



Practical and Authoritative Analysis of Key National Issues

*Canada Watch* is a publication of the York University Centre for Public Law and Public Policy and the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies of York University.

## PRIME MINISTER PARIZEAU COMES TO NEW YORK CITY

by Stephen Blank

Prime Minister Parizeau spoke to a "Wall Street audience" at the Americas Society yesterday. Afterward, reporters accompanying him grilled guests on how they felt about a separate Quebec. That was the wrong question. Obviously, no one wants to see Canada divided, but Quebec independence is not really the issue.

Americans do not believe Quebec will leave Canada — and the idea bruited about here recently by an Ontario MP that America's failure to squeeze Quebec would signal

our ultimate aim of grabbing Canadian territory or resources is truly absurd. They are optimistic that Canadians will come to some sort of accommodation as they always have. But American interests are not directly challenged by whether Canada's constitution is changed, by whether Quebec or other provinces create a new relationship with Ottawa or with each other — or even by Quebec independence.

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## PREMIER PARIZEAU'S PROJECT: A VERY CANADIAN NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

by David Cameron

In a document tabled in the National Assembly on December 6, Premier Jacques Parizeau said that Quebec's Declaration of Sovereignty will be modeled on the American Declaration of Independence.

Really?

The American document was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, in the early

stages of a six-year war in which the American colonists fought for their liberty from Great Britain. The American colonists, acknowledging that prudence dictates "that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes," asserted that "when it

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## A CONTINENTAL ECONOMY

American interests lie in maintaining the integrity of North American free trade and in ensuring monetary stability and the stability of financial markets in North America. America has profound interests in enhancing North American competitiveness in global markets — "North American" because US and Canadian firms increasingly compete globally on a North American basis. We have a fundamental interest in defending and advancing free trade against the rising forces of protectionism within our own countries.

The events of the past few weeks will have a major impact on the environment in which Quebec sovereignty is resolved and on how others, including Americans, view these developments. *The Perils of Pauline* Uruguay Round of GATT is a reality. The World Trade Organization, despite enormous uncertainties, is coming off the drawing board. Members of APEC, including the United States and Canada, agreed to remove trade and investment barriers in the next quarter century in a region that already makes up 40 percent of world trade and one half of the world economy. And the 34 western hemisphere heads of government who attended the Summit of the Americas in Miami this past week committed themselves to a new Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by 2005.

Much of this, admittedly, is smoke and mirrors, and more remains to be done than has been accomplished. But our Wall Street friends are thinking much more about these developments than about Quebec separation.

Some people who attended the meeting — myself among them — believe that a new economic and political system is emerging in North America (and in Europe and, to a

lesser, in East Asia). National sovereignty is being unbundled both upward and downward. Markets no longer conform to national boundaries and new sets of rules overarch national sovereignty — while at the same time competitive advantage increasingly clusters in subnational cross-border regions. In 1982, an economic map of North America would have shown basically three national economies defined by national borders. Today, an economic map of North America would show an increasingly integrated continental economy.

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All countries are dealing with how this new relationship between markets, rules, and regions will be organized. The most likely outcome will be greater decentralization and regionalization within a complex, multi-level system of rules and authorities — not just in Canada, but in every advanced industrial nation.

## BRINKSMANSHIP: CANADIAN STYLE

Given this perspective, outsiders have a hard time understanding what is going on today in Canada.

Parizeau's position remains enigmatic. He calls for Quebec sovereignty, but clearly acknowledges the limitations to that sovereignty: shared monetary arrangements with Canada (increasingly shared with the United States as well); common passports; and the rules of free trade with the

rest of Canada, CUSFTA, NAFTA, GATT and so on. The nuance is elusive.

The initial response from the rest of Canada is, if anything, more puzzling. The temptation to sling threats at Quebec is understandable. Parizeau irritates the hell out of other Canadians, but blithely assumes that they will go along with his plans for financial and monetary cohabitation. The same goes for trade.

But Canada's main interests in the CUSFTA, NAFTA and FTAA are clear. One is to strengthen Canadian export performance by pushing trade liberalization and economic integration forward on the widest possible front. With regard to the US, Canada's key concern lies in what Roy MacLaren calls the "black hole" at the core of CUSFTA and NAFTA — the lack of common trade laws. Canada's interest is to build a network of hemispheric trade commitments around the United States, not only to pre-empt the dreaded hub-and-spoke system, but to weave a fabric of common practices, policies, and laws that will limit American unilateralism.

For Canadians to seek to isolate Quebec and exclude it from Canadian and continental free trade is entirely counterproductive; however, it is Mr. Parizeau's calm certainty that at the end of the day Canadians will act in their own best economic interests that sends them through the roof and leads to threats that they will pull down the temple around their own ears.

The uncertainty that threats and counter-threats produce intensifies concern about deficits. What foreigners want to know is that political developments in Canada will not diminish anyone's capacity to deal with these obligations or to put Canada's financial house back in order.

C.D. Howe's Bill Robson observes that many legal and financial



problems that would arise from constitutional changes could be resolved if there is a real desire to solve them. But it is difficult to find this will in Canada at the present time.

This is the issue that Americans have the hardest time coming to terms with. Those who have been up the Meech and Charlottetown hills and down again do not understand why no one is talking, or why the federal government seems unwilling to present a counterproposal to sovereignty particularly when, as Daniel Latouche wrote in the last issue of *Canada Watch*, "the absence of such an alternative is one of the most potent weapons in the hands of the PQ."

Several explanations are available. Latouche and Lucien Bouchard say that Ottawa's more fundamental objective is to re-centralize political power in Canada. Another view is that this is a Quebec-Canadian kind of brinkmanship.

