

Inroads

The Canadian Journal of Opinion | Issue No. 22 | Winter/Spring 2008 | \$14.95



Unreasonable Accommodation?

Four leading observers respond to Quebec's Bouchard-Taylor Commission

22



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Published twice a year by

Inroads Journal Publishing Inc.

We acknowledge the financial
assistance of the Canadian
Government through the
Canada Magazine Fund and
Publications Assistance
Program

Printed by Quebecor World
Région Québec (St-Romuald)
Member of Magazines Canada
and the Independent Press
Association

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Montreal, Quebec H3S 1N4
tel: 514-731-8383
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DISTRIBUTION

Magazines Canada

ISSN 118-746x

Indexed in CPI, CBCA,
Historical Abstracts, ABC:
PoliSci, America: History and
Life, IBSS

Publications Mail Agreement
No. 40808027

Return undeliverable
Canadian addresses to
business office

SUBSCRIPTIONS

two years: \$48
students: \$36 (2 years)
prices include taxes and shipping
institutions: \$60
single issue: \$15 plus shipping
US mailing addresses add \$10
International mailing
addresses add \$20
GST registration: 133724039

Introducing Inroads 22

Over the last few years, Inroads has published in-depth articles and theme sections on Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, eastern Africa, Europe, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and the United States. Having travelled the world, with this issue we return to our roots, devoting two separate but related sections to Quebec.

Two developments brought Quebec back to the forefront of our attention. One was the dramatically new political configuration that came out of the election of March 26. Premier Jean Charest's Liberals lost their majority, the Parti Québécois was reduced to third-party status, and Mario Dumont's Action Démocratique du Québec vaulted from four seats to 41 to emerge as the official opposition. For insight into what happened and what is likely to follow, Inroads turned to party insiders and knowledgeable observers close to all three parties: MNAs Geoffrey Kelley (Liberal) and

Camil Bouchard (PQ), former Liberal Party director general John Parisella; ADQ adviser and founding member Eric Montigny; and François Vaillancourt and Bryan Breguet of the Université de Montréal's economics department. Parisella and Kelley look to Liberal history and enduring Liberal values to find sources for their party's renewal; Montigny, Vaillancourt and Breguet examine the ADQ's key policies in the constitutional and economic domains; and Bouchard asks how the PQ can win the loyalty of young families, especially in the 450 region surrounding Montreal, back from the ADQ.

One of the factors in the ADQ's rise, observers agree, was Dumont's critical stance toward "reasonable accommodation" – measures taken to accommodate cultural and religious minorities. By early 2007 these measures had become increasingly controversial in Quebec, and incidents surrounding them – including one involving Asmahan Mansour (pictured on our cover), an 11-year-old soccer player from

Ottawa who was told to leave the field during a tournament in the Montreal suburb of Laval when she would not take off her hijab – increasingly heated. Premier Charest responded by referring the issue to a commission, to be chaired by two of Quebec's most eminent intellectuals, Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor. Bouchard and Taylor laid out their general approach to the issue in a consultation document released in August. We present an excerpt from the document along with comments from four distinguished observers: British writer and editor David Goodhart, Paris-based Quebec journalist and essayist Christian Rioux, and Canadian political scientists Alan Cairns and Garth Stevenson.

Quebec is also central to Gary Caldwell's essay, in which he argues that the Canadian federation was the product of a particular geopolitical context and political culture. That political culture has been allowed to slip away, he maintains, with the result that the federation may no longer be workable.

Even if we wanted to, we couldn't entirely ignore the rest of the world in this issue. Doug McArthur takes us to Pakistan, which he portrays as a misgoverned country that has become the most volatile and dangerous place on the planet. President Gen. Pervez Musharraf's November 3 declaration of martial law highlighted the weakness of his rule. But there is still hope that a proposed power-sharing deal between the military and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto might restore a measure of stability, and McArthur urges Canada to play an active role in supporting such a deal.

This issue is also noteworthy for two innovations, both intended to make Inroads more accessible without losing any of the depth that readers expect. First of all, Inroads has been completely redesigned – the work of our design and production manager, Nadene Rehnby – to give it an airier, more contemporary feel. Second, we are introducing three new columns, by Inroads editorial board members Reg Whitaker, Finn Poschmann and Arthur Milner. In their initial instalments, Reg sets out in search of the real Stephen Harper; Arthur laments the decline of CBC radio; and Finn explores a phenomenon that he calls our "muted millenarianism."

Also in this issue:

- Keith Archer and Rainer Knopff offer a critique of university funding policies, which have favoured science, technology and medicine at the expense of the arts and social sciences, while Richard Nimijean worries about the impact of the Harper government's more focused foreign policy on the international Canadian Studies community;
- Inroads listserv contributors debate the issues behind Michael Ignatieff's apology for his support of the Iraq war in the *New York Times*;
- John Richards reviews Calvin Helin's *Dances with Dependency*, approving the author's break with Aboriginal orthodoxy;

— Bob Chodos

The enigma of Stephen Harper

by Reg Whitaker



This article inaugurates a new political column by Reg Whitaker, political scientist, author of the classic study of the Liberal Party (*The Government Party*) and longtime Inroads contributor and editorial board member.

Stephen Harper became Prime Minister of Canada in early 2006. Canada's "new government," as Harper insists on calling it, is no longer new but increasingly familiar. Yet there is a real sense that Harper remains an enigma to Canadians. We don't really *know* him. There is behind Harper's now familiar TV face a curious blank. Not the blank that George Bush registers: the sign that says "Nobody home." The enigma of Stephen Harper is quite the opposite: hidden depths, concealed agendas, complex contradictions. There are any number of Harpers that flash by, and they simply do not add up.

Harper the neocon ideologue v. Harper the liberal pragmatist: The first Harper to appear was the young Reform Party founder and intellectual star; the MP who left the Reform caucus because he found Preston Manning's populism too flaccid, who then headed the right-wing National Citizens Coalition, who has been associated with the University of Calgary school of polemical conservative thinkers, who sneered that Canada was a hopeless Scandinavian-style welfare case, who publicly scorned global



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He breaks an unwritten hockey rule: captains should be above the battle, commanding respect; dirty work should be left to enforcers who command fear. Harper likes to be both.

warming as junk science and a socialist plot to steal from the rich countries and who in office has effectively scrapped the Kyoto Accord.

Another face first appeared in the 2006 election campaign when he ran on a platform of five fairly moderate priorities. In office, the new pragmatic Harper has presided over a shift to a “green” agenda and a budget in 2007 that follows a classic Liberal “goodies for everyone” formula, agreed to tax income trusts (a directly broken promise that alienated Bay Street and the oil patch) and displayed an unexpected affection for multiculturalism.

Harper the “equality of the provinces” federalist v. Harper the “Québécois nation” special-status federalist: The old (“Firewall around Alberta”) Harper was a hard-line Western “Plan B” get-tough-with-Quebec sort of guy, who denounced the Mulroney government for awarding the F-18 maintenance contract to Montreal rather than Winnipeg. Harper in office dropped the “Québécois are a nation” bombshell on a discombobulated Parliament, and has worked as assiduously as his Liberal predecessors at favouring Quebec in government spending (the old Harper would have called this “pandering to Quebec”). He even found a few billions to dispense to Jean Charest to repair the “fiscal imbalance” in the midst of a Quebec election, Charest promptly turning the windfall into promised tax breaks for Quebec voters.

Harper the pro-American v. Harper the Canadian nationalist: The old Harper appeared on Fox TV and in the Wall Street Journal to denounce Canada for not joining Bush in the Iraq war. Harper in office has pushed hard on Canada’s military role in Afghanistan, despite mounting casualties, and has attacked critics in much the same manner as Bush attacked critics of the Iraq war. Yet he has done nothing to reverse the Liberal decision to stay out of Ballistic Missile Defence, which Bush had hounded Canada to join. The new Harper boasts a nationalist strategy in the Arctic in competition with the United States and takes every opportunity to highlight differences with the Bush administration.

Harper the social conservative v. Harper the social liberal: In opposition, he was a passionate, even demagogic, opponent of same-sex marriage, suggesting against all expert advice that he

could and would reverse the law without regard to the court rulings that had precipitated the legislative change. He regularly attends an evangelical church, and born-again enthusiasts help finance the well-oiled Tory war chest with a regular flow of many small donations. Harper’s unqualified backing of Israel in its 2006 invasion of Lebanon not only won support from traditional Liberal Jewish voters, but seems to reflect the unqualified pro-Israeli position of the “theocons” across North America.

Yet once in office, Harper called an early vote in Parliament on same-sex marriage that he knew he would lose, and then promptly dumped the whole issue like a child abandoning a broken toy. Talk of a “defence of religions” act has been buried. As for raising a reversal of abortion rights, you could search with a bloodhound in vain for any trace of an issue that animated Stockwell Day and his followers when he led the Canadian Alliance before Harper.

Harper the prime ministerial insider v. Harper the insecure outsider: This is one of the weirder contradictions. Since the moment he assumed office, Harper has very successfully donned the mantle of the decisive, directed, in-command, professionally competent Prime Minister. The contrast with his “Mr. Dithers” predecessor helps, but is not the whole story: Harper looks very much at ease with himself in the position. This is an important part of his reelection image: the guy in charge who knows how to get things done.

There is however, a very different Harper: the Alberta conservative outsider with deep suspicions and resentments against the Liberal/liberal Eastern Establishment he sees entrenched in the Ottawa bureaucracy, the Liberal-appointed courts and the “left-wing” national media. There have been battles with baffled bureaucrats over a range of issues; the result has often been a standoff in which senior public servants are told not to provide policy options and not to offer warnings of possible pitfalls in Conservative plans, but simply to do what they are told. The relatively critical national media are regularly excluded from access, while the less informed and more credulous local media are cultivated by Harper’s rigorously on-message communications team.

