

MINORITY GOVERNMENT: THE NEW NORMAL | LINGUISTIC DIVIDES IN CANADA AND BELGIUM

Inroads

The Canadian Journal of Opinion | Issue No. 23 | Summer/Fall 2008 | \$14.95



AFRICA

Scenes of hope and horror

23

Transformation in South Africa

War and reconciliation in Uganda

Remembering genocide



Battalions, Rebellions, Millions.

Every issue of Inroads is chock full of intelligent, approachable analysis of Canadian and world events.

regular subscriptions • 2 years (4 issues) • \$48

students \$36 (2 years) • institutions \$60

single issue \$15 plus shipping

Complimentary copy of the special retrospective Inroads 21 with every paid new subscription.

www.inroadsjournal.ca

Inroads

The Canadian Journal of Opinion | Issue No. 23 | Summer/Fall 2008

INROADS COLUMNISTS

The return of God – and what to do about it

by Reg Whitaker...6



Trust on a street corner, approaching midnight

by Finn Poschmann...10



Did the Israel lobby kill Rachel Corrie?

by Arthur Milner...14



Polygamy, impunity and human rights

by Daphne Bramham...18



FRONT MATTER

Enfranchising immigrants

Should noncitizen residents have the right to vote?

by Daniel Munro...23

Stephen Harper, Canadian

A personality at a distance profile

by Neal Carter...26

Politically correct and lovin' it

by Willa Marcus...30



Dr. Dion, or

How I learned to stop worrying and love Minority Government

by Henry Milner.....34

POLITICAL CHANGE ON THE PRAIRIES

The Prairie NDP's uncertain future

A realistic Aboriginal agenda is nowhere to be found

An introduction by John Richards...42



Diverging paths?

Why Manitoba still likes the NDP,
and Saskatchewan doesn't
by Christopher Adams...44

The de Tocqueville of Saskatchewan

An appreciation of Seymour Martin Lipset
by John Richards...53



LANGUAGE

Language: how well are we doing?

An introduction by John Richards...61

Linguistic peace: a time to take stock

The language situation in Canada and Quebec
by Linda Cardinal...62

Francophone immigration beyond the Bilingual Belt

Wasting a precious resource
by Charles Castonguay...71

Belgium: Less than the sum of its parts?

by Johanne Poirier...84

NORTH AMERICA

Thinking North America

by Philip Resnick...92

AFRICA

Scenes of hope and horror

An introduction by Bob Chodos
and John Richards...103

A work in progress

The new South Africa's first fifteen years
by Robert Cohen...105



Northern Uganda

The human face of atrocity

Compiled by Bob Chodos, from reporting
by Dave Klassen and Rick Gamble.

Photographs by Dave Klassen...117



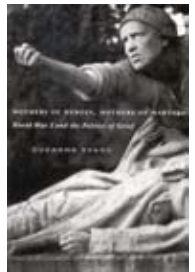
Remembering genocide

by Don Cayo...130

REVIEW

The struggle for the
meaning of war

by Bob Chodos...141



PUBLISHERS

Henry Milner and John Richards

MANAGING EDITOR

Bob Chodos

EDITORIAL BOARD

Linda Cardinal, Bob Chodos,
Arthur Milner, Henry Milner,
Finn Poschmann, Philip Resnick,
John Richards, Reg Whitaker

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

Reg Whitaker

LISTSERV MODERATOR

Harvey Schachter

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Nadene Rehnby/Pete Tuepah
www.handsonpublications.com

BUSINESS MANAGER

Frances Boylston

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Rafael Guzman

WEBSITE DESIGN

CWA with Paul Barber

© Contents may not be
reprinted without permission

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

EDITORIAL INQUIRIES

280 Huron Street
New Hamburg, Ontario
N3A 1J5
tel: 519-662-3390
fax: 519-662-3594
email: inroads@canada.com
www.inroadsjournal.ca

BUSINESS OFFICE

Suite A, 3777 Kent Ave.
Montreal, Quebec H3S 1N4
tel: 514-731-8383
e-mail: inroads@canada.com

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 23

Inroads has become a quarterly. Well, sort of. Feeling that six months between issues is too long, in March we put together a 34-page package that we made available only through email and our website.

Its main feature was an exchange on Pakistan between Doug McArthur, whose article on that troubled country appeared in the Winter/Spring issue, and John Richards. The exchange discussed prospects for the country after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and raised questions about democracy, stability and economic growth and how they relate to one another. Also in the package were highlights of an Inroads listserv discussion about polls and political leaders and a review by Richard Nimijean of a book on the state of Canada's universities.

We emailed a newsletter with a link to the package to all subscribers for whom we have email addresses. If you didn't receive the newsletter but would like to, please send your email address to us at inroads@canada.com.

We will email you our next newsletter in September as well. You can also find the March package at www.inroadsjournal.ca/pdfs/Inroads_newsletter_01_mar_2008.pdf.

Meanwhile, in this print issue, we turn our attention from Pakistan to another troubled part of the world, Africa. Robert Cohen has spent the last five years in South Africa as a housing consultant, and has been a witness to the country's post-apartheid transformation. Despite the terrible toll of the HIV-AIDS pandemic (and the government's inadequate response), he finds South Africa's story basically a hopeful one. Filmmakers Dave Klassen and Rick Gamble have documented the effects of the devastating (and underreported) war in northern Uganda – and the remarkable efforts at reconciliation currently taking place. We present their findings in words and pictures. Finally, in the last year Don Cayo has travelled to three sites of genocide: the Killing Field of Cambodia, the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz and, most recently, two churches

in Rwanda where Hutus massacred Tutsis. He reports on who is visiting these sites and what meaning we can draw from them.

Three of our front section writers engage a theme that has been ongoing in Inroads, notably in our coverage of the “reasonable accommodation” debate in Quebec in the Winter/Spring issue: the place of religion in our public life. Speaking as a lifelong atheist, Reg Whitaker finds that religion cannot be completely excluded from the public sphere but needs to be kept within strict limits. Daphne Bramham returns to a subject she discussed in the Summer/Fall 2005 issue, and about which she has since written a book: the fundamentalist Mormon community in Bountiful, B.C., and authorities' failure to prosecute its leaders for breaking Canada's anti-polygamy laws. Willa Marcus, declaring herself “politically correct and lovin' it,” looks at last fall's outcry over the revelation that Elections Canada would allow Muslim women to vote with their faces covered and asks what the fuss was about. We have by no means exhausted this topic, and expect to continue the discussion in the September electronic newsletter and our next print issue.

Also in this issue:

- Henry Milner argues that minority government is no longer an aberration in Canada; rather, we have entered an era of Minority Government, and the media need to get used to it.
- Chris Adams looks at why Manitoba voters reelected their NDP government while Saskatchewan voters defeated theirs, and John Richards presents

an appreciation of Seymour Martin Lipset, author of the classic study of North America's first social democratic government, Tommy Douglas's CCF in Saskatchewan.

- Linda Cardinal and Charles Castonguay explore the implications of 2006 census data for Canadian language policy, while Johanne Poirier offers a cautionary tale of divisions based on language from Belgium.
- Looking both at what unites Canada, the United States and Mexico and at what divides them, Philip Resnick finds evidence for the existence of a North American identity encompassing the three countries.
- An unusual night-time scene in Washington, D.C., inspires Finn Poschmann to reflect on the importance of trust for successful societies; Arthur Milner examines the role of the Israel lobby in causing the cancellation of a play about Rachel Corrie, an American killed in Gaza while protesting collective punishment; Daniel Munro makes the case for allowing noncitizens to vote in municipal elections; Neal Carter's “personality at a distance profile” of Stephen Harper shows the Prime Minister to be more pragmatist than ideologue; and I draw attention to a book that looks at how mothers of slain soldiers are mobilized in the struggle to control the meaning of war.

— Bob Chodos

The return of God — and what to do about it

by Reg Whitaker



Political scientist Reg Whitaker writes a political column for Inroads and is a member of its editorial board.

Who would have thought that the new millennium would begin with jihads, holy wars, fatwas, inquisitions and slaughter of the innocents in the name of God?

Almost four centuries since the Catholic Church condemned Galileo for heresy; a century and a half after Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the new millennium ushers in religious disputation that rivals that of the darkest of ages past — yet in a new and strange language in which ancient shibboleths come clothed in the guise of threatening modernity.

The iconic moment that has defined our era was the destruction of the symbols of contemporary global economic and military power by Islamic jihadists chanting centuries-old incantations. Yet these jihadists were university graduates with the technical skills to pilot hijacked jetliners as precisely targeted weapons of mass destruction. In the United States, born-again evangelicals spread an atavistic antiscientific gospel through the most sophisticated modern techniques of mass communication.

It is easy to grow too apocalyptic. The 9/11 terrorists' dream of a medieval caliphate from Spain to Indonesia has not progressed one inch toward realization since 2001.

A Republican candidate for president who insisted that the constitution be made compliant with Holy Scripture has lost, and the successful candidate echoes none of his evangelical ravings.

In the West, at least among those who read books other than the Bible, a ferocious intellectual counterattack has been launched against the new religiosity. Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* and Christopher Hitchens's *God Is Not Great* are among a wave of attacks on religion from a forthrightly atheist perspective. As a lifelong atheist, I should be enthusiastically joining the insurgency. Challenge religion not with another faith, but with no faith.

The atheist soldiers have my good wishes. But something is missing in their manifestos. Dawkins the scientist demolishes the arguments for the "God Hypothesis." His logic is compelling — to those who already think like him. I doubt that he has convinced a single believer (assuming any believers actually read Dawkins, as opposed to denouncing him). Arguments from within reason cannot touch faith, unless faith is already shaky.

