

# Globalization, Trade Policy and the Permissive Consensus in Canada

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Les protestations publiques dramatisent-elles le rôle devenu aujourd'hui prééminent de la politique commerciale? Notre article analyse un sondage d'opinion effectué au Canada juste avant que ne s'élèvent les protestations contre le Libre-Échange dans la zone des Amériques, proposé à Québec en avril 2001. Tel qu'il a été conçu, le sondage permet de mettre en comparaison, chez les Canadiens, d'une part l'évaluation positive des accords commerciaux et, d'autre part, des réactions plus ambivalentes quant à la mondialisation. Nous examinons une série d'attitudes et de valeurs sous-jacentes de manière à sonder l'opinion latente sur le commerce et la mondialisation. Nous concluons à la solidité du consensus permissif quant aux accords commerciaux — c'est-à-dire que les Canadiens sont prêts à s'en remettre aux gouvernements en ce qui concerne la libéralisation des échanges — mais que ce consensus peut être compromis par la mondialisation en cours et les pressions exercées pour l'intégration de l'Amérique du Nord, qui vont bien au-delà des questions tarifaires et commerciales. Sur ces derniers points, c'est la *nature* de la globalisation et de l'intégration, non leur existence, qui fait l'objet de vives discussions.

Do public protests dramatize the new political salience of trade policy? This article analyzes a survey of Canadian mass opinion taken just before the protests against the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001. The survey design allows a comparison of the difference between Canadians' positive assessment of trade agreements but more ambivalent responses to "globalization." We examine a series of underlying attitudes and values to probe latent opinion on trade and globalization. We conclude that the permissive consensus on trade agreements is robust — that is, Canadians are prepared to defer to governments on trade liberalization — but this consensus may be endangered by ongoing globalization and pressures for North American integration that go well beyond issues of tariffs and trade. On these latter issues, the *nature* of globalization and integration, not their existence, is subject to heated debate.

Do public protests dramatize the new political salience of trade policy? Were the anti-globalization demonstrators in the streets of Quebec City in April 2001 acting as surrogates for millions of other Canadians?<sup>1</sup> The answers matter for policy because protest in general can affect the climate of ideas within governments and international organizations (Knopf 1998), and protest can be a signal to governments about the legitimacy of trade negotiations. Public opinion on trade liberalization matters for policy because politicians can become reluctant to pursue major initiatives that appear to be inconsistent with public opinion, remembering that elections can turn on such issues, as they did in Canada in 1911 and 1988.

Anti-globalization and anti-trade liberalization protestors have been a feature of international economic meetings since well before the gatherings in Seattle in December 1999.<sup>2</sup> In anticipation of the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001, with protests expected against the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), we designed a survey to assess the views of Canadians. If the Quebec City protests are understood to have been about opposition to the proposed FTAA, our survey suggests that a majority of Canadians did not agree with the protestors. Trade policy in Canada still falls with the “permissive consensus,” that is, the freedom to act that the public has traditionally accorded governments in the realm of international affairs. If, on the other hand, protestors were interested in raising concerns about globalization, then large numbers of Canadians were sympathetic. The difference between the strong support for new trade agreements and the FTAA, and the uncertainty about globalization (Figure 1) sets the stage for our analysis.

In the first section of this paper we describe our understanding of the “permissive consensus” and discuss our survey instrument. In the second section we provide a descriptive overview of the survey results and argue that the permissive consensus on trade remains intact. In the third section, we provide more analytic detail by looking at the latent considerations and belief systems that are related

to support for globalization. In the conclusion, we assess the policy implications of our analysis.

## PUBLIC OPINION AND TRADE

One of Canada’s most distinguished trade analysts, Sylvia Ostry (2001), wonders if trade policy currently suffers from the end of what V.O. Key Jr. called the “permissive consensus” in international affairs (Key 1963, p. 32). Key, a major figure in the history of opinion research, argued that on issues related to foreign policy — unlike issues of domestic policy — the public defers to elites and permits experts to make decisions. Modern public opinion researchers refer to a “zone of acquiescence” in public opinion (Stimson 1991): the public does not have one tightly defined preference on most issues, but rather a range of acceptable outcomes. So long as government policy is within this zone, the public will usually acquiesce. Some analysts, and many government officials, interpret protests against new trade deals as signaling the end of the era of the permissive consensus and the beginning of a period when trade agreements will be subject to as much public scrutiny as domestic issues such as health care. Some contend that an aggressive trade agenda may now fall outside the public’s “zone of acquiescence.”

We expect to find little evidence for these predictions in our new survey data. A recent analysis of publicly available polling data on international trade between 1980–2000 showed that protests in Seattle had few roots in or impact on mass opinion (Mendelsohn and Wolfe 2001). Because mass opinion evolves only very slowly, we had expected that the protests during 2000 and 2001 would have had little impact on public views. To the extent that opinion about trade policy is an aspect of opinion about foreign policy, our expectations are consistent with the conclusions of a growing body of American (Holsti 1996) and Canadian (Martin and Fortmann 2001; Munton and Keating 2001) scholarship that finds that mass opinion on foreign policy is stable and well-structured, rather than subject to rapid swings.

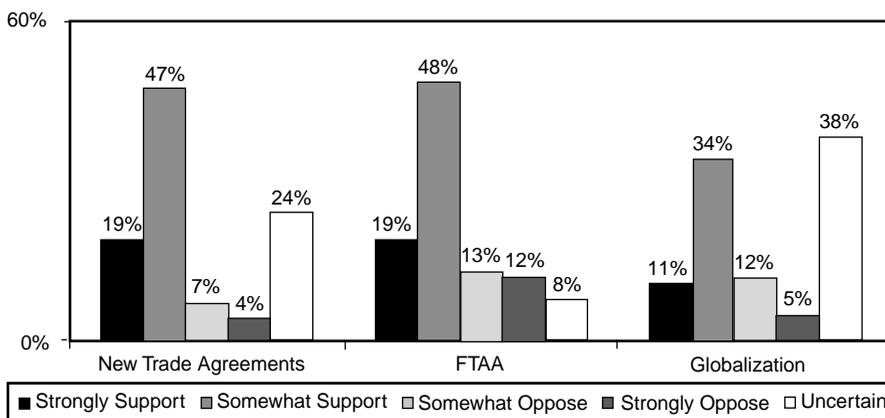
FIGURE 1

Support for New Trade Agreements, the FTAA, and Globalization

Q1. This next section of the survey is about international trade agreements. By international trade agreements I mean things like the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the other international trade agreements that cover Canada and the over 140 other members of the World Trade Organization — the WTO. Do you strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose Canada **negotiating new trade agreements with other countries**, or do you have no opinion on this question?

