

Tribute

## TO MEL WATKINS

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It's ironic, indeed bitterly so, that almost to the very day of losing Mel, our Prime Minister announced that Canada needs manufacturing self-sufficiency in the face of the Corona virus --- maybe he'll also realize that such manufacturing will require reliable sources of energy. (Might he call it a national energy program?)

Among my many fond memories of Mel and, of course, all the things that I, like all of us, learned from him, one personal memory stands out. As an immigrant to Canada from the United States (in 1965), it took me some time to recognize that the country was not Michigan



Taken on Mel's birthday in May, 2019, Constance Bay

North and a bit more time to come to appreciate and finally identify with my new home, taking out citizenship in the early 70s. I worked hard to fit in, e.g., by working to lose an American accent and involving myself in our national struggles. During that time and even today (nobody can completely hide an original accent from someone with antennae finely tuned to detect it), I took flak from not a few of the left nationalists in my political circles for being an "American." But never from Mel! Not once. Not even in jest. He accepted me as a political ally, a fellow left-wing scholar, and a friend from the very beginning of our relationship in those heady days of the peace movement, and socialist, and yes, progressive, Canadian-independence struggles.

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