The reductionist attack on belief misses most of what religion sets out to answer. Its purpose never was to find the most plausible scientific hypothesis to explain existence, but rather to answer other questions that are prescientific and yet survive the age of science. Dawkins has been savagely attacked not only by believers but also by Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton, who scorns his incomprehension of the cultural richness of religious meaning. Dawkins, he argues, simply misses the point.

It is an elusive point to those outside the faith. From the first childhood moments when I began to think for myself, I rejected the inherited notion of God. I have known many people who have grown out of their inherited religion, or have thrown it over later in life. Sometimes they become particularly zealous atheists who show no mercy to their former faith, like the ex-Communists in the book *The God that Failed*. But they at least have more than an inkling of what it was to have believed in a God. For me the very concept has always been a mystery. Like Dawkins and other atheist writers, I have no idea what it is like at the emotional, visceral level to live in a world infused with the certainty of an omnipresent, omniscient intelligence that was, and is, and will always be.

One inner voice tells me that this is an intellectual strength: I am too smart to fall for the superstitions of the many. Another, less arrogant, voice suggests that it is a weakness, disabling me from any empathetic sense of thoughts and feelings that have been characteristic in one form or another of every society in human history.

The reductionist attack on belief misses most of what religion sets out to answer. Its purpose never was to find the most plausible scientific hypothesis to explain existence, but rather to answer other questions that are prescientific and yet survive the age of science.

That atheism will always be a minority persuasion is a hard reality which we atheists must face. In the 20th century there were attempts by Communist regimes to establish atheism as official state doctrine. They failed abysmally. Instead of contesting religion as an external threat to liberal democracy, we must live with it as a necessary part of the foundation of any society.

But official theocracies are every bit as nightmarish as Communist police states. Even short of theocracy, religion-ridden societies are steeped in social and personal repression. The Roman Catholic Church with its 2,000-year weight of hierarchy and dogma has been among the worst offenders. It is surely no accident that three Western societies where Catholic influence was once most pervasive – Ireland, Spain and Quebec – are the sites of vigorous social liberal reaction to clerical domination.

Yet countries long characterized by the separation of church and state now contend with resurgent religious interference in politics. There are two very worrying trends in the contemporary accommodation of religion in Western societies. One is the “multicultural” response to the rise of militant Islam. The Archbishop of Canterbury recently set off a firestorm when he tentatively suggested the possibility of incorporating Islamic shari‘a law into British practice for consenting Muslim citizens. In Ontario, this issue surfaced a few years ago when Premier Dalton McGuinty shot down an attempt to establish shari‘a – and at the same time evenhandedly reversed an earlier Ontario decision to permit Orthodox Jewish codes to apply in disputes within families in that community.

One law for all, applied equally and without discrimination, is surely the only sound basis for a liberal multicultural society. A liberalism that would permit multiple privileged religious enclaves, in which unaccountable spiritual leaders apply laws that may run contrary to universal rights and freedoms, is liberalism seemingly intent on its own evisceration.

Another challenge comes from the opposite direction. Conservative hostility toward militant Islam and reactions to multicultural and multiethnic “threats” have helped engender a new born-again Christian militancy, the confident insistence that self-appointed Christian arbiters of right and wrong should set the rules for everyone else. “We” need to protect “our” culture and way of life from the threatening influx of the Other, and Christianity is front and centre in the definition of who “we” are. Instead of the many Goods nurtured by the multicultural ecumenists, there should be only the one privileged Good raised above all others. If the former constitutes undermining liberalism from within, the latter is a frontal assault.

Obviously many Christians, hopefully still the majority, are not intolerant zealots but respect the boundary between church and state and fully accept common citizenship with nonbelievers and followers of other faiths. But one does not need to push too hard to discern vulnerability and intellectual laxity in the liberal ecumenical strain of Christianity, which shrinks from contact with more aggressive forms of Christianity and wavers uncertainly before the challenge of Islamic certitudes. Can competing Truths really be coequal?

This is less of a problem for religion as such than for the monotheistic, totalizing faiths that rule most of the world today. Despite millennia of relentless propagandizing against the “pagans” who preceded the victory of monotheism, it is intriguing to revisit the wisdom of the

ancients before they were banished by the warriors of the Jewish, Christian and later Muslim faiths.

The Roman Empire has always had a very bad press in both Jewish and Christian camps, but there is much to be said for its polytheism. The ancient gods were in a sense humanist: they reflected humanity in all its strengths and weaknesses. They could be petty, jealous, quarrelsome and vindictive as well as Olympian. When they took sides in human disputes, their interventions were arbitrary and often unjust – just as human fate is arbitrary and often unjust.

The Roman gods were tolerant and pluralistic. Their roster was always being expanded. When the Romans conquered, they brought their gods along with their centurions, and they expected subject peoples to acknowledge them in public as symbols of imperial rule. But they were always willing to include new gods and new religious practices of the subject peoples within an expansive tolerant pantheon.

The Jews rebelled because their austere monotheism would not permit them to acknowledge the heathen gods of Rome even *pro forma*. They suffered defeat and dispersal for their zealotry. The Christians were more devious. As Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and unto God that which is God’s.” Eventually, of course, they succeeded in burrowing from within and took over Rome. On assuming power, those who had once been persecuted for being Christian enthusiastically took to persecuting people for *not* being Christian. Within a couple of centuries, another prophet of monotheism, Muhammad, arose in the desert and Islamic jihad spread a new faith by the sword across the continents. The triumph of exclusivist and exclusionary faiths was complete, and woe to the infidel and heretic.

We can no more bring back the ancient gods than establish a godless republic. But today’s pallid liberal ecumenism fails to recapture the easy tolerance of the pagan world because the very faiths liberals are trying to be ecumenical about are at root exclusivist claims to Truth. And each brings expectations to the public realm to see its Truth reflected in the state.

The Bouchard-Taylor Commission in Quebec (see *Inroads*, Winter/Spring 2008) is engaging this conundrum under the guise of “reasonable accommodation.” Ethnicity can be accommodated, but can religion? Charles Taylor grapples at great length with this in his recent book *A Secular Age*, but his personal affirmation of his Christian, Catholic faith sits uneasily with the notion of intercultural pluralism that his commission would like to foster.

Religion cannot be banished into the private sphere, but in the public space it must be contained within strict limits or it will overwhelm the liberal foundations of free societies. In the end, we have to fall back on secularism as a muscular doctrine that will face down all the proponents of public religiosity. The liberal democratic public sphere cannot be atheist, but it can, should and must be agnostic.

On assuming power, those who had once been persecuted for being Christian enthusiastically took to persecuting people for *not* being Christian.

Trust on a street corner, approaching midnight

by Finn Poschmann



Finn Poschmann is Director of Research of the C.D. Howe Institute in Toronto and an Inroads political columnist and editorial board member.

A few blocks north and slightly to the east of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., there is a post office. Around a quarter to midnight on April 15 this year, I happened to be walking by (don't ask why). One thing, then another, grabbed my attention. The first was that traffic was heavy as I neared the intersection of 1st NE and Massachusetts Ave. Since the downtown office core of Washington goes into a deep, fitful sleep at night, traffic is an oddity.

The second thing I noticed (hardly a feat of observation) was a handful of men and women weaving among the cars that stopped at the light with the seemingly slow ease and fleet steps of squeegee kids. Unlike squeegee-wielders, however, they were not kids, they were wearing reflective vests, and they had a singsong call that I could not easily make out amid the partylike din.

The people moving amid the traffic, no doubt out of sight of occupational health inspectors, were carrying shipping boxes of a very familiar sort – they were stackable bulk mail boxes. On noticing that (pardon me for slowness), I realized what was going on. The squeegee-like crew were postal workers – I assume on

time-and-a-half at least, which I could hardly begrudge them – and April 15 is tax day in the United States. The people driving by were meeting their tax-filing deadline, and the singsong call was the posties' message to “drop returns here, tax returns!”

And that prompted a moment's reflection. The U.S. Postal Service and the U.S. Internal Revenue Service are institutions that receive almost ritual torment in public, at least some of it justified. They are perceived as slothful, unresponsive, lazy on the one hand and too energetic and vengeful on the other. To liberty-minded Americans, these two institutions also symbolize the overbearing state. They are, one might imagine, not much to be trusted.

Yet here were Americans, whose financial well-being could depend on delivering tax returns by midnight on the 15th, driving down the street near the post office and trusting that dropping their returns, cheques stapled inside, into a box carried by someone wandering among traffic would mean that those same returns would be accepted by the post office within minutes, postmarked, delivered to the IRS promptly and there accepted as delivered on time. There are several risks involved there, and potential points of failure even if good intentions prevail.

The scenario I describe, I thought, was a remarkable display of public trust in institutions well known for their uneasy public images. Why remarkable? In many countries, the transactions I described would be unlikely to happen. If they did, they would require an *ex gratia* payment, a bribe, to intermediaries. Another way to look at the sight of citizens casually passing important documents to strangers in the middle of the night is to consider the large number of developing countries where the notions of self-assessing and even paying taxes would be all but unthinkable – and that's not to mention dropping unreceipted documents at the roadside, in the naive expectation that they would arrive whole, at a prescribed pace, at their intended destination.

What is remarkable about successful societies is that non-naive residents do expect transactions involving strangers and casual acquaintances to be successfully completed

Another way to look at the sight of citizens casually passing important documents to strangers in the middle of the night is to consider the large number of developing countries where the notions of self-assessing and even paying taxes would be all but unthinkable.

– and, in the main, happily resolved. Not all of them of course, but a big enough share of them that trust in the system prevails. After all, if such transactions failed too often, the trust that underpins them would swiftly evaporate. The implication would be that more resources would be devoted to verification and enforcement, successful transactions would be more costly to execute and fewer of them would happen. Lack of trust would put sand in the wheels of interpersonal transaction, slowing the flow of human and financial resources to their most valuable uses and making us all the poorer for it.

