



DOING THE CONTINENTAL

A New Canadian-American Relationship

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Foreword by Bob Rae



Twelve Steps for Doing the Continental

- 1) There is no BIG solution in our relationship with the U.S.
- 2) Continentalism is a force of nature that we have to be wary of and tame for our national interests.
- 3) Our debate in Canada about how to engage the Americans is polarized and ideological. It has its basis in a lingering colonial mindset of over-arching and underpinning fear that has our policies vacillating between truculence and wanting to please the Americans.
- 4) Manifest Destiny has deep historical roots, but its real power today is not in the American but in the Canadian mind, contributing to our sense of vulnerability and fear of the U.S.
- 5) The U.S. is vast and preoccupied with domestic issues and international hot spots. Its system of government is divided and it rarely acts towards allies as a unified corporate force. The nature of our debate informs a wilful misunderstanding of how the U.S. and its system of government works to protect us from the retributions we imagine. We have much more freedom to act than we realize.
- 6) Our relationship is based on the massive, mutual self-interest and interdependence of *both* parties. America may

be an elephant, but it is in bed with a hippo or a muskox, not a mouse.

- 7) By placing Mexico centrally in our relations with the U.S., we are not achieving the benefits of multilateralism. We must resist the corrosive notion of a North American Community, in part presented as being “Okay” because it includes Mexico.
- 8) We have unnecessarily locked ourselves into exporting what is now much more than half of our production of natural gas and oil, as our reserves of natural gas and conventional oil are in serious decline. We have done this in part due to what seems, for the moment, to be intractable issues within our domestic politics.
- 9) While we export as much oil and natural gas as we possibly can, the mood is we must never export a drop of water to our neighbour, when, in fact, Canada has for decades diverted massive amounts of water to river systems in the U.S.
- 10) In the Arctic, controversy concerning Canadian jurisdiction over the Northwest Passage might best be resolved, not by seeing the Americans as the problem, but as the solution.
- 11) When we go beyond our shared continent, into the wider world, we are more effective and ironically more helpful to our leading ally when we imagine ourselves less fully as a junior partner.
- 12) It is not the U.S. that is the problem; it is how we think about the U.S. Our relationship is not so much about them as it is about us.