

Economic journeys and friend-finding missions

by BROCK WEIR

Not to brag or anything, but I've tried my best to buy and support local before it was cool.

Let me have it, as there are so few instances where I've been on the cutting edge of trendy. Heck, the last time I had anything similar to say on the subject of trend was back in 2010 or so when Betty White had an unexpected career resurgence.

As someone who remembers watching the last few seasons of the Golden Girls in primetime as a kid, a factoid that apparently makes me perilously close to being an elder statesman in the fan community, I was a ?Betty Booster? before it was cool ? only comparative few listened to me extol her virtues before she was back on a hot streak.

But, the value of buying and supporting local has always been apparent because, chances are, if you truly spend your money in the community, and in businesses whose owners also call the community home, your money will stay in said community in one way or another.

It's a win-win and, as the saying goes, a rising tide floats all boats.

Buying and supporting local, of course, became ?trendy? again at the height of the pandemic when so many of our businesses faced unprecedented challenges staying afloat. Every dollar spent suddenly felt like it had a much greater value and, in many instances, you could see the impact your dollar had not just within the bricks and mortar of the business in question, but in the wider area, whether it helped keep a neighbour employed or a local sports team sponsored.

Yet, every once in a while, supporting local is not quite possible, so you have to look further afield.

As an ardent collector of memorabilia related to a very specific area of our pop culture, I recently found a Bucket List item in the wild west that is eBay.

Given that it had been a good seven months since something in that online marketplace well and truly caught my eye, that the item was reasonably priced, and was being sold by an independent seller, I decided to treat myself with minimal guilt.

The item secured, I was eagerly waiting its arrival and smiled on Monday morning when I got a tracking notification that the item was now in Sydney!

?Okay, it's crossed the border into Nova Scotia ? it won't be too long now!? I thought.

But, then I delved in a little deeper ? for reasons known only to the United States Postal Service, my humble purchase was, instead, in Sydney, Australia!

Now, I'm not as versed as I should be with the ins and outs of international postage, but it seems to me that there are easier ways for all concerned to get from Point A to Point B without having to circumnavigate the globe, but here we are!

Whether this is a super-creative ? if labour-intensive ? way to somehow get around any unforeseen impacts of Trump Tariffs or simply a matter of someone in the USPS taking Bugs Bunny's proverbial wrong turn at whatever Pacific atoll serves as the region's equivalent of Albuquerque, remains to be seen. But at least my item is in a friendly nation, so I'm not too worried ? yet!

In the midst of a trade war, there are worse places for a purchase to be than Sydney, Australia.

Much focus has been placed today, and rightly so, on restoring as much as we can of our trade with the United States?as delineated under our most recent trade deal with the States, signed under the President who likes to pretend he's not spent the last few months railing against a deal he himself executed. It's puzzled me though that Canada has looked little beyond Europe and parts of Asia as a way to shore up our economic power ? at least on the surface.

Canada is the second most senior Commonwealth Realm ? that is, one of the 15 Commonwealth nation that remains a constitutional monarchy with King Charles III as head of state ? behind the United Kingdom and holds a key place among the 56-member ?Commonwealth Family of Nations.?

?Recognizing that in an era of changing economic circumstances and uncertainty, new trade and economic patterns, unprecedented threats to peace and security, and a surge in popular demands for democracy, human rights, and broadened economic opportunities, the potential of and need for the Commonwealth ? as a compelling force for good and as an effective network for cooperation and for promoting development ? has never been greater,? reads the first tenet of the Commonwealth Charter, before it touches upon sustainable development.

?We are committed to an effective, equitable, rules-based multilateral trading system, the freest possible flow of multilateral trade on terms fair and equitable to all, while taking into account the special requirements of small states and developing countries. We also recognize the importance of information and communication technologies as powerful instruments of development; delivering savings, efficiencies, and growth in our economies, as well as promoting education, learning and the sharing of culture. We are committed to strengthening its use while enhancing its security, for the purpose of advancing our societies.?

It seems that, by and large, we, as Canadians, are very much on the same page as the Commonwealth philosophy, but it's a shame that we don't work harder to foster these ties ? economic and cultural ? for the greater good.

Plans have often been proposed for free movement among select Commonwealth nations, particularly the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, but that only goes so far; it also raises questions why proposals such as these almost invariably focus on the four Commonwealth nations that have the highest population of people with European heritage to the exclusion of the myriad member nations within Africa, the Caribbean, South Pacific and elsewhere, but that's column fodder for another day!

Economic partnerships here seem to be a win all around, if only there was interest.

Perhaps, however, these tides are turning ? even if it might simply be out of economic expediency.

Later this month, the King and Queen will be in Ottawa to formally open Parliament at the invitation of Prime Minister Carney. It's entirely fitting, of course for our Head of State to personally read the first Throne Speech of his Canadian reign, and such an act certainly serves to underscore our Canadian sovereignty at a time where it's under significant threat, but I can only hope that it signals a renewed interest on the part of this government in our constitutional institutions, what sets Canada apart, and who our international friends are.

A re-think on this front, in my opinion, is long-overdue.

And, hey, if it makes my vintage coffee mug's journey out from the Land Down Under any easier ? well, that's just a bonus!