

IV. DEFINING INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

i) Competitiveness and Trade

When respondents were probed on their assessments of the term "international competitiveness" moderate supporters of the FTA stated that Canada's ability to compete was essential to on-going economic well-being. ("We have to compete;" "It's the cost of doing business. It's critical to doing business.") Virtually all 'supporters' agreed that the world was becoming increasingly competitive and that Canada needed to concentrate efforts on ensuring that it remained at the forefront of an international trend.

Even opponents of the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement admitted, albeit reluctantly, that the world was becoming increasingly competitive. While concerns about free trade (particularly with the U.S.) were cited as negative effects of international competitiveness, the prevailing view was that international competitiveness was a reality and that Canada probably needed to become more competitive ("We have to become more competitive by producing products cheaper.") A significant minority, however, cited the effect of international competitiveness on Canadian jobs, reporting that the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement was largely responsible for job losses and plant closures in Canada. These participants saw this trend continuing as international trade becomes more widespread. It is worth noting that despite firmly held negative impressions of the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement among moderate FTA opponents, participants in these groups recognized that there may be benefits accruing from international trade. Few respondents argued that Canada should focus internally or that it had a self-contained market for its goods and services. Interestingly, FTA opponents in Ottawa (who were the most strongly opposed in the three cities) were able to offer positive comments when asked what international trade and competitiveness meant to them: "fine, but must be beneficial for both sides, U.S. too big;" "exciting, presents opportunities, inevitable;"