Which is just another way of saying that trust in one another and trust in institutions is a valuable asset or, in the now well-known economic jargon, a form of social capital. The trust that permits us to engage in transactions with people when we have less than perfect information about them or their ability to execute the commitments into which they enter can be interpreted as a capital asset that a society or community may or may not possess. Social capital improves the ease with which our efforts, our property or our financial capital can be traded with others. That makes the attributes we control more productive. We trade our time, or the things we own or produce, until they find their most valued use. The ease with which we are able to do so raises the usefulness of the resources within our collective possession. Social capital, while an intangible asset, improves a community's productivity.

Think of two communities, each possessing similar access to natural resources, human and financial capital and people able to work. The community which is able to steer resources more smartly is better able to convert those resources into products and services that they and their trading partners value. Trust, or social capital, facilitates this conversion, so it helps to think of trust as an asset analogous to human capital, which boosts the productivity of a community's natural resources and physical capital.

That people (much of the time anyway) display trust when dealing with members of their family or tribe, where it is relatively easy to verify and enforce the terms of a deal, is unremarkable. But trust is an enabler when it comes to dealing with strangers and casual acquaintances. It takes on a special value when dealing with new relationships, and when verification and enforcement are not so simple.

Game theory – and simple experience – show that, when engaging with new parties, individuals fare better if they begin by trusting. If both sides to an exchange trust each other initially, more happy exchanges take place. The most successful strategy is tit-for-tat – as in, trust a new pizza shop enough to try it, but if the owner reneges on the implicit deal by delivering a cold pizza with minimal toppings, punish him immediately by shifting your trade elsewhere. The process of building and reshaping trust networks is all around us.

New communication and information technology has a role to play in reinforcing and extending trust networks. EBay's scoring system for establishing sellers' reputations is an electronic trust network built from scratch, and built precisely to facilitate the growth and profitability of



Lack of trust would put sand in the wheels of interpersonal transaction, slowing the flow of human and financial resources to their most valuable uses and making us all the poorer for it.

the exchange web. Improved, computerized consumer credit scoring systems facilitated a boom in U.S. home ownership and a huge securitized mortgage market.

These examples point to something else – trust networks can be gamed. Shady sellers try to puff up their online identities through phantom trades and adopt multiple identities, specifically to steal some of the benefit of others' trust in the trust network itself. Mortgage originators, who profit from connecting borrowers to lenders but whose financial incentives are unaffected by whether debts are repaid, routinely failed in recent years to verify borrowers' abilities to carry credit, contributing to an inflated (and eventually deflated) U.S. housing market.

The message is a familiar one from international arms negotiations: "Trust, but verify."

Of course, trust with verification can feel like not much trust at all. A border security officer inquiring after your travel documents hardly conveys an initial stance of trust. But it is part of the process, because once credentials are established, personal travel and trade can proceed apace, and border agencies make significant investment in information systems to facilitate exactly that.

Frequent travellers across the Canada-U.S. land border take advantage of special identification cards, electronically establishing that they are who they say they are, and they travel to and fro across the border all but unimpeded. Businesses that trade goods across the border likewise take formal steps to establish their credentials, and comply with reporting procedures so that their shipments quickly cross the border. And a good thing, too, because visual inspection of every Canada-U.S. crossborder shipment would be tantamount to closing the border, impoverishing both sides. That means verification is an essential part of keeping the trust system working to our mutual benefit.

Now what about those late-night taxpayers, dropping their returns by the roadside? They are relying on the credibility of the postal service, and personal experience indicating that when you give an envelope to someone who looks like a postal worker, it will be postmarked and delivered on time and unmolested. More and more, such exchanges will be supplanted by computer communications verified by electronic signatures, and the trust network will be less visible to us. Meanwhile, we should be happy to see that trust exists and can be traded on, even on dark corners in the dead of night.

Did the Israel lobby kill *Rachel Corrie*?

by Arthur Milner



Playwright and theatre director Arthur Milner is Inroads' cultural columnist and a member of the Inroads editorial board.

Rachel Corrie, an idealistic 23-year-old American from Olympia, Washington, was crushed to death by a bulldozer driven by an Israeli soldier in Gaza on March 16, 2003. She was protesting collective punishment and the destruction of Palestinian homes. British actor Alan Rickman and Guardian journalist Katherine Viner wrote a one-woman play, *My Name is Rachel Corrie*, using excerpts from Corrie's journals and letters. From her raw material they fashioned a solid, intelligent piece of writing, concentrating on Corrie as a human being – a well-intentioned, quite intelligent, somewhat naive, admirably modest, occasionally presumptuous young American woman.

My Name is Rachel Corrie opened at London's Royal Court Theatre in April 2005, and was published by the Theatre Communications Group in 2006. The play has now been programmed by three North American theatres, including Toronto's Canadian Stage Company (CanStage). All three cancelled their productions before they reached the stage.

There have been other efforts to stop productions. For example, in 1996, members of Toronto's black

community and their supporters protested against Livent's production of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's *Showboat*. But the producer did not back down. Actual cancellations in response to protests are extremely rare. I've worked in professional theatre in Canada for more than 30 years and I cannot remember a single instance.

John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt mention *Rachel Corrie* in their book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* and, not surprisingly, attribute the three cancellations to pressure from the Israel lobby. They cite a New York Times report that New York Theatre Workshop's artistic director polled "local Jewish religious and community leaders," and was told, according to the Los Angeles Times, "that after Ariel Sharon's illness and the election of Hamas in the recent Palestinian elections, we had a very edgy situation." Miami's Mosaic Theatre cancelled its production "after protests from what the Miami Herald called an 'impassioned, vocal minority of subscribers and outside individuals.'"

CanStage Artistic Producer Martin Bragg denies he bowed to pressure. According to Martin Knelman in the Toronto Star, "when he read the script he was 'absolutely reduced to tears.'"¹ But when he went to see a production, "it fell flat ... 'It just didn't seem as powerful on stage as it did on the page.'" Knelman continues:

The alternate version being told among CanStage insiders: Members of Bragg's board were alarmed by negative response from influential supporters of the theatre, especially in Toronto's Jewish community, who were canvassed for their opinion. Many were dismayed and openly critical when confronted with the prospect of the city's flagship not-for-profit theatre producing a play that could be construed as anti-Semitic propaganda.

Knelman quotes "veteran cultural activist" Bluma Appel: "I told them I would react very badly to a play that was offensive to Jews." CanStage performs in the Bluma Appel Theatre.

Jack Rose, a developer and a member of the CanStage board "who, like Appel, has not read or seen the play," told Knelman, "I had one phone conversation about this. There was a question whether it would be a mistake to proceed with it, and my view was it would provoke a negative reaction in the Jewish community."

Richard Ouzounian, in a Toronto Star article this past January 12, is unequivocal: Bragg withdrew the play in the face of "pressure from his Board of Directors." (In response to a request for an interview, Bragg told me, "I am not making any further comment on *Rachel Corrie*.")

In 1989, I had my own run-in with the Israel lobby. I was resident playwright at Ottawa's Great Canadian Theatre Company and was working on a play called *Masada*, a one-person play about the history of Zionism. It had been advertised as part of GCTC's upcoming season, and was to be directed by then-GCTC Artistic Director Steven Bush.

A local Jewish women's group wanted to buy out all 220 seats of one performance. They planned to invite a number of people, including me, for a panel discussion afterwards. But first

they wanted to read the play. I gave them the script. “It will never happen,” I thought. But they reported back enthusiastically.

Two weeks later, they asked if I would allow a member of the education committee of the Jewish Community Council of Ottawa (JCC) – a Carleton University political scientist – to read the play. I agreed. I was told she approved.

Two weeks later, they called back. The political scientist had changed her mind. They said this would make things difficult, and they would now buy only 100 tickets; but they still wanted to have the discussion afterward.

Two weeks later they said they could sell only 50 tickets.

Two weeks later – we were getting close to opening night – they called to say they could sell only 17 tickets, they would go to someone’s home for a discussion, and I wasn’t invited.

Meanwhile, the JCC asked to speak to GCTC’s board of directors. I was a board member but did not attend. The JCC representatives said that *Masada* was inaccurate and biased and should be cancelled. The board said they had confidence in me and that I would welcome comments and suggestions. The JCC representatives asked that the show be restricted to adults(!), but the board refused.

Masada opened on January 31, 1990. It has had a few more productions and was published twice.² It was also the subject of a May 2005 article in *Teatron*, Israel’s major theatre magazine. I should add that a number of women resigned in protest from the JCC.

What the careful reader will have noticed is that a professor of political science had to read the script twice before recognizing how inaccurate and biased it was. *Masada* is critical of Zionism, but it’s subtle, too. Bronwyn Drainie saw the Toronto production and attended a discussion afterwards. She wrote in the *Globe and Mail* that panelists were concerned that some in the audience might be confused about who were the bad guys: “The idea that people might absorb the play and then come to their own conclusions was disturbing to the panelists.”³

My Name is Rachel Corrie and *Masada* are one-person plays about Israel/Palestine. Neither *Corrie* nor *Masada* is radical or extreme: they aren’t anti-Semitic, and they don’t deny the Holocaust or call for the destruction of Israel. And both were subject to efforts by the local Israel lobbies to shut them down.

A few questions spring to mind:

Q: Why didn’t the three artistic directors who cancelled *Corrie* avoid the whole controversy by simply not programming the play?

A: Because they didn’t see it coming. They didn’t think their Jewish patrons and donors would be so easily offended.

Q: Why were the three artistic directors so timid?

A: Artists will stand up to anything, except financial pressure. That would be irresponsible.

