funds at the disposal of the Cegeps and universities. This mismanagement arises because the people in charge serve private interests instead of the public interest. Serving the public interest requires that the right to education be provided with a guarantee so that society can flourish for the good of all.

Rather than dealing with opposing viewpoints in a responsible political manner, the Quebec state is criminalizing the students' right to their own conscience and organizing violent assaults on them for putting forward their demands. The government is now threatening to up the ante. While police assaults on students increase, rumours of other draconian measures it might take are heightening tensions. Such

criminalization of the political life of Quebec goes against the interests of the entire polity.

In spite of accusations of brazen corruption, the Charest government continues to hand over wealth produced by the Quebec working class and people to private interests. It is thus a matter of great shame that all official circles across the country have joined the chorus calling for the use of police powers against the students. This shameful activity includes the establishment political parties that are either demanding an escalation of the attacks against the students or running for their lives lest they be branded with the same brush as the students.

This is not a time to play coy. It is not a time to pretend to side with the students and their right to education by dividing them into good students versus bad students. It is not a time to speak about the need to uphold the democratic institutions against some alleged lawlessness of the students. Referring to the slander that the demand of the students is extremist, one student put it very eloquently: Asking for a profound change in the direction of the education policy is a political stand not a bloodbath, she said. Why is the government responding with a bloodbath and then saying the students are extremists?

CPC(M-L) calls on all democratic political and social forces across the country to take clear stands on who is responsible for the escalation of the crisis in Quebec. The students are fighting with conviction and sincerity yet are met with rubber bullets, tear gas, truncheons, arrests, beatings and criminalization. They are even threatened with fines should they refuse to

return to class. How can such things be justified no matter what high ideals are cited?

The Charest government is directly responsible for creating an atmosphere of anarchy and violence with its illegitimate attempt to raise tuition fees to benefit the banks and private interests that use skilled workers without paying society for their education. The government wants students and their parents to pay exorbitant interest rates to guarantee odious profits for the banks. The proposed tuition fee hikes have nothing to do with the issue of underfunding of universities or making them competitive or making Quebec students equal to their counterparts in the rest of Canada. The fee hikes have everything to do with paying the rich and perpetuating a system of class privilege not only in Quebec but also across the country.

CPC(M-L) also rejects the suggestion that those who benefit from the government's corruption and pay the rich schemes should be the ones who decide to use police powers against the students. It must not pass!

Using police powers to criminalize political life in Quebec serves private monopoly interests. The media, political parties and legislatures in the service of these private interests should not be permitted to deliberate on the legitimacy crisis of the democratic institutions and blame the students for the shortcomings of those institutions. The criminalization of politics on the part of the ruling circles is self-serving and highly irresponsible;



their dogmatic discourse contributes to lowering the level of political life even further. It is unacceptable to dismiss those who think differently by marshalling even more police powers. Their aim to keep the people at bay to prevent them from taking up and having a say on the problems they and their society face cannot be achieved because the people demand their say and right to be at the centre of all aspects of life in this modern world.

The Charest government faces an election in the next few months and the ability of the Official Opposition to take a political stand that favours

the polity is in serious doubt. The increasing use of police powers, criminalization of political life and the pathetic media campaign to create sympathy for Jean Charest serve to divert the attention of the people at home and abroad away from the real issues facing them and their society. This includes the unconscionable use of the state and its institutions to pay the rich and depoliticize the demands and needs of the people.

CPC(M-L) calls on all democratic forces to oppose in no uncertain terms the criminalization of political life in Quebec and Canada by the Charest and Harper dictatorships. Denounce with contempt the government and media attempts to justify the criminalization of political life and divert the people from the issues they face. Stand firmly with the Quebec students to hold the Charest government to account to freeze tuition fees and not turn back the clock on the historic mission to give the right to education a lawful guarantee.

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