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## THE LATE NITE ISSUE

### CANADIAN COMA



Doug Jarvis (United States), Mathew Letourneau (Mexico), Fernando Mayer (Canada)

#### An editorial by Eléonore Bernier-Hamel

The Canadian delegation of the Triumvirate in the Customs Union commission has been successfully exploited by the United States and has agreed to a very questionable proposition. The journalist assigned to this commission provides an analysis of what happened.

The day began just as it did on Tuesday. All Canadian members of the commission seemed to be satisfied by the resolution, but they didn't say so too loudly. It was as if they were shy or had the feeling that they were losing control. However this was not just a feeling. Back in their caucus, the American legislators couldn't believe how easy they had it.

In my article yesterday, I mentioned the surprise of the American delegation. While I was walking back to Anderson Hall with the members of the Customs Union commission, Derek McDonald, a legislator from Michigan, told me he was surprised to see both Mexico and Canada accepting the resolution as it had been

drafted only a few minutes earlier. When he realized I could publish his naively-made comment, he got Doug Jarvis, the legislator from Massachusetts, to try to persuade me not to. This manoeuvre only persuaded me to publish the comment. I could sense the nervousness of the American delegates and I tried to understand the nature of their concern. I found out that they wanted the resolution to be finalized as quickly as possible because they were stunned by the silence of the others, especially the Canadians, and they were afraid to see them waking up and refusing what appeared to be unacceptable.

At that time, the resolution was not yet completed, but it was progressing well. In fact, not even an hour later, it was finished and accompanied by a letter signed by the entire commission. Doug Jarvis and Georgina De la Fuente, legislator of the federal Congress of the US, came together to hand it to me. They asked me to publish it in the TrilatHerald of the next day. They even wanted us to translate it both in French and Spanish, so all the members of the Triumvirate could be inspired by their triumph. As you probably read yesterday, the message expressed their "great surprise" of the success of the commission. It also made it clear that the members were expected not to vote against the resolution.

The shock the American delegation tried to hide was caused by the Security Clause (Article 3). It stipulates that : "The government of Mexico and Canada each agree to provide ten percent (10%) of their respective annual duties under NACET to the government of the USA for the purposes of domestic security and continental defense." Not unlike the American legislators, I must admit I was surprised to see this clause accepted so easily by Mexico and Canada. I thought that 10 % represented an enormous amount of money. In addition to that, I was still wondering what compromises had been made by the US. As Cled-

wyn Jones, the President of the commission and a Mexican legislator, repeated to me many times during the discussions, he was wondering why the American delegates were so afraid that they would lose something if they accepted the creation of a customs union.

So, I went to ask the delegates from Mexico why they had approved this article. Lampros Stougiannos, the delegate of the state of Nuevo Leon in Mexico, who was an active participant in the commission, explained to me that he thought all of their objectives were achieved. Mexico was now part of a new NACET contract, and an Independent Working Group (IWG) was established with “the purpose of working on sectors in which the Common External Tariff (CET) has not been applied, in order to form recommendations on sectors where tariffs can be reduced and hence make them qualify for the CET.” (Title 3, article 1, line 173) Mr. Stougiannos told me the advantages for Mexico in joining the NACET were worth the sacrifice. He estimated that his country would gain much more in return and that finally, the 10% duty was not much when compared to the growth possibilities of the Mexican economy. Mister Stougiannos has a point; nonetheless, it seems to me it was an enormous compromise. This attitude ruined what could have possibly been an alliance between Mexico and Canada in front of the American giant. In the Canadian caucus, the delegates were disappointed to see the consensus between the two.

So, I went to see the Canadian delegates to ask them if they were happy with the resolution. I didn't have a clue because they remained silent during the commission and they always voted in the same way as the others. I found out they were pretty sceptical of how the commission was leading up. Fernando Mayer, the chairman of the Canadian caucus as well as the spokesperson of the delegates in the Customs Union commission, told me they were waiting to see if they were losing power over the control of their natural resources in the Water Management commission. The Americans made it clear at the beginning of our commission: they would ask either for significant monetary contributions for environmental security or for access to Canadian natural resources. Canadians had accepted the American's rules: they were ready to give up one or the other. The press conference on Thursday was framed as if the resolution had been a success for everyone. Delegates Stougiannos, Jarvis and Mayer shook hands energetically. But through all this *mise en scène*, I couldn't stop thinking about what a source had told me at lunchtime about the possibility that the Canadians could use their veto if the resolution was too unfair towards them.

As time went by, I realised the resolution had been completed with the support of every member of the commission, even though the veto issue was still in the air. Yesterday morning at the Inter-American Development Bank, Mr. Jones presented the

resolution and nobody tried to change it. No questions were asked. Later on, at the press conference, they repeated the same position (see photo). When a journalist asked Mr. Jarvis if he had heard about the possibility of Canadians using their veto against the resolution, he couldn't keep a straight face and let out “I'm shocked!” But then Mr. Mayer calmed him down and assured him of his delegation's support for the resolution. The subject seemed to be closed.

I could understand the surprise felt by Doug Jarvis. As unnamed source told me the American legislators of the CU commission didn't hide their satisfaction in caucus and were very proud of their accomplishment. They even laughed about it, probably thinking to themselves how well they had played the game.

After the press conference, I went to see Canadians that were not in the CU commission. I asked them what they thought about the compromise their delegates had made. They didn't seem to be pleased. They told me they were thinking about presenting an amendment the next day to change the article on security that they had trouble with. I submitted to them to decrease it from 10% to around 3%. But as we were having this conversation, Fernando Mayer interrupted and told me that there will be no amendment on the last day. So Canada will let go of 10% of their duties to protect the American territory...

When I came back to the AU campus, I met Cledwyn Jones who seemed to be thinking that his job was finished. In his head the CU commission was done and over with. I wasn't feeling that way. I was, and I am still, persuaded that this article needs to be amended. If not, Canada must impose their veto.

Therefore, I decided to write this article in English to make sure everybody could read about this situation. I would have failed my readers had I not reported this. As a Canadian –Québécoise– I am wondering why this country has to pay for the rude attitude of the US government towards the Middle-East and the security problem that comes from this. The Canadian government refuses to participate in the missile defence program as the American government wished after 9/11; why should Canada now accept to finance a plan of national security that covers the entire territory of North America? This is non-sense, and Canadian government would never conclude this deal.

While I was writing this editorial, Mr. Jarvis came to my office and asked me if I was trying to “sink the deal?” I honestly answered that I would do my best to try to get an amendment. Mr. Jarvis returned to drink beer with his friends. Apparently he wasn't too worried. “Who read the *TrilatHerald*, anyway?” he said before leaving. I think Mr. Jarvis underestimates the role of the media. I only hope he will be unpleasantly surprised at the results of the plenary session.