Q2. The government of Canada is currently talking about expanding the NAFTA by creating a **Free Trade Area of the Americas** that would cover all the countries of North, Central and South America. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the idea of creating a Free Trade Area of the Americas?

Q3. Many people say we are presently experiencing a process of globalization, which means that the economies of all of the countries of the world are becoming more and more linked. Do you strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose Canada encouraging **more rapid globalization**, or do you have no opinion on this?



Source: CROP, April 2001. Centre for Research and Information on Canada.

“Public opinion” is ambiguous and can mean many different things. Many scholars distinguish between *mass opinion*, “the aggregation or summation of individual preferences as tabulated through opinion polls”; *activated public opinion*, “the opinions of engaged, informed, and organized citizens”; *latent public opinion*, “the fundamental public preferences that underlie more fleeting and superficial opinions” expressed in polls; and *perceived opinion*, “the perceptions held by most observers, including journalists, politicians, and members of the public themselves, of where the majority of the

public stands on an issue”(see Entman and Herbst 2000, pp. 206-08).

Mass opinion on international trade is shaped by latent opinion, that is, by the underlying value structures and belief systems of Canadians on questions that they link to trade. By examining those beliefs that help shape mass opinion about trade liberalization, and the public’s propensity to be more cautious about nebulous “globalization” than about concrete “trade agreements,” we are able to identify where Canadians are comfortable and where they are

uneasy about international economic developments. The permissive consensus exists because on most issues the public does not have a preferred plan of implementation; instead they have goals and values — latent opinion — and so long as they believe that the government generally shares these priorities, they will support associated government action. Public protest at economic meetings is evidence that something is happening to activated opinion, although civil society organizations represent only one segment of activated opinion. Protests have certainly influenced perceived opinion, and trade policy officials are addressing some of the concerns raised by civil society organizations, which is no doubt wise.<sup>3</sup> Yet many elites may have misperceived the state of mass opinion, something that is quite common in the area of international affairs (Kull and Destler 1999; Kull and Ramsay 2000; Page and Barabas 2000; Clark *et al.* 2000). Our data show that the permissive consensus on trade continues and that mass opinion is supportive of new as well as existing trade agreements. The question, then, is whether protests reflect latent opinion and are therefore a harbinger of evolution in mass opinion on globalization, an issue that may call to mind different underlying considerations than “trade agreements.”

The standard political economy explanation for opinion on liberalized trade roots trade policy preferences in individual interests. The assumption is that free trade, which may be the optimal policy for the economy as a whole, will be sought by the winners from openness, while “protection” will be sought by those who are hurt by openness.<sup>4</sup> Such an interest-based approach is complemented by models that root attitudes in a desire to reward or punish a governing party, in assessments of macro-economic performance, and in confidence in the government generally. But governance requires individuals to act collaboratively as citizens and not independently as consumers or producers. As consumers, Canadians are mostly supportive of trade and trade agreements, as trade theory would recommend. As producers concerned about earning the maximum return on their skills, their responses show

a predictable interest-based relationship (Mendelsohn and Wolfe 2002). But as citizens concerned about values, or about policies rather than outcomes, Canadians might be expected to be more dubious. What citizens say they want at home and the revealed preferences of consumers in the global market are not always the same. To take one example, in the domestic food safety system, citizens’ concerns go beyond the quality of the food to such values as animal welfare, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability.

These types of tensions — between interests and values, between thinking as a consumer or producer, and thinking as a citizen — have demonstrably played a role in Canadians’ choices on trade liberalization in the past. The economic advantages of access to a large market competed with the individual concerns about the loss of sovereignty and maintenance of distinctive social programs during the 1988 election campaign fought almost exclusively on the issue of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States (Johnston *et al.* 1992). In a particularly innovative study, Gidingel found that the significant gender gap on the FTA was not explained by different material circumstances between men and women, but by different values, with men relying more heavily on economic considerations and women on social ones (Gidengil 1995).

This paper reports on the findings of a survey of Canadian mass opinion conducted for and funded by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC), a non-partisan think tank. The survey instrument was designed by CRIC in association with the authors and administered via telephone to a random, probabilistic sample of 1,298 Canadians between 21 February and 13 March 2001 by CROP Inc. a major commercial polling firm. Up to 12 callbacks were conducted to ensure greater representivity. The response rate was 62 percent. Data were then weighted by region, gender, and age.<sup>5</sup>

The major dependent variables in the poll relate to support for new international trade agreements

and globalization. Independent variables include attitudes revealed through questions that probe a variety of beliefs that could be linked to the emerging debates over globalization. Our key questions, along with the results (frequencies) are reported in the Appendix (see also CRIC 2001). While some of our questions might seem provocative, or even factually incorrect, to trade experts, they have an analytic purpose. Surveys are not referenda and answers do not have to be translated into public policy. Instead, we are interested in probing underlying values and their potential relationship to support for trade liberalization and globalization. We also made use of experimental variations in the framing and wording of questions, so as to better understand how the public thinks about these issues. Subtle but purposeful changes in wording help illuminate latent opinion (see, e.g., Sniderman and Piazza 1993). For example, we examined the impact on responses when an identical question was framed in terms of “Canadian businesses,” the expression favoured by business and producer organizations, as opposed to “multinational corporations,” the term used by civil society organizations.

#### THE PERMISSIVE CONSENSUS ON TRADE

When we first asked respondents whether Canada should be more involved, less involved, or maintain its current level of involvement in the negotiation of new trade agreements (Q4), 44 percent said “more,” 41 percent said “about the same as now,” and only 8 percent said “less.” When we asked whether “being a country that trades extensively with other countries of the world” should be a priority or not (Q5a), 65 percent of respondents said it should be a high priority, and another 28 percent said a medium priority. These first responses highlight that Canadians recognize the importance of trade, although they say nothing about the nature of the globalization or trade liberalization that Canadians would support or oppose.

