

experiences with violence. Yet surveys by feminist researchers that define violence on the basis of what women themselves consider violence, including terrifying experiences with non-criminal street harassment, obscene phone calls, and the like, have uncovered very high levels of victimization.

Consider just one finding from the study at hand: 9 out of every 10 women interviewed reported having been subjected at least once as an adult to some form of unwanted sexual attention by a male or males in a public place. Almost all of these women provided an in-depth account of their worst experience of this sort.

"Some feminists propose that the threat and reality of male sexual and physical violence are important factors in the social control of women, keeping women in a state of anxiety and leading them to narrow the scope of their lives in an effort to protect themselves from danger. The data presented here provide compelling evidence that this is so."

Although the majority of the women were not physically injured or sexually assaulted in the strict legal sense of the term, most were shaken emotionally. As they made clear, it is not necessarily *what* happens during such episodes that produces these feelings; it is the not knowing and the lack of control over how such episodes will end, the nagging, gnawing sense that something horrible *could* happen.

The account that follows (from over 1,800 similar stories) conveys something of this sense. It also underlines the point that concern about sexual and physical well-being is part and parcel of most women's normal daily routines. Consider just

one such routine, travelling home from work:

I was waiting in the subway, coming home from work. A man came up beside me and started saying he would like to perform various sexual acts with me. Then I went over to a group of men, hoping they might sort of protect me. Then the subway came and I got on further down the platform. But the man ran and got on the same car. He stared at me and said to the other people, "She thinks I'm following her" and other things. Then he came very close and stared at me and made me feel very uncomfortable. I got off the subway when it was my stop and that was that. He didn't follow me off ... I was terrified. I had just moved here and I had to come home late at night. I was surprised because the man looked nice at first. You wouldn't think he would be the type to do these sorts of things.

Some feminists propose that the threat and reality of male sexual and physical violence are important factors in the social control of women, keeping women in a state of anxiety and leading them to narrow the scope of their lives in an effort to protect themselves from danger. The data presented here provide compelling evidence that this is so. One thing is clear, women's fear will end only when men's harassment and violence does.

The authors teach at the Department of Sociology and the LaMarsh Research Program on Violence and Conflict Resolution, York University.



WESTERN REPORT

WATCHING THE ABORIGINAL HORIZON

by Roger Gibbins

Over the next few months western Canadians, like all Canadians, will avoid any long-term political thinking pending the upcoming federal election. This election will be of particular interest in the region given the uncertain future of the Reform party. It will provide the first full test of fire for Reform, and recent polls suggest that success is far from certain. A lot will depend, of course, on the prime minister's decision about his own future.

It is not, then, a time for bold regional initiatives on the national stage. Nor is there any indication that western premiers would welcome any such initiatives. In the wake of the October referendum, the game plan is to stick close to the home fires.

The lull, however, will not last because the next major challenge is on the horizon. It will come from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, whose research teams are fanning out across the country. Although the commission's report has yet to be written, there is no doubt that it will thrust Aboriginal self-government back to the centre of the national stage. Within the commission, and perhaps only within the commission, constitutional politics are alive and well.

Given the lull on other fronts, it is an opportune time to look ahead to one of the most complex and intriguing public policy questions the region is likely to face.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE WESTERN SCENE

Although the commission's mandate is national, the west will pro-

vide particularly intriguing and difficult terrain for the public policy issues to be addressed.

The centrality of the west to the larger project stems only in part from the relatively large size of the Aboriginal population in the region. A more important factor is the complexity of that population and thus the complexity of the problems to be addressed.

The west contains not only many of the largest and most assertive treaty organizations in the country but also, in British Columbia, the largest non-treaty Aboriginal population. The region contains small rural communities, large urban populations, remote reserves, and reserves contiguous to large urban centres. It contains well-organized treaty and non-treaty Indians along with the great bulk of the Métis population. Aboriginal communities differ tremendously in size, wealth, and human resources.

FASCINATING POLICY CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD

Although it does not take much of an intellectual stretch to apply conventional notions of federalism to Aboriginal communities with a well-defined and reasonably well-resourced land base, it is not at all clear how models of self-government can be used to address the concerns of Aboriginal peoples living in urban environments.

The application of Aboriginal self-government to the region's Métis population will be particularly problematic given that the population still lacks demographic definition, that no landbase exists outside the Métis settlements in Alberta, and that many Métis live in urban centres.

The application of self-government within more conventional, reserve-based Indian communities will have to address very complex ques-

tions relating to the redistribution of wealth both within and across communities. Any right to tax inevitably carries with it questions of redistribution that Aboriginal communities have not yet had to address.

Finally, the application of the *Charter of Rights* within self-governing Aboriginal communities will again emerge as a central issue of public policy and the one most likely to bring the larger Canadian community into play.

A CHANGING POLITICAL CONTEXT

In reading the entrails of the October 26 referendum, most observers concluded that despite a "no" vote, and a particularly strong "no" vote in the west, a good deal of public support was evident for Abo-

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riginal peoples. It should not be assumed, however, that such support, if it in fact exists, will be easily transformed into support for some of the more specific proposals that might emerge from the royal commission.

I would argue that public support for Aboriginal self-government has been systematically overestimated. My concern is that Canadians might not support the concept of Aboriginal self-government that Aboriginal peoples have in mind. There is a danger

that Canadians may see self-government as a way to shed any continued fiscal responsibility for Aboriginal peoples, and indeed as a means of removing a sense of collective guilt. Aboriginal peoples will be seen as responsible for their own fate, fiscal and otherwise, and Canadians at large may anticipate washing their hands of any ongoing responsibility.

It should also be kept in mind that this time around Aboriginal self-government will not be discussed in the context of a broader constitutional package. Yet that package was responsible in part for public support for Aboriginal self-government, because it seemed unconscionable to go ahead with constitutional reform without at the same time addressing the concerns of Aboriginal peoples. However, when the larger package is stripped away, it is not clear that Canadians will bring the same degree of support, concern, and urgency to the concerns of Aboriginal peoples.

Roger Gibbins is Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary. Western Report is a regular feature of Canada Watch.

