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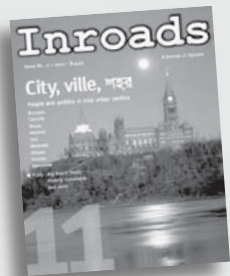
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Big Bear's Treaty

The road to freedom

by **Jean Allard**

with research by Sheilla Jones



2002 For several years prior to its publication in *Inroads* in 2002, Jean Allard's critique of Aboriginal policy circulated in samizdat. When a copy came our way, we published a substantial excerpt. This is a major piece of writing. Allard ranges from the significance of Big Bear, last of the major Plains chiefs to sign a treaty, to the "rebirth of Indian spirituality." He brings to life both Pierre Trudeau's motivation in drafting the 1969 "thunderclap" White Paper and Harold Cardinal's in writing a rebuttal. Having abandoned the strategy of terminating reserves as advanced in the White Paper, Trudeau moved in the opposite direction, making large fiscal transfers to band councils and entrusting them with the design of on-reserve social programs. In the absence of on-reserve employment opportunities for most Indian families, Allard contends, these transfers have created "one-dimensional systems" in which "chiefs, councils and their allies ... exercise power and control over the lives of people who live on reserves that is unheard of in a democratic county." His solution is a dramatic increase in the value of "treaty money" to be paid to registered Indians independently of band councils and independently of whether they choose to live on- or off-reserve. The portions included here deal mainly with the White Paper, the Aboriginal response and the changes that ensued.

D

AVE COURCHENE WAS DYING. THAT'S WHY I'D GONE TO SEE HIM. His wife led me to the living room of their Pine Falls home, and a shrunken old man walked into the room. At first, I didn't even recognize him. He was no longer the burly, fiery Indian leader of our younger days.

We'd had a long history, Dave and I. Dave was president of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood in the late 1960s. Aspiring NDP premier Ed Schreyer had asked him to run for the party in the vast northern riding of Rupertsland. Dave had too much to do running the Brotherhood, so he asked me if I was interested. After some consideration I said yes, but I'd need somebody to run my election campaign for me.

"Go see the young fellow next door," Dave said. "He'll be able to help you."

The young fellow was Phil Fontaine, and between the two of them and their people, I was elected in 1969 to the Manitoba Legislature with Schreyer as premier.

Dave and I were both a lot more idealistic back then. I'd spent time overseeing projects for Indians – clearing hydro line rights-of-way in the bush, running pulpwood operations. I thought these projects were intended to help Indians, but a successful project attracted the wrong kind of attention. As soon as it started being successful, some bureaucrat changed the rules and a promising project floundered and failed. I figured that, by working in government as a member of the Legislature, I would have the clout to be truly helpful. I had yet to learn the classic Big Lie: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help you." ...

F

OR A PEOPLE WHO HAD LIVED A SUCCESSFUL TRIBAL LIFESTYLE FOR some 12,000 to 40,000 years – depending on the anthropologist you believe – the rapid disintegration of the known and familiar way of living took an enormous toll. With the introduction of European diseases and the disappearance of the great buffalo herds, this ancient culture suddenly came face to face with its own extinction. All this happened over a handful of decades, a mere blink of an eye in historical terms.

The rupture of lifestyle and values experienced by Indians was described in an essay by the late Chief Dan George:

I was born a thousand years ago ... born in a culture of bows and arrows. But within the span of half a lifetime I was flung across the ages to the culture of the atom bomb.

I was born when people loved all nature and spoke to it as though it had a soul ... And then the people came ... more and more people came ... like a crushing wave they came ... hurling the years aside!! ... and suddenly I found myself a young man in the midst of the 20th century.

I think it was the suddenness of it all that hurt us so. We did not have time to adjust to the startling upheaval around us. We seemed to have lost what we had without replacement for it. We did not have time to take our 20th century progress and eat it little by little and digest it. It was forced feeding from the start and our stomachs turned sick and we vomited.¹

Big Bear stood in the midst of the “rupture” as it was happening. He was the last of the major Plains Indian leaders to agree to taking treaty in the 1880s. He saw the movement to a reserve, where he would lose his role as a hunter, as going to jail. He referred several times to his fear of having a rope around his neck. This was mistranslated to mean he was afraid of being hanged; he was in fact referring to a horse with a rope around its neck, a horse deprived of its freedom, a tamed animal. When you break a horse, you’re breaking its spirit. This was Big Bear’s greatest fear, a fear that the loss of freedom for his people would lead to soul-destroying humiliation ...

MISTAHI’MASKWA (BIG BEAR): In leg irons in 1885 outside North West Mounted Police barracks in Regina. Sessional papers credit the photograph to “Prof. Buell.” NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA





ANADA'S PHILOSOPHER KING, PIERRE TRUDEAU, SHOCKED INDIANS into a new level of political awareness.

As Prime Minister in 1969, Trudeau's solution for the problems afflicting Indians was to do away with the Indian Act and phase out the Indian Affairs Department and reserves over five years. In his idealized "Just Society" all Canadians were to be treated the same, and because the Indian Act was a special set of rules for certain Canadians, it was discriminatory. Jean Chrétien, at the time Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, tabled the White Paper in Parliament on June 25, 1969. It called for the Indian Act to be repealed and government responsibility for Indians as a separate group to come to an end.

Not surprisingly, it drew an immediate and outraged response from Indian leaders. They had just gone through a lengthy exercise in consultations, the first the federal government had ever held with the hundreds of Indian chiefs and councillors across the country. One of the consultation topics was amending the Indian Act. No one – including Chrétien who attended many of the meetings – had even mentioned doing away with it. Chrétien was the seventh Indian affairs minister in as many years, appointed by Trudeau to take over what had been dubbed the "No Action, No Results" department. That Chrétien had no qualifications for the post, Trudeau considered an asset. "Nobody will be able to say you have any preconceived views of the problems," Trudeau told him. "In fact, you represent a similar background. You're from a minority group, you don't speak much English, you've known poverty. You might become a minister who understands the Indians."²

Trudeau had long been unhappy with government treatment of Indians, and made it one of his first priorities in government. Opposed to special status for any Canadians – Quebecers or Indians – he put Chrétien to work on a plan that would abolish the Indian Act, reserves and the Indian Affairs Department.³

But Chrétien had a problem. His department was in the midst of a Canada-wide review of the Indian Act, started in 1967 by his predecessor. It had raised expectations among Indian leaders that they were finally to be included in making decisions that affected their lives. It was an illusion, however. The meetings across the country with Indian leaders resumed in the fall of 1968, following the summer federal election that confirmed Trudeau's accession. Even as Chrétien was preparing to dismantle Indian Affairs and do away with the act, he attended meetings and participated in discussions to *amend* the act.⁴

Chrétien then developed the strategy for the White Paper without any consultation with Indians, and without them knowing what was being planned. He decided the policy would be presented as a *fait accompli*, rationalizing that no consensus of any kind was possible in any case. Indians learned the contents of the White Paper at the same time as other Canadians – when Chrétien presented it to the House of Commons in 1969. According to his autobiography (written in 1985) Chrétien was aggrieved at the howls of outrage from Indian leaders when they finally found out what had been planned for them.

"Trudeau and I had been bothered by the charges that Indians were the victims of discrimination," he wrote, "because they lived on reserves and came under the authority of the Indian Act. They described themselves as second-class citizens, and the reserves looked like ghettos to outsiders. But when we offered in all sincerity to abolish the department, to give the Indians their land to do with as they pleased, to make them fully equal to other Canadians, they were shocked by the challenge."⁵

The day after the "thunderclap" that was the White Paper, Indian leaders released a letter denouncing the government's intentions signed by the eight chiefs and cochairs of the year-old National Indian Brotherhood. The White Paper acted as a powerful catalyst in bringing Indian leaders together in a rare show of unanimity, and at the same time tapped into a generalized white guilt amongst Canadians over the treatment of Indians.

