

## **FROM ARCADIA TO CASCADIA - A ROAD TO DISENCHANTMENT?**

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### **Introduction**

The main purpose of this introductory piece is to set into context the four main papers presented at the annual conference of the London Conference for Canadian Studies (LCCS) in 1993. The opportunity is also taken to add some lines on British Columbia (BC) that were to have been presented that day.

When LCCS first chose the topic of "NAFTA-Canada and the Pacific Rim" for its Annual November conference in 1993, at least two extremely interesting developments were not fully anticipated. One was that we would choose the very week of the Congressional vote on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); the other was that we would attract such interesting and wide-ranging papers. Whilst the topic seemed to have particular appeal to Economists and Geographers (see for example, Davies, 1993), we soon found that the timing ensured that a wide range of opinions was forthcoming. Yet, as I shall seek to argue, the issues raised - from whatever source - so often seem to have an interesting Geographic (or at least regional) dimension. This, at least, will have to serve to justify the inclusion of some specific comments on British Columbia in this preface.

### ***A Context to Change***

A more suitable starting point, however, seems to me to be the recent observations by John Kenneth Galbraith on the human condition as experienced in countries such as Canada, the UK and USA. His notion of a *culture of contentment* contained warnings that the political base of such a concept was already eroding (1992 pp 152-153). He specifically cited the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA) with its attendant loss of manufacturing jobs as a political threat to the incumbent Canadian Conservatives. Galbraith's theme was one of an enduring threat to the cosy assumptions upon which so many "ordinary" people in Western nations had based their conceptions of how the world really worked. This notion of dislocation or breakdown, relocation or transformation, surfaces many times in the papers presented in this volume. Galbraith wrote before the election of

President Clinton and , whilst the conference slightly pre-dated the event, some of the papers in this volume note the cataclysmic electoral disaster of the Canadian Conservative Party at the last Canadian Federal Election. Somewhere in the debris, however, we are forced to single out issues of external relations - and NAFTA in particular. It can be argued that the electoral escape for the *British* Conservatives was not unassociated with their long-time appropriation of the notion of patriotic nationalism - and an ability to tap electoral ambivalence towards a "threatening" Europe. In Canada, the election came in the aftermath of a perceived loss of employment (in some Provinces more than in others) attendant upon an external relations policy - NAFTA - with which the incumbents were perhaps too closely and enthusiastically associated. Perhaps, then, NAFTA is aggravating the unsettling of Canada's "culture of contentment"? This, of course, is too neat a view for several reasons.

As we approach the millennium, most economically-advanced nations are currently facing severe and unwelcome problems that unsettle their contentment. Recession and high unemployment rates figure highly. Most, too, have to juggle with their position as part of wider trading blocs ( in most cases this is the European Union). Some have severe Balance-of-Trade problems in respect of manufactured goods. Others - such as Italy - are struggling with political uncertainty and some even failed to make the soccer World Cup Finals. Canada, remarkably, faces all these threats, uncertainties and disappointments at the same time and faces a prospect that needs to be set in its political context.

### *The Papers*

#### Wayne Hunt

This volume commences with Wayne Hunt's personal interpretation of recent Canadian political developments. The collapse of the Progressive Conservatives in the Federal elections just a few days before our conference demanded that Wayne be allowed to update his piece and it is his revised paper that we print. This has the additional benefit of offering a useful political backcloth to the three papers that follow. The threat to the established political order is highlighted by his account of the rise of the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party. This he traces back to Pierre Trudeau's repatriation of the Constitution - and the Pandora's box thereby opened when Quebec refused to sign. This step brings to mind the common trend that nations can unite their view in respect of forms of external control - but bicker intolerably when the

