

V. IN-DEPTH PROBING ON CANADA/U.S. RELATIONSHIP

The concept of free trade with the United States found roughly half of all respondents unwilling to even venture a guess at how to describe it.

Those who did attempt to describe it generally had the fundamental principles correct, but virtually no one had any well thought out arguments as to the benefits or drawbacks associated with free trade. While the ensuing discussions found that most were able to understand the opportunities associated with having much larger markets available to Canadian products, they could also imagine the threat to our competitiveness when American "manufacturers" were able to sell their goods in Canada free of tariffs.

After most of the discussion had revealed the major pros and cons, the lingering thought in the minds of most participants seemed to be the sense that larger countries benefit more from free trade agreements than do smaller partners, and that the risks to Canada were significant. No one volunteered the idea that Canada would face more hazardous tariffs in the future if steps were not taken to reduce the amount of conflict occurring at present and few seemed worried that this would in fact occur.

Most participants seemed very convinced that entering into this type of agreement with the Americans would not necessarily guarantee favourable or even fair treatment at their hands. The commonly held view was that the Americans have become economically powerful because they are shrewd and at times ruthless and would try to exploit their relationship with Canada if it were possible to do so.