



MAWO STATEMENT ON THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S "INDEPENDENT ADVISORY PANEL ON AFGHANISTAN" CANADA/NATO OUT OF AFGHANISTAN NOW! CALL FOR AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CANADA'S WAR DRIVE IN AFGHANISTAN!

October 23, 2007 - Vancouver, BC

"... our government wants a full, open and informed debate about our options [in Afghanistan]. (...) To that end, today I am pleased to announce the formation of an independent panel of eminent Canadians who will consider our options and provide expert non-partisan advice that will help parliamentarians make our decision."
-Prime Minister of Canada & Federal Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Stephen Harper October 12, 2007

Stephen Harper's October 12th announcement of the newly appointed "Independent Advisory Panel on Afghanistan" marked the latest government maneuver to try to delay and mask the deepening crisis that the occupation of Afghanistan poses for the government of Canada. The creation of this 'independent' and 'non-partisan' panel attempts to sideline any public or parliamentary debate on the occupation of Afghanistan until the panel has delivered its report by the end of January 2008. Harper stated that the decision in parliament on whether or not to extend Canada's occupation of Afghanistan past February 2009 will be informed by this advisory panel. Unable to deal with the widening rift in the ruling class on how to remedy the crisis, the government of Canada is using this as an attempt to determine some way Canada can still secure its economic and political interests through this war and occupation.

The "independent" panel is chaired by John Manley, a member of the Liberal Party and a former Foreign Affairs minister and former Deputy Prime Minister. Manley was minister of Foreign Affairs in October 2001 when Canada supported and participated in the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. The other members of the panel are 5 ruling class advisors with career histories in federal government politics with the Conservative or Liberal parties, the department foreign affairs, or as CEOs and top executives of major Canadian corporations. The panel includes former federal Cabinet Minister and Conservative Party of Canada member Jake Epp, former Clerk of the Privy Council Paul Tellier, former Canadian Ambassador to the United States Derek Burney, and Pamela Wallin, former Canadian Consul General in New York City.

The announcement of this panel comes at a time when the failure of the occupation of Afghanistan to provide security, democracy, stability or freedom for regular Afghan people couldn't be more glaring. In 6 years, the NATO/Canada occupation has lowered life expectancy by 4.5 years, killed tens of thousands of Afghan people, raised the suicide rate of women, and destroyed hospitals, schools, and other infrastructure. Daily criticism of this failure from the media and other elements of the ruling class is heaping pressure on the Conservative government. This "advisory panel" is their desperate response to diffuse the pressure that comes from their failure.

John Manley himself said "Canada's future in Afghanistan really transcends partisan politics." and this is very true. For all sections of the ruling class of Canada, whether they're grouped into different political parties or not, the occupation of Afghanistan is key to rescuing the status quo political, social and economic system in Canada from economic crisis. The recommendations from this panel will not fundamentally change anything about the occupation, nor will they represent the interests of regular Afghan people or working, poor people in Canada. This panel is nothing but a ruling class advisory to deal with a ruling class crisis. If it is "independent", it is indeed independent from the working and oppressed masses of Canada and therefore people in Canada shouldn't be tricked by this ruling class maneuvering.

Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) strongly condemns and opposes the formation of this panel which only serves as another way to continue Canada's occupation of Afghanistan. As an antiwar coalition in Vancouver, BC Canada MAWO continues to call for an independent and public inquiry into Canada's war drive in Afghanistan. The call is for an inquiry that will be 100% independent of the war-making government of Canada and its political parties, not hand-chosen by Harper. People in Canada do have a right to know how and why the decisions were made to occupy Afghanistan, expand and extend the operation, and more than double the military budget without any say from people in Canada at all. More than 13,000 people in the Lower Mainland have signed the MAWO petition demanding "Canada Out of Afghanistan Now!" in a show of just what regular people think about this occupation. No more "advisory panels", non-binding debates in parliament, and maneuvers to maintain this criminal occupation!

We demand: Canada/NATO Out of Afghanistan Now! Independent Public Inquiry Now!