A more straightforward explanation, however, focuses on the exhaustion of elites in Canada. Elites across Canada, including Quebec, exhausted by the search for accommodation, terrified of the political reaction if they should dare raise the issue of the constitution once again, fearful about the economic outlook

and the impact of free trade, alarmed at unemployment levels and deeply discouraged by prospects for young people, have concluded that the time for symbolic solutions is over. Somehow, after all these years, the boil must be lanced.

This pressure for clarity and closure, driven by impatience and exhaustion, may be dangerous and unnecessary. Massive, profound changes are now under way in Canada's, and North America's, economic and political infrastructure.

It would be remarkable, to say the least, if Canadian leaders, renowned for their ability to effect compromise, now conclude that they can no longer tolerate ambiguity and that the one issue that has structured the history of Canada must be at last resolved. Even more ironic, if at the very moment of tremendous change in Canada and all of North America, Canadian leaders should actually force the division of the country.

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becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another ... , a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

What were these causes? More than two dozen specific evils and abuses are listed, all of them demonstrating to the satisfaction of the Continental Congress that "the history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States." These are not peccadilloes; they are black political sins. A few examples:

- the repeated dissolution of legislatures and the refusal to hold elections;
- the obstruction of justice;
- the keeping of standing armies, in times of peace, without civil consent;
- cutting off trade with other parts of the world, imposing taxes on the people without their consent, the denial of trial by jury; and

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- the waging of war against the people ("He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people").

This is the model for the Premier of Quebec's Declaration of Sovereignty?

What causes of separation are offered by the Government of Quebec to satisfy "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind"? In all the documents placed before the National Assembly last week at this solemn moment in history of the people of Quebec, only one cause of separation is mentioned: "to settle definitively the constitutional problem that has been confronting Quebec for several generations." No allegations of tyranny, no abuse of power, no denial of democratic rights, no confiscation of property, no infringement on the liberties of the citizen. Just a "constitutional problem." Thomas Jefferson would weep.

The American colonists were struggling to free themselves from despotism, from the tyrannical oppression of Great Britain.

The difficulty for the separatists of Quebec is that they are already free.

As individuals, they are unquestionably living in one of the freest countries on the face of the globe; protected by the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and a constitutional charter of rights; benefiting from membership in a society that places a high value on respect for freedom and the rights of others; operating in a democratic political system muscular enough to allow a secessionist political party to form the Official Opposition in the Parliament of Canada.

As members of a national community, the separatists are free again.

The vast majority of francophones in Canada live within Quebec, where they make up more than 80 percent of the population. Enjoying the benefits of what is arguably the most decentralized federal system on the globe, their government is free to fashion very much the kind of society that the majority wants — in health care, in education, in social policy, in the structure of the economy and, to a substantial degree, in immigration. Their government is able to borrow abroad, sell hydro-electric energy internationally, engage in quasi-diplomatic representation, set up an "embassy" in Paris larger than that of many sovereign states. The people of Quebec have been free enough to utterly transform their society in little more than three decades, all within the framework of Confederation. When they have pushed on the door, it has opened. This is tyranny? Meanwhile, despite the regrettable fact that the country has been unable to recognize Quebec as distinct society in the constitution, Canada has nevertheless substantially redefined itself to take into account the French fact, which 35 years ago was barely acknowledged as being of national significance. This is oppression?

Quebec separatists implicitly recognize all this. They do not use the language of an oppressed people; that would be silly. Quebecers are already in charge. They do not argue that they need to separate so that the rights and freedoms of their people can be protected properly; they already are. They do not contend that it is their desire to build a new economic order based on different principles; they wish to maintain the existing role of the private sector and they want in, not out of the FTA and NAFTA and GATT and every other economic acronym going. Part company with the Western military alliance? No way: they aim to be part of NATO and NORAD. They

are not fed up with an alien British parliamentary system; in fact, they intend to keep it as is and plan to seek membership in the British Commonwealth.

So why do the separatists want out? What do they want to be free of? A cynic, or a tired federalist, might say that they want out so that they can get back in. They want to be free of the rest of Canada so that they can economically associate with it. They want to separate from the country, but keep Canadian citizenship. They want to secede, but continue to use the Canadian dollar. They want open borders, free movement of people, closer economic ties with Ontario. And Jacques Parizeau is supposed to be far more committed to hard-line independence than René Lévesque was years ago. The next thing you know, they will be saying they want to keep Elizabeth as the Queen of Quebec.

This is a very Canadian national independence movement.

You can see why the rest of the world finds it a little difficult to take our perpetual wrangling too seriously. The idea of seceding from one of the wealthiest and freest democracies in the world makes about as much sense as it would for you to agree to your genial dentist's proposal that he pull all your teeth out so you won't have to worry about cavities.

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson and the other members of the Continental Congress are, I have no doubt, speechless in heaven.

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## EDITORIAL

# PARIZEAU'S GAME PLAN: JUST A PROPAGANDA EXERCISE?

by Daniel Drache

For good reason, Parizeau's strategy for next year's referendum on sovereignty has been harshly attacked in the English Canada media and by Quebec federalists. If Parizeau succeeds in persuading Quebecers that a "yes" vote is their only constitutional option on the table at this time, it will be game over for the federalist forces. This explains why both Chrétien and Johnson have rejected the government-organized consultation process. Ottawa needs a winning strategy and it has decided to destabilize the consultation process by opting out of it. However, the question is this: by boycotting the consultation process, is it likely to help or hinder the federal and provincial liberals in defeating the referendum?

Federalist forces remember all too vividly the way the Bélanger-Campeau Commission undermined their arguments. The process was fluid, outside of party control and, in the end, the federal liberals got the short-end of the stick. It is easy to see why they do not want a second Bélanger-Campeau Commission at any price.