The insecure outsider complex may help explain one remarkable feature of the Harper government, a degree of command-and-control centralization of all activity in the Prime Minister’s Office that is unparalleled in our history – Pierre Trudeau’s alleged presidentialization of the office and Jean Chrétien’s “friendly dictatorship” look collegial in comparison. Perhaps Harper the control freak must keep his grip on everyone and everything because he fears the ubiquitous Establishment will snatch his power away. There is a whiff here of a Richard Nixon complex. During his presidency, the Nixon team set themselves up like the beachhead of an army of



There is a whiff here of a Richard Nixon complex. During his presidency, the Nixon team set themselves up like the beachhead of an army of occupation in a Washington that was deemed irredeemably hostile. Were Harper to falter and lose office, one could well imagine a bitter “you won’t have Nixon to kick around any more” *envoi*.

occupation in a Washington that was deemed irredeemably hostile. Were Harper to falter and lose office, one could well imagine a bitter “you won’t have Nixon to kick around any more” *envoi*.

Harper the captain v. Harper the enforcer: The Prime Minister is a hockey fan and is reputedly writing a book on the history of the national sport. Yet in his own job performance he breaks an unwritten hockey rule: captains (like Gretzky or Crosby) should be above the battle, commanding respect; dirty work should be left to enforcers (like Domi or Brashear) who command fear. Harper likes to be both. Linking a Sikh Liberal MP to the Air India bombing by association with his father-in-law to smear the Liberals as soft on terrorism was an ugly piece of McCarthyite tactics, made even worse by the fact that it was the Prime Minister himself who delivered the Bertuzzi-style sucker punch. How prime ministerial can he be when he is seen personally directing elbows to the faces of opponents?

Captains are about hockey as the rink of dreams; enforcers are about exercising power.

You get the idea. I could quote Walt Whitman: “Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes.” But is there a key to unlocking the enigma? Perhaps it’s a bit early in the game for finding magic keys, but let me make a suggestion.

Stephen Harper stands at the cusp of far-reaching changes in the Canadian body politic. Economically supercharged Alberta is moving to the forefront of the federation, while in Quebec the old sovereignty-federalism polarization seems to be declining (and with it one of the bases of the Liberals as the “government party”). As an Albertan PM who has engineered the thin edge of what could turn into a major Conservative breakthrough in Quebec, Harper is well positioned to steer his government and party into a historic Alberta-Quebec alliance to govern Canada.

But this is a very tricky operation. The Alberta political culture that Harper reflects is often on the edge of the mainstream of Canadian values, and is particularly alien in Quebec. Push-

ing too far to the right can cause him problems in Quebec, while going too far to placate Quebec can certainly cause problems for him not only in Alberta but in English Canada more widely. There are the big liberal and cosmopolitan cities to contend with, none of which (save Calgary and Edmonton) have shown much warmth for Harper’s conservatism or his candidates. At the same time, his hard-core right-wing base has to be tossed occasional bits of raw meat to keep them from turning ugly.

Can Harper successfully play the *über*-centrist Mackenzie King, of whom Frank Scott memorably wrote, “*He blunted us*”? Harper is not naturally a master of ambiguity, but rather of cool, rational precision – not the qualities required for sustaining a coalition of opposites. Perhaps the succession of multiple personalities is a way of coping with the stresses of coalition-building in the tower of Babel.

In his recent book *Harper’s Team*, Tom Flanagan, a longtime alter ego to Harper, lays down the “ten commandments of Conservative campaigning.” The second commandment reads: “Canada is not *yet* a conservative or Conservative country.” The fourth commandment identifies “incremental” conservatism as the only way to make progress. Flanagan once described himself to me as a “right-wing ideologue,” and there has been considerable comment on his (and Harper’s?) transmutation into a compromising incrementalist. But read Flanagan carefully, note the crucial *yet* in the second commandment, and note that incrementalism proceeds toward a goal. “Sweeping visions have a place in intellectual discussion, but they are toxic in practical politics,” Flanagan writes. The Promised Land is still there, but it can only be reached by small, incremental steps. Revealing the destination (the sweeping vision) too soon will be toxic.

Does this not sound a little like the “hidden agenda” that dogged Reform and the Alliance, and even now lingers over the new Conservative Party? Perhaps it helps explain why the Conservatives seem to have hit a glass ceiling with the support of about one in three voters – not enough for a majority – and why so many people simply do not *trust* Harper. Is it credible that this cerebral and articulate conservative has gone on a long march through four parties (destroying one, and replacing two others) only to end as a Red Tory/Blue Grit wallowing in the mushy centre, holding onto power without principle? Not likely.

Carefully scan the many faces of Stephen Harper. The *real* one is there, just obscured for marketing purposes. There may be something after all in the partisan crack that Harper “loves power, but hates government.” This is, after all, a fundamental conservative paradox.

Harper is not naturally a master of ambiguity, but rather of cool, rational precision – not the qualities required for sustaining a coalition of opposites.

Harnessing the new millenarianism

by Finn Poschmann



This article inaugurates a new political column by Finn Poschmann, Director of Research with the C.D. Howe Institute in Toronto and a member of the Inroads editorial board.

I suspect that millenarianism surrounds us: not a radical or religious millenarianism, although these thrive in numerous trouble spots around the world, but a muted and diffuse strain. It is a mode of thinking in Western culture that wears disguises and creeps into political thought and speech and into our daily lives.

This muted millenarianism keeps many of us ticking, and is not a bad thing. It helps us through mundane, material and sometimes manifestly important moments in our families and careers. Such a moment could be a cosmically modest but nonetheless life-changing event such as buying a house or car or moving neighbourhoods. It could be as straightforwardly material as a promotion that will make all the difference, we think – perhaps rightly so – between where we are and the professional happiness and financial stability that we seek. Or it might be a cusp in our personal lives, a defining event such as a marriage or divorce that distinguishes the known, imperfect past and present from a possible, presumptively happier future.

So I paint a picture of a muted millenarianism. It is not a grand millenarianism that predicts an end to the

familiar world and, after the last cataclysmic battle, a perfect peace. My millenarianism is a simpler, casual observation: many of us, individually and collectively, routinely allow ourselves to be driven by the sometimes correct notion that there is a hump to be got over, after which everything will get better.

Do you see yourself yet? You might not be an aggressive socialist or an Islamist or a harsh evangelist of the Christian right – these are clearly grand millenarian tendencies, and perhaps linked to the new millennium in the case of the Christian right. But perhaps you support Quebec nationalism. Or proportional representation. Or fundamental tax reform.

Let's take them in turn.

Quebec nationalism, although now at a weak juncture, has always found its strongest support among the middle-class, vaguely left intelligentsia, and among rural residents, especially in the north and east of the province where income and education levels are low. While Quebecers are far better off, materially, than rural counterparts in southeast Asia or the Middle East, populations of relatively low socioeconomic status tend to be fertile ground for apocalyptic movements. The Quebec nationalist movement, while not apocalyptic, is millenarian in political or cultural terms.

Among the political and academic elite – more intertwined in Quebec, arguably, than elsewhere in North America – nationalism has been an avant-garde or politically enlightened stance, and especially attractive to young voters. However, the appeal of the movement has hinged on the notion that, absent the English oppressor or the cultural imperialism of English-speaking North America or, more coolly, a domineering centralist hand in Ottawa, political and personal fulfilment would be more readily achieved.

By implication, the political success of the nationalist movement has depended little on the economic, political or cultural arguments of the nationalists, whatever their merits. Instead, in elections, where the Quebec rural vote counts heavily, millenarian themes hold great sway. To be blunt: on this view, the electoral success of the nationalists has depended on convincing voters that, once over the particular political and legal hump of achieving sovereignty, then

My millenarianism is a simpler, casual observation: many of us, individually and collectively, routinely allow ourselves to be driven by the sometimes correct notion that there is a hump to be got over, after which everything will get better.

cultural freedom, family happiness and economic security (or getting that personal promotion) all fall into place. Any of these things might be true, if unlikely, but it is their millenarian appeal that draws in votes.

Consider next the champions of proportional representation – now commonly known as electoral reform – whether in Canada or other first-past-the-post jurisdictions. They allege or believe many things, such as that voters' happiness is impaired if their ballots are “wasted” in voting for unsuccessful parties or for successful candidates whose success did not require their vote. To supporters, proportional representation offers more fairness by making political representation for small parties more likely or by putting more female or minority candidates into office or, more generally, by ensuring that the views of those whose votes were too few to elect a legislator in a particular region might nonetheless win legislative representation in proportion to their numbers across the entire electorate.

Viewed dispassionately, these hopes are unlikely to be realized. For instance, it is hard to imagine how quality of life could be improved significantly if more small parties were represented in Parliament, or how that would boost “fairness” in political life in an objectively measurable way. And an increase in representation for women and minorities would be possible only if parties happened to choose their electoral lists in a fashion that produced such a result (empirically speaking, they do not tend to do so under proportional representation any more frequently than under first-past-the-post).

Yet taken together, the hopes attached to proportional representation generate evangelical fervour among supporters, however implausible the individual claims. Group dynamics count for much in this arena. Millenarian impulses have repeatedly overtaken the “citizens' assemblies” that governments have sometimes selected to vet ballot proposals. That this would happen is scarcely surprising: when individuals offer to serve on such bodies, when they give freely of their evenings and weekends to hear lectures and supplications on the evils and benefits of one or another electoral system, they inevitably form mental images of a better life after the reform. And to the extent that citizen-assemblers select themselves, they will be those with a predisposition to contemplate reform. As we saw recently in Ontario and British Columbia, it can be no surprise that the respective citizen assemblies overwhelmingly plumped for a new system. To opt for the status quo would have been to imply that their commitment to the process was a forlorn cause: far better for the soul, instead, to believe that political salvation is ready to hand, if only other voters could see it.

