



# ON THE ROAD

with Maude Barlow

**The return of spring and summer always brings renewed hope and energy. Certainly, we need both as we live in such challenging times. For me, the lengthening of the days is a personal promise to spend more time with my three wonderful grandchildren who teach me something new every day.**

In the few months since I last wrote you, I have been travelling and speaking in many places. January took me to Porto Alegre, Brazil, with 150,000 other activists from around the world for the fifth annual World Social Forum; March to Geneva; April to New York, Washington and Mexico City; and May to San Francisco, all advancing our international civil society movement for social justice. At home, the bulk of my time has been spent on the Citizens' Inquiry on Canada-U.S. Relations and dealing with every aspect of the increasingly organized campaign by the big business community in Canada to promote a North American common market, complete with a North American logo and passport; common security, immigration, refugee and foreign policy; and a continental resource market in energy, agriculture, hydro-electricity and water.

So deeply concerned is the Council's Board of Directors about continental integration that, at our February meeting, we decided to reframe all of the Council's work to reflect this threat. We agreed that the overarching framework for all of our political work will be to uphold Canadian sovereignty and democracy in an interdependent world and will focus on opposing further integration with, and reclaiming lost sovereignty from, the United States. In doing so, we are conscious that, in many ways, this is coming full circle for our organization. We came into being to fight for Canadian sovereignty – cultural, resource, social security and foreign policy – in anticipation of a groundbreaking free trade agreement with the United States. However, the Council has also become a leader in the global social justice movement and brings 20 years of international experience to all areas of our work. We have no intention of losing this international perspective to our work against George W. Bush's corporate and security agenda for the continent.

For one thing, we are clear that Canadians cannot fight to preserve our own democracy or our rights to our resource and social "commons" unless we are fighting for those same rights of all peoples everywhere. The world has become too truly interdependent to carve out one island of public justice in a sea of privatized injustice. For another, it has become abundantly clear in the last two decades that, while there are still many Canadian values and institutions worth fighting for, Canada – at least the Canadian government and its business elites – has

become a significant player on the international scene in promoting many of the very policies and ideologies we are fighting. Canada is no victim of neo-liberal policies. From support for the World Trade Organization and Free Trade Area of the Americas, to promotion of genetically engineered food and private water services in the Third World, Canada has become an important policy ally of the U.S.

It is worth remembering that the current push for deep continental integration is coming not from the U.S. but from the Canadian Council of Chief Executives – Canada's own corporate leaders. The Board of Directors also recognizes that deep integration is a threat to peace and security; protection of natural resources; democratic citizen rights, human rights and collective rights; and social programs and public services. All of this became painfully clear to us this spring with the signing of the new Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (see page 8).

While we will continue to stress the key work areas of fair trade, clean water, safe food and public health, we will also be turning our attention to other threats posed by deeper integration with the U.S., such as a proposed continental energy pact, with a first task of intervening in the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline hearings. With the likelihood of another federal election next fall, the dangers of deeper integration with the United States can't be underestimated.

Until next time,

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Chairperson of The Council of Canadians