

A Our guest today is Fiona Dempsey, a dual citizen of the US and Canada and the author of a recent book with a rather provocative title. The book's called *Merger of the Century: Why Canada and the United States Should Become One Country*. I can imagine your book caused strong reactions Fiona. So why did you write it?

B The United States and Canada have the world's longest border, a total of eight thousand nine hundred kilometres. But they share much more than that. The two countries share the same values, the same lifestyles, and the same aspirations. Some European countries have merged together - think of the United Kingdom or Belgium - so why not the US and Canada? Some eighty per cent of Canadians already live within one hundred and fifty kilometres of the US border. I know a merger sounds like a very bold idea, but I think it makes sense.

A I'm sure you do, but I think you'd have a very hard job persuading the American and Canadian governments to give up their independence to do it.

B So let me give you some reasons why it would be a good thing. Firstly, the two countries united would become the world's biggest superpower. They're already the second and fourth biggest countries in terms of land area. The combined population would be more than three hundred and fifty million. They'd be bigger than South America, a bigger economy than the twenty-eight countries of the European Union, and they'd have the biggest coastline on the planet. They'd have the largest military forces, and the best universities, research facilities, and technology sector in the world.

A Wouldn't China and Russia, for example, look on this as a dangerous development?

B Perhaps, but North America needs to take action now to cope with the rise of Asia. One united country could be a huge advantage in a competitive world. The new country could provide the growing middle classes of India and China with the technology they need, as well as food and energy. America and Canada have more metals and minerals, energy resources, farmland and water than any other region in the world.

A I understand your point about resources, but isn't there an environmental problem here? Are we talking about the exploitation of the wilderness areas of Canada? Wouldn't we be destroying one of the last really wild areas in the world?

B Not if the development of those resources were done carefully. The northern half of Canada is virtually empty, just one hundred thousand people live there. The area needs all kinds of infrastructure to tap the buried treasure - copper, gold, silver, uranium, diamonds, and rare earth materials. All this could create millions of jobs.

A But this doesn't sound like a takeover, it sounds more like a merger: the mighty US taking over little Canada? The US is by far the bigger partner, and I'm not sure many Canadians would appreciate a Washington takeover.

B On the contrary: it's a perfect partnership because the two countries have complementary strengths. America has the capital, manpower, know-how and military might, Canada has vast resources and the strategically important Arctic Ocean. They're already one another's biggest investors, customers, and suppliers. America ships more goods and services to Canada than to any other country, and Canadians buy more US products than does the entire European Union.

A If all of that is already happening, why do they need to merge? Isn't it better to try to stay friendly good neighbours, rather than take the political risks of a full merger? Let me give you one example: how do you think French-speaking Quebec would respond to the idea of a merger with the US? Would French become an official language of the US?

B But the fact is that the two populations are already merging, About three million Canadians live full or part-time in the US, and more than a million Americans live in Canada, Seven million Canadians immigrated to the US in the past century, so millions more Americans have Canadian roots. US corporations own about eleven per cent of Canada's corporate assets, and Canadian corporations are the third biggest investors in the US. And as well as all those economic factors, Americans and Canadians like each other. The logic is for a merger.

#### Outline

In this interview with the author of a book entitled *Merger of the Century: Why Canada and the United States Should Become One Country*, we hear the author's major reasons for proposing the merger of the USA and Canada to form one country, The two countries have the world's longest border, a total of eight thousand nine hundred kilometres. If joined into one, they would become the world's biggest superpower; they would have huge natural resources; they could create millions of jobs; they have complementary strengths; and the two populations are already merging. The interviewer raises such problems as the exploitation of the Canadian natural environment, the practical difficulties of merging, and whether such groups as the people of Quebec would favour a merger.

#### Questions

1. Can a merger of two countries really work?
2. Should the wilderness of northern Canada be protected at all costs?
3. How would you respond to this idea if you were a citizen of Canada?
4. Does a country need to be a big one to survive in today's world?