spoils are theirs alone to share. Crucially he highlights the ramifications of the arrival of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (John Mercer is another who dwells upon what he describes as "Charter based thinking" as fundamental to the current Canadian predicament.) Wayne Hunt sees distinct differences in approach to Canadian Federalism as characterised by the two dominant Federal political characters of the last two decades - Liberal Pierre Trudeau and Progressive Conservative Brian Mulroney. The latter he views as significantly more conciliatory towards the aspirations of Quebec ; particularly in negotiation with Quebec's Robert Bourassa. Wayne Hunt covers the concepts of the Quebec "distinct Society" and significant events such as Meech Lake and Charlottetown. He shows how the latter acted as a focus for regionally-based dissent that gave rise to the Reform Party in the West and Bloc Quebecois in that Province. He also interweaves the rise of the negotiations that led first to CUFTA and then to NAFTA. In the midst of this lies the controversial MacDonald report - originated, of course, by Trudeau. Hunt sees this as opening a door to Mulroney's moves on Free Trade and to negotiations with the then President of the USA, "Feelgood" Ronald Reagan. The collapse, possibly coincidental, of course, of industrial plants in Ontario in the wake of CUFTA and NAFTA led, Hunt argues, directly to the Liberal Party sweep of that Province in 1993 -thus sparing the Liberals alone as a mainstream nationally-based party. This rise of regionally-based opposition serves to highlight the contrast with Britain where regional identities are largely suppressed via increased political control from national Government (though Scottish Nationalism broke free in the 1994 European elections). A parallel of the debacle for the Canadian Progressive Conservatives cannot happen in Britain so long as there is no regionally-based dissent in the Tory heartlands. The Liberal Democrats' "third party" status is cemented by being thinly spread and lacks a clear regional power base. Strictly regionally-based vote-splitting, then, only occurs in Scotland and Wales - where the Tory vote is, in any case, notoriously weak. Wayne Hunt then moves on to consider the fate of anti-NAFTA Ross Perot before leaving the ball squarely in the court of Canada's Liberals and America's Democrats.

### John Mercer

The emphasis on matters Constitutional leads us into the work of John Mercer. He, too, offers a highly personal view on the future prospects for Canada - one that has seen him view the 49th parallel from both sides. Following on from Wayne Hunt, this is a piece dominated by political considerations - most notably focused on Quebec. He asserts that , in post-

modern times, Canada is more vulnerable than some other states to pressures from social movements and economic conditions. We will later gain views from Bruce Wilkinson on economic conditions and from Jocelyn Letourneau on social movements. Mercer sees Canada being squeezed by both global processes (of which NAFTA is a part) and internal or regional processes. For John Mercer, the possibility really exists that Federal Canada as we know it could break apart. He links this to what he describes as the aforementioned "Charter-based" thinking - an approach more American in outlook than classical Canadian consensus. Nor is it an approach that one can unequivocally welcome - it did not take Thomas Jefferson long to regret the possibility that the US Constitution had possibly devolved so much freedom to "the people" that the crucial tensions that lead to responsible citizenship may have been forever lost. ( Equally, responsible citizenship founders when the State leaves even civic-minded individuals powerless). Such worries lead into Mercer's consideration of those crucial collective values that, hitherto, have differentiated Canada from the USA. He then moves to discuss the nature of regions in Canada and their diversity - from the Maritimes, through Quebec, to British Columbia or *Lotusland*.

This latter destination offers the welcome opportunity to write about other types of regional pressures (see the short passage on British Columbia, below). We cannot, of course neglect heartland Ontario - nor does John Mercer and he raises again the telling spectre of the branch-plant existence "susceptible to withdrawal of investment when it becomes apparent to managers that the Canadian market can be supplied...from American or even Mexican locations". It is to just such prospects that Bruce Wilkinson will later turn.

John Mercer, however, next turns to identity....initially moulded by the Charter Peoples. He ranges through bilingualism and multiculturalism to make telling points about the future of identities other than "pure" Quebecois in any putative Quebec State. Such issues of identity, he avers, may prove a final stumbling block to the scenario with which Bruce Wilkinson will end his piece - total assimilation within a dominant US "culture". Accordingly, John Mercer ends with the view that Canada will, indeed, survive.

