

# ON THE ROAD

with Maude Barlow



Tony Clarke and Maude Barlow, along with the other recipients of the Right Livelihood Award.

Hello, friends.

I have so many things to report. The winter election dominated our lives, as it did yours, all through December and January. The Council weighed in to put our issues before the politicians. We distributed over 100,000 of our voter's guides, put up billboards supporting public health care, and held many all-candidates meetings focusing on the issues of health care and deep integration with the U.S. I was asked to submit a daily election blog to *Maclean's*, which reached over 30,000 Canadians! We also clearly warned Canadians about the dangers of either a Conservative or a Liberal majority and formed a coalition called "Think Twice" with unions, women's groups, equality-seeking organizations, environmental activists, students, and daycare advocacy groups to put Stephen Harper's record before the public. I believe that this coalition was successful in denying the Conservatives their desired majority.

We were – and continue to be – deeply concerned about the core beliefs of the Harper Conservatives and will be vigilant in fighting any threat to our public services, health care, water, food safety and environmental standards. It is worth remembering, however, that almost two-thirds of Canadians did not vote for the Conservatives and do not share their extremist views.

We have been busy on many other fronts as well. I took my book *Too Close for Comfort: Canada's Future Within Fortress North America* to 25 cities, where we held large, enthusiastic

public meetings and met with the local media. This was a wonderful tour, with the national office and chapter members working together like a dream. In fact, my publisher was so impressed with how smoothly the tour went, they suggested that my next book should be about organizing! We also published our report on the Citizens' Inquiry on Canada-U.S. Relations, an excellent resource for all Canadians.

We held our fabulous 20th anniversary Annual General Meeting in Ottawa and it was every bit as wonderful as we had anticipated. Terrific speakers, great workshops, dynamic slam poets, sensational music, moving testimonies and awards – it was all there and made me so proud to have been a part of this great movement for so much of my adult life.

December took two of our campaigners and me to Hong Kong for the WTO ministerial meeting. There, the powerful northern countries of North America and Europe forged a last-minute deal to cut agricultural subsidies from their food exports (a commitment they are already backing away from), in return for a promise from the rest of the world to participate in further talks that will open up their services to liberalization and privatization. Once again, Canada played a shameful role and proposed new rules to remove the right of developing countries to accept or reject service offers based on what is good for them. (See page 10 for a report on the WTO negotiations from our Trade Campaigner Jean-Yves LeFort).

Finally, it was with great excitement that I flew to Stockholm, Sweden, in December with Tony Clarke, to receive the Right Livelihood Award – the "Alternative Nobel" given by the Swedish Parliament for international social justice work. Stockholm in December is magical – it is dark all but six hours a day, but the old city is alight with candles and torches. The ceremony was held in the 600-year-old Parliament chambers and filled with music, dance, celebration and feasting. In receiving the award, Tony and I were clear that we accepted it on behalf of our activist colleagues in Canada and around the world. The honour bestowed on us really belonged to a whole movement. For me, that movement is also a family – my Council of Canadians family.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maude Barlow". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of The Council of Canadians