

Remarks to Windsor Peace Coalition Demonstration – October 28, 2006

On behalf of the Windsor Peace Coalition I would like to welcome everyone who has come here today to take a stand to say: **Canada must get Out of Afghanistan Now!**

The Windsor Peace Coalition has organized this action as part of a national day of action being held today in cities and towns all across Canada under the slogan: **Bring the Troops Home Now! Canada Out of Afghanistan!** It is an opportunity for groups and individuals to take a stand against Canada being in Afghanistan and discuss together how to end this situation.

This month marks the 5th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan by the U.S.-led NATO Coalition of which Canada is part.

In October of 2001, the U.S. government used the pretext that the government of Afghanistan was harbouring Osama Bin Laden to invade a sovereign nation. They said the attack on the twin towers was carried out by Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda and declared that this amounted to an attack on the United States by the government and people of Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan said they would hand over Bin Laden if the U.S. provided them with the evidence he had carried out the attacks, a request consistent with the rule of law.

Instead of following the norms of international law, the U.S. invoked so-called self-defence provisions in NATO and mobilized its troops and the troops of Canada, Britain and others to commence a campaign to change Afghanistan's government through force.

Through NATO, the U.S. and Canada imposed a government on the people of Afghanistan by force. It was they who first destroyed the country and are now claiming they want to rebuild it.

Canada has around 2,400 troops in Afghanistan, including an unknown number of Special Forces. Twenty percent are reserve soldiers.

The decision to invade Afghanistan was not taken by the Canadian people, nor by the Canadian parliament. It was taken by NATO an aggressive military alliance of which Canada is a member. Canadians were informed after the fact. This was our contribution to assist the U.S. in Iraq, by freeing up U.S. soldiers to fight there despite the fact Canadians vehemently opposed the invasion of Iraq as well.

Over these five years, the mission in Afghanistan has changed. It has become an all out war. Still Canadians have had absolutely no say in what the government does. The demand to withdraw Canada 's troops immediately from Afghanistan was only raised in last year's election by the small parties. The big parties did not even mention it for fear of losing votes.

We had discussion in the peace coalition in preparation for today's Day of Action....on what stand we should take.

On one hand our stand has been clear since 2003 when we formed the Peace Coalition. Occupation is not liberation and that we are one humanity, all of the peoples of the world, in one struggle for our rights.

Some are saying that Canada's aim in Afghanistan is fine, to democratize a so-called failed state and the only problem is that it's not working.

Others say the problem with Canada's role in Afghanistan is that there is too much emphasis on the military side of things and not enough on so-called reconstruction (development).

The government has said that we have to finish the job, whether we like it or not and that Canadian values dictate our role in Afghanistan. We are told that our only role is to "Support the Troops."

When the majority of us, even families of those shipped out to Afghanistan disagree with the mission we are accused of demoralizing the troops which equates to being traitors or un-Canadian. **It is the mission and the crimes Canadians soldiers are being ordered to commit which are demoralizing the troops, not our resistance!**

Our stand is that all peoples and nations have a right to sovereignty and self-determination. And to resist foreign occupation. This is the basis of the UN Charter and International Law.

No country has a right to impose its interests on another, either through the use of military force, or through the use of economic blackmail, or coercion using humanitarian aid.

We stand for sovereignty and self-determination for all peoples and nations, including our own. We are all Canadians, and we are having our say! Canada must get out of Afghanistan Now! Not only militarily. The Canadian

government was part of the nations which invaded and destroyed Afghanistan. It has no right to say that now it wants to rebuild it. This is disinformation aimed at confusing our movement. The re-building or “development” part of the mission has the same aim as the military part, to subjugate the people of Afghanistan to foreign financial and political interests, not to assist them build their own nation based on their own history and experience.

This is our stand as the Peace Coalition and it is expressed in our banner:

Canadians Say..Get Out of Afghanistan Now!

We have organized this rally as an opportunity for people who are part of the anti-war movement, elected officials and others to take a stand to call for Canada's troops to be withdrawn from Afghanistan immediately. We think that everyone should support this stand. At the same time we think that everyone should give their views and through the discussion Canadians will affirm their right to take the decisions on matters that affect their lives.