The "rediscovery" of Indians in Canada in the 1960s was a side-effect of the civil rights movement in the United States. It even came up during a United Nations debate, when the Soviet representative countered criticism of their treatment of Jews by suggesting that Canadian delegates take a look at how they were treating their Indian people.⁶

Trudeau and Chrétien awakened the nationalistic instinct of Canadian Indians through their attempt to make "Indians like all other Canadians." Of course, assimilation had long been the policy of the Canadian government. Throughout much of the agency's existence, Indian Affairs officials had continually instituted rules and programs that, to all intents and purposes, were to "improve" Indians by turning them into the colonial ideal of the time – a version of hard-working, God-fearing, Scottish Presbyterian farmers.

The idea of improving an "inferior race" by assimilation was not new to British North America. In 1839, Lord Durham wrote that "every race but the English ... appears there in a condition of inferiority. It is to elevate them from that inferiority that I desire to give to the [French] Canadians our English character."⁷

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Durham's words echo in Trudeau's defence of the 1969 White Paper:

*We can go on treating the Indians as having a special status. We can go on adding bricks of discrimination around the ghetto in which they live and at the same time perhaps helping them preserve certain cultural traits and certain ancestral rights. Or we can say we're at a crossroads – the time is now to decide whether Indians will be a race apart in Canada or whether they will be Canadians of full status.*⁸

In the same way that Durham's recommendations for assimilation were a catalyst for French Canadian nationalism, Trudeau's assimilationist vision catalyzed Indian nationalism. To Indian leaders, the White Paper was "a thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation."⁹

The most effective rebuttal of the White Paper was a document produced by the Indian Association of Alberta. Dubbed the Red Paper, it was primarily the work of 24-year-old Harold Cardinal, a bright young man from Sucker Creek Cree Reserve near High Prairie, who had been elected president of the Alberta association the year before. The Red Paper demanded the Canadian government honour not only the terms of the treaties, but the intent as well:

*In our treaties of 1876, 1877, [and] 1899 certain promises were made to our people; some of these are contained in the text of the treaties, some in the negotiations, and some in the memories of our people. Our basic view is that all these promises are part of the treaties and must be honored... The Indian people see the treaties as the basis of all their rights and status. If the Government expects the co-operation of Indians in any new policy, it must accept the Indian point of view on treaties. This would require the government to start all over on its new policy.*¹⁰

The Red Paper called for the "modernization" of treaty rights. Treaty Six, for instance, stated "that a medicine chest shall be kept at the house of the Indian Agent for the use and benefit of the Indians." That provision had already been challenged in court in *Regina v. Walter Johnston*, and was judged to mean something much more than the literal interpretation. In his ruling, the judge stated, "I can only conclude that the 'medicine chest' clause and the 'pestilence' clause in Treaty No. 6 should be properly interpreted to mean that the Indians are entitled to receive all medical services, including medicine, drugs, medical supplies and hospital care free of charge."¹¹ The judge added that this entitlement would go to all treaty Indians, even though some treaties did not have a medicine chest provision.

The Red Paper called for the modern interpretation of treaty benefits, demanding legislation to protect hunting, trapping and fishing rights; the right of education; the right of full and free medical services; the right to use of land; and the encouragement of economic development on reserves.¹² It also laid out how that economic development should occur. But it neglected to address treaty money for the individual, the most important part of the treaty that Big Bear fought for.

Instead, at a time when the annual budget for Indian Affairs was some \$235 million, the Red Paper called for the establishment of a \$50 million development fund for Alberta Indians. This was, coincidentally, the same amount promised in the White Paper for economic development to be shared by all reserves. In the Red Paper proposal, the money would flow through a development corporation under the control of the Alberta Indian political organization, down through multiple layers of agencies and professionals to the reserves and, lastly, to the reserve residents.¹³

Via the Red Paper and *The Unjust Society*, a book written in response to the White Paper, Cardinal became the effective architect of the system that grew out of the collapse of the White Paper and the subsequent vacuum in government policy. In the face of continued opposition, Trudeau admitted he got matters wrong: "I'm sure we were very naive in some of the statements we made in the paper. We had perhaps prejudices of small 'l' liberals, and white men at that, who thought that equality meant the same law for everybody ... But we have learnt that ... perhaps we were a bit too theoretical, we were a bit too abstract, we were not, as Mr. Cardinal suggests, perhaps pragmatic enough or understanding enough."¹⁴

Trudeau left the field open for Indians to come up with their own solution, in their own time. Indian policy was now in limbo. The Indian Affairs bureaucrats, the other party that had been facing elimination under the White Paper, were in charge of the shop. They too had been out of the loop over the White Paper. Although they could not, as good civil servants, loudly protest the unilateral termination of their positions, they had been abruptly awakened to their vulnerability.

All these elements – a revived Indian activism and the accompanying "liberal white guilt" that could be assuaged with tax dollars, the absence of a coherent government policy on Indian Affairs, and a bureaucracy that had just escaped a death sentence – laid the foundation for a new system of allocating power and money.

The key players in the newly energized Indian movement were the leaders of the three Prairie political organizations: Dave Courchene, Manitoba Indian Brotherhood; Walter Deiter, Federation of Saskatchewan Indians; and Harold Cardinal, Indian Association of Alberta. In 1968, the three provincial leaders had already split from the National Indian Council, a group made up mostly of middle-class, urban and nonstatus Indians. Courchene, Deiter and Cardinal wanted a national body that would act for the specific interests of status Indians. The three men created the National Indian Brotherhood with Deiter as the first national president. The mandate of the NIB (since renamed the Assembly of First Nations) was to represent the

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provincial organizations at the national level and to act as their national advocate. In the years leading up to the White Paper, the government offered money to select Aboriginal organizations. The amount rapidly increased in the years following. By 1971–72, Dave Courchene was overseeing a Manitoba Indian Brotherhood budget of more than \$1 million.¹⁵

In 1970, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) issued its own position paper, the Brown Paper. Here was the first clearly stated intention of Indians' desire to take over the administration of services and programs from Indian Affairs:

*It is necessary for the Federal government to provide certain services for Indians but it is not necessary for the government to administer those services ... We favour a gradual change in the role of the Indian Affairs Branch and we propose that there be a carefully drawn up implementation plan to effect the required changes. Initially, the UBCIC working together with the branch will develop an integrated planning approach to our gradual absorption of the administrative functions. The Branch will need to provide the necessary resources to help in developing these plans, programs and budgets.*¹⁶

Not only would the Indian political organizations take control of economic development funding, they would also start taking over the bureaucratic functions of Indian Affairs. This, of course, meant a great deal of money would flow from the government through the hands of those in control of the government-approved Indian organizations.

There is an old saying, he who pays the piper calls the tune. Indian leaders seemed to think it not a serious problem. The Brown Paper stated, "There is no need for us to be deprived of self-determination merely because we receive federal monetary support, nor should we lose federal support because we reject federal control."¹⁷

The fledgling National Indian Brotherhood was at first very careful about its financial relationship with the government. Walter Deiter is said to have made personal loans to the NIB because it was so short of money, and this resulted in his own bankruptcy.¹⁸ He was replaced by George Manuel, a skilled politician and tactician, who stressed traditional Indian methods of consensus, participation and nonhierarchical structures, while carefully cultivating key relationships with, and getting money from, Indian Affairs bureaucrats. Yet Manuel insightfully pegged money as the potential cause of downfall:

*Money may be our downfall in the sense that we'll have too much of it. When Indian people were poor we were able to retain our Indian identity. But the more money we get, the more we seek, and the more we get entangled in the economic and political institutions of the white man and lose track of our Indian culture, identity and values.*¹⁹

Although Manuel was careful to avoid getting entangled with the bureaucracy during his three terms as president, the NIB nonetheless "penetrated" into the workings of government. It participated in various federal government review, advisory and liaison activities; it maintained connections with the Privy Council, the Public Service Commission and the departments of Manpower, National Revenue, Health and Welfare, Justice, Solicitor General

and Secretary of State.²⁰ Manuel reportedly put the brakes on a number of relationships he deemed too cozy, but the line between government bureaucrat and Indian political leader became decidedly blurry.

