

The Brunswickan

Canada's oldest official student publication

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OPINION...

THE DEAL

By DAVID S. GORHAM

This nation is in grave danger. Amidst the thunderous applause for a Constitution about which we know little and a continental trade deal about which we know even less, the voice of the concerned Canadian was struggling to be heard. From above these edicts came, and those in power have demonstrated a frightening predisposition for dictatorial excess. A recent remark by a Tory incumbent in Ottawa was heard in stony echo: "We have a mandate to do whatever we want."

The ship of a frail democracy threatens to be torpedoed by the guardians of the holy politics. These are the politics of sonorous platitudes and inept policy; the politics of corporate donations and government propaganda euphemistically called information.

Many voters may wonder at this point in an absurd electoral campaign, why do we have this Mulroney-Reagan Trade Deal? Why, when our illustrious P.M. was opposed to such a deal when elected Conservative leader. Did that same P.M. stumble into a marriage contract that looks as if it were drawn up by the United States government and simply initialled by a top-hatted beaver?

The Business Council on National Issues is one key element. The B.C.N.I. applied its coercive talents to our P.M. and party so that they would change their mind and back an economic merger between the Eagle (with claws) and Beaver (without claws). What the hell is the Business Council on National Issues?

The Business Council on National Issues contains an important ingredient: the 150 largest U.S. corporations with branch-plants in Canada. It has interjected itself into public policy, so that by slow economic means its interest will be furthered. Even if Canada were not a branch plant economy in many sectors we would still be in difficulty.

In order to compete with the U.S. South's rock-bottom minimum wages, longer growing season (not to mention that free trade zone with Mexico which is cheap, cheap manufactured components) and American subsidy in the form of Pentagon procurement, our indigenous Canadian firms will be backed to the wall.

The U.S. does not and will likely never acknowledge that Pentagon procurement (defence) contracts are regional development tools in the U.S. and by our definition, subsidy. The other U.S. subsidies include the aforementioned 19th century style wage rates. They are not going to change these features of their economy.

What about Canada? What are our subsidies? Try medicare, regional transfer payments (for regional disparity and despair), U.I.C., cultural subsidies (if you think its exempted because it was promised you're dreaming) etcetera and so forth. Our systems of basic social support will not only be attacked by the United States as unfair subsidy under "The Deal" (and subject to countervailing duties if seen as subsidy), but we will also be attacked from within. Right-wing Canadian business firms want our social programs gone, after all, they cost tax money to support. But some businessmen aren't that extreme: they may simply want to survive under "The Deal" and cries will be heard even from the moderates to cut taxes to businesses and corporations. In the real world that means goodbye to your social programs, not to mention national independence.

The key to all in this "Deal" is one word in it: harmonization. That means, we slowly and inexorably harmonize our systems and programs. Do you think, with a population ratio of 25:1 (U.S. to Canada), that they will harmonize any of their way of life to ours? Don't let the economists try and fool you. Their ivory tower talk of comparative advantage means, in the real world, a strong advantage for the American Colossus to the South.

Brunswick Staff

Photo

Will be taken at today's general meeting, SUB room 35 at 12:30. All contributors welcome.