

O Canada? - Rick Grylls

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By: Guest Columnist

I was reflecting on our national anthem and the pledge we once were taught about protecting “our home and native land — and about how I feel we have been over taken by foreign interests. I believe this is the result of government leadership developing poor regulations on investment and ownership of Canada’s natural resources — which now aids corporate prosperity over communities and CEOs over citizens.

Today, self-centered people seem to have forgotten “true, patriot love, in all thy sons’ command.” I interpret this as we — our troops, our labour, and our wealth — are at the means of our country, for our country — not a few individuals and foreign interests. When developing and growing Canada 160 years ago, (when stock market scams, the buy-low, sell-high by any means, and today’s market and ponzie scams were in their infancy) there was, in Canada, dreams of “with glowing hearts we see thee rise, the true north strong and free.”

And through those years of Canada’s growth, when tyrannies and evil grew in the hearts of men, Canada’s sons and daughters answered the call to defend our freedom, many with their lives — “from far and wide, O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.”

There was a time when family doors were unlocked, their hearts and minds were open and parents prayed with their children “God keep our land, glorious and free.”



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Families become communities, communities become provinces and territories, and provinces and territories become our country. It once belonged to the citizens who, in good faith, elect men and women to represent and govern for the best interest of our communities, provinces, territories and country. When governments grant the opportunity to use our natural resources to generate wealth and prosperity, it entailed three equal partners — the investors, who put up money for the enterprise, the employees, whose paid labour produced the wealth, and the taxes generated to fund the growth of the community and country, that represents the resource. But the equation of good citizenship has been altered. Self preservation, instead of mutual growth for all, has become the act of the day.

The deals of foreign investment cannot be shared with the citizens, particularly when elected representatives elevate their personal well-being above those they serve. When groups of people stop (or prorogue) parliament, you have to wonder, O Canada, who stands on guard for thee?

Unbridled corporate power, seen in the last 40 years of consumerism and consumption,

has produced a society where citizens' bellies and bodies are overflowing with excess weight and their bank accounts are empty and indebted. It's a society in which new corporate ideas on investing deviate from good business practices and crash the economic system, destroying the dreams and entrapping the lives of many and enriching a hand-full of manipulative individuals.

These actions have betrayed and sacrificed future generations for a chance of prosperity. The jingle of "30 silver pieces" comes from the pockets of many people like Tony Clement, and others who, I believe, do not represent the line "O Canada, we stand on guard for thee."

We live in a time when some governing powers want to sell our public health care system and publicly-owned businesses to private corporations. These same people advertise that others with ideals like Tommy Douglas are not the ones who should be running the country.

The business and corporate interests, which got us into the mess we are in, will keep advertising that we should still listen to their ideas on how to rebuild the economy. They preach that there is enough rules and regulations and they will self-regulate themselves and guide us to the land of milk and honey.

Enough is enough. I believe the working men and women of this country have forged and built this great country of ours, and will continue to do so. We believe this country is not for sale. Good government should protect the citizens' assets, which are Canada's natural resources. Taking a stand to share in the wealth workers generate for our communities is necessary.

There will be a more equal sharing of growth and prosperity for the citizens and our country when communities have the same power as corporations, and a labourer has the same security as the CEO. The past 60 years of corporate government strategies resulted in corporate profits and our country's debt — \$550 billion and counting. We need community government strategies.

There have been, and there will continue to be, free and loyal Canadians who, by their good and charitable deeds and actions, work to build our communities. By means of joining together in their workplace as a union, citizens negotiate a fair and equal wage for their labour in building wealth and prosperity for their community.

I believe in my Canadian and community citizenship before any allegiance to corporate citizenship. Sometimes, making a personal sacrifice today — like being on strike for a more equal share of the wealth our labour produces — we hope to build a better tomorrow for the Canadian generations that are to follow..

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

Rick Grylls is a community activist and former president of the Canadian Auto Workers Local 598.