

Atlantica! SuperCorridor! Without Congress, a Borderless Corporate World

by Dave Lewit, *Alliance for Democracy*

GISBORNE LAKE is a 3 by 5 mile clearwater gem near Fortune Bay on the south coast of Newfoundland, Canada. Gerry White developed a plan to pump 132 million gallons each week from the lake into tankers, for sale in the US, Europe—wherever. "When environmentalists got wind of this, White's grand plan was scrapped," according to Nova Scotia activist-scholar Janet Eaton. "The environmentalists successfully argued that allowing Gisborne Lake water to be sold in bulk would make Canadian water a 'commodity' and thus subject to the terms and conditions of GATT* and NAFTA."

According to a program of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, environmentalists went on to say "changing water levels and flows will have unpredictable and harmful consequences to basin habitat, biodiversity, shorelines, jobs and culture, particularly to First Nations... Water is an essential need, a public trust, not a commodity. It belongs to everyone and to no one... If Newfoundland is allowed to export bulk water, it becomes, ipso facto, a 'good' under NAFTA, which would allow any other company in Canada to do the same."

This case centers on a tiny patch of land and water in vast, water-and-oil-rich Canada—which has 20 percent of the world's fresh water. But the terms of the Pandora-box North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) would open the whole country of Canada to international water exploitation because of this one crack, with no way to turn down the tap—or turn it off—short of dangerous defiance of that rushed-through, controversial treaty.

SuperCorridor—The Triple Bypass

No sooner had NAFTA been pushed through the US, Canadian, and Mexican congresses in 1993 than North America's largest corporations formed quiet working groups to enlarge and deepen their dream of totally reshaping and exploiting the world. (Their Multilateral Agreement on Investment—MAI—was exposed in 1997 by civil society activists including the Alliance for Democracy, in a dozen countries, and shot down. But this was merely a setback.) Not surprisingly, the "prosperity" hype of NAFTA proved to be true only for shareholders and corporate managers, while ordinary folk in all three countries lost jobs, benefits, and security as manufacturing moved farther toward China and agriculture toward industrialization while retaining US subsidy. Wars and environmental damage accelerated, but this was of little concern to CEOs set on economic globalization.

In her startling exposé at MassGlobalAction and Alliance for Democracy's water conference at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst last September, Janet Eaton revealed the plans and ongoing actions of the Council of the Americas (COA), the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and the Task Force on the Future of North America to containerize, slice, and corporatize America the Beautiful from the tropics of Mexico to the glaciers of Canada.

Picture this: A multi-branched transportation corridor almost a quarter mile wide with acreage approaching Vermont's size, reaching from newly constructed Mexican Pacific ports through the heartland of America to megaports in Seattle and Halifax. The super-corridor would accommodate pipelines for water, gas, oil, electric and electronic cable, freight and high-speed railways, and ten lanes of auto and megatruck traffic pumping out tons of greenhouse gasses and other pollutants 24 hours a day. The pipelines would bring oil from Mexico and Canada to refineries and cities all over the US, water from Canada to Texas and California and other parched states and to tankers heading for Europe and Asia, and the trucks (90 percent) and trains (10 percent) would carry things manufactured in East Asia through megaports and inland check-in centers to consumers in the US. The super-corridors would be partially publicly owned (having taken its land by eminent domain) but privately designed, built, controlled, tolled, and corporate-profit-yielding, with heavy subsidy from taxpayers.

SPP---The Politics of Aggrandizement

In Amherst and in a recent update Eaton emphasized the political side, beyond the physical and fiscal. Referring to articles by Richard D. Vogel in the *Monthly Review* (www.monthlyreview.org/0206vogel.htm) and Paul Bigioni in the *Toronto Star* (www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=10&ItemID=11354), she describes the quiet, government-cozy nature of the institutions and working groups set up by the corporations behind this surge in globalization. In 1965 Nelson Rockefeller and his Latin-America-investing friends set up a "Council of the Americas", which conceived of NAFTA, CAFTA, and the "fast track" method of bypassing democratic process in Congress. This group along with the Council on Foreign Relations fostered a "Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America" (SPP) endorsed at Waco, Texas, in March 2005 by the "tres amigos" — US President George W. Bush, Mexico's Presidente Vicente Fox (both of whom took office after dubious

electoral processes), and Canada's Prime Minister Paul Martin—without parliamentary or congressional authorization. In turn, a year later the SPP set up a "North American Competitiveness Council" (NACC) consisting of corporate officers of some of the largest US businesses, to directly advise the three leaders and their cabinet members for foreign affairs, international trade, and commerce.

The political and corporate elite behind the SPP, says Eaton, are pushing for rapid implementation of their scheme which many see as a plan for a North American Union within a New World Order. Enabling this are ten cross-border SPP working groups strategizing on manufactured goods & sectoral and regional competitiveness, movement of goods, energy, environment, e-commerce & information communications technologies, financial services, business facilitation, food and agriculture, transportation, and health. Three other groups are working on security issues.

A more narrowly focused North American SuperCorridor Coalition (NASCO) was formed in 1996 as a nonprofit organization and obtained hundreds of millions of dollars in federal Department of Transportation funding. They have been busy working with government officials in Texas and elsewhere, designing corridors and clearing procedural obstacles. NASCO became a pet project of the SPP which can integrate and facilitate its work in the overall North American scheme.

