

A Citizen's Critique Increases Uproar in Canada Over Trade

By John F. Burns, Special To the New York Times

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When Marjorie M. Bowker set out to read the text of the free-trade agreement between Canada and the United States, she did so, in her words, "primarily as a quest for self-enlightenment." But if Canada rejects the agreement, which is the

central issue in the general election of Nov. 21, the 72-year-old retired family court judge will have played an influential part in its undoing.

At street-corner bookstalls, in student unions and in other places across Canada where momentum against the trade pact has been building, people are snapping up copies of the analysis Mrs. Bowker wrote after studying the 1,125-page text of the agreement. Results of the Latest Polls

Published last month in booklet form and retitled "On Guard for Thee," a phrase from Canada's national anthem, Mrs. Bowker's point-by-point condemnation of the agreement has become a potent political force.

In the last week, opinion polls have shown that the opposition Liberals could defeat Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives or at least deny them a parliamentary majority, thereby blocking Canadian ratification of the agreement. The United States has already ratified it.

The latest Gallup Poll, released today, provided the most dramatic results to date. It showed that among registered voters who have made up their minds, 43 percent support the Liberals, 31 percent support the Progressive Conservatives and 22 percent support the New Democrats, who also oppose the free-trade pact.

On the basis of this poll, the Liberals would win a 27-seat majority in the 295-seat House of Commons.

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John Turner, the Liberal leader, has been credited with stirring fresh anxiety about the pact with an aggressive performance in two televised debates. Even before that, a welter of voices was raised against the pact.

Among these critics, few have had as much impact as Mrs. Bowker, who has no affiliation with any of the parties in the election. Circulated originally in the form of a 58-page text that she typed, photocopied and mailed herself, her essay has been

welcomed by opposition leaders in Parliament, praised by newspaper columnists and debated on television and radio.

The publisher of the booklet, Voyageur Publishing of Hull, Quebec, increased the print run to 20,000 from the originally planned 5,000. Then it rushed into a second printing of 20,000 more last week when the first sold out. Mrs. Bowker has refused to accept royalties from the booklet, which sells for the equivalent of \$4.05 in American money. Another Writer in the Family

Mrs. Bowker, whose middle name is Montgomery, is not the first member of her family whose writings have moved the Canadian people. Her father was a second cousin of Lucy Maud Montgomery, who wrote "Anne of Green Gables," the tale of an orphan on Prince Edward Island that has become part of Canadian folklore.

At her home in Edmonton, Alberta, where she lives with her husband, Wilbur, a former dean of law at the University of Alberta, Mrs. Bowker recalled what prompted her to spend four weeks studying a text of the trade agreement that she borrowed from the university law library in June.

"I was like all the thousands of other Canadians who didn't understand what this was all about," she said. "As a citizen, I said, 'Something is happening to our country.' So I decided to read the thing."

What she discovered, applying the skills developed in a 40-year career as a lawyer and a judge, was a shock. "It's a virtual license for the takeover of Canada," she said, adding:

"I don't think the Government wanted people to get a copy of the full text. Somebody might read it and understand. And the fact is, the more you learn about what's in it, the more reasons there are for opposing it."

Mrs. Bowker's critique is similar to that made by Mr. Turner and Edward Broadbent, leader of the New Democrats. She offers a low-key analysis that foresees major injury to Canada in such matters as agriculture, energy, investment and service industries. Wary of American Actions

In virtually every major part of the accord, the former judge sees a threat of American actions that would constrain Canada's independence.

Mrs. Bowker asserts that the accord endangers Canada's elaborate network of social programs, including unemployment insurance, old-age pensions and medical insurance. Mrs. Bowker says American companies may attack the programs as "unfair subsidies" to Canadian corporations, since they relieve Canadian companies of the costs of many employee benefits.

Mrs. Bowker also attacks a clause that would make it easier for American companies in service industries to expand their operations in Canada. She says Canada stands to suffer from the fact that it would be forced to compete on an equal footing with a country that has 10 times the population of Canada. She declared: "If 100 accountants from Canada went to the United States, it wouldn't make any difference to the American profession. But just imagine, if 1,000 accountants from the United States were to come to Canada, it would dislocate the entire profession."

When Mrs. Bowker began mailing the treatise to politicians and journalists across the country three months ago, she became an instant celebrity.

"She has no ax to grind; she simply speaks the truth." said an editorial in The Gazette, Montreal's leading English-language newspaper.

"You have touched a national nerve, Madam Justice," wrote Roy MacGregor, a columnist for The Ottawa Citizen. He said he had received more than 1,000 telephone calls from readers. Apology From a Columnist

Another columnist, William Johnson of The Gazette, published an apology after his mailbox was jammed with letters protesting his column brushing off Mrs. Bowker as "a grandmother" with no credentials in economic affairs.

Simon Reisman, the official in charge of negotiating the trade pact for Canada, complained about amateur critics of the agreement, calling them "every Tom, Dick and Marjorie."

Through his office, he issued a detailed rebuttal that called the Bowker thesis "a pseudo-legal analysis."

The Government has tried to draw attention to an analysis by William Gearing, a 61-year-old retired high school economics teacher in Orillia, Ontario. His booklet is titled "Free Trade: Why It's a Good Deal for Canada."

But the tract that seems to have caught the public's imagination is Mrs. Bowker's. While conceding that her original text included some technical errors, she said she was convinced that allowing the agreement to be ratified would do irreversible harm.

"Not in a year or two or 10, perhaps," she said. "But we'll wake up in the year 2010, and by that time it'll be too late. I don't expect to be around by then, but somebody's going to have to answer to my grandchildren for allowing it to happen. I find it very depressing."

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