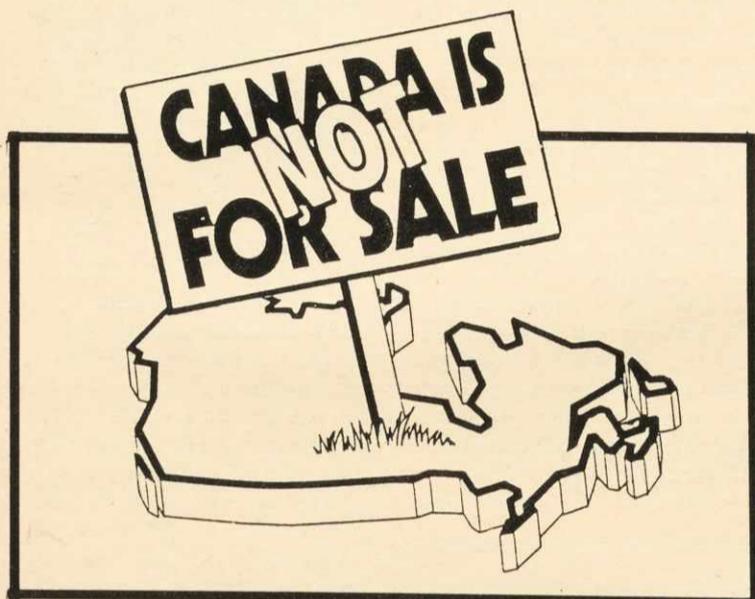


FREE TRADE

It's not free and it's more than trade



Graphic: CPC/Progress Books

Canada's future on the table

by Tony Tracy

Mulroney's "Free Trade" deal with the Reagan administration could endanger the future of Canada, according to George Hewison, labour columnist for

the *Canadian Tribune* and Labour Secretary for the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). Hewison, who is on a cross-country tour discussing the trade deal, spoke at Dalhousie last weekend on the dangers of

free trade to Canada.

The issue of free trade could determine what kind of future is in store for Canadian workers, not only for this generation, but for the generations to come, Hewison said. The issue of Canadian sovereignty is at stake, as well as Canadian culture and jobs, according to Hewison: "This could be the greatest debate in Canada's history."

Hewison pointed out a large number of groups which have been adamantly opposed to free trade, including farmers, women's groups, various churches, cultural organizations, trade unions, and student groups.

Hewison said the Tories, who are promoting the free trade pact, are using arguments which are blatantly false. "Mulroney says one of the blessings of the free trade agreement is that we will be able to get cheap consumer goods in the United States duty-free," said Hewison. "However, he fails to mention that as the demand increases for these items in the US, the prices of these items will rise as manufacturers and stores attempt to make a higher profit margin."

As well, Hewison said Canadians will be laid off as more and more people go from Canada to shop in the US, creating less demand for Canadian items and less business for Canadian stores.

"The name of the game is profit for a small handful of large industries, while the need for new job opportunities and new industries is not addressed," said Hewison. "It is this very small handful of people who would betray our country who will benefit from this agreement."

As well, Medicare programs, unemployment insurance, and regional development programs will be under attack with this deal in place, according to Hewison, "as this would be an 'unfair subsidy' to Canadians."

Hewison admitted that in order to effectively oppose the deal, alternatives must be presented which would benefit the Canadian people. He suggested a number of alternatives to the trade deal, including broadening the markets of Canada. "Instead of having 80 per cent of our trade going to American transnational corporations, we need to expand trade with all countries on the basis of equality, and the basis of a mutual need for each other's goods," he said. Regional development programs should be encouraged, and the social services provided should be expanded to increase the purchasing power of Canadians. A national housing program could be implemented which would not only put thousands of people to work constructing houses, but will also provide much-needed housing for Canadians. The railways should be rebuilt and utilized to provide a means of transporting goods from one location to another within Canada. Schools, universities, and hospitals

should be built and heavily funded, and the tax structure should be changed so that loopholes for multinational corporations could be stopped. As well, Hewison suggested that Canada should ensure it has control of its own resources, and not allow them to be used as reserves for the US.

Hewison believes many Canadians feel nothing can be done to stop the Mulroney-Reagan deal, but he says, "Canadians must demonstrate the political will" to change the direction of the deal. To that end, he announced that the Communist Party will be giving "critical support" to the NDP, which is the only party which has guaranteed to tear up the deal if elected. However, the CPC does not "endorse" the NDP, Hewison said, but only supports them in this election, while understanding that as a Social Democratic party, the NDP is likely to move further to the right after gaining power, which has historically happened with Social Democratic parties in Canada, as well as world-wide.