Atlantica

Correlative to SuperCorridor is the notion of cross-border economic unions, for example, "Atlantica"—comprising the Maritime provinces of Canada, the upper tier of New England, and upstate New York—spawned in dispirited circles of Atlantic Canada. A SuperCorridor would be pushed from a megaport at Halifax, Nova Scotia, to the US Midwest acting as North America's deep water commercial gateway, receiving goods in mega-container ships from China and elsewhere in Asia. State, provincial, and federal laws would be "harmonized" to enable unimpeded flow of goods, capital, and profits. Atlantica is more hypothetical than functional, although cross-border arrangements do exist in the region—Quebec-Vermont agreements on economic cooperation, tourism, transportation, security, environment, energy, and education; Quebec-Maine agreements; annual conference of Eastern Canada premiers and New England governors; Gulf of Maine Council on Marine Environment.

Economics clearly leads the concept of Atlantica. "Cascadia", another cross-border concept on the West Coast unlike the corporatist "Pacific North West Economic Region" (PNWER), is led instead by culture and neighborliness, and a disdain for national politics. The goal of Cascadia, as with the Vermont secessionist movement, is independence, while the goal of Atlantica and PNWER is regional and even continental integration.

This is what worries conservative and right wing commentators about SPP: loss of sovereignty—not regional sovereignty, but national sovereignty. For example, Jerome Corsi, whose articles appear often on the right-wing site WorldNetDaily.com, is dismayed at the Bush group's promoting a "North American Community" with Canada and Mexico—SPP—without congressional authority, and at keeping secret the names of SPP working group members (as was also true of MAI). He fears that Canada and Mexico will change US protective laws regardless of what Americans want. This from the man who co-wrote *Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans speak out against John Kerry* and who wrote *Black Gold Stranglehold: The myth of scarcity and the politics of oil*.

Beyond Fascism

Indeed, liberals would agree, there is cause for worry. Janet Eaton points out the similarity of Bush-Fox-Martin operations (now Bush-Calderón-Harper) to the development of fascism in Europe in the 1930s. She quotes Paul Bigione writing in the *Toronto Star* of 7 November 2006: "To my dismay I see in North America a repetition of the German trend... What is entirely new however, is the global ambition of our business leaders. Today's business elite have at their disposal the NAFTA and WTO-administered trade agreements with which to limit the ability of government to interfere with their profits. NACC members already recommend the creation of more supranational governmental bodies to administer different aspects of the North American economy. By this means, national sovereignty will be further displaced, and the voice of the citizen will matter even less."

"In other words," says Eaton, "SPP (or 'NAFTA-Plus') is driven by globalist aspirations to link regions of the world into new political-economic entities which would be controlled by a global elite far removed from democratic reach. There is much thinking not just in US right wing circles but also in Canadian left wing, Green, and nationalist political parties, and in anti-globalization civil society groups, that this is all about a North American Union similar to the European Union." They fear that it would bring not just loss of liberty to Americans, Canadians, and Mexicans, but subjugation to a transnational elite—analogue, perhaps, to submission to the medieval Church, the Chinese Communist Party, or the Ayatollah.

As if this were not enough, the SuperCorridor flies in the face of sustainability. It furthers the fossil fuel economy, hastening climatic catastrophe and earth-poisoning. It would accelerate water theft—theft of the Commons. It is eco-destructive, slicing and ruining animal habitat and hastening die-off also in the plant world. It is community-destroying, flooding us with foreign goods at the expense of local industry and ingenuity, usurping still more jobs with "guest" labor.

“Security and Prosperity Partnership” is the next seductively misnamed program for an unsustainable, take-it-or-leave-it, trickle-down world. For the short-term benefit of the few, with the bedazzlement of the many, most of us are being led further into a brave new world of consumerism for the lucky. If that trend continues our environment and economy will collapse, ending for us in desolation and humiliation.

If we can share our insights we may realize that we must look elsewhere for viable systems and leadership. As the Hopi elders prophesied, “We are the ones we have been waiting for.” “We” includes our democratic, humanistic brothers and sisters across borders.

*** Table of Acronyms:.....**

CAFTA	Central America Free Trade Agreement
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
COA	Council of the Americas
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
NACC	North American Competitiveness Council
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NASCO	North American SuperCorridor Coalition
PNWER	Pacific NorthWest Economic Region
SPP	Security and Prosperity Partnership

This article was inspired and factually provisioned by Janet M Eaton, PhD---part time academic, independent researcher, friend of the Alliance for Democracy, and activist whose career has spanned a gamut of concerns from marine biology to community-based economic development, adult education, anti-corporate globalization, corporate accountability, public policy, water privatization, deep integration, and systemic change. She is currently the Sierra Club of Canada’s International Liaison to the Sierra Club’s Corporate Accountability Committee and Water Privatization Task Force, the national Co-Chair of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, and has just been named International Trade Critic for the Green Party of Canada. She is presently researching and writing a "Guide to Continental Integration -- Why Say NO to the SPP!" which will be available before the next election in Canada projected to be sometime between this spring and fall.

Janet’s power-point presentation on SPP/SuperCorridor/ Atlantica is available at www.sierraclub.org/cac/water/. For her 1500-word summary and update of that presentation contact BCA Dispatch editor at boston@newenglandalliance.org . She also recommends www.thealliancefordemocracy.org/ , <http://defendingwaterinmaine.org/> and www.worldwaterwars.com/ .

Janet can be reached at jmeaton@ns.sympatico.ca

Action Note: Why not form a “**Speaker-phone Solidarity**” group? Talk every week with new friends in Mexico and Canada. Get names and numbers from web sites of Council of Canadians (www.canadians.org), Mexico Solidarity Network (www.mexicosolidarity.org) , or google Phone Solidarity Mexico Canada (567,000 entries!).