

FACT SHEET on ATLANTICA

...and the growing resistance against it.

INTRODUCTION:

• Atlantica, also known as the Atlantic Northeast Economic Region (AINER), is a cross-border trade concept spanning the Atlantic Provinces, Newfoundland, southern Quebec, and the New England States (i.e. Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and upstate New York). Its main proponent and originator is a right-wing think-tank group called AIMS, the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies.

• The Atlantica tag line is "business without borders", which has a double meaning: business unimpeded by the international border, but also freed from the boundaries of environmental regulation and social protections such as minimum wages, social program spending, public ownership and unionization.

• Contrary to the belief that Atlantica is concerned with increasing trade ties in the northeast region. The trade concept has little to do with increasing trade between the Atlantic provinces and New England states. It is *actually* about:

WHAT?	1. Developing a conduit to channel Asian goods to the United States through the Atlantic provinces.	2. Increasing exports of unprocessed resources, like energy, from Canada to the United States.
WHY?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massive container ships called "Post-Panamax" are too large to pass through the Panama Canal; Halifax is the closest North American port for ships from Asia via the Suez Canal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To export oil and gas from the Atlantic offshore as quickly as possible on terms that favour industry and leave decisions about exports to deregulated markets.
ECONOMIC FLAWS and ELITE INTERESTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic provinces have benefited least in the past from integration with the US in terms of output, productivity, employment and wages. • Transport infrastructure and increased truck traffic would mean more wear and tear on roads resulting in higher maintenance costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantica prioritizes US energy needs over Atlantic Canadian energy security • Atlantic Canada currently exports 75%, and rising, of gas to the US, without even meeting the energy needs of everyone in the Maritimes; under NAFTA's <i>proportionality clause</i>, Canada must supply the US with the same proportion or more of total exports as it has within the previous 3 years.
ENVIRONMENT and HEALTH CONCERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bulk of massive expansion in container traffic would be shipped onwards by "truck trains" which would result in increased greenhouse gas emissions, higher fatal crash rates per mile, as well as the creation of superhighways through communities, wilderness, and farmland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With increased pressure to deliver finite oil and gas reserves to the US, there is no regard given to the advantages of using cleaner-burning natural gas as a stepping stone to a more renewable energy future. • For the region to export vast quantities of natural gas while burning imported coal and refined petroleum locally makes little environmental sense.

LABOUR ISSUES

- Atlantica is a thinly-disguised attack on working people using language like "poor quality public policies" and "economic distress factors" to describe minimum wage and union density, claiming that their extremely low rates are already too high.
- The AIMS Atlantica concept asserts that all government is deadweight that burdens "the private economy"; this measure, rooted in market fundamentalism, is based on the unconditional belief that unregulated private markets always benefit society and that the best government is the smallest.

EXCLUSIONARY DEVELOPMENT

- Atlantica and its proponents have continually denied the involvement of other stakeholders including labour groups, working class communities, the public sector, etc. in their discussions with pro-industry government officials.
- There is no mention made about the impact such a concept will have on communities of color who will be most detrimentally affected, socially and economically, by Atlantica; the involvement of such groups in discussions about resource management, in particular First Nations, is not even touched on in Atlantica's documents.

This is, by no means, a comprehensive list but only a starting point for the fallacie of Atlantica and why it must be opposed.

Atlantica is rooted in a framework which aims to attract corporate interest to the Atlantic region by threatening to axe our minimum wage (which is already below poverty levels), our environmental regulations, our social programs, our public services and our workers' rights to unionize; things they refer to as "policy distres factors". This kind of language is eerily familiar to that of NAFTA and the FTAA, stemming from a neo-liberal free-market agenda that aims to dismantle "trade barriers" such as social and public programs, environmental regulations and workers' rights.

Proponents of Atlantica, including AIMS and members of the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce, are meeting in Halifax on June 14-16, 2007

Communities, labour unions, environmental organizations, social justice groups and concerned citizens are mobilizing a grassroots movement to confront Atlantic and send the clear message that the people of this region are not in support of th profit-before-people plan for development!

There is a **3-DAY FESTIVAL OF RESISTANCE** being planned in response, as well as a counter-conference, and teach-in.

For more info or to get involved, contact:
resistatlantica@nspirg.org
 call 902.494.6662 or check out www.nspirg.org
www.stopatlantica.com | www.policyalternatives.ca
www.maritimes.indymedia.org

