

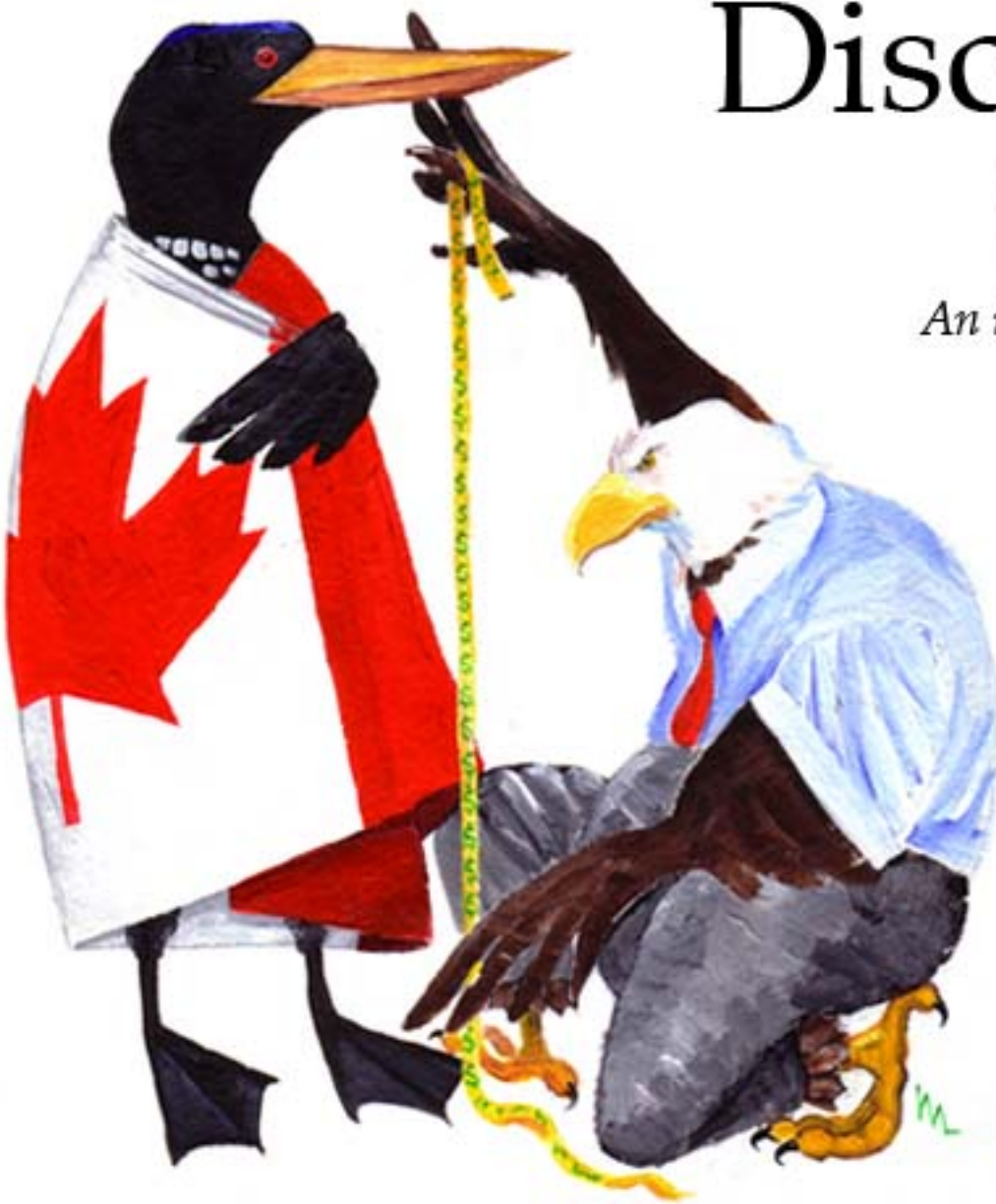
Discounting Canada

An imperialist guide to devaluing our northern neighbors

To many observers in the North Country, news last week that the Canadian loonie had overtaken the US buck on foreign monetary exchanges was as alarming and disorienting as a 3AM wake-up call.

For three decades the diminished Canadian currency—as a factor in the complex equation by which we Americans routinely devalue our northern neighbors—has seemed as solid and constant as, say, the north polar ice cap.

Of course there are many other indicators beyond buying power involved in evaluating the precise extent of our cultural superiority over Canada. To illustrate the broader equation of Canadian Discount Factors (CDFs), consider a road trip from Schenectady to Montreal:



1. The first thing you notice once you clear customs at the Champlain port of entry is that the road you are traveling has inexplicably decreased from Rte 87 (US) to Rte 15 (Can). A CDF coefficient of nearly 83%!

2. Next thing you notice is the distances. The GPS on your fully tricked-out SUV indicates you are 40 miles from Montreal, while the sign at the side of the road says 65 km. This attempt to make your destination seem farther away than it really is is Canada's subtle way of telling you to turn around and go home. (It is always useful to remember that Canadians hate us for our freedom, our mathematical aptitude, and the unconscionably large tax cuts we offer our wealthiest citizens.) As effective as this road sign ploy is on many Americans who bother to read them, it invariably backfires. From our perspective, Canadians look even smaller at these greater distances. CDF coefficient: 60.3%.

3. If on your trip you should need to refuel—pretty much a sure thing at 7 mpg—keep in mind that Canadians buy their gasoline by the litre while we burn it by the gallon. CDF coefficient: 26.4%.

4. And while you wait nearly four times longer for the quart-like units to fill your capacious tank, consider the temperature. Depending on the time of year, Canadians, with their Celsius thermometer enjoy only a fraction of our big American Fahrenheit degrees. Soon enough, when our temperatures dip below 32 degrees, Canadians will be into the negatives, remaining there well into spring. Experience teaches that bodies constrict at lower temperatures: CDF: 26% to 1/ minus infinity %.

5. And while we're on the subject of body image, an average-sized American, at 225 lbs. would be shocked and dismayed to discover his identical Canadian twin weighing a scant 102.06 on the kilogram scale. CDF: 45.4%.

6. The Canadian Discount equation is not limited to standard units of measure. There are other cultural factors to track. For example, Canadians need to score six times at their national sport, hockey, to match one touchdown in our national sport. What's more, whereas we get to score on a green plastic carpet made to simulate vegetation, they must do so on ice (see number 4). CDF: 16.7%.

7. Linguistically Canadians require two languages, French and English, while all we need is one, American. Never mind that knowledge of another language sometimes comes in handy for resolving international tensions. How necessary is talk really when you have righteousness and overwhelming military force on your side? CDF: 50%.

So, with such a ridiculously lopsided cultural comparison equation, it is more than a bit puzzling to wake up and realize that the Almighty US Dollar is a few cents shy when measured against the festively decorated Canadian bills (featuring kids skating, wee woodland creatures, and a queen). Did I say "puzzling?" I meant outrageous. Annoying, even. It would serve our upstart little northern friends right if we just annexed the whole country, making it our fifty-first state. Hey, it's not like they wouldn't be improved—589% by the above equation—overnight by becoming American, right?

And we plan to do exactly that. Soon. Only, everything is just a little too expensive for us up there right now.