Now consider fundamental tax reform, another common cause that is vulnerable to millenarianism. Fundamental tax reformers' salvation is economic. They believe that once the tax

rate is flat and excessive progressivity is stamped out of the income tax system, or once a national sales tax has displaced the income tax entirely, or once the capital gains tax is lifted completely, then our individual economic fulfilment and thereafter personal happiness can finally be achieved. The appeal of the tax reform impulse has driven successful political movements, though not as many as has nationalism. Fundamental tax reform has been implemented in some jurisdictions, though not in as many as proportional representation.

A supporter and beneficiary of proportional representation recently said to me that after making the switch, the electorate found that the worst fears of the fiercest opponents were not realized – and neither were the fondest hopes of the earnest reformers. Could the same be said of fundamental tax reform? Perhaps: economists have wrestled to demonstrate the economic benefits of tax reform empirically, but with only small success.

It seems clear to me that millenarianism should be tamped down in policymaking. It clouds thinking and risks confusing hopes and dreams with likely outcomes. But we cannot eliminate it, nor should we to: hope and optimism give politics its energy and, without that, beneficial change cannot happen. Bernard Shaw claimed (I paraphrase) that the possibility of change depended on the existence of unreasonable people.

The way to harness millenarianism, in tax policy for example, is to focus on the merits of incremental gains. If changes to the tax system improve the ease with which human and financial resources flow to their best use, then our economic potential is indeed increased. And small increases in the potential for economic growth translate at the national level into very large dollar amounts. Small, permanent gains in growth equate to huge gains in broad social welfare – but they may not be readily visible to every family's eye. That these gains might fail to transform the world is no reason for forgoing them.

Readers would be right to suspect that there is a warm spot in my heart for millenarianism in tax reform, a warm spot I do not have for nationalism or proportional representation. In the last two cases I do not see incremental gains offsetting the costs and risks of sweeping change. My stance is not a half-cheer for millenarianism, but rather a grudging admission that I am a cautious optimist. Sadly, this is a stance that seems unlikely to launch a political movement.

When individuals give freely of their evenings and weekends to hear lectures and supplications on the evils and benefits of one or another electoral system, they inevitably form mental images of a better life after the reform.

More money for universities, but...

Government policies have tilted the balance toward science, technology and medicine. Is it time to tilt back?

by Keith Archer and Rainer Knopff

Keith Archer and Rainer Knopff both teach political science at the University of Calgary.

On May 17, 2007, the federal government released its long-anticipated science and technology strategy, entitled Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage. Through this new strategy, the government indicates that while it will continue to support basic research, it will adopt a more strategic approach of setting research priorities and supporting a more focused research agenda. The strategy suggests,

While basic research is a necessary foundation for advancing knowledge and innovation, Canada must increasingly harness science and technology to meet our social and economic needs. By setting research priorities, the government will focus funding, build partnerships, and lever Canada's public research base to address social and economic challenges and maximize our competitiveness (p. 63).

The priorities to be addressed by the federal government under this strategy include the four areas identified by the Council of Canadian Academies as Canada's science and technology strengths:

- environmental science and technologies;
- natural resources and energy
- health and related life sciences and technologies; and
- information and communications technologies.

Although this science and technology strategy is relatively new, it reflects a continuation of trends at least a decade old that are transforming – and were intended to transform – the character of the higher education system in Canada. Beginning around 1997, a substantial increase on federal research funding within higher education promoted a twofold transformation of the university system. First, it heavily emphasized disciplines in the science, technology and medical – STM – areas of research at the expense of funding in the social sciences, humanities and fine arts disciplines. Second, it fostered the development of concentrations of research excellence through greater institutional specialization. Both these changes have had consequences that need to be closely examined.

The STM emphasis

Federal government research support is allocated through three granting councils: the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). In 2002–3, 18 per cent of Canadian faculty members were identified with CIHR, and they received 42 per cent of Tri-Council funding. The 28 per cent of faculty members associated with NSERC received 44 per cent of the funding. Meanwhile, the 54 per cent associated with SSHRC received only 13 per cent. In a sense, the federal government's traditional research support has always gone disproportionately to the STM disciplines, and the extent of this granting-council imbalance

between the “hard sciences” and the arts disciplines has always been controversial. But while an imbalance of some degree can be explained by the fact that arts research is on average less costly, the intensification of the funding imbalances introduced by new federal funding initiatives in the late 1990s – especially by the Canada Research Chairs program – is not as easily defended in this way.

The process began in 1997 with the establishment of the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI). This foundation was created in response to growing concerns across the higher education system about the aging character of the country's research infrastructure and the need for greater investments to ensure that Canadian researchers based at public universities remain competitive. CFI has received from the Canadian government well over \$3 billion since its founding, and it is not unusual for a CFI competition to award between \$500 and \$750 million. These funds are focused entirely on research infrastructure, particularly equipment and, to a lesser extent, personnel to operate the equipment. In a higher education system the size of Canada's, competitions awarding funds of this magnitude are profoundly significant.

From the beginning, CFI has been heavily concentrated in areas of research related to science, technology and medicine. The mandate of CFI limits the foundation to supporting research in four areas – health, the environment, science and engineering (areas that look remarkably similar to the areas of priority identified in the 2007 science and technology strategy). It is true that after the first CFI competition, the foundation relaxed

the interpretation of the areas of emphasis, such that the term science was defined more broadly to include research in the social sciences, humanities and fine arts as well. Nevertheless, funding continues to be heavily focused in STM.

In 1999, two years after CFI was established to provide for research infrastructure, Ottawa launched the complementary Canada Research Chairs program to fund personnel support. The CRC program provided funds of \$900 million over five years for the creation of 2,000 research chairs. As in the case of CFI infrastructure funding, the allocation of Canada Research Chairs is strongly tilted to the STM disciplines: 45 per cent of CRCs are allocated to research areas relating to NSERC, 35 per cent to CIHR-funded research areas and 20 per cent to the SSHRC-funded disciplines. In short, the distribution of CRCs largely tracks the allocation of funds to the three granting councils.

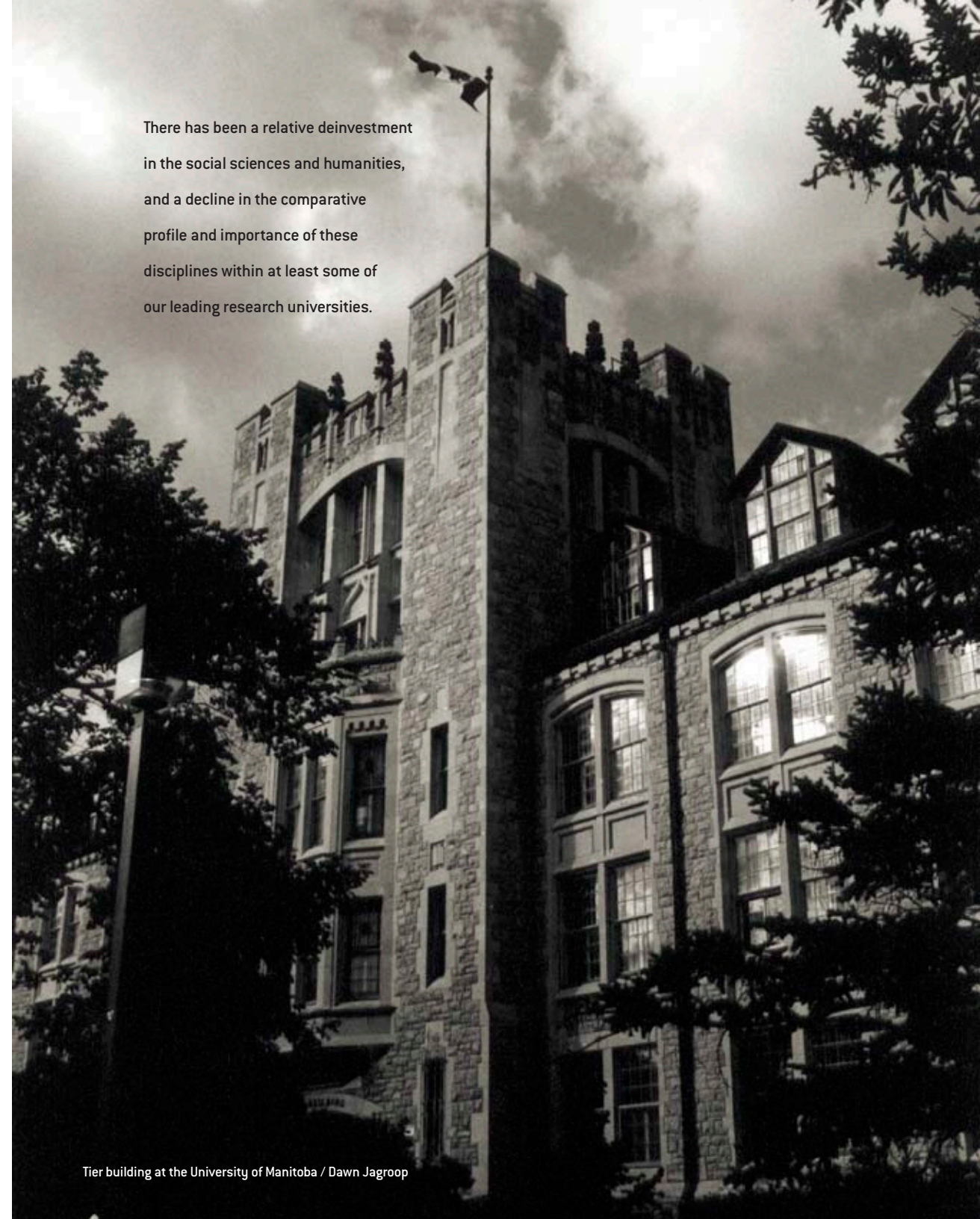
However, the logic of allowing the comparative cost of different fields of research to drive the number of research chairs in those fields is not compelling. Unless “less costly” research is synonymous with “lower-quality” or “less deserving” research, it is unclear why more than 50 per cent of the scholarly community should receive only 20 per cent of the chairs. While the CRC program has certainly provided universities with significant new funding to recruit and retain faculty members, it compounds the STM emphasis of the Canada Foundation for Innovation in ways that simply do not reflect the cost differential between the hard sciences and the arts disciplines.