In order to test the boundaries of the permissive consensus, we asked more specific questions about

trade agreements, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and “globalization.” We find very strong support for all three questions (Figure 1). We take these results as strong evidence that moving ahead on the negotiation of new trade agreements remains well within the permissive consensus, yet important differences need to be highlighted. Canadians are far more certain about the FTAA, with only 8 percent of Canadians expressing no opinion. We conclude that this is because concrete trade agreements can be evaluated on the basis of previous agreements; Canadians have concluded that the FTA and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have been good for the Canadian economy (Mendelsohn and Wolfe 2001) and by a margin of 67 percent to 25 percent, Canadians support the FTAA, which they interpret as an extension of earlier agreements. Indecision regarding trade agreements is much higher, with 24 percent giving no answer to our question. We suggest that this is because the nature and content of the agreement is important for many Canadians, and some therefore refuse to offer an answer to our general question: while most Canadians now support an active trade agenda, the details of particular agreements matter to Canadians. Nonetheless, by a margin of 66 percent to 11 percent, Canadians say they support new trade agreements, a strong endorsement of an activist trade agenda. But large numbers of Canadians are not yet engaged and do not have well-thought-out views regarding globalization. A full 36 percent of the sample said they had never heard the term, and when read a general definition, 45 percent were happy with Canada supporting more rapid globalization (which is 19 points lower than the number who supported Canada negotiating new trade agreements), 17 percent were opposed, and 38 percent remained uncertain. Again, the nature and quality of globalization matter to many.

We put aside our discussion of globalization until the next section, and ask here why there is such high support for trade agreements generally and the FTAA in particular. This support is consistent with trends in Canadian opinion. A majority supported

“the elimination of tariffs” in the 1960s when the reference point was the 1965 Canada-US Auto Pact, an agreement that eliminated tariffs but guaranteed that a proportion of automobile production would remain in Canada (Sigler and Goresky 1974). Support for “free trade” in principle dropped in the mid-1980s during the national debate over free trade negotiations underway between Canada and the US, and support for the eventual agreements (the FTA and then the NAFTA) dropped substantially during the late 1980s and early 1990s. At the time, Canadians blamed the FTA for the job losses associated with the recession of the early 1990s, and economic downturns are generally associated with a drop in support for liberalization. As the economy improved throughout the decade, fears about unemployment declined, and support for liberalized trade, including NAFTA, grew steadily. Unskilled workers in affected industries are more likely to oppose liberalized trade, but most Canadians believe that the net impact on employment has been positive (Mendelsohn and Wolfe 2001).

Support for new trade agreements is based in part on retrospective assessments of the effects of past deals on Canada. We asked respondents whether they thought trade deals helped or hurt a number of objects (Q9). By a large margin, respondents believe that Canada has benefited from trade agreements. A significant plurality believe that their local community, Canadian culture, and Canadian social programs have benefited. Canadians also view trade agreements as being good for human rights abroad. Only on the question of the environmental impact are Canadians evenly divided between those who believe trade agreements have helped and those who believe they hurt (notably a plurality of Canadians with a university education), although even on the environmental question the most popular answer is “no impact.”

In addition to this retrospective judgement, Canadians rely on their level of confidence in the agent responsible for the negotiation of agreements, namely the federal government. Overall, 58 percent

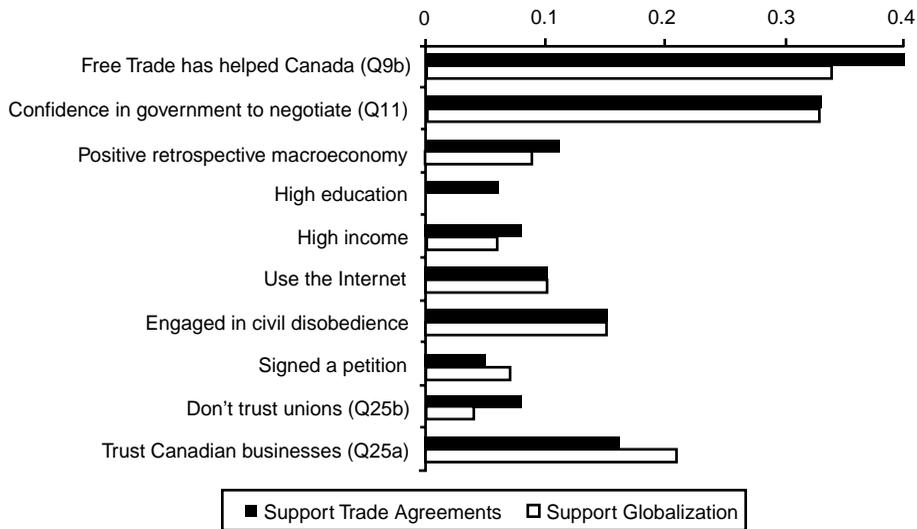
of Canadians express some confidence in the federal government’s ability to protect Canada’s national interest in trade negotiations, while 40 percent express little confidence (Q11). This trust represents a significant increase from the period leading up to the FTA and, even more dramatically, the period leading up to the negotiation of NAFTA, when only 36 percent said they had confidence in the government (Decima Quarterly 1991; See Mendelsohn and Wolfe 2000, Figure 17B). This increased confidence highlights that support for new trade agreements is in part a product of general support for the current government.

The data presented in Figure 2 show that it is these three factors — assessments of the economy, confidence in the government, and retrospective evaluations regarding trade agreements — that are the best predictors of opinion on new trade agreements (dark bars).<sup>6</sup> In short, Canadians’ attitudes toward liberalized trade are shaped by quite traditional political preoccupations. These judgements, however, tend to be devoid of affect or feeling: few Canadians feel strong emotional attachment to liberalized trade; they have simply made evaluative judgements about its impact, and they have confidence in the government and the economy. One piece of evidence that suggests that support for new agreements is based neither on detailed policy preferences nor on a deep emotional reaction to liberalized trade, but rather on the permissive consensus, is the very large number of Canadians who say they “support” new agreements. Few *strongly* support (or strongly oppose) trade agreements. The public is giving elites the benefit of the doubt to move forward, but withholds final judgement until they can view whether the final negotiated agreements remain consistent with their latent values.

