

Free Trade Fantasies: Canada Must Reject Both NAFTA and TPP

Global Research News Hour episode 208

By [Michael Welch](#), [David Orchard](#), and [Gus Van Harten](#)

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Region: [Asia](#), [Canada](#), [Japan](#), [Latin America & Caribbean](#), [Oceania](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#), [History](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

“Our government has been saying, well, we want a more progressive NAFTA. We want to have labour rights and gender rights and all this. You can’t have a more progressive NAFTA because it’s all about allowing the U.S. corporations to come in and buy up our country. And that’s what we’re seeing happen.”

- David Orchard (from this week’s interview.)

“Canada leads the world, at least among Western developed countries, in our willingness to sacrifice our sovereignty in favour of these foreign investor protections...Once you add to that the CETA with Europe and now this new TPP, we will have virtually all foreign-owned parts of our economy governed by this, in my view, really, really offensive regime.”

- Professor Gus Van Harten (from this week’s interview.)

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Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has boasted of his commitment to progressive economic, environmental and social policies. [1] At the same time, has been a passionate warrior in his pursuit and defence of so-called ‘free trade’ agreements.

Following the latest round of talks on renegotiating the 24 year old North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Prime Minister made it clear that “NAFTA has been good for American jobs, it’s been good for Canadian jobs, it’s been good for our economy over the past twenty-five years...”[2] Prime Minister Trudeau maintains however he is prepared to withdraw from the agreement rather than submit to an inferior deal. [3]

Likewise, the Canadian Prime Minister is championing a revised version of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement with ten other Pacific Rim countries (excluding the US). When he announced his support for the deal in front of world leaders, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland last month, he indicated that the refurbished agreement would be ‘progressive’ and achieve the goal of maintaining growth and prosperity while protecting Canadian workers:

“Trade helps strengthen the middle class, but for it to work we must ensure that the benefits are shared with all of our citizens, not just the few. The Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership is a new step on that path.” [4]

Media within Canada have been overwhelmingly uncritical of the assumption of NAFTA’s worth to Canadians. [5] In a recent reply to an accusation of media bias, the Ombudsman for Canada’s national broadcaster, the CBC noted this point, but explained that the context of the coverage was the tri-lateral discussions with the U.S. and Mexico, not influential critics within Canada. She maintained that, according to official sources, there was in fact, broad support for the deal:

“There is consensus from the federal political parties that Canada should try to save the deal. While you question the contention that Canadians are in favour of NAFTA, the fact is that public opinion research reveals they do, including reputable institutions like the Pew Research Centre and the Environics Institute.” [6]

Of course, this argument fails to acknowledge the role of the media in shaping these opinions and attitudes in the first place.

The mission of this radio program, the Global Research News Hour, is to provide access to analysis of some of the major issues shaping our world today from quarters seldom exposed in major media. Consequently, this week’s broadcast tears some holes in the free trade propaganda curtain concealing the light of truth about what these trade deals have meant to the broader public outside the boardrooms.

Our first guest is David Orchard. Orchard has been a critic of the free trade orthodoxy for more than thirty years. He recently authored an article about how Canada is in the same position in 2017 as the Canadian colonies were in back in 1866, and now like then, pulling out of free trade with the U.S. would be to the advantage of those above the 49th parallel. He explains his point of view in the first half hour.

In the second half hour, we are joined once again by Professor Gus Van Harten. The international investment treaty expert has studied what is known about the Trans-Pacific Partnership and is not persuaded that this agreement will deliver benefits for the many as the Canadian government suggests. Professor Van Harten will speak to the investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms in TPP and other deals and how they ultimately undermine any supposed gains for the environment, Indigenous peoples, Labour and other elements of society.

David Orchard is a Borden, Saskatchewan-based organic farmer, political activist and two-time contender for leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. He is also author of the 1993 best-seller [The Fight for Canada: Four Centuries of Resistance to American Expansionism](#) (Stoddart, 1993; 2nd ed. Robert Davies, 1999). His website is davidorchard.com

Gus Van Harten is a professor at Osgoode Hall Law School of York University. Previously he was a faculty member in the Law Department of the London School of Economics. He specializes in international investment law and administrative law. In June 2016 he authored

the paper [Foreign investor protections in the Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. His books include [Sold Down the Yangtze: Canada's Lopsided Investment Deal with China \(Lorimer, 2015\)](#); [Sovereign Choices and Sovereign Constraints: Judicial Restraint in Investment Treaty Arbitration \(Oxford U Press, 2013\)](#); and [Investment Treaty Arbitration and Public Law \(Oxford U Press, 2007\)](#).

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Boston College Radio [WZBC 90.3FM NEWTONS](#) during the Truth and Justice Radio Programming slot - Sundays at 7am ET.

[Port Perry Radio](#) in Port Perry, Ontario -1 Thursdays at 1pm ET

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It is also available on 93.9 FM cable in the communities of SFU, Burnaby, New Westminister, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Surrey and Delta, in British Columbia, Canada. - Tune in at its new time - Wednesdays at 4pm PT.

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[CORTES COMMUNITY RADIO CKTZ 89.5](#) out of Manson's Landing, B.C airs the show Tuesday mornings at 10am Pacific time.

[Cowichan Valley Community Radio CICV 98.7 FM](#) serving the Cowichan Lake area of Vancouver Island, BC airs the program Thursdays at 6am pacific time.

Campus and community radio [CFMH 107.3fm](#) in Saint John, N.B. airs the Global Research News Hour Fridays at 10am.

Caper Radio CJBW 107.3FM in Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia airs the Global Research News Hour starting Wednesday Morning from 8:00 to 9:00am. Find more details at [www.caperradio.ca](#)

RIOT RADIO, the visual radio station based out of Durham College in Oshawa, Ontario has begun airing the Global Research News Hour on an occasional basis. Tune in at [dcstudentsinc.ca/services/riot-radio/](#)

Notes:

1. <https://www.liberal.ca/canadians-can-choose-strong-progressive-change-with-justin-trudeau/>

2. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thehouse/the-house-sits-down-with-the-prime-minister-1.4512987>
3. <https://globalnews.ca/news/3997855/justin-trudeau-nafta-negotiations/>
4. Charlie Smith (January 23, 2018), 'Justin Trudeau announces in Davos that Canada has joined 10 other countries in new CPTPP trade deal', The Georgia Straight; <https://www.straight.com/news/1023156/justin-trudeau-announces-davos-canada-has-joined-10-other-countries-new-cptpp-trade>
5. <http://www.ombudsman.cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/complaint-reviews/2017/nafta-coverage/>
6. ibid

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