

# The market and nationalism: what if the right is wrong?

## Commentary

by Bill Doskoch

The purpose of Friday's debate on *The Ideology of the Marketplace and Canadian Nationalism* may indeed have been, as one participant put it, "to make everyone else feel like moderates."

The discussion was led off by Dr. Patricia Marchak of the University of British Columbia, who ardently advocated the virtues of a centrally planned economy while attacking the tenets of neo-conservatives.

"Their (the neo-conservatives) premises are false and their arguments naive."

Ideas such as the market is capable of establishing the true social value of everything, that social progress depends on the freedom of entrepreneurs to innovate, and that trade equilibrium between nation-states is possible if trade barriers are removed were attacked by her.

"Those who have capital place no value on things such as clean air," she said. "Depending on entrepreneurs to provide social progress through innovation ignores other talents that enrich humankind and the positive roles played by interventionist governments."

However, it was for the trade question that she reserved her strongest criticism.

"In the 1980's, trade is not between nation-states, it's between the siblings of multi-national corporations," she said.

"In nation-states, labor, infrastructure and resources are immobile, while capital is very mobile."

Dr. Marchak claimed much of the current trade deficit is due to the fact that American transnationals have shifted their capital to countries with low labor costs and then exported back to North America.

To help the Canadian economy, Marchak recommended against free trade, saying it would only help the trans-nationals by removing barriers to the flow of capital.

She claimed we must develop a national industrial strategy and increase the quantity of research and development work done in Canada.

"We must look outward from the North American fortress and recognize the falsehoods of the market," she said.

Dr. Michael Walker of the Fraser Institute wryly introduced his organization by saying "it is not the intellectual arm of the Ku Klux Klan."

He began by describing the marketplace as an arena to "develop coping skills" and said it was democratic "because we are constantly voting with our dollars."

In dealing with Canadian nation-

alism, he said, "I don't get a clear sense of what it is," but he suggested it was Xenophobic.

Tariffs and other protective barriers were actually a tax, claimed Walker, and merely stopped consumers from making the choices they'd like to make.

"The forest industry in British Columbia (the province's largest) would shut down completely if a 15 per cent tariff were imposed by the United States."

When it came to the question of Canadian culture, Walker described it as a "luxury good" and

pinnings of neo-conservative economics, her suggestion of a need for a centrally planned economy was not developed enough and in any larger forum would simply not provide enough of a competing vision.

In using the B.C. forest industry as an example of the dangers resulting of a free trade agreement, Walker failed to mention that there has been sectoral free trade in lumber and pulp forest products for decades, and that countervailing duties are only a recent pressure move by U.S. producers to shore up their market share which has been weakened by the current strength of the U.S. dollar over the Canadian.

When using the example of the relationship between Britain and Ireland as nations which have separate cultural identities yet strong trade links, Walker ignores the fact that those cultures have developed over thousands of years. In comparison, Canada has only been a separately defined entity for 119 years and is still developing its economic and cultural identity beside the most economically and culturally domineering nation on earth.

So, although there were some good points raised, it is unfortunate the debate was not more focused, as the scope was too large for each speaker to develop their arguments fully.

**"Their (the neo-conservatives) premises are false and their arguments naive."**

**Dr. Patricia Marchak**

**"The Fraser Institute is not the intellectual arm of the Ku Klux Klan."**

**Dr. Michael Walker**

"Trade creates wealth while protectionism destroys it," he stressed, and used the example of Australia and New Zealand: two left-wing countries that established a free trade agreement between each other because it was in their best interests.

In Canada's case, "people say free trade will not benefit Canada, but they don't say what will happen if Canada doesn't get a free trade agreement with the United States," he said.

said there was "a difference between culture and chauvinism. Just because it's Canadian doesn't make it worthwhile."

"Britain and Ireland have had free trade for centuries and they have distinctly different cultures," he said.

Although both speakers were convincing in some aspects of their arguments, there were definite holes in others.

For example, while Marchak did well in attacking the basic under-

## Debating arguably growing

by Elaine Ostry

The U of A Debating Society is becoming the largest club on campus. It hosted a Model Parliament Session last weekend at University Hall. Clubs from UVic, UBC and U of C participated.

The Model Parliament included three parties and the Debating Society's official party, The P.S.S.T. (Party of Silver Second Thoughts). They discussed such international issues as: flat taxation, socialization of legal costs, withdrawal from NATO, participation in the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars").

A highlight of the affair was a banquet dinner at the Terrace Inn.

The U of A Debating Society is one of the most active members of CUSID, the Canadian Union of University Debating Societies. On February 1st, it will host the Edmonton Open, which is open to the general public as well as debating clubs. It is expecting television coverage.

The club has been around for 73 years. It is even seeking a historian commissioner. Distinguished alumni include Joe Clark, Laurence Decore, Grant Notley and Joe Shctor.

The club meets each Wednesday at 5 pm in HC 2-41. Experience is not essential; in fact, the U of A club is one of the only clubs in Canada to have beginner's and open categories for debating tournaments.

Each meeting is followed by a Cub debate, an impromptu affair in which the winning party gets to keep a stuffed Golden Bear Cub for a week, and the honour at being the government party the next week. Before each major tournament there is a pub debate, a combination of a debate and a party.

The debates are generally humorous. An example is the pressing issue: Be It Resolved That The Grinch Is Not As Bad As They Say.

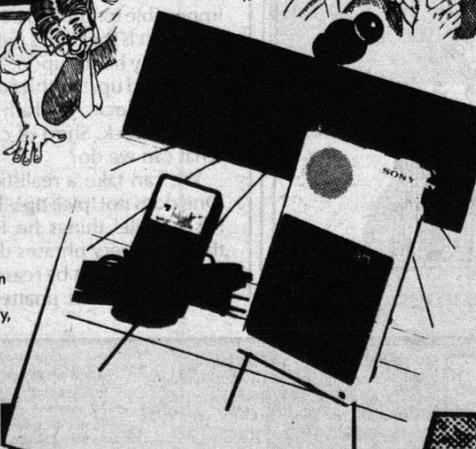
Debating is great for overcoming any shyness of public speaking, and developing communication skills. Several members are in Law (debating looks good on a resume). For more information, contact the society's office in SUB 030D.

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