

This summer in Saint John, people of the Atlantic Provinces & Northeastern States will make a stand against corporate rule that rides under the flag "Atlantica"...



Issue # 2



ATLANTICA!

THE PEOPLE VERSUS

"Reaching Atlantica: Business without Boundaries"

Conference in Saint John, NB, June 8th -10th, 2006



www.stopatlantica.com

ATLANTICA

a unified region consisting of Canada's Atlantic Provinces and the northeastern United States in which provincial + state legislation would eliminate / stagnate the minimum wage, restrict the ability of workers to organize and drastically reduce public spending on social programs; spearheaded by the Halifax-based Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS) and the Eastern Maine Development Corporation. AIMS: "If the border cannot be made to disappear, its impact must at least be blurred."

THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO ATLANTICA

*Check Website for transportation assistance + billeting

THURSDAY, JUNE 8TH

*Coastal Inn Fort Howe Hotel - Saint John (New Brunswick)
Counter-Summit (details still being updated!)*

Public meeting with keynote speakers from The Council of Canadians (Maude Barlow) & Canadian Labour Congress (Andrew Jackson) + TBA.
Translation Services available.

FRIDAY JUNE 9TH AND SATURDAY JUNE 10TH

Hilton Trade and Convention Centre - Saint John

PROTEST BEGINS - Gathering at the Trade & Convention Centre from around 9:00am Friday and 8:00am Saturday; staying out until the evening both days. Expect (and bring) placards, banners, drums + noisemakers, puppets, chants, etc. Expect creative actions and a demonstration of the power of the people. A proposed Marching Route has been suggested should the desire arise (see website).

*Other details - Free hot food provided by Food Not Bombs Fredericton + a civil society room organized at the Saint John Library. **CHECK WEBSITE FOR UPDATES**



Atlantica and the Coy Agenda for Continental Integration: What the business elite is not telling you about Atlantica

By

Charles Fournier

(April 17, 2006)

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The Atlantica concept is an enigma for most people in the Atlantic Provinces. It is an agenda that has brought elites in the region to a consensus that Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec needs to economically, socially and politically integrate with Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Upstate New York to form a single coherent entity. The chief proponents of this concept are Brian Lee Crowley, President of the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS), and Jim Quigley, President of the Atlantic Provinces Chambers of Commerce (APCC) and Vice-President of the Bank of Montreal. They have been promoting the “Atlantica” concept to Business and political leaders in the region. Most have not been made aware of the designs they are drawing, and would abhor their Neo-conservative prescriptions for the future of Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Crowley and AIMS have been the chief architect of the Atlantica concept. AIMS is a well funded big business think tank, with Atlantica Canada’s wealthiest families represented on it’s Board of Directors, that is based out of Halifax.

In a speech to an APCC meeting in Montague PEI on May 29th of 2004, Crowley laid out his vision of “Atlantica” which contained three central ideas. The first of which is to turn the Atlantic Provinces and New England into a “transport intensive economy”. To accomplish this would mean doing two things. Firstly, building a highway from St. Stephen, NB through New England to Cornwall ON, and Montreal. Secondly, upgrading the Halifax port to accommodate Post-Panamax sized cargo ships. Crowley doesn’t take into account the fact that the world is running out Oil. Also the trade routes he wants to create by-pass Newfoundland and the Francophone regions of New Brunswick.

The second and most alarming central idea to “Atlantica” is Continental Integration. This follows from a report called “Building a North American Community” written by the “Task Force for the Future of North America” which is an ad hoc coalition of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the US Council on Foreign Relations and their Mexican counterparts the Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales. The document makes 41 sweeping recommendations that read like a Christmas list for the Neo-Conservative hawks that are now in power south of the border. The recommendations centre around, first, creating an integrated North American Military and Law Enforcement Security apparatus that would transcend national boundaries and building a common North American security perimeter. Secondly, they call for an expansion of the NAFTA agreement to include Non-Tariff barriers to Trade (i.e. Public Services and cultural protections) and the harmonisation of Government regulations between Canada, the US and Mexico.