Manuel retired in poor health, and was replaced by Noel Starblanket, a 29-year-old Cree from the Starblanket reserve in Saskatchewan. Starblanket developed a friendly relationship with the new Indian affairs minister, Warren Allmand. That did not stop the bureaucracy from flexing its muscle and using fiscal coercion. When the NIB attempted to embarrass the government prior to an imminent general election, Ottawa cut off \$1 million in funding to the provincial Indian organizations. The NIB also had an election coming up, and since the leaders of the provincial organizations elected the NIB executive, Starblanket's leadership was on the line. Funding was restored just days before the NIB general assembly. Here was a pointed lesson reminding Indian political leaders who was calling the tune.²¹

Although the Indian political organizations may indeed have represented the interests of Indians in the early days, times changed. The government-sanctioned groups were dealing with more and more money, and the siren call of sovereignty was sounding: more power and more money.

In 1973, an Indian Affairs consultant analyzed the structure of the National Indian Brotherhood to see whether or not it spoke for Indians as a whole. Two key weaknesses of the provincial and national Indian organizations were specifically identified:

1. The associations are not directly accountable to those whom they hold they represent since the people cannot effectively withdraw support.
2. Credence is lent by specific recognition by government through such funding that such organizations do in fact represent the people.²²

These weaknesses seriously undermined the validity of the Indian political leaders claiming to speak for all Indians. Ordinary Indians had no method for denying personal support; they were also denied a vehicle for presenting alternate views.

It is not reasonable to expect that all Indians agree on everything and speak with only one voice. Indeed, in the years before the White Paper, the lack of Indian political clout was blamed on the inability of Indian leaders to agree on much of anything, although a lack of funding to enable them to organize was also a factor. By funding only one group to speak for all Indians, the Indian Affairs Department was ensuring only one voice would be heard.

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Implicit in this policy is that groups or individuals with dissenting opinions do not have a right to speak on their own behalf. Only the officially sanctioned voice is heard. This silencing of people is further entrenched because dissenters cannot withdraw their support of Indian political leaders by withdrawing their financial support: all financial support comes from Indian Affairs and other government departments. Indian political leaders might feel that a single, unified voice greatly strengthened their political clout. To achieve it, however, has required them to slide into a form of totalitarianism whereby the rights of the individual are denied in the name of an allegedly infallible leadership.

The NIB had always been run from the top down. Policy and action were decided at the top, sold to the chiefs and councils who were not directly involved in making the policy decisions, and then sold to grassroots Indians. As the organization grew, the division between its interests and those of ordinary Indians grew more and more apparent.

During his tenure as NIB president, Noel Starblanket was keenly interested in professionalizing the national organization. Manuel had already introduced “technicians” into the system in the form of policy advisers and unelected professionals like lawyers and consultants. The professionalizing of the NIB distanced it from ordinary Indians who, it was assumed, were not really capable of understanding the intricacies of their own problems. In the 1969 Red Paper, Harold Cardinal described the problems facing Indians in these terms:

*The basic problem, in all its varying degrees of intensity, which is confronted by all reserves and their peoples, is that of poverty with all its relevant symptoms – unemployment, inadequate education, overcrowded and deteriorating housing, crime, alcohol and drug abuse, sub-standard preventative medicine and resultant disease, apathy, frustration, moral decay, destruction of the family and community units and total alienation from society.*²³

This presented a veritable smorgasbord of problems to be studied and analyzed by professionals, a wealth of opportunity for programs for professionals to design and administer, a bounty of needs to be professionally attended to. The budget for Indian Affairs has swelled dramatically, yet the problems faced by Canadian Indians today remain much the same as in 1969, and, in some cases, are worse. In 1970, the Indian Affairs’ annual budget was \$232 million, with an additional \$30 million for Indian Health Services. There were about 230,000 status Indians, the great majority of whom lived on-reserve. By 1999, the Indian Affairs budget had mushroomed to \$6.3 billion and the status Indian population had increased to about 680,000, about half of whom lived off-reserve.²⁴

In the absence of government policy on Canadian Indians, the Indian Affairs bureaucracy and the designated Indian political organizations, both amply serviced by consultants of all kinds, have been running the show. Bureaucracies have an amazing survival instinct. Following its narrow escape from death, it is understandable that the Indian Affairs bureaucracy sought to prove itself. The demands of Indian organizations provided opportunities to expand the bureaucracy of both Indian Affairs and of the Indian organizations.

All this was seen as politically progressive. “My time in Indian Affairs and Northern Development,” recalled Chrétien, “coincided with a period of expansion, and that helped my reputation and my popularity among bureaucrats and in the country. In a period of expansion, ministers are judged by how much money they can spend and how well they can extract money from the system for their projects. Spending was easy, because there was no end to the useful and imaginative initiatives bubbling up in the department. Those were its glory days.”²⁵

The glory days didn’t end when Chrétien moved. The growth of spending in Indian Affairs continued, even through the years of fiscal restraint when all other federal departments undertook belt-tightening exercises. Indian Affairs did go through an apparent downsizing in the 1990s, but it was actually a lateral shift of administrative responsibility from Indian Affairs bureaucrats to Indian administrators. This mutually beneficial relationship gave rise to a vast, absorbent layer of consultants, program officials and administrators, and professionals of all kinds who soaked up a significant percentage of the money filtering down through the system to chiefs and councils.

Although at the bottom of the filtering system in terms of program delivery, chiefs and councils today have a great deal of money to work with. The funds for housing, welfare, education and other such services flow through their hands. Since there is no real separation between politics and administration on reserves, everything on a reserve that is in any way related to band administration is politicized. Whoever is elected is in control of just about everything on a reserve. The result is elections coloured by bitter rivalries and ugly disputes.

Reserves are one-dimensional systems. Elsewhere in Canadian society, multiple voices act as checks and balances on each other. The interests of unions, for instance, temper the interests of the business lobby groups. Those who speak for individual rights temper those who advocate collective rights. There are no such “other voices” on reserves, leaving the single dimension of politics in which to work out solutions to social, economic and political problems.

The most powerful of moderating influences in a democracy is the middle class. With few exceptions, reserves have only a ruling elite and a lower class. This, concludes sociologist Menno Boldt, is a direct result of the Indian Act:

By undermining the traditional Indian values of reciprocity and redistribution, which historically inhibited socio-economic class development in Indian communities, these forces (i.e., the elective system, privatization, bureaucratization and co-optation) are generating a two class social-economic order on most reserves: a small, virtually closed, elite class comprising

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*influential landowners, politicians, bureaucrats and a few entrepreneurs, and a large lower class comprising destitute, dependent and powerless people.*²⁶

Chiefs, councils and their allies – who make up the ruling elite – exercise power and control over the lives of people who live on reserves that is unheard of in a democratic country. They control everything: from who gets the on-reserve jobs to who gets plumbing repairs. The ruling elite exercises total control while the impoverished class is voiceless and powerless.

In 1869, the Canadian government imposed the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians Act, which introduced provisions to elect chiefs in accordance with the ordinary Canadian regime. Incorporated in the 1876 Indian Act, these provisions were part of the government's policy of substituting the supposedly superior form of electoral democracy for the traditional Indian form of consensus. Before then, families would leave bands for a leader of another band who could provide them with good hunting, family living conditions and war skills. If the leader faltered or showed weaknesses, people did not demonstrate their displeasure by defeating him in an election – they did so by leaving.

Recall that Big Bear had some 3,000 followers at one point. Because he understood the long-term implications of limiting Indians to reserves, he took a hard line that lost him

most of his followers. Migration had served to check the power of a leader. When the government put Indians on reserves and imposed on them an electoral system, band members were tied to a specific piece of land and no longer had the option of migrating to a more agreeable band. They could not even leave their reserve without permission of the Indian agent.

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Most bands resisted imposition of the electoral system. In the early years, there was little money or power attached to elected positions since the Indian agent held the delegated authority of Indian Affairs. Says Boldt, “if a band/tribe showed resistance, the department's resident agent ... would appoint his own choice of chief and councilors, and then channel the department's benefits and authority through his appointee.”²⁷ Anthropologist Harry Hawthorn, in a landmark report on Indian policy prepared for the Canadian government in 1966, wrote of the “evident desire for public consensus or unanimity and the perception of the elective system and majority rule as inimical to the achievement of this goal, because they bring out into the open the divisions between factions and individuals.”²⁸

The illusion that chiefs and councils are elected under the same democratic principles as municipal, provincial or federal politicians continues to this day. Democracy cannot be adequately served where the same elected officials running for office are also in control of the election machinery, and in turn they are under the authority of a system that can unilaterally

nullify or void elections results as it deems fit, without avenue of appeal. The system still has the ability to choose chiefs and councils that are most amenable to its agenda.