The federal funding tilt in favour of the hard sciences is paralleled in virtually all of the provinces. To use Alberta as an example, the government has identified three primary research priorities – life sciences, energy and the environment, and information and communications technologies. These priorities align closely with those identified in the new federal science and technology strategy. Furthermore, the province provides highly disproportionate support to research in the health sciences and in the natural sciences and engineering through two provincially funded foundations – the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, which has an endowment of \$1.5 billion, and the Alberta Ingenuity Fund, endowed with \$1 billion to support research in science and engineering. In addition, the province has a fund to support research in information and communications technologies (iCORE), with an annual allocation of \$10 million, and funding for organizations in genomics research. Overall, the research funding environment in the province, like the situation federally, is highly focused on health, natural sciences and engineering.

The reallocation of internal funds

Not only do the STM disciplines disproportionately benefit from the new external funding sources, but the influx of these funds also tends to trigger an internal reallocation of university budgets in favour of STM. This occurs to the extent that the external funds come in the form of “conditional grants” that

There has been a relative deinvestment in the social sciences and humanities, and a decline in the comparative profile and importance of these disciplines within at least some of our leading research universities.



The science and technology strategy reflects a continuation of trends at least a decade old that are transforming – and were intended to transform – the character of the higher education system in Canada.

need to be matched by other funds. Although the matching sources are typically intended also to be external to universities, in practice internal resources must often be committed.

CFI, for example, funds infrastructure projects to a maximum of 40 per cent of the total costs, with at least 60 per cent of the project funding coming from other sources. While industry was expected to be a major contributor of matching funds, it became clear soon after the CFI was introduced that the typical investment from industry would be far short of the 60 per cent of project funding needed for the CFI funds to be released. Consequently, in each of the provinces one or more pools of funding were created to provide matching support for a portion of a CFI-funded project. Thus, it has become typical for a project to receive approximately 30 to 40 per cent of its funding from CFI, a similar proportion from a provincial government program and the remaining funds from industry and other sources. The “other sources” often include internal university funds.

The internal funds on which universities draw for their contributions to the externally funded infrastructure or personnel come mainly from provincial government operating grants and tuition fees. Since the government operating grant is intended to support all parts of the university, the different parts might be expected to benefit from that part of the grant that they can fairly be said to “bring in.” Calculating what portion of the operating grant a faculty “brings in” is tricky and must account for the fact that some disciplines are inherently more expensive than others.

One of the authors of this article – Rainer Knopff – attempted to address these questions through an examination of the University of Calgary’s internal allocations of funds in the 2002–3 fiscal year. On the basis of conservative assumptions, the Faculty of Social Sciences “brought in” roughly \$14 million of the university’s base operating grant. Yet, because tuition fees covered most of the faculty’s \$21 million budget in that year – between 80 and 90 per cent – the faculty drew only between \$2.1 and \$4.2 million from the base operating grant. In effect, a faculty with 11 per cent of the university’s academic staff and 27 per cent of its course enrollees received only 1 to 2 per cent of the government operating grant, or between 15 and 30 per cent of its – conservatively estimated – contribution to that grant.

The same analysis concluded that the predominantly arts faculties collectively derived about 60 per cent of their budgets from tuition while the predominantly non-arts faculties (excluding medicine) collectively derived about 45 per cent of their budgets from tuition. Thus,

while student loads are increasingly used to support faculties in the arts, the non-arts side of the house (again excluding medicine) draws funding disproportionately from the university’s base operating grant. This can be viewed as a cross-subsidy from the social sciences and humanities disciplines to the natural sciences and engineering disciplines. No doubt there are many reasons for this cross-subsidy, but the pressures for internal reallocation generated by the “conditional grant” features of external funds disproportionately targeted to the STM disciplines is certainly a factor.

Among the many effects of this relative shift of resources toward the STM disciplines is the changing distribution of faculty positions. In 1996, for example, 50 per cent of faculty members at the University of Calgary were identified as working in the SSHRC disciplines. By 2002, that percentage had dropped to 39 per cent, with STM disciplines seeing a corresponding increase in their relative share of university faculty positions. At least at some of the more research-intensive universities, the new funding environment has contributed to a significant transformation of faculty distribution.

The new differentiation among universities

In terms of the other objective of the new federal funding regime launched in the late 1990s, the differentiation of institutions of higher education, there are two main kinds of differentiation in play. First, because the

STM emphasis of the new funding programs goes disproportionately to institutions with medical and engineering schools, it promotes an elite of “high-end,” research-intensive universities. These institutions, not surprisingly, have welcomed their good fortune. In 2003, Robert Birgeneau, then President of the University of Toronto, justified such preferential funding in terms of Canada’s need to become truly competitive at the international level. Doug Owram, then Provost and Vice-President (Academic) at the University of Alberta, agreed. “The reality,” said Owram, is that “Canada is a small country. We cannot afford to operate at a world level in dozens of institutions.”

Second, among universities, whether they fall in or outside the elite category, the federal programs also promote the development of differentiated or specialized areas of strength. The idea was to create concentrations of expertise rather than spreading every research area evenly across and among institutions. Even a smaller institution can benefit from this kind of differentiation by focusing on a small number of concentrations. The University of Lethbridge, for example, has developed significant strength in neuroscience.

An additional and perhaps unintended kind of differentiation may stem from the fact that universities less able to access the new STM-oriented funding programs, and thus less subject to the resulting internal reallocation pressures, may be able to grow and develop their arts complements at a higher rate than the STM elite institutions. While it seems unlikely that Canada would move to a U.S.-style differentiation, which includes institutions devoted

solely to STM disciplines (e.g., the University of California, San Francisco) and institutions with great prominence primarily in the liberal arts (e.g., Boston College), anecdotal evidence suggests that we might see some shift in that direction.

Many arts disciplines have recently grown much faster and larger at, say, Concordia University than at the University of Calgary, and graduate-student funding in social science disciplines has been more dramatically expanded at Wilfrid Laurier than at some larger “research-intensive” universities. Not long ago it would have been difficult to imagine that a Concordia PhD in political philosophy might rival its University of Toronto counterpart. That this possibility is no longer unthinkable likely owes something to the new funding environment.

This evidence should not be overstated. Some major research universities with large endowments, and thus greater budget flexibility, have also augmented their arts disciplines in recent years. However, not all research-intensive institutions have been so fortunate,

A faculty with 11 per cent of the university’s academic staff and 27 per cent of its course enrollees received only 1 to 2 per cent of the government operating grant.

and there seems little doubt that changes are afoot.

Assessing the new regime

The new federal funding regime launched in the late 1990s was intended to increase the relative share of university resources going to the STM disciplines, and it has clearly achieved that objective. For the most part, universities have demonstrated considerable willingness to become active partners with government in realigning and reshaping their priorities and personnel. Unfortunately, there has been a relative deinvestment in the social sciences and humanities, and a decline in the comparative profile and importance of these disciplines within at least some of our leading research universities. Such disciplines appear to rely increasingly on the tuition support they can generate, and thus there have been substantial increases in teaching-related workload in these disciplines. At the same time, a growing number of chair appointments, with reduced teaching loads and accompanied by significantly increased infrastructure support, has been provided to researchers primarily in the government’s targeted areas. In addition, there has been an unexpected, indeed unintended, growth of arts disciplines at small, less STM-oriented institutions.

The government’s new funding strategy has brought money into the universities, but shaped them in a particular way. It is time to ask whether this is really the university system we want.

Canadian Studies and the Harper foreign policy agenda

by Richard Nimijean

Richard Nimijean teaches in the School of Canadian Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa.

A few years ago, when I told my first-year students about two presentations I had just given in the United States, I was greeted with surprise. “Why do you always give talks in exotic places like Washington, D.C., and Buffalo?” a student asked. After all, I teach Canadian Studies. But the fact is that many of my academic presentations have been outside Canada, and there are far more Canadian Studies programs abroad than there are in Canadian universities, where Canadian Studies remains a marginal discipline. All this is largely due to a little-known program housed in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), through which the federal government has been investing in the Canadian Studies program since 1975 – an investment currently worth \$5 million annually.¹ Now, as a result of a new strategic orientation proposed by the Harper government, the essence of this program is threatened.

The Canadian Studies program is a classic example of public diplomacy, promoting a greater understanding of Canada internationally. It raises awareness and a specialized knowledge of Canada among key opinion makers: academics, students, diplomats, public servants and business people. This helps put Canada “on the radar” and

accompanies traditional diplomatic, political and business relations. It provides financial support to international scholars researching Canada and to 26 international associations. Without this support, many of these international scholars would not study Canada, and some of these associations would struggle to survive. The Canadian Studies program promotes exchanges between Canadian and international academics and encourages student mobility. It makes Canadian scholarly works and literature available internationally.

The Canadian Studies program has also been a vital lifeline for the discipline of Canadian Studies domestically. Canada does not have an independent *academic* Canadian Studies learned society,² so the academic conferences sponsored by international associations are vital to Canadian academics in the field of Canadian Studies. Those of us in Canada with academic positions in Canadian Studies must rely on activities initiated by the various international Canadian Studies associations if we wish to work in our discipline.³

However, budgetary and administrative measures are altering the federal government's historic support for promoting knowledge of Canada, both abroad and at home. As part of a major cost-cutting exercise in 2006, the Harper government removed \$11 million from the budget for public diplomacy. The pressures for efficiency and returns on investment remain: Ottawa recently announced that DFAIT, with several other departments, would have its spending activities reviewed.

