

Un-Canadian

It's just the latest slander
against the right-of-centre

Anasty little sickness has been spreading in this country lately, and it has nothing to do with SARS.

It's the growing tendency, mostly from those on the left, to label those who disagree with them "anti-Canadian," or some variation thereof.

Un-Canadian. Canada-basher. Canada-hater. Such is the new slander, the politically correct weapon of mass defamation used by those who ostensibly embrace those oh-so-Canadian values of tolerance and inclusivity.

In the past several weeks, I've been told to pack up and move to the States enough times that I could probably claim refugee status there. And I'm far from alone.

Last week, CFRB's Bill Carroll responded to similar attacks by delivering a heartfelt speech to his listeners about how deeply he loves Canada. It was wonderful, but it shouldn't have been necessary.

Numerous commentators – not to mention ordinary citizens – who've dared to criticize: a) Canada's decision to keep its threadbare military out of the Iraq war; or b) various other sacred Canadian cows like our free-for-all health care system or our bloated subsidy programs for everything under the sun, have found themselves labelled anti-Canadian.

Heaven help you if you joined one of those pro-U.S. rallies a few weeks ago, as thousands did. Traitor! Go live there!

Personally, I liked it better when the lib-left just accused right-of-centre folks of being racist – but that was just too easy to disprove, I guess, by the fact that conservative views are shared by all races. I could even smile at the insult of being "mean-spirited" – remember, cutting taxes, government waste and the deficit was "mean-spirited" when Mike Harris and Ralph Klein did it; when Paul Martin and Jean Chretien did it, they were Canadian heroes.

But questioning people's love of Canada because you disagree with them is too much for my quintessentially courteous and tolerant Canadian nature to bear.

The final straw came when I read about how Patricia Pearson, a biweekly columnist for the *National Post*, quit the paper because of its pro-U.S. – and, to her mind, anti-Canadian – slant. The arch-rival *Globe and Mail* gave her half a page in last Saturday's paper to vent about it.

Now, this is the sort of navel-gazing newspaper-war nonsense that I – and most normal human beings – generally ignore. But Pearson, who reminded readers she's the granddaughter of for-

mer Liberal PM Lester Pearson, went too far:

"I cannot sit back and watch this nation attacked, relentlessly and viciously, by a newspaper that would trash so much of what we believe in, from tolerant social values to international law...." she wrote, adding, "I weep for those of my countrymen who have been made to feel ashamed by the *Post*."

"I sat at the knees of my grandfather as a child, absorbing the love he felt for this country with every exhaled breath, and you cannot – and will not – make me betray him in favour of becoming George Bush's 'best friend.'" Good grief.

Now, I'm not here to defend the *Post*, although I think its brash, conservative voice has been great for Canada. And I just have to laugh at the suggestion that the hundreds (if not thou-

sands) who've told the *Sun* and other media they're "ashamed to be Canadian" were made to feel that way by a broadsheet paper most have likely never read.

These people aren't ashamed of Canada. They're ashamed that a great country isn't living up to its potential. They're angry about endless Liberal arrogance in Ottawa, about our declining stature on the world stage, about a dollar and productivity that are lower than they should be and taxes that are far too high. They want a strong, secure Canada that stands up for itself and doesn't stiff traditional allies like the U.S. and Britain out of blind allegiance to the UN.

They believe in Canada every bit as much as those clinging to 1960s-era Pearsonian ideals – which are all very nice, but can surely stand some improvement and criticism in the 21st century. Being pro- or anti-American (never mind pro-Bush) has nothing to do with how Canadian you are.

Late last week, a government-commissioned Canadian Policy Research Networks study found that Canadians and Americans have different "core values."

Of course we do. But we also share core values – the sort of values that terrorists attacked on Sept. 11, 2001.

Among them is our freedom to speak our minds and criticize our government and its acolytes.

Anyone who thinks good Canadians don't – or shouldn't – say such things is confusing this with a very different sort of country. And I won't sit back and let it be trashed that way.

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Second Thoughts