### Bruce Wilkinson

It is clearly appropriate next to thrust directly into the heart of the topic of NAFTA with an unequivocal viewpoint from Bruce Wilkinson. What his paper seeks to show us is that the underlying principle behind all such "agreements" is that of power (a theme recently pursued in not dissimilar vein

by another Albertan Professor of Economics, Robert Wright (1993)). The root question is whether or not Canada could long survive economically outside a wider trading bloc. The adjunct questions are *which trading bloc?* and whether or not the societal costs ( and, as Bruce Wilkinson and others see it, the sovereignty costs ) outweigh any possible advantages of such a move. Canada's lot, like that of the policeman, is not generally seen to be a happy one - with the debate raging as to which long-term outcome would be for the worse. For Bruce Wilkinson the NAFTA signifies a real economic threat to Canada. He is not alone in seeing the CUFTA agreement as merely a precursor to a series of agreements that would bind, ultimately, all of the Americas within a US sphere of influence. In a foreign relations context, the British last encountered such a view in the early days of the Falklands/Malvinas conflict when the received (Kirkpatrick) wisdom was that those islands were in AMERICA's backyard. Wilkinson traces the genealogy of a US-based (dominated?) trading sphere right back to the blatantly expansionist views of the Manifest Destiny doctrine. Looking forward, he presages a total loss of sovereignty as Canada retires its national debt in spectacular fashion. En route to this conclusion he brings into play a powerfully-argued case that is rooted in close reading of the documents themselves. Only similar close examination - but with a different interpretation of possible outcomes - could possibly be set as counterpoint to this controversial piece. Since none could quickly be found for this publication, readers of a different persuasion will have to supply their own counterpoint. This is a paper that pulls powerful , if controversial, evidence in support of its central thesis. It is a viewpoint that many would wish to challenge - but few have thrown down the gauntlet with such force as Bruce Wilkinson.

#### Jocelyn Letourneau

The choice of Jocelyn Letourneau's paper to follow this *tour de force* is not hard to justify. His clear view - increasingly echoed by British researchers on the "hollowing out" of the welfare state ( see, for example, Jessop, 1993, Peck, 1994) - is that there is a much wider (if not deeper) problem to be tackled. He uses imaginative diagrams to evoke the notion of "precarised" employment prospects for so many of those individuals for whom Galbraith's culture of contentment is presently a credo ( see also Hallsworth, 1992 pp133-173).

Note that a fair amount of Canada's economic misery is related to debt. That debt is not unassociated with a period when nationalism and local control of resources was a vote-catching policy issue. When the high interest

rate policies of Thatcher and Reagan were introduced (see Congdon, 1987) the debt became a millstone. Debt also affected individuals and corporations and ,inevitably, many corporations, seeking to avoid debt, began to shed individuals. The attendant culture of insecurity - once felt to be the province of the poor and under-skilled - is now being keenly felt by the middle classes. They, it seems, feel themselves to have so much further to fall once economic distress sets in. With trillions of dollars in footloose investment capital circling the globe in 24-hour trading markets the threat of divestment is clear - for any location that is seen as having unduly high labour costs. Small wonder that those in Canada with views close to those of Bruce Wilkinson, regard Mexico with some alarm. For, as footloose transnational corporations (with little national or regional loyalty) increasingly seek the lowest-cost locations then Canadians are forced to ask what they can offer to the global investor that Mexico cannot offer more cheaply. Within CUFTA, Canada could have played the role of nearby cheap supplier to the USA (as Britain seeks to do to the EU (Hallsworth 1994)) - yet has not Mexico usurped that role within NAFTA - and will Mexico, in turn, be undercut? We see that we are full circle to Geography. For Mexico , as an additional advantage , is nearer to the growth markets of the USA - whilst Canada adjoins the rust-belt. Hence comments on the "natural" direction of trade flows by Bruce Wilkinson. The durability of flows is, of course, linked to the strength of attempts by sovereign national governments to retain those links.(see also Slack, 1993).

Letourneau puts forward a well-constructed argument on wider trends in employment in advanced economies that face threat from the "lowest cost labour source" in a world economy still dominated by those large footloose corporations. These are the realms of power and resistance. Academics dash to any location in a developed economy that seems to have found a way to generate sustainable growth in the face of undercutting pressures from developing economies (the so-called "third Italy" being presently popular). We even read that nowadays Taiwan is now "too expensive" and that yet cheaper locations must be found. Letourneau offers a grim prospect for labour in countries such as Canada - a progressive cycle of decline for the majority - the prospect of advancement for the suitably-qualified few.

