

# C-51 TARGETS THE VOICES OF PUBLIC DISSENT

Across Canada, alarms are being raised against Bill C-51, the so-called “Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015” which gives the Canadian state sweeping new powers to further criminalize public dissent.

In the first place, it targets those critical of the corporate agenda of austerity, environmental destruction, and imperialist war. This dangerous Tory legislation would help further transform CSIS into a secret police force beyond the control of the public or even Parliament.

This Bill constitutes perhaps the most serious threat to free speech and civil liberties in Canada since the era of the War Measures Act, which was proclaimed by governments several times from World War One to the 1970s to suspend democratic rights, including mass incarcerations of targeted ethnic groups, Communists, trade union leaders and a broad range of democratic forces in Quebec, until it was finally repealed by Parliament in response to massive public pressure.

Bill C-51’s alleged purpose is to protect Canadians from “terrorism”, but its true aim is to help the Conservative Party use fear and intimidation tactics to extend its political base in advance of the 2015 federal election. The underlying purpose is to limit civil, labour and democratic rights of all Canadian citizens and residents, and to expand the powers of an increasingly authoritarian state. Making racist speeches which single out mosques for special attention, the Prime Minister has clearly indicated that entire sections of the population are being placed into a category of potential terrorists, considered “guilty until proven innocent.”

Even the Globe and Mail has warned that “the fearmongering of a campaigning Prime Minister” is being used to turn CSIS into “something that looks disturbingly like a secret police force.”



**The Communist Party of Canada warns that Bill C-51 cannot be “amended” or “improved”. C-51 must be rejected by Parliament, and CSIS itself should be dismantled -- not expanded.**  
[www.Communist-Party.ca/StopC51](http://www.Communist-Party.ca/StopC51)

## 1. A WARRANT TO IGNORE THE LAW

Under this legislation, CSIS agents will be allowed to act against any perceived “threat to the security of Canada,” without a judicial warrant if they claim that their activities do not contravene Charter rights or the law.

## 2. DISRUPT “RADICAL” WEBSITES

CSIS would be permitted to disrupt vaguely defined “radical websites”, and to apply for court orders to remove “terrorist propaganda” from the Internet.

## 3. “PREVENTATIVE” ARREST

The Bill lowers the legal threshold to detain people without criminal charges, and expands the reach of the “no-fly list”. CSIS agents will be allowed to break into homes and offices, seize documents, remove whatever they find, install monitoring devices, or carry out “dirty tricks” or disruptive activities a judge agrees is “reasonable”.

## 4. “BLACK OPERATIONS”

Since the government is again beating the drums of war, bombing Iraq and Syria, there is every reason to believe that judicial limits on these police powers will be minimal, and that these activities will be integrated with the CIA’s “black operations” around the world.

## 5. ZERO PUBLIC CONTROL

Ominously, there will be no new mechanisms for Canadians to even monitor CSIS, leaving only the PMO and a tiny clique of powerless and complicit government appointees with knowledge of its actions.

# STRIKES AND PROTEST ARE OUR CIVIL AND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Section 16 of C-51 prohibits “advocating and promoting terrorism”, raising a wide range of unanswered questions.

Public Safety Minister Blaney has refused to give a direct response in Parliament or to the media regarding non-violent civil disobedience protests against the extraction and export of tar sands bitumen.

The clear implication of Minister Blaney’s comments is that any protests directed against the energy industry are by definition potentially dangerous, and could fall under the general umbrella of “terrorist” activity.

Conservative cabinet ministers repeatedly slander the broadly-supported movements which oppose Israel’s apartheid-style occupation of Palestinian territories – such as the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions campaign – in effect branding these movements as targets of CSIS actions.

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## BUILD A BROAD, UNITED AND POWERFUL RESISTANCE!

- Petitions, letters, statements and resolutions to MPs;
- Public forums, letters to the editor, social media, call in to talk radio shows;
- Initiatives forming broad-based anti-C-51 coalitions;
- Visible mass public resistance -- protests, pickets, street theatre, occupations of MPs offices, mass action.

**MORE IDEAS:** [www.Communist-Party.ca/StopC51](http://www.Communist-Party.ca/StopC51)

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Since coming to power in 2006, the Harper government has engaged in massive surveillance against indigenous people's movements, and has frequently used back-to-work legislation against unions under federal jurisdiction, claiming that strikes at Air Canada, Canada Post, and elsewhere constituted a threat to the economy.

Now, Bill C-51 will criminalize actions which "interfere with the ability of the Canadian government to maintain economic or fiscal stability", an obvious threat against both the labour movement and the right to strike, and indeed any movement which resists the agenda of the banks and corporations.

Trade unions and Aboriginal peoples will be a major focus of the beefed-up CSIS, just as the RCMP was used for decades by federal and provincial governments to break strikes and target Aboriginal activists.

In other words, the Harper Conservatives are providing CSIS with powers going far beyond those which were stripped from the RCMP over 30 years ago as a result of its illegal activities such as barn-burning in Quebec and spying on CUPW – and at the same time the Tories are implicitly setting the political agenda for this new secret police operation.

## MASS UNITED ACTION THE WAY FORWARD

A growing chorus of criticism is emerging, including by some media outlets and civil liberties groups. The Green Party leader, MP Elizabeth May, has condemned C-51 as so "overbroad" that it "could apply to anything".

After some wait, the NDP have opposed Bill C-51. This is welcome; however their reasoning that the Bill "goes too far" understates the dangers to civil, labour and democratic rights. While raising some questions about the lack of public oversight of CSIS, the Liberals and Bloc Québécois are supporting the legislation.

The Communist Party will do everything in our power to help defeat Bill C-51. We urge labour and democratic movements, environmental groups, Aboriginal peoples, the Palestine solidarity and anti-war movements, civil liberties groups, and all those who care about civil, labour and democratic rights, to help build a powerful, mass, united campaign against this police state legislation.

**Such a broad-based fight can win, by mobilizing public opposition right across the country!**

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The Communist Party of Canada has long supported working people in action to curb corporate power and expand civil liberties, labour rights and democracy. We make the link with the need for jobs, and stopping war.

Today, the top 1% own and control 50% of the entire wealth of our planet, while billions go hungry.

We think it is urgent, necessary and possible to replace capitalism with a socialist society based on full democracy and working people's power, human equality, peace, and environmental sustainability. We invite you to learn more about our party online, and get involved.

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