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*Thanks.*

## ENTRE FÉDÉRALISTES

An exchange between André Burelle and Claude Ryan, with a reply by Gregory Marchildon

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A WORD ABOUT PRINTING THIS ARTICLE: These pages are intended to print on legal (8.5 x 14 inch) paper, two pages per sheet, in a horizontal landscape. Pages can also be printed onto letter sized paper, vertically, at a reduced size.

# Foreword

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by John Richards

Since the 1995 referendum, discussion of formal constitutional change has largely disappeared from Canadian political debates. Underlying tensions within the federation persist, however, and much of the diplomatic activity has merely shifted ground. Some of that activity now revolves around determining the appropriate roles for Ottawa and the provinces in reworking the country's social programs. The Social Union Framework Agreement, signed in February 1999 by Ottawa and all provinces except Quebec, is an example. In the previous issue of *Inroads* we published Claude Ryan's well argued critique of the agreement.

In an attempt to advance the discussion, we have brought together in this issue the ideas of three people who have been intimately involved in Canadian social policy: Claude Ryan, André Burelle and Greg Marchildon.

*Inroads* is honoured that Claude Ryan and André Burelle have agreed to our publishing the following exchange of private letters. The exchange was inspired by Claude Ryan's initial article and by André Burelle's reply that subsequently appeared in *Le Devoir* (see my translation below).

I had the privilege of reading the letters, and concluded that here is as lucid a discussion of what is required simultaneously to “renew the Canadian federation” and manage social policy as is likely to be written.

As the authors' preface makes clear, the letters were intended to remain private. In reading the following exchange between two of the country's leading statesmen, readers will, I hope, share the intellectual stimulation that prompted me to prevail on them to allow publication.

Inevitably, some nuances and cultural references have been lost in my translation, but making the exchange available to an English-speaking audience is worth the sacrifice. Letter writing of the calibre displayed here is rare.

The third contributor is Greg Marchildon, deputy minister to Premier Romanow in Saskatchewan. He too is responding to Claude Ryan's initial article. Marchildon was, as he writes, “a participant in the social union discussions, from the time when the idea was first raised in the spring of 1995 until the Social Union Framework Agreement was signed on the 4th of February 1999.” Better, he argues, this imperfect agreement than the previous status quo. He concludes with the hope that Quebec reconsider its rejection of the agreement. If Quebec is to join, he acknowledges, “the agreement will require some changes ... including a more explicit constraint on the federal spending power.”

— John Richards

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