In this environment, DFAIT, as part of a broader review of academic relations programs, is reviewing the Canadian Stud-

ies program. In the spring of 2007, DFAIT released a consultation document proposing a new strategic orientation for the program that reflected government policies and priorities.⁴ Aiming for a "results-oriented" process," the report states, "The new approach, while continuing to respect academic freedom, should be better targeted to support activities (teaching, conferences, seminars, research, etc.) in areas of policy relevance to Canada and supportive of regional strategies." These are largely public policy areas such as peace and security, North American relations and the environment. Culture is noticeably absent from the list.

Not surprisingly, the strategic reorientation reflects the broad foreign policy orientations of the Harper government, the two most important of which are security and closer collaboration with the United States and other hemispheric partners.⁵ It also appears to be a response to pressure exerted by the government to align foreign policy programs with its political priorities. Prime Minister Harper recently complained that DFAIT was not following his priorities, and senior foreign affairs bureaucrats began emphasizing "alignment" with the government, telling its employees that "alignment is about how we undertake service to the government and its priorities ... [It] is a goal, in that it shows that the Department is attentive to the Government's needs and priorities."⁶

The strategic reorientation of foreign policy generally, and the Canadian Studies program specifically, are rooted in Ottawa's ongoing efforts to make government spending more productive and eliminate what it deems to be

unnecessary programs. At the same time, however, they could undermine the government's long-term objective of "branding" Canada internationally to advance its economic and political interests. In short, the branding exercise tries to communicate a national narrative that resonates internationally to attract foreign investment and skilled labour.⁷ The federal government uses public diplomacy to improve Canada's image abroad by emphasizing the promotion of Canadian values, culture and academic relations in support of its economic and political objectives. It is a subtle process in that it seeks to raise awareness of Canada in the international "mindspace" rather than bluntly and aggressively promoting the country.

For example, DFAIT provides significant support to the "CONNECT" program, based at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh. It has successfully identified a growing number of scholars in the United States interested in Canada, providing support to help them develop courses and research interests.⁸ Ultimately, this will spread knowledge of Canada to a growing number of American students, with the long-term goal of promoting a better understanding of bilateral issues. This type of project is a useful model, for it supports academic freedom and develops international networks of Canadianists while also helping the federal government achieve its goals.

Adopting a more strategic and political orientation has hurt Canada's reputation. This was seen clearly in the reaction of international scholars, who see the reorientation as crossing the fine line between academic freedom and government support of academic research.⁹

Those of us in Canada with academic positions in Canadian Studies must rely on activities initiated by the various international Canadian Studies associations if we wish to work in our discipline.

They expressed concern that the reorientation could be used to make them agents of Canadian foreign policy. The South African Association of Canadian Studies was most blunt in this regard, noting that the reorientation privileges "Canadian rather than mutual interests." Rejecting the limited thematic scope of the reorientation, they state, "The detailed policy priorities, as described, would tie us to Canadian foreign policy in a way that would be unacceptable; endanger our position as an independent academic body; and implicitly compel us to adopt priorities which we do not share." Noted British Canadianist Ged Martin was adamant, stating that he worked "*with* the Canadian government, not *for* the Canadian government" (his emphasis).

The international scholars portrayed Canadian Studies as a complex discipline embodying a multidisciplinary network of scholars, and were disturbed by the narrow enumeration of strategic themes highlighted by Ottawa. The Association for Canadian Studies in German-Speaking Countries noted that the themes "*should not be the main*

The strategic reorientation of foreign policy generally, and the Canadian Studies program specifically, could undermine the government's long-term objective of "branding" Canada internationally to advance its economic and political interests.

criteria for the distribution of resources. The existing network is too complex to reduce it to some overarching issues. Our future has a broad, wide, open and interdisciplinary focus, an example we have taken from our Canadian partners" (their emphasis).

Given the small amounts of funds and the relatively small number of scholars involved, we can ask whether the government's pressure for efficiency will really result in more productive spending. If the federal government truly needs strategic research in its priority areas, it has instruments such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. It can also contract research to obtain any expertise it needs. This is not the role of public diplomacy programs, which are intended to promote goodwill between nations and raise awareness of a country abroad. Trying to steer perceptions and understandings of Canada in the directions favoured by the government of the

day, even if "academic freedom" is respected, jeopardizes this goodwill.

Many international Canadianists study Canadian culture, drawn to the field because of Canada's numerous cultural creators with international reputations. Why alienate this group of scholars? Moreover, Canadian culture, broadly defined, is one of Canada's major export sectors and a key component of the branding strategy. It is hard to understand how cutting public diplomacy, not emphasizing culture as a strategic orientation and alienating international scholars, all to save a little bit of money, can be seen as "trimming the fat and refocusing spending on the priorities of Canadians," as Minister John Baird declared on September 25, 2006.

The reorientation is symptomatic of the Harper government's slow education in foreign policy. Whether it is human rights in China or Canada's position in the Middle East, the government did not appear to realize the importance of Canada's nuanced role in global issues. When he has framed his foreign policy in terms of the Canadian identity, Harper has performed better, sometimes brilliantly. Thus, his northern strategy promoting "the True North Strong and Free" addresses concerns that resonate with Canadians: Canadian sovereignty, national identity, global warming and the use of resources to promote Canadian prosperity. Contrast this with Harper's tough talk on Afghanistan and his infamous comment that Canadians do not "cut and run." Canadians simply do not see themselves that way, and Harper has had to alter his rhetoric in order to connect with the electorate.

This makes the politicization of Conservative foreign policy more puzzling. Canadians respond to positive contributions internationally, but as former ambassador to the United Nations Paul Heinbecker noted recently, DFAIT has seen its resources shrink in an era of budget surpluses, a trend that will contribute to a more military-dominated foreign policy.¹⁰ This is out of touch with Canadian priorities and with strategies used by other countries. For example, the United States continues to promote itself heavily through public diplomacy, and other countries use culture, sports and academic exchanges to increase their profile abroad.

The Harper government may one day realize that it is being "penny wise, pound foolish" in cutting public diplomacy and reorienting the Canadian Studies program. As the Ottawa Citizen noted in an editorial on the Canadian Studies program, "Canada, despite its diminished stature internationally, still has many good ideas to offer the world. Spending a modest amount to spread those ideas not only enhances Canada's presence in the world, but could even do some good in the world, too."¹¹ The government's determination to extract value for money or otherwise cut public diplomacy programs will only hurt the effort to promote Canada abroad, and raises the possibility that some scholars will stop studying Canada altogether. As countries compete for capital and skilled labour, expanded public diplomacy programs based on shared interests are needed, not cuts to public diplomacy or efforts to use foreign scholars to advance domestic interests.

Notes

- ¹ Information on the program is available at www.cdnstudies.ca/a_aboutCS/menu-en.html
- ² The Association of Canadian Studies supports many academic activities but it is not a national scholarly association. A meeting of Canadian Studies scholars in Ottawa, at which forming a national scholarly association may be discussed, is scheduled for November 2007.
- ³ Information on international Canadian Studies associations is available at the International Council for Canadian Studies website: www.iccs-ciec.ca
- ⁴ The report is available at www.iccs-ciec.ca/forum/report_cnd_studies.pdf
- ⁵ See Mike Blanchfield, "Relations with Canada 'energized:' U.S. envoy: Tories stress U.S. co-operation as top foreign priority," Ottawa Citizen, September 27, 2006.
- ⁶ Cited in Alan Freeman, "Top bureaucrats take aim at Ottawa's diplomats," Toronto Globe and Mail, June 29, 2007, p. A-4.
- ⁷ I discuss these issues in "The Politics of Branding Canada: The International-Domestic Nexus and the Rethinking of Canada's Place in the World," *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Canadienses*, Vol. 11 (2006), pp. 67-85.
- ⁸ Information on Project Connect is available at www.plattsburgh.edu/offices/academic/cesca/projectconnect.php
- ⁹ Debates on the reorientation plan, including reactions, are available at www.iccs-ciec.ca/forum/index.htm
- ¹⁰ Paul Heinbecker, "Canada's forward defence in the world," Toronto Globe and Mail, September 4, 2007, p. A-15.
- ¹¹ "Learning to like Canada," Ottawa Citizen, May 19, 2003, p. A-12.

Ignatieff, Iraq and Empire Lite

Selected and edited from the Inroads listserv by Bob Chodos

The Inroads listserv began in 1997 as a means to link readers of the journal and others interested in policy discussion. With nearly 130 subscribers, it offers one of the few chances for people of diverse views to grapple with social and political issues in depth.

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It has been called liberal imperialism, liberal interventionism or “Empire Lite.” It refers to a policy of foreign military intervention for the purpose of protecting human rights rather than strategic, economic or other more traditional great-power interests. It has been controversial, both in theory and in specific instances where it has been invoked as a rationale for military action – most notably, in recent years, in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It has also frequently been the subject of debate on the Inroads listserv. This exchange in August 2007 was sparked by a New York Times Magazine article in which Michael Ignatieff expressed second thoughts about his earlier support for the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq.¹

From: Reg Whitaker | August 9

Michael Ignatieff’s confession of error over the Iraq war in the New York Times has, not surprisingly, attracted attention in Canada. After all, Ignatieff is the deputy leader of the Liberal Party and, if critics of Stéphane Dion have their way, a possible future prime minister. That in the past he had written articles cheerleading Bush’s folly in the same newspaper had been something of an albatross

around his neck when he ran for the leadership of the party that in 2003 had had the good sense to say no to Bush. Now he has finally, and in the same venue, admitted that he was flat-out wrong.

