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Ensemble et libres Together and free

# THE MÉTROPOLITAIN

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THE BILINGUAL JOURNAL OF REFLECTION, OPINION AND THE ARTS • LE JOURNAL BILINGUE DE RÉFLEXION, D'OPINIONS ET DES ARTS

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PHOTO JOHN MAHONEY / COURTESY OF THE GAZETTE

## Peuple québécois, puis-je compter sur ta solidarité?

**Djemila Benhabib**

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**V**ous avez été très nombreux, à travers tout le Québec et même au-delà, à me témoigner votre appui dès la parution de mon livre *Ma vie à contre-Coran*, une femme témoigne sur les islamistes pour saluer mon courage et ma détermination face à mon combat contre l'hydre islamiste et ses tentacules. J'ai rencontré plusieurs d'entre vous, d'un bout à l'autre du Québec, pour partager mes réflexions et mes aspirations. Je parcours des milliers de kilomètres pour honorer vos invitations et échanger de grands et de petits moments de bonheur. Au fil du temps, une proximité s'est installée entre vous et moi. Est-ce pour cela qu'aujourd'hui, j'ai envie de vous interpeller directement pour partager avec vous mes terribles inquiétudes? C'est fort probable. Des inquiétudes qui me rongent l'esprit. Des inquiétudes qui me tiennent éveillées des nuits entières. Des inquiétudes qui obscurcissent des

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## ASSEZ, C'EST ASSEZ!

**Enlevons les « ombrages » du gouvernement**

**1.8 million Montrealers, 1.6 million tickets**

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**I**l y a un contrat social entre les gouverneurs et les gouvernés. Nous le peuple acceptons d'abandonner une partie de nos libertés et de notre trésor en échange de prestation de services qui rendent nos vies meilleures. Des services que même le plus fort parmi nous ne pourrait pas se fournir à soi-même. Quand nous sommes sortis des jungles et des forêts et avons créé des habitats, nous nous sommes rendus compte qu'en repoussant les loups ensemble, nous aurions le time de vivre. Pour grandir. Pour aimer. Pour engager nos passions et nos poésies et réaliser la pleine capacité de notre individualité.

Throughout history however, our governors too often turn out to be

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**T**his year, Montreal will issue one traffic ticket for almost every man, woman and child in the city - and that, believe it or not, is a conservative estimate based on information from the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal. Most people aren't aware of it, or if they are, they accept the ticketing as fair punishment for bad behaviour. If so many of us are breaking the law on such a regular basis, it begs the question: Are we guilty of delinquent behaviour, or are we victims of municipal persecution?

The police department was kind enough to direct The Métropolitain to its website, where we were taken aback by last year's statistics. In

Continued on page 6

## Un bâillon contre la liberté d'expression au Québec

**U**ne poursuite-bâillon est une poursuite stratégique contre la mobilisation publique. C'est un nouvel instrument insidieux qui est de plus en plus utilisé en Amérique du Nord. Utilisé par des gouvernements à tous les niveaux, ça essaye d'écraser colère publique sous la menace de poursuites diffamatoires.

Le 26 mars 2010, la Cour d'appel du Québec a renversé une injonction interlocutoire, rédigée de

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**L'HISTOIRE D'AMAL**

« Tout ce que je veux savoir c'est pourquoi? »

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Daycare debate

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## MILLES MOTS • THOUSAND WORDS

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13,000 Montrealers took part in the 62nd Israel Independence Day rally on Tuesday, April 20.

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LA PATRIE

LE BUDGET QUÉBÉCOIS ET SES CONSÉQUENCES

## La triste réalité

La popularité du gouvernement est au plus bas. Il y a à cela d'excellentes raisons. Il y en a de très mauvaises. Parmi ces dernières, en voici une qui saute aux yeux : le dernier budget du ministre Bachand. Les Québécois sont décidément incapables de voir la réalité en face.

Tant qu'à se faire honnir par 80 % de la population, pourquoi Jean Charest n'a-t-il pas visé plus haut ? Aurait-il provoqué plus de grogne s'il avait appliqué dès maintenant une mesure qui deviendra bientôt nécessaire, c'est-à-dire la hausse des frais de garderie dans les CPE ? Le gouvernement serait désapprouvé par 95% des Québécois que ça changerait quoi à la situation ? Il n'y aura d'élections que dans trois ans à ce que je sache ! À propos... si en remettant à plus tard l'augmentation des frais de garderie afin de ménager en 2010 cette fraction de l'électorat qui est constituée de jeunes familles le gouvernement croyait assurer sa réélection en 2013 ou 2014, il s'est fourré le doigt dans l'oeil jusqu'au coude. Jean Charest se met la population à dos quand il prend de mauvaises décisions, il aggrave son cas quand il en prend de bonnes.

Bien sûr, à part cette inexplicable reculade quant aux frais de garderie, le budget comporte des mesures contestables : l'impôt sur la santé applicable à tous les contribuables et le projet de ticket modérateur. Cela dit, les doutes les plus légitimes portent sur la promesse du gouvernement de resserrer sa gestion des finances publiques. À cet égard il est certes permis d'être sceptique. Supposons néanmoins que le gouvernement puisse atteindre ses objectifs. Qui paiera la note ? Réponse : les employés de la fonction publique. Veuillez m'en croire, je suis loin de m'en réjouir. Les fonctionnaires québécois ne sont pas des « gras durs ». Des procureurs de la couronne jusqu'aux ingénieurs en passant par les pharmaciens et les concierges, les employés de l'État québécois sont moins bien traités que leurs confrères des autres provinces. On a beaucoup parlé du sort des infirmières, je m'attarderai sur celui des enseignants.

Le salaire à l'embauche d'un enseignant québécois était de 39179 \$ en septembre 2009. Après cinq ans, un enseignant

gagne 48213 \$. Il lui faut quinze ans pour atteindre le plafond salarial, qui est de 70 352 dollars. À titre de comparaison, au Nouveau-Brunswick un débutant gagne 45511 \$, en Ontario 47826 \$. Dans ces deux provinces le plafond salarial est respectivement de 70180 et de 84470 dollars. L'État des finances publiques étant ce qu'il est, sera-t-il possible de hausser le salaire des enseignants québécois de manière à ce qu'ils rejoignent la moyenne canadienne ?

La réponse est non. Les enseignants, qui ont déjà vu leur pouvoir d'achat diminuer de 5% depuis 1999, ne peuvent compter sur aucun rattrapage, à fortiori sur aucune amélioration.

On ne peut comparer le travail effectué par un chauffeur d'autobus à la tâche d'un enseignant. Les deux métiers sont aussi respectables l'un que l'autre. Mais notons quand même qu'à la STM un chauffeur gagne à l'embauche environ 10000 \$ de plus qu'un enseignant et qu'il atteint le maximum salarial en 5 ans. Ce maximum est certes inférieur à celui d'un enseignant, mais il est de notoriété publique que de très nombreux chauffeurs gagnent plus de 100000 \$ en effectuant des heures supplémentaires. Les enseignants québécois pourraient-ils gagner davantage en prolongeant leurs heures de travail ou en abrégant leurs vacances ?

La réponse est non. Les heures supplémentaires des enseignants sont bien réelles, mais difficilement mesurables, car le plus souvent effectuées à la maison. Et qu'on se le dise, aucun enseignant ne pourrait échapper à l'épuisement si ses vacances étaient écourtées. J'en sais quelque chose, j'ai enseigné à l'école primaire pendant 33 ans. Abréger les vacances des enseignants (même en augmentant les salaires en proportion) aurait pour première conséquence de provoquer la démission de la moitié d'entre eux.