### ***British Columbia - a transborder alternative society?***

There is of course a flaw in these geographic generalisations about Canadian regions - British Columbia does not abut a rustbelt and is not so

visibly in decline as ,say, Ontario : on the contrary, the general mood is presently extremely positive. Not least because this is so, we have seen recent suggestions that the Pacific Northwest (both sides of the 49th parallel and that fiddly bit including Victoria) "naturally" form a tightly-defined transborder trading region easily labelled CASCADIA.... a considerable contrast with the more elusive Acadia (Dinwoodie,1986). John L. Sullivan - quoted by Bruce Wilkinson - was neither the first nor the last to allude to natural regional identities and some are suggesting that the US/Mexico border may, in places, similarly erode. With Japan - until very recently **the** engine of global economic growth - having its shortest sea-crossing to Vancouver, more than a few observers see scope for a viable new regional entity. This, then, is the transborder region, remote from Ottawa, that is to some extent already going its own way economically if not politically. We will, then, conclude with a few observations on the CASCADIA phenomenon.

One obvious question is whether the view across CASCADIA is uniform. Do the key cities of Seattle and Vancouver really experience much more that is held in common than they have competitive forces dividing them? The evidence is certainly mixed and the recent labour disputes in the Port of Vancouver were certainly focused on meeting a competitive threat from Tacoma, south of the border. Furthermore, recent US research on economic prospects in the Seattle region (from the University of Washington) focuses on internally-generated growth, pinned on Boeing, on expertise in the treatment of cancer and on computers (Microsoft & its spinoffs). Yet, for BC , trade (already generating 35-40% of GDP ) has a more central importance. Trade's role in the economy is, indeed, more important than in many other provinces whilst, in particular, manufacturing has a much weaker representation. For this latter reason much attention is usually paid to the role of services in the BC economy but in a way less clearly linked to key industrial producers. At the same time, then, that links across the Pacific NorthWest are being mooted, BC can actually be seen as **less** dependent on a dominant US market than other Provinces. The contrary viewpoint would suggest that BC , *in its natural linkages*, has more in common with the Pacific Northwest than with remoter Canadian Provinces - but does this equate to grounds for economic partnership? Nevertheless, the BC economy has been more robust than most over the duration of the current recession - so how else may this good fortune be explained?

British Columbia was the only Provincial economy to record employment growth every year since the mid-1980s and was second only to an exceptional year for the Yukon in 1992. With the CUFTA agreement

having come into force some time ago it is clearly difficult to separate out causal factors in any changes in Provincial economic performance. Locally, however, few doubt that the steady inflow of investment from the Pacific rim has been a key factor in BCs growth record and some sources suggest that 30% of Provincial growth is derived from that source. For this reason alone, the remainder of this paper will focus on this Pacific Rim dimension.

The inward investment manifests itself in a continued buoyancy in employment and housing markets - and on the skyline of Vancouver in particular. Accordingly, whilst BC eyes NAFTA warily - having been central to spats over softwood lumber - many are especially wary of any policies that might in any way place a drag on growth from the Pacific Rim. Indeed it is easy to find evidence to support the importance of Pacific Rim linkages : for example, the Japanese Businessmen's Association of Vancouver raised \$2.5 million in funding for the University of British Columbia in the early 1990s. Around 6,000 people per annum sign up to learn Asian languages as further testimony to the influence of the Pacific Rim.

### ***Trade***

The importance of the Pacific Rim in BC trade should certainly not be underestimated . Japan accounted for CAN\$ 4,636,000,000 of export trade from BC in 1990, representing 27.8% of the total trade. This placed Japan second only to the USA which took CAN\$ 6,980,000,000 worth of trade and 41.9% of the total. Whilst the United Kingdom came 3rd, accepting 4.2% of BCs exports, Korea accounted for 3.7%, Taiwan 1.4% and China 1.2%. Overall, the Pacific Rim bloc is only just behind the USA in total trade volume. In terms of imports, the USA was lead supplier at 44% but Japan accounted for 30.9%, Korea 3.6% and Taiwan 2.9%. The Pacific Rim, thus occupied 2nd,3rd and 4th places in the list of those supplying BC and China, Hong Kong and Thailand also featured in the top ten.