Up until the 1950s, some Indian bands remained economically self-sufficient, particularly those in northern communities where a livelihood could still be derived from hunting, trapping and fishing. Welfare dependency effectively arrived with the right to vote in Canadian elections in 1959. After the treaties but before 1959, people survived by hunting, fishing or trapping. Families worked on farms, hoeing beets or stooking grain. Some dug seneca root or caught frogs for market; others wove baskets or made moccasins. It was a hardscrabble kind of life.

People living on reserves initially paid little attention to chief and council because the elected officials had little to offer them. The department did what it wanted, and Indian agents came and went. Life changed after World War II, with the introduction of welfare. The increasing availability of medicine and improved medical care led to a burgeoning population. An ever-increasing population had less and less ability to feed itself with the limited resources available. Not surprisingly, people turned to the new system of welfare.

When the Diefenbaker administration gave Indians the vote in 1959, they suddenly had a newfound value as voters. In the 1960s, federal politicians became interested in Indians, and the Indian Affairs bureaucracy had an expanding role as the supplier of programs, the main one being welfare.

And so we've come full circle – back to the “thunderclap” decade of the 1960s, when the stage was set for corruption to grow in proportion to the money poured into the system. On the reserves, the chiefs and councils who played ball with Indian Affairs obtained more and more control over budgets and services. But the checks and balances to keep the chiefs and councils on the straight and narrow were not there. People could not pick up and go to a band with a better administration. And since the money funding the band did not come from band members, they had no means to hold their chiefs and councils accountable.

In

SEEKING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE ON RESERVES, HAROLD Cardinal's Red Paper paradoxically laid the foundations for a badly flawed system. Flowing from the Red Paper, programs were developed for many long-neglected needs. There was a need for more and better schools for a growing population, improved housing, economic development and jobs. Money was needed to finance a bureaucracy to organize these programs. With training and resources, all those in responsible positions would, it was hoped, behave ideally. But we do not live in an ideal world.

Without the checks and balances built into democratic government over the centuries, the results are a foregone conclusion. The field is open to misuse of authority with all its attendant ills – nepotism, fraud, corruption and abuse of human rights. The truth of Lord Acton’s aphorism that “power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely” can be seen by visiting many of Canada’s reserves.

There have been many exceptions at the reserve level, as people fought the corrupting effect of the bait offered by the system. But slowly, inevitably, greed and personal ambition took hold. People with good hearts and good character, concerned with the welfare of the people, were weeded out. That left in charge the people whose first priority was to serve the system, the source of their money and power. They gained control of all aspects of the welfare of people on reserves. Ordinary Indians found themselves – as they are today – powerless and despondent, living with the resultant social breakdown.

There is a corollary to Lord Acton’s aphorism: absolute powerlessness destroys absolutely.

Postscript

THIS BOOK PROPOSES A SINGLE REFORM. TREATY MONEY, MODERNIZED TO FIVE THOUSAND dollars a year from five dollars, should be paid monthly outside the system to all status Indians. I have argued that this reform can be accomplished quickly and simply, that it can be organized in a revenue-neutral manner, and that it will result in the empowerment of individual status Indians.

This is not a panacea to cure all ills facing status Indians, but it will provide them with a base to democratically deal with their own problems.

This reform needs the support of two groups – status Indian citizens and other Canadians. Both groups have been shut out of the system, and both continue to be victims of the system. This book advocates the empowerment of status Indian citizens so that they and other Canadians can negotiate and define their relationship.

Since 1970, Canada has been without a federal government policy on status Indians. After more than 30 years of unrelenting failure and escalating costs, the time has come for change. Successfully dealing with this issue would provide the current era of government with a unique legacy. ■

Notes

- ¹ Chief Dan George, “My Very Good Dear Friends ...,” in *The Only Good Indian: Essays by Canadian Indians*, ed. Waubageshig (Toronto: New Press, 1970), pp. 184–85.
- ² Jean Chrétien, *Straight From the Heart* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1985), p. 62.
- ³ Lawrence Martin, *Chrétien*, Vol. 1 (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1995), p. 192.
- ⁴ Martin, *Chrétien*, Vol. 1, p.192.
- ⁵ Chrétien, *Straight From the Heart*, p. 62.
- ⁶ Martin, *Chrétien*, Vol. 1, p. 191.
- ⁷ *Le Rapport Durham* (Montreal: Éditions Sainte-Marie, 1969), pp.118–26.
- ⁸ Quoted in J. Rick Ponting and Roger Gibbins, *Out of Irrelevance: A Socio-political Introduction to Indian Affairs in Canada* (Scarborough, ON: Butterworth & Co., 1980), p. 27.
- ⁹ Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1969), p. 1.
- ¹⁰ Indian Chiefs of Alberta, *Citizens Plus* (the Red Paper; Edmonton: Indian Association of Alberta, 1970), pp. 8–9.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
- ¹² Cardinal, *Unjust Society*, p.37.
- ¹³ Indian Chiefs of Alberta, *Citizens Plus*, p. 44.
- ¹⁴ Quoted in Martin, *Chrétien*, Vol. 1, p. 200.
- ¹⁵ James Burke, *Paper Tomahawks: From Red Tape to Red Power* (Winnipeg: Queenston House, 1976).
- ¹⁶ William I.C. Wuttunee, *Ruffled Feathers* (Calgary: Bell Books, 1971), pp. 62, 76.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.62.
- ¹⁸ Ponting and Gibbins, *Out of Irrelevance*, p.199.
- ¹⁹ Quoted in Ponting and Gibbins, *Out of Irrelevance*, p. 244.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 207.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.
- ²² Report to R. Connelly, Assistant Deputy Minister, Indian Affairs (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs, 1973).
- ²³ Indian Chiefs of Alberta, *Citizens Plus*, p. 38.
- ²⁴ According to data published by the Department of Indian Affairs, 58 per cent of status Indians lived on-reserve in 1999, but there are reasons to believe the on-reserve ratio is actually lower.
- ²⁵ Chrétien, *Straight From the Heart*, p. 72.
- ²⁶ Menno Boldt, *Surviving as Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 124.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.121.
- ²⁸ Quoted in Richard H. Bartlett, *The Indian Act of Canada* (Regina: University of Saskatchewan Native Law Centre, 1988), p. 23.

An exchange on Aboriginal policy

by Alan Cairns and Tom Flanagan

January 31, 2001

Dear Alan,

Congratulations on publication of *Citizens Plus*. It's a truly important book. When anyone asks about my book, I always say they should also read yours if they are going to read mine.

Actually, it's all part of a vast right-wing conspiracy! By publishing my more radical work at the same time as yours, I make your analysis look moderate by comparison, and thus more likely to have an impact on public policy. But by any normal standard, *Citizens Plus* is a radical demolition of today's conventional wisdom about Aboriginal issues. Your most important contribution is to demonstrate that the concept of "nation to nation" relationships between Canada and Aboriginal peoples is inadequate and ultimately unworkable. No matter how many times [then-Assembly of First Nations National Chief] Matthew Coon Come says, "I am not a Canadian," the Indian, Métis and Inuit people living in Canada cannot help but be Canadians. As you show so well, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) did everyone a disservice by focusing so much on the separate identities of Aboriginal peoples and virtually ignoring the fact that they are and will remain Canadian citizens, living under the constitutional authority of the Canadian state, and entwined in a dense network of individual and collective relationships with other Canadians.

Another important part of your book is your description of how earlier generations of progressive intellectuals favoured the assimilation of Native people. In contrast, today's

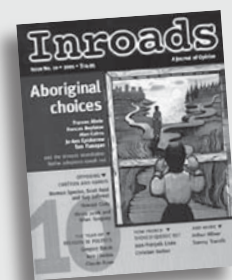
progressive intellectuals are almost entirely lined up in support of what you call institutionalized parallelism. Although you don't draw any particular conclusion from this development, it reinforces my scepticism about progressive intellectuals in general. A class of thinkers that changes its mind so profoundly in such a short period of time cannot be a reliable guide to public policy.

