



INTEGRATE THIS!

Challenging the Security and Prosperity Partnership in North America

The North American Competitiveness Council: A corporate *coup d'etat*

Notes from an address, Panel 1: The Big Business of Insecurity

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A great big wonderful good morning. It is wonderful to be part of this Teach-in, let's hope there are many more.

I'm John Foster, and I'm part of Common Frontiers, which – if you don't already know – is a coalition of labour, student, religious, environmental and development organizations.

We've been working for a different North America, with allies from Mexico, Quebec and the United States, some of whom are with us this weekend, for twenty years.

I'm here to talk about the North American Competitiveness Council, the NACC, or what we might call the North American Corporate coup d'etat.

Because time is short, there will be homework. I'm not going to give you a lot of details or selected readings from the business recipe book for their kind of North America. There are many useful web-sites, and a sheet with a list of them is on the Council table. Take a look!

Taking a torch to democracy

One hundred and sixty eight years ago, on April 25, 1849, a mob broke into the new Canadian parliament buildings in Montreal, breaking up furniture, smashing gas lamps, the building went up in flames, although the members retreated safely.

The mob included many business people – Tories of the time – upset with the government and changes in imperial trade policy. The same elements shortly thereafter published the ***Annexation Manifesto*** calling for union with the United States.

Today, they don't have to burn down the Parliament buildings to make their point, all they have to do is quietly take the guts out of the place.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership is the bland name for this process. Its architects are a privileged "Council" of 30 senior private sector executives – the NACC – 10 from each country.

You can find a full list of these folks on their website. For Canada they include:

- Paul Desmarais, Jr., Chair of the Power Corporation
- Rick George, President and CEO of Suncor
- Hunter Harrison, President and CEO of CN
- Michael Sabia, President and CEO of BCE and Bell Canada
- Richard E. Waugh, President and CEO of Scotiabank

The Canadian secretariat for the group is based in Tom D'Aquino's Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the CCCE. The NACC is just one part of a plan for the future of North America and the Governing of North America that the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and its allies in Mexico and the United States have been developing and implementing for several years.¹

You may be getting the picture.

- This group has a mandate to advise the three political chief executives, as the Council of the Americas puts it, "to prioritize the priorities".
- It has access which none of the rest of us has, meeting with security and prosperity ministers and engaging with senior government officials on an ongoing basis. That's what the Prime Minister confirmed when he named the Canadian 10 CEOs last June.

¹ A brief summary of the lead-up to the SPP can be found in "Integrate This! A Citizen's Guide to Fighting Deep Integration" www.canadians.org

- Last month here in Ottawa, when Condi and Peter MacKay were making eyes at each other, the NACC presented its initial agenda, its “private sector priorities”.²

I’m not going into further detail, at this point, but want to concentrate on something more fundamental.

My basic point is how unhealthy and weak our democracies are if we are permitting, tolerating, unique and privileged access for a group of powerful and overpaid corporate CEOs to our political leaders, to advance agendas which will change the face of our continent and how it is governed. They have gained this position not only over the heads of you and I, but over the heads of our Parliamentary and Congressional representatives.

How inadequate and weak are our media if they have not ripped the veil off this process.

Are we sleeping through a corporate *coup d’etat*?

Let’s be clear, Parliaments are not involved, ***by design!*** The Security and Prosperity Partnership is designed to harmonize regulations and advance corporate investment protections without “changing a single law”.³

As the head of Lockheed Martin pointed out last fall, the CEOs know they’d be in trouble with legislatures. The cabinet ministers, on the other hand, say, “tell us what we need to do and we’ll make it happen.”⁴

There have been repeated meetings between senior business leaders and government officials leading up to and from the announcement of the formation of the NACC at the Cancun meeting of the “three amigos” a year ago. These gatherings, in Louisville, Washington and, most significantly in Banff, have gone ahead essentially “under the radar”. This is **integration by stealth**.

Its watchwords are *oil* and *war*, dressed up as “energy integration” and “security”.

Last summer the Canada West Foundation with a number of allies organized a North American Forum in Banff. Security Minister Stockwell Day addressed it. The invitees included leading military figures like General Hillier and Donald Rumsfeld. Although neither of the latter seem to have attended, lots of other high level military, corporate and government figures participated, from all three

² NACC. *Enhancing Competitiveness in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Private Sector Priorities for the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP)*. February, 2007.

³ I am indebted in this clarity as in much else to the research of Teresa Healy of the Canadian Labour Congress.

⁴ Ron Covais, of Lockheed Martin, who attended the Banff meeting, in Kelly Patterson, “Integrating North America ‘by stealth’” Ottawa Citizen. Ottawa, Feb.7, 2007 p. A7

countries. Although the meeting was organized by the Foundation and the CCCE, its communications strategy declared it was “NGO” organized. It has been necessary to pursue an access to information initiative in order to gain public information about who attended and what they discussed, waiting for months for government documents. Much still is unknown.

This Banff encounter was a staging ground for the NACC strategy. Oil, war and much much more.⁵

Myths and realities

The US SPP website has an extensive lists of myths and realities, aimed to dispel the doubts of people like me.

I thought we might try some of our own.

1. Transparency

When Common Frontiers and its allies accused the NACC, last month, of not being transparent about what they were proposing to the trilateral cabinet ministers meeting, they reacted with strong protests.⁶ They released their recommendations, having had high-level meetings.