La question des salaires étant réglée, les enseignants québécois peuvent-ils espérer que leurs conditions de travail seront améliorées ? À la fin du dernier conseil général de son parti Jean Charest a déclaré qu'il entendait « revoir la question

À propos... si en remettant à plus tard l'augmentation des frais de garderie afin de ménager en 2010 cette fraction de l'électorat qui est constituée de jeunes familles le gouvernement croyait assurer sa réélection en 2013 ou 2014, il s'est fourré le doigt dans l'oeil jusqu'au coude.

de l'intégration des élèves en difficultés ». On le sait, les politiques d'intégration des élèves en difficultés n'ont jamais eu pour objectif d'offrir aux élèves québécois de meilleurs services. En fait, le sabotage des « classes spéciales » visait un seul but : la réduction des coûts. Les résultats sont désastreux. Il y aurait bien des histoires d'horreur à raconter. « On va chercher les meilleures solutions possibles », a dit le premier ministre. Le problème, c'est que ces solutions ne doivent rien coûter.

Les enseignants québécois ont raison de se plaindre. Ils pourront continuer, le gouvernement du Québec n'a rien à leur offrir. Telle est la triste réalité.

...si le Gouvernement nous protège de tout,  
qui donc nous protège du gouvernement ?

...if the Government protects us from everything  
else, then who protects us from the government?

Citoyens Anti Gouvernement Envahissant

CAGE

Citizens Against Government Encroachment

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### L'HISTOIRE D'AMAL

# « Tout ce que je veux savoir c'est pourquoi? »

Le nom arabe Amal signifie trois choses. L'espoir, l'anticipation, et l'aspiration. Ces trois mots sont une bonne synthèse de ce qu'une résidente de Pointe Claire et étudiante à l'Université Concordia en relations humaines et psychologie Amal Asmar ose rêver ces jours-ci après que la police l'ait harcelée, malmenée et laissée avec quelques 1 000\$ en amendes. Elle espère pour la justice; anticipe des excuses et aspire à une réponse à sa demande sincère de : « tous ce que je veux savoir c'est pourquoi? ». Alors qu'elle achève ses études et continue sa recherche pour un emploi, les cicatrices mentales qu'elle a toujours l'obligent à maintenir ce rêve vivant. Ses « crimes ? ». Être assise sur un banc devant la Plaza Alexis Nihon avec sa sacoche sur le banc et crier quand les policiers l'ont tordu les bras et les poignets alors qu'ils lui ont dépêchés dans leur voiture parce qu'elle criait. Elle suspecte qu'il pourrait y avoir un autre « crime »: qu'elle avait la mauvaise apparence, au mauvais endroit, au mauvais moment.

Amal, born and raised in Montreal, is perfectly bilingual with no trace of an accent in English or French. She loves to walk her beloved Black Lab Freddy in the parks of Pointe Claire where she often waves to public security officers who ask if all is well when she is out at night. She happens to be of Palestinian origin. Her parents came to Canada from Ramallah seeking a peaceful life. Her tan complexion and piercing dark eyes are framed by black hair worn in long, natural curls. She could be from any Mediterranean country. But, she sports one other distinguishing feature, a keffiyeh — or Arabic scarf. She wears it around her neck as a scarf — not a head dress — out of cultural affinity, not political posturing. In winter, she will pull up part of it around her nose and mouth when there is a strong wind or icy frost as many of us do with our scarves in the cold. And that's what she suspects may have caught the attention of two police officers on a cold February night. Amal spent the evening of Wednesday, Feb. 3 of this year studying in Concordia's Webster Library for an important exam the

next day. She has to study late because she holds down a part-time job as a companion and caregiver to an elderly Jewish man — a member of what Amal describes as a very “caring” family — who suffers from a psychological disorder. Before she knew it, it was way past midnight Thursday morning Feb. 4. Instead of going home to Pointe Claire, she decided to walk to a friend's place in lower Westmount, sleep there and get to school early for the exam. It was a cold night, but dry as most of this past winter has been. By the time she had walked from Guy and St. Catherine to Atwater, she was a bit tired and decided to sit down on that now famous bench in front of Alexis Nihon Plaza. She pulled her school bag up onto the bench to look for gloves and left a white plastic grocery sack containing Tupperware and apple juice on the ground in front of her.

She was dressed in casual student attire with dark blue jogging pants, running shoes, a black-and-white ski jacket and a beige ski knit hat. She also wore her keffiyeh... pulled up over her nose and mouth against the cold. As Amal was looking through her agenda for a moment, she noticed that a police cruiser from Westmount's Station 12 had pulled up. The cruiser had two officers inside. Their names were Champoux and McIntyre.

Les policiers ont commencé à l'interroger à l'intérieur de leur voiture. On a demandé en premier à Amal s'il y avait un problème. Elle a répondu que « non ». Ils l'ont alors demandé ce qu'elle faisait là et elle a répondu qu'elle s'était assise simplement pour se reposer et pour chercher quelque chose. Ils l'ont par la suite demandé à voir une pièce d'identification. À ce moment, Amal a demandé, « pourquoi, ai-je fait quelque chose de mal? ».

Amal says it was at that point that — without answering — the officers got out of the cruiser, walked over and each stood inches from her on either side. She felt intimidated by their posture and demeanor. They told her that the way she was using the bench was against the law. She asked them what they meant. They answered that a public bench is not a



place for placing bags.

Amal then asked what law prohibited her from doing so, since the answer was completely stupefying. Amal says that they again refused to answer and instead told her to stand up because she was being “arrested.” She asked to see their badges. They replied “You watch too much Law and Order, we're not obliged to show you that.”

Before she could respond, the officers grabbed her and physically removed her from the bench to the cruiser. Amal describes that each one took one of her arms and wrists, twisted them, shoved her against the front hood passenger side of the cruiser with her face against the hood. One of the officer's hands was around the back of her neck squeezing hard and applying pressure against the spine. The entire time, they each held one arm and continued to twist Amal's arms and wrists. Amal says she was desperately trying to pull up her head to scream, hoping to attract someone's attention. The officers then put metal handcuffs on her. Amal continued to yell as she was scared and in excruciating pain. The officers told her to stop yelling. She answered that they were hurting her. They said that they would not stop until she stopped screaming. The officers then frisked her. Champoux

allegedly told her that they were looking for weapons.

Les policiers l'ont alors mise dans la banquette arrière de la voiture et ont fouillé sa sacoche. Ils ont trouvé son portefeuille et ses pièces d'identification, mais ont continué à chercher toutes ses affaires. La fouille a duré environ 15 minutes, pendant qu'Amal est resté dans la banquette arrière de la voiture de police, menottée.

As it happened, a vehicle with the word “Supervisor” in French on the window, showed up. Judging by his accent, Amal understood he was Francophone. He spoke to the other two officers in French only. Amal describes him as being around 190 pounds and 6 feet tall. He never spoke directly to her. Amal heard the supervisor ask the two officers if Amal spoke French. They replied no without asking her. As Amal told me, that was a stroke of luck because she could understand everything that was being said without the officers knowing it. They had never asked her.