Many of the recommendations of the report are already being implemented such as the “Smart Regs” initiative of the Martin Government which took the first steps towards regulatory harmonisation. The recommendations, if implemented, would decimate Canadian sovereignty. Canada would no longer be able set it’s own regulation around food safety, health, the environment and slew of other jurisdictions. By far the most frightening recommendations are around defence and boarder security which would expand NORAD into a “Multi-service Defence Command” or one central military command for all of North America.

The other recommendations around energy, the creation of new tri-national institutions and immigration are just as draconian and would be met with disgust by the average Canadian. The Continental Integration agenda being lobbied for by the nation’s business elites would be the end of Canada as a sovereign nation and the consolidation of US power over North America.

The third central idea of the “Atlantica” concept is “Regional Coherence Building”. This means integrating energy infrastructure and creating new cross border institutions that would replace previous structures and deepen the geo-political relationship between Atlantic Canada and the New England States. Much of the impetus for this has

come from the Federal government which directed the Policy Research Initiative (PRI) to study "Cross Border Economic regions" through the North American linkages research project. PRI has set up five regional roundtables dream up cross border economic regions from coast to coast.

What is carefully omitted from this Vision of Atlantica are the implications it carries for the standard of living of working people. The phrase "non-tariff barriers to trade" is glossy terminology for removing any public institution, act of legislation or government regulation that inhibits the ability of business to make profit. The APCC is hosting a conference in Saint John from June 8-10th called "Reaching Atlantica: Business Without Boundaries". This kind of language leads one to wonder how far they will take this and if anything is sacred? Proponents of Atlantica, such as Crowley, Jim Quigley and Dennis Savoie are already talking about scrapping minimum wage legislation, privatising health care, restricting access to employment insurance, decertifying unions and closing rural communities. The Conference's largest sponsors are the Bank of Montreal and Irving Oil.

What is more unsettling is that the Atlantica Concept does not offer any ideas for the basic resource industries that have been the traditional economic activity of Atlantic Canada for centuries. Not a word of mention for farming, forestry and the fishery, all industries which have experienced major closures and economic setbacks in recent years causing untold hardship for working people. Also, Atlantica offers no solutions to the major challenges that are confronting our collective future in Atlantic Canada including the out-migration of young people and the acute aging of the population, the challenges posed by climate change, and the precipitous decline in the standard of living for the majority of Atlantic Canadians.

In the same pattern as the negotiations for NAFTA, the WTO and the FTAA, civil society groups are not at the table nor are they invited to the Atlantica negotiations. On the official promotional website for the "Reaching Atlantica: Business Without Boundaries" conference those invited are: "small business owners, CEO's, managers and executives, as well as Government representatives from the four Atlantic Provinces and the US Northeast". What is more astounding is how discrete the planning for this conference has been. There has been no mention in the print or broadcast media. The secretive nature should set off warning bells in civil society. If they don't want you at the table then they are likely planning something that you won't like.

The Atlantica concept needs to be exposed for what it really is, an attack on our social programs and rights for working people and the environment, a big business free for all and the annexation of Atlantic Canada by the United States.

WE WILL SHUT THEM DOWN:

SONG BY DAVID ROVICS

September 2000

www.davidrovics.com

We shall fight them on the beaches
We shall fight them on the shore
They will bring us exploitation
We'll bring them their class war
We'll lock down to the gates
As they're spreading vicious lies
They want to dominate the world
And we see through their disguise

And CNN will spread the lies
This is just how it's gotta be
Well they can have their CNN
'Cause we got our IMC
And we will tell the truth quite clearly
Though they don't want to hear it
And they'll try to stop our broadcasts
'Cause the truth is that they fear it

Provocateurs within our ranks
And if they can't divide us
They'll send in the tanks
But we will stand together
Pacifists and Zapatistas
Workers, farmers, the indigenous
Tree-huggers and baristas

(chorus)