Q: Why did efforts to cancel *Corrie* succeed where efforts to cancel *Masada* failed?

A: At the time GCTC produced *Masada*, the company’s only large donors were government agencies (which is a good argument for government funding and for not letting arts organizations get dependent on large donors). *Corrie* has just been coproduced by Montreal’s Teesri Duniya Theatre and Vancouver’s NeWorld Theatre, and will be produced – one hopes – in Toronto at the end of May by Theatre Panik and in Ottawa in September by Vision Theatre. These are very small companies with, I would be willing to bet, no large private donors.

Q: Why does the Israel lobby think it’s all right to stifle work it doesn’t approve of?

A: Multiple choice: (a) because its members believe all criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic; (b) because it makes tactical sense to treat all criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic; (c) because it can; (d) all of the above.

Q: Is it really fair to call those who tried to cancel *Rachel Corrie* or *Masada* the Israel lobby? Aren’t they just individuals acting on their own?

A: Mearsheimer and Walt have been criticized for their expansive definition of the Israel lobby. They include actual lobbying organizations (like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and Christians United for Israel), along with think tanks (like the American Enterprise Institute and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy); various journals, journalists and academics; elected and appointed government officials; and ordinary individuals who participate in various lobbying efforts. I would tend to agree with Mearsheimer and Walt’s inclusiveness. All play a role.

I haven’t seen *My Name is Rachel Corrie* but I have read the script – unlike Martin Bragg, without tears in my eyes. As I mentioned before, *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is a solid, intelligent piece of writing. We see Corrie develop affection and respect for her Palestinian hosts and, as we watch, we grow to like her. When she dies, she dies as thousands of Palestinians have died, and her death represents theirs.

Perhaps the production Bragg saw did fall flat. But a director’s challenge would be – and the script allows this – to make a connection through Corrie to the Palestinians she lived with. Then we in the audience might begin, through her, to feel for the Palestinians, to sympathize with them as human beings, and to see things from their side.

That is something good art can do – and, apparently, something the Israel lobby cannot allow.

Notes

¹ Toronto Star, December 22, 2006.

² Most recently in Jason Sherman, ed., *Modern Jewish Plays* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2006).

³ Toronto Globe and Mail, May 25, 1991.

Polygamy, impunity and human rights

by Daphne Bramham



This article inaugurates a new social affairs column by Daphne Bramham, columnist for the Vancouver Sun and author of *The Secret Lives of Saints: Child Brides and Lost Boys in Canada's Polygamous Mormon Sect*, published in March by Random House.

(KIM STALLKNECHT PHOTO)



Polygamy has been illegal in Canada since 1890. It was criminalized soon after Charles O. Card, a fugitive escaping prosecution in Utah for having more than one wife, settled in Alberta.

Card and several senior members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints went to Ottawa to ask Sir John A. Macdonald to allow them to practise polygamy. The Prime Minister said no. Parliament approved the anti-polygamy law the same year that Utah outlawed plural marriage in both its constitution and law and the Mormon Church issued its manifesto suspending the earthly practice of polygamy and warning members that they would be excommunicated if they entered into celestial or plural marriages.

In the intervening years, polygamy has rarely been prosecuted in either Canada or the United States. But since the 1990s, a breakaway sect of polygamous Mormons in British Columbia has acted with impunity. The reason? The B.C. government received a couple of legal opinions in the late 1980s saying that the anti-polygamy law is contrary to the guarantee of religious freedom in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Opinions in hand, NDP

Attorney-General Colin Gabelmann, who had no legal training, rejected the RCMP's recommendation to prosecute two leaders of the fundamentalist Mormon community in Bountiful.

Since 1990, Bountiful has tripled in size to 1,200 or more people. There are nearly 500 children in the two government-funded independent schools, which only go up to Grade 10. Winston Blackmore, the community's bishop, has framed a copy of the Charter and hung it in his office. By his own admission, he has also consummated "celestial marriages" with "several very young girls." In league with American fundamentalist Mormons, Blackmore has participated in the forced marriages of dozens of underaged girls. He is also complicit in the trafficking of young girls and women between Canada and the United States into what one author called "God's brothel." Now 51, Blackmore has had 26 wives and, by last count, has 116 children.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee has repeatedly said that polygamy is "incompatible with equality of treatment with regard to the right to marry." To make the skewed arithmetic of polygamy work, women and children must be chattels. As a result, men – usually in God's name – trample the freedoms of everyone who has the misfortune to fall under their power.

Fundamentalist Mormons in Bountiful (as well as those in the Texas compound raided in April by child protection authorities) are taught that boys are to treat girls as snakes. They're disciplined if they do something as innocent as flirt with girls their own age, watch videos or listen to rock music. Some are excommunicated and told to leave the community at ages as young as 12 and 13. Their mothers are told to tear up or burn photos of them. But the boys are useful for something. It is on the backs of their labour that the leaders support their multiple wives and dozens of children. The patriarchs send the boys to work at companies they control, either as unpaid labourers or for little more than slave wages.

Men who run afoul of Warren Jeffs, the prophet of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, are excommunicated. For their part, women and girls are told that their highest and best use is to produce children. Most expect to have eight, ten or more. Birth control is not allowed. They are taught to be subservient to the prophet, their fathers, their husbands and sometimes even their sons. "Keep sweet" and "perfect obedience leads to perfect faith" are two mantras they are encouraged to repeat.

To make the skewed arithmetic of polygamy work, women and children must be chattels. As a result, men – usually in God's name – trample the freedoms of everyone who has the misfortune to fall under their power.

It is a rare polygamous family where all of the wives and mothers are treated equally. As a result, plural wives must constantly compete for affection, attention and money with other women and the children. If a woman's children are sickly or if she collapses under the strain of too many pregnancies, too many children or too many sister-wives, it is her fault. She is told she is rebellious and out of harmony with God, the prophet and her husband.

Canada's polygamous community flourishes because B.C. politicians have been led to believe the Charter will stymie them. They look south to the United States where an estimated 38,000 fundamentalist Mormons practise polygamy with near-impunity as well. But this is Canada where – unlike the United States – the constitution guarantees equality as well as freedom of religion.

The Supreme Court of Canada has been very clear that freedom of religion is not an unfettered right. In a landmark decision in 1985, Mr. Justice Brian Dickson wrote, "Freedom [of religion] can primarily be characterized by the absence of coercion or constraint. If a person is compelled by the state or the will of another to a course of action or inaction, which he would not otherwise have chosen, he is not acting of his own volition and he cannot be said to be truly free. One of the major purposes of the Charter is to protect, within reason, from compulsion or restraint."

Dickson defined coercion not only as blatant forms such as direct commands: "Coercion includes indirect forms of control which determine or limit alternative courses of conduct available to others ... Freedom means that subject to such limitations as are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, no one is to be forced to act in a way contrary to his own beliefs or conscience."

All of which suggests that, even in 1990, the B.C. government had a fighting chance of convincing the courts that polygamy is not protected by the Charter's provisions for religious freedom. Yet even though the federal Justice Minister of the day – Kim Campbell, another British Columbian – believed that the law was constitutional and offered to share the cost of taking a case all the way to the Supreme Court, the B.C. government dropped it like a hot potato. There was no tsunami of public opinion against the polygamists.

But the courts have continued to clarify the limits to religious practice (as opposed to belief). In 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada legalized so-called swingers' clubs on the basis of the right of consenting adults to do what they wanted if there is no harm to others. In a dissenting opinion, two justices, Michel Bastarache and Louis LeBel, had this to say about harm:

According to contemporary Canadian social morality, acts such as child pornography, incest, polygamy and bestiality are unacceptable regardless of whether or not they cause social harm. The community considers these acts to be harmful in themselves. Parliament enforces this social morality by enacting statutory norms in legislation such as the Criminal Code.

It is a rare polygamous family where all of the wives and mothers are treated equally. As a result, plural wives must constantly compete for affection, attention and money with other women and the children.

In short, they said that in most cases evidence must be heard to establish harm. But some acts are unacceptable by their very nature because they lead to "societal dysfunction or to the creation of a predisposition to anti-social conduct." Polygamy, they said, is one of those.

The federal government, supported by the Federal Court and the Federal Court of Appeal, has aggressively upheld the anti-polygamy law by denying Muslim polygamists' immigration applications. It has also instituted a policy of granting refugee status to foreign women fleeing polygamy and forced marriages.

What it has failed to do up until recently is apply the same standards to the fair-skinned fundamentalist Mormons. Until recently, fundamentalist Mormon plural wives who entered the country illegally have been allowed to stay on "humanitarian and compassionate grounds," which they applied for only after they had six, seven, eight or more children.

Though it has accepted as refugees women fleeing forced and polygamous marriages in Africa, the Canadian government has never extended a helping hand to either Canadian- or American-born fundamentalist Mormons escaping the same treatment. There is no money to help them in relocating. No money for legal aid to secure the custody of their children. No money to upgrade their woefully poor education. There is no money for counselling, for them or their children, to overcome the years of emotional and mental abuse or brainwashing. No safe houses. No transition houses capable of handling a woman with eight or more children.

In British Columbia, the government has had no qualms about testing the religious freedoms of Jehovah's Witnesses. In the spring of 2005, the Ministry of Children and Family Development got a court order forcing a 14-year-old Jehovah's Witness to have a blood transfusion deemed necessary to treat her life-threatening cancer. It did it again in 2007 to force transfusions on sextuplets born to Jehovah's Witnesses. B.C. Supreme Court Justice Mary Boyd ruled that people can't be denied their right to hold their beliefs, but religious beliefs cannot override a person's Charter-guaranteed right to life and security of person: "The preservation of the life of a child ... is foremost. All children are entitled to be protected from abuse and harm." Except, it seems, if those children live in Bountiful.