Amal a alors entendu le surveillant demander aux policiers pourquoi ils l'avaient « arrêté ». Elle a entendu les policiers répondre qu'ils avaient conduit jusqu'à elle et qu'elle a immédiatement commencé à crier « comme une folle ». À travers la

conversation entre les policiers, Amal a compris qu'environ 20 minutes avant qu'elle est arrivée à Atwater une femme avait fait un appel au 911 d'une des cabines téléphoniques avoisinantes, mais les policiers n'étaient pas certains de l'origine exacte de l'appel. Amal a entendu le superviseur demander à Champoux s'il était certain que c'était Amal qui avait appelée. Le superviseur a demandé à Champoux trois fois. Il a répondu oui à chaque fois et a ajouté que la voix semblait étrangère. Le superviseur a dit ok et est parti. Comme rapporté ci-dessus, Amal n'a aucun accent.

Champoux and McIntyre then re-entered the cruiser and asked Amal if she had called 911 — they said they were investigating such a call — and whether she had a cell phone, which she did not. In shock and pain, Amal at that point had had enough. She said she had the right to remain silent and said she wanted to speak to their supervisor. The officers' alleged answer according to

Amal was thick with sarcasm. “Yeah, sure,” they said.

Amal a alors vu les policiers feuilleter un livret et discuter quelles offenses mèneraient aux plus grandes amendes. Ils ont alors remis brusquement ses affaires dans sa sacoche et l'ont jeté à terre. Ils l'ont alors sorti de la voiture et l'ont enlevé les menottes. Ils ne l'ont même pas laissé prendre son chapeau qui était tombé à l'arrière de la voiture, quoiqu'elle ait demandé.

Amal again asked to see their badges and they again refused saying “we don't have to show you. Our names are on the tickets.” Amal asked “what tickets” because they hadn't handed her any. Champoux responded that “you'll find it in your stuff.” They then sped off into the night. Amal began collecting her belongings on the ground. She found two tickets tucked into her agenda.

One ticket was for use of municipal property other than for its intended purpose. \$620! The other was for having made a loud noise other than yelling. \$420!

Amal's wrists were hurt as a result of the handcuffs. She also had pain in both arms, shoulders, neck and upper and lower back from the manner in

which the officers had handled her. She went to see a doctor at a West Island clinic. The doctor examined her wrists and found that one was strained. He gave her a note to excuse her from her exam. Amal was so shaken up by the incident that she didn't attend classes for the entire following week.

Bien que la description de la confrontation d'Amal Asmar avec la police vienne principalement d'elle, plusieurs facteurs mènent à la créance de sa version des événements, même après mon entretien avec le commandant du Poste 12, Stéphane Plourde, lundi après-midi.

The first is that, in public statements, the police have not challenged her charges or her version, particularly those of using force. They merely claim that they used it because she was yelling "like a crazy person" at the officers "as soon as they arrived," as reported in this story. Cmdr. Plourde even repeated that in a CTV television interview. He also agreed, as did Mayor Tremblay in that same news segment, that the fines were excessive. To me, Cmdr. Plourde added that the officers were investi-

gating the 911 call mentioned in the story and had approached Amal just to see if she knew anything because the call supposedly came from a payphone in the area. That call was later deemed by police to be a prank.

Cmdr. Plourde repeated the officers' statements about her immediate screaming. I asked him if that was the case, why was Amal not charged with obstructing an investigation or locked up for the night to protect her from herself, instead of being issued irrational tickets with fines that even he found excessive? Cmdr. Plourde paused, then said that the department was still investigating the two versions of the events. He then added that police officers have the discretion whether to issue any charges or fines and what they are to be.

Secondly, the police have failed to explain why they used such force, whatever their reasons were for approaching Amal. Amal is a calm person, but admits to yelling when she was being hurt. Would it be unreasonable for any citizen to yell in frustration when police officers refuse to tell them why they are questioning them or show their badges, and even more so when they are twisting arms? A comment Cmdr.

Plourde made to me is very germane to this issue. Though not responding directly to this point, he did say that it takes officers years to acquire the skills to deal with people on the street. Champoux has been a police officer for five years. McIntyre for three.

Third, the very language of the infractions she received undermines any reasonable cause the police may have had for questioning her. Nowhere is there a bylaw that states you cannot put a bag on a public bench. So do the police now decide the interpretation of our laws when they told Amal she could not put a bag on a bench? Is it the police who decide on the particularity of a generality? Is a bag now to be equated with sleeping on a bench? The second ticket was for "emitting an audible noise other than a yell." Again, is there no restraint of compassionate authority over the decision of a police officer? Are the very officers writing tickets that generate so much revenue for the city going to be the deciders of subjective judgments? I asked Cmdr. Plourde — in light of the recent report that 250 tickets were issued last year for every 1,000 Montrealers — whether

it is not time that the police stop being the revenue agency for the civic administration? Again, he answered diplomatically, telling us that with a total of one million police "interventions" last year the department does have its hands full.

Quatrièmement, l'agent Champoux a dit à son superviseur, et le département a indiqué la même chose, que la voix de l'appel au 911 avait un accent étranger. Quoique Champoux n'ait pas su qu'Amal parlait français, il pouvait certainement reconnaître qu'Amal n'avait pas d'accent en anglais. Et s'il ne pouvait pas discerner des accents anglais, son partenaire anglophone McIntyre pouvait le faire. Pourquoi alors n'indiqueraient-ils pas cela au superviseur?

Finally, the medical exam bore out the signs of excessive force.

It is ironic to remember that some years ago the Montreal police, with the support of elected officials, said they were going to enforce "civility and respect for authority." Fo Niemi, director-general of CRAAR which guided Amal in her complaint to the Police Ethics Commission, warned Montreal's Public Security Committee at the time that such a

broad and subjective approach would be prejudicial to the rights of all Montrealers but particularly to minorities. His words have proved prophetic. It is unfortunate that police and politicians have not been guided by another prophetic warning from the late American Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis who said that, "For the law to be respected, it must first be made respectable."

J'ai souvent écrit à propos de Montréalais harcelés par une application trop zélée de règlements municipaux irrationnels et de réglementation par des autorités de sécurité. Je préférerais en écrire moins de ces faits. Mais j'en vois constamment plus. Et trop souvent contre des minorités visibles. Nous ne pouvons pas encore répondre à la réclamation d'Amal de « pourquoi? ». Mais si son cas était causé par des policiers inexpérimentés, ou trop expérimentés à remplir des quotas d'amendes, ce journaliste est laissé avec une pensée harcelante. Les agents Champoux et McIntyre auraient-ils troublé une blonde aux yeux bleues avec une écharpe Burberry autour de son nez et de sa bouche?

“You will find *true*  
**SUCCESS** in those *efforts*  
 that captivate your  
*heart and soul.*  
 Belief fuels **PASSION**  
 and *passion rarely* fails.”



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1.8 MILLION MONTREALERS, 1.6 MILLION TICKETS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## Shocking traffic stats scream 'Big Brother!'

2009, 609,063 traffic tickets were handed out across the island by police for violations like speeding. Add to that the parking tickets issued, and the number skyrockets another 1,034,176, for a grand total of 1,643,239 vehicle infractions in just one year. 1.6-million tickets; 1.6-million residents.

Mark Twain once said that "there are lies, damned lies and statistics." It is a brilliant quote that suggests quantitative data can often be used to manipulate public discourse. But these statistics are hard to manipulate: 1.8 million residents; 1.6 million tickets. This raises some interesting questions about the ferocity of local law enforcement, the wisdom, of legislators and whether or not this municipal government would survive if not for its policy of harassment-for-profit.