If they'd have one big multinational
With their corporate flag unfurled
Searching everywhere
For the lowest wages in the world
Then we'll have One Big Union
From Melbourne to Prague to Seattle-
town
Wherever they may go
We will shut them down

(chorus)

They want a world full of strip malls
Plants grown by biotech
As long as they get richer
They just don't give a heck
But we don't want their ecocide
We want a world we can live in
That's why we're here to stay
And we're not gonna give in

And we will build a new world
Without the corporate elite
And we will see the day
Of their international defeat
We'll have self-determination
And equality for all
For what choice do we really have
But to rise up and see them fall

(chorus)

(Chorus)
We'll shut them down, we'll shut them
down
We will shut them down

(chorus)

And they'll infiltrate us



And we all get to watch?

The Atlantic Canadians' Declaration Against Atlantica

by

Citizens Against Atlantica,

A working group of the Fredericton Social Network: www.frederictonsocial.net

(May 5, 2006)

Atlantica, the International Northeast Economic Region (AINER), is charting a course towards breaking down barriers for big business in Atlantic Canada, Eastern Quebec, and the Northeast United States. While Atlantica acknowledges economic distressed regions of Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, it seeks to perpetuate local economic hardship in these regions by lowering minimum wage and concentrating economic wealth in a proposed Atlantica triangle. This proposed triangle includes Connecticut and spreads to the three points of Boston, Albany and New York.

Atlantica, the International Northeast Economic Region (AINER), is charting a course towards breaking down barriers for big business in Atlantic Canada, Eastern Quebec, and the Northeast United States. While Atlantica acknowledges economic distressed regions of Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, it seeks to perpetuate local economic hardship in these regions by lowering minimum wage and concentrating economic wealth in a proposed Atlantica triangle. This proposed triangle includes Connecticut and spreads to the three points of Boston, Albany and New York. Proponents of Atlantica, Atlantic Canada's business elite and their policy research arms, blame 'too much government' as economic burdens in our region when in reality it is the cheap sell off of our public resources, privatization of our public services and other concessions for large corporations.

Barriers slated for dismantling by the proponents of Atlantica include our national sovereignty, our labour rights, our natural resources, our environment, and our health.

Large business interests and federal government congregating in closed meetings of various kinds, are working towards harmonizing Canadian and American regulations. These business interests are also looking to harmonize standards that govern and protect our precious natural resources, energy, environment, and health. These meetings include strategic allies in the government but exclude unions, environmental groups, and other civil society groups. Atlantica is flying in under the public radar with the media virtually silent on the big business plan.

Atlantica threatens our national sovereignty

The "Smart Regulations", another shorthand jargon meant to deceive the public, was initiated by the Paul Martin government. "Smart Regulations" was a move to harmonize regulations between Canada and the U.S. to suit trade and development interests. Such regulation harmonization would hinder Canada from setting its own regulations around health, food safety, the environment, and several other jurisdictions. Besides harmonization of regulations, proponents for Atlantica want an expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to include removing non-tariff trade barriers between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Removing non-tariff barriers to trade means removing any public institution, piece of legislation or government regulation that threatens a corporation's profit.

Atlantica threatens our workers

Proponents of Atlantica, Atlantic Canada's business elite, are calling for scrapping minimum wage, restricting access to employment insurance, restricting the ability of workers to organize, and decertifying unions. The largest sponsors of the "Reaching Atlantica" conference, including the Bank of Montreal and Irving Oil, want "labour market flexibility", which really means control to dictate hours, wages and working conditions of workers. As costs of living continue to rise, proponents of Atlantica deplore increasing wages, saying that it would result in businesses relocating to more business friendly environments. Essentially, the Atlantica masterminds are suggesting the opening of sweatshops and the abandonment of living wages in our region. Also, Atlantica proponents hail the U.S. welfare-to-work program, which would provide a readily available pool of cheap labour for their businesses.