The larger problem is that public consultation is always fraught with risk for elected governments, whatever their stripe. Certainly, Axworthy has discovered the perils of funding different interest groups to be intervenors in the reform of Canada's social programs. The message they are sending him is not what he wants to hear. So he is not listening. What else is new? Every government wants to control the public agenda and the federal Liberals are masters of the technique.

Even before Axworthy has finished his consultation exercise, Finance Minister Paul Martin is preparing to make further cuts to Canada's UI program and CBC funding; grants to the Canada Council are also going to be axed, despite federal promises to leave both core institutions' budgets unaltered.

Where does this betrayal of the public trust leave the Axworthy reform process? Is it a fraud? At the end of the day, Canadians do not get a chance to vote on these nation-affirming programs. By contrast, all

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*"If the PQ government expects to find 200,000 more votes than it received in the recent election, which are needed to win the referendum campaign, it has to involve Quebecers in an innovative way to break the present constitutional stalemate."*

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significant change to Quebec's place in confederation is to be put to the will of the people in a referendum vote beginning with a broad-based consultation process. In these circumstances, should all popular sector groups stop talking with Mr. Axworthy? Certainly not. If all these groups sit on the sidelines, their concerns will be ignored.

### A BROAD-BASED CONSULTATION PROCESS

The substantive issue is not that Parizeau is trying to "bamboozle Quebecers." If anything, he has taken a considerable risk in laying out a strategy that could easily go off the rails. It is an ambitious project

with a number of fail-safe provisions if the public turns against it. In the event that that happens, the whole project can be aborted. Surely this is what democracy is all about. In the final analysis, if Parizeau does not win a majority, the sovereignty bill is not passed.

The charge that the PQ's game plan is a hoax does not make much sense, particularly when one looks at the fine print. In essence, the PQ government is going to appoint 15 regional committees and they will offer Quebecers of all persuasions a voice in deciding their collective future. There will be a representative from the PQ and the Bloc québécois. The Parizeau plan allots three seats to the federalist forces — one to Johnson's provincial Liberals, one to Ottawa, with the third place going to the federal conservatives who have only two seats federally and no seats provincially.

Whatever else one can say, the federalists are at the table and are not under-represented. They should use their position in these regional committees to rally the No forces. In addition to representatives from the political parties, each regional committee will have between seven and ten non-elected members representing various interest groups in the region. The criteria for nominating these individuals still has to be determined by the National Assembly's standing committee.

If the process is to have any legitimacy in the eyes of Quebecers, the PQ government will not be able to appoint simply its "friends." It

*Continued, see "Propaganda Exercise?" on page 34.*



**"Propaganda Exercise?"**  
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may want to and it may try to do so — it will then face a violent backlash from Quebeckers. But it is not likely to put its entire project in jeopardy for this reason. Parizeau knows full well why the Bélanger-Campeau Commission was so effective. Business, as well as labour, and community groups, as well as representatives from elite and non-elite groups, were at the table shaping its deliberations. The Parizeau plan will reach out to Quebec's civic society, inviting it to participate once again in deciding Quebec's future.

If the PQ government expects to find 200,000 more votes than it received in the recent election, which are needed to win the referendum campaign, it has to involve Quebeckers in an innovative way to break the present constitutional stalemate.

The question is whether Quebeckers will find the process too intense and too emotionally stressful to maintain the high level of interest that Parizeau's scheme requires. There are many unknowns and it is too early to say with certainty whether the consultation process will be frictionless. What is clear, however, as Stephen Blank's analysis of Parizeau's address to the "lords of Wall Street" shows, is that Quebec's economy is in poor shape and that Quebec will be under intense pressure to adopt a leaner and meaner style of government. Even though Parizeau has promised no more "blind" cutting, it is the intent of Paul Martin to test his will.

With the economy so weak, Martin is betting that Quebeckers are likely to tire of the constitutional wars. If this happens, Parizeau will have a very tough time in rallying public opinion to his side because he will be pressed to cut spending in order to reduce Quebec's deficit.

Nonetheless, Parizeau is far ahead of the federalists in articulating a different vision of Quebec and Canada. He has found a way for Quebeckers to affirm their identity and their desire to thrive in North America. His novel approach to Referendum '95 stresses that cultural and socio-economic questions cannot be arbitrarily dissociated. They are, in fact, intimately linked and form the core of Quebec's constitutional demands.

Many Quebeckers must find Parizeau's vision attractive, as well as the fact that his new government is ready to give strong leadership on the constitutional question. The latest opinion poll confirms that the independence option is now supported by roughly 45 percent of Quebeckers, or more than 53 percent of francophones. It would be a mistake for English Canadian opinion leaders to pretend that the draft bill is not the missing piece of the constitutional puzzle.

A large number of Quebeckers are of the view that Parizeau's government is serious in its desire to limit the federal government's power. They seem ready to reject the notion that Quebec needs the support of the other provinces and the federal government before it can resolve the ambiguity surrounding its place in Canada. Foolishly, liberal hardliners have not adjusted to the reality that they are now in the opposition and no longer control Quebec's constitutional agenda.

**THE "EMPTY CHAIR"  
STRATEGY**

For this essential reason, then, Daniel Johnson's "empty chair" strategy is problematic in the extreme. He is being petulant rather than strategic. The federalist forces have made a gigantic blunder in deciding to boycott the consultation process now that Mario Dumont and

his party are on board. Other prominent federalists, such as Jean-Paul L'Allier and Marcel Masse, have scrutinized Parizeau's proposal and have been persuaded of its merits. This is surely the most convincing evidence that the PQ government's consultation is not a bogus exercise.