True, the revenue generated from these tickets feeds a large central bureaucracy at the city of Montreal and the various smaller bureaucracies in boroughs across the island. As municipal affairs minister a decade ago, Louise Harel envisioned a centralized municipal administration. After the creation of the megacity, Mayor Gérald Tremblay put into place his so-called "decentralization" plan, giving more powers to each borough. After the two equally distasteful plans were merged, the hybrid bastard child that resulted became a perfect model for government inefficiency and waste. It is expensive to maintain and must

be supported through high taxes; some transparent, some hidden.

Enter the SPVM and its significantly less respected minions, the green onions. When Montreal is strapped for cash, you can always count on law enforcement to squeeze the extra revenue out of citizens. But when the equivalent of every Montrealer, driver or not, receives a fine, we have to start questioning authority.

Although individual officers may sometimes show a lack of tact when dealing with the public, the police are not the root of the problem. It is the pressure they face, perhaps from those who run this city, to veer away from real police work to fill city coffers with much needed revenue. That explains the hiring of 130 new officers in 2008 – not to deal with street gang activity, corruption or financial crimes – but to conduct traffic blitzes, trapping motorists to bring in money.

And there are the quotas, that we're told don't exist despite police Brotherhood assertions and the existence of department memos that suggest otherwise. One note dated January 5 clearly spells out « objectifs quantitatives (sic) » to reach for 2010:

« Voici donc, pour chaque équipe, les chiffres à atteindre, » reads the memo sent by Station 42 Commander Sylvain Arsenault. « Constats d'infraction : 1500 pour l'année (125 par mois). »

There are quotas; their rigidity

remains unclear, as do the possible consequences for officers who fall short. The SPVM and the Tremblay administration cannot acknowledge quota systems, no matter how overwhelming the evidence to support their existence may be. Again, it comes down to the shadowy and dishonest pillaging of the citizenry's purse.

If groups of motorists fighting speeding tickets could convince judges that the officers who pulled them over were purposely overzealous and trying to keep monthly numbers up to please commanders, the consequences of a ruling in the motorists favour could affect a lot of people. Any number of fines could be overturned; the city's cash cow would be in danger of disappearing.

A fantasy scenario, perhaps. It is one, however, that would confirm what many of us in Montreal and elsewhere have already suspected: There are institutionalized efforts on the part of government to demonize citizens for profit. Targeting citizens in coordinated efforts to separate them from their money is immoral, even if it involves lowering speed limits without cause and nabbing unsuspecting drivers under the pretense of public safety.

It is worth noting that drivers aren't the only targets. Aside from traffic-related infractions, readers of this newspaper are surely aware of the myriad of creative ways in which the city of Montreal punishes ordinary citizens for ordinary behaviour:

Merchants fined for weeds growing on city-owned sidewalks in front of their businesses, Metro riders who don't hold the escalator handrail, students who don't sit upright on park benches – these absurdities know no bounds. The common thread with all of these outlandish prohibitions is the criminalization of the banal to justify ever-increasing fines and an expanding bureaucracy.

In addition to the parking tickets, 11,900 pedestrians who received fines last year, presumably in large part for jaywalking, were unjustly targeted. We have become so immune to silly, paternalistic regulation that we stand at red lights like dopes, just because they are red, for minutes on end, when there is no oncoming traffic. Our government doesn't trust able-bodied adults to look both ways before crossing; a fail-safe technique I learned in kindergarten.

But, of course, fining pedestrians who jaywalk has little to do with safety and more to do with creating the illusion of hazard. Where there is perceived danger, there is a politician eager to exploit it; sometimes for political gain, sometimes for financial gain.

Is the "zéro accident" jaywalking campaign and crackdown working? In 2008, there were 18 pedestrian deaths in Montreal. In 2009, there were 18. How can you prevent that relatively low number of deadly accidents from reoccurring again in 2010? If you're in charge at city hall,

the answer is clearly pre-emptive punishment through obscene fines; that will teach those jaywalking pedestrians who put no lives in danger and whose actions will likely have no adverse consequences!

Zero deaths is an admirable goal and one is too many, but, for the sake of our collective sanity and our right to freedom of movement, decision-makers need to start thinking within the parameters of the "Shit Happens" factor (The Métropolitain, Feb. 5, 2009). This means accepting that our fragile existence is filled with uncertainty, sometimes tragedy, and a government that attempts, through increasingly overbearing regulation, to prevent the unpreventable, is simply conning the public.

If this city needs to fine the equivalent of every Montrealer over the course of the year to ensure its financial well-being, it would be preferable to scale back some of the daddy-knows-best regulations and send every one a bill for \$42. Call it a "bureaucracy tax," or something vague, like a "general contribution fee." Don't call it anything – just send the bill and stop trying to convince us that taking more of our money will make us safer. Relentless government-sponsored harassment and clandestine taxes are robbing this city of its freedom. What we are witnessing is the emergence of the "Big Brother" state and the slow death of personal liberty.

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## PEUPLE QUÉBÉCOIS, PUIS-JE COMPTER SUR TA SOLIDARITÉ? SUITE DE LA PAGE 1

jours heureux qui ont un parfum de printemps. Des inquiétudes qui me rappellent les jours les plus sombres de ma vie, en Algérie, lorsqu'au tout début des années 1990, un parti politique du nom de Front islamique du salut et ses armées menaçaient de prendre le pouvoir et de voiler toutes les femmes de mon pays. Le projet politique du FIS pouvait se résumer en une phrase : l'islam est religion et État et la charia est notre constitution.

La charia, qui se fonde sur la supériorité du musulman sur le non musulman et la supériorité de l'homme sur la femme. En découle entre autre la condamnation à mort des apostats comme moi. L'islamisme politique est une idéologie mysogine, sexiste, xénophobe et homophobe qui porte en elle la haine et la violence.

Dans ce contexte, les violences à l'égard des femmes sont monnaie courante car les islamismes s'attaquent aux corps des femmes qui est devenu un enjeu politique. Au printemps de l'année 1994, j'habitais à Oran en Algérie. J'avais 21 ans et des rêves plein la tête. Cette ville m'a collé à la peau pendant longtemps. J'y ai fréquenté ses quartiers de bout en bout, des minables au plus raffinés, me suis pavanée sur ses boulevards taraudés de palmiers et me suis laissée bercer par ses musiques et ses vagues en cultivant secrètement mais non candidement le goût de la rébellion.

Un jour, tout cela s'est arrêté. La ville qui m'a vue grandir ne ressemblait plus à ce qu'elle avait été. Le 10 mars 1994, Abdel-Kader Alloula, ce géant du théâtre, venait d'être assassiné et Oran avec, à la même période, le Groupe islamique armé (GIA) a ordonné aux femmes de mon pays le port du voile islamique. Deux choix s'offraient à nous. Dissimuler nos corps dans des cercueils ambulants ou résister. Certaines ont résisté et ont été assassinées.

Ce fut le cas de Katia Bengana, une jeune lycéenne, âgée de 17 ans, assassinée le 28 février 1994 à la sortie de son lycée à Meftah. Ce jour-là, j'ai compris que ma vie dépendait de la mise en échec de cette idéologie de la mort, que sa

victoire sera ma négation, que sa progression sera mon enfermement. J'ai compris aussi que mon corps portera pour toujours, à tout jamais, les marques indélébiles de cette confrontation si inégale.

Ce n'est pas un hasard si le FIS en Algérie a imposé le voile islamique et a assassiné des militantes féministes ou de simples femmes avec une sauvagerie inouïe. Des têtes nues ont été tranchées à la hache, au sabre, au couteau, à la lame et même à la tronçonneuse.