The BC Government takes Pacific Rim trade very seriously indeed and is clearly very proactive. One key argument is that Pacific Rim countries are used to interventionist governments and *expect* that groups seeking trade will have a government link. Obviously, a visible element of Government support adds status and legitimacy that in a sense underwrites any trading ventures.

BC seems to be profiting on both sides of its 'dual' economy. The same wood products that were part of the temporary upset with the USA are in particular demand in Japan which always tries to look for safe and stable sources of supply. The service sector is the other half of the story and it has

benefitted from various forms of intermediary and facilitating role in respect of trade. In fact, of course, services are rather more than half the story. In Vancouver by 1986, just over 75% of the labour force were employed in services. This figure was just above the average for Canadian metropolitan cities. Furthermore..

" in the case of British Columbia, service industries led employment growth during the period 1975-1987...with the Finance, Insurance and Real Estate category expanding by 48.1%, and the broader services group by 61.0 per cent, compared to 2.6 percent for manufacturing" ( Hutton & Davis, 1992 p 2).

Few services offer a more visible presence than real estate : for the remainder of this paper , then, will focus on developments that suggest the strength of the Asia-Pacific links .

### ***Pacific Place***

Concord Pacific developments is redeveloping the former 204 acre site of Vancouver's *Expo 86* - overlooking False Creek - which it purchased from the Government of British Columbia in May 1988. It is claimed that the project will cost CAN \$ 2.5 billions to complete over the span of a decade and that 25% of the site will be devoted to parkland. The company is working with telecommunications partners to ensure that its 8,500 apartments are equipped with the latest fibre optics systems. There will also be 3 million sq ft of commercial development and sites for two schools. Whilst a major shareholder in Concord Pacific developments is the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the controlling shareholder is Hong Kong based entrepreneur Li Ka-shing. The development represents an exceptional example of Asian-Pacific investment in Canada, claiming as it does to be the "most spectacular urban residential and commercial waterfront development in the western hemisphere". Being not unassociated with the increasing numbers of ethnic Chinese living in the Greater Vancouver area, a spokesperson for Concord Pacific suggests that Vancouver could become not unlike Hawaii in its population mix. The substantial numbers of ethnic Chinese undergraduates attending, in particular, the University of British Columbia testify to the important and increasing purchasing power of this segment of the population.

### ***Richmond - Edge City?***

In seeking specific locations where direct Asia-Pacific investment can especially be found, it is worthwhile to turn to Richmond - in the south of

Vancouver and adjacent to Vancouver International airport. The Toronto Globe and Mail , under a piece entitled **Asian investment floods Richmond** (Nov 16th 1992) suggested that land prices in Richmond had risen from \$30 to \$50 per square foot in three years.

In his book "Edge City" Joel Garreau makes much of the symbolic importance of growth poles - especially their ability to entice the very fashionable Department Stores. By 1993 Japanese Department store group YAOHAN (a talisman for Garreau) had not only reached London, England, but also Vancouver - at Richmond. Interestingly this group moved its corporate headquarters to Hong Kong in 1989 , largely for tax reasons but also to facilitate foreign expansion. Whilst, in mid-1993, Yaohan only had the 27,000 sq ft supermarket element of its \$30million investment open, the letting process for the mall at large seemed to be proceeding rapidly. Just a half block south of Yaohan on the curiously-named No. 3 road President Plaza - a \$46 million luxury hotel complex - is under construction : again funded by Pacific Rim finance, this time from Taiwan. The growth of the Chinese influence is affirmed by the oddly-named \$20million Aberdeen mall - Hong-Kong financed via Fairchild Holdings and itself in the shadow of President Plaza. Just off the main street - no 3 road - , this small mall is dominantly Chinese in flavour. So much so that some local protest arose over the lack of signage in any language but Chinese. The attendant rise in house prices - \$400,000 said to be the norm for Richmond by 1993 - and the equally predictable complaints about lot-filling mega-homes also testify to the trend. The Globe and Mail quoted one source as suggesting that 70% of all land in the centre of Richmond was Asian-owned by 1992.