The danger is that Johnson will find himself isolated from mainstream opinion in Quebec. What is even a greater threat is that Ottawa will have no official status during the consultation process and, at every town hall meeting, the chairs for federalist representatives will be unoccupied. Federalists need a better strategy if they expect to defeat Parizeau's vision of a sovereign and independent Quebec sharing economic and social ties with the rest of Canada.

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*Canada Watch* welcomes submissions on issues of current national interest. Submissions should be a maximum of 1,000 words.

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# FULL SPEED AHEAD, EASY ON THE GAS

by Roger Gibbins

Ralph Klein's Progressive Conservative government is in a somewhat paradoxical position. On the provincial scene, it is moving with unrelenting speed and determination in its efforts to transform the fact of government. However, on the national scene, and with specific reference to the emerging national unity debate, the government faces near paralysis.

## AT HOME IN ALBERTA

Most Canadians are familiar with the basics of Alberta's deficit reduction plan. The government announced in February 1994 that it planned to eliminate the provincial deficit in three years. This was to be accomplished through a very modest anticipated increase in revenues (6.6%) and deep cuts in expenditures (18.3%). The program cuts varied somewhat across government departments. For example, education has been cut by 12.4%, advanced education by 17%, family and social services by 19.3% and environmental protection by 29.8%. These cuts have been accomplished in part through a 5% reduction in salaries and benefits for all public sector employees including Edmonton bureaucrats, teachers, nurses and university professors.

An important point to stress about the Alberta deficit reduction plan is that it is driven primarily by expenditure cuts rather than by revenue growth; the government has been adamant that there will be no tax increases (user fees are not considered taxes!). Unlike the strategy taken by the federal government, there is no optimistic reliance on economic growth as the solution to the deficit crisis. As a consequence, the government is well positioned

should revenues increase and, indeed, this is what is happening. Rigorous expenditure cuts coupled with unanticipated revenue growth will mean that the government will likely meet its goal of a balanced budget in less than two years, rather than three.

What many Canadians may not realize is that the deficit elimination program and its associated expenditure cuts are only part of the restructuring process that is underway in the province. The Klein government is determined to use deficit reduction as the justification to reduce the provincial state in many ways that have nothing to do with expendi-

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*"In the months ahead, the Klein government can be expected to keep a relatively low profile on national unity issues while at the same time arguing that its deficit reduction model is one for all Canadians."*

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tures. Thus, for example, the government has embarked on an expansive process of privatization. Legislation passed in part during the fall session, and to be concluded in the spring, will enable cabinet ministers to privatize any aspect of their departmental operations, and to do so without either legislative debate or any ongoing public responsibility for the behaviour of private contractors. Privatization will likely extend to jails, environmental protection and many forms of social services. It should also be noted that the government has moved to centralize control over education by radically reducing the number of school boards and by gutting their taxation powers.

In summary, the Klein government is moving ahead with an ag-

gressive plan to reduce not only the deficit, but also the size and scope of the provincial state. And, despite the massive transformations that are being undertaken, the government is not encountering significant political opposition. The changes have been so extensive, and have been taken so rapidly, that opponents barely have time to catch their breath, let alone mount any coherent opposition. Certainly, the opposition Liberals have been sidelined in the expenditure reduction despite significant legislative strength.

## THE NATIONAL STAGE

This image of a relentlessly aggressive and single-minded government changes dramatically when we shift to the national stage and more specifically to the emerging national unity debate. There the Klein government faces two very difficult problems.

The first stems from the fact that it is not clear that the Alberta government has anything useful to say with respect to the national unity debate, or at least useful in the traditional sense that it would build bridges to moderate opinion in Quebec. The constitutional principles that Alberta has staked out in the past—the constitutional equality of the provinces and Senate reform—are non-starters in Quebec. Given the litmus test that is generally used to evaluate political ideas in Canada is their receptivity among Quebecers, there is little to be gained by the Alberta government speaking out on national unity issues for the language it would use would not be shared by political elites east of Manitoba.

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*"Full Speed Ahead,"  
continued from page 35.*

The second problem stems from the Klein government's ongoing commitment to public consultation. While this government is by no means reluctant to move, it is reluctant to do so without at least the veneer of public consultation and input. The problem on the national unity issue is that it is clear what Albertans will say if they are consulted. They will recommend an early referendum in Quebec (tomorrow would be just about right) and they will recommend, even demand, a straightforward, three word referendum question: in or out?

Thus, if Klein government goes to the public, its position on national unity issues will be highly constrained and will be seen in the parts of the country that count (Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto) as being unreasonable, even bigoted. Therefore, the government is paralyzed; it has little that is "constructive" in any event, and if it engages in public consultation, it may have even less to say.

It is for these reasons that the current Alberta scene is somewhat contradictory, combining an aggressive provincial agenda with a standpat, low-key national agenda. In the months ahead, the Klein government can be expected to keep a relatively low profile on national unity issues while at the same time arguing that its deficit reduction model is one for all Canadians. Whether the first strategy will be successful, and whether the second will be believed, remain to be seen.

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## THE DE-RE-GENDERING OF SOCIAL POLICY

*by Janine Brodie and Leah Vosko*

Feminists have long argued that state discourses and practices around social welfare are critical to understanding the character of gender relations during any period of structural transformation and the way in which women both identify with and mobilize in politics. The welfare state, for example, represented a marked departure from the rigid boundary between the public and private spheres that was enforced by the laissez-faire state. It also altered the character of the gender order and women's place within it. It presumed a stable middle-class nuclear family that contained a male breadwinner, a dependent wife, and children that relied on the unpaid domestic labour of women. Through the protection of unionization and collective bargaining rights and through social policy, the welfare state ensured that there would be a family wage. The individual male worker was expected to bring home an adequate enough income to care for his family. To the extent that the welfare state spoke to women, it spoke to them as mothers. Indeed, it readily transferred money from working women who did not fit this dominant cultural model to women who did — mothers.

