

NAFTA fortress: Canada stuck in attic

by Wilfrid Dinnick

NAFTA is a fortress and Canada is stuck in the attic. We are losing our social programs and our political decisions are being crippled by big American business, said Maude Barlow, Chair of the Council of Canadians, a non-partisan organization aimed at encouraging nationalism.

Barlow visited Halifax on November 25 and discussed issues which are destroying the fundamental privileges Canadians enjoy. These issues, not found in 'Tory tabloids' are written in the "obscene language written of difficult to read legal texts of international trade agreements," said Barlow.

The Tory government is having another so called public forum. This time it is on NAFTA. Only five cities are being consulted and none are in Ontario: the area worst hit by

the FTA since it was initiated in January of 1989. In just three years, over 900 business have moved from Southern Ontario to Buffalo, and 500 Ontario manufacturing jobs are lost per day.

According to the OECD, Canada is in the third worst recession of all 24 industrialized nations. It has lost four times more manufacturing jobs than the US.

The hidden truths are the destruction of our public programs through the trade agreements between Canada and the US. For instance, the FTA's National Treatment clause dictates that any private sector in society that becomes public and accessible must compensate financially all potential North American competitors. This was the real reason the NDP abandoned their 25 year-old platform of public auto insurance in

Ontario. When Rae was elected, the American private auto insurance industry slapped him with a billion dollar warning.

Barlow went on to say the recent legislative push to OK the 20 year

which will drastically reduce the Canadian standard of living. For example, in Canada, the government, employers and employees all paid into Unemployment Insurance unlike the US, where just employers

according to the government, will do away with impediments on trade. Yet, impediments are not just tariffs but labour laws, pollution control or social programs. Barlow fears our standard of living will decline to the lowest levels of many poor American states.

Another factor to consider is NAFTA's Accession Clause. It allows the entry of other American countries such as Colombia, Chile, El Salvador, Haiti or Guatemala into NAFTA without legislative approval of an initial member like Canada.

Barlow sees the rapidly growing membership of the Council of Canadians and the Federal NDP platform of abolishing NAFTA as reasons to remain optimistic. However, "the rich will become richer and the poor will become poorer if we do not get out of the attic."

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patent on drugs for multinational corporations will wipeout generic drugs and chop away at our health system.


The Tory government will also make sure you do not understand the real meaning of their buzzword 'homogenization', said Barlow. This is the goal of the FTA and NAFTA

and employees contribute to Unemployment insurance. According to the FTA, that was unfair competition. Consequently, in 1989, the Canadian government withdrew payments. Canada's unemployment insurance protection has fallen from 80% to 58%.

Such examples of homogenization,

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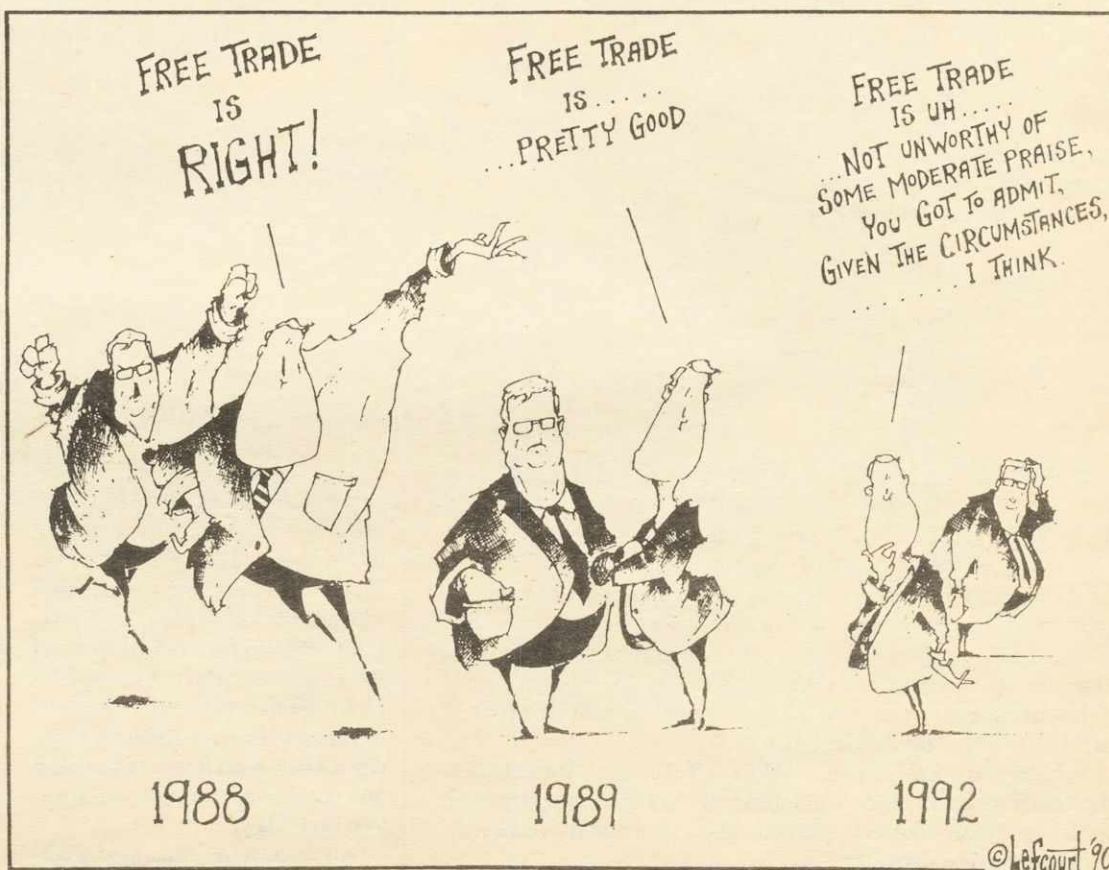
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Our dubious inheritance

by Gazette staff

Everyone is invited to come find out about the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and to voice their concerns on Monday. The federal Subcommittee on International Trade will make Halifax one of their stops on a week-long tour of five Canadian cities. The hearings begin at 9 am, in the Bluenose Room of the Chateau Halifax, Scotia Square, 1990 Barrington St. They may last all day.

If passed, NAFTA will create the world's largest trading block, affecting the lives of 360 million people. Most tariffs on goods will be phased out over a period of 15 years. Transnational companies will have free access to markets in Canada, the

US, and Mexico, and many people are worried that they will lose their jobs and social programs. Some fear that companies will take advantage of Mexico's less stringent environmental protection policies and pol-

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lute the environment. The deal does not include any specified standards, but allows countries to improve their environmental protection programs. Supporters say NAFTA will make North America more competitive in

the world economy, but admit that the transition will involve a social cost.

As heirs to the policy being created, students across the continent are concerned. The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), the American International Student Trade Environment And Development (INSTEAD), and the Mexican Federacion de Estudiantes Universitarios met in Guadalajara last week. Two students from Dalhousie attended.

People who wish to speak on Monday may have their submissions tabled at the meeting, or they may fax them to: Ellen Savage, Clerk of the Committee, in Ottawa at 613-996-1962. Or they may call Greg Bent of NS Economic Development at 424-3932.

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