Our task in this paper is to show how far the trade agenda can take this apparent benefit of the doubt before it moves outside the permissive consensus. The coming debate is about the substance of policy not merely redistributing the gains from trade. The differences in response on our dependent variable

FIGURE 2

Traditional Political Variables and their Relationship to Support for Globalization and Liberalization



between “globalization” and “new trade agreements” are greatest among Canadians with higher education and knowledge. Among those with a university education, Canadians support new trade agreements by a margin of 77 percent to 12 percent, while they are much more muted in their support for globalization (55 to 22 percent) (not shown). To respondents with higher levels of knowledge, globalization has a politicized meaning different from “trade deals.” Support for the negotiation of liberalized trade agreements appears to be heavily influenced in a fairly straightforward way by education and income, whereas globalization brings to mind a whole series of other considerations for university graduates.

Liberalized trade is a known proposition: Canadians are able to evaluate proposed trade agreements through their retrospective knowledge of the actual NAFTA. Globalization does not bring to mind such obvious cues. Policy analysts may attribute globalization to changes in the technology of transportation

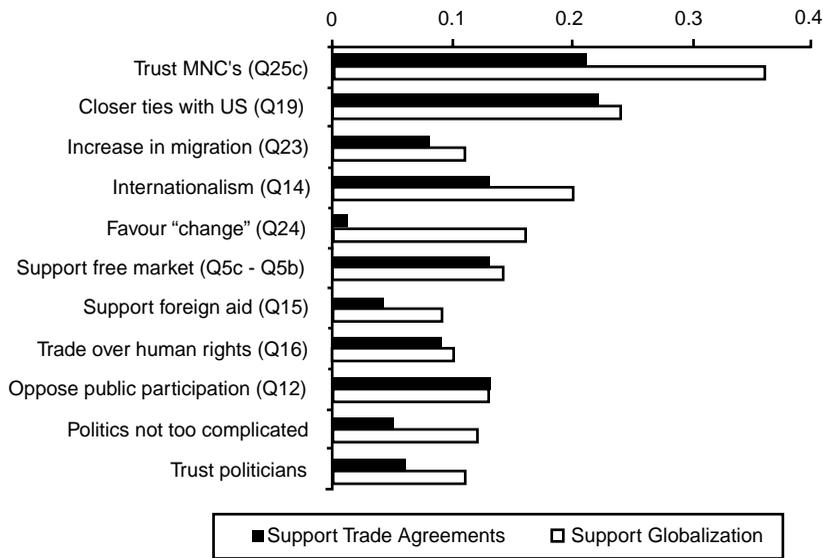
and communications, but what are Canadians thinking *about* when they think about globalization? Among other things, they could have in mind trade agreements, the institutions of global governance, the Internet, the spread of disease, increased travel, Americanization, or something else entirely. In the next section, we examine how Canadians respond to globalization through the lens of their values.

#### THE LESS ROBUST PERMISSIVE CONSENSUS ON GLOBALIZATION

When we examined the relationship between our two dependent variables — support for new trade agreements and support for globalization — and a large number of values, attitudes, and judgements, we found that traditional considerations, in particular, retrospective evaluations of the macroeconomy and previous trade agreements, were more highly correlated with support for new trade agreements than support for globalization (Figure 2). Likewise, the

FIGURE 3

Value Conflicts and the Relationship to Support for Globalization and Trade Liberalization



more highly educated were more supportive of new trade agreements, as an interest-based approach would suggest.<sup>7</sup> However, opinions about globalization were more influenced by a large number of value conflicts (Figure 3). We find that value conflicts regarding immigration, change generally, multinational corporations, foreign aid, as well as the US and internationalism, are particularly related to globalization.

### Transparency, Participation, Efficacy and the New Politics

Calls for more transparency and public participation are now a routine part of ministerial statements about trade negotiations, which suggests that officials believe that these overtures appeal to a segment of activated opinion and are necessary to buttress the permissive consensus. The last 20 years have seen a decline in deference to governments and increased calls for transparency in decision-making (Norris 1999; Nevitte 1996) and it may be that citizens opposed to globalization reject traditional

hierarchical decision-making processes governed by administrative decision rules in favour of processes that are more participatory and dialogic.

First, the evidence suggests that “disaffected democrats,” that is, respondents committed to democratic processes but unsatisfied with the current workings of our institutions, are numerous, although clearly still in the minority. Only 30 percent of Canadians said they want citizens to have a big say in negotiating trade deals (Q12). A majority wants more transparency, while few would leave trade deals to officials alone. The fact that fewer than one-third of Canadians say that the general public should have a big say in negotiating trade agreements is, in our view, a large endorsement of deference to the government and the continuation of the permissive consensus on international trade. Although Canadian attitudes have evolved over the past 30 years, one should not mistake this evolution for a shift toward radical participatory values.

We also asked respondents standard efficacy questions, such as whether they think politicians often lie to get elected and whether they think politics is too complicated to understand. The relationships between these questions and our dependent variables show that respondents who think that government does not care about people like them are more opposed to trade deals and globalization. Respondents who think that politics is too complicated for them to understand are also more likely to oppose new trade agreements and globalization. Thus, respondents who demonstrate high “external efficacy” — confidence in governments — as well as high “internal efficacy” — confidence in one’s own abilities — are more likely to support globalization. This highlights an important difference between *mass* and *activated opinion*: although many protesters are well-informed and have confidence in their own political abilities, when one turns to mass opinion, respondents who share these qualities are more likely to support globalization.

We asked respondents about their political activities. A substantial majority have signed a petition, while other majorities have or might participate in boycotts or legal demonstrations. These answers were only marginally correlated with our dependent variables, with respondents who would engage in those kinds of activities more *supportive* of globalization and new trade agreements. We also asked whether violence at protests was mostly the fault of the protesters, the police, or both equally (Q13). We did not find overwhelming public sympathy for the protesters, but a large majority believes that the police are equally to blame: 20 percent said it was mostly the fault of the protesters, 4 percent said the police, and 70 percent said it was the fault of both groups equally. Respondents who believe that violence was mostly the protesters’ fault were much more supportive of globalization.

### **Ideological Belief Systems: The Economy and Social Change**

We expected that ideological disagreements over the role of the state and the market would play a role in

helping people make judgements about globalization and liberalization, but the impact of these values, while present, is distinctly marginal. Respondents who believe strongly in the importance of maintaining generous social programs, and respondents who believe that the government should interfere as little as possible with the market, were only marginally different from others. Rather than constrained ideological attitudes toward the market and the state, Canadians demonstrate strong feelings about groups such as multinational corporations (MNCs). Respondents who have little confidence in MNCs are far less likely to support globalization and a good deal less likely to support new trade agreements.