Je l'ai toujours dit et je le répète encore aujourd'hui, le voile islamique n'est pas un simple vêtement. Il est un élément parmi tant d'autres de tout un système de valeurs qui est incompatible avec nos choix démocratiques. L'attachement de certains, voir leur entêtement à le porter traduit l'état de misère dans lequel a sombré vertigineusement le monde arabe et musulman depuis une trentaine d'années.

Le voile islamique est devenu, ici, en Occident, le premier pilier de l'islam alors que de plus en plus de femmes en Iran, au Soudan, en Arabie-Saoudite et en Afghanistan le condamnent au péril de leur vie.

Lorsque j'ai quitté l'Algérie, je ne connaissais rien du Québec. Une chose était sûre, je pensais laisser la terreur islamiste loin derrière moi.

Je ne pensais jamais qu'un jour je rouvrirais ce chapitre si douloureux de ma vie. La douleur était tellement vive que je voulais oublier, taire ce que j'avais vécu et surtout ne rien dire.

Je ne pensais jamais devoir crier dans une salle bondée de féministes toute ma douleur de femme pour dire que j'ai été condamnée à mort à l'âge de 20 ans parce que femme, parce que féministe, parce que laïque.

Je ne pensais jamais à avoir à convaincre une salle de féministes que le voile est un objet d'asservissement sous lequel des femmes étouffent dans plusieurs pays musulmans.

Je ne pensais jamais devoir dénoncer des féministes ou des gens de gauche, car ils font partie de ma famille politique naturelle. Pourtant, en mai dernier, lorsque la

Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) a pris la responsabilité d'ouvrir grandes les portes au voile islamique dans la fonction publique du Québec, je n'avais nul autre choix que de dénoncer cette prise de position qui nous disait abruptement, à nous femmes de culture musulmane, qu'on doit s'accommoder de l'intégrisme lorsqu'il est musulman et qu'il faut le combattre

lorsqu'il est catholique.

C'est cette bataille du port des signes religieux dans la fonction publique du Québec qui se joue en ce moment sous nos yeux. Or, rappelez-vous d'une chose, le voile islamique, quel qu'il soit, porte en lui la négation des femmes et leur asservissement.

Lorsque les voiles avancent, les valeurs démocratiques reculent et

les droits des femmes avec. Soyons nombreux à manifester, auprès de nos députés, notre aversion face au port de TOUS les voiles islamiques dans la fonction publique ainsi que dans les établissements scolaires aussi bien pour les enfants que pour leurs enseignantes. Peuple québécois, j'ai besoin de ta solidarité concrète et agissante, aujourd'hui plus que jamais.

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## UN BÂILLON CONTRE LA LIBERTÉ D'EXPRESSION AU QUÉBEC, SUITE DE LA PAGE 1

façon assez large, qui avait été émise contre plusieurs blogueurs internet qui avaient été impliqués dans la publication de commentaires sur un forum internet, rawdon-qc.net. L'injonction interlocutoire, qui avait été émise le 9 juillet 2009 par la Juge Danielle Richer de la Cour supérieure du Québec, cherchait à complètement interdire les blogueurs internet de diffamer d'une façon ou d'une autre le gouvernement de Rawdon, son maire, ou son directeur général de quelque façon sous la menace de poursuite pour outrage à la cour.

Cet appel a attiré la participation de journaux québécois et de l'Association canadienne des libertés civiles comme intervenants.

En annulant l'injonction interlocutoire émise par la Juge Richer, la Cour d'appel du Québec a noté que le blog rawdon-qc.net, qui avait été établi en 2005, contenait environ 240 pages internet de commentaires divers et que, tout au plus, environ 22 commentaires qui aurait pu constituer des commentaires fortement répréhensibles et possiblement diffamatoires, et que la Juge Richer avaient échoué en essayant d'interdire d'une façon ou d'une autre quelconque ou toute diffamation dans son ensemble par les blogueurs contre le gouvernement municipal et ses dirigeants (ce qui est équivalent à la censure).

La Cour d'appel du Québec a refusé de jugé l'enjeu de la possibilité pour un gouvernement municipal de poursuivre au Québec pour diffamation alléguée (en dépit d'une prohibition absolue dans d'autres provinces canadiennes), en dépit de l'insistance de l'Association canadienne des libertés civiles que l'enjeu doit être adressé conformément à la nouvelle législation québécoise contre les poursuites-bâillon et de ne pas laisser trainer jusqu'à une date de procès ultérieure.

Le 1er novembre 2009, le Québec organisa des élections municipales à travers la province, et Rawdon a eu un changement de gouvernement. Le nouveau parti politique avait fait campagne, en partie, sur une plateforme qui cherchait à jeter la lumière sur le

procès de diffamation financé par le gouvernement de Rawdon.

Quand l'injonction interlocutoire avait été émise par la Juge Danielle Richer en juillet 2009, le maire de Rawdon de l'époque a publiquement indiqué dans des entrevues aux médias locales que le procès avait coûté aux contribuables de Rawdon 150 000\$, et elle avait reconnu une contribution financière directe de l'Union des Municipalités du Québec au cas de jurisprudence de Rawdon.

En mars 2010, les vérificateurs désignés par le gouvernement nouvellement élu de la municipalité de Rawdon ont non seulement indiqués que l'administration précédente avait accumulé des factures juridiques de 541 675.25\$ (au 31 décembre 2009), mais que le travail juridique sur le cas de jurisprudence de Rawdon avait commencé bien avant que les procédures aient été déposées ex parte et de façon urgente au début de février 2008 à la Cour supérieure du Québec (District de Joliette). Les factures juridiques de 541 675.25\$ (au 31 décembre 2009) sont plus que les montants totaux réclamés par Rawdon et l'ancien maire et ancien directeur-général dans leur procès!

CAGE (Citoyens anti gouvernement envahissant) a noté que suite au déclenchement du cas de jurisprudence de Rawdon, un autre cas a été façonné dans l'image du modèle de cas de jurisprudence de Rawdon. En décembre 2008, une majorité du conseil municipal de Beauceville a autorisé le financement d'une poursuite contre un média local pour la diffamation alléguée du gouvernement municipal et de son maire. Le texte de la résolution de Beauceville déclare expressément qu'elle cherche à avoir le cabinet d'avocats qui a représenté Rawdon dans le procès numéroté 705-17-002451-084 « pour faire pour Beauceville ce qu'ils ont fait pour Rawdon. »

Le financement du procès a été suspendu suivant un vote du conseil municipal de Beauceville en début 2009, et la poursuite de diffamation du gouvernement a plus tard a été complètement abandonnée.

Il y a plus de 1 100 municipalités au Québec. Permettre n'importe quels d'entre elles de poursuivre pour la diffamation alléguée du gouvernement municipal avec des dollars des contribuables serait laisser la porte grande ouverte pour l'oppression des adversaires politiques. On doit seulement se rappeler de la loi du cadenas au Québec, qui a été à l'origine conçu pour adresser la propagande communiste, mais qui est plus tard devenu un outil puissant pour l'oppression plus généralisée des adversaires politiques et des minorités au Québec.

L'état du droit au Québec est maintenant tel que tous les conseillers municipaux qui pourraient avoir un vote majoritaire pour autoriser le financement municipal pour des cabinets d'avocats désireux et disposés d'intenter des procès en leur nom, pourraient intimider des critiques, ou des minorités, ou menacer de tous les épuiser financièrement en les forçant de se défendre contre de tels procès.

