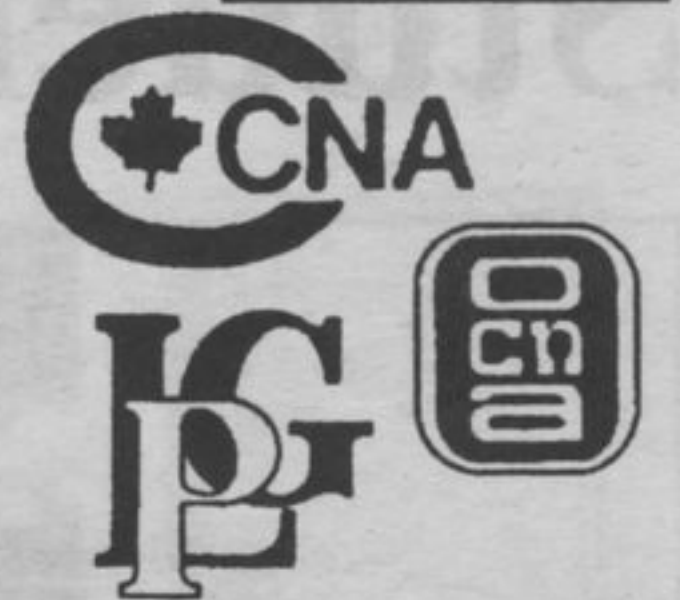


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FTA with Mexico: how can we afford not to sign a deal?

You can't blame Canadians for being concerned about signing on to a free trade deal with Mexico. The FTA deal we already have with the Americans hasn't exactly shown itself to be the saviour of our nation—not yet anyway. It has basically eliminated our lower technology manufacturing industries and, combined with this never ending recession, has pushed up unemployment rates just about everywhere.

But let's think about this for a moment. When most people think of Mexico, usually the big worry is cheap labour. How can we compete with non-unionized workers making only a few dollars an hour? Not to mention the lax environmental standards, poor health care, and all of the other factors inherent in a third world economy.

But really, these factors are much more of a threat to the American worker than to us. Because of the current FTA, most of the lower-skilled jobs the poorly educated Mexican worker could do have *already* headed south anyway. What would probably happen is they would continue their journey southward.

The exception to this would be in the automobile industry. United Auto Workers President Bob White is understandably concerned about a new trade deal. Canadian workers have benefited enormously from the Auto Pact with the United States, a deal that guarantees Canada a certain share of the North American car market.

What a trade deal with Mexico would mean for the Auto Pact is probably the biggest question mark for Canadians. But a deal could only help other people such as farmers who could sell grain and other foodstuffs without tariffs; for construction firms who could bid for Mexican government contracts to build a first world infrastructure in that country; for producers of consumer goods who would suddenly have an increasingly affluent market of about 60 million people eager to buy the material status symbols we produce here.

Our highly educated and productive work force has another advantage neither the American or the Mexican worker has: government financed health care. That's one of the reasons Japanese companies have shown a preference to set up here rather than down south.

The knock against the US-Canada trade deal was that it was going to hurt our manufacturing industries. It has done that, and the Canadian economy is still struggling to adjust. However, a free trade deal with Mexico provides a much greater opportunity for Canada to benefit, and considerably fewer risks, since we have already gone under the change that the Americans would have to go under after a North American Free Trade deal.

Since the end of the second world war, freer global trade has led to unprecedented prosperity in western countries. However, countries that have avoided free trade—and the competition that comes with it—have withered. Argentina and Brazil, for example, were once nearly on par with western nations in terms of living standards. After decades of protected markets and economic mismanagement, however, their economies are in ruins. So don't believe it when someone says that protectionism protects jobs. That kind of thinking should have ended in the 1930s.

The world is breaking up into trading blocks in Asia, Europe, and now North America. It's vital that Canada be included in this global trend, just to survive.

As long as concerns about the automobile industry can be ironed out, free trade with Mexico holds more appeal for Canada than it does for the United States. We have to accept that the world has changed forever, and take advantage of the opportunities we can—like free trade with Mexico.



Japan learns ways of West

Take a look at the Japanese. They have virtually no resources. All they have going for them are 90 million overachievers! Think what the Japanese would give for Canada's resources!

President, Dow Chemical Company

Yep, pretty impressive, the story of Japan. "One Huge Processing plant" someone called the country, "scouring the world for raw materials."

It's an amazing story when you think of it. Just a generation ago, Japan was prostrate. Slapped flat by the Allied forces. Defenseless. Yenless. Forced to accept handouts from the rest of the world.

And today? *The Economist* magazine recently did a study of Japanese real estate. Overall value; 17 trillion Canadian dollars. In case you're wondering what that looks like it's

17,000,000,000,000.00

Or, as *The Economist* explained it; "In theory, Japan can buy the whole of America by selling off Metropolitan Tokyo, or all of Canada by hawking the grounds of the Imperial Palace."

How did the Japanese manage to accomplish all that in less than half a century? In a word—sweat. A Japanese schoolteacher would collapse in disbelief if he saw the soft ride Canadian schoolkids get. And it doesn't stop with the graduation ceremony.

Your typical Japanese working stiff—white collar, blue collar and no collar at all—gives a helluva lot more than you or I would ever dream of putting out.

An average Japanese office worker puts in about 2,250 hours at his or her desk every year. That's about six weeks more than the average North American office worker.

