CHAPTER NINE

CANADIANS SPEAK

LET'S WRITE (OR TAKE NOTES AND DISCUSS).

Read the roundtable discussion and then write about five typewritten pages in answer to these questions:

1. Which problems do Canada and Korea seem to have in common? Explain in detail.
2. Which problems are very different? Explain in detail.
3. Do you believe national resources should be controlled by the government or by private companies? Explain with examples from Canada and Korea.
4. What is your opinion of multiculturalism? Explain.

LET'S JOIN THE ROUNDTABLE.

Sun-ok and Jane are already seated at the table when Anne comes over, followed by five people. "Sun-ok, Jane, I'd like you to meet Alec, Cindy, Liberty, Paul and Eugene. They're all Canadian teachers of English, and they're here to provide a little balance to our view of life in North America."

After pleasantries are exchanged all around, Sun-ok begins the discussion by asking, "Tell me, what's different about being Canadian?"

Being not American

Paul shakes his head, "First, we've made a big thing of not being American. A lot of things can be blamed on the Americans because they're bigger. We're much smaller, and we have no say in over what happens in America. So we're at the mercy of the big brother next door."

Anne nods, "You mean like acid rain coming north of the border."

"Absolutely. Even economics can be blamed on the U.S. Sometimes it seems like everything in Canada depends on what happens in America."

Liberty adds, "Most of our companies are American companies. We don't have much—especially in manufacturing—we can really call our own."

"I've never felt outspokenly patriotic until I came to Korea," Cindy confesses. The others agree. "I think Americans have a love of country that Canadians don't talk about so much. I feel more like a Canadian here—although I've been to a lot of other countries—because we're always held up against the Americans, even with simple things like people pointing at us all the time and saying, *'Miguk, Miguk.'*"

Eugene interjects, "But with Americans, you see all this patriotic stuff on AFKN."

"Yeah, but that's the military," Anne objects. "The military culture and the civilian culture are completely different."

Cindy shakes her head, "I don't know if you've noticed it at your jobs, but at mine there's a split between the Canadians and the Americans. Any time any of the Canadians show any type of patriotism, like wearing a little flag on a backpack or something, the Americans get really upset."

"I never experienced that," Eugene says, "I've even known Americans who wore a maple leaf when they were abroad. I didn't like it very much, but I guess they don't want to be associated with the American military."

Paul says, "My American friends give me a hard time. They'll say, 'Did you bring your skates? Do you like hockey? Who's your favorite team?' Or they'll say, 'Oh come on, you're just like us. I mean, come on, admit it.' They insist that deep down we're all the same."

Liberty nods. "I think there's a silent tug-of-war between Canada and the States. We're always kind of lumped together, but Canadians are always insisting that we're not the same. We don't want to be the same. We are different. We're from a different country."

Preserving Canadian culture and autonomy

Alec nods. "One of the biggest issues is the media. In the free trade agreement, the biggest stumbling block was our cultural integrity. That's one big way we differ from Americans—by culture. It's true that a lot of Canadians don't believe that there is a distinct Canadian culture. I do. Canadian writers do well overseas, and to me Canadian literature is definitely distinct from American literature."

"So are Canadian filmmakers," Liberty adds.

"Well," Anne agrees, "There certainly seem to be a lot of Canadian publishers interested in publishing only Canadian writers."

Eugene says, "There are also laws about Canadian content. For something to be considered Canadian in the media or the arts, two of the three principals—like the writer, the producer and the director—have to be Canadian. It's funny. The work of Brian Adams, our most popular entertainer, is supposed to be our biggest export. But his last couple of albums weren't allowed in the competition for Canadian awards because one of the writers was British and the producer was British."

"You think Brian Adams is really Canadian?"

"I think sometimes these protection things become a little absurd."

