

## NOT DEMOCRACY

When our Prime Minister can sign a massive give-away of Canadian resources and rights and rush it through Parliament without discussion, debate or a vote, do we still live in a democracy, or do we now live in a dictatorship?

I am referring to the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement. It was signed by Prime Minister Harper in Russia on September 9, made public on September 26, and is set for automatic approval on October 31. No discussion. No debate. No vote. This is an unprecedented way to deal with the most significant trade agreement to be signed by Canada since NAFTA. Perhaps the speed and secrecy is to make sure Canadians don't have time to find out what it is really all about.

None of the Opposition MPs have spoken out against this agreement, with the exception of Green Party MP Elizabeth May, who asked for an emergency debate on it and was denied. The Conservative party MPs never seem to speak up about anything if it means contradicting their leader. And the silence from the mainstream media is deafening.

This Agreement guarantees that Chinese state-owned companies operating in Canada will be treated exactly the same as Canadian companies. They will be able to sue the government of Canada over any decisions that limit or reduce their "expectations of profits", and will be able to claim damages against Canada for decisions made at the municipal, provincial, or federal level. Decisions made in our courts can be reversed if they merely threaten to reduce profits of

Chinese companies operating in Canada. Disputes won't be settled in court, but in secret arbitration hearings, so future governments may be forced to change our laws without us ever knowing why. It gives China a great deal, without offering Canada much at all in return.

And most importantly, the Canada-China Investment Agreement requires that if, in the future, Canada wants to reduce Chinese access to our natural resources (and every one of our natural resources is covered under this agreement, including water), then Canada can only do so to the extent that we limit our own use of those natural resources. Nobody who really cares about future generations of Canadians would agree to that

According to Andrew Nikiforuk, writing in *The Tyee*, "the treaty would give Sinopec, one of the big Chinese backers of the Northern Gateway pipeline, the right to sue the government of British Columbia if it blocks the project. Sinopec could also demand that only Chinese labour and materials be used on the pipeline.

Moreover the treaty gives Chinese state owned companies "the right to full protection and security from public opposition."

Democracy is defined as "a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives."

We have a government that was elected with less than forty percent of the vote, yet it does whatever it wants to regardless of what the majority of Canadians want. Our elected representatives are either powerless against a 'majority' government, or uninterested in protecting our rights and our resources, and agreements with foreign countries are passed without us ever being told what the implications are for the future of our country, and for future generations. Doesn't sound like democracy to me.

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