

The Lie of Free Trade and Development

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, January 29, 2005

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The World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting is taking place right now in Davos, Switzerland. The global corporate elite have named this year's meeting ["Taking Responsibility for Tough Choices"](#).

I have heard enough of the tough choices of BC Premier Gordon Campbell starting his junta's reign with a tax cut to the rich, followed by the tough choices of downsizing government spending. His neoliberal government eradication program is in full swing.

I sit appalled by the WEF's use of that phrase.

Even more appalled, I read Canada's International Trade Minister Jim Peterson's [notes](#) for his pandering talk in Davos.

Not speaking on behalf of me, but on behalf of the Canadian government, Peterson asserts, "We believe that the highest level of development will come from the highest level of trade liberalization."

As much as I would like to golf with Tiger Woods, I would not compete with him without using handicaps. Though a level playing field means comparing our raw scores, using handicaps lets us compete recognizing differences in abilities. Without handicaps, I would lose all the time. Free trade is a level playing field between differently abled economies. Trade liberalization will not allow the weaker economies to succeed when competing with stronger ones.

Peterson continues, "Admittedly, it is true that fear will have to be managed. Fear of failure and fear of being blamed for failure. It is also true that failure is not an option."

How brave of him to be bold. How brave of him to encourage the global corporate elite to be bold. And other nations--developed and developing--to be bold. Fear must be overcome. But from Canada's point of view, we're fine if we don't overcome it. Really we are. Failure is not an option, but if we do fail, Canada will not be destroyed and plummeted into a heart-wrenching economic and social depression. But the majority world will.

But ultimately what kind of failure are we really talking about? Failure to ensure developing countries can no longer protect themselves from the global corporate elite's economic rape and pillage machine, of which Canada is a sponsor. If Peterson and the WEF gods succeed, the majority world will be playing golf every day with Tiger Woods and their handicap is merely their fault for not being better. And while domestic protection built the developed world and spawned the WEF, we will not let the majority world do the same.

So what exactly is failure?

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