

Seeing CETA For What It Really Is

I recently met a woman who is fiercely proud of being a Canadian citizen and feels blessed to live in such a wonderful country. This is something I share her passion about. She hasn't always been a Canadian citizen; she immigrated to Canada just over 20 years ago. In the years leading up to the family's immigration to Canada her country was ravaged by almost 2 decades of civil war. There were staggering numbers of citizens being murdered at the hands of the military death squads. In one year alone almost 12,000 civilians were murdered. The vast majority of those targeted by the death squads were teachers, students, journalists, human rights advocates, priests, trade unionists, and villagers.

Her message to me and to everyone that is willing to listen is **WAKE UP! Wake up Canada** to what is happening now and what we have lost just in the past 20 years. She is asking us to look at the erosions to social services, to health services, to public services, to legislation affecting all aspects of Canadian life including unions and unionism. All of these changes are showing us what we can expect in the future if we don't **Wake UP!**



What is CETA?

Is this an everyday topic of conversation at your dinner table or in your work place? My guess is no. In fact many of you are asking who or what is CETA? CETA is the Canada-European Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement. For this woman it is a topic of conversation at the family dinner table. They see the staggering negative impact that this agreement will have on our Canadian way of life if signed by our Government. It would encourage the privatization of public sector services; it would undermine social, health and environmental regulations while providing increased investors rights at the very high cost of our democratic rights. A singular example in respect to health care is the potential for higher prescription drug costs at an estimated 2.8 billion per year. These costs will impact our public health care system and individual Canadians.

Language in the proposed agreement would allow large corporations to override government decisions federally, provincially and municipally. At the municipal level it would include decisions made by school boards and hospitals. This has the potential to undermine our democratic decision making processes by our fellow elected Canadian citizens.

Will CETA cause job creation or job loss? The government claims there will be an increase of 80,000 new

jobs. However, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study estimates that between 28,000 and 150,000 jobs will be lost as a result of CETA.

There are many examples of loss of sovereignty that Canada would sustain under CETA. The European Union wants all public services covered by CETA. If it is passed, private health care companies from both Europe and the United States will be able gain access to our Medicare services. Drinking water services could be included in CETA, allowing European multinational companies access to municipal water services. Also, our already dwindling environmental controls could be ignored by European companies working in Canada and would impede our government from making new regulations.

As of May 15th, three provinces including Manitoba, British Columbia and Ontario have raised their concerns about the agreement. Motions have been passed by over 50 municipalities requesting a greater say in the negotiations. There are millions of Canadians represented by these municipalities. And over 80 Canadian and European organizations have jointly demanded an end to this brand of free trade negotiations. Are these voices enough for our Government to hear?

I know that each of us have very busy work and home lives, but . . . if we don't speak up our society and our culture will continue to be undermined and eroded. As citizens our human rights and environmental rights far out-weigh short term private interests. As this very inspiring woman said to me, "**WAKE UP! Wake up Canada!**"

In solidarity
Wendy

For more information, check out:

Council of Canadians http://www.canadians.org/trade/documents/CETA/CETA_ten.pdf

Trade Justice Network <http://www.tradejustice.ca/en/section/1>

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/what-ceta-and-why-should-we-be-worried-about-it>

National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) <http://www.nupge.ca/search/results/ceta>

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) <http://cupe.ca/ceta>



Wendy Despina,
President, MLT