

Left, Right - Marching to the Beat of Imperial Canada

A review of Yves Engler's book

By [Jim Miles](#)

Global Research, August 22, 2018

Region: [Canada](#)

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This short work is another in a wonderful series by Canadian author Yves Engler that examines much of the foreign policy actions and policies of Canadian politics. In Left, Right, Engler examines the positions of many of the institutions and organizations of the supposed left – my word “supposed” as I am not sure there is a true ‘left’ remaining in Canada when looking at the broader actions and context of individual initiatives that focus on narrow issues without being related to a broader ‘left’ international view.

Regardless of my current position on the left, Engler has presented a strong compilation of the contradictions of those nominally on the left, acknowledging that they do contribute to many issues – especially domestic – for the left, but falter or fail on many other issues of foreign policy that support imperial endeavours and corporate-state control of other populations.

His first target, as it should be, is the NDP, considered to be a party of Canada’s social conscience, helping to determine many policies for Canada. The Liberals in particular will steal social progressive ideas promoted by the NDP in order to maintain their ‘centre’ perspective in the eyes of Canadian voters. This was particularly evident in the last election in which the Liberals generally campaigned to the left of the NDP on a number of headline issues (e.g. debt financing). However for foreign affairs, the NDP do not have much to steal, as their foreign policy is very much in alignment with empire and corporate interests.

The labour movement is the next target, and again, while they have done a fair bit for Canadian workers, the union bosses are aligned very much with the corporate and political perspectives on foreign policy issues. The unions are also aligned significantly with U.S. unions, and union personnel are part of the ruling elites circle of friends making the rounds between politics, administration, corporations, and the military.

Several high profile people on the left are also criticized, essentially for the same reasons. While supporting strong left stances on certain domestic and even global issues, when it comes to actual global foreign affairs – being Canada’s role in military interventions and corporate support over indigenous rights – these individuals again take on the role of supporting Canada’s overseas adventurism.

In the second last chapter, “Ties that bind and blind”, the intertwined relationships between the military, think tanks, corporations, politicians and relationships with the U.S. and other

foreign policy influences (Israel, Britain, France – essentially NATO). Special significance is given to two groups whose histories of being victims of imperial/state interference/repression or worse, genocide, would indicate they might choose a much stronger anti-imperialist, anti-corporate, non-interference position. These two groups are the native people of Canada and the Quebec nationalists, both under the dominant British imperial tradition.

Unfortunately, money speaks power, influence, and the ability to move people beyond their own best long term interests for short term gain. This applies to the native groups as well as the Quebec nationalists. Unfortunately, part of the left’s timidity on foreign relations might be the lack of true grit, the ability to withstand the programmed mainstream thought that Canada is a force for good in the world, a peacekeeping nation. The record, as viewed here in *Left, Right* and in Engler’s other works, speaks differently about Canada’s foreign policy actions.

The final section admits that change will not come easily and quickly. Engler posits that we need to support those smaller groups that are capable of standing up to the mainstream message of Canada’s foreign policy. In addition he indicates that he is working to set up an initiative titled the “Canadian Foreign Policy Institute” on the web, on Facebook. It is to provide a central spot for many of the smaller organizations and individuals working to realign Canada’s foreign policy to an acceptable internationally humanitarian position to have their voice heard. It is currently available on Facebook.



Title: *Left, Right: Marching to the Beat of Imperial Canada*

Author: Yves Engler

ISBN: 978-1-55164-663-3

Pages: 264 pages

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