

## ON THE ROAD



**Happy spring to all! As we approach the first federal election under the Paul Martin government, the Council has been working hard to put our concerns about continental integration front and centre on the Canadian stage.**

Three forces have come together that may represent the biggest threat to Canada's sovereignty and values in years.

The first is an all-out push by the business elite of Canada to assuage the fears of the Bush government over border security through deep integration with the U.S. This lobby supports the idea of a common market and border, a guaranteed and uninterrupted supply of energy to the U.S., and participation in George Bush's ballistic missile defence program. The C.D. Howe Institute is calling this a "Big Idea," the Canadian Council of Chief Executives has been lobbying for their "North American Security and Prosperity Initiative," while Paul Martin's new parliamentary secretary on Canada-U.S. relations supports a "seamless border."

The second is the fact that the United States is living under the most right wing and unilateralist government in many decades. The Bush administration has adopted a "first strike" foreign policy (even with respect to nuclear weapons) and U.S. Ambassador Paul Cellucci's behaviour demonstrates that the U.S. will not tolerate dissent from its northern neighbours, or the rest of the world for that matter.

The third is the make-up of Paul Martin's cabinet. Progressive nationalists such as Sheila Copps are actively being squeezed out of the party. In their place are ministers who are openly supportive of much deeper ties with the United States and fully intent on integrating the defence and security policies of the two countries.

It is imperative that Canadians understand these forces that are at work and make this a central debate in the 2004 election, the way free trade was the key issue in the 1988 election. This "big idea" is a bad idea and we must stop it in its tracks. After my speaking tour across Canada this March to organize resistance to deep integration, I have every faith that we can do this.

Health care must also be central to the election debate in this country. Most of the recommendations of the Romanow Commission have still not been implemented, even though the polls tell us Canadians want to see these recommendations put in place. Provinces such as British Columbia and Alberta are continuing to get away with galloping privatization of health care while the federal government does nothing. This must stop.

On other fronts, in January we helped organize the first People's World Water Forum which brought 600 "water warriors" from 60 different countries to New Delhi to plan our collective work. I had the pleasure of travelling from that event to Mumbai (formerly Bombay) for the World Social Forum, where over 100,000 people from all over the world gathered to promote alternatives to economic globalization.

My recent trip to India has made it clear to me the level of international solidarity that exists for Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser in his battle against the corporate giant Monsanto. While Percy's case was being argued at the Supreme Court of Canada, I participated in a support rally in India that included people from Argentina, the Philippines, Mexico and Japan. There is no denying that they see Percy's struggle against the patenting of life as their struggle too.

As we work on critical issues at home, it is heartening to know that so many people around the world are standing with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maude Barlow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.