virtually indistinguishable and equally unbelievable policies. Thus, Manning is left to run on the much more treacherous terrain of social conservatism, terrain that leaves him and his party open to damaging ideological attacks from partisan opponents, the media, and interest groups.

**But What About the Senate?**

How, then, does the recent flap over the Senate’s decision to increase tax-free allowances by $6,000 figure into all of this? It does two things: it puts Senate reform back onto the national agenda, and it complicates the terms of the debate in western Canada.

"The Alberta election results suggest that there is no tide of populist discontent waiting to sweep Reform candidates into the House. Moreover, Campbell can certainly make the argument that she, and not Manning, provides the best chance for a stronger regional voice in Ottawa."

Senate reform has been kept on the constitutional table by western Canadians arguing for more effective regional representation. However, public support for Senate reform has been driven more by democratic discontent with an appointed body that has been starting to exercise some real influence on Canadian public affairs. This democratic discontent is more likely to support abolition than to support the reformed Senate favoured by western Canadian political elites.

It may be the case that democratic discontent with the Senate will reach such a level that abolition emerges as a realistic option. If it does, western Canadian political leaders will find themselves in an awkward position. Could they carry the argument for reform in the face of growing public support for abolition? Would they appear to be resisting a democratic surge? At the very least, a renewed national debate on the Senate will be very different in character from what we have witnessed in constitutional circles over the past few years.

One final note. The potential for a renewed national debate on the future of the Senate depends on the outcome of the next federal election. If the Conservatives win, then a Conservative majority in the House will coexist quite happily with a huge and docile Conservative majority in the Senate, and such a situation will stifle any democratic impulse for reform or abolition. However, a Liberal majority or minority in the elected House facing a hostile Conservative majority in the appointed Senate would be a much more contentious and problematic situation.

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have made the link immediately between the meaning of 1982 for Quebec and the famous passages on breach of trust and dissolution of government in Locke's *Two Treatises on Civil Government*. For some reason, which had nothing to do with the proximity of fellows such as David Bercuson and Barry Cooper, the insight came to me when I was teaching Locke in a political theory class at the University of Calgary, one month or so before the Meech Lake accord was signed in 1987. It is there that I figured it out conceptually and in the flesh what 1982 was all about.

The government of Quebec takes care of the only majority French-speaking society in the Americas. At the heart of the 1982 package was a lucid and voluntary attempt to reduce the legislative powers of the government of Quebec in key matters such as language and education, without the consent of Quebec if necessary. In a federal state, the government of Canada also takes care of the people of Quebec. But in the spirit of Locke, as Allen Buchanan reiterated it recently, it had no business reducing the powers of a member state. 1982 is about breach of trust and dissolution of government. Winning the battle, Canadian nationalism also prepared its own demise. Hence, the comparison still holds, follows the lines of a slow but steady degeneration of a political system unable to untangle itself from the stultifying vision of 1982. Before the end of this century, the constitutional world of 1867-1982 will be no more.

If I am wrong, I promise to buy a round for all my colleagues who will have precisely treasured this issue of *Canada Watch* and who bring it to the constitutional conference in Australia scheduled for the year 2001.

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