Paul shakes his head. "But don't you think it's necessary? The U.S. cultural industry is just so much larger and more heavily marketed that without protection and support, most Canadians would never even hear about their own literature and film. Canadian publishers are heavily subsidized to publish Canadian writers. If we want to keep our publishing industry with a market as small as we have, then we have to subsidize it. Most of the publishers in Canada are very small, anyway."

"If they get big and profitable, they get bought out and then maybe shut down."

"Remember, Canada has a population of only 27 million spread out over a huge land mass."

Our friendly neighbor to the north

Anne looks startled. "Canada only has a population of 27 million?"

Alec says slyly, "It was 22 when I was a kid. It's gone up." Laughter goes around the table.

Anne says, "The U.S. population is over 257 million."

Paul leans forward to make his point. "It's approximately ten times bigger. There are reasons why Canadians are afraid of being taken over by the U.S. economically and culturally. So in the publishing industry, *Sports Illustrated*, runs off millions of copies of an issue in the States. Then they put it on a computer disk, ship it up to Canada and print the same issue as a Canadian magazine. They add just one Canadian article."

Eugene adds, “I saw a good example of this the last time I was home on vacation. I was watching television with my nephews, and I found out the older one thought that when Canadians were arrested for a crime and taken to court, they were under the same laws as he’d seen on American television. The younger one thought we had a president instead of a prime minister.

“Or look at industry,” Paul says. “We don’t have a single auto manufacturer of our own – only branch plants of the big U.S. auto makers. And NAFTA—“

“This is the North American Free Trade Agreement,” Jane explains to Sun-Ok.

“Yeah, sorry. The free trade agreement hasn’t helped exports of Canadian lumber products or grain in US markets. The Americans use the agreement to take away our rights to protect our industries, but somehow retain the right to protect theirs. One big fear is that NAFTA will be used to force Canada to surrender its universal public medical system, open the door to privatized care and control by the insurance industry.”

Anne shakes her head. “That would be awful. The American health care industry is an enormous mess. But it was not possible for Americans to accept the Canadian system of health care, even though the Canadian system is much better. My compatriots simply aren’t that liberal.”

Big cities go international

Eugene looks skeptical. “Well, people from Toronto and Vancouver say that, but I don’t think other Canadians are too worried about American influence. I think it’s easier to see the differences in the small towns. Once you get into the larger cities, it doesn’t matter if you’re in Canada, the States or somewhere else. The bigger it gets, the more international it tends to be—with industry, business, everything.”

Too much land

Anne looks shocked. “Well sure, but still, I bet this concern is not understood in the U.S. I suspect it’s partly because people look at the map, and Canada looks so big.”

Paul nods. “Particularly if you look at a Mercator projection. The way they lay out the map from the globe, the Mercator projection expands the northern hemisphere. So Canada looks 15 or 20% larger than it really is, whereas America, because it’s closer to the equator, looks smaller.”

“That’s true.”

“I’ll tell you a secret about Canada,” Paul continues. “It’s mostly empty. In most of Canada, there’s hardly anybody there—no cities or towns or even villages. If you drive across the country, you can spend hours and hours and not ever see another soul.”

“Wait a minute. The Native population exists throughout the so-called ‘empty’ spaces.”

“Sorry. That’s true, of course. But still, Canada’s whole story has been described as a struggle to overcome a large land mass with a small number of people—too much land, not enough bodies. Fifty years ago, most of Canada was really a hard place to live in. I’m sure living in Regina is not easy.” Paul turns to Liberty, who comes from Regina. “The winters on the prairies are hard.”

“Awful,” Liberty agrees. “You’re right.”

“Also,” Alec remarks, “Canada has always been tied to the land. I remember reading about the early 50s and all the lumberjacks. The whole Canadian identity is still tied to the land, far more than any other country except for maybe Russia.”

Paul adds, "Lumber, fish, mining and oil are still the biggest money-makers. It hasn't developed the manufacturing industries that it should have."