We also found that respondents concerned about immigration had a high propensity to be opposed to new trade agreements, and an even higher propensity to oppose globalization. We also found a strong relationship between opposing globalization and believing “things are changing too quickly,” but very little relationship between perceptions of change and support for new trade agreements. Taken together, all of our variables that measure feelings related to diversity can be understood as measuring concern about the loss of a traditional Canadian way of life, and all are more highly correlated with globalization than trade agreements.

### **Internationalism and Sovereignty**

Scholars and activists alike often emphasize the “internationalist” tradition in Canadian foreign policy established after World War II. Internationalism has been defined as a willingness to engage, in cooperation with other nations, in acts of “good international citizenship” with the aim of “creating, maintaining, and managing a community at a global level” (Nossal 1998/99, p. 98), and public support for internationalism continues (Martin and Fortmann 2001). Munton and Keating (2001) document the multidimensionality of internationalism, something we do not follow up on in our own survey. We simply asked whether Canada should be more or less involved in international affairs, and 24 percent said Canada should be more active, 65

percent said about as active as now, and only 9 percent said less active (Q14). On specific issues like development assistance, military alliances such as NATO, and peacekeeping, a majority of respondents said that Canada should be about as active as now, though “more active” always attracted at least twice as many respondents as “less active” (Q14a,b,c). A majority of Canadians also believe that we have a moral obligation to help the world’s poor (Q15), and those more supportive of foreign aid are more supportive of new trade agreements and much more supportive of globalization. Again we see the disjunction between activated and mass opinion: many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) opposed to globalization are very concerned about international social justice, while those most supportive of international social justice in the mass public are the most supportive of globalization.

Respondents were asked to choose between two options: making trade a top priority even if it means taking a softer line on human rights, or taking a hard line on countries that violate human rights, even if that means missing out on opportunities to expand Canadian trade. Two-thirds of respondents favoured Canada taking a hard line on human rights (Q16). But it is notable that respondents who would take a hard line on human rights were no less likely than others to support Canada negotiating free trade agreements with other countries. If forced to choose, most Canadians opt to privilege human rights over trade, but most have concluded that the two goals are usually complementary, and are more supportive of agreements that consider the impact on human rights. And, as pointed out earlier, a plurality of Canadians believe that trade agreements have helped human rights in other countries.

One of our key findings is that for most Canadians the negotiation of new trade agreements complements an internationalist foreign policy. Respondents more supportive of internationalist goals are more likely to support Canada negotiating new trade agreements with other countries. Specifically, support for new trade agreements is higher than

average among respondents who think Canada should be more involved in world affairs than it is now, should accept more immigrants, and should be more involved in peacekeeping missions. The question of whether Canada should be more or less involved in world affairs was one of the most highly correlated with attitudes toward globalization.

A related issue is attitudes toward international organizations and their potential to undermine Canadian sovereignty. When asked whether the Canadian government or an international body should take precedence when the two are in conflict, over half had no opinion, highlighting the relatively low salience of these issues to the public, and the continuation of the permissive consensus. When the United Nations is pitted against the Canadian government (Q17a), respondents with an opinion are evenly split as to who should take precedence (23 to 23 percent). In the case of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Q17b), the Canadian government comes out ahead (27 to 20 percent). But in neither case is there a huge groundswell of opposition to Canada occasionally deferring to international organizations.

### **Attitudes Toward the United States**

Our survey asked a number of questions about the United States, one regarding whether Canada was becoming more like the US (Q18), and another on whether Canada should have closer ties with the US (Q19). A majority of Canadians think Canada is becoming more like the US, and few think that this is a good thing (see *CRIC Portraits of Canada* 1999, 2000). We also found little strong anti-American feeling: 23 percent of Canadians said Canada should have a more distant relationship, 23 percent said a closer one, and 52 percent said that the relationship should be about the same as now.<sup>8</sup> We also found little support for political union when we repeated a question from 1964 (Q20). Canadians today are even more opposed to the political union of Canada with the United States than previously. Eighty-one percent of respondents were opposed to the idea in 2001, compared to 62 percent 37 years ago.

Both of the main questions have a huge impact on our dependent variables, although the prospective measure (should Canada have closer ties in the future?) plays a much larger role because it clearly taps into affective feelings toward the US. The evaluative measure (has Canada become more similar?) is less emotionally charged and plays a less important role. Along with attitudes toward internationalism generally, attitudes toward the US were more strongly related to opinion about new trade agreements and globalization than any other question in our survey. It is not surprising that attitudes toward trade agreements are highly correlated with attitudes toward the US, since previous trade agreements have been so tightly associated with the US, and attitudes toward the US were clearly relevant during the FTA debate (Johnston *et al.* 1992), but it is striking that attitudes toward globalization are still wrapped up in feelings about the US for many Canadians.

We had one other question that might seem to measure “protectionism.” Respondents were asked if they would place restrictions on American investment in Canada to prevent investors from taking control of Canadian companies (Q22). Eighty-four percent said that they would. It may be thought that this question is unrealistic, even leading, but what is interesting is that Canadians seem to differentiate the economic benefits of liberalized trade and foreign investment generally from the perceived negative impact when Canadian companies are purchased by foreigners. The existence of entirely open investment regimes is something that causes concern. The question, however, measures latent worries about unfettered control of the Canadian economy by non-Canadians, not concerns about trade liberalization itself, although this is an aspect of latent opinion that could be mobilized in the future. If Canadians became convinced that new trade agreements permitted entirely open investment regimes, this might upset the permissive consensus on trade.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A large plurality of Canadians currently support both globalization and further trade agreements. But a significant percentage of our sample, 27 percent, support further trade agreements while opposing or being uncertain about globalization. In concluding, we want to speculate on the evolution of the permissive consensus by discussing two questions: whether a potent anti-globalization coalition in the mass public has emerged in Canada, and whether the government faces constraints on an ambitious trade policy agenda. Looking simply at the size of the protests, at the majority of Canadians who are neutral or opposed to globalization, and at the third of Canadians who are neutral or opposed to the FTAA negotiations, one might conclude that a viable anti-trade electoral coalition has emerged. But it has not: Canadians are very supportive of trade generally, trade agreements specifically, and the FTAA in particular, and this support is built on a foundation of retrospective positive assessments. However, a viable coalition that supports a more inclusive, accountable policy response to globalization has emerged, one based on values.

