

On the Road with **Maude Barlow**



Adam Schultz

Maude attended the third Annual Meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative University where she spoke as a panelist in a session titled, "The Future of Water." The event was held at University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida.

Dear friends,

This edition of *Canadian Perspectives* marks a very special milestone for the Council of Canadians as we celebrate our 25th anniversary. And what a 25 years it has been! I remember the early meetings leading up to our launch with some of my most wonderful and famous Canadian heroes and heroines – Mel Hurtig, Marion Dewar, Bob White, Farley Mowat, Pierre Berton, Margaret Atwood, and so many more.

We came together to fight what would become the first free trade agreement in the world: the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and the ramifications it would have for Canada's sovereign ability to determine our own course, maintain our foreign policy of peacekeeping, protect our social security network and safeguard our natural resources – particularly energy and water – from American corporate interests.

While we could not stop the passage of that bad trade agreement or its successor, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), we have gone on to many victories on the trade front. We prevented the spread of NAFTA to Latin America; we worked with allies to stall the World Trade Organization; we defeated the Multilateral Agreement on Investment altogether; and more recently, we orchestrated the demise of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. In this work we have made it clear that it is not trade per se that we oppose, or even trade agreements, but the dismantling of government powers to promote democratic values and maintain social and environmental safeguards that are in the interest of communities and Canadians.

Much has changed with our organization in the intervening years. We have become a large social movement with activists, chapters and members across the country. We have also become a serious player in the international movements for trade, water and climate justice, working with allies here in Canada and around the globe. We work in coalition with others to mutually support our common goals of social and environmental justice for all.

We have had some losses (the recent Chapter 11 NAFTA case that will have us paying AbitibiBowater an astonishing \$130 million) and some wonderful wins (most recently with the spectacular vote for the human right to water and sanitation at the UN). However, the most important thing we have done, in my view, is to speak up for justice, here and around the world, by maintaining our independence as an organization and by building a movement of people inspired to act for social justice. I cannot think what Canada would look like today if it were not for our organization and many others that have kept up the struggle in the face of great odds.

As we celebrate this milestone, I see that we have come back to our roots, fighting bad trade agreements such as the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Trade and Economic Agreement (CETA); protecting our water by fighting Schedule 2, the Fisheries Act amendment that allows healthy lakes to be polluted with toxic mining waste; defending our oil and gas by fighting tar sands expansion and offshore drilling in the Arctic; working with allies to stop the erosion of our public health system; and speaking our truth to their power as we did at the marvellous "Shout Out for Global Justice!" event at Massey Hall in Toronto (packed with almost 3,000 cheering friends) on the eve of the G20 summit.

It has been my honour to serve as Chairperson of the Council of Canadians for most of these 25 years and with your support, I intend to stay deeply involved in this wonderful organization in the years to come. I hope to see many of you at our Annual General Meeting October 22-24 in Ottawa, Ontario, where we will continue "Building People Power" and celebrate the next 25 years of activism.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maude Barlow".

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