

VI. THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA)

(i) General Impressions of NAFTA

Perhaps the most important finding with regard to the discussions on a North American Free Trade Agreement was the pervasive view among virtually all participants that if the United States and Mexico were going to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement, Canada had to be at the table. Both moderate supporters and moderate opponents in all three cities were strongly of the view that Canada has to make sure that its interests are protected.

Interestingly, the level of awareness of negotiations for NAFTA were markedly lower in both Vancouver and Winnipeg compared to Ottawa. While moderate FTA opponents were somewhat more aware, residents of the two western cities displayed less awareness of negotiations involving Canada, the United States and Mexico. While participants in each of the groups recognized that Canada was involved in the negotiation of a possible trade agreement, awareness beyond 'talks' was minimal.

When asked about their general views on the negotiations for trilateral trade, respondents' views were mixed. Supporters, not surprisingly, were significantly more positive in their general views. In Ottawa, moderate supporters pointed out that there would be advantages resulting from a North American trading bloc and that such an agreement will strengthen the North American position in GATT talks and with other countries around the world. ("whole bloc becomes slightly stronger;" "our position is stronger to negotiate in the GATT or with other countries;" "one step closer to global free trade;" "struggling industries can take advantage of cheap labour;" "we can benefit politically...trade benefits communication").

Among supporters in Vancouver, only two of eleven respondents indicated that they were opposed to Canadian negotiations with the U.S. and Mexico. Residents of Vancouver were quick to point out that Canada had to be involved in the negotiations