Yet this coalition faces serious obstacles. Protesters, the visible manifestation of “civil society,” do not necessarily share the same value structure as members of the mass public who might potentially be their allies. Using the language of traditional ideological labels, some citizens opposed to globalization are on the left on economic issues, but many others are more likely to be on the right culturally, a result we do not find surprising. Kitschelt (1994) has identified two dominant cleavages shaping democratic politics in industrial societies: an economic one and a social/cultural one. Respondents to our survey who had no opinion or were opposed to globalization were significantly more likely to believe that we accept too many immigrants, believe that the world is changing too quickly, oppose increased internationalism, and were somewhat less likely to believe that we have an obligation to help poor people in developing countries. These attitudes

are important predictors of opposition to globalization in mass opinion, but these responses are at odds with the opinions of activated opponents of globalization. Although civil society protesters and their potential allies in mass opinion may be nominally on the “left” because both support intervention in the market (and both have little confidence in government), the social and cultural views of protesters place them at odds with their potential allies. In fact, citizens who share the social and cultural preoccupations of the protests are supportive of globalization because they look upon the social and cultural changes engendered by globalization, such as the movement of people across borders, more benignly.

We do not expect the permissive consensus to shift easily — extensive public debate and massive protests have not so far shifted mass opinion against trade liberalization, although few Canadians have strong opinions about the issue. This result mirrors Cobb and Kuklinski’s (1997, p. 101) finding that Americans had much less intense feelings about NAFTA than they did about then-President Clinton’s health-care proposal. An activated minority of Canadians is strongly opposed to new trade agreements and globalization, but the majority tends not to feel strongly about these issues and, to the extent that they do, they are supportive.

Whether this permissive consensus continues will depend first on whether new trade policy instruments are seen to represent either the status quo or a significant change. Most people are risk averse, and proponents of change carry the burden of proof. Certainly, the FTA in 1988 was seen to represent a significant departure from the status quo in Canada, and arguments against it were quite persuasive: on election day in 1988, most voters supported parties that opposed the FTA. Opponents of new agreements are in a more difficult position today: the FTAA, particularly after NAFTA, will not be perceived as a break with current practice, and its opponents cannot draw to the same extent on the instinctive caution of mass opinion. Indeed, it is now opponents of new

trade agreements who carry the burden of proof. We know from the evolution of opinion over the past decade that retrospective evaluations of existing agreements tend to be more positive than prospective assessments of new agreements (Mendelsohn and Wolfe 2001). As long as the FTAA, or a new round of negotiations in the WTO, is seen as an extension of previous trade agreements, it is likely to be met with the acquiescent support of a majority of the public, especially in view of the retrospective assessment that agreements have been good for Canada. Moreover, proponents of the FTAA or other new initiatives, far more than proponents of the initial FTA, can more easily portray the agreement as one consistent with the public’s support for internationalism and multilateralism and concern about US dominance.

Whether the permissive consensus continues will also depend on how ongoing globalization affects the latent opinions that shape mass opinion. If Canadians come to believe that government policy is encouraging more American penetration, privileges multinational corporations, undermines sovereignty, damages the environment, or ignores human rights, then the permissive consensus might erode. Canadians believe that we have a moral obligation to help the world’s poor (Q15), and how globalization affects poorer countries matters to Canadians. The nature and quality of globalization, rather than its existence, have become key issues, and to move forward the Canadian government needs to consider latent concerns.

The most complicated factor driving latent opinion might be attitudes to political participation. Scharpf (2000) offers an abstract view of democratic legitimation based on what he calls inputs and/or outputs. Inputs are legitimation by the process of decision; outputs are legitimation by showing that policy serves a community’s common interests. International cooperation, as it is practised, limits the possibility for procedural (input) legitimation because domestic processes cannot be determinative of the outcome of multilateral negotiations, making

substantive (output) legitimation all the more important.

Some opponents of globalization complain about the lack of input legitimation. About three in ten Canadians think that citizens should be directly involved in the negotiation of agreements. Part of the ambivalence about globalization may well be due to worries about consequential decisions taken far away by organizations not subject to the domestic political process. Thus far, the permissive consensus has been based on output legitimation: since most people think that trade deals have worked reasonably well, they are content to leave the details to the government. However, if the substantive policy outputs change, that is, if trade liberalization appears to hurt Canada, the permissive consensus will erode because officials will be unable to look for help from input legitimation, unless changes are made to the way domestic and international decision-making processes work.

#### AFTERWORD

As we were in the field before the Quebec Summit, our “trade” question was about the FTAA. Since then, members of the WTO meeting in Doha have launched a new “round” of negotiations, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have unsettled previous assumptions about international relations. Do our conclusions still hold? Start with Doha. For a variety of reasons this meeting had a lower public profile in Canada than either the Seattle or Quebec City meetings, and therefore, our questions regarding the more high-profile FTAA are better surrogates for general attitudes than questions on more recent issues that are unknown to respondents. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to ask whether on the basis of our analysis we think that the policy implications for Canada of the “Doha Development Agenda” fall within the permissive consensus.<sup>9</sup> Our answer is “yes.”

The government’s initial position on the WTO negotiations tried to be all things to all people.<sup>10</sup>

As always, new negotiations arouse the normal sort of lobbying from interest groups, but Doha is unlikely to get much attention from the mass public. Canadians will trust the government to attempt to get market access abroad for Canadian producers, especially farmers. They would nod approvingly at language, perhaps merely symbolic language, that “encourage[s] the WTO to be more transparent and open.” Canadian values clearly support moving ahead more aggressively to make globalization work for more people, so the intent to “contribute to the economic growth and poverty reduction of developing countries” is not only within the permissive consensus, but is a key component of fashioning a Canadian constituency supportive of globalization. Canadian efforts at Doha to “address public concerns about the social and environmental implications of trade” conflicted with developing countries’ resistance to having such issues discussed in the WTO, but failure to address these issues might undermine the permissive consensus within Canada. Development is said to be central to the negotiations, which will require Canada to improve access to its own markets for exports from developing countries, especially in domains like textiles where industrialized countries have been resistant to offering such access in the past.<sup>11</sup> Canadians working in these sectors will be opposed, although most civil society organizations concerned about social justice do support opening Canadian markets to products from less-industrialized countries. Such an issue could undermine even further the “Baptist-bootlegger” coalition between unions and activists that is less than coherent to begin with.

