

Canada Syndrome: Good People Supporting Mass Internment, War, and Genocide

Global Research News Hour Episode 142

By [Michael Welch](#) and [Richard Sanders](#)

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“Many Canadians are still captivated by the self-righteous illusion that their blessed “Peaceable Kingdom” is based on the principles of multiculturalism, justice, democracy and human rights. These sacred “Canadian Values” form the basis of a narcissistic fantasy of exceptionalism that is so out of touch with reality that it constitutes a national disorder of mythic proportions.” -Richard Sanders ([Press For Conversion Issue #68](#))

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Canada enjoys an international reputation as a [“friendly and welcoming” place](#). This nice guy image is sometimes contrasted with what could be described as America’s “bull in a china shop” approach to international affairs.[1]

This perception is not lost on Canadians themselves who seem to pride themselves on this kinder, gentler image.

Yet, this perception seems to be at odds with a documented history of atrocities against Blacks (pre-Confederation Canada was once a slave society) oppression and discrimination toward Chinese railway workers in the late eighteenth century, and anti-Semitism in the early twentieth century.

Canada’s “multicultural” heritage also includes the mass internment of peoples of Eastern European descent into slave labour camps during and after the First World War, and of course, Canada’s genocidal policies toward the Indigenous population, which included the reserve system and Indian Residential schools.[2]

What makes this history all the more outrageous is the notion that the Canadian population were quite comfortable with this state of affairs.

Doubly concerning is the way individuals recognized as icons today had a hand in perpetuating violence and discrimination against minorities and the working class.

Take for example the legendary J.S. Woodsworth. The Winnipeg based activist minister,

proponent of the “Social Gospel” and founder of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (which would become the New Democratic Party) expressed in his time racist attitudes toward Indigenous and Black people, and xenophobic attitudes toward non Anglo-Saxon Europeans. These views are documented in his book *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1908). In fact, Woodsworth actively campaigned for eugenics policies as Director of the Bureau of Social Research. Notwithstanding his pacifist beliefs, there is no indication he ever objected to let alone spoke out against the mass internment of thousands of Ukrainians in Canada during the War years. [3]

The Orwellian double-think at the time perpetuated the view that the mass internment and enslavement of destitute Eastern Europeans was somehow an act of Anglo-Canadian kind-heartedness because “thousands of these aliens were starving.” Rounding up the Aboriginal population and placing them on reserves and in Indian Residential schools was an act of compassion to “civilize” them. [4][5]

In the Twentieth-First Century, symptoms of “Canada Syndrome” might include “humanitarian interventions” in places like Yugoslavia(1999), Haiti (2004), and Libya (2011), which coincidentally seem to serve an imperial agenda. This is a level of manipulation that seems to be more pervasive than straight government propaganda.

Richard Sanders, this week’s guest on the Global Research News Hour, argues that these dynamics are enabled by widely disseminated narratives. Over the course of this feature length interview, Sanders elaborates on the notion that these types of narratives are key to inducing a psychosis enabling corporate and imperial plunder, he explains how some of these dynamics played out during the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, the role of the “Social Gospel” and the importance of confronting these past crimes if we are to prevent a repetition of history.

Richard Sanders is a long-time anti-war activist and organizer based in Ottawa, Ontario in Canada. He is coordinator of the Coalition Opposed to the Arms Trade, and the lead researcher, writer and editor of Press For Conversion magazine. To obtain a copy of the latest issue, visit <http://coat.ncf.ca> or write to COAT, 191 James St., Ottawa, ON, K1R 5M6

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Notes:

- 1) Chris Cobb (March 29, 2015), Ottawa Citizen, “Q&A: Why Canada’s ‘nice guy’ image remains intact”; <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/qa-why-canadas-nice-guy-image-remains-intact>
- 2) Press For Conversion Magazine Issue #68 (March 2016)
- 3) *ibid*, pg 24-26

4) *ibid*, p.11

5) *ibid*, p.17

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