Of course, the structural foundations for this particular model of social welfare provision and the post-war gender order have long passed. The branch plants have closed and the concept of a family wage is now premised on two parents working in the labour force and not one. More than this, the model post-war family is being replaced by alternative families and, in particular, the spectacular rise of lone-parent (read women-headed) families.

### NEO-LIBERAL NEWSPEAK

How then does Human Resource Minister Axworthy's discussion paper, *Improving Social Security in Canada* (ISSC), recast the welfare provision, the gender order, and women's place within it? In short, it first degenders women, making them employable individuals instead of mothers; it is hard to find women in this discussion paper even though we know that the provision of social welfare is highly gendered. Second, it regenders them as welfare dependants in need of therapeutic and educational interventions. For example, some 60 percent of single mothers live below the poverty line and this group, in particular, finds strong representation among the ranks of welfare recipients.

Finally, the problem of lone-parent poverty is no longer identified as a common phenomenon among women. Instead, single mothers are cast as employables — potential workers — who are a burden on the state. The poverty of single mothers is divorced from the poverty of their children: children are the new "vulnerable" poor, and "deadbeat dads" become the cause of their poverty. As the discussion paper explains, "one key reason why there is such a close link between poor children and lone-parent families is inadequate, unreliable, or unpaid child support payments." Axworthy's document sees the lone-parent family as a gender-neutral one when, in fact, we know the vast majority of these families are female-headed.

Instead of recognizing the highly gendered division of the labour force both in the work force and the home, the government proposes to help



"people" find work, to help "people" develop their skills, and to help "people" devise their individual action plans. The discussion paper is intended to send the clear and unequivocal message that being a social welfare client or an unemployed worker is an "individual" problem first and foremost. As well, it sends the message that if individuals were willing to take "lesser jobs," unemployment and poverty would be lower. Perhaps most distressing and disingenuous, however, is that it has embraced the neo-liberal rhetoric about welfare dependency — that there are plenty of jobs if government could only break the habit of the welfare recipient or the "frequent user" of unemployment insurance.

The idea of dependency stigmatizes the poor and the unemployed and makes them appear to be personally to blame for their condition. The term is a metaphor for drug addiction — again something that is judged to be an individual and moral shortcoming, blameworthy and avoidable. The term dependency raises the spectre of the pathological and dysfunctional that is, in turn, treatable through selective and corrective intervention. In the case of the government's proposals for social security reform, this involves identifying the diseased, the dependants, and the otherwise employable, and subjecting them to treatments such as retraining and counselling or creating disincentives to break their habit in the form of workfare — "the dignity of work" as the report would have it, or restrictive and declining benefits. The latter is the rationale underlying the proposed two-tiered UI system that would pay the so-called "frequent user" (the addict) lower insurance benefits than the so-called "occasional user" (the recreational user).

To this point in our reading of Axworthy's discussion plan, the de-

re-gendering of social welfare provision is only implicit. But the discussion paper goes further to draw the links between social assistance, dependency, personal culpability, gender, and the necessity for individual therapeutic intervention. At one point, it suggests that the problem of UI dependency is more pronounced among particular groups such as women, members of visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and aboriginal people. And, at another point, it suggests that single mothers should be encouraged to "leap successfully from social assistance to the independence of a job — even a low paying one," essentially so that they do not transmit their pathologi-

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*"The Axworthy plan fits comfortably into the newspeak of neo-liberal governments that attempt to make structural inequalities invisible and, in the process, silence groups that protest these inequalities. Instead, it conveys a message of 'mutual responsibility' — that it is up to every 'good' individual to become more flexible and self-reliant and to make fewer demands on the state."*

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cal behaviour onto their children. As the discussion paper puts it, "the price of staying on welfare is high ... children who grow up on society's sidelines, risk the continuation of a cycle of low achievement and joblessness."

The Axworthy plan fits comfortably into the newspeak of neo-liberal governments that attempt to make structural inequalities invisible and, in the process, silence groups that protest these inequalities. Instead, it conveys a message of "mutual responsibility" — that it is up to every "good" individual to become more flexible and self-reliant and to make fewer demands on

the state. But a deeply entrenched and unequal gender order, by definition, means that women can only be gendered individuals. As much as this newspeak tries to cast women as individuals detached from a deeply gendered social order, it must then necessarily recast them as "bad individuals" — the ones who are different, dependent, and blameworthy for not successfully leaping into independence. This is the gendered message that shines through the optimistic lines of the Axworthy discussion paper.

The fact is that one study after another shows that the present period of restructuring is increasingly characterized by the "feminization of poverty." Axworthy's vision of the "individualization of poverty" attempts to deflect us from making claims on the state precisely because of women's unequal and structural relationship with poverty. This vision must be rejected.

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# THE IMMIGRATION REFORM THAT WASN'T

by James C. Hathaway

Much of the publicity about the recently announced immigration reform focused on the government's decision to de-emphasize the admission of family members in favour of enhanced economic class immigration. In fact, no fundamental changes were proposed to family admissions in Canada's immigration mix. Some fine tuning, yes, and promises of reforms to come, but no clear vision of why Canada admits family members, or of the optimal mix of family and other classes of immigration. Beneath all of the statistical machinations there is a simple truth: roughly 73 percent of those who immigrated to Canada in 1993 entered on the basis of their family status (including members of both the family class and assisted relative class, as well as the dependants of assisted relatives, independent immigrants, and business immigrants.) In contrast, only about 10 percent were admitted because they were refugees or otherwise demonstrated humanitarian need, and about 17 percent were selected for economic reasons. The plan for 1995 projects a reduction of family-defined immigration to about 67 percent of the overall total. This is hardly the stuff of radical reform.