The government faces potential difficulty with newer issues that address not traditional measures imposed at the border but questions of domestic regulations and policies. The government is open to negotiations on investment rules in the WTO, but the limited mandate in the Doha declaration is unlikely to take the government beyond what Canadians are willing to accept. Canadians understand the benefits of investment, but latent opinion is hostile to anything that privileges “multinational

corporations” or policies that might appear to increase American control of Canadian firms. Better market access abroad for exporters of services would likely lead to greater access to Canada for foreign service providers but, thus far, the government avoids this contentious issue with its assertion that “Our health system and public education system are not negotiable,” a position that is important for mass opinion and large segments of activated opinion. In sum, the Doha round seems likely to remain within the permissive consensus in Canada.

In contrast, managing Canada’s relations with the United States is more complex than ever in the changed international context since September 11, 2001. Experts have worried for some time that Canada faces a choice between being an internationalist participant in global organizations or being inside the US “perimeter.” The latter would require adopting common policies on immigration, terrorism, and missile defence, for starters. Although some portions of activated opinion, such as exporters, are keen to move quickly within the perimeter, the possibility of North American “integration” evokes a different, and more negative, public response than “trade liberalization,” even if some experts pretend that the two terms are interchangeable. The 1988 election campaign featured a debate on the economic benefits of free trade and on whether Canadian sovereignty would be eroded. A dozen years after the FTA took effect, Canadians think that liberalization has been beneficial and sovereignty has not been eroded unacceptably due to the agreement. But North American integration implies the kind of policy harmonization that Canadians were told in 1988 would not happen. Canadians’ support for trade agreements, what we have termed the permissive consensus, cannot be extrapolated to support for globalization and North American integration.

## NOTES

We are grateful for the helpful comments of Stephen Kobrin, Denis Stairs and anonymous reviewers for CPP. Marnie Wallace, Patrick Kennedy, Gina Lorinda Yagos

and Alex van Kralingen were able research assistants at various stages of the project.

<sup>1</sup>It might be thought that this question is redundant after the attacks of September 11, 2001. We would disagree. We are first interested in whether the April 2001 protests were consistent with mass opinion at the time. Our second goal is to speculate on how the underlying values that drive public opinion might affect attitudes to new policies, and we believe that the structure of attitudes, and their relationship to one another, do not change quickly.

<sup>2</sup>The lineage of the current wave of protests can be traced back at least as far as the 1981 popular summit in opposition to the G7 meetings in Ottawa.

<sup>3</sup>Interviews with Canadian trade officials conducted by author. January to June 2001.

<sup>4</sup>The two dominant models of attitudes assume that individuals will be motivated either by their factor ownership (a class-based approach), or by the industry (or economic sector) in which they are employed (a group-based approach). See Scheve and Slaughter (2001, pp. 48-50) and Hiscox (2001, pp. 3-4) for a discussion of the difference between so-called Heckscher-Olin (or Stolper-Samuelson) and Ricardo-Viner models. The former would test opinion by different type of worker, regardless of industry, while the latter tests by type of industry, regardless of worker characteristics. The literature is surveyed in Mendelsohn and Wolfe (2002).

<sup>5</sup>For further information on the survey, see [www.cric.ca](http://www.cric.ca). For a report on the survey, see CRIC (2001). The data are available for secondary research and replication purposes through the Canadian Opinion Research Archive at Queen’s University: <<http://www.queensu.ca/cora/>>.

<sup>6</sup>The bars depict groups that demonstrate statistically significant differences from the rest of the sample on either of the dependent variables. The results presented represent spearman correlation coefficients. All were subject to multivariate testing (ordered probit), controlling for all of the other variables presented (not shown). Those variables that remained statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level under multivariate controls (for either the globalization or the trade agreements equation) were retained for presentation in Figure 2. Undecided respondents were coded at the mid-point to preserve the sample size.

<sup>7</sup>Age was not correlated with either dependent variable. It is certainly possible that older and younger respondents understand and interpret globalization (or trade liberalization) differently than do the elderly, but their responses to our questions were indistinguishable.

<sup>8</sup>This is one of the few issues on which opinion may have moved post-September 11, 2001. The CRIC Annual Portraits of Canada Survey repeated the question in October 2001 and found fewer saying Canada should have a more distant relationship with the US (13 percent), more saying the relationship should be closer (33 percent), and 53 percent saying the relationship should be about as close as now (data available through the Canadian Opinion Research Archive at Queen's University; reports on the surveys are available from CRIC at <www.cric.ca>).

<sup>9</sup>The ministerial documents are available on the Website at <[http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/dda\\_e/dohaexplained\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dda_e/dohaexplained_e.htm)>.

<sup>10</sup>Quotations are from "Canada's WTO Objectives" (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, updated 24 October 2001) at <<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/WTO-Background-e.asp>> accessed 24 October 2001.

<sup>11</sup>See Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, "Canada Seeks Citizens' Views on Trade with Least-Developed Countries," Press Release No. 29, 27 March 2002.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS AND RESULTS**

Q1, Q2, Q3 are presented in Figure 1.

Q4. For each of the following activities, please tell me whether you think Canada should be more involved, less involved, or maintain its current level of involvement: The negotiation of new trade agreements.

More involved (44 percent); Less involved (8 percent); Maintain current level (41 percent); DK/NA (6 percent).

Q5. For each of the following items, do you think it should be a high priority for Canada, a medium priority, a low priority, or should it not be a priority at all?

a. Being a country that trades extensively with other countries of the world.

High (65 percent); Medium (28 percent); Low (3 percent); Not at all (3 percent); DK/NA (2 percent).

b. Having a government that interferes as little as possible with the free market?

High (28 percent); Medium (44 percent); Low (12 percent); Not at all (7 percent); DK/NA (10 percent).

c. Have a more generous system of social programs?

High (51 percent); Medium (36 percent); Low (9 percent); Not at all (3 percent); DK/NA (2 percent).

Q6. We are interested in which stories are in the news these days. Have you personally heard anything about what some people are calling “globalization”?

Yes (63 percent); No (36 percent); DK/NA (1 percent).

Q7. Have you heard anything about the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization that took place about a year ago in Seattle?

Yes (66 percent); No (33 percent); DK/NA (1 percent).

Q8. Have you heard anything about the Summit of the Americas that will be held this year in Quebec City?

Yes (49 percent); No (51 percent); DK/NA (0 percent).

