

Canadian Diplomacy at Odds with Democracy & Truth

By Richard Sanders

Jamaica's Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, spoke out strongly against the coup that deposed President Aristide, saying it



P.J. Patterson

"sets a dangerous precedent for democratically-elected governments everywhere, as it promotes the removal of duly-elected persons from office."¹

Patterson is the Chair of CARICOM, the Caribbean Community whose 15-member states all adamantly refused to grant diplomatic recognition or support to Haiti's

coup-installed regime.²

The African Union, which includes 53 member nations, also refused to recognize the legality of Haiti's "interim government," saying Aristide's "removal" was "unconstitutional."³

Expelled from his country, Aristide went into exile in South Africa. He was warmly welcomed by Nelson Mandela, whose party—the African National Congress (ANC)—quickly endorsed CARICOM's diplomatic initiative against Haiti's illegitimate regime. The ANC also launched a campaign to restore Haitian democracy which called on the UN to lead:

"an international effort, with the involvement of regional bodies like ... CARICOM, to ensure the unelected interim government ends the political persecution of Lavalas members and supporters, releases all political prisoners, ends all illegal arrests and summary executions and ensures the disarmament of all illegally armed groups and individuals.... The constitutional order must be restored, which should include ...the return of all exiles, including President Aristide."⁴

South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki, criticised the UN Security Council's Resolution on Haiti that established the mili-



Thabo Mbeki

While rebels attacked police and government offices across Haiti, Canada refused to help but instead put diplomatic pressure on President Aristide. When the coup succeeded, and a puppet regime was installed, Canada rewarded it with official recognition. Canada then used every trick in the diplomatic book to support Haiti's unconstitutional regime and to cover for its violent excesses. Our prime minister and top cabinet members led official visits to Haiti. During reciprocal visits to Canada, the top politicians in Haiti's illegal regime were welcomed with open arms and smiling photo ops.



Hugo Chavez

tary force (MINUSTAH) in which Canada became so involved:

"What was and is strange and disturbing about this Resolution is that it is totally silent on the central issue of the unconstitutional and anti-democratic removal of the elected Government of Haiti. It says nothing about the notorious figures who achieved this objective, arms in hand, killing many people."⁵

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who was almost overthrown in a U.S.-led coup in 2002, condemned Haiti's puppet regime saying:

"We don't recognize Haiti's new government.... The president of Haiti is named Jean-Bertrand Aristide and he was elected by his people."⁶

These 69 governments, representing a third of the world's countries, not only refused to recognize the so-called "interim government" of Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, they also joined in demanding an international investigation into the circumstances of Aristide's departure.⁷

Canada's Response

Despite their efforts, Haiti was given immediate recognition by the U.S., France and Canada, which then provided military, financial and diplomatic backing. Nik Barry-Shaw, of Haiti Action Montreal, noted that Canada used:

"every diplomatic means available... to provide legitimacy to the installed government. High-level officials, such as Paul Martin, Pierre Pettigrew and Denis Coderre,...made numerous visits to Haiti since the coup to 'underline Canada's support of the interim government.' Canada... organized and hosted international conferences with the Latortue government and chided other nations to disburse their aid more quickly. Paul Martin...even chastised CARICOM ...leaders for their refusal to recognize the installed government and their continued calls for an independent investigation into the removal of President Aristide."⁸

Other examples of Canada's disregard for democracy in Haiti abound. For example, Martin's junket in support of the coup-imposed regime in late 2004, was the first visit to Haiti by any Canadian Prime Minister. While there he "alluded to widespread demands... for the return of Aristide" by stating "that reconstruction in Haiti should not be based on 'nostalgia for the past.'"⁹

When asked in March 2004 about CARICOM's call for an investigation into the coup, Kenneth Cook, Canada's Ambassador to Haiti, said:

"As far as I'm concerned, there is no evidence of a kidnapping. I don't have a position on the request to the UN by the CARICOM...for an investigation into the circumstances of the removal of Aristide. If there were

[an investigation], it should be brief in order not to interfere with the task of rebuilding the country.”¹⁰

Another reason Canada’s government would prefer a “brief” investigation, is that any indepth study would surely find deep Canadian complicity in the coup.

