

ON THE ROAD

WITH MAUDE BARLOW



Christina Riley

As I write this column, the earth has come to life again, and with it, the endless promise of renewal and hope. What an active time we have all had at the Council of Canadians this past few months!

In early spring we held a fabulous teach-in in Ottawa on deep integration called Integrate This! We launched the teach-in with a Friday night musical event at a club in the Byward Market, which brought out a huge youth crowd. And on the weekend, we brought together hundreds of people from across the country to analyze the Security and Prosperity Partnership and propose a very different vision for our shared continent. (See page 9 for a glimpse of what we learned at the Integrate This! teach-in.)

The teach-in garnered lots of media attention, which clearly alerted officials from the U.S. Embassy, who invited us to share our concerns about the SPP with them. In a lively and honest discussion, I asked a senior official why the SPP had not been brought to the legislatures of the three countries. He replied that the three governments did not want a repeat of the “bruising

NAFTA battle.” Bet they knew they would lose if it ever became public!

In early May, my appearance before the Standing Committee on International Trade resulted in the committee calling for a ban on exports of Canada’s water. Council board member Gordon Laxer appeared a week later before the same committee on the issue of energy and the SPP. The Conservative chair and MPs stormed out of the room, claiming that Gordon’s comments about Canada’s energy security were “off-topic.” We beg to differ, and so did the other members of the committee. (See page 14 for Gordon’s first-hand account of his experience.)

From May 3 to 4, the Council joined hundreds of others in Regina for the historic Tommy Douglas SOS Medicare Conference organized by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Canadian Health Coalition. While there, we called for a national campaign to protect public health care and set out the agenda for its expansion. We also laid out the Council’s campaign plans to enlist the support of community

organizations, as well as Canadian small and medium-sized businesses to protect medicare. Everyone involved left feeling more deeply committed to the fight for the crown jewel of our social system.

The winter and spring also took me travelling abroad – to Brussels, Bern and London – to speak on the right to water. In May, I became a “Founding Councillor” with the newly formed Hamburg-based World Future Council, whose mandate is to “champion the rights of future generations, and work to ensure that humanity acts now for a sustainable future.”

Somewhere amid all of this action, I wrote a new book called *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Fight for the Right to Water*. It will be published this fall.

On a sad note, we recently lost the very wonderful Doris Anderson – role model, trailblazer and member of our advisory board. I first met Doris when I ran the Office of Equal Opportunity at the City of Ottawa in the early 1980s and she came at my invitation to speak at an event there. I was immediately taken with her strength, tenacity and sense of humour – although I was so intimidated I could hardly speak in her presence. Over the years, Doris became a guiding light for me, as she was for so many other women, and helped me find my way in what was still a man’s world. We remember and celebrate the life and gift that was Doris Anderson.

I wish a safe and happy summer to all of you in the Council of Canadians family.

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians.