

THE MYTH OF ATLANTICA

Why deep integration is bad for Canadians

Atlantica is being promoted as an historical return to the days before the Maritimes was a part of Canada, to a time when there were no borders between the provinces and the United States, and trade flowed freely in a north-south direction. But it is not a vision of prosperity for all. Atlantica's corporate backers are asking for the elimination of minimum wage laws, a weakening of the role of unions, and massive reductions in public spending on social programs. The goal is the deep integration of Eastern Canada with the North-Eastern United States, and it is part of a larger trend toward North American integration taking place without any public input.

What is "deep integration"?

Deep integration is the dismantling of the border between Canada and the United States. For several years now, a variety of task forces, working groups, commissions, coordinating committees and cross-border consultations have been operating behind closed doors to harmonize Canadian and U.S. regulations related to our health, food safety, environment, and our security and immigration procedures. These regulations were developed to protect the interests of Canadians but they are being dismantled without public support or knowledge.

What does Atlantica have to do with it?

Atlantica is one of these many cross-border consultations pushing for deeper integration between Canada and the United States. Business leaders in both countries are hoping to merge the economic, social and political needs of Eastern Canada and Quebec with the U.S. States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. The aim is to eliminate as many non-tariff barriers to trade as possible. These include labour laws, environmental regulations and other public policies that interfere with corporate profits. The Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, a key supporter of Atlantica, has stated, "if the border cannot be made to disappear, its impact must at least be blurred."

Who is pushing the integration agenda?

On a national level, deep integration is happening at the request of Canada's richest corporations and right-wing think tanks like the C.D. Howe Institute. Leading the charge is the Canadian Council of Chief Executives who, in January 2003, argued for a North American customs union, shared Canada-U.S. security and immigration strategies, and harmonized standards, inspection and certification procedures. Almost all of these ideas ended up in the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, an agreement ratified by Canada, the U.S. and Mexico in March 2005.

Have your say on deep integration!

Deep integration weakens democracy. Not surprisingly, there has been little public debate on the subject. Stephen Blank, professor of international business and keynote speaker at the 2006 "Reaching Atlantica" conference, even acknowledged in *Embassy* magazine last year that, "integration deepens, interdependency increases, but little support for or understanding of the process exists." With public debate, it could be possible to explore alternatives to deep integration, ones that do not undermine our public institutions for the sake of corporate profit. You can make a difference by writing a letter to your local MP or community newspaper. Let them know Canadians will not be kept in the dark on deep integration any longer!



To find out what you can do to challenge deep integration, visit www.canadians.org or call 1-800-387-7177.