We should not begrudge Ignatieff his admission, even if it does come rather late in the game, at a time when hardly anyone is left standing, save Messrs. Bush and Cheney and the superannuated poodle Blair, who actually tries to justify the colossal idiocy of the invasion and subsequent occupation. But not to quibble: admitting error is a fine thing, especially in a politician (would that our infallible PM, behind the armour-plated surety of his own righteousness, should ever admit the slightest, even inconsequential, mistake!). And, in the process of his confession, Ignatieff also has some very interesting and thought-provoking things to say about the difference between being an intellectual and academic and being a practising politician. His piece is worth reading, not only for the confession but also for the way he explains his mistake.

Unfortunately, Ignatieff’s arguments cannot be taken entirely at face value. There are still problems, and issues, with Ignatieff as intellectual *cum* born-again practical politician. He admits that his intellectual’s judgement on Iraq was wrong, but mainly because he had become too emotionally involved with the fate of the Kurds and the viciousness of Saddam Hussein’s rule, and let this emotion get in the way of a more prudent assessment. The politician’s judgement, on the other hand, should be more cognizant of the consequences of actions taken, and especially of the uncertainty that attends an action as serious as invasion and

regime change. Ignatieff spells out at length what is required of the prudent, self-critical politician, and finds that Bush misses the boat on all counts. Bush is unreflective, and apparently incapable of questioning his own judgements. Ignatieff should have grasped this point, did not then, but – given that he has since gained practical political experience – does now.

This argument fills in a one-liner Ignatieff tossed to Lawrence Martin of the Globe and Mail during the Liberal leadership campaign: he was wrong about Iraq, he told Martin, because he had failed to gauge just how incompetent Bush’s execution of the plan would be. But this leaves open the possibility that it is not the concept that is wrong, but the botched implementation. And in any event, an intellectual writing in the leading American newspaper should not urge a war that will be entrusted to the direction of self-righteous incompetents.

But there is a deeper issue surrounding Ignatieff’s stance as an intellectual that he does not deal with at all. His advice on Iraq was not

Having freed himself from the Iraq albatross, Ignatieff presents himself as humbled (generally a good strategy for a politician) but at the same time as someone in whom you should place your trust. I wouldn’t. – Reg Whitaker

a one-off, but embedded in an intellectual position best termed “liberal imperialism.” This position looks to a muscular liberal program of intervention abroad wherever human rights are challenged by oppressive regimes. He has articulated a philosophical foundation for the “responsibility to protect” as a guide for the United States and other Western countries to use their military power to crush oppression and defend human rights. This is closely tied to the Wilsonian American mission to spread democracy, by armed force if necessary, to every corner of the globe. As Rousseau advised, people may have to be forced to be free. Iraq was just one stop along a road that also counts, or should count, Bosnia, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Darfur, etc.

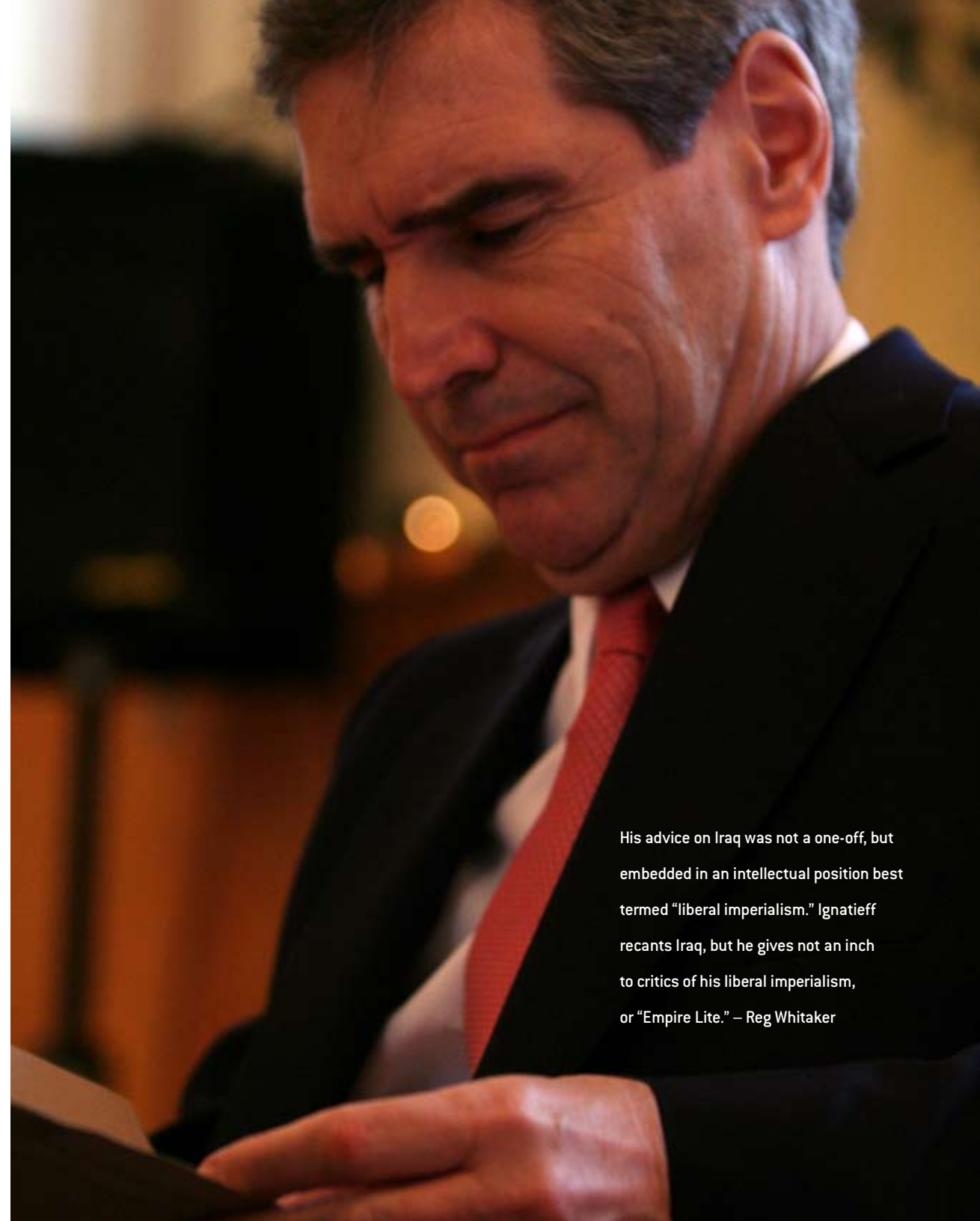
Ignatieff recants Iraq, but he gives not an inch to critics of his liberal imperialism, or “Empire Lite.” Indeed, he and a handful of other Liberal MPs broke with the majority of their party to give Stephen Harper the thin four-vote majority he needed to extend the Canadian mission in Afghanistan to 2009. Worse, during the leadership campaign, in a fit of stunning demagoguery, Ignatieff justified Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan as combating “genocide” and linked the duty to intervene to the previous Western failure in Rwanda.

It was this dressing up of the old-fashioned American-British imperialism in Iraq (shock and awe to enforce hegemony) as the liberal defence of human rights that prompted Tony Judt, writing in the *London Review of Books*, to put Ignatieff at the head of the class of what he termed the “useful idiots” of the American neocons. Unfortunately, although he has bailed on the Iraq fiasco, it is not at

all clear that Ignatieff does not remain to some degree a useful idiot for the dregs of the failed neocon enterprise, this time not in the pages of the *New York Times*, but in the House of Commons where he was warmly congratulated by neocon (Canada) Ltd. Harper for providing liberal cover for Harper’s War.

Much the same could be said about his failure critically to reassess his writing on terrorism (*The Lesser Evil*). It is true that Ignatieff does not explicitly justify the use of torture, as some critics have alleged. In politics, he writes, “All that matters is what you said, not what you meant. The political realm is a world of lunatic literalism.” These plaintive remarks are quite right (the notorious media gaffe-watch masquerading as election coverage), but in another sense beside the point. Ignatieff opened the door to torture by building an argument for the “lesser evil” to prevent the greater evil. Once that door is opened, there is no clear moral compass to steer us past the sirens that seductively promise that the Jack Bauer TV method of defending against terrorism (brutalize, torture and kill) is the best way – as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia notoriously declared in a recent judicial conference in Canada. Of course, Ignatieff does not endorse Jack Bauer (played by another Canadian who found fame in the United States, Kiefer Sutherland), but where exactly does he draw the line where the lesser evil becomes equal to the greater evil?

The same lack of precise moral compass helps to explain some of Ignatieff’s political gaffes, about which he is so sensitive. During the Israeli attack on Lebanon last year, how could he veer from saying heartlessly that was not losing any sleep over civilian casualties of



His advice on Iraq was not a one-off, but embedded in an intellectual position best termed “liberal imperialism.” Ignatieff recants Iraq, but he gives not an inch to critics of his liberal imperialism, or “Empire Lite.” – Reg Whitaker

Israeli rockets (since Hezbollah was hiding amid civilians) to his politically disastrous statement about Israeli “war crimes” in striking civilian targets? Since Hezbollah was characterized as “terrorist,” Israel was justified in employing the lesser evil of military strikes. But confronted with the obvious evidence of reckless Israeli excess out of all proportion to the provocation, Ignatieff swung in the opposite direction. Apart from complaining about being deliberately misunderstood by political enemies, he has yet to revisit his own theory of the lesser evil to reassess its value as a guide to practical, and very consequential, political action.

Until we see some more fundamental self-reflection from Ignatieff, intellectual turned politician, we may be forced to conclude, as Don Macpherson did in the *Montreal Gazette*, that his well publicized mea culpa on Iraq is really no more than a cunning step in establishing his bona fides to usurp the Liberal leadership from the seemingly faltering hands of Stéphane Dion. Having freed himself from the Iraq albatross, Ignatieff presents himself as humbled (generally a good strategy for a politician) but at the same time as someone in whom you should place your trust.