Government control

Anne nods. "Another difference is state regulation of natural resources. I remember hearing about oil in Alberta several years ago. To me, the idea of state-owned natural resources makes a lot of sense, but it would not be politically possible in the U.S.

"Sorry, but your information is way out of date," Eugene says. "Now most of the resources and utilities that were once public have been sold off, privatized and deregulated."

"Canada was owned by the British crown," Paul explains. "So all the land in Canada was once called Crown Land. So the crown gave the land to the government of Canada, and the government of Canada gave the provinces the rights to the lumber and everything underneath the ground. In the division of power between the federal government and the provinces, natural resources go to the provinces."

Alec adds, "There are a lot of crown corporations in Canada. It's similar to the European model of democratic socialist ideas within a free-enterprise system. In Canada the economy is organized more by the state, whereas in the States one of the biggest problems seems to be that the federal government has almost no control over the economy."

Paul turns to Anne and explains, "For a long time no private individuals had enough capital to get started, for example, to start a phone company reaching from one end of Canada to the other but serving only a few million customers. So the feds, the government, had to supply the capital to start it up. That's also true with transportation and publishing. Nobody had the money to start a train company for a small population stretched out over God knows how many tens of thousands of kilometers."

Who knows?

For a moment there's a pause in the conversation. Paul looks around the table. "There's a certain anonymity in being a Canadian. Nobody knows anything about Canada. Koreans don't know how many people live in Canada or what the capital is or how many provinces there are. They don't know what kind of armed forces we have or what the politics is like. They don't know anything about..."

Cindy starts up suddenly, "As a matter of fact, when the Prime Minister was here, I phoned the embassy, and I asked if I could speak to the Prime Minister of Canada. The Korean receptionist said, 'Who?' 'May I speak to Jean Chretien?' 'Who?' 'Jean Chretien, the Prime Minister of Canada.' Finally she got it. 'Ooooh.' I said his name three times.

"At our own embassy?" Alec asks. "You're kidding."

"At our own embassy."

"Wow."

"Poor President Clinton can't do anything without its being all over the papers. But Jean Chretien..."

"Who?" Alec jokes. Laughter around the table follows.

Stereotypes

"I think the differences between Canadians and Americans are not easily spotted," Alec says with a grin. "You know, simply because someone's polite does not necessarily mean they're Canadian."

Hearty laughter greets this statement. Then Paul adds, "I think we're funnier. I think we have a better sense of humor."

"One of the stereotypes I grew up with," Liberty says, "is that Americans are obnoxious. I learned that, but I never really knew any Americans. Since I've come here, I've found that some people are like that, but it's not fair to say that of all Americans. It's not true at all."

Cindy comments, "Well, one of my American friends says she's always so surprised to hear Canadians talking about how they dislike Americans because they always think of Canada as their friendly sister or brother up to the north."

Coverage of Canada

Anne says, "When you see things about Canada on TV in the U.S., it's often somebody proposing that we make some changes and be more like Canadians, like the health care system and like the penal system. I saw a program once about Canadian penitentiaries and what humane places they were."

Paul nods. "I don't know a lot about the penal system, but I think there's an assumption in Canada that a criminal can be reformed, while in America the assumption is that you're going to jail to be punished."

"I know that imprisonment has to be humane," Liberty says, "but it also has to be a punishment because these people have done something wrong. They shouldn't have tennis courts—"

"Not anymore," Alec jokes. "Government cutbacks."

As everyone laughs, Liberty responds, "So now it's ping-pong."

National identity

"We always need to compare ourselves," Alec says. "We have more multiculturalism, rather than the melting-pot society in the States. I think because of that we're much more open to different cultures in general, and we seem to do better overseas. But I don't think we're as tolerant as we'd like to think we are."