## DEIFYING THE "FAMILY"

Why do we reserve such a mammoth proportion of our immigration quota for family members? Family immigration, unlike refugee protection, is not required to meet our responsibilities under international law. Nor is it simply a case of admitting accompanying family members to attract persons of economic or other value to this country (other immigration states employ narrower definitions of sponsorable family members). Instead, the recent policy

review's commitment to "maintaining a strong family program" is more visceral. In essence, the government suggests that we should admit family members simply because it is "natural" that families want to live together. Both current and proposed immigration policy unthinkingly deify the place of "family," causing two kinds of difficulty.

First, this reflexive and open-ended commitment to recognizing the importance of "family" has left immigration planning starkly exposed to political pressures to expand opportunities for "family

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*"... the facile assumption that 'family' is to be validated through immigration law ignores the claims of equally meaningful relationships that serve both as functional socioeconomic units and support systems for effective integration by immigrants."*

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reunification." As Daniel Stoffman has observed, "Recent arrivals are more cohesive in their political behaviour than more established residents. Ethnic voters play a pivotal role in 30 federal ridings, and even non-citizens can vote in nomination contests. The ethnic groups wanted liberal family reunification policies, and so the government gave it to them." Persons legally in Canada have lobbied for and been given a virtual trump to sponsor the resettlement in Canada of a broad range of biologically defined family members.

Under current policy, Canadian citizens have a presumptive right to sponsor their spouses, dependent children, parents, and grandparents,

although the government's recent reform suggests greater scrutiny will be given to the latter two categories. Moreover, more distant relatives may be "assisted" to immigrate, meaning that their relationship reduces the point threshold for issuance of an immigrant visa. Unless the government is prepared to expand overall immigration quotas, the pressure to keep the door open to relatives of Canadian permanent residents and citizens makes balanced immigration planning next to impossible. Does it really make sense in a world teeming with involuntary migrants that Canada admits six times more family immigrants than refugees? At a time when carefully targeted independent migration could contribute to the economic recovery, do we truly want to limit that group to less than one in five new immigrants? Because refugees and economic migrants have nothing close to the political clout of voters who wish to bring their families to Canada, however, the recent reform imposed only a symbolic reduction on family immigration.

## RETHINKING THE FAMILY

Second and conversely, the facile assumption that "family" is to be validated through immigration law ignores the claims of equally meaningful relationships that serve both as functional socioeconomic units and support systems for effective integration by immigrants. An immigration law that looks only to formal status and biological bonds disfranchises the *de facto* heterosexual spouses, same-sex partners, cohabiting companions or siblings, and other modern counterparts to the nuclear family. A similar injustice is done to immigrants who come from societies in which primary re-



relationships of interdependency are with persons excluded from the family class as defined by Canadians of dominant cultures.

Both problems could be tackled by rejecting the present categorical definitions of "family" codified in immigration law, and embracing instead a contextually functional definition of family immigration. Rather than simply granting permission to immigrate based on documentary proof of a sanctioned relationship, family (whether biologically linked or not) would be admitted in recognition of ongoing emotional and material interdependency with the Canadian sponsor. This conceptual flexibility might be coupled with mechanisms such as conditional admission to ensure *de facto* viability of the relationship in Canada, an enhanced system of enforced accountability for sponsorship undertakings, and perhaps even general numerical limits for each sponsor.

By refocusing immigration law on facilitating the continuation of

relationships of demonstrable emotional and economic interdependency, we would force debate about "family" reunification away from rhetoric, and onto the ground of principle. This would both impose a self-regulating constraint on demands for ever-expanding family immigration opportunities and effectively incorporate a meaningful assessment of social viability at the outset of the sponsorship process. Such a shift would, moreover, be consistent with the emerging legal trend to recognize families as legally significant because of their social value rather than because of stereotypical assumptions; it is "the responsibility and community that family creates that is its most important social function and its social value" (per Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dubé, dissenting, in *Canada v. Mossop*, [1993] 1 S.C.R. 554, at 629).

The government's recent reform, in contrast, stuck comfortably to the modification of particular sponsorship modalities for traditionally defined families. It did not confront

the critical importance of rethinking the basic premise for validating family in immigration law, opting instead to cut family immigration just enough to generate (unwarranted) "get tough" headlines. It is high time to recognize that it is not anti-family to demand reasonable balance between opportunities for family-defined immigration and more general immigration policy objectives. Nor is it anti-family to expect enough definitional fluidity to recognize as legitimate a variety of family forms. Such principled stands do, however, require policy leadership at a level not evident in this fall's policy review.

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## THE FEDERAL DEFICIT: ONE MORE TIME (WITH FEELING)

by William Robson

### TEN YEARS AFTER ...

To find a period as critical for Canada's long-term economic health as the current one, you have to look back a full decade to 1985 when a newly elected government faced a comparable opportunity to turn a deteriorating situation around.

On that occasion, the chance slipped by. Fearing the wrath of recipients if federal transfers were reined-in, the Conservatives substituted the language of fiscal restraint for the real thing and never broke the vicious cycle of compound interest that drove debt and taxes up through the next eight years. In 1993, Cana-

dians saw the ludicrous spectacle of Kim Campbell running on a deficit-fighting platform even as Ottawa's borrowing — which, on average, had topped \$30 billion annually under her Conservative colleagues — headed for a new record of over \$42 billion.

