

# The Neighbours We Love To Hate

By Jonathan SMITH

Following a very close campaign and a major discrepancy involving the United States of America's electoral system in the Sunshine State, George W. Bush was declared the victor and became the newest president of the most powerful country in the world. The win was not based on the popular vote of the people, but rather the electoral vote; such is the way of the American constitution.

Nevertheless, the Bush Administration came into power in early 2001 and immediately proceeded to go to work abolishing or disregarding established national and international policies and treaties. By the summer, the United States, as well as most of the Western world, was engaged in a large bout of navel-gazing. That all changed on September 11, 2001.

With the Administration's new "outlook" on world conditions, there has been much talk of growing anti-Americanism throughout the world, including in our own country. This comes as little surprise given the 'State's new goals of eliminating terrorism throughout the world, a goal that offers very little in terms of concrete targets and which is bound to result in many international noses being knocked out of joint.

We stand on the verge of a possible US-led (or US solo) war against the nation of Iraq, a country ruled by a dictator whose character and policies offer little to admire. Despite that, there is much resistance to the brewing conflict, because it is seen as America's attempt to remove those who are a hindrance to its own interests. While there is indeed cause for debate on this issue, there is another matter that

needs to be addressed as well - the issue of where to direct anti-American sentiments.

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America is a country born of revolution, complete with a developed Declaration of Independence and mission statement. It has been involved in most of the major international conflicts of the past century and has emerged in the Twenty-first century, as the world's superpower militarily, economically, politically, and culturally. History is written by winners, and given the American past, it only makes sense that they would feel an obligation to police the world and ensure that it is a place of stability, unity, and order. Unfortunately, with the coming of the Bush Administration, perhaps these values and feelings have been pushed too far.

For the most part, the Western world subscribes to the concepts of freedom and democracy, and America is a major player in that. Their culture is a melting pot of nationalities, religions, and ideas. Some speak of assimilation rather than actual multi-culturalism, but even if that is true, those who become part of America have chosen to accept that over other conditions that exist through-

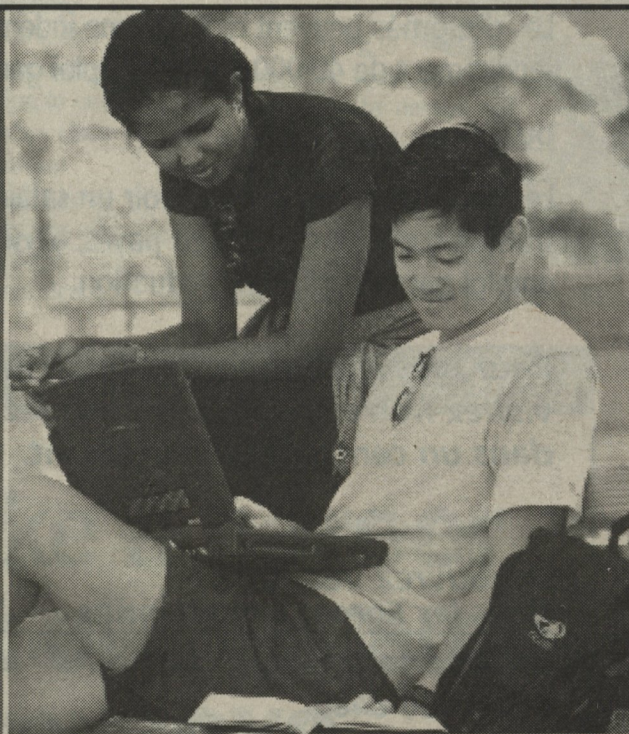
out the world. America is a nation of many different peoples, all living together under common ideals and values.

For the rest of the Western nations, American culture has become a large part of life. With regard to we Canadians specifically, we fear the US overtaking our identity. That can only happen if we allow it ourselves, and there is little reason why we cannot live with our southern neighbor and still retain our own unique culture.

We must not allow ourselves to fall into the trap of blaming America itself for all the ills of the world. There is much about the country that can be criticized, but let that criticism be directed at the Administration calling the shots, rather than the people and culture itself. There are Americans who criticize their own administration just as much as we do. It is because they live in a country that recognizes difference of opinion and freedom of speech that they have the choice to do so. America is not the cause of all the world's problems, but what the Bush Administration needs to realize is that it is not the solution either.

We live in a world in which there are many problems to be solved. Unfortunately, perhaps due to 9/11, the Bush Administration seems to be infected with the mindset that in many cases, force is now the only way to resolve these issues. It is their short-sightedness that may cause many more problems in the future than it could solve, and when they exit from power they may leave a nasty taste in the world's mouth. For that reason, it is the Administration that deserves criticism, not the American people themselves. We can only hope, as citizens of the world, that whatever damage is done will not be irreversible. So go ahead, speak out and be heard. However, be sure that your criticisms and opinions are directed at the right target.

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