Atlantica threatens our natural resources

The current U.S. administration is relying on Canadian energy to fuel America's costly military forays and economic expansion. Invading Canada would be a harder sell than invading Middle Eastern countries for energy and natural resources. Instead, Atlantica proposes to solve that problem for the U.S. by creating a mutual benefiting continental energy and natural resources pact. Canada is also under pressure to sell its water to the U.S. through diversions and bulk water exports. Atlantica would sabotage policies that would protect our precious natural resources and water. Resource-based sectors like agriculture, forestry and fisheries that have been the economic backbone of many Atlantic Canadian communities. For many years, Atlantic Canada has already suffered major closures and economic setbacks

due to unfair trade policies that favour large businesses. Atlantica would further threaten our natural resource sectors, leaving them even less economically and environmentally sustainable.

Atlantica threatens our environment

Atlantica proposes a transportation revamping of the area including building a highway from St. Stephen, N.B. to New England, to Cornwall Ontario, and finally to Montreal. Also proposed is the upgrading of the Halifax port to accommodate Post-Panamax-sized cargo ships. The environmental impacts will no doubt become afterthoughts and of little consideration when trade barriers such as effective environmental impact assessment and environmental protection regulations are reorganized into ineffectiveness under the “Smart Regulations”.

Atlantica threatens our health, education and social programs

Atlantica would promote a privatized healthcare and education system, and thus a greater lack of access to healthcare and education as seen in the U.S. Health Canada’s proposed changes espoused in the “Smart Regulations” would let companies off the hook for proving their new foods, drugs and technologies are safe. The public would be left with the burden to prove that a product is unsafe, which would most likely occur after harm had been done, possibly irreversible harm. Health Canada’s role would change from harm prevention to damage control. Proposed regulation changes would also erase our right to sue the government for regulatory negligence.

The proposed changes are a result of very powerful corporate lobbying while scientific experts warn that the precaution principle must be taken in regulating the industries providing biopharmaceuticals, genetically modified foods, animal to human transplants and cloning products and services. While the European Union is strengthening the precautionary approach in its regulations, Canada is following the U.S. in the opposite direction towards relaxing regulations that allow large corporations to get their new products on the market more rapidly. Atlantica proponents want to participate at the annual New England Governors and Eastern

Canadian Premiers Conference where they can lobby for the removal of social policies that interfere with corporate profit making including harmonizing Canadian and American health regulations and standards, increasing private sector involvement in Canada’s public healthcare system, and privatizing our universities.

The clear winners of this Atlantica nightmare would surely be large corporations. The losers would be the public, left to console with unaffordable and inaccessible essential public services, the sell off of non-renewable natural resources, smaller wages, precarious working conditions, higher unemployment and poorer health. Instead of solving problems of economic distresses and poverty in Atlantic Canada, Atlantica would exacerbate such problems and further economically marginalize those most affected by unfair trade, contaminated and unhealthy environments, poor labour conditions, and meager social policies who tend to be women, youth, children, and senior citizens.

Considering the aforementioned items, we, the undersigned, condemn Atlantica because of the harm that this big business initiative would place on our economy, social programs, workers, environment and health.

We also condemn the “Reaching Atlantica: Business Without Boundaries” conference by the proponents of the Atlantica Initiative to be held June 8-10 in Saint John, New Brunswick, with the goal of realizing Atlantica. Instead, our vision for addressing the economic problems facing Atlantic Canada involves: **A participatory democratic process where all sectors of society are able to give input and make decisions on future social and economic public policies. The interests of Atlantic Canadians must be placed first and foremost before the interests of economic elites in solving local economic problems.**

Individuals and/or organizations can sign on by emailing tracy@jatam.org or calling 506 454 8075. Deadline for signatures is June 8th. **SEE GROWING LIST OF ENDORSERS @ www.stopatlantica.com.**



An Opportunity for the People as They Gather on the Streets of Saint John – It Must Go Beyond a Three Day Movement

By

Asaf Rashid from Fredericton

[Worker-Owner of The Underground Café and Alternative Bookstore worker's coop (www.ugcafe.org); member of the UNB-STU Social Justice Society (<http://sjs.revolt.org>); PhD Forestry student at UNB(F)]

