

Can the United States Cure Itself of its Many Chronic Ailments?

The world is waiting with disquietude and curiosity to see how the drama turns out.



by Conrad Black

Tucker Carlson's screed on his Fox News program Thursday, urging Americans to contemplate a rescue of Canada before it descends to the Cuban level of leftist and woke authoritarianism, raised some legitimate points but not as many as it ignored.

Because almost 75 percent of Canadians are English-speaking

(almost all the others speak French) and because 90 percent of Canada's nearly 40 million people live within 200 miles of the U.S. border, it is generally difficult for most people to distinguish between a Canadian and an American from a northern state.

People from Seattle and Vancouver, or Minneapolis and Calgary, and Toronto and Pittsburgh or Cleveland sound almost identical, apart from the pronunciation of the letters "ou" as in "out, about," or "house," and a handful of expressions. A large number of Canadians winter in the United States, immense numbers of Americans visit Canada in the summers, and American television and film entertainment penetrates the English-speaking Canadian market almost as thoroughly as the domestic American market.

Historically, there have been times when the United States was relatively serene and prosperous and the Canadian dollar was comparatively depressed, when polls indicated that a significant number of Canadians, if offered federal union with the United States and parity for the Canadian dollar, would be tempted. It gives me no pleasure in advising Americans that the prestige of their country has substantially deteriorated over the last 20 years or so.

Start with the annual influx of millions of unskilled migrants illegally, with literally tons of fentanyl smuggled across the southern border with them, entering a country that is still struggling with the legacy of slavery and a level of violent crime that appalls Canada and other advanced Western societies.

The open southern border has incited swarming masses of indigent and desperate people that less resembles the fabled arrival of the immigrants under the Statue of Liberty, and up the St. Lawrence River to Canada, pledged to make their way in the new world as law-abiding citizens, than it does the masses of barbarians thrusting into the late Western Roman Empire

with no interest in assimilating to the jurisdiction they were entering.

The rise in Canada's population has made it more self-sufficient in matters of culture and entertainment and the debacle of American violent woke-ism and racial division has completely eliminated any ambition or temptation Canadians might have had to seek a closer association with the United States.

Because there was no economic justification for slavery in a northern country such as Canada, and because slavery was abolished in Canada decades before it became an independent country in 1867, and there were never more than a few hundred of them, almost none of the odium of what Lincoln called the evil of the "peculiar institution" of slavery has existed here. No one in Canada came here involuntarily or has ancestors who were coerced to come to Canada.

Canada has neither a revolutionary tradition nor one of aggressive conquest, nor any use for firearms apart from authentic hunters, collectors, herd-owners, and the police. Mindful of the dangers Americans had taught them of trying to withhold rights from peoples capable of self-government, after minor agitation, the British voluntarily gave Canada independence. And the British military guarantee deterred the more enthusiastic American proponents of a manifest destiny that included trying again to seize Canada (it didn't work in 1776 or 1812), until America outgrew the impulse.

Canada has only officially participated in the world wars, Korea, the first Gulf War, and Afghanistan. It sought nothing for itself, sent almost entirely volunteer forces even though Canada itself was never under direct threat, and it was interested only in defending the cause of liberty and human rights in the world.

It is easy to allegorize Canada as a scarlet-tunicked Mountie

like Nelson Eddy in the film "Rosemarie" and to portray it in the blandest and most sophomoric terms. As my learned friend Frank Buckley said some years ago when he moved to the United States from Canada to accept a high academic appointment, he was going from "the best country in the world to the greatest country in the world but they are both good countries and they are both great countries."

Tucker Carlson is right to mock the wokeness, hypocrisy, and the low demagoguery in which the current Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, sometimes engages. He's also right to criticize Mr. Trudeau's overreaction to the truckers' trans-country convoy last year in protest against Covid rules that made it practically impossible for them to earn a living, and he is right to heap scorn on excessively severe restrictions on certain types of public meetings, including some church services.

The attempts in Canada to throttle and gag those who object to the oppressive conformity, do-goodism, and the whole nauseating range of woke idiocy and collective self-loathing, are utterly contemptible. But they face heavy opposition and they will be rejected. Those of us on the northern side of our proverbially unguarded 3,000 mile border with the United States have much greater fears for America.

The wanton random violence, the race-hate after the prodigies that the white majority of America has deployed to raise up a formerly subjugated people to full equality, the flooding in of people unlikely to be an asset to the country for at least a generation, the erratic alternations of government, the corruption and unverifiable harvesting of ballots in elections, the awful legal system with its 98 percent conviction rate, the see-no-evil urban prosecutors, all of this greatly saddens the millions of Canadians who have long liked and admired the United States and know it and wish it well. (The political press of both countries are approximately equally venal, dishonest, and unenterprising.)

Mr. Carlson's criticism can be taken seriously up to a point, but the United States is in far greater need of, again in Lincoln's words, "binding up the nation's wounds," than Canada is. Both countries, and some others, are crossing the desert of orchestrated and maladjusted self-dislike. Mr. Carlson's morale may require that he step out of his glass house to fire a few stones, but Canada will cure itself without any help from the Americans.

The world is waiting with disquietude and curiosity to see if the United States can cure itself of its many chronic ailments. It is not now recognizable as the land of the free and the home of the brave, or even as a country of particularly sensible or apposite television commentators.

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