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President Trump Echoes Candidate Trump

Even the *National Post* had mostly negative things to say about President Trump's inaugural address. It was a speech that utterly disappointed those who had expected or hoped that Trump the president would tone down the rhetorical level of Trump the candidate. Only his supporters had anything positive to say about either the style or the content of the new president's first official remarks. Only Conrad Black was positively impressed, actually going into poetic raptures in singing his praises.

The offensive was launched in the first lines of the speech as the President disparaged everything done by politicians to date. The message which seemed to bother commentators, including writers for the *National Post* most was the strong drive against free trade. The message was "America First", "Buy America, hire America".

His condemnation of politicians did not distinguish between the Democrats and the Republics. Free trade, a key Republican aim, will be history if Trump has his declared way. That includes the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and any other agreement, whether in force or being negotiated.

Though it sounds as though President Trump may actually implement an economic approach that benefits everyone, However, the sound may sig-

nify nothing. President Trump is, after all, a businessman whose first obligation, he said during the campaign, is to his shareholders (what he did not say was, mainly himself).

The tough talk goes beyond trade. Without making clear quite how this would be accomplished, President Trump promised to wipe Islamic terrorism from the face of the earth.

As for domestic policy, in case anyone had doubts, the very first thing President Trump did was to start dismantling Obamacare, as the health plan introduced under President Obama was called. Without the promised "something better" in place. President Trump signed an execu-

tive order allowing officials to decline to implement the legislation.

Insulting behaviour toward the press started almost immediately with a major debate about the turnout for inauguration events. Both the medium (twitter for Trump) and the message ("alternative facts", delivered curtly by representatives) were very unsatisfactory from the viewpoint of the press corps. The idea is to circumvent "dishonest media", unfortunately by being even more dishonest.

President Nixon said, "If the President does it, it isn't a crime." President said, at least by implication, I can make it okay by issuing an executive order." To prove it, he issued a one-time exception to the rule forbidding recent servicemen from holding the top pentagon job.

The Numbers Game

There was a major battle between President Trump and the press corps about the numbers attending the inaugural events, but there was little question about the numbers involved in the demonstrations of women opposing President Trump as an ignorant, misogynistic, racist, Islamophobic boor — the numbers were clearly huge.

The biggest demonstration may have been in Washington (with upward of 500,000), but there were also large events in other American cities.

Many Canadians went to the USA to participate (although, at least one carload and an unknown number of others were turned back at the border — after being fingerprinted and photographed, and warned that they would be arrested if they tried to cross at another point. because their visit would not have been for a legitimate purpose). Many other demonstrated in Toronto (filling Queen's Park lawn), Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Halifax and elsewhere.

Canadian Economy Steady

Some of Canada's economic numbers looked pretty good at the end of 2016, with some job creation, (full-time jobs, that is), a fairly low rate of inflation, and some increase in some parameters suggesting intent to increase manufacturing and other industrial activity.

The fly in the ointment was the uncertainty in the United States, leading the Bank of Canada to leave its key interest rate unchanged.

Concern about the American market was also the source of fears of an international trade war which could be devastating to Canada. If it found itself suddenly facing tariff walls raised by its trading partners, Canada could find itself

in a serious slump.

In spite of the job creation, the unemployment rate was slightly up because more people had joined the work force.

Some of the traditional concerns persist, among them the continuing rise in household debt. This problem is made worse by factors like the increase in fuel prices, whether it be gasoline or hydro. While the effect may even itself out over the course of a year, it hits family budgets hard during the winter months.

In the meantime, promised assistance, like Premier Wynne's help with electricity prices always seem to be too little too late — if they actually happen at all

Well, summer's coming.

The Next Issue

The next issue of the "UCH" will be dated March, 2017. Announcements of events in March, 2017, or early April, 2017, as well as articles for the March, 2017, issue should be in our office by February 10. Thank you for your consideration.

Canada Prepares for the Attack

Many people in Canada seem to think that Canada to too important a trading partner to fall victim to US protectionism, but the government of Canada is doing what it can to take no chances.

Before President Trump was sworn in, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau shuffled his cabinet in an effort to make it more effective in dealing with American officials. Among the changes was the appointment of Chrystia Freeland as Minister of Foreign Affairs, replacing Stepan Dion, who was given a diplomatic posting.

The Prime Minister also launched a lobbying campaign, ensuring that key state governors were reminded how important Canada was to their constituents, and making sure, too, that members of the Congress were well informed.

A substantial presentation has been prepared for a meeting with President Trump.

Perhaps the most significant preparation Prime Minister Trudeau did was to signal a willingness to open negotiations to modify NAFTA.

However, the government of Canada has not put all its eggs in the American basket. Along with other countries, it has engaged in some public speculation about the viability of the TPP without the participation of the USA.

If nothing else, such talk might raise some concerns in Washington about becoming the odd man out. That might not influence Trump, but it

might have an effect on other officials who, in turn, could put some pressure on the president.

Things really are up in the air, with President Trump such a wild card

In This Issue

| | |
|--|----|
| AgaGate a Russian Trap .. | 8 |
| AgaGate a Sham | 8 |
| Bob Dylan: the Evolution of a Poet | 6 |
| Burkini Ban a Russian Tactic | 8 |
| Candidates Concerned | 8 |
| Celebrating Injustice? | 2 |
| Clowns Succeed | 9 |
| Commentary | 4 |
| Correction | 8 |
| Current Eclectic | 3 |
| An Economy for the 99% . | 4 |
| Editorial | 4 |
| EU-Ukraine Trade | 9 |
| Fake News | 8 |
| Global Warming | 3 |
| Grassy Narrows Mercury Pollution | 2 |
| Happy Birthday, Friends . | 11 |
| Hating "the Russians" Isn't New | 10 |
| Hulak-Artemovskiy Anniversary | 6 |
| Join Us! | 11 |
| Joke Time | 11 |
| Lesya Ukrainka Chronology | 10 |
| The moment of Truth | 4 |
| More on Healthy Breakfasts | 3 |
| On Wings of Song | 7 |
| Review of <i>Finks</i> | 3 |
| The Rewards of Reform in Ukraine | 9 |
| Russia Hacks Bombardier | 8 |
| Russia Runs the World! | 3 |
| Sustaining Fund Donations | 11 |
| Tempest in an African Teapot | 3 |
| Those Dastardly Russians | 10 |
| Ukraine the Beggar | 9 |
| Ukrainian Miscellany | 9 |
| Who, What, When, Where | 11 |
| Winnipeg Resident Hacked | 8 |
| Youth Suicide | 2 |

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