The federal government has commissioned a series of studies on polygamy over the last couple of years. All but one has concluded that polygamy should remain a criminal offence

and be prosecuted. In its *Separate and Unequal: The Women and Children of Polygamy*, the Alberta Civil Liberties Association described Bountiful as

an authoritarian, theocratic culture where many individual rights are so limited that they have little or no meaning when measured against the bundle of rights and liberties that other Canadians enjoy ... Polygamy as practised in Bountiful is harmful to children, women and society because it perpetuates a value system premised on the idea that women have no place in a community as fully equal citizens.

The civil libertarians noted that under Canadian and international law, there is a difference between a guarantee of religious belief and a guarantee of religious practice. And the courts have determined that religious practices can and should be outlawed if they cause harm to others.

In late 2006, Canada's justice department released a study written by Rebecca Cook, faculty chair in international human rights and co-director of the University of Toronto's international reproductive and sexual health law program. She concluded that polygamy offends the dignity of all women and denies their protection and the protection of their children. It undermines women's and children's rights to be safe and secure as well as their ability to exercise their full rights and privileges as citizens of this country.

She also warned that the failure to prosecute polygamy not only was contrary to the constitution and Charter but also contravenes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – written by a Canadian and ratified by Canada in 1948. That's not all. Failing to prosecute, she concluded, contravenes other international conventions that Canada has ratified, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To nonlawyers like me, the logic seems simple. Religious freedom ends with harm or coercion. Polygamy is harmful to women and children. Therefore, religion ought not to provide shield or

shelter for polygamists, and the men who perpetrate it ought to be prosecuted. It seems blindingly obvious that Canadians and our governments have failed the children of Bountiful. We have allowed them to be degraded, humiliated, abused, exploited and violated.

All the while we've congratulated ourselves on being among the world's most compassionate and caring people. We care so much about human rights that we put our sons and daughters in harm's way in countries like Afghanistan. Yet if we refuse to uphold the human rights of our own citizens and fail to bring our homegrown zealots and petty tyrants to heel, we have no moral authority to tell others what to do.

Canadians and our governments have failed the children of Bountiful.

We have allowed them to be degraded, humiliated, abused, exploited and violated.

Enfranchising immigrants

Should noncitizen residents have the right to vote?

by Daniel Munro

In an interview with the Toronto Star's editorial board, Toronto Mayor David Miller indicated his support for a policy that would extend municipal voting rights to landed immigrants in Toronto. According to Miller, people should have “a real say in the decisions that are affecting them” whether they are citizens or not.

Daniel Munro holds a PhD in political science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is currently a Senior Analyst with the Council of Canadian Academies in Ottawa.

Such a policy, if adopted, would cut against the grain of conventional opinion, which holds that newcomers should integrate and acquire citizenship before they are allowed to vote. Extending the franchise to immigrants, the conventional wisdom maintains, would flood ballot boxes with the poorly informed votes of individuals with divided loyalties.

Rudy Czekalla, a 20-year noncitizen resident of the city of Mississauga, faced that conventional wisdom when he requested that the city change its current practice of prohibiting noncitizen residents from participating on municipal committees and boards. A German citizen who was raised and educated in Canada, Czekalla argued that the city should adopt more inclusive arrangements that would in turn help committees and public policies “reflect the growing cosmopolitan reality” of the city. Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion and city councillors rejected Czekalla's proposal. One councillor,

Nando Iannicca, even suggested that noncitizen residents should stop treating Canada like a “buffet table” of “rights and privileges and good things.”

But is the conventional view fair to noncitizen residents? Is it even consistent with what democracy requires?

A growing number of immigrant rights activists in Canada and even some governments around the globe are answering no to both questions. Voting rights activists point out that noncitizens live, work, pay taxes and, in some cases, are eligible for compulsory military service in their adopted countries, but they have no right to vote in elections that determine who will write the laws and policies that will shape their chosen communities. Mayor Miller notes that voting rights for noncitizen residents would satisfy a principle of democratic legitimacy, according to which people who are affected by laws and policies should have opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes that produce those laws and policies.

Some democracies – primarily those in western Europe – have already accepted that reasoning and have granted local and regional voting rights to noncitizen residents. In the Netherlands and Sweden, for example, voting rights have been extended to noncitizens as a way of ensuring that they have a voice in political decisions that will affect them and facilitating their full and fair integration into their new liberal democratic homes. Moreover, the European Union’s 1992 Maastricht Treaty promised to grant all citizens of EU member states the right to vote in local elections in any other EU state.

Outside Europe, noncitizen voting arrangements have been adopted in more than a dozen countries, including New Zealand and Israel, and even in a handful of towns in the U.S. state of Maryland. Campaigns to extend the municipal franchise to noncitizen residents are active in San Francisco, New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The formal political participation of all people *living* in Canadian cities, and not simply Canadian *citizens*, may serve not only to satisfy a principle of democratic legitimacy but also to improve the quality of public policy. While landed immigrants already have some opportunities to voice their concerns and offer their opinions, tying those opportunities to a formal vote would improve politicians’ responsiveness to their concerns and opinions. In that case, policy decisions could be made with more and better information about how well certain policies might fare in the neighbourhoods to which they are directed.

In addition, extending the municipal franchise to landed immigrants may serve to increase the speed and depth of newcomers’ integration into Canadian political and social life. To be sure, critics maintain that newcomers should gain political knowledge and develop loyalty to Canada *before* they are allowed to vote. But it may be that the best strategy for successful integration is participation. That is, newcomers may develop the requisite political knowledge and loyalty more quickly if they are allowed to put that knowledge and loyalty to use during election campaigns. Indeed, it is hard to see why newcomers should develop an attachment to political institutions that currently marginalize their voices while demanding their obedience.

Noncitizens live, work, pay taxes and, in some cases, are eligible for compulsory military service in their adopted countries, but they have no right to vote in elections that determine who will write the laws and policies that will shape their chosen communities.



Of course, significant barriers to effective immigrant participation would remain even if the municipal franchise were extended. These include the comparatively lower socio-economic status of newcomers, difficulties with the languages of public deliberation and the stubborn resistance of some citizens to recognizing the legitimate needs and interests of immigrants and new Canadians. Under these conditions, extending the franchise could facilitate a rise in political cynicism among immigrants as they discover that the right to vote does not automatically produce social, political and economic gains.

On the other hand, that may simply be another lesson that those potential citizens

should learn about the reality of political life in Canada. Hopes and expectations must be accompanied by a spirit of compromise and patience. In any case, inclusive political arrangements may offer the best hope we have to overcome those circumstances. Because politicians and policymakers would have to be more responsive to the interests and opinions of enfranchised immigrant residents, chances are that policies would better serve them.

The crucial point is that enfranchised residents can take advantage of the opportunity that democracy offers to fight another day. And that may be just enough to forestall cynicism and, over time, assist immigrants and others in their pursuit of social and political justice.

Stephen Harper, Canadian

A personality at a distance profile

by Neal Carter

Neal Carter is Associate Professor of Political Science at St. Bonaventure University in Olean, NY. The author would like to thank Social Science Automation, Peg Hermann and Azimat Sakiev for their help with Profiler Plus software.

Stephen Harper presents a serious puzzle to students of Canadian politics. Often portrayed as a radically conservative ideologue, his policies on both the domestic and international fronts have been less dogmatic than most observers expected. In his column in the Winter/Spring 2008 issue of *Inroads*, Reg Whitaker referred to Harper as an “enigma” of “hidden depths, concealed agendas, complex contradictions” and listed several contradictory practices and policies.

A good part of the problem lies in his tight control over his organization and, especially, over what gets into the media. In such cases, more indirect methods can prove useful. One such method is the “personality at a distance profile” based on the work of political psychologist Margaret G. Hermann of Syracuse University. I here offer such a profile of Stephen Harper. The technique is used to compare leaders across seven key leadership traits, and is based on a content analysis of accessible data such as transcribed interviews (see box on p. 28). Its main application has been to anticipate how certain leaders are likely to act on the international stage.

Using the data, the analyst develops a profile based on seven traits: self-confidence, conceptual complexity, belief in one’s own ability to control events, need for power, task or affiliation focus, in-group bias and distrust of others. These are then compared with normed data from profiles previously constructed to rank the individual from high to low in a particular trait.

In Harper’s case, the findings (summarized in Table 1) suggest that – to use Whitaker’s terms – the liberal pragmatist has prevailed over the neocon ideologue, at least since 2001.

In comparison with 87 heads of state or government and 122 other political leaders in data aggregated by Hermann, Stephen Harper

places as low-to-moderate in his *belief in his own ability to control events*. We would thus expect him to be somewhat cautious about the issues on which to focus, but willing to take the initiative when an issue is very important to him. Moreover, he should be willing to allow other members of his government to carry out the responsibilities of their portfolios with a moderate amount of interference or supervision. This is complemented by his somewhat surprising low rank in *need for power*. Leaders low in need for power are likely to try to empower others, accept being one among several having influence, and focus on developing a sense of team spirit, shared responsibility and clear goals.

| PERSONALITY TRAIT | 87 HEADS OF STATE/GOVT. | 122 POLITICAL LEADERS | STEPHEN HARPER |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Belief can control events | Mean = .44 Low < .30 High > .58 | Mean = .45 Low < .33 High > .57 | .3597 Leans Low |
| Need for power | Mean = .50 Low < .37 High > .62 | Mean = .50 Low < .38 High > .62 | .2273 Low |
| Self-confidence | Mean = .62 Low < .44 High > .81 | Mean = .57 Low < .34 High > .80 | .5700 Moderate |
| Conceptual complexity | Mean = .44 Low < .32 High > .56 | Mean = .45 Low < .32 High > .58 | .6131 High |
| Task focus | Mean = .59 Low < .46 High > .71 | Mean = .62 Low < .48 High > .76 | .6982 Leans High |
| In-group bias | Mean = .42 Low < .32 High > .53 | Mean = .43 Low < .34 High > .53 | .0645 Low |
| Distrust of others | Mean = .41 Low < .25 High > .56 | Mean = .38 Low < .20 High > .56 | .1392 Low |

Source: adapted from Margaret Hermann, “Assessing Leadership Style: Trait Analysis,” Harper data added

Harper falls in the moderate range for *self-confidence*. Those in the moderate range will make some use of suggestions based on information, but are not likely to be blown hither and thither by every passing breeze of public opinion. Moreover, he scores high on *conceptual complexity*. Those high in this trait tend to see many shades of grey, seek out multiple sources of information and perspectives, and mistrust their first response. This may at times make him appear to be indecisive or to agree with individuals expressing contradictory opinions.