The subsequent electoral debacle had many causes, but the mounting burden of taxes during the late 1980s and the virtual stagnation of Canadian incomes during those years doubtless played a major role. Unable to escape the pressure of irresponsible fiscal policy on their living standards, voters could only lash out at the government that presided

over it — leaving its successor to pick up the pieces.

### ... THE COSTS OF EXCESSIVE BORROWING ARE OBVIOUS ...

This time around, the new government's enthusiasm for addressing the problem appears to be weaker. Considering the current strength of the economy, the Liberal's 3 percent of GDP (\$25 billion) target for the deficit by 1996-97 amounts to little more than marginal nibbling — inadequate to prevent the deficit from ballooning again

*Continued, see "One More Time" on page 40.*

*"One More Time,"*  
continued from page 39.

when the boom is over. Yet the evidence that this course will lead only to more misery is stronger. We need only look back because the future will bring more of the same.

To begin with, the 3 percent target implies deficits that could add as much as \$140 billion to Ottawa's debt load over the life of this Parliament. If the average interest rate on federal debt does not change, the first budget voted by the next parliament will contain an additional \$10 billion — \$1300 per family of four — in interest costs. The result: higher taxes for fewer government services and continuing erosion of respect and support for the public sector.

Moreover, if government continues its 1990s trend of soaking up almost 85 cents of every dollar of private sector saving, Canada's national wealth will scarcely grow. The likely result: once the current cyclical rebound is over, Canadian living standards will stagnate again.

### ... AND THREATEN TO BECOME ACUTE

As grim as it is, this outlook would be far worse in the event of a sudden drop in the amount, or hike in the cost, of credit to Canadian borrowers. A financial crisis is far from certain, but Canada is vulnerable on too many fronts to dismiss the possibility.

Our foreign debt, for example, cannot continue to mount faster than our economy indefinitely without producing a crisis of confidence. Alternatively, Canada could see a provincial "Orange County." Quebec separatists could move ahead in the polls. Or ongoing fiscal pressure could push the Liberals toward a "soft" option — monetizing more debt, or forcing low-interest bonds on financial institutions and pension funds.

Such fears are already reflected in massive risk premiums in Canadian interest rates. If they are realized, credit will be choked off, forcing an abrupt, panic-driven balancing of the budget — and sudden, deep spending cuts along with clumsy, confiscatory tax hikes will be prominent in the package.

### THIS TIME COULD BE DIFFERENT

Decisive action, by contrast, could change everything. Reversing the rise of interest costs would allow Paul Martin to contemplate new spending initiatives or tax cuts — or both — in this 1998-99 budget. Plugging the drain of government

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*"Putting the budget on course for balance by the end of this Parliament would require two-year cuts of some \$17 billion from this year's budgeted spending. As large as this cut appears, it would put the total 1996-97 spending in Canada back only around its level two years ago — hardly Draconian."*

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borrowing on Canada's saving could, by the end of the decade, produce annual increases in national wealth rivaling anything since World War II.

Without a growing mounting of debt to provoke fears of inept future policy lurches — even default — interest rates would fall, while consumer and business confidence would rise. After a decade of loud, but ineffectual talk, moreover, actual action would do wonders in restoring Canadians' faith that government might fulfill its promises and honour its contracts.

### BUT OTTAWA NEEDS A PLAN FOR A BALANCED BUDGET ...

The difference between the gloomy scenario and its rosy counter-

part is a simple objective: a balanced budget by 1998-99, the last year of the current Parliament. The current scrambling in Ottawa suggests that Cabinet is hamstrung by a lack of choices. In fact, however, the opposite is true: numerous options exist.

Some are less attractive than others, to be sure — particularly on the tax side. "Temporary" tax hikes to get us over the hump, for example, deserve especially skeptical treatment: after 25 years, Canada's deficits have proved persistent enough to deserve the label "structural" — and structural problems require more than temporary measures. To make quick headway against an interest-driven debt buildup, a budget package needs to inspire enough confidence in future success to bring interest rates down. "Temporary" tax increases that signal an unwillingness to take the necessary action on the spending side will not do the trick.

But if it is long-lasting changes that are needed, we had better not levy anything we cannot live with. Taxes per family of four in Canada went up by over a fifth during the 1985-93 period, after inflation, and now stand over \$38,000 annually. Competitiveness issues aside, Canadians have stumbled into a vicious cycle of tax exhaustion, avoidance, and evasion on the one hand and increasingly heavy-handed and arbitrary enforcement on the other. Solutions involving more "snitch lines," inspectors, and jail terms are unattractive and, in a free society, ultimately unworkable.

### ... SOME SMART CHOICES FOR ACHIEVING IT ...

The spending side presents numerous options, as a glance through the pages of the Public Accounts quickly confirms. Even if social spending were ruled off limits, cuts



sufficient to balance the budget by 1998-99 could be found in subsidies to private and state-owned businesses (including agriculture), transfers to interest groups, defence, government operations, and the contingency reserves. A clear headed review of social spending would yield further savings in unemployment insurance, provincial transfers and transfers to the elderly.

Putting the budget on course for balance by the end of this Parliament would require two-year cuts of some \$17 billion from this year's

budgeted spending. As large as this cut appears to be, it would put the total 1996-97 spending in Canada back only around its level two years ago — hardly Draconian.

### ... AND THE WILL TO ACT

The government's aversion to such a modest package testifies to the power of short-run political fears to override much larger long-term economic and political benefits. Yet the prime minister, the finance minister, and their colleagues need only look ahead four years with the les-

sons of the recent past in mind. If 3 percent of GDP is all they can achieve, the outlook for the late 1990s is dismal. If they act decisively to balance the budget, the improvement in that outlook would be equally dramatic. Learning from the past will help them — all of us — avoid repeating it.

