

## V. CANADIAN IDENTITY AND INDEPENDENCE

### A. Independence

Participants were asked whether they thought the concerns expressed by some people about free trade leading to a loss of independence or sovereignty were justified or not, and whether they themselves were concerned that under free trade the Americans will assume control of Canada's future. The group discussions indicate that, as with opinions on U.S. investment, once again there are no absolute answers. Taken in total, the group discussions suggest that the issue is one of degree and definition for many Canadians.

Certainly the discussions reflected the results of the quantitative work, with a number of participants feeling that the concerns about threats to Canada's independence were justified. Comments made by those with such views included the following:

That's my whole concern, losing our sense of identity as Canadians;

I don't want to become the 51st state and free trade could eventually evolve into this; and,

I hope our leaders are concerned that there is no impact on Canadian sovereignty, whatever treaties are reached. No agreement should infringe on our political sovereignty.

Others were less concerned with possible threats to Canadian sovereignty and independence feeling that "...we're not going to become Americans because of free trade." While recognizing the likelihood of increased U.S. influence under free trade, some even went so far as to say they felt that free trade "may improve our ability to be independent." The rationale upon which this was based was an expectation that Canada would not have to "worry" about the Americans retaliating against Canada in an economic context were Canada to "do something they didn't like."