Rather than exposing the coup that deposed Aristide—Haiti’s most popular President—Canada’s idea was to promote his supposed crimes. As our Ambassador to Haiti, Claude Boucher, who “is known to be close to elements within the elite Group of 184”¹¹ (see pages 47-49), told the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas:

“We hope...Aristide is going to disappear... I believe...he should never come back.... We hope [an inquiry into his alleged corruption] will show Aristide is guilty of so many criminal actions.”¹²

Harold Lavendar, a Vancouver activist, writer and editor, said he encountered *apparent* ignorance about many basic facts surrounding the coup.

“Canadian officials...seemed clueless about the details of Aristide’s removal and ...U.S.-supported repression. One Canadian diplomat told me, ‘Really, we have little of our own intelligence on Haiti. We rely on the

U.S. for that.’” (emphasis added)¹³

Another activist/writer said Paul Martin “quickly accepted Aristide’s resignation, without knowing its circumstances.”¹⁴ But was Martin really so completely out of touch with reality?

Within two days of the coup, Aristide got the word out that he had been threatened and kidnapped by U.S. Marines: “I was kidnapped,” “I did not resign,” and “Tell the world it was a coup.”¹⁵ Anyone searching the internet quickly finds over 100,000 references to his being kidnapped.

We would be naive to think that key players in the Canadian government did not know this even before the word spread online. Canada, after all, had helped to plan, organize and carry out the coup. Canadian special forces even secured the airport from which Aristide was forced out of Haiti.

So, although top Canadian politicians may *seem* to be lacking intelligence on matters in which they are obviously deeply embroiled, it is much more likely that they are just *feigning* ignorance. To Canadian lawmakers who make such preposterously phoney claims of innocence, after committing grave crimes, we must say: *Ignorance is no excuse for breaking the law!*

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Haiti Advisor, Denis Coderre, Serves up the “Baloney Defence”

By Richard Sanders

Denis Coderre, who was Prime Minister Martin’s special advisor on Haiti, completely dismissed international human rights reports documenting abuse in Haiti, calling them:

“propaganda reports, which are just not telling the truth. If you talk about the report from the University of Miami, it’s disgusting.... And...some people...talk about repression of our own police force. That’s *baloney*; that’s not true.”¹ (emphasis added)

Coderre, however, “presented no evidence and refused to address any of the facts, interviews, photographs, or other damning context, in these so-called ‘propaganda reports.’”²

This was not the last time Coderre blurted “baloney” when confronted with facts about Canada’s role in the coup and its bloody aftermath. When asked on CBC radio to respond to comments by Patrick Elie (a Haitian,

pro-democracy activist and former Aristide cabinet minister), Coderre cried: “that kind of politics is totally *baloney*, I mean this is not true, he’s lying.”³ (emphasis added)

When asked: “Are you dismissing everything he says as mere propaganda?... He says he’s talking for the people who live there,” Coderre interrupted with a response that began: “Yeah, yeah, right, yeah right. We can, you know, it’s, it’s *baloney*.”⁴

But no one should take such outbursts personally. Coderre has a history of serving the “baloney defence.”

Back in 1997, when Bloc Québécois MPs accused the Liberals of catering to Canada’s major banks that had bribed them with huge donations, Coderre interrupted saying: “Point of order, Madam Speaker. The member ...is always full of baloney.” The Speaker cut Coderre off saying MPs should be “more careful in their choice of words,” and then told them to con-

tinue “calmly and peacefully.”⁵

When accused of withholding information from a Commons’s immigration committee in 2002, Coderre said it was all “baloney and nonsense.”⁶

In 2003, Coderre dismissed concerns that a national ID card might erode civil liberties and help build huge government databases on Canadians, saying “that’s total baloney.”⁷

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