As much as I admire your book, however, I have reservations concerning your attempt to resurrect the Hawthorn Report's concept of Aboriginal people as "citizens plus." Since you were part of the team that produced that report in 1966, it is not surprising that you want to resuscitate the term, but I have to express my doubts about the enterprise.

In a recent article in *Cité libre*, you describe "citizens plus" as the moderate position, lying between the parallelism espoused by Aboriginal advocates, including RCAP, and the assimilationism that you attribute to the Canadian Alliance, the National Post, Preston Manning and me.¹ Describing one's views as a moderate compromise between extremes is an honourable rhetorical posture, but if we are going to judge policies intelligently, we must also have some idea of their contents.

As you note in your book, the Hawthorn Report "deliberately declined to spell out the 'plus' aspects, which it argued should appropriately be left to the political debates of the future." Thirty-five years later, the future has arrived; but you are still not spelling out what "citizens plus" will mean in practice, except that it will recognize "the need for a strong common citizenship" as well as "the survival of a distinct modernizing Aboriginality in self-governing communities."²

Since you do not say what policies are entailed in these verbal formulas, let me speculate a bit. The "plus" factor must mean that government will offer Aboriginal people benefits, opportunities and privileges not extended to other categories of citizens – what the American economist Thomas Sowell calls "*government*-mandated preferences for *government*-designated



2001 In 2000, almost simultaneously, political scientists Alan Cairns (retired from the University of British Columbia) and Tom Flanagan (of the University of Calgary, former research director of the Reform Party) published important books on Aboriginal policy. We persuaded the two to exchange "letters" for publication in *Inroads*. Here we reproduce major excerpts. Flanagan's *First Nations? Second Thoughts* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000) is a root-and-branch critique of what he terms "the Aboriginal orthodoxy." He criticizes the agenda of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples as an unworkable exercise in institutional segregation and a romantic belief in the potential of communalism. In *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), Cairns agrees with Flanagan inasmuch as both draw attention to success of urban Aboriginals relative to rural-based communities, and both stress the need for shared rights and obligations of Canadian citizenship – across all ethnic groups. However, Cairns insists that recognition of Aboriginal distinctness is fundamental to reconciliation. Cairns summarizes his argument by rehabilitating the slogan "citizens plus," used by a major policy review in the 1960s, as the title for his book.

groups.”³ ... Sowell carried out an international review of preferential policies, paying special attention to programs in India, Nigeria, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the United States. Here is his description of the main patterns he discovered:

- Preferential programs, even when explicitly and repeatedly defined as “temporary,” have tended not only to persist but also to expand in scope, either embracing more groups or spreading to wider realms for the same groups, or both. Even preferential programs established with legally mandated cutoff dates, as in India and Pakistan, have continued far past those dates by subsequent extensions.
- Within the groups designated by government as recipients of preferential treatment, the benefits have usually gone disproportionately to those members already more fortunate.
- Group polarization has tended to increase in the wake of preferential programs, with nonpreferred groups reacting adversely, in ways ranging from political backlash to mob violence and civil war.
- Fraudulent claims of belonging to the designated beneficiary groups have been widespread and have taken many forms in various countries.
- Both official and unofficial writings on preferential programs tend to abound in discussions of the rationales, mechanics and resource inputs of such programs, with a dearth – or even total absence – of data on the actual outcomes.⁴

Even though “citizens plus” has not been the official designation, a wide range of preferential policies for Aboriginal peoples in Canada have flourished in Canada for the last three decades, and the patterns that Sowell described are clearly visible in this country. Below are Canadian examples illustrating each of his five observations:

- After 25 years of rapidly escalating outlays on Aboriginal programs, RCAP called for another quantum leap in expenditure. Aboriginal programming was one of the few parts of the federal budget to keep growing while almost everything else was being cut back or held constant during the 1990s.
- The average income of on-reserve Indians increased more rapidly than that of other Canadians during the 1990s, but the proportion of on-reserve Indians utilizing social assistance remained constant at about 40 per cent.⁵ This strongly suggests that, while some Indians at the upper level are doing better economically, a very large number are caught in a welfare trap and not progressing.
- There is an obvious political backlash against contemporary treaty negotiations in British Columbia, and mob violence has made a regrettable appearance in the Atlantic fisheries disputes.
- While Sowell’s term “fraudulent” does not apply in this context, there was a rush to regain Indian status in the wake of the 1985 amendment to the Indian Act (Bill C-31).

A population that had been growing at the rate of 2 to 3 per cent a year suddenly started to grow at over 7 per cent a year. Status Indian population growth did not return to its earlier 2 to 3 per cent level until 1997.⁶

- Although there is a large and laudatory academic literature on Aboriginal self-government in Canada, my book *First Nations? Second Thoughts* is exceptional in making a sustained attempt to analyze the patterns of patronage, waste and corruption in Aboriginal self-government reported in the media almost every day.

Sowell’s research focused on preferential policies intended to bring minorities into the educational and occupational mainstream. While such programs would form part of “citizens plus,” they would surely be overshadowed by self-government and economic autarky. Thus, as thought-provoking as Sowell’s work is, it does not furnish a complete template for understanding the likely consequences of a Canadian version of “citizens plus,” which would inevitably emphasize self-government on scattered territorial enclaves. We have to give further thought to the dynamics of preferential policies in this context.

Even if the Aboriginal movement were to moderate its nationalism in favour of “citizens plus,” the resulting policies could not help but have a strong territorial focus, given the existence of more than 600 Indian bands located on reserves and organized as so-called First Nations. In practice, “citizens plus” is likely to mean an ever-growing flow of money to Aboriginal governments combined with economic development projects aiming at many different goals, such as job creation, employment training, reserve infrastructure, Aboriginal entrepreneurship and cultural preservation.

Assume for the moment that Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault will be successful in obtaining parliamentary approval of the First Nations Governance Act that he is drafting, with the result that Aboriginal self-government will get beyond the waste, inefficiency, patronage and outright corruption plaguing it today. Undoubtedly, all the money spent under the heading of “citizens plus” will have some positive effects. Some Aboriginal people will find jobs and careers, will become self-supporting, and will be able to inculcate their children with higher aspirations and give them greater opportunities. In short, the growth of an Aboriginal middle class, already underway, may be accelerated. But in spite of that desirable development, there will be two less desirable side-effects.

First, the never-ending transfer of large amounts of public money to reserves will encourage more status Indians to remain or return there. This might be fine for a few reserves, such as the Tsuu T’ina Nation, which, situated on the southwest edge of Calgary, is well positioned to participate in the economy of Canada’s fastest-growing city. But most reserves are located far

Most reserves are located far from centres of employment and have few realistic prospects for economic growth. Subsidizing people to live in such locations has had perverse consequences for status Indians, just as it has for Atlantic Canadians. — Tom Flanagan

from centres of employment and have few realistic prospects for economic growth. Subsidizing people to live in such locations has had and will continue to have perverse consequences for status Indians, just as it has for Atlantic Canadians. Fred McMahon's critical dissection of federal subsidies in Atlantic Canada provides many insights into the effects of analogous subsidies upon First Nations communities.⁷

Second, the implementation of a "citizens plus" strategy will reinforce the already overwhelming presence of government in the lives of reserve residents. The band council is the de facto owner of land, housing and natural resources on most reserves; it is usually the largest, and sometimes the only, employer; it distributes social assistance, runs the local school, and sometimes has its own police force. Such concentration of government power is a threat to individual freedom, and it certainly is not conducive to economic efficiency.

The Russians learned the hard way that they could not build socialism in a single country, and the NDP learned that they could not build socialism in a single province. In fact, the

Western world has pretty much concluded that you cannot build socialism anywhere, because a government-owned and -controlled economy simply does not work. I fear, however, that the practical reality of "citizens plus" will encourage the proliferation of small, quasi-socialist satrapies across Canada.

