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Canada

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The Council of Canadians sees this situation as dangerous to Canada's future. It is a situation that could result in Canadians becoming 'assimilated Americans' insofar as Canadians would be shaped by an American way of thinking.

The threat to Canadian cultural sovereignty is further heightened by the increased dependency on the US which would stem from a bilateral free trade agreement. "How typical it is today of Canada, that pressure groups in Washington DC have recently been threatening Marcel Masse (former minister of Culture) that if Bill C-58 (supportive of the Canadian magazine industry) was not substantially relaxed or recinded, Washington would threaten to curtail asbestos exports from his riding which is very dependent on those exports to the United States," say Hurtig.

"We support the expression of Canadian culture that recognizes the diverse experiences and reality of Canadians," says the report of the workshop on culture.

"If there is one thing all Canadians share, it's American culture."

The other major concern addressed by the Council of Canadians was on the issue of foreign policy. The COC believes Canada should play a greater role among "the world community of nations," both in reducing super-power tensions and promoting a free and just world. While Canada's status as an ally of the United States was reaffirmed, "to subordinate or abandon Canadian interests merely for the sake of sustaining a friendly relationship in Washington should not be

seen as a policy in itself," says the COC's background paper on foreign policy.

Condemnation of Ronald Reagan's policies, particularly in Central America, was unanimous. In response, the Council of Canadians adopted a resolution in support of the principles of democracy, social justice, and national self-determination for all people and that Canada has a responsibility to oppose violations of these fundamental principles.

As with the economy and culture, an independent Canadian foreign policy is threatened by a bilateral free trade arrangement with the United States. Economic union, the COC argues, would put Canada in a position where we would be more susceptible to pressure from the US to conform to American policies.

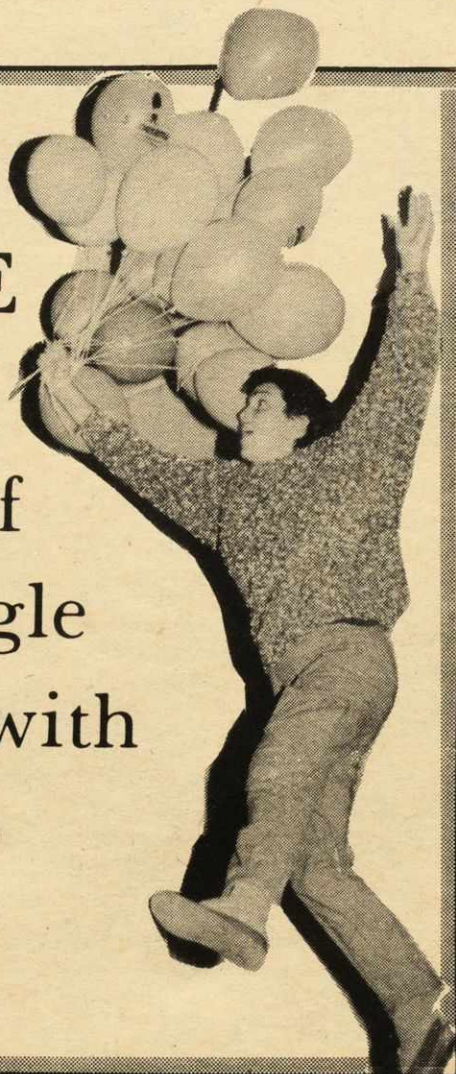
In a letter to the founding convention Walter Gordon says, "If we are foolish enough to agree to a free trade treaty with the United States we will weaken our present fragile status of independence and we will make it all the harder to resist further impairments in the future. It has never been easy for Canada to avoid becoming a satellite of the United States. We must avoid doing things that will weaken our position."

Other prominent members of the Council of Canadians include former NDP leader Tommy Douglas; Liberal MP Herb Gray; Progressive Conservative leader for British Columbia Peter Pollen; Marion Dewar, mayor of Ottawa and national president of the New Democrats; Bob White, United Auto Workers director; Jim Stark, President of Operation Dismantle; Margaret Atwood; Margaret Laurence; Peter C. Newman; and Pierre Berton.

Mel Hurtig, chair of the COC, will be in Halifax Wednesday, Nov. 6 to speak on the threat of free trade and American assimilation of Canada. The talk will take place in Rm 304 of the Dunn building, Dalhousie University at 8:00 p.m.

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