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## THE FEDERAL SOCIAL POLICY REVIEW AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

by Donald C. Wallace

The size and ferocity of the student protest against Axworthy's green paper caught many observers by surprise. Student leaders seemed to have stolen the march on university and college presidents and faculty members by mobilizing their opposition to the federal proposals and threatening strikes in protest. As the weeks passed, the extent of the Axworthy proposals was becoming more evident. They posited a massive restructuring of post-secondary education in Canada on a scale not witnessed since the 1960s.

### THE BACKGROUND

When Established Programs Financing (EPF) was introduced in 1977, federal transfers to the provinces in respect of health and post-secondary education (PSE) were converted from a cost-shared basis to a combination of "tax points" (percentage points of the personal income tax) and cash. The federal government is also involved in PSE through the federal research granting councils — the Medical Re-

search Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) — and the Canada Student Loans program. In 1976, Pierre Trudeau told a first ministers' conference that, in relation to PSE, the federal government was concerned "with matters such as accessibility, and with the great importance of the field for the development of our national life, our economy and technology, and so on. Provincial and federal government interests and concerns coincide in many of these areas, and the maintenance of high standards across the country requires the combined and coordinated efforts of both levels of government." Much as the health component of EPF was dedicated to the principle of universality, the PSE element was designed to promote greater accessibility and equity.

Although EPF was designed to grow at the same rate as the national economy, Ottawa has intervened unilaterally six times over the past

12 years to control the growth in EPF. The latest of these changes was introduced in the 1994 federal budget when Finance Minister Paul Martin indicated that the PSE portion of EPF — tax points and cash — would be held at 1993-94 levels beginning in 1996-97. The federal claim to "ownership" of the tax points is dubious at best; they should instead be regarded as provincial taxation.

Nevertheless, as the tax points increase in value as a result of economic growth, the cash portion of the PSE will decline and eventually disappear. The cash portion is valued at \$2.6 billion this year and will decline to \$2 billion in 1996-97.

### THE GREEN PAPER

Although the green paper dresses up its principal option for change in the garb of "an expanded and permanent system of aid to individual learners based on loans and grants," the intention is clearly to reduce

*Continued, see "Social Policy Review" on page 42.*

*"Social Policy Review,"  
continued from page 41.*

federal expenditures on PSE and to off-load the responsibility onto students through higher tuition fees. In specific terms, Ottawa would set up a \$2 billion fund for loan capital with the loans to be repaid on an income contingent basis.

In a marvelous example of understatement, the discussion paper suggests that "it is true that replacing federal cash transfers would put upward pressure on tuition fees." According to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), university tuition fees would have to double in order to replace the lost federal grants. Higher tuition fees would also drive up the cost of the Tuition Fee Tax Credit by \$340 million per annum.

Canadian universities have already witnessed some negative effects of high tuition fees on student demand. In November, Statistics Canada reported that part-time university enrollment fell for the second consecutive year after two decades of steady growth. The agency attributed the 6 percent decline to market conditions and increased tuition fees. This particular segment of the market is highly "price-sensitive." Paradoxically, the green paper puts much stock in the concept of "lifelong learning," which embraces periodic "retooling" after graduation, presumably on a part-time basis. Canadian universities have also experienced a noticeable drop in visa student enrollments, again because of high fees. There has been no suggestion that visa students would be eligible for the income contingent loans and the fee hikes are likely to be devastating on these enrollments. Since the EPF cash transfers also have an equalizing effect on provincial finances, their withdrawal is likely to have differential regional impacts. Dra-

matic increases in fees will be felt disproportionately by economically and socially disadvantaged individuals and will impair the values of accessibility and equity that EPF was supposed to safeguard.

The green paper asserts that "the federal government is committed to working with the provinces and territories so that reform of federal and provincial programs is mutually reinforcing." The Ontario minister of education and training recently declared that "using income contingent loan repayment as an excuse for boosting tuition fees or for deregulating fees to let post-secondary institutions charge whatever they want would not be acceptable to the Ontario government." The ramifications of uncoordinated decisions governing PSE support would be far-reaching and debilitating on universities and colleges that have already experienced large-scale cuts in provincial funding in recent years.


This move toward shifting the burdens of PSE financing is often justified by arguments related to the balance of fees and public grants in Canada as opposed to elsewhere, usually the United States. For example, Jeffrey Simpson of *The Globe and Mail* compared Canadian tuition fees with those in the United States and called on Canadian students to stop whining. US tuition fees are higher now, but so is government support in Canada for PSE. A rise in Canadian tuition fees accompanied by a commensurate drop in government grants would mean that public support would drop from 84 percent of the US average to 65 percent.

#### THE PATH AHEAD

It is hard to predict where the debate will go from here. One concern that student leaders have consistently raised is the impact of greater debt on women. Even now,

women borrow more to finance their educations, take longer to repay their loans, and experience greater financial difficulties if they are not in the job market. While income contingency offers some relief on the latter score, female graduates might face relatively longer periods of repayment and indebtedness than their male counterparts. Similarly, students from lower-income households would be understandably reluctant to take on considerable debt loads. Federal officials point out that two-thirds of students graduate without resorting to government loans, but even now 20 percent of students could end up owing upward of \$26,000 at graduation. This group may be unwilling or unable to cope with a 40 percent larger debt burden even if income contingency were available.

At a national level, Canadian participation rates in higher education reach extraordinarily high levels. Some 70 percent of 20- to 24-year-olds participate in some form of higher education, more than three times the participation rate in the United Kingdom and the twice the level of participation in Australia, Denmark, and the Netherlands. There can be no doubt that existing funding mechanisms have succeeded in securing widespread access to PSE. The Axworthy proposals threaten this distinctive Canadian success story.

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