"Since I've been in Korea," Paul says, "it's really been driven home to me. People are always asking me if I speak French. Or they don't realize that at one time—not that long ago—there were more French-speaking people in Canada than English-speaking people. So they say, 'Why do you speak two languages in Canada?' When Canada became a confederation in 1867, there were about equal numbers of French-speaking Catholics and English-speaking Protestants, and guaranteeing the language and religious rights of both groups acrss the proposed new country was the only way to get every to agree to become a nation. These days, a large number of Canadians came from countries that were neither French- nor English-speaking. Our official policy of multiculturalism means we encourage Canadians to retain their original language and culture as well as adopt the language and culture of their new country. Most new Canadians have learned English rather than French, and French is not the main language of more than 10% of Canadians anymore, but we try to recognize its importance by being bilingual."

Cindy nods. "In class I draw a map of Canada on the board, and I show my students it's this big and there's one person per every seven square kilometers. Then I show them a

little spot in Alberta between Edmonton and Calgary, and then I show them way over in Quebec and tell them how many hours it would take to drive there. Then I show them what a small area all of South Korea could fit into. That helps them to understand, first of all, why we have two official languages, and secondly, why not everybody can speak both of them."

"Yeah," Alec agrees.

"It's not like being from Pusan and Seoul."

Alec says, "It's so big. With Canada, it's really not a single identity that we have. There's very much a regional identity. Even though that exists in the States, I think that Americans are so patriotic because there's been a concerted effort to create a national identity."

Anne interrupts, "There was the Civil War, which was an unbelievable national tragedy. After that we had to put the country back together again. That's what did it."

Alec continues, "Whereas in Canada there wasn't the urgency to create a national identity. Canada became a country as a sort of a logical, political decision to protect it from America, rather than of any sense that there was a autonomous, common culture."

Multiculturalism

Cindy turns to Anne, "When you're in the United States or somewhere close to home, and someone asks where you're from, what do you say?"

"I usually say I'm from Pittsburgh."

"What if someone says, 'What's your nationality?'"

"U.S."

"You see, I usually say Hungarian."

"Really? Oh, that's right. If someone asks my nationality I say German."

Anne remarks, "In most of the States, people use the word *ethnicity*, rather *nationality*. But in the upper Mid-West, like in Minnesota, a lot of people will ask what nationality you are, and they'll mean Scandinavian or—they'll mean the country your ancestors came from. I think it's because the immigration to the upper Mid-West has been really quite recent. But that concept is foreign to me. My European ancestors have been in the U.S. for two or three centuries, and one great-great grandmothers was a Native-American."

"But in Canada," Liberty explains, "for example, I am Canadian, and I know that. But it hasn't been that long that my family's been in Canada. So I still think I'm Canadian, but I'm also German."

The American Dream

Paul looks around the table and asks, "How many times have you been to the States?" All the Canadians have been south of the border a few times. He says, "I think that's another thing about Canadians—most of us have visited America. Even in Korea, America is the Land of Oz. Everybody wants to go to America."

"Go across the border, get cheap groceries and cheap cigarettes."

"But I really notice that here. Even though some of my students can go to Australia or England or Ireland or Scotland or New Zealand or Canada to learn English, everybody wants to go to America. Even if you have to get a visa, even if it costs a lot more money."

"I know," Liberty asserts. "The U.S. is seen like heaven on earth by a lot of people, all my students."

Alec says, "I think there's like a mythology about America that Canada doesn't really have."

"Well, except that we get both ends of it," Anne admits. "There's the glorification—'In America the streets are paved with gold.' But then you also get the view from CNN about the race wars and the drugs."

"And the moral corruption."

Paul shakes his head. "In Korea people are afraid American culture will be a bad influence, and that ultimately it's not such a good thing."

Liberty agrees. "I think it must be hard for people to reconcile their love-hate relationship with the United States. They want to dress, they want to eat, they want talk, they want to look, they want to act like Americans, but they hate American culture."

Who's responsible?

"Wait a minute," Anne objects. "I think the West—and it's really Western culture we're talking about, not just American culture—often gets blamed unfairly."