I wouldn't.

Reg Whitaker is a British Columbia writer and commentator and a member of the Inroads editorial board.

From: Ian Malcolm | August 10

That's an interesting and challenging post by Reg, but I don't think right. (I should add that I have a conflict of interest as I've edited several of Ignatieff's books, including *The Lesser Evil*,

and like and respect him.) I will restrict myself just to Reg's statement that, although Ignatieff does not explicitly justify torture, he “opened the door to torture by building an argument for the ‘lesser evil’ to prevent the greater evil. Once that door is opened, there is no clear moral compass to steer us past the sirens that seductively promise that the Jack Bauer TV method of defending against terrorism (brutalize, torture and kill) is the best way.” That's just not so. When the police use force to arrest someone, does that mean that they will no longer be able to distinguish between a headlock and the rack? Societies choose lesser evils all the time, and the point of Ignatieff's book is to figure out how we can do so without throwing away our moral compass. You may argue that he doesn't succeed (I think he largely does), but I don't think there's any reason to conclude more generally that any acknowledgement that we may have to choose force opens the door to all uses of force.

Ian Malcolm is senior editor for the humanities at the European office of Princeton University Press in Woodstock, England.

From: Ricardo Duchesne | August 10

Part of the difference between being an intellectual and being a politician is that the politician knows that “lesser evils” are intrinsic to the game of politics. Forget everyday peccadilloes. How about “war measures acts,” or the firebombing of countless cities in Japan? Where Ignatieff might be criticized is in the use of the word *evil*, for the use of violence against real evil is not a lesser evil but a means to a better end. I think it is more ap-

propriate to use the word *sinful* to refer to the use of violent means or some other word that attests to the immorality of the means. “Evil” carries an absolute meaning which cannot be understood in terms of degree. Either the act is evil or it is not.

I agree that Ignatieff appears to be saying that he was wrong “because he had failed to gauge just how incompetent Bush's execution of the plan would be, [which] leaves open the possibility that it is not the concept that is wrong, but the botched implementation.” Ignatieff is not questioning his moral judgement as much as his practical political judgement. I wonder how many of those who retracted would re-retract if things were to start improving in a substantive way in Iraq. What I fail to understand is why all the critics in North America persist in interpreting the Iraq war as a failure for the United States, for which the Bush administration should be held morally responsible, without at the same time recognizing that this same war has not been a failure for the terrorists. Why do we insist that the war was a “botched implementation” rather than a successful counterresponse by the terrorists? If American interests and long-term goals in Iraq had faced opposition in the form of peaceful political parties and associations, through the more liberal democratic institutions they were assisting to create, would we even be considering whether the Americans were the “lesser evil”? There is no way out of this dilemma: either the American invasion is evil in itself or it is “evil” as a result of its inability to defeat terrorism by violent means. As I see it, what American soldiers as a whole are doing in Iraq is not even the “lesser evil,”

Societies choose lesser evils all the time, and the point of Ignatieff's book is to figure out how we can do so without throwing away our moral compass. – Ian Malcolm

although the use of violence generates evil acts, and quite a few evil acts have been committed by some singular Americans.

Ignatieff's political gaffes were plainly engendered by an intellectual intellectualizing about how to be a “politician,” and I don't think Ignatieff has it in him to be a politician.

Ricardo Duchesne is professor of sociology at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John.

From: Garth Stevenson | August 10

Reg Whitaker's comments about Ignatieff and liberal imperialism are appropriate, although I don't think his gratuitous obiter dictum about Stephen Harper added anything to the strength of his argument. However, Reg seems to be a bit of a liberal imperialist himself, since, as far as I know, he has never disavowed his own enthusiastic support for Bill Clinton's liberal imperialist intervention in former Yugoslavia. How did that episode differ from George W.'s intervention in Iraq?

Garth Stevenson is professor of political science at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario.

From: Gareth Morley | August 10

What was appalling about Ignatieff's mea culpa was just how badly written and conceptually woolly it was. Reg's email is much better than Ignatieff's feature in the New York Times Magazine.

However, I think Afghanistan is reasonably distinguished from Iraq. Unlike Saddam Hussein, Mullah Omar's Taliban regime was providing a haven for Bin Laden and Al Qaeda, and refused to hand them over after September 11. There are a lot of difficulties in Afghanistan. I would criticize the "right-wing" response for prioritizing the drug war and ruling out talks with the Taliban in principle. I'd criticize the "left-wing" response for exaggerating the development responsibilities of NATO and failing to see a positive military objective in fighting the Taliban.

I realize that public opinion is now pretty firmly against continued Canadian involvement, and sooner or later the politicians are probably going to have to heed that. But from what I can tell, the Forces are pretty strongly in support of our intervention and the military situation is complex but hardly disastrous. Afghanistan is a really poor country which has been at more or less continuous war for almost 30 years. The opposition tends to pose unrealistically high expectations of civil order, human rights and development, while ignoring the likely consequences if we left. And since it and the neighbouring tribal regions of Pakistan remain the headquarters of Al Qaeda, we have a good strategic reason to be there.

I'm slightly optimistic that a Democrat in the White House might turn public opinion in Canada around on this.

Gareth Morley is a lawyer in Victoria, B.C.

From: Reg Whitaker | August 11

In response to some of the thoughtful replies re Ignatieff's mea culpa:

1. Of course, the principle of the "lesser evil" is a necessary requirement for the exercise of political power, even in liberal democratic states. Although Ignatieff does not quote him in his discussion of the differences between being an intellectual and being a politician, Max Weber pointed out long ago in his essay "Politics as a Vocation" the crucial difference between the *absolute ethic* that can be followed by those (say, saints and intellectuals) who insist on doing the right thing in all situations, regardless of the consequences, since they are answerable only to their own consciences; and the *ethic of consequences* that must be followed by those who wield power. The latter must always bear in mind the effects of their actions on others to whom they bear responsibility, which may mean that actions that are in themselves suspect from a moral perspective may in fact be necessary for the greater good. The exercise of state violence sometimes fits this latter category, but this must be carefully calculated as to proportionality.

2. My difficulty with Ignatieff is not with the principle in general, but rather the specific application to the "war on terrorism," where terrorism is judged so great an evil that countermeasures are permitted that may be disproportionate to the threat (that is, not lesser evils at all but equal evils). Torture of other human beings, even suspected terrorists or those suspected of having knowledge of terrorism, is not, in my view, a "lesser evil"

under any circumstances. It is an evil, plain and simple, that degrades and dehumanizes those who practise it, under whatever banner, and degrades and dehumanizes the society that permits it. Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib are the end of the road that is opened up by Dick Cheney's enthusiastic espousal of "going over to the dark side" and Alan Dershowitz's scholastic justification of the use of terror in a worst-case scenario. Unfortunately, Ignatieff opened the same path when he argued that the use of torture *could* be justified. That he then rejects this option is a credit to his judgement, but he leaves himself vulnerable to the claim that his prudential calculation may be wrong, that torture *might* be justifiable in the face of a threat of sufficient magnitude, that Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib could be justified if the intelligence returns from torture prevented terrorist acts from taking place. This is why so many of his former colleagues among human rights activists have repudiated his argument. Ignatieff expresses bewilderment and hurt at this repudiation, but the critics have a point.

3. The theory of liberal imperialism does not stand or fall on the basis of whether this or that intervention is justified. Yes, I was and remain convinced that the NATO (not just Bill Clinton) intervention in Bosnia was quite appropriate. The later Kosovo campaign is somewhat more dodgy, especially the messy long-term results, but it too was probably inescapable under the circumstances; certainly doing nothing would have had worse consequences. Yes, intervention in Rwanda might have prevented genocide, or at least limited it, and this may be the case today in Darfur. These are interventions to be determined on a case-

by-case pragmatic and prudential method, but not on the basis of a putative obligation to protect as a kind of benign Bush Doctrine of preemptive regime change. Iraq illustrates how wrong this approach can be. Iraq was an invasion to force regime change to advance an agenda of American-Israeli hegemony over the Middle East, justified on entirely spurious, indeed mendacious, grounds, which has resulted in an objectively worse situation for the Iraqis than under Saddam. Ignatieff's liberal imperialist cover for Bush's folly was useful to the neocons; his repudiation cites the incompetence of the policy's execution, but re-



He and a handful of other Liberal MPs broke with the majority of their party to give Stephen Harper the thin four-vote majority he needed to extend the Canadian mission in Afghanistan to 2009. — Reg Whitaker

tains the flawed theory that permitted Ignatieff to fall into the role of Bush's useful idiot.

4. Yes, the original intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 was justifiable – not on liberal imperialist criteria, but strictly on grounds of self-defence against aggression since the Taliban regime was harbouring Al Qaeda which had attacked the United States and murdered thousands of civilians. But having deposed the Taliban, the mission displays little sense of direction, particularly since the Americans lost primary interest, failed to meet their generous promises of multibillion-dollar aid for nation-building, and wandered off into the black hole of Iraq, leaving the likes of Canada holding the bag, while other NATO countries duck commitment. Ignatieff, like a wind-up toy hitting a wall, keeps yattering on about genocide, as if Afghanistan is an Islamic Rwanda. But once again his liberal imperialism offers useful cover for a war pursued by neocons, this time in Canada, even though his rationalization makes no sense on its own terms. [Then–Minister of National Defence] Gordon O'Connor says we are in Afghanistan for “retribution,” and General Hillier (our MacArthur?) says we are there to kill “contemptible murderers and scumbags.” These are unimpressive rationales for 67 Canadian dead, but they beat out Ignatieff's liberal fantasies.

