

DOES CANADA BELONG IN AFGHANISTAN ANYMORE?

Canada is not now, or ever has been, a nation bent on war. Today our country projects itself to the world as a peaceful nation. Yet in spite of this fact something odd, something wrong, something disturbing has happened that continues to linger on—Canadian troops remain in Afghanistan.

The chaos inflicted onto the United States during the events of “9/11” produced chaotic, hasty action; a declaration of war. Feeling that they were under attack, America’s right-of-centre leaders responded in a manner they thought was necessary. However, deploying Canadian forces to Afghanistan to provide the “military support requested”¹ was a wrong Canadian approach, and the death toll dramatizes this mistake with staggering clarity.

Fifty-one Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have been killed since the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) set foot on Afghan soil January 14, 2002. The majority of those deaths have come within the last two years of Canada serving in Afghanistan. In a CBC poll done in November 2006, 80% of Canadians believe our country’s role should be in a peace-keeping capacity, in war times, and an astonishing 92% are proud of this approach. Additionally, only 10% believe that our Armed Forces should stay in Afghanistan past 2009. Experts have given estimates that it will take at least ten years to with a modern war on the basis of counterinsurgency.

These statistics continue to beg the question of why Canadians are still in Afghanistan. Despite the cost to taxpayers (over 2 billion dollars) there are approximately

¹ Chretien, Jean, Oct. 08/01

2500 soldiers in Afghanistan and the Canadian government has proposed another boost in artillery for the spring of 2007. Canada did not start this war, and Canada was never attacked so why are our innocent soldiers sent to fight in a war where innocent civilians get killed daily?

This question is continually left unanswered by politicians in Ottawa, both Liberal and Conservative, over the past five years of Canada's occupation in Afghanistan. As Canadians we should quit letting our leaders off the hook, and stop letting them give into the United States by continuing to fight in Afghanistan. Our government should be willing to listen—we withstood the request to get involved in Iraq, we can start a protest on Afghanistan now. Our country identifies itself as a sovereign nation with unique morals and values but we need to start paying more attention: to the innocent lives lost, to the dollars being spent and to the impact our actions have on the world. If we continue to be involved with war it will not be long before we consumed by war, and that is not a Canada I want to be a part of.

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