Rawdon est une ville de quelques 10 000 résidents: comment pourrait-elle accumuler des factures juridiques à la hauteur de 541 675.25\$ (au 31 décembre 2009)? C'est un peu plus que 54\$ pour chaque homme, femme et enfant qui habite à Rawdon. La théorie d'un cas de jurisprudence est convaincante, surtout avec une contribution financière reconnue de l'Union des municipalités du Québec.

Les Québécois devraient prêter une grande attention à ce cas, surtout tout citoyen qui publie des commentaires critiques au sujet des gouvernements municipaux sur l'internet. Si le cas de diffamation du gouvernement de Rawdon ne rejoint pas la définition d'une poursuite-bâillon, alors c'est quoi? On pourrait espérer que les cours du Québec pourraient le voir de la façon que le citoyen moyen du Québec le voit, et équilibrer le terrain de jeu pour les personnes devant se défendre de ce genre de procès conformément à la nouvelle législation contre les poursuites-bâillon.

*"You can get anything you want in life if you help others get what they want."*

- George F. Lengvari, Sr.



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David Solway is the award-winning author of over twenty-five books of poetry, criticism, educational theory, and travel. He is a contributor to magazines as varied as the *Atlantic*, *the Sewanee Review*, *Books in Canada*, and the *Partisan Review*. His most recent book is *The Big Lie: On Terror, Antisemitism, and Identity*.

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# Coulter and the Camel

The camel is a noble animal. Had it not existed, Islamic civilization would never have gotten off the ground, just as, in the absence of the horse, we in the West would still be lugging barrows and scraping along in donkey-hauled slipes. The camel is perhaps even preferable to the horse. It is fast, carries its own water, and provides what SUV manufacturers call “command seating,” rivaled only by the elephant. Indeed, Mark Twain understood the inherently exalted nature of the creature when he introduced the cameleopard in *Huckleberry Finn*. Of course, the cameleopard, or “Royal Nonesuch,” is really a giraffe (Arabic: ziraffah, “tallest one”), but it sounds like a camel with a temper and enviable velocity, a beast that demands respect. Detective writer David Baldacci calls his group of likeable, informal sleuths “the camel club,” whose goal, according to author’s website, is “to seek the truth.” With so much going for it, it’s a crying shame to see the desert taxi disparaged, rejected, or ignored, especially by those who should know better.

For example, even the great historian Edward Gibbon and prominent writer and intellectual Jorge Luis Borges lay it down that there are no references to camels in the Koran. Borges comments in his essay, “The Argentine Writer and Tradition”: “Gibbon observes that in the Arabian book par excellence, in the Koran, there are no camels.” Gibbon and Borges obviously skipped surah 88:18 in which the Prophet (PBUH) urges the redeemed in paradise “to reflect on the camels, and how they were created.”

Joining this cabal of camel skeptics is one Fatima Al-Dhaher, a young Muslim student who attended Ann Coulter’s talk at the University of Western Ontario on March 22, the first in a three-lecture swing through Canada. A firebrand conservative critic of the Western multiculti tendency to appease and coddle Islam in the wake of 9/11, Coulter has suggested, with her characteristic brashness, that Muslims be banned from commercial flights and rely on flying carpets instead. Challenged by Ms. Al-Dhaher, who took the jibe with utmost seriousness and felt “stabbed to the heart” by so callous a recommendation, Coulter shot back, “take a camel.” This was not, apparently, an allusion

to a famous brand of cigarettes, as if to say, “relax, light up, think it over,” but, from Ms. Al-Dhaher’s perspective, a politically incorrect snub of epic proportions.

I believe the only one who should feel slighted is the camel, who has furnished transportation over the millennia through drought, heat, sandstorm, and mirage with nary a complaint. And maybe, too, the hundreds of thousands of frequent flyers who are subjected to all manner of indignity and inconvenience because some aggrieved Muslims are prone to wreaking destruction in and from the air. Ms. Al-Dhaher should have understood Coulter’s point regardless of its heavy-handedness, namely, given the well-attested fact that the overwhelming majority of the world’s terrorists happen to be Muslims, and assuming that we are really interested in saving lives, what we call “racial profiling,” however unpalatable, is nothing short of a civic obligation.

To vary the metaphor, how many straws will it take to break the poor camel’s back? How many more victims of their own credulity are needed before the alarm goes off? What are we waiting for? Another 9/11? Another Christmas bomber who this time manages to reduce hundreds of travelers to body parts? A second and successful plan to bring down a fleet of airliners over the Atlantic? Another shoe bomber with somewhat better dexterity? Another Egypt Air Flight 990 with its 217 dead? This is the grisly possibility, and indeed likelihood, that Ann Coulter is addressing and that Fatima Al-Dhaher, like her supporters in the legacy media, steadfastly refuses to acknowledge, let alone contemplate. Instead she is stabbed to the heart by a heuristic wisecrack about camels.

Francois Houle, provost of the University of Ottawa where Coulter was scheduled to speak on March 23, was no less affronted. Houle sent a letter admonishing his guest that inappropriate speech “could in fact lead to criminal charges.” He “encouraged” Coulter to “educate yourself ... as to what is acceptable in Canada,” and reminded her of the proud Canadian tradition “of restraint, respect and consideration in expressing even provocative and controversial opinions.” Clearly exemplifying the provost’s celebration of Canadian

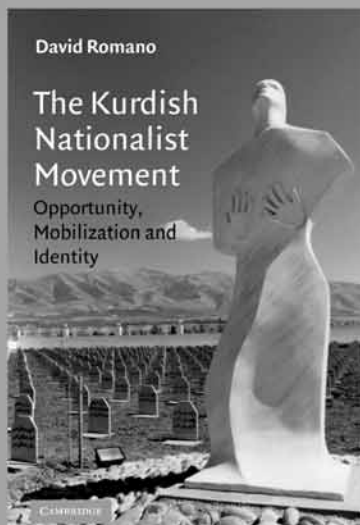
values, a mob of student protestors went on a rampage and forced the cancellation of the event. (This is the same university that recently hosted Israel Apartheid Week, where hate speech comes as natural as breathing.) The only way these professional hypocrites, or those training to become such, will learn about the real world, I suppose, is when their disintegrated remains are wafting down the air currents. It might be preferable, however, to listen to Ann Coulter and at least recognize that we confront a veritable menace against our way of life, one that thrives upon our willed ignorance and canting sanctimoniousness.

I’m glad to report that Coulter had a more appreciative audience at the University of Calgary in Alberta on March 25. (Adopting American terminology, Alberta is what we might call a “red province” while Ontario is “blue”; in Canada, the colors are reversed, the Conservatives blue and the Liberals red, which makes greater symbolic sense.) The Calgary university provost, Alan Harrison, was demonstrably more urbane and mature than his Ottawa counterpart, stating that the university’s purpose “is to give [Coulter] the same respect that everybody else deserves.” But that did not prevent a clutch of protestors from bearing placards blazoning messages like “Go home u racist pig” and, according to news reports, nearly breaking down the door to the venue, chanting “Coulter go home.” Camel-back, no doubt.

Unfortunately, Coulter’s hectic lecture schedule compels her to spend an inordinate amount of time standing in airport security lines and increases the risk of a terrorist misadventure. For myself, I have decided not to fly anymore except on those rare occasions when it is absolutely necessary. I prefer to walk, drive or get on a train, and, if the opportunity presented, I would be more than disposed to take Mohammed’s advice and consider the glorious and much-abused creature to which Ms. Dhaher took exception. Certainly, I would have no objection to riding the camel.