Harper is moderate to high on *task focus*, being somewhat more likely to stress the accomplishment of goals over building in-group loyalty and contentment. He is likely to discount some discontent, but is unlikely to be oblivious to problems that could disrupt his control of the group. Also somewhat surprising, given the general portrayals of Harper,

is his very low score for *in-group bias*, which means that (comparatively speaking) he is less likely to view the world in zero-sum, us-versus-them terms. Those low in this category tend to take into consideration the context in which interactions occur and to adjust in-group and out-group categories accordingly. The tendency to be fairly even-handed when dealing with out-group members has served him well as head of a minority government and in his determination to maintain a strong, friendly relationship with the United States regardless of personal opinions about its leadership.

Finally, Harper also scores low on *distrust of others*. Those low in distrust tend to withhold judgement and allow a pattern of interaction to develop, basing their attitude on the accumulated experience. As a result, Harper is likely to have a fairly optimistic view of the political world and to be generally

A content analysis of interview responses generates a profile of Stephen Harper as a crafty, context-savvy leader. Overall, the profile is more compatible with Harper as liberal pragmatist than as neocon ideologue.

willing to cooperate rather than see the world in dog-eat-dog terms.

Hermann's method then goes on to combine these basic traits to produce profiles of an overall leadership style. If we apply this method to what we have surmised of Stephen Harper, we get what she calls the *reactive* style of leadership. We should thus expect him to be opportunistic, picking and choosing his battles. Sensitive to constituencies and the various political players, he should either respect constraints or be direct and open in his use of power. Seeing the world in terms of opportunities, he will tend to focus on building relationships to take advantage of them. Since he is less prone to see the world in zero-sum terms than many of his counterparts, he will tend to maximize his flexibility of response and to look for institutions where cooperation can garner gains. The softwood lumber dispute and recognition of Quebec's status as a nation come to mind as manifestations of this.

In sum, a content analysis of interview responses using Profiler Plus generates a profile of Stephen Harper as a crafty, context-savvy leader concerned with being informed about the relevant facts and the attitudes, beliefs and capacities of other players, seeking out situations where cooperation can lead to mutual gains. This is not to say that he is unlikely to make enemies: his ideological views and his

reaction to constraints may make him susceptible to too blunt a use of power and lack of subtlety in dealing with others.

Nevertheless, forced to choose, he is likely to place defending a particular set of identity-based principles second to addressing and solving particular problems. And he is capable of switching to the accommodative style when he feels the need to build consensus and empower others.

Overall, the profile is more compatible with Harper as liberal pragmatist than as neocon ideologue. One caveat: it is not possible to specify the extent to which the traits studied here are context-driven, as opposed to deep-set features of the leader's personality. In Harper's case, most of the interviews took place in the context of minority government or the establishment of leadership in a divided party, tasks requiring complex negotiations and balancing demands from different factions. Would Harper's scores change if his party had either no chance of influencing the government or was in solid control of Parliament? Finally, one cannot help speculating that it is just possible that many of these traits are typical of Canadians generally, so that if the comparison were drawn with only Canadian political leaders, his profile might be quite different. But that is for another day.

Constructing a personality at a distance profile

The profile was developed from about 75 responses of at least 100 words in interviews with Stephen Harper in Alberta Report, CBC News, CTV News and Reader's Digest between December 2001 and December 2006. The responses were analyzed using the Profiler Plus content analysis computer program developed by Margaret Hermann. (The analysis requires a minimum of 50 such responses.) The system examines the relative frequency of a number of words or phrases that are linked to the seven leadership traits.

These configurations are then compared to the overall configurations derived from profiles of 87 heads of state or government and 122 other political leaders. The overall list of names is confidential, but a few Canadian prime ministers are included, as are several American presidents. The rest are drawn from leaders in many countries covering a wide range of cultures. Hermann's article "Assessing Leadership Style: Trait Analysis," in Jerrold M. Post, ed., *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp. 178–212, provides a good overview of this method.

Politically correct and lovin' it

by Willa Marcus

Willa Marcus, a former CBC producer, now practises law in Toronto.

One of my first jobs in journalism, back in the 1970s, was as researcher on CBC radio's *Cross Country Checkup*, the national phone-in show. Generally it was serious political stuff, but around April Fool's Day we decided to go light. In the era before the top ten list, we hit on a novel idea: plumb callers for Canada's best jokes.

Because the rules governing radio required it, the program was broadcast on a seven-second delay, a safety valve to excise that which should not be broadcast. On this occasion, we used that heavy, whirling delay mechanism over and over. As the technician deftly pulled the tape so we went to dead air (the biggest no-no in radio), I kept muttering, "Another dirty joke, without the joke." It turned out that for many callers, Canada's best joke involved either a Newfoundlander or a French Canadian along with the back end of female livestock. The cynic in me says they stuck to these tried-and-true themes because there were too few visible minorities in Canada at the time, too few gays out of the closet, for jokes honed over generations to have incorporated them.

People still tell the same kinds of jokes. The biggest difference is that today there's often the preface, "I know it's not politically correct, but ..." It doesn't make the jokes any better. I still think that the mix of minorities (or gays or women or the disabled) with scatology is about as funny as the mix of alcohol with cars. Yes, I'm politically correct, and to borrow from the burger chain with the Scottish name, I'm lovin' it.

In today's world, seeking equality is the frontline of democracy. We've moved beyond the crucial democratic precept that the majority, not a self-chosen elite or a dictator, must rule. In addition to majority rule through free and fair elections, Western democracy has embraced the idea that equality for everyone, especially marginalized groups and minorities, is key to democracy.

Our own founding father who lent his Scottish name to the burger chain waxed eloquent about minority rights. "The test of a democracy is how it treats its minorities," Sir John A. Macdonald is said to have quipped. "And the rich are always fewer in number than the poor."

On this matter we *have* come some distance in 140 years: minority rights are no joke today. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 through the Canadian Charter of Rights in 1982 and the 1996 Constitution of South Africa to the 2006 Fundamental Rights of the European Union, rights-based documents with significant equality provisions have become enmeshed in modern law. Even the 200-plus-year-old American Bill of Rights, one of the granddaddies of the genre, has seen renewed vigour over the last half

century, and it's not because of Viagra. Rather, it's because more and more, movements of the marginalized assert equality rights under such documents, combining social activism with legal action.

It's the correct thing, politically. And if saying so makes me a strident scold from the fire-and-brimstone brigade, then pass me my asbestos bucket. But why does the admission of political correctness put me in line to shoulder a Fox-News show's worth of pejorative attributes, while an assertion of political incorrectness would put me in line to, well, be considered as a guest on the same show?

For one thing, "politically correct" as a term has the odour of extremism, a whiff of Mao's Little Red Book and the Cultural Revolution. It evokes the "It's our position or the Inquisition" approach. And that's the point. It's designed precisely to put people like me on the defensive. It was popularized in the 1990s, primarily by those distressed by demands for equality in relation to ethnicity, race, gender and sexual orientation. Whether the issue was

Why does the admission of political correctness put me in line to shoulder a Fox-News show's worth of pejorative attributes, while an assertion of political incorrectness would put me in line to, well, be considered as a guest on the same show?

gender-neutral language, affirmative action or Mounties wearing turbans, one side would accuse the other of being “politically correct.”

The “politically incorrect” portray themselves as buffeted by the excesses of movements for equality. In their telling, we’ve done what we had to do. You no longer see signs that say “No Jews” or “Whites Only.” But dammit if the demands don’t just keep on coming. So when I hear comments prefaced as “politically incorrect,” I take it as a warning that the speaker is about to tell us that equality is a good ideal that has been achieved, and demands today are out of control.

But democracy is not static. And as it advances, its issues become more complex. Even majority rule through free and fair elections is not so simple. Proportional representation (an issue extensively debated in Inroads) adds a big wallop of complexity to simple, traditional first-past-the-post. But because it suggests a bigger wallop of fairness that would enhance majority rule, it merits our attention.

So it is with today’s frontier of democracy: equality. Thirty years ago, suggesting that two men or two women should be able to marry would have only engendered laughter. Twenty years ago, it had started to engender scorn and anger. Today’s commonplace same-sex wedding is more than an advance for gays. It’s democracy moving forward.

Last fall, it was Elections Canada’s turn to be plastered with the epithet of political correctness. The issue was head coverings and voting.

If you’ve voted in a Canadian federal election, you’ve never been required to show photo ID. I’ve only been asked for ID of any

kind when I didn’t have the voter card sent to me in the mail.

That’s now changed.

Voter ID laws are a post-2000 American presidential election thrust, extruded through post-9/11 security. There is no evidence in the United States suggesting a problem with voter impersonation, and the irregularities in Florida in the 2000 presidential election had other explanations. But several states have enacted laws requiring government-issued photo ID at the polls. Critics say these laws further marginalize the marginalized, who are least likely to have driver’s licences, passports or the like.