These developments, as much as Vancouver's well-entrenched downtown Chinatown, visually back up the statistic that, in central Vancouver schools, half the children now have English as a second language. One census-based projection is that by 2010 one Vancouver resident in three will have Chinese as their first language . The Vancouver Sun ( August 12th 1993) quoted Wayne Duzita of Richmond Chamber of Commerce as stating that the Asian malls such as Aberdeen were a tourist attraction and that special transport systems for the area were warranted.

### ***More general growth effects***

Whilst this paper has focused directly on Asia-Pacific investment in Vancouver and its immediate environs it is also clear that economic buoyancy manifests itself in the Greater Vancouver area in general. One sector that quickly responds when the economy is generally confident is retailing - so it is

often useful to take this as a talisman for the climate of the times. It may seem odd , then, to start with the fact that after 100 years in the retail business, *Woodwards* - heavily represented in the Vancouver area - recently ceased trading. However, groups such as the Bay and Zellers have moved quickly to take prime slots in major malls that *Woodwards* have vacated. Now this is in itself instructive of the Cascadia debate , because *Nordstroms* - one of the strongest and fastest-growing Department Store chains in the USA - made no move to take that mall space. Whilst entirely happy to locate a store thousands of miles away from their home base of Seattle (in the Tyson's Corner "Edge City" of Washington DC) they did not make the move barely a few hundred miles north from their home state of Washington - to enter the Canadian market. Yet, as noted, the Vancouver area has many "Edge City" characteristics including two of the fashionable waterfront "festival" style malls - one in North Vancouver (Lonsdale Quay) and one in New Westminster (Westminster Quay)...the former accessible by SeaBus, the latter linked to skytrain rapid transit.

The largest transformation in the Vancouver area retail structure is the development of METROTOWN. As a planned attempt to bring retail infrastructure to mid-town it has been spectacularly successful. The pre-existing extensive warehouse uses have been transformed into no less than three loosely-aggregated mall-type developments. The central development is an Eaton centre with an adjunct 120,000 sq ft foodstore and adjacent links to skytrain. Furthest from downtown is another 1 million sq ft mall development with central atrium - another where *Woodwards* has been replaced by *Zellers*. Finally, the most recent development , loosely linked to the rest, is anchored by a 400,000 sq ft Save-on-Foods discount superstore. Of note is that this boasts a "bulk purchase" section - a clear response to the Costco/Price Club warehouse club innovations.

This has been a brief peregrination around Vancouver - not by any means a total view of the Province. The conclusion is that, structurally, BC could stand to benefit from NAFTA, just as it could stand to benefit from CASCADIA-type links. Neither prospect, however, seems as yet to have offered clear, economy-enhancing, benefits. Such is not the case with the Pacific Rim in general and Hong Kong in particular. The real-estate investments are, indeed, *real* - though the final accounting will depend on the relationship that emerges after Hong Kong returns to Chinese control. Demonstrably, however, BC seems increasingly to be turning to the Pacific Rim - and the Pacific rim is responding. Ultimately, it is up to each individual to weigh the extent to which this is a push/pull factor. At present, however,

the Pacific Rim connection is more obviously driving growth than is any CASCADIA or, indeed, CUFTA/NAFTA effect. It may simply be that trade from the Far East is driving growth in the CASCADIA region - but not necessarily in a co-ordinated fashion. Research must be done to demonstrate cross-border synergies.

### ***Conclusions***

In the context of this collection of papers, what emerges is that BC (or Lotusland as John Mercer refers to it) seems to have more potential escape routes than any other Province should the road ahead for Canada prove to be a rocky one that leads, indeed, to disenchantment. The fuller picture on CUFTA and NAFTA will take time to emerge and it may be that the papers by John Mercer and Bruce Wilkinson will have to stand as mileposts on a road to change that is, in many senses, inevitable. They offer warnings that it is timely to heed. Certainly, Jocelyn Letourneau is convinced that his labour market trends will transcend any trading agreements. This paper suggests that prosperity in British Columbia, too, may be quite unrelated to NAFTA and it is an outstanding challenge to accept or refute that notion.

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