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Discussion Following the Remarks of Mr. Papademetriou

Discussion

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DISCUSSION FOLLOWING THE REMARKS OF MR. PAPADEMETRIOU

COMMENT, MR. HARVIE: Thank you. Are there any questions?

QUESTION, MR. KING: Would the Legislative Branch or Executive Branch of government make these changes? You are talking about some pretty big changes. Who starts them, how would these changes occur and who has to act?

ANSWER, MR. PAPADEMETRIOU: Depending on the change, some of them will have to be legislative. If they are legislative, it means everybody will have to work very hard to find allies in the U.S. Congress. I do not believe it is the same problem with governments of either Canada or Mexico, although, in Mexico their congress is beginning to be more powerful. Hardly any of these changes can occur through regulation because the agencies that we are talking about, they are controlled very tightly by the congress, so some of it will have to happen at the level of the administration, to create opportunities for the two countries to work together. Many of them will have to occur through legislation. None of these changes are going to be very easy to make.

I am emboldened by the fact, at least in the Mexico/U.S. case; you have a whole bunch of coincidences that have actually created opportunities that did not exist a mere six or seven months ago.

Let me give you some of those coincidences. Both the U.S. government and the Mexican government are now not of the same party as before the end of the Year 2000, which means that neither side is committed to the policies of its predecessor; they can all say something that is very true, but no government official would ever say, and certainly no congressman really said until early this year, namely, that our enforcement-based relationship at the southern border is a failure. Why is it a failure? Because prior to having this tremendous buildup. We spend between one and a half and two billion dollars a year on the southern border, that is about six times as much as it was in 1994, during that same time, illegal immigration in the U.S. increased at a pace that is double that of the pace between 1988 and 1994. What other measure do you want? You want a measure of how many people die at the border? There were thirty or forty deaths at the border in 1994. There were close to five hundred last year. So we manage to spend money well to create conditions where people die, to create a black market on immigration on drugs, et cetera, that totally overwhelms both the government of Mexico and our government, okay? What did we do next? Now you have major Repub-

licans who would never have been able admit what I just told you, basically, saying the system does not work, therefore, let us try to, instead, do things cooperatively, and Mexico be willing to, basically, say corruption, it's a big problem, let's work on it together. Drugs, they undermine the legitimacy of our government as much as they undermine the legitimacy of the American government, let us work on the problem together. There is an opportunity there.

In the case with Canada, we do not have any of these big things, but we tend to get overwhelmed by small things. So we have a major problem now with softwood. Is this something we just developed today? Did not we have a similar problem six years ago? I seem to remember, you know, shingles and all that just from a few years ago. All of those things, those irritants are fine. In any relationship you are going to have irritants as long, as the irritants do not define the relationship.

Now, I do not know whether Mr. Bush is going to pay as much attention to Canada as he is going to pay to Mexico. This is something the Canadians are very sensitive about. The fact of the matter is that our economies in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are totally integrated and so are our labor markets. If you look at U.S. immigration figures, Canada has over a one hundred ten thousand Canadians come into the U.S. each year. The top half of the American labor market is dominated and fully integrated with Canada. The bottom half of the American labor market is fully integrated with Mexican labor. We are, essentially, talking not just about one economy; we are talking increasingly about a single labor market. That does not mean we do not have problems.

That does not mean we should not be concerned about culture. We should be concerned about the people in Canada wanting to remain Canadians. I do not want the Canadians to stop being Canadians. I want us to be realistic about these things, and I want for a Canadian to explain to me in a satisfactory way what would happen if I became emperor tomorrow and I said, by Tuesday morning the border will no longer exist; what would be different? I would not have dictated that the U.S. go and collect social benefits from Canada. The only thing I would have said is that the border does not exist. This would have forced Canada, the U.S. and, eventually, Mexico to think outside of the box.

What if we looked at customs? Which actions could you perform away from the border? If you do them away from the border, you do not need to do them at the border, therefore, you may not have a truck line of five hundred trucks.

How about if we collected all of the customs duties and we did all of our checks out of North American space, so what you going to have to do? You

are going to actually have to really begin to invest in those kinds of activities. So the possibilities are endless.

The political concerns are legitimate, but it takes leadership to try to move us beyond the status quo.

I am, for one, convinced that you do not get to where you may want to be by the Year 2015 by taking small, incremental steps, because the small, incremental steps must have a vision, must have an end goal in mind. These are just small, incremental steps.

Every time that you think you have turned the curve, you have turned the corner, you find that out that the growth in trade or the growth in terrorists, whatever, has again overwhelmed you. You have to start thinking differently about these things.

COMMENT, MR. HARVIE: Are there any other questions? If not, thank you very much Mr. Papademetriou.