On each reserve, the Aboriginal elite will do

On each reserve, the Aboriginal elite will do well for itself by managing the cash flow of government programs and enterprises, but most people will remain mired in poverty and misery. — Tom Flanagan

well for itself by managing the cash flow of government programs and enterprises, but most people will remain mired in poverty and misery. I know, Alan, that such a version of "citizens plus" is not what you want or intend for Aboriginal people, but I fear it is likely to turn out that way in practice.

Maybe I have it all wrong. Maybe there is a version of "citizens plus" that (a) will not encourage Aboriginal people to remain in locations where there is little economic future; (b) will confer benefits upon them as individuals to liberate them from the governmental tutelage formerly exercised by the Indian Agent and now passed to the band council; and (c) will be genuinely temporary and transitional, resulting in an Aboriginal population as self-supporting as other Canadians. If you have viable suggestions along these lines, I will be happy to support them. But I am not optimistic, given the array of entrenched veto groups and special interests constituting the policy network in Aboriginal affairs.

Sincerely yours,



TOM FLANAGAN

February 24, 2001

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your thoughtful letter. We are in agreement that public policy is best served by vigorous debate. We also know that Aboriginal policy is extremely politicized, and subject to taboos which constrain both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. I am pleased, therefore, that our debate will indicate that civility and strongly differing views are not an oxymoron. As I said on the back cover of *First Nations? Second Thoughts*, Tom Flanagan's "views are controversial and, whether or not you agree with him, there is a clear need for his ideas to be publicly available and debated." ...

Different versions of [what you call] the Aboriginal orthodoxy are found in the post-imperial era wherever indigenous peoples existing as minorities in settler societies are made aware that they are not alone, that their past treatment and future aspirations are shared by other indigenous peoples around the globe. They gain assurance and self-confidence from the recognition that this time the zeitgeist is, at least in part, on their side. In the mid-20th century, Third World independence movements launched counterattacks against the former imperialist orthodoxy that had supplied the rationale for European control of much of humanity in overseas colonies. The Aboriginal orthodoxy is a later fourth world counterattack against the marginalization of indigenous peoples in settler colonies, an attack against their treatment as wards placed outside the civic community. The Canadian version of wardship treatment for status Indians was brutally summed up by the anthropologist Noel Dyck: "From birth to death most Indians have been caught in a situation where they have had to listen to one unvarying and unceasing message – that they are unacceptable as they are and that to become worthwhile as individuals they must change in the particular manner advocated by their current tutelage agents."⁸

When they emerge from the sidelines of history, people who have been demeaned, humiliated and stigmatized inevitably construct arguments and reinterpret the past in ways that enhance their dignity. Although the orthodoxies they construct have an instrumental dimension, the psychic gratification they produce is immensely valuable to their believers. Accordingly, destruction of the orthodoxy – in the unlikely event that its believers would agree to renounce it – would not wipe the slate clean. The alienation and resentment which fuelled it would remain, possibly in an exaggerated form, for the comforting respectability and emotional support provided by the vanished orthodoxy would not be quickly replaced ...

In a sense, your radicalism is simply a revival of yesterday's settled understanding of where our non-Aboriginal predecessors thought we were heading. This, in itself, is not necessarily a criticism, but a reminder that it is only radical because it now attracts fewer supporters than in

its heyday. Nevertheless, in the light of the decisive repudiation of the White Paper by Indian organizations, and its subsequent withdrawal, your analysis may not speak to today.

The White Paper defeat occurred before the contemporary growth of Aboriginal nationalism. The likelihood of an updated version of the White Paper triumphing in present conditions is, therefore, close to zero. The obvious reason is that the distinct Indian identity which the Canadian state did so much, admittedly inadvertently, to reinforce, has now come back in the form of Indian nationalism, which includes a desire for a cultural reinvigoration based on a synthesis, so the argument goes, of tradition and modernity. Therefore, there will be organized, self-governing, territorially bounded Indian communities in Canada for the indefinite future. You admit this, but reluctantly. You view this inescapable reality as a regrettable survival to be tolerated but certainly not encouraged. In particular, these small communities, self-described as nations, are to be deprived of the rationale for special treatment, a rationale based on the Aboriginal orthodoxy that you hope to vanquish.

You are, by contrast, positive about a second reality, the large urban Aboriginal population – overall about 50 per cent of the total, a somewhat smaller share of status Indians. Although you devote only a few pages to this reality – almost in passing – you view the urban scene positively. This is where assimilation/integration (“call it whatever you want”) is taking place. It was, however, not your task to examine the urban scene, mainly because your focus on the Aboriginal orthodoxy that justifies special rights for Aboriginal communities has limited salience for urban Aboriginals. As a consequence, the urban Aboriginal reality, which you see as the positive alternative to self-governing First Nations, is underexamined.

The urban scene provides grounds for both optimism and despair. The optimism comes from the understudied phenomenon of a developing Aboriginal middle class fed by the escalating numbers, now more than 150,000, of Aboriginal people who have completed or are in postsecondary education.⁹ By 1990, there was a significant urban Aboriginal population earning a good income of \$40,000 or more.¹⁰ Compared to the reserve situation, many of the socioeconomic indicators of urban Aboriginal life are positive. The despair is the depressing reality of ghetto conditions – youth gangs, substance abuse, violence, etc. – especially in several of the major cities in the prairie provinces.¹¹ A recent publication of the National Association of Friendship Centres and the Law Commission of Canada portrayed a depressing future in major urban centres with a “very real likelihood of grim consequences for the fabric of both Aboriginal communities and Canadian society” in the absence of innovative measures directed particularly at urban Aboriginal youth.¹²

We may well be developing a Canadian version of the American big city phenomenon of an Afro-American middle class and an Afro-American ghetto. The Aboriginal middle class has obviously been enlarged by the astonishing increase in Aboriginal graduates of postsecondary institutions just noted, and is surely a result of “citizen plus” treatment, special state-provided financial assistance and support for Aboriginal students. Surely also, additional “plus” treatment

in the form of remedial state measures will be necessary to reduce the poverty, violence and criminality of the ghetto. While your sympathy is clearly with urban Aboriginals because they have taken the path dictated by the inevitable direction of change – by what “has to happen” – the dark side of urban life is absent from your analysis. Further, your apparent antipathy to a positive state role beyond some Hayekian minimum implicitly discourages state involvement in situations of incipient crisis. “I do not present a plan for curing all the ills besetting Aboriginal peoples,” you state. “I do not believe in the validity of such plans.”¹³ Whether you believe in smaller initiatives directed to the alleviation of specific ills is not clear. I argue that we cannot stand aside.

We agree that the Aboriginal future is within Canada, for both Aboriginal peoples living in cities and those living in organized communities. This also means, and here we also agree, that Aboriginal peoples are not only Canadians, but are and should be thought of as such by others and by themselves. This was the argument of the Hawthorn survey a third of a century ago, restricted by its terms of reference to the legal-status Indian population.¹⁴ *Citizens Plus* is an attempt to revive the necessity and relevance of the citizen component, which I see as threatened by a policy discourse that pays more attention to how we can be kept apart than to what will hold us together. My fear is that an exaggerated stress on “otherness,” on incommensurable solitudes, on a multinational definition of who we are, may lead us to treat each other as strangers with little moral obligation to help each other. I believe that this theme gives you no problems.¹⁵ ...

Your radicalism is simply a revival of yesterday's settled understanding of where our non-Aboriginal predecessors thought we were heading. — Alan Cairns

Whether we like it or not, we have a series of natural experiments underway in two arenas. In addition to Nunavut, and other Inuit and Métis governments, hundreds of other experiments in First Nations self-government are taking place. We also have major Aboriginal urban populations whose long-run future is a question mark. Urban governments will undoubtedly experiment with various programs to improve the situation of urban Aboriginal peoples, to make the city a home. In both arenas, there will be policy successes and failures. At the moment, we have inadequate data on what works and what does not in either arena. I have asked various informed colleagues what percentage of existing First Nation governments are performing in excellent, adequate or unacceptable ways. The responses are admittedly anecdotal, but the answers vary significantly. My conclusion is that we simply don't know.