In Canada, too, there is no evidence that voter fraud is anything but very rare. Still, swept up in the prevailing logic of election security, Parliament last year, with no controversy, passed a voter ID law. It requires every voter to show one piece of government-issued photo ID or two pieces of non-photo ID, or else to swear an oath and be vouched for by another voter.

At a press conference related to byelections last fall, the first votes after Parliament changed the regulations, the new stew of rules got mixed with the hot sauce of fear that Canada is being overrun by Muslims. A journalist asked an Elections Canada official whether people with covered faces could vote. The answer was that there is no rule against it. The brave elections official went further, stating that the rules were up to Parliament; his job was to implement the law to promote free and fair elections that are as accessible as possible to all voters. Later, he refused to use his emergency power to invoke a no-covered-faces rule on grounds that there was no emergency.

Although we identify one another by our full faces, if both Julia Roberts and I were wrapped up head to toe, you’d still be able to tell us apart – unfortunately for her.

These were the comments that set off a firestorm of “political correctness” invective. Prime Minister Harper castigated Elections Canada, stating that Parliament had passed a law intended to require visual voter identification – even if that’s not what the law said. And here was an elections official more focused on making it easy for everyone to vote than in securing the ballot boxes against a problem that didn’t exist.

Don’t misunderstand me. Confidence in the fairness of elections is very important. So it’s legitimate to discuss what ID voters should present. We recognize one another by our full faces, so government-issued photo identification might be the answer.

But that can’t be the end of the discussion. First, there’s the issue of who doesn’t have government photo ID and the importance of bringing the maximum number to the polls. Second, there had been no demand by Muslim women to vote covered up (during the controversy a representative of a Muslim group said Muslim women are always willing to show their faces when asked, whether at the border or at the bank). Third, although we identify one another by our full faces, if both Julia Roberts and I were wrapped up head to toe, you’d still be able to tell us apart – unfortunately for her.

Okay, maybe that last argument is a bit rich for your – or Julia Roberts’s – taste. But it doesn’t really matter how many arguments

I present, or how valid they are. Because this swirl wasn’t about the legitimate debate of what is appropriate as identification at polling booths (the answer to which might be photo ID). Instead, this was a platform to attack the “special” privileges allegedly demanded by Muslims, and to imply that their clothing options (and their presence too?) are attempts to undermine democracy.

Convinced that it hadn’t gone far enough to solve the problem that didn’t exist, the government is currently stickhandling new legislation through Parliament to require all voters to present themselves with heads uncovered. You’ll still be able to vote with two pieces of non-photo ID – otherwise too many people would be denied their right to vote. So, as one commentator said, all the new law will do is make you prove that you have a face. That is, unless you are ill, in which case you’ll be able to keep your face covered for health reasons. As there are no reports of voter fraud on any scale to begin with, it’s hard to conclude that the ill are less likely to perpetrate voter impersonation than Muslim women. But the Muslims are precisely the point here, aren’t they? And our government seems to be proud of kicking some good old-fashioned political incorrectness into that patsy of political correctness, Elections Canada.

I say, good for Elections Canada. They’re politically correct and I’m lovin’ it.

Dr. Dion, or

How I learned to stop worrying and love Minority Government

by Henry Milner

Henry Milner is co-publisher of Inroads.

When the Liberals announced that they would not vote down the 2008 budget, *Globe and Mail* columnist Jeffrey Simpson wrote, “The recent, silly, occasionally frenzied speculation about an election will end, for which Canadians can only be grateful.” Indeed we were grateful, but exactly who was doing the silly, frenzied speculating? The answer is of course obvious.

Exhibit A: The February 6, 2008, *Globe and Mail* announced, “It has been two years to the day since Stephen Harper and his Conservative cabinet formally took office,” and invited readers to “join *Globe* Columnist Jeffrey Simpson online.” The subject? Not what the government had or hadn’t accomplished but “How has Harper managed to survive? ... How is [the government] doing in its neverending quest to position itself for a majority government after the next election?” Below was a story about the aid program to help economically depressed regions. The headline: “Aid package could forestall election.”

Exhibit B: The next day in *La Presse*, our other “paper of record,” Ottawa correspondent Joel-Denis Bellavance’s story

Minority governments are no longer an aberration. They have become standard fare, the result of an important change in Canada’s political makeup. It’s time our political class took notice.

began, “After almost two years as head of a minority government, Stephen Harper *is burning with desire* to go into an election campaign.” Opposite was Vincent Marissal’s column entitled “Five good reasons for a spring election” (author’s translation and emphasis).

Articles like these, full of silly, frenzied speculation about an imminent election, are ubiquitous. Politicians cooperating to pass bills or organize debates are not newsworthy, but any statement that can fuel speculation about the government falling is page-one material – the political variant of “if it bleeds, it leads.” And yet, in this case, reporters’ and columnists’ prophecies were not self-fulfilling: the inevitable election turned out not to be.

The institutional context in which Canadian politics takes place has changed, in a way that makes it perfectly reasonable for the opposition not to vote nonconfidence on a budget it does not agree with. But our pundits and reporters have failed to notice the change. When it came to the budget, the main reaction was one of scorn for Stéphane Dion’s cowardice or hypocrisy. Fortunately for Dion, the Cadman and Obama/NAFTA affairs got him off the hot seat. But the reality is that, given our minority government situation, he should never have been there in the first place.

Minority Government

To put it simply, we no longer have minority governments; we have Minority Government. Minority governments are no longer an aberration. They have become standard fare, the result of an important change in Canada’s political makeup that has not received the attention it deserves.

We had minority governments in Ottawa in 1957–58, 1972–74 and 1979–80, and everyone reasonably expected that the next election would return a majority government. Both our political practice and our political culture were majoritarian. A normal government consisted of one party holding more than half the seats and calling all the shots. The noise may have been on the Commons floor, but decisions were taken behind the closed doors of majority party cabinets and caucuses. Confidence motions and budget denunciations were part of the opposition’s game and were not intended to defeat the government. Rather, the opposition was trying to strengthen its position for the next election, which would take place three to five years after the last, on a day of the prime minister’s choosing.

There was one exceptional period: in 1962, 1963 and 1965, the Cr ditistes won enough seats in rural and small-town Quebec to deny

A normal government consisted of one party holding more than half the seats and calling all the shots. The noise may have been on the Commons floor, but decisions were taken behind the closed doors of majority party cabinets and caucuses.

the Liberals their expected majorities. The Cr ditiste episode showed that even before the rise of the sovereigntist movement, Quebecers in large numbers were prepared to vote for a home-based third party with no chance of forming a government. But the Cr ditistes, with their protests against modernization, were doomed, and the restoration of the majority system was inevitable. Such is not the case with the Bloc Qu b cois, with which Quebec voters sympathetic to sovereignty have found a separate and durable home in federal politics since 1993.

The rise of the Bloc Qu b cois fundamentally transformed Canadian federal politics by making minority government the norm. However, that transformation was masked by another dramatic event: the disintegration of the Progressive Conservatives. With the resulting split of the centre-right vote between Reform and what remained of the Conservatives, the Liberals under Jean Chr tien were able to win three successive majorities. But when the centre-right reunited, the mask was stripped away and the new reality became – or should have become – apparent. With two major parties, and with the Bloc entrenched in roughly half of Quebec’s seats, Minority Government replaced Majority Government as the normal state of affairs.

It’s now 15 years since the rise of the Bloc. That should have been enough time for our journalists and pundits to have noticed that we have an underlying partisan cleavage that makes minority government more likely than not. Confirmation can be found, if anyone still needs it, in the fact that its support has held up even though memory of the sponsorship scandal, which the Bloc effectively played on in the last election, has faded.

But to judge from the way they cover the current Parliament, our correspondents and pundits see a minority government rather than Minority Government, expecting the parties to act as they did when minority governments were short-lived exceptions. They take for granted that this minority government will be short-lived, and they interpret party behaviour in that context. But the logic has changed. Leaders and, especially, ordinary MPs know that provoking an election will most likely not result in the sought-after majority government. Instead, there will be yet another minority Parliament: overall party strength will have changed little, but a bunch of incumbents will have lost their seats.

The MPs’ reticence is reinforced every time they go out among their constituents. Ordinary citizens do not want an election. This is not simply a matter of acknowledging the inevitable – Canadians actually seem to like

the idea of minority government. For example, on January 28, the Toronto Star reported a poll the Canadian Press commissioned from Harris/Decima that asked 1,000 respondents to choose the kind of split they would like to see in a hypothetical Parliament of 100 seats. Projecting those percentages to the 308 House of Commons seats, the Liberals would end up with 111 seats, the Tories 95, the NDP 46, the Bloc 31 and the Greens 25. In a later, similar CP poll, “54 per cent said a Conservative minority would be acceptable, 49 per cent said a Tory majority would be acceptable. The results were almost identical for Liberals: 59 per cent said a Liberal minority would be acceptable while 50 per cent said a Liberal majority would be fine.” Canadians like the idea of not giving all the power to one party, especially the Conservatives, and they like the idea of parties cooperating to arrive at compromises.

A similar phenomenon has occurred provincially in Quebec, which in March 2007 elected its first minority government in well over a century. In a March 2008 CROP–La Presse poll, 66 per cent of respondents agreed with the proposition that election of a minority government had served the interests of the population. Almost as high a proportion – 61 per cent – expressed their approval of Premier Jean Charest’s government, the highest approval rating for any Quebec government in the last 20 years.