David Solway is a Montreal writer and poet. He is author of “The Big Lie” and a two-time winner of Quebec’s National Poetry Prize.

## Cambridge Middle East Studies



David Romano focuses on the Kurdish case to generally try and make sense of ethnic nationalist resurgence. In a world rent by a growing number of such conflicts, the questions posed about why, how and when such challenges to the state arise are becoming increasingly urgent.

Throughout the author analyzes these questions through the lens of social movement theory, considering in particular politico-social structures, resource mobilization strategies and cultural identity. His conclusions offer some thought-provoking insights into Kurdish nationalism, as well as into the strengths and weaknesses of various social movement theories.



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GLOBAL VILLAGE

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# The leaking begging bowl

Ottawa spends some \$5 billion on foreign aid every year. Countless numbers of people also give millions in personal donations to global relief efforts.

It's no wonder generous Canadians want to know where their money goes.

A spate of recent news stories has cast doubt on the accountability and transparency of humanitarian aid.

A recent BBC report suggests 95 per cent of \$100 million in Live Aid funds meant for

Ethiopian famine victims went to weapons; an army investigation is being launched in the

U.K. over millions in Afghan aid cash going to Taliban, drug lords and profiteers; and a U.N.

study suggesting as much as half the food aid meant for Somalia ends up in the hands of corrupt contractors, Islamic militants and even United Nations staff.

Money sent in the aftermath of the 2005 tsunami also went missing in corruption-prone Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Fifty years ago, some theorized corruption was not a problem. But recent research suggests otherwise: Countries with more corruption have less investment, and each investment dollar has less impact on growth, that bad governance has direct and negative effects on long-term concerns like infant mortality and education.

Corruption also has a ripple effect. New research out of Georgia State University suggests Americans who live in states with more corruption not only lose trust in public officials, but the general public as well, creating a systematic corrosive effect on civil society.

George Ayittey, president of the Free Africa Foundation, claims corruption alone costs the continent and estimated \$148 billion each year.

"Helping Africa is noble," he said during a blistering speech on the current African at recent TED Talks. "But helping Africa has been turned into a theatre of the absurd. It's like the blind leading the clueless. There are certain things that we need to recognize. Africa's begging-bowl leaks."

So how much aid money is actually being funnelled into private interests?

"Nobody has a clue," admits the director of the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University, Peter Walker.

He recently co-authored a report on how to prevent corruption in humanitarian assistance (often a response to humanitarian crises, as opposed to development aid for longer term projects). It suggests food aid, medicine and especially construction materials are at the highest risk of being diverted.

"Why should Indonesia or Sudan be any different from Quebec?" asked Walker, referring to this province's own rumours swirling around its construction industry.

(The construction industry, noted Walker, runs "the usual scams in every country" regardless of the country's overall ranking on corruption indexes.)

Interestingly, our own desire to help – and help quickly – may exacerbate the problem. Aid is ramped up quickly following a disaster, flooding cash-poor regions with dollars. After severe humanitarian disasters, per beneficiary aid can reach as high as seven times the country's annual per capita gross national income.

"Overnight, spending gets out of whack," said Walker. "In a sense, you're almost setting up the temptation. Haiti is a case in point. There's no way Haiti can spend that kind of money at that speed."

Canadians gave over \$110 million in the wake of the earthquake in the Caribbean country. In January, *The Guardian*

newspaper estimated a world total of \$2,422,202,996 was spent in aid to Haiti post-tremor. More has been pledged since.

Walker said aid agencies need to be clear when they solicit funds that they intend to save any extra money for later development work. And donors should be made aware their dollars could be spent for both short-term aid and long-term reconstruction.

NGOs also need to resist the push for the money to be spent based on the emotional ties of individual donors or the budget or election cycles of world governments, Walker said. As well, aid agencies are often pressured to have low administration costs to ensure the highest possible percentage of funds goes directly to the needy.

But, said Walker, low administrative costs mean less oversight.

"You can't have your cake and eat it too," he said.

In recent years, agencies have become more open to facing the challenges. But Walker said their scope is too narrow, often focusing solely on financial fraud. Corruption – the abuse of entrusted power for private gain – ranges from financial fraud, kickbacks, nepotism and other abuse of human resources, sexual abuse, intimidation and outright theft.

Walker suggests they go a step further and incorporate anti-corruption methods already being used outside the field – by the World Bank, for example. He also insists that, despite the negative news stories, humanitarian assistance has helped millions of people. Even with the sheer desperation of those receiving aid, the money often went where it was supposed to go.

"I was surprised," he said, "by how little opportunism there actually was."



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# Israel under siege—again

## The dilemma of mutually assured discomfort

Washington, DC - Having just returned from a Middle East trip that included travel in Israel, I am prompted to muse over the current imbroglio roiling U.S.-Israeli relations. Over the past several weeks, there has been renewed incentive to fault find Israel for offenses that sometimes more in the mind of the beholder than in reality. Indeed, it is far easier to find unloving critics than uncritical lovers in the current environment. For example, the tour group with which I traveled had two briefers: An articulate representative of the Palestinian Authority who (predictably) found fault with all elements of Israeli policy and an Israeli from a local NGO who was also critical of the GOI. But the absence of "balance" went unremarked.

And one must be at least mildly skeptical that some of this media bludgeoning came during the run-up to Passover; likewise, one can be cynical over the breathless revelations regarding the child molestations by Catholic clergy adroitly timed for the Palm Sunday/Holy Week/Easter time frame. The public relations battle for citizens' hearts and minds is a constant one.

Nevertheless, prompting the latest round of prickly irritability, Israeli announcement of further steps for construction of 1,600 housing units in Jerusalem while Vice President Biden was visiting Tel Aviv to jumpstart "proximity talks" between Palestinians and Israelis, appeared designed to embarrass the USG. At best, it was the type of "left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing" stupidity. It also is possible that the announcement reflected internal Israeli government infighting to force Netanyahu into even less compromising positions.

Still the practical result has been invidious: de facto postponement of these proximity talks that at best had little chance of substantive accomplishment, but the absence of which provides justification to

Palestinian "days of rage" and attacks that resulted in greater restrictions on West Bank Palestinians. There has also been a new burst of global irritation and hand-wringing over the Israeli announcement, prompting a circle-the-wagons response from Netanyahu and a predictable refusal on his part to reverse the GOI decision even under intense USG pressure.

What can be said is that the deliberate refusal by media, human rights NGOs, the United Nations, and others to hold Palestinians to

account on at least an equal standard, justifies Israeli rejection of any external criticism. Still, it is also clear that few Americans or Canadians would accept life under the extensive labyrinth of political, economic, and social constraints inflicted on West Bank Palestinians. Passing from the West Bank into Israel is a protracted security process even on the best days; clearly it discourages easy communication and economic activity. The "separation barriers" have worked, so far as largely eliminating Palestinian terrorist

entrance into Israel is concerned (and who in a post-9/11 world can criticize a government for protecting its population), but it seals off rather than resolving the problem. Simply examining the virulent graffiti on the Palestinian side of the barriers confirms that there are few who would support any compromise Tel Aviv could accept. The torch is being passed to the next generation, but they only wish to use it to incinerate the Israeli state.

Thus in April 2010, we have the same frustrating problem that has defied solution by the best minds

and most devoted negotiators for over two generations. Nobody has ever lost money betting against peace in the Middle East, perhaps because the parties have settled into an endurable, if hardly perfect, balance: Mutually assured discomfort but not at the level of pain that the sides feel compelled to make the hard compromises to resolve the problems. Without mutual willingness to compromise (now including Hamas as well as the Palestinian Authority and Israel), no outside authority can manufacture an agreement.