Q9. Can you tell me whether you think each of the following benefits a great deal, benefits a little, is harmed a little, is harmed a great deal, or is not affected either way by international trade agreements?

	<i>Benefits a Great Deal (%)</i>	<i>Benefits a Little (%)</i>	<i>Not Affected (%)</i>	<i>Harmed a Little (%)</i>	<i>Harmed a Great Deal (%)</i>	<i>DK/NA (%)</i>
a. Your local community	11	37	28	11	4	8
b. Canada	29	42	5	11	5	8
c. Human rights in other countries	15	33	15	13	9	16
d. The environment	10	26	14	22	15	12
e. Canada's social programs	8	33	22	17	8	13
f. Canadian culture	12	35	22	16	6	9

Q10. Who do you think benefits more from international trade agreements? Is it:

- a. Canadian workers, because more trade means more jobs (8 percent).
- b. The owners of Canadian businesses, because more trade means more profits (32 percent).
- c. Both owners of Canadian businesses and workers (45 percent).
- d. Neither owners nor workers in Canada (10 percent); DK/NA (5 percent).

Q11. How confident are you in the government's ability to protect our national interests when negotiating trade agreements with other countries? Are you very confident (10 percent), somewhat confident (48 percent), not very confident (29 percent), or not at all confident (11 percent)? DK/NA (2 percent).

Q12. Which of the following statements is closer to your own view:

- a. International trade agreements are so complicated that ordinary citizens should trust government officials to negotiate them (7 percent).
- b. Although government officials should negotiate trade agreements, it is important that they consult the public and keep them well-informed (60 percent).

c. International trade agreements are so important that ordinary citizens should actually have a big say in the negotiation of these agreements (30 percent). DK/NA (3 percent).

Q13. Sometimes when people protest against the government, the confrontation between the protestors and the police turns violent. When this happens, do you think that:

- a. it is usually the fault of the protestors (20 percent).
- b. it is usually the fault of the police (4 percent).
- c. usually both sides are equally to blame (70 percent). DK/NA (5 percent).

Q14. Do you think that Canada should be more involved in world affairs than it is now (24 percent), less involved (9 percent), or about as involved as it is now (64 percent)? DK/NA (2 percent).

Q14a/b/c. For each of the following activities, please tell me whether you think Canada should be more involved, less involved, or maintain its current level of involvement:

- a. Peacekeeping missions abroad. More (30 percent); Less (13 percent); Same (56 percent); DK/NA (2 percent).
- b. Economic aid to poor countries. More (30 percent); Less (13 percent); Same (55 percent); DK/NA (2 percent).
- c. Military alliances like NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization). More (24 percent); Less (12 percent); Same (58 percent); DK/NA (6 percent).

Q15. As you may know, many people living in other countries are suffering because they are the victims of war, natural disasters, or live in poverty. Which of the following three statements about this comes closest to your own opinion?

- a. Canada has a moral obligation to help these people (50 percent).
- b. Canada should help these people, but only when our economy is strong (39 percent).
- c. While I may feel sorry for these people, I do not feel that Canada has much of an obligation to help them (10 percent); DK/NA (1 percent).

Q16. Which of the following two options do you prefer:

- a. That the government make the expansion of trade with other countries [like China] a top priority, even if that means taking a softer line on the issue of human rights (25 percent).

b. That the government take a hard line against countries [like China] that violate human rights, even if that means missing out on some opportunities to expand Canadian trade (66 percent); DK/NA (9 percent).

*Combined responses to both versions.*

Q17A. If a United Nations' agency rules that a law passed by the Canadian government goes against one of the UN conventions that Canada has signed, who should have the final say?

- a. The Canadian government, because it was democratically elected (23 percent).
- b. The United Nations, because Canada signed the convention (23 percent).
- c. Or have you not heard enough about this kind of issue to have an opinion? (51 percent).

Q17B. If the World Trade Organization rules a law passed by the Canadian government goes against one of the international trade agreements that Canada has signed, who should have the final say?

- a. The Canadian government, because it was democratically elected (27 percent).
- b. The World Trade Organization, because Canada signed the trade agreement (20 percent).
- c. Or have you not heard enough about this kind of issue to have an opinion? (50 percent).

Q18. Over the last 10 years, do you think Canada has become more like the United States (52 percent), less like the United States (8 percent), or has there been no change (36 percent); DK/NA (4 percent)?

Q19. Do you think Canada should have much closer ties to the US (9 percent), somewhat closer (14 percent), about the same as now (52 percent), somewhat more distant (15 percent) or much more distant (8 percent) ties to the US than it has now, DK/NA (2 percent)?

Q20. Some people are in favour of the political union of Canada with the United States; in other words that Canada and the United States should become (1964 version: only) one country. Other people are against political union. Personally are you strongly in favour (5 percent), moderately in favour (10 percent), moderately against (14 percent) or strongly against (67 percent) the political union of Canada with the United States, DK/NA (4 percent)?

Q21. Do you think that it is just a matter of time before Canada and the United States join together; in other words, do you think that the union between the two countries is inevitable?

Inevitable (27 percent); Not inevitable (68 percent); DK/NA (5 percent).

Q22. Would you let Americans [foreign companies] invest their money in Canadian companies the way they want (12 percent) or would you place restrictions so that they do not take control of these companies (84 percent); DK/NA (4 percent)?

*Combined responses to both versions.*

Q23. Do you think Canada should accept more immigrants (14 percent), fewer immigrants (29 percent) or about the same number of immigrants (51 percent) as we accept now? DK/NA (5 percent).

Q24. In general, would you say that things are changing too fast these days (31 percent), are changing at about the right pace (43 percent) or are not changing quickly enough (22 percent)? DK/NA (4 percent).

Q25. Can you tell me if you have a great deal of confidence, some, not very much or no confidence at all in each of the following groups?

- a. Canadian businesses? Great deal (26 percent); some (58 percent); not very much (10 percent); none (3 percent); DK/NA (2 percent).
- b. Trade unions? Great deal (10 percent); some (41 percent); not very much (26 percent); none (17 percent); DK/NA (6 percent).
- c. Multinational corporations? Great deal (10 percent); some (45 percent); not very much (24 percent); none (15 percent); DK/NA (6 percent).

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Questions presented here are only a selection of the questions asked in the survey. For precise order of items, other questions, and details on question wording experiments, see the complete survey available through the Canadian Opinion Research Archive at Queen's University at <<http://www.queensu.ca/cora/>>.

