



INTEGRATION BY STEALTH

The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP)

What if

...you were on your way to Mexico for a holiday and couldn't get on the plane because you were put on a 'no fly list' over US air space.

or

... your company got a huge contract with a US firm and you were told you couldn't keep your job because your country of birth was on the 'no hire' list of the US.

Couldn't happen here? These things ARE happening to Canadians. And there is more to come because of a program our government is quietly working on called the Security and Prosperity Partnership – or SPP.

What is the SPP?

The program was announced by the leaders of Canada, Mexico and the US in March, 2005. The SPP seeks to eliminate or scale down regulations in areas like immigration, food and agriculture, and to enact a continent-wide resource pact - a few of the 300 policy areas to be affected.

At their March 2006 meeting the 3 leaders created the "North American Competitiveness Council" (NACC) made up of 30 CEOs from large companies (10 from each of the 3 countries) with the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) housing the Canadian Secretariat. The NACC arrangement gives corporations exclusive access to the SPP talks, by-passing the legislatures in the three countries as well as civil society sectors like unions, churches, students and environmental groups.

The three heads-of-state are ignoring the fact that these privileged NACC CEOs would be in a 'conflict of interest' situation when advising governments to take regulatory actions that ultimately fatten their own bottom lines.

They say... that this is nothing to worry about. It's only bringing regulations in all 3 countries in line with "best practices".

But we ARE worried... "Best practices" are being defined by large corporations interested in increasing profits and eliminating obstacles to investment.

Security and Prosperity for whom?

Prosperity for large corporations

Regulations protect people's health, safety and human rights. Despite what government and corporations say, they are vitally important. Under the SPP the regulatory regime that defines Canada-US relations is being reviewed in the light of the US security agenda. This agenda includes economic interests as defined by large corporations in North America who want to remove all obstacles to unfettered investment.



Although Canada is the US's largest trading partner, it is by no means an equal partner. On softwood lumber, defence, security, energy and climate change the Bush administration's views are shaping Canadian policy. The government has put a lot of resources into the SPP, arguing that Canadian economic interests must be framed in terms of US security interests if we want to maintain access to their market.

The case of Bell Helicopter

A US State Department regulation prohibits workers in the aerospace industry born in one of 19 'enemy' countries from working on US defence contracts. Despite human rights laws in Quebec and Canada, twenty-four workers at Bell Helicopter of Montreal were removed from their positions. The case of one worker, Mr Jaime Vargas, born in Venezuela, has been taken up by the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations.

Security for the USA

Since 9/11 Washington has instituted a series of security measures at home as well as waging wars abroad. These actions come from a world view that the globe is populated with enemies of the US who should all be dealt with as likely 'terrorists'. Under the SPP there are 10 executive-branch working groups focused on security issues in the three countries, all charged with drawing up changes to Canadian and Mexican regulations and procedures so they will be in sync with Washington's security agenda. One of these SPP working groups is focused on 'no fly' lists that have already mistakenly identified innocent air travelers in North America as 'terrorists'.

'No Fly' holiday in Mexico

In the winter of 2005, a Canadian family booked a holiday in Ixtapa with Air Transat. The flight left from Toronto, but as it crossed the border into US air space, passengers noted they were flanked by two US fighter jets. On arrival in Mexico, the father of the family was escorted off the plane and jailed. The rest of the family was not allowed off the plane and they were forced to return immediately to Toronto. RCMP officers arrived in Ixtapa in a private jet to collect the 'suspect' after he spent two days in a Mexican jail. They flew him around US airspace and back to Toronto, where he was informed that it was a case of 'mistaken identity'. Canada asked the US to remove the Canadian family's name from their 'no fly list' but the US refused to do so. A Canadian 'no fly list' for domestic and international travel containing several thousand names, went into effect mid-2007.

'Security' isn't only about fighting 'terrorism'.

Other SPP working groups are discussing how to ensure the future 'security' of US access to Canadian and Mexican oil and gas. This will include expansion of Alberta's tar sands despite risks to the environment and to people's health. While the SPP ensures that more Canadian oil flows south to the US, there is no such 'security' plan for Canadians. Quebec and the Atlantic provinces depend on insecure imports to meet 90% of their oil needs and Ontario for 40% of its supplies. Harper has no plan to ship western crude to eastern Canada in the event of an emergency. Canada does not maintain a strategic reserve.

And the environment in all of this??

These same government and business leaders behind the SPP have in the past claimed that Canada will lead the world in environmental regulations. Yet the drastic deregulation they are seeking under the SPP and other agreements will completely tie government hands on any new regulations, be it on toxins or air quality or pesticides - especially since these new agreements on deregulation allow private corporations to sue government for any policy business perceives as restricting investment.



Globalize Peoples' Rights, not Corporate Privilege

We believe that cross border cooperation in this era of globalization is important. That is why a coalition of organizations from different social movements in Mexico, the United States, Canada and Québec have been working together to fight against this corporate vision for North America. We propose an alternative agenda based on social equality. Unlike the SPP, we view the role of government as ensuring that the basic needs of the population are met – not as facilitating corporate investment.

Our Agenda includes:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good, secure jobs• Measures to tackle growing economic inequality – both within and between our 3 countries• Climate change and other environmental concerns• Measures to help small farmers• Access to public health care | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect for labour rights• A creative response to de-industrialization and worsening trade deficit in manufactured goods• Electoral reform• Income security for retired workers• Access to quality child care |
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Common Frontiers is a network of Canadian organizations from different sectors working with others in the Americas to resist 'free trade' and build new trade alternatives.

www.commonfrontiers.ca

What You Can Do

- Pay attention to what our government and business leaders are up to and elect leaders who will fight for Canadian sovereignty
- Pressure our governments at all levels to use their purchasing power to create and maintain local jobs and strengthen domestic markets
- Mobilize for the '3 amigos' SPP meeting in New Orleans April 21-22 among Bush, Calderon, and Harper.
- Support worker-run factories in the Americas. <http://market.the.workingworld.org/>
- Learn more. Some websites to check out for more information: www.policyalternatives.ca; www.kairoscanada.org; www.canadians.org; www.asc-hsa.org (click on English).