Our ignorance is, if anything, even more profound at the urban level, which has attracted much less scholarly research and political attention. Thus, I take exception to the negative portrayal of Aboriginal people in the city in the RCAP report. It does not give adequate weight to the evident successes and the opportunities that cities provide. I also demur from your

thesis about the “inherent problems of Aboriginal self-government,” if that is intended to mean anything more than that special difficulties attend its successful practice. . . .

I do not view “citizens plus” as a compromise between assimilation and parallelism, and I did not so describe it. I reject both parallelism and assimilation as unrealistic. They simply do not fit where we are. Each is blind to a crucial reality. Parallelism is indifferent to and incapable of answering the question “what will hold us together?” Assimilation, which assumes, among other things, the monopolization of our civic identities by a common, uniform citizenship, is unresponsive to the clear and strong Aboriginal desire for a positive institutional and symbolic response to what Patrick Macklem recently called “indigenous difference.”¹⁶ I believe that *First Nations? Second Thoughts* is insensitive to the need for some positive policy response to that indigenous difference. If I correctly read where we are, the choice of ignoring or overriding the Aboriginal desire for recognition is not available to us.

Let me sum up on what I see as the virtue of “citizens plus.” It is an organizing rubric for the future sharing of a country that contains both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

“Citizens” brings Indian peoples into the “we” community of other Canadians. Citizenship is the source of the empathy that induces us to feel responsible for each other. I do not mean the formalities of citizenship, but rather the emotional bonds of solidarity that accompany shared citizen identification.

“Plus” means that there is a supplementary component – a positive recognition of difference that might be manifested in a third order of government, in special start-up education programs, in programs to reduce the incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome, in a catch-up program of support for postsecondary education and elsewhere. The relationship between “citizens” and “plus” is symbiotic. “Citizens plus” is a package, not two separate components. Without some “plus” component, citizenship will appear inadequate to many, perhaps most, members of First Nations. On the other hand, citizenship sets limits to and shapes the plus component. At some point, the elaboration of “plus” could go so far that little is left of a common citizenship, that we have become strangers. In the long run, the “plus” component is unlikely to receive marked non-Aboriginal support if Aboriginal peoples neither see themselves nor are seen by others as Canadian citizens.

I look forward to your response. Our critics are our best friends.

Sincerely yours,



ALAN CAIRNS

Notes

- ¹ Alan Cairns, “*Aboriginal Nationalism and Canadian Citizenship*,” *Cité libre*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Fall 2000), pp. 50–55.
- ² Cairns, *Citizens Plus*, pp. 182, 54.
- ³ Thomas Sowell, *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective* (New York: William Morrow, 1990), p. 14.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.
- ⁵ Canada, *Comparison of Social Conditions, 1991 and 1996* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 2000), p. 7; Canada, *Basic Departmental Data, 1999* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 2000), p. 44.
- ⁶ Canada, *Basic Departmental Data, 1999*, p. 3.
- ⁷ Fred McMahon, *Retreat from Growth: Atlantic Canada and the Negative-Sum Economy* (Halifax: Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, 2000).
- ⁸ Noel Dyck, *What is the Indian Problem?* (St. John’s, NL: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1991), p. 27.
- ⁹ John Borrows, “‘Landed’ Citizenship: Narratives of Aboriginal Political Participation,” in Alan C. Cairns et al., eds., *Citizenship, Diversity and Pluralism: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), p. 75.
- ¹⁰ Evelyn Peters, *Demographics of Aboriginal People in Urban Areas in Relation to Self-Government: A Report Prepared for Policy and Strategic Direction, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1994), p. 28 and Table 15, p. 55.
- ¹¹ Carol LaPrairie, *Seen but not Heard: Native People in the Inner City* (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1995).
- ¹² National Association of Friendship Centres and the Law Commission of Canada, *Urban Aboriginal Governance in Canada: Refashioning the Dialogue* (Ottawa, 1999), pp. 63–65.
- ¹³ Flanagan, *First Nations? Second Thoughts*, p. 4.
- ¹⁴ H.B. Hawthorn, ed., *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada*, 2 vols. (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1966–67).
- ¹⁵ Tom Flanagan, “Are Aboriginals Canadian?” *Cité Libre*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Fall 2000).
- ¹⁶ Patrick Macklem, *Indigenous Difference and the Constitution of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Our full, unequal world

Ecological footprints and international trade

by Jan Otto Andersson

To ECOLOGICAL ECONOMISTS, THE MOST COMPELLING FACT IS THAT we are living in a “full world.” Rapid population growth and mass consumption have transformed humanity into a colossal user of nature’s services. Our “ecological footprint” – the area we require for our consumption and waste absorption – has become so big that ecosystems are being destroyed, species are dying out, climate is changing and people are losing the potential to pursue their traditional livelihoods. One of the most ambitious attempts to quantify all this is the *Living Planet Report*, published every two years by the World Wildlife Fund. According to the WWF’s analysis, humanity’s ecological footprint (EF) exceeded the biological capacity (biocapacity) of the earth by about 1985. As of the beginning of this millennium, the “ecological overshoot” is calculated at about 20 per cent. (See box on page 162 for definitions of these concepts.)

Of course, such calculations are estimates and are subject to many uncertainties. Nevertheless, we need some measure of the pressure human consumption is generating on renewable resources and ecosystems. For all its limitations, the ecological footprint concept is better than any other practicable concept, such as energy use or material flows. Unlike alternative indicators, EF calculations make it possible to estimate the biocapacities of different types of land and sea – cropland, grazing land, forestland and fishing grounds. The concept of biological capacity includes, first of all, the ability of



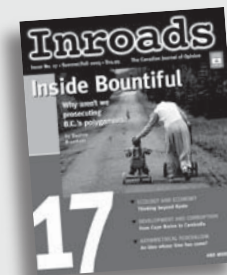
Urban sprawl hits the environment in Greater Vancouver. ARLENE GEE PHOTO

the ecosystem to produce biomass, that is the quantity of plants and other organisms that can live on a given area. Second, it incorporates the capability to absorb wastes, such as carbon dioxide emissions stemming from the use of fossil fuels. By combining them, we can estimate the hypothetical upper limit of services the biosphere can supply, a limit not to be exceeded if we want to achieve ecological sustainability.

Furthermore, it is possible to estimate the biocapacity of smaller areas than the globe, such as that of individual countries. It is

important to assess whether countries are maintaining their biocapacities or overusing them. Are they gradually destroying their natural capital through “overshooting”? The Global Footprint Network has measured the biocapacity, the total ecological footprint and the difference – the ecological “surplus” or “deficit” – for 150 countries (see table 1 for sample results).

Most countries have an ecological deficit. This applies for all densely populated industrialized countries – such as Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Israel. It is



SUMMER/FALL 2005 As part of an Inroads section on the environment, Jan Otto Andersson, Reader in Economics at the Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Finland, introduced readers to the concepts of “ecological footprint” and “biocapacity.” Much of the article dealt with the relationship between these concepts and international trade, which he examined in terms of importing and exporting biocapacity. Trade that appears mutually advantageous in economic terms, he argued, may be inequitable or unsustainable in ecological terms. In this excerpt, he explains the basic concepts and assesses their significance.

also true for countries that can afford high consumption levels thanks to the money they receive for oil exports: Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Only some sparsely populated temperate countries – such as Australia, Canada, Finland, Russia and several African and Latin American countries – have substantial ecological reserves. It is remarkable that the United States, with bountiful natural resources relative to its population, would need to double its territory to achieve ecological self-sufficiency. (Admittedly, the U.S. overshoot is exaggerated by use of lower global – not domestic U.S. – productivity per hectare parameters.).

A very troubling result is that China and India, as well as other poor countries like Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Thailand and Pakistan, have ecological deficits even though their per capita footprints are low. The ecological overshoot of these developing countries is set to increase dramatically as they try to “develop.”

It should be noted that the land area required for the absorption of carbon dioxide emissions constitutes almost half of the EFs. For the rich countries the deficits would become significantly smaller – and would often turn into a surplus – if we excluded the imputed hectares required to absorb emissions. Since the damage from global warming may be felt anywhere in the

globe, if a country has an ecological deficit it does not necessarily imply that its natural capital has been undermined.

