

# Canada: A Modest Proposal to Stand on Our Own Feet

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For over three decades we have been subjected to an unrelenting promotion of “deregulation, ” “free trade,” “privatization” and “globalization. ” Canadian ownership of its corporations became passé. Institutions and programmes serving Canadians were swept away. “Free markets” were the future and any “barriers” inefficient relics. Government itself was best dismantled as far as possible. Canada should integrate its economy into that of the U.S. and, for greater efficiency, adopt the American dollar.

Those who objected were ridiculed as “Luddites,” “socialists, ” “protectionists” and “xenophobic. ” Liberal Leader John Turner, leading the fight against the 1988 Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, was vilified for challenging the prevailing dogma.

Now some of those just yesterday preaching the gospel of an unregulated, borderless world have turned 180 degrees. A Newsweek cover announces, “We are all socialists now.” Prime Minister Harper and Minister of Finance Flaherty, who until recently promoted further deregulation of our financial sector and led the sneering attacks on “protectionists” and “socialists, ” now brag about Canada’s independent banking and financial institutions. Separatist leaders, who once told us they didn’t need the Canadian market any more, are expressing alarm that almost 80% of Quebec ‘s exports depend on a U.S. economy in free fall. Former advocates of adopting the U.S. dollar now laud Canada ‘s financial system as a model for the world.

We who fought to maintain our sovereignty and the independence of our institutions are watching in disbelief.

Yet, incomprehensibly, the drum beat for even deeper integration into the U.S. goes on. Its promoters see the election of Barack Obama as a golden opportunity. Former Foreign Affairs Minister, David Emerson, says Canadians are “less defensive” now. Decrying the “tyranny of small differences” remaining between Canada and the U.S. , he says now is “an opportunity to really carry a much bigger vision... of North America as an economic and environmental and security entity.”

What Emerson and his colleagues are brazenly proposing is a border around North America, adopting U.S. foreign policy, and the end of Canada ‘s sovereignty.

Handing our resources and our corporations to foreign owners has cost Canadians billions of dollars and thousands of jobs. Now we learn to our surprise that the “globalized” world has not followed suit, that 77% of the world’s oil belongs to national oil companies — not the multinationals. While the U.S. has a national energy policy aimed at self-sufficiency, national

energy security and domestic control, Canada does not. Our leaders seem terrified at the very idea. So Quebecers, Atlantic Canadians and almost half Ontarians are dependent on imported oil and all Canadians pay an outrageous “world price” for a resource we own in abundance.

And the bottom line of this policy?

After decades of resource wealth being pumped south from Alberta — at give-away royalties — the province is in deficit, about to tap its small heritage savings fund of \$14 billion, while Norway — in a similar oil rich position — has saved its oil profits (some \$400 billion in its heritage fund) and kept its industry in Norwegian hands. Are the Norwegians — whose standard of living exceeds Canada’s — “Luddites,” “protectionists” or simply good managers?

For years I have advocated for a Canadian industrial policy built on our needs — including our own ship building industry, east-west energy security, a domestic farm machinery and manufacturing base and a cutting edge Canadian automobile sector. (Instead of fostering a clean Canadian car, our government is preparing to give billions to bail out the foreign owned industry, which we don’t control and whose track record is neither cutting edge nor clean.)

No great power has arisen relying on foreign ownership, yet hard on the heels of the disastrous giveaway of our steel industry our government is ready to give away more industries including — by destroying the Canadian Wheat Board — delivering the western grain trade to foreign hands. Already over half the country’s manufacturing profits go to foreign owners. Instead of continuing the weak-willed giveaway of our economy under a thoroughly discredited ideology of globalization, we should enhance and expand control of what we have. A first step could be constructing an east-west electricity super grid to allow existing Newfoundland, Manitoba, BC and Quebec hydro to flow across Canada. This would result in cost savings, attract industry, make new nuclear stations unnecessary and help bind our country together with a greater sense of security and independence. There would be no more Ontario blackouts.

Our parents built Trans Canada Airways (Air Canada), the world’s third largest shipping fleet and the world’s fastest jet interceptor, the Avro Arrow. Their parents constructed the country’s great railways and national infrastructure. Canada’s founders conceived of a powerful country, nobody’s satellite. Louis Riel spoke of Canada as a visionary nation where the oppressed of the earth could come. Georges-Etienne Cartier and John A. Macdonald saw Canada becoming a continental power. What would they say to those who have allowed the sell-off of Canada’s companies, dismantled its institutions and now go cap in hand pleading to bid on bit pieces of U.S. contracts and beg to become part of a “North American entity”? All this precisely when U.S. power has peaked and is fading fast, while ours, with a spark of leadership, could begin to emerge.

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