This is a message quite different from what the politicians have been hearing from journalists and pundits in Ottawa. But we should keep in mind that most Canadians are not paying attention to them. According to my own research, fewer than half report watching the

TV news or reading a newspaper on a given day; that number falls to 40 per cent for 15- to 25-year-olds.

There is additional indirect evidence of Canadian appreciation for minority government in the changed strategy of opponents of proportional representation. In the days of Majority Government, simply invoking fears of the minority governments that more proportional electoral systems would engender was an effective tactic. But in the campaign to block the Citizens’ Assembly’s proposal to change the voting system in Ontario’s fall 2007 referendum, such efforts fell flat. The anti-reform editorials and op-eds increasingly (and, alas, effectively) relied on arguments evoking fears of unelected hacks from party lists sneaking into the legislature.



In March 2007, Jean Charest barely won enough seats to form Quebec’s first minority government in well over a century. It now has the highest approval rating of any Quebec government in the past 20 years.

Fixed voting dates

Another element has recently been added to the equation. Soon after taking power, the Harper government introduced a bill to fix voting dates, as promised during the election. After being delayed by Liberals in the Senate, the fixed election date bill received Royal Assent and came into force on May 3, 2007. Each federal election will now take place on the third Monday in October, four years after the previous general election. Our next election is scheduled for October 19, 2009.

To its credit, the government thus lived up to its election platform commitment despite finding itself in a minority position. Fixed election dates confirm in law the basic principle that elections belong to the voters: election day is the day they can express themselves on how they are to be governed. Allowing the governing party to call elections when it sees fit is unjustifiable, and confirms to a population already cynical about politics that elections

are there for politicians to manipulate in their own interests.

As Table 1 shows, fixed election dates have been adopted or are being considered in almost every province. In Quebec, the Director General of Elections made such a call in his report in December 2007. Even in Alberta it has been proposed by the opposition, though so far given short shrift by the governing Tories. Clearly there is a widespread understanding among political leaders that something must be done to reduce the democratic deficit.

This is a major reform, one would say. Yet how many people reading this article know about it? It comes as news even to well-informed citizens because the bill received very little media attention, likely because the very idea that a minority government could last out its term was unthinkable. Of course, technically, an election call can come any day, since a clause in the act states, “Nothing in this section affects the powers of the Governor General, including the power to dissolve Parliament at

Fixed election dates confirm in law the basic principle that elections belong to the voters: election day is the day they can express themselves on how they are to be governed. Allowing the governing party to call elections when it sees fit is unjustifiable.

the Governor General’s discretion.” But it is clear that this clause is meant to be invoked when the government is defeated on a confidence motion.

Harper knew all this when he presented the bill. He didn’t have to do so: public opinion was not mobilized behind it, nor were the other parties demanding it. While he and his ministers have been happy to take partisan advantage of the fact that the onus falls on the opposition to bring down the government, the record, overall, is of a governing party trying to govern as a minority.

The only group with a neverending, burning desire to force an election, it would appear, are our pundits and reporters. Indeed, passage of the law appears to have had no effect on election speculation. No one seems to have asked why a government “burning with desire to go into an election” as part of a “neverending quest to position itself for a majority government” would spend political capital on a law that removes its power to select the election date.

The role of opposition parties

What about the other parties? Were existence of the fixed election date act common knowledge, it would place the onus for forcing a new election more firmly on their shoulders. For the Bloc and the NDP, it is not seen as their decision to make, and they will thus not bear the blame – especially within their own relatively narrow constituencies.

The Liberals have had the hardest time amid the frenzied speculation, with their leader’s masculinity in effect being impugned by the other parties and by cartoonists. One can sympathize with the feelings expressed by one Liberal MP as quoted in *Le Devoir* (February 8): “We’re sick of being presented as unprincipled cowards.” As a political scientist, Dr. Dion could have tried to make the obvious point that while in a majority government situation a nonconfidence vote is pure ritual and thus always invoked by the opposition however trivial its criticism of a budget, it is perfectly reasonable to separate the two when passage of such a motion brings on an unwanted election. But admittedly, this would not have been easy given both Dion’s egghead image and the tone of attacks from other parties, as gleefully reported in bold headlines in the media.

Dion’s Liberals could have avoided placing themselves in this position if they had publicly welcomed the fixed election date act as an important democratic step when it was discussed early in the current term.¹ They would thus have clearly signalled their expectation that only under extreme circumstances would they be responsible for forcing an election. This

TABLE 1: FIXED ELECTION DATES IN CANADIAN PROVINCES

| PASSED | CONSTITUENCY | FIXED ELECTION DATE | 1ST USED |
|------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| 2001 | British Columbia | 2nd Tuesday in May every 4 years | 2005 |
| 2004 | Ontario | 1st Thursday in October every 4 years | 2007 |
| 2004 | Nfld & Labrador | 2nd Tuesday in October every 4 years | 2007 |
| 2006 | Northwest Territories | 1st Monday in October every 4 years | 2007 |
| 2007 | New Brunswick | 4th Monday in September every 4 years | 2010 |
| Pending | Prince Edward Island | 2nd Monday in May every 4 years | 2011 |
| Uncertain | Manitoba | 2nd Tuesday in May every 4 years | 2011 |
| Introduced | Saskatchewan | 1st Monday in November every 4 years | 2011 |
| Introduced | Nova Scotia | 2nd Tuesday in October every 4 years | 2010 |

Adapted from data at Nodice Elections, “Fixed Election Dates in Canada,” retrieved April 24, 2008, from <http://www.nodice.ca/elections/fixedelections.php>

would have changed the context significantly, and they would have had less trouble taking credit for an honourable compromise on Afghanistan and explaining that their criticisms of the budget did not justify laying aside the important principle that when an election takes place is not something politicians should manipulate for partisan purposes.

Taking this “what if?” scenario a bit further, the Liberals could have indicated an

openness to an understanding with the NDP and the Greens for the 2009 election, not merely to avoid splitting the vote, but to have a government representative of the largest voting bloc: those on the centre-left of the political spectrum. As Table 2 shows, when it comes to key values, there are two political cultures in Parliament: the Tories and everyone else. The Liberals might have learned from the reaction to Dion’s decision not to oppose Green Party

TABLE 2: THE TWO POLITICAL CULTURES

A survey of candidates in the 2004 election revealed the existence of two political cultures in Parliament with the Conservatives representing one culture and the other parties to varying degrees representing the other. The response rate for the survey was about 50 per cent. Here are some results.

| IS UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND VISIBLE MINORITIES IN THE COMMONS A SERIOUS PROBLEM? | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| | A SERIOUS OR VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM (%) | NOT A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM OR NOT A PROBLEM AT ALL (%) |
| UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN | | |
| Conservative | 25 | 74 |
| Liberal | 57 | 43 |
| Bloc | 62 | 38 |
| NDP | 83 | 18 |
| Green | 81 | 20 |
| UNDERREPRESENTATION OF VISIBLE MINORITIES | | |
| Conservative | 20 | 80 |
| Liberal | 45 | 56 |
| Bloc | 65 | 35 |
| NDP | 84 | 16 |
| Green | 74 | 27 |
| WHO SHOULD HAVE THE FINAL SAY ON THE CONSTITUTION, PARLIAMENT OR THE COURTS? | | |
| | PARLIAMENT (%) | COURTS (%) |
| Conservative | 86 | 14 |
| Liberal | 40 | 60 |
| Bloc | 48 | 52 |
| NDP | 22 | 78 |
| Green | 19 | 81 |

Adapted from Jerome H. Black and Bruce M. Hicks, “The Views of Candidates: Preliminary Excerpts from the 2004 Canadian Candidate Survey.”

leader Elizabeth May in her effort to win the Nova Scotia seat currently held by Tory deputy leader Peter MacKay. While their local members grumbled, public opinion generally welcomed the agreement. There could even have been a Liberal-NDP-Green agreement to reform our electoral system to make it more compatible with interparty cooperation.

Minority governments are stable in Europe because of fixed election dates and proportional electoral systems that encourage cooperation through formal and informal coalitions. In our scenario of a less frenzied climate induced by fixed election dates, Canadian party leaders might have said: if we are going to have minority governments anyway, we might as well have stable ones based on cooperative alliances produced under PR.

Unfortunately, the opportunity presented by fixed election dates for developing a political culture compatible with Minority Government (and we should always keep in mind that a government with more than half the seats put into office by the ballots of only 40 per cent of voters is still, in essence, a minority government) was missed. And so Ottawa remains trapped in a majoritarian political culture with little resonance among the people. This is best illustrated by the recurrent show of New Democrats smugly contrasting their own “courage” with the cowardice of the Liberals. The display is music to the ears of the Tories in the House, but judging by the poor NDP showing in the March 17 byelections, it falls on the deaf ears of the voters.

A rational political climate can exist only if those who interpret politics in the media let it. I end with a plea to our pundits and

The Liberals could have indicated an openness to an understanding with the NDP and the Greens for the 2009 election, not merely to avoid splitting the vote, but to have a government representative of the largest voting bloc: those on the centre-left.

correspondents. We have a stable minority government, by and large; Canadians welcome it and the politicians have come to terms with it. When you explain the choices that parties and political actors make, leave room for the possibility that they may have something to do with living up to the voters’ expectation of a well-functioning government. Don’t simply assume they are nothing more than tactics in a never-ending quest for majority government. Things are different in an institutional context of Minority Government and fixed election dates. It’s time you noticed.

Note

¹ I set out the reasons for adopting this reform – set in comparative context – in a paper published at the outset of the debate in December 2005 by the Institute for Research in Public Policy (*Fixing Canada’s Unfixed Election Dates: A Political Season to Reduce the Democratic Deficit*, IRPP Policy Matters, Vol. 6, No. 6, retrieved April 24, 2008, from <http://www.irpp.org/fasttrak/index.htm>).