

V. FREE TRADE

(i) Defining Free Trade

Participants in all six groups were asked what the general term "free trade" (apart from a specific agreement) meant to them. While it was virtually impossible for most participants (both supporters and opponents) to respond without the context of the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement, supporters were inclined to identify the lack of restrictions on trade, the removal of tariffs and the removal of duties on products between countries involved in a free trade agreement as their definition. ("no restrictions on trade;" "opening up the market;" "back and forth with little structure;" "tariff-free;" "accessing new markets"). There was some confusion about duties in the discussion with several participants pointing out that free trade had not removed duties on consumer goods purchased in the U.S. and brought into Canada.

Moderate supporters in Ottawa were among the most inclined to cite positive aspects of 'free trade' with comments like: "it means more competition and a more competitive economy;" "good thing -- it weeds out monopolies and makes us more competitive;" "some weeding out of shaky-ground companies;" "larger market equals larger competition."

Supporters in both Winnipeg and Vancouver were also positive in their definitions of free trade. They recognized that free trade meant the removal of tariffs and placed Canada on "an equal footing." While supportive participants were generally positive, they too pointed out shortcomings within the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement specifically, saying that it has not turned out as they had expected, that there have been job losses, and that they are uncertain about the content of the agreement.

Interestingly, supportive participants in each of the three cities pointed out, on an unaided basis, that the long-term effects of free trade would be beneficial. They

