

No way to stop the selling

Limited to resurrect its dreams of a successful domestic nuclear technology by pressing for nuclear power to be given the green light.

So the old national framework has gone, and these considerations and interests will all be part of the national debate that will eventually determine the form of the "continental" relationship.

Opportunities lost

These new horizons have not been gained without some losses, primarily the ability to shape trade and natural resources for national purposes. The intent of the Treaty is to liberalize trade, and as such, reduce the power of government to interfere with the play of the market. The issue then becomes not continental trade, but the role of government in shaping its forms and terms. Canadian hydro policy fostered continental trade, but maintained the sovereign power to define what was surplus to Canadian needs, to see that exports were priced fairly, to encourage a degree of mutually satisfactory economic integration among provinces and to repatriate resources as contractual commitments expired. Dissatisfaction with that policy

was never a domestic cause for seeking freer trade. Now continental US customers have a domestic (i.e., Canadian) status, and the ability of the Canadian government to direct resources for national development is fundamentally circumscribed by the Treaty, one that we do not know well now, but one with a quasi-constitutional status that will grow in meaning as it is implemented, interpreted, enforced and modified over the years.

Canadian economic nationalism has always had its share of opponents, and many for good cause. But the loss of sovereign national and provincial powers takes away one of the formative influences in the terms of continental integration. It adds a certain permanency to this policy shift, one that should make all look beyond immediate gain to reflect upon future consequences. Some may think this loss of sovereignty is a small price to pay for continental market access. But we should remember that healthy export industries do not necessarily mean a healthy economy or that those industries are serving any domestic needs. As the treaty process unfolds we have to be wary that we do not become rich in hydro and poor in energy. □

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