As we show up, from all over the Atlantic Region (the Atlantic Provinces and the Northeastern States), to gather in Saint John, I hope we have the presence of mind to recognize the unique moment that will be upon us. It is shaping up to be an enormous gathering of people from all over the region who are looking for a different reality than the one that is being put forward through the name “Atlantica” (see above for description). The word is that people will be coming from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, PEI, Maine and from all over New Brunswick—and organizing efforts are continually drawing in more communities. The people who will gather for the counter-summit and protest (see above) will be showing up though a desire to protect their region and future generations from exploitation that will further stratify our society and drive daggers deeper into the environment we all depend on.

Speaking only about the exploitation I am aware of in my home of New Brunswick, just a piece of an entire region characterized as “depressed”, it is clear that we – workers, indigenous, unemployed, (poor) youth, (poor) seniors – are already pushed into a corner, with means to survival being pushed over the edge in front of our eyes. Just a look at the forests reveals that the area of Crown forests in the province containing mature Acadian forest (traditional forest type) has already dropped below 45 percent and is now officially **one of the most endangered forests in North America** (www.conservationcouncil.ca). What will be left for the next generation? As well, in the northern New Brunswick town of Belledune, there sits a toxic waste incinerator that was denied a permit in Massachusetts, British Columbia and Ontario, yet it was considered acceptable in Belledune, due to the low property values (i.e. the people are considered to be worth less money), as well as the fact that the government maintained very low environmental standards, which included the complete bypass of a proper Environmental Impact Assessment. The toxic machine sits ready to begin full operation, only awaiting a full dose of poison to burn after testing is completed (www.stopbennett.com). There is also the First Nation community of Burnt Church, who only a few years ago faced an assault by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the RCMP; their only crime was attempting to survive from their traditional fishing economy that was suddenly made “illegal”, since it was deemed to be at the wrong time of the year. There is also the horrendously low level of social assistance that people of New Brunswick have to endure. A single person gets only \$264 per month, an impossible sum to live on. These are all examples of oppression, and there are many more examples throughout the (held) depressed Atlantic region. The People’s gathering to counter *Atlantica* offers the chance for a turning of the tide.

If we maximize on the opportunity that will be at our feet, we will not only be making a stand; we will then travel in the other direction, towards sustainable solutions. The point is, if we are to truly realize the potential that will be upon us, we must continue to move because there is so much ground to cover. The broad Atlantic representation and spirit of resistance that will be present in Saint John from June 8th – 10th offers the chance to build new interdependencies between movements, organizations and communities. We must consolidate a movement that will build solidarity through ongoing exchanges between struggling communities, something that goes beyond just a gathering for three days. We must build connections between us that will create a new regional economy based on solidarity, equality and participatory planning from community-to-community. We must work towards not only stopping the Atlantic agenda, but work to fix the inequalities and oppressions that create a fence both between and around us. We must make connections with those we have not interacted with before to create new community interchanges.

Thinking practically is important. We must identify the possibilities we have for land redevelopment, towards value-added industries that maximize the value of all the natural resources we consume. Using the forestry example, we must move away from turning trees into mostly pulp – then simply shipping it abroad – as our primary activity in the forest and focus instead on producing multiple wood products; extracting oils and resins; and, planting hemp for alternative sources of fibre in cleared areas. We must also look towards supporting such initiatives as the Renewable Energy Coop that has been established near Sackville New Brunswick (www.renewcoop.net).

Most importantly of all, in order to truly establish the June 8th – 10th gathering in Saint John as the start / consolidation of a significant people’s movement in the Atlantic Region, we need to act to protect each other from the infringements of our environmental and social rights. We can do this by NOT waiting for our governments to deliver us a dignified existence, but we have to create and consolidate the redevelopment ourselves, keeping in mind the principles of solidarity, equality and participatory planning. If we wait, and don’t maximize on the great opportunity will be in front of us, transnational capital – which waits for no one -- will push us all off the edge. **Now is the time for the people.**