The Communist party, says Hewison, supports a coalition of Canadians from a variety of backgrounds which would oppose the free trade deal and "bring Canada onto the road of Peace, Jobs, and Prosperity".

Another committee

TORONTO (CUP) — Five months after a much-touted National Forum on Post-Secondary Education, the federal and provincial governments have decided to act: the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada recently issued a press release announcing more meetings will be held.

Six hundred delegates representing universities, business, and government travelled to Saskatchewan last October to take part in the three-day, \$2.4 million conference, called to help formulate a national blueprint for the future of the country's post-secondary system.

Students and forum participants had anxiously awaited the February meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, expecting more concrete policies on post-secondary education to be announced.

But according to a February 26 communique, the "new commitment" consists of an announcement by CMEC president Roland Penner that the council had formed a committee of the ministers responsible for post-secondary education.

"My biggest disappointment in all of this was the meeting between Crombie and the CMEC," said Tony Macerollo, chair of the Canadian Federation of Students. "They only met with the secretary of state for a couple of hours."

"That's not enough. Six hundred people spent three days thrashing through some pretty

profound issues. Now we can't let them (federal and provincial government officials) skirt the issue."

A unanimous call from the forum was for more provincial and federal cooperation on post-secondary education funding.

Opposition critic Bill Rompkey introduced a bill to provide for a Canadian Post-Secondary Education Council, but withdrew it when the government would not support the bill but agreed to have a standing committee study the concept.

"At that time it was the Secretary of State Committee's intention to travel across the country to hear interested parties," said Rompkey. "Unfortunately, we recently learned of the Government's decision to deny the committee permission to travel."

The group, made up of members of the Secretary of State's standing committee, will have to study universities and colleges from Ottawa, said the committee's clerk.

"We will bring the witnesses to Ottawa. I don't see why a lot of the witnesses cannot come to Ottawa. The committee can pay for their travel expenses — all committees proceed that way," said Elizabeth Kingston.

Even though it's grounded, Kingston said, the committee will still focus on creating a national advisory board on post-secondary education, similar to those now in place for science and technology and the status of women.

Cultural sovereignty

Philosophizing about nationalism

by Chris Elson

"American capitalism is, of course, a difficult society to resist."

Last Thursday, George Grant, retired Dalhousie professor and author of *Lament for a Nation, Technology and Empire*, and other philosophical/political works, addressed the second of three "Encounters on free trade and cultural sovereignty" co-sponsored by the Nova Scotia Coalition on Arts and Culture and Henson College. His talk, entitled "Capitalism and Canadian Nationalism", took a profound look at the possibility of genuine Canadian sovereignty in the context of what he refers to a "late state capitalism".

Drawing on such philosophical figures as Plato, Nietzsche, Marx, and Heidegger (names one might not immediately associate with the free-trade debate), Grant made the point that it is misleading in the extreme to

reder to culture as something divorced from economic and other realities. "Culture is not a growth on top of necessity."

Grant's remarks followed the screening of the NFB film *In Bed with an Elephant* (directed by Halifax filmmaker Kent Martin, who was also present), which set the historical stage, demonstrating the precarious nature of Canadian-American relations and the impact of economic and trade decisions on all aspects of national life.

Both Grant and Martin insisted upon the marginalization of truly nationalist options within the three political parties, citing the fates of former PC prime minister John Diefenbaker, Walter Gordon of the Liberals, and the NDP's James Lazer. This would seem to suggest that the current free trade agreement is nothing more than a recognition of the impossibility of Canadian nationalism. Grant, taking

the longer view, indicated that the absorption of Canada into the United States is probably an inevitable development, a sad though relatively unimportant consequence of what he regards as the destructive homogenization of world cultures being wrought by two competing technological empires.

Grant was very careful not to advocate any form of despair (which he considers one of the greatest evils) and urged his audience to think carefully about what a distinctive Canadian civilization means. In the midst of a debate which tends to focus on statistical reckonings of gain and loss, this call to reflect on what particular virtues Canadian sovereignty affirms should be heeded.

The third "Encounter" in this series, featuring speaker Eric Kierans, will be held at Henson College on Thursday, March 31, at 8:00 p.m.