

There's no road-map that will tell us which way to go at every cross-roads, but the general direction seems clear enough. So what's holding us up? I think Pogo, the late Walt Kelly's swamp possum, may have put it best: "I have met the enemy, and he is us."

Our hesitation seems to spring from deep in the Canadian psyche. Our hangup, as usual, is the Americans.

Opening up our trade with the world necessarily involves opening up our trade with the United States — since 80 percent of our trade is with the United States. And that brings all the old spectres out of all the old closets.

The fear of being taken over by the U.S. has dominated the thinking of some Canadians for so long that it brings on a conditioned response to any initiative that might improve or expand our relations, even our business relations. The current response runs like this: that a trade agreement with the States will be the first inevitable step to oblivion, that the next step will be a customs union, followed by a common market, followed by political integration. Goodbye, Canada.

But these are the fears of a minority. They are a hangover from the past, when Canada was less sure of itself as a nation and Canadians less sure of themselves as a people.

I think it's fair to say that most Canadians today find nothing inherently pernicious about the prospect of conducting bilateral trade negotiations with the United States. That's what the polls indicate, at any rate. The polls also show something else: that younger Canadians are more in favour of freer trade with the States than are older Canadians. Indeed, the generation that is most for it — by a ratio of more than two to one, accord-

ing to the latest CROP poll — is your generation: people between the ages of 18 and 29.

Why is that? I'd like to suggest two possible reasons. First, that your generation feels more comfortable with being Canadian, more secure. And second, that you have some very real concerns about the prospects of finding rewarding employment down the road.

One of Britain's most thoughtful magazines, *The Economist*, is sympathetic to those concerns. Listen to what it wrote in a recent report on Canada: "There is every reason to be confident that greater exposure to worldwide economic and cultural forces would continue to enrich Canadians and their distinctive, though definitely North American, way of life. There is equally good cause to fear that the steady improvement in living standards which Canadians are used to will continue to slow down unless the country opens up its economy further."

But let's go back for a moment to the issue of Canadian sovereignty. Sovereignty comes in two forms, political and cultural. Our political sovereignty is not at stake in our trade talks with the Americans. We don't want to become Americans — and they don't want us to. As for our cultural sovereignty, I think you're aware of what Canada's position will be at the negotiating table. If you're not, the Americans certainly are. Our position is this: Our cultural sovereignty is not negotiable. Our social programs are not negotiable. They are our business, and nobody else's.

Let me take this thought a bit further. In this country, our cultural sovereignty and social programs depend on our capacity to sustain economic growth, and that is directly linked to our ability to trade. Only a strong economy can guarantee the cultural in-