When we look at the preliminary but strategic meeting at Banff and its communications strategy, secured via access to information, the strategy of “media management” and non-communication is clear. Participants were told to avoid direct media engagement, and the strategy was organized by a reserve officer in the Canadian Forces. At least one top Canadian cabinet minister and senior public servants including the Canadian Ambassador to Mexico were part of the meeting.

One of the contributions civil society networks made during the years of NAFTA negotiations and again before the Quebec City Summit of the Americas, was to secure negotiating documents and unveil at least some of the official and corporate agenda. The work continues.

2. The myth of the “MODEST AGENDA”, the “don’t worry” myth

When the NACC representatives were accused of planning the integration of North America by stealth, they were anxious to reply that there was “no master plan”⁷, no conspiracy. The public representations emphasize that these are only

⁵ The Canadian Labour Congress has been able to secure some of the working papers of the event, including a “vision” paper, one on key energy challenges, and a strategy for “media management”.

⁶ Ross Laver of the CCCE wrote to Rick Arnold of Common Frontiers (e-mail February 22, 2007) “If the NACC was trying to keep its recommendations secret, why would it be making them public tomorrow? ...The “privileged access” of which you speak is simply an opportunity to make recommendations to government. You are welcome to make your own recommendations...”

⁷ See Laver to Arnold: “Given that you claim that this is all a secret conspiracy, it’s odd that you seem to know so much about it.”

technical discussions, couched in words like “regulatory harmonization” and cooperation.

However the Banff conference documents are quite clear about the mandate of the NACC: “The mandate of the NACC is to provide government leaders with private sector advice, expertise and support. As such, the Council is free to recommend broader strategic steps beyond the current scope of the SPP and to begin building consensus and support for such steps in all three countries.”⁸

What on earth might they have in mind? A “Vision” paper considered by the Banff Conference, which seems to have been written by US academic advisor, Bob Pastor, is quite expansive:

- A North American investment fund or bank
- Joint training of security/military agents from the three countries
- A customs union, common external tariff
- A competitiveness council or regulatory commission to deal with regulations which may protect businesses in one country from competition.
- New North-South transportation corridors
- A common immigration policy for Canada and the US
- A common energy and conservation strategy for the three countries.
- A permanent Court on Trade and Investment to replace ad hoc dispute settlement

There may be some positive ideas mixed in among the quite threatening ones, but the basic question is: **are these the priorities of the peoples of North America?**

3. The myth/trap that this is an American conspiracy.

The “vision” paper came from an American source. The American participants in the NACC and the Banff Conference are among the most influential figures. The NACC strategy and the SPP all exist within an overall US strategic framework. But that shouldn’t blind us to the fact that the organizers of the Banff agenda were Canadian corporate leaders and their allies.

Just like the Tories of 1849, it’s their interests, their definitions of our world and our options which are dominant. Unlike the Tories of 1849⁹, they don’t have to burn down Parliament to get their way. They’ve paved a direct route to the ears and arms of the three political chief executives.

⁸ This approach is repeated in the February 2007 NACC Enhancing Competitiveness document.

⁹ It is important to point out, as well, that these interests are embodied not by one party, be it Liberal or Conservative, PRI or PAN, Democrat or Republican, but dominate all.

The NACC is the embodiment of an alliance of the richest and most powerful men – overwhelmingly men – on our continent. It advances *their* interests whether they are from the U.S., Mexico or Canada.

A challenge

When we raise issues about all this, the frequent response from groups like the CCCE and NACC spokespeople is that we're the usual "complainers".

Well, we do complain. But if that's all we do, we deserve the description.

If business executives are pushing their plans for North America, it is in part because no one else has claimed the ground. Yes we have the alliance of four coalitions challenging the agenda, but, by and large, Canadian bodies engaged in international affairs are pretty weak on the future of North America.

Few Canadian international NGOs have any ongoing programmes with Mexico. Yes, the labour movement has continued liaison and support for Mexican counterparts, the Canadian Council for Social Development has joined in a trinational study of the situation of children, but since the high-point of interest in the hemisphere around the Quebec Summit, there has been relatively little priority and even less money for challenging the agendas of the CCCE and the NACC.

Despite efforts from valiant friends like M.P. Peter Julian, Parliament remains largely un-engaged.

Visions

So, what sort of future do we want? This is what today is all about.

Is it:

- Greater inequality and polarization with the violence it engenders, which the current model and the NACC proposals will bring us, *or* a more equal and civil continent.
- Continued and greater involvement in war and the security agenda, under US military and strategic dominance, *or* the creation of a non-nuclear, non aggressive and peaceful zone in the Americas.
- A high energy cost economy with truck trains running from Lázaro Cárdenas to Winnipeg *or* a sustainable carbon reduced *ambiente*, where farmers in all three countries have sustainable and profitable production and food security is assured.
- The rationing of health care, with the rich and prosperous first in line, *or* universal health care insurance where every Mexican, American and every Canadian, no matter what their status or income has access to

quality care, necessary medicines and the requisites of health living whether clean water, clean air, decent housing or personal security.

These are the sorts of challenges our four networks have been putting forward, are you ready to add your own?

Invisible people

When the party in power tried to stop him from running for President, Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said that they were treating the citizens like *imaginary people* : unreal, un-important. Speaking to the largest demonstration in Mexican history, he said “Once we were imaginary citizens. Now we are real! And we are not going to go back.”

I guess that’s the challenge. The Harper government, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and the NACC treat the rest of us as purely imaginary. So, the question is, are we going to get real?

THANK YOU