"I agree," Sun-ok says.

"For example?" Alec asks.

"OK, for example, some years ago New Kids on the Block appeared at the Olympic Gymnastics Gymnasium. The concert promoters—who were Korean, of course—oversold tickets, so the place was dangerously overcrowded. At one point in the concert, the excited fans got unruly and started to stampede, crushing others. They were clubbed back by the police. Thirty teenage girls were injured. The band stopped the show until order could be restored. But instead of being applauded for acting responsibly, the band—and Western culture—was blamed for bring demoralization among young people. I don't see it."

"There was another case where two policemen were playing Russian roulette with their guns," Sun-ok adds. "The press said it was Western influence, that they must have read about this in a novel. I think that's ridiculous. Those were grown men who should be held responsible for their own actions."

"Right."

"The reason why I feel so strongly about it," Sun-ok continues, "is that I think it's essential for Koreans to take responsibility for Korean problems. As long as we just blame our problems on America or Japan, we won't be doing anything to solve them. That's victim mentality, and a think it's time for us to rise above that."

"It's in your own best interest," Anne comments.

Government protection for individual rights

Liberty remembers, "In twelfth grade Canadian history, we read the American "Declaration of Independence," when the Americans made their defiant list of their grievances against the British crown, and we compared it with the respectful way the Canadians asked the crown for independence and autonomy. The attitude was very different."

"That brings up another difference between America and Canada," Paul says. "In Canada the relationship between the federal government and the provincial governments has always been that of a strong central government holding this shaky, jerry-rigged country together. We don't have the American distrust of federal control. There's no states' rights. Canadian people have come to rely on their government for a lot of things."

Alec points out, "The difference is evident in the mottoes. In America, it's "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," whereas in Canada it's "peace, order and good government." There is much less emphasis on individual freedom in Canada than in the States. The importance of government is placed above the importance of the individual. For

example, in 1970, when there was a crisis with Quebec terrorists, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeaux imposed martial law on Quebec. That would have been unheard of in the States—a really big deal. But in Canada, almost everyone supported it, even people who didn't like Trudeaux and even the majority in Quebec."

"I disagree," Eugene asserts adamantly. "Our Charter of Rights begins, 'Each individual has the right...' I think the rights of the individual are even more important than in the States in many cases. The Canadian government goes out of its way to protect the individual. And in many cases, I think the majority suffers. For example, in several different places, but mainly in Ontario school boards were told not to allow the singing of Christmas carols at school."

"Why?" Sun-ok asks.

Anne explains, "We have a similar issue in the States involving prayer in the public schools. Our Constitution separates church and state to protect people who don't practice the majority religion."

Paul continues, "Fifty percent of the immigrants go to Ontario and the other fifty go to Vancouver. They may be multi-ethnic communities, but the majority are still Christian. Anyway, in response to complaints from non-Christians, they banned Christmas carols from all the schools in Ontario. On radio and television stations in Ontario, you couldn't use the word Christmas or any word that had any kind of religious connotations."

Anne says, "In the States you can't have religious symbols like Christmas scenes on state property, but I think in the schools people try to acknowledge the holidays of all the ethnic groups represented."

Getting back to Korea

"You know," Sun-ok says. "From my perspective you've missed the point. Both of your countries obviously place great importance on the rights, privileges and responsibilities of the individual. It's so much a part of your ideals that it is the foundation of both of your governments to protect the one person from the many. Then you add to this the image of a vast countryside with too few people on it and cities made up of people from all over the world. I can't tell you how difficult it is for an Asian to understand this."

Alec grins at her. "You'll have to come over and have a look for yourself."

Eugene nods. "But don't just go to Toronto and Vancouver. Take a look at the small towns and the wide open country."

"You could take the train across the country," Anne says, remembering her own experience with the Canadian railway.

"Maybe I should. But right now I have to leave or I'll be late for class."