5. Garth Stevenson objects to what he calls my “gratuitous obiter dictum about Stephen Harper” that “adds nothing” to the strength of my argument. I beg to differ. Ignatieff, as a would-be contender for Harper's office, has offered a public apology for getting a major policy issue wrong. The contrast to Harper is not gratuitous at all, but instructive. Harper

never apologizes about anything, even when he is clearly wrong. (The only apology I have ever heard him utter was to Maher Arar, and then he went out of his way to make clear that this was an apology for his Liberal predecessors, and had nothing to do with him). I rather think that this represents a serious character flaw in Harper, a stiff unbending intellectual arrogance, but the point is that Ignatieff drew a contrast between himself and Harper by his very act of public apology. I will give him credit for that, as perhaps will the Canadian public, although my larger point was to question how serious the apology really is upon closer examination.

From: Anthony Westell | August 12

As I recall the article, Ignatieff's primary motive for supporting the war was not terrorism but Saddam Hussein's treatment of the Kurds. If that was not permissible, under what circumstances, if any, can the UN or NATO invade a country to save a people from their own tyrant? How was intervention in the Balkans justified but not intervention in Iraq? Or might we say that Bush would have been justified in invading Iraq if he said it was to save the Iraqis, and forgotten the nonsense about WMD?

Anthony Westell is a retired political reporter and columnist.

From: Reg Whitaker | August 12

There are a number of responses to Tony's questions. First, if we go back to the prewar era in Iraq, Saddam's capacity to inflict repression on the Kurds had already been contained.

All of northern Iraq where Kurds predominate was a no-fly zone and the Saddam regime's writ simply did not extend to the Kurdish areas any longer. The Kurds had de facto autonomy. Of course, there were terrible memories, and unpunished crimes against the Kurdish people by Saddam and his henchmen, but it stretches credulity to claim, as Ignatieff did, that a war for regime change – along with all the death and destruction that entailed – was necessary to protect the Kurds in 2003.

A second answer is that the analogy to NATO in the Balkans is simply inaccurate. NATO did not invade Bosnia and Kosovo to “save a people from their own tyrant.” They intervened – not invaded – to protect entire national communities (Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo Albanians) from the aggression of the Serbs who were attempting violently to enforce a Greater Serbian hegemony upon communities that had seceded from the failed Yugoslav federation. Srebrenica, the worst human rights atrocity in Europe since the Nazis in World War II, is proof enough of what lay in store for these communities if the revanchist Serbs prevailed. As for the tyrant, it was left to the Serbs themselves to deal with Milosevic, whom they eventually passed over voluntarily to the Hague, thereby regaining some credit for themselves in the international community.

Finally, Bush did claim, as certainly did Blair, that the Iraq invasion was to “save the Iraqis.” The goalposts kept being moved as the WMD threat proved illusory, no evidence of collusion with Al Qaeda surfaced, and it finally became clear that the terrorist threat was actually pumped up by the invasion rather than undermined. The final refuge of

Ignatieff's primary motive for supporting the war was not terrorism but Saddam Hussein's treatment of the Kurds. If that was not permissible, under what circumstances, if any, can the UN or NATO invade a country to save a people from their own tyrant? – Anthony Westell

the Bush-Blair scoundrels was that the Iraqis were better off without Saddam Hussein: a point that must have been very comforting to the ghosts of the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who perished as a result of America's generosity, not to speak of the millions now suffering in the Hobbesian hell that the invasion and occupation have helped create. This last refuge was where Ignatieff and his like served as useful idiots for the neocons, giving liberal cover to an entirely illiberal enterprise. My point ultimately is that Ignatieff is right to have recognized his mistake, but wrong in not pursuing further how his own thinking had led him into this mistake – and how similar thinking can lead to further mistakes, as with Afghanistan.

¹ Michael Ignatieff, “Getting Iraq Wrong,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 5, 2007, retrieved October 20, 2007, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/05/magazine/05iraq-t.html>

The trivially hip

CBC radio and the decline of public broadcasting

by Arthur Milner



This issue of Inroads features a new column on cultural matters by Arthur Milner. Arthur is a playwright and theatre director, a frequent contributor to Inroads and a member of the Inroads editorial board.

Some 20 years ago, a number of us in Ottawa formed a committee to defend the CBC, then “under attack” by the Mulroneys. We soon realized that it wasn’t the CBC as a whole we wanted to save: it was CBC radio. Of course, we supported CBC television, because we believed in public broadcasting. The problem was that CBC television was public broadcasting in theory. CBC radio, on the other hand, was public broadcasting in practice.

At a public meeting some months later, a few labour activists argued that our committee should defend CBC radio and television equally. Their motion passed easily, but people stopped coming to the meetings.

In those days, I lived in a four-room apartment, and most of the time a radio was tuned to CBC AM, as it was called, in each room, so that as I wandered about I was rarely without the CBC. Some shows were dull, but even these formed a pleasant background to my day. The odd one – *Basic Black*, for example – I found irritating enough to turn off. But there were a great many shows that I found reliably worthwhile: *Sunday Morning*, Peter Gzowski’s various morning shows, *Ideas*, *Quirks and*

Quarks, *The House*, *This Native Land*. I bought a cassette recorder that I could preset to record shows I didn’t want to miss. And every night I went to sleep comforted by my citizenship in Vacuum Land.

In those days, no doubt I watched CBC television, but who pays attention to which TV channel you’re watching? I was a strong supporter of CBC television drama, but again, in theory. With a few notable exceptions – early *Street Legal* and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and, more recently, *This Is Wonderland* – I didn’t actually watch the stuff. I have no doubt that CBC television’s news and current affairs programming was better than the competition’s, but it couldn’t hold a candle to CBC radio news. Television news is just too slow. Endowed with visual capability, television news has to use it, but pictures take up valuable time and one battle scene looks pretty much like another (the attack on the World Trade towers being a notable exception). Train crashes always make for better visuals than political analysis. The most serious accusation one can make about a television current affairs show is that there are too many talking heads. But that’s exactly what radio is.

Things have changed now. I try to listen to *The Current* and *As It Happens*, but the list of annoying shows has mushroomed so that most of the time I prefer silence. Shelagh Rogers’s *Sounds Like Canada*, or “Death and Recipes” as my friends call it, features interviews about what it feels like to find out you have cancer. Then there’s *Vinyl Café* with Stuart McLean, rock star for seniors.

But that kind of banal sentimentality is on its way out. Ascendant is the trivially hip: all that talk about the wired universe; a weekly half-hour show devoted to the kumquat in contemporary cuisine; documentaries on potentially interesting subjects so overproduced you think you were listening to a technopop rock video; *Out Front*, where amateurs are encouraged to explore the use of sound effects as they tell stories of interest only to close relatives. Finally there’s the violence. Violent crime is, according to statistics, not increasing. But you’d never know it from local CBC programming, which, besides its endless chatting, seems committed to reporting every accidental or criminal death within 500 kilometres.

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The CBC's mandate

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as the national public broadcaster, should provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains;

The programming provided by the Corporation should:

- (i) be predominantly and distinctively Canadian,
- (ii) reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions,
- (iii) actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,
- (iv) be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,
- (v) strive to be of equivalent quality in English and French,
- (vi) contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,
- (vii) be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose, and
- (viii) reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada.

– Broadcasting Act [1991, c. 11], available at www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/about/mandate.shtml

Google “CBC mandate” and you will find the sidebar on this page. It’s filled with admonitions about *how* the CBC should do things: be Canadian, be in English and French, connect the regions, reflect Canada’s multicultural and multiracial nature. But there’s little about *what* it should do, except at the top: inform, enlighten (as in *The Enlightenment?*) and entertain; and, further down, promote cultural expression. Clearly the CBC is living up to its mandate. But what kind of informing is going on? Well, you can learn a lot about the kumquat. Is that enlightenment? Is that entertainment? If you say so.

Many of us who support public broadcasting believe it contributes to “civic literacy,” to borrow Henry Milner’s phrase. We believe informed discussion is a precondition to successful democracy, and we were loyal to CBC radio, then, because there was a great deal of informed discussion. The weekly debate between Eric Kierans, Dalton Camp and Stephen Lewis was the model (although those who complained that it and the CBC in general were too left-wing had a point). CBC radio fulfilled the mission we gave it. Now it doesn’t. *The World at Six*, *The Current*, *As It Happens*, *Quirks and Quarks* do their best. But that stuff just isn’t hip enough to survive in the new CBC. Last week one of *The House*’s correspondents complained that electoral reform was boring. Compared to what?

What CBC management clearly believes is hip is the new media: websites and blogs, YouTube and Wikipedia and Facebook. Their ubiquity does force us to ask serious questions: What role will radio and television play in the future in this multimedia, million-channel



What role will radio and television play in the future in this multimedia, million-channel world? Will all the distinct media converge into a few submedia, all delivered by Google? Will YouTube and Wikipedia replace CBC radio? Will it matter?

world? Will all the distinct media converge into a few submedia, all delivered by Google? Will YouTube and Wikipedia replace CBC radio? Will it matter?

The future of technology may well make radio, television and newspapers dead or irrelevant. On the other hand, Wikipedia, YouTube and Facebook might turn out to be fads, or at least not harbingers of cataclysmic change. Either way, why should CBC be out at the vanguard, hastening its own demise?

But it seems determined to do so. Recently, the CBC announced the appointment of John Cruickshank to its “top CBC news post.”¹ According to a CBC spokesperson, Cruickshank’s areas of interest include the use of multimedia and digital applications, and the “different ways how news has to transform to serve better and provide a relationship with people [*sic*].”

Of course the CBC has to change with the times and attract a new audience as the old one dies. But the CBC’s strongest support has come from supporters of traditional public broadcasting – CBC radio listeners – and the CBC is doing its best to send them to U.S. National Public Radio.

The future will be rocky. The next time CBC comes under attack, who will come to its defence?

Note

¹ Retrieved September 21, 2007 from <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/media/story/2007/09/19/cruickshank-cbc.html>