As a spokesman by the name of Yukio Matsuyama explained: "The Japanese are addicted to tension as a welcome way of life, as a stimulating springboard for individual and collective

advancement."

Mind you there is a price tag for all that workaholicism. It's called karoshi—literally "death by overworking". It's the second biggest killer in the country according to a recent Japanese Ministry of Health report.

There are signs that all is not rosy in the Land of The Rising Sun.

A new business has opened in Tokyo in which actors and actresses visit lonely old people and pretend to be their sons or daughters. The actors feign contrition and shame while the old folks 'scold' them for not visiting more often.

Price tag for this little fantasy play: \$1,100 per therapy session.

And there are indications that the next generation of Japanese might not be quite so dedicated. The Japanese who hauled themselves out of the rubble of World War Two have—as parents everywhere—made certain that their children didn't endure

that same hardship. That's why, according to a recent study, more than half of Japanese children own televisions, radios and tape recorders. A third of them have their own telephones as well.

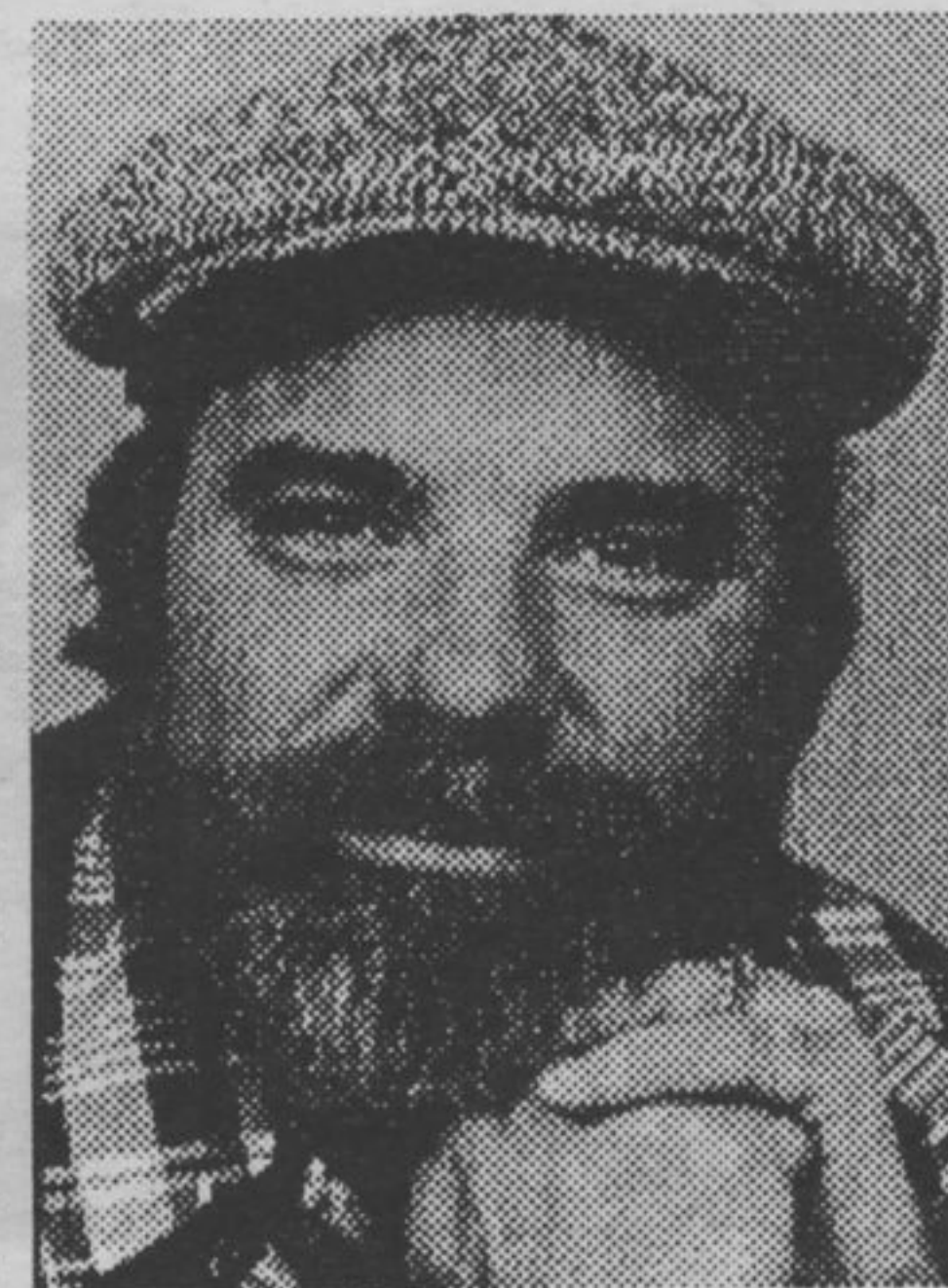
And they're fat. Japanese kids scorn the traditional rice-based diets of their parents. They want junk food. The kind they see on TV. Researchers asked them what their favorite game was. Most frequent answer: watching television.

Japanese child psychologists say it's even worse when the kids hit their teens.

"They have no interest in anything," says one expert. "They live from day to day with no goal in life."

Hmmmm. Now where have I heard that before?

To paraphrase a cigarette ad, you come a long way, *tomo dachi*.



Arthur Black