The ecological footprint calculations reveal that we live not only in a full world, but also in an unequal one. An average North American consumes 15 times more renewable resources than an average Bangladeshi or Ethiopian. To sustain his or her lifestyle, a typical Western European requires six times the biocapacity of an African or Indian. If everybody on earth were to consume as much biocapacity as North Americans currently do, we would need four more globes, and at least one more even if we did not care about global warming. The major reason for the inequalities

in resource use is differences in income and purchasing power per capita. In the global supermarket, the rich are deciding the uses to which the planet’s land and sea areas will be put ...

The importance of ecological economics

Standard economics focuses on efficiency, defined in terms of today’s willingness to pay for goods and services. Environmental economics extends this thinking to environmental problems, and tries to correct for the lack of functioning markets for environmental services. However, focusing on efficiency,

What are “ecological footprints”?

The **ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT** is an estimate of how much biologically productive land and water area an individual, a city, a country, a region or humanity requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb the waste it generates, using prevailing technology. This land and water area can be anywhere in the world. Ecological footprints are calculated for each country. This calculation includes the resources contained within the goods and services that are consumed by people living in that country as well as the associated waste. Resources consumed for the production of goods and services exported to another country are added to the footprint of the country where the goods and services are actually consumed, rather than the country where they are produced.

The ecological footprint is measured in **GLOBAL HECTARES**. A global hectare is one hectare of biologically productive space with world average productivity. Since productivity changes over time, so does the estimated total of global hectares for the planet. The latest estimate, for 2001, is 11.3 billion global hectares. (This is equivalent to roughly one quarter of the actual surface area of the planet. The productivity of particular geographic regions obviously varies – from fertile farmland to forest to desert to ocean. In calculating the planet’s estimated total of 11.3 billion global hectares, the productivity of actual hectares has been adjusted.)

BIOCAPACITY (biological capacity) is the total usable biological production capacity in a given year of a biologically productive area, for example that within a country. It can be expressed in global hectares. Global biocapacity available per person requires dividing the 11.3 billion global hectares of biologically productive area by the number of people alive – 6.15 billion in 2001. This gives the average biocapacity per person on the planet: 1.8 global hectares.

BIOPRODUCTIVITY (biological productivity) is equal to biological production per hectare per year. Biological productivity is typically measured in terms of annual biomass accumulation.

We can use the concept of ecological footprints to estimate how much land and sea area each individual, each country or humanity as a whole needs to satisfy its present consumption requirements. In doing this, we can use either national productivities or average global productivities per hectare. When estimating, for instance, how much land is needed to produce one tonne of sugar, we can use the average yield per hectare in one country – say Cuba – or use the global average yield in all countries producing sugar. Since consumption goods can be bought from any part of the world – today we have a “global factory” and a “global supermarket” at our disposal – it is logical to use global average yields when estimating the pressure an individual or a country causes. However, when we measure the ecological pressures on a particular area, such as a country, it is preferable to use local rather than global yields.

When interpreting the results of ecological footprint calculations and their relation to biological capacity, we need to be careful. On the one hand we may underestimate the pressures, since we assume that present production is achieved in a sustainable way. We are also unable to take into consideration all waste absorption requirements. On the other hand, we may overestimate the pressures, for example by not being able to account for the multiple uses of land and water. The use of global yield averages when assessing biocapacities may overestimate the pressures in relatively high-yielding regions of the planet and underestimate pressures in low-yielding regions. The low-yielding regions may have a potential for significant future productivity improvements based on existing knowledge.

so defined, means that questions of justice and sustainability are set aside.

Ecological economics differs in its approach from both standard and environmental economics. It puts sustainability at the centre of analysis, and it focuses on distributive justice globally as well as be-

tween present and future generations. When we look at international trade from the standpoint of an ecological economist, we perceive problems that are not confronted by either environmental or standard economists. Concepts used in this article ... are barely comprehensible to most economists.

Table 1: National footprints and biocapacities, 2001

	Population (millions)	Ecological footprint	Biocapacity		Ecological surplus or deficit
			(global hectares per person)		
World	6,148.1	2.2	1.8		-0.4
Argentina	37.5	2.6	6.7		4.2
Australia	19.4	7.7	19.2		11.5
Bangladesh	140.9	0.6	0.3		-0.3
Brazil	174.0	2.2	10.2		8.0
Canada	31.0	6.4	14.4		8.0
China	1,292.6	1.5	0.8		-0.8
Egypt	69.1	1.5	0.5		-1.0
Ethiopia	67.3	0.7	0.5		-0.2
Finland	5.2	7.0	12.4		5.4
France	59.6	5.8	3.1		-2.8
Germany	82.3	4.8	1.9		-2.9
India	1,033.4	0.8	0.4		-0.4
Indonesia	214.4	1.2	1.0		-0.2
Israel	6.2	5.3	0.4		-4.9
Iran	67.2	2.1	0.7		-1.4
Japan	127.3	4.3	0.8		-3.6
Netherlands	16.0	4.7	0.8		-4.0
Nigeria	117.8	1.2	1.0		-0.2
Pakistan	146.3	0.7	0.4		-0.3
Russia	144.9	4.4	6.9		2.6
Saudi Arabia	22.8	4.4	0.9		-3.4
Thailand	61.6	1.6	1.0		-0.6
Turkey	69.3	2.0	1.4		-0.6
United Arab Emirates	2.9	9.9	1.0		-8.9
United Kingdom	59.1	5.4	1.5		-3.9
United States	288.0	9.5	4.9		-4.7

Source: Global Footprint Network. http://www.footprintnetwork.org/gfn_sub.php?content=footprint_hectares

On the other hand, a person accustomed to calculating in terms of biophysical quantities such as “ecological footprints” can easily understand how trade that in money terms is advantageous to all parties may be questionable from the point of view of sustainability or distributive justice.

Most ecological economists think of sustainability in the “strong” sense of the term: we are not allowed to endanger the natural capital passed on to future generations. We cannot make up for the destruction of environmental capital by improving our human and human-made physical capital. Future generations have the same rights to nature’s services as we have. Furthermore, other living beings may have rights that we are not allowed to ignore.

For both standard and environmental economists, natural capital is just one factor of production comparable to others such as human capital (labour of varying skill levels) or human-made physical capital (buildings and equipment). In principle, they believe it possible to compensate for eroding natural capital by improving education or investing in new machines. Those among them who

have pondered the costs and benefits of preventing global warming mostly believe that we should not incur the costs of preventing change. Since future generations will be better off than we are, there will be enough human and human-made capital to compensate for a worsening of the climate. Ecological economists call this belief in the possibility – and even desirability – of substituting nonnatural for natural capital as “weak sustainability.”

In this article, sustainability has been

The long-run environmental consequences of our present trajectory are almost impossible to assess, but since they may be catastrophic, we should not test the ecological limits lightly.

discussed in ecological terms: overexploitation of our biological capacity implies, quite simply, unsustainability. Eroding ecosystems and causing global warming cannot be justified by hypothetical compensation. The long-run environmental consequences of our present trajectory are almost impossible to assess, but since they may be catastrophic, we should not test the ecological limits lightly.

The countries of the world today can be ranked according to their use of global resources. Those with the biggest ecological footprint are generally those with the highest standard of living and the most competitive economies. But does this imply – as most economists believe – that all should strive for the way of life of those on the top? Given a full world subject to ecological overshoot, the answer is far from obvious. ■

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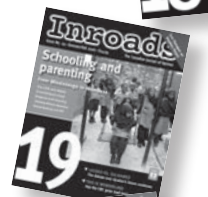
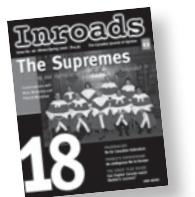
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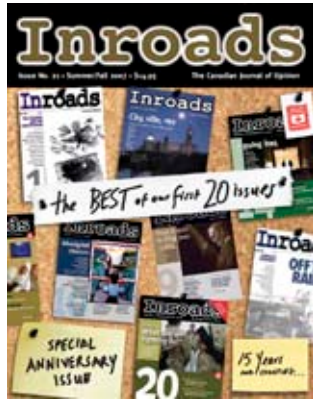
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