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# The skittish consumer

Sustaining the recovery depends on their spending – can they afford it?

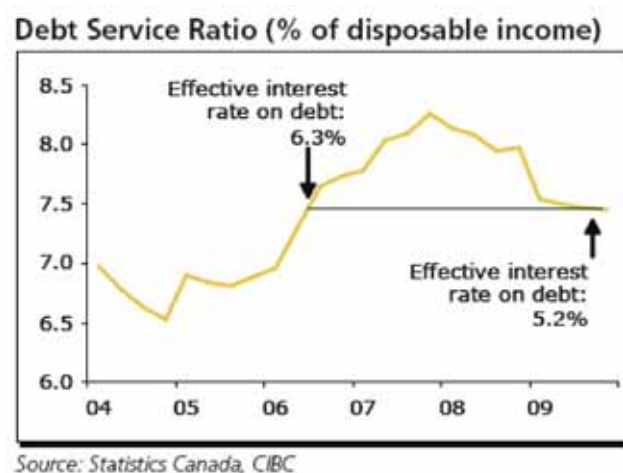
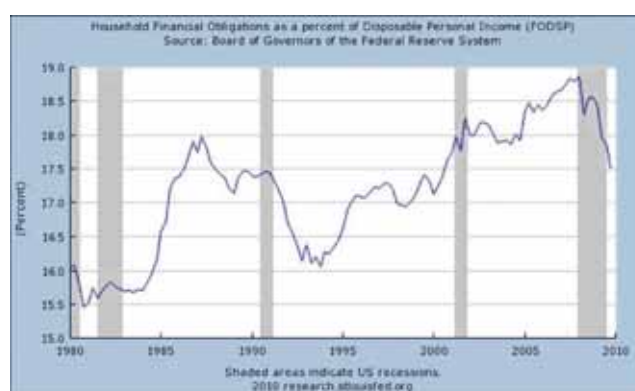
After a year and a half of misery, things are looking up for the Canadian and U.S. economies. The stock markets are up over 70 per cent from their lows of March 2009, both economies put out five per cent annualized growth rates in the last quarter of 2009, and consumer spending is on a tear. In Canada, consumer spending rose at a four per cent annualized rate in Q4 2009 and in the U.S., spending was up 1.6 per cent month to month in March, including a whopping one per cent due to sales of autos and parts alone. Economists and governments are now debating the sustainability of such encouraging results as they plan monetary and fiscal policy for the year to come.

The key question is how solid consumer finances are and how sensitive they may be to increases in interest rates, taxes, essential purchases such as gasoline prices, or a combination of all three. At its high in 2008, consumer spending accounted for nearly 70 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in North America, so the durability of these improving retail numbers is key to predicting future economic growth overall.

The mindset of consumers is difficult to predict, but it is fair to say that the U.S. consumer has been through a much worse credit and spending crunch than their Canadian counterparts. Comparing the two graphs here, the first one looks at Federal Reserve statistics detailing U.S. consumer debt servicing obligations when compared to income, the second from CIBC is the Canadian equivalent. Even after the recession, the U.S. consumer supports twice the cash flow burden to service their debt than the Canadian – even though the U.S. debt service requirement has fallen back to year 2000 levels, while in Canada it has only retrenched to year 2006 obligations. Some of this can be explained by U.S. mortgage interest debt deductibility that encourages U.S. consumers to pile debt on their houses to get the tax break, but it demonstrates that the U.S. consumer is still more at risk to rising interest rates and taxation encroachment than we are in Canada.

Canadians need to be seriously concerned about U.S. consumer debt levels because our economies are so intertwined. If the U.S. consumer retrenches, then the slowing effect on their economy will certainly be felt by Canadian exporters. The Canadian manufacturing sector is already struggling with the Canadian dollar at par with the U.S. greenback and most economists believe that it will stay there, or even increase in value over the next six months. Any renewed decline in U.S. spending, which could be induced by higher gas prices, a renewed slide in home prices or rising state and federal taxes, would curtail U.S. consumption of Canadian goods and services and further damage Canadian tourism, which is already reeling from the recession and a huge drop in cross-border trips by Americans.

In a conversation with Benjamin Tal of CIBC World Markets, he emphasized that the U.S. was the only western economy to undergo a serious restructuring following the financial crisis of 2008; Canada endured a far milder recession and our banking sector was fundamentally sound, while the Eurozone is in complete denial of its structural problems and is now working on bailouts for its weakest members, like Greece. U.S. debt levels remain elevated, but



the federal government has been able to fund its massive deficits because non-government credit requirements have fallen dramatically, more so than the \$30-billion per week (yes, per week) that the U.S. federal government borrows on the open market. The U.S. banks have been using savings deposited with them from newly conservative American savers to purchase U.S. treasuries to fund the debt, along with China and other international investors who still view the U.S.D. as the world reserve currency.

The greatest danger is posed by rising interest rates – consumers are going to have to adjust from the environment of almost-free money that existed in the U.S. for over a year as well as record low rates in Canada. The most interesting contrast between U.S. and Canadian consumer behaviour is that U.S. consumers are deleveraging (shedding debt) while the Canadian consumer debt is at record levels, and indeed never fell during the current recession. The U.S. housing market has seen a price decline of 30 per cent overall, while Canadian prices have recovered to peak levels.

Many economists believe that the Canadian housing market has yet to face its day of reckoning, and if prices drop more than 10 per cent in hot markets like Vancouver and Toronto, a lot of consumers will find themselves unable to refinance their entire mortgage debt when it comes due. The U.S. mortgage shakeout is not over, but these properties will eventually find buyers since pricing has corrected, while a default property in Canada is going to be priced closer to the elevated pricing levels in its market and will be harder to

move.

Another danger to the consumer is the impending revaluation of the Chinese Yuan, which some experts estimate is undervalued against the U.S.D. by as much as 40 per cent and must be allowed to rise in value. An appreciating Yuan means that prices for millions of consumer goods produced in China and purchased here must rise accordingly, and many of these goods are basic, weekly staples in our shopping baskets.

In the last few weeks, owners of the Dollarama chain of discount stores easily sold \$250 million of shares on the open market – all based on the assumption that the low prices that attract consumers to its Chinese-made goods can be maintained. Dollarama has already moved some goods to the \$2 per item price level from \$1, and even if the Chinese allow only a 10-15 per cent rise in the Yuan, it will mean that Dollarama, Wal-Mart and others will have to raise prices across the board to maintain their margins. If the typical weekly Wal-Mart shopper sees their checkout receipt rise by only \$10 per week based on their Chinese goods, this works out to about the price of a tank of gas a month, or \$520 per year. The devastating effect of the Yuan appreciation on consumer discretionary spending should not be underestimated.

The U.S. may name China as a currency manipulator due to Chinese government reluctance to re-price the Yuan. This creates the potential for an open trade war between the two nations and a cooling of world trade, which up until now had rebounded strongly. Trade wars destroy job creation, create economic inefficiencies and ultimately limit the income growth and wealth creation needed to prolong the recovery. Thus, the U.S. has set itself up for a set of poor outcomes – if the Yuan rises too rapidly (i.e. faster than the gradual increase the Chinese are prepared to offer) the North American consumer is going to be whacked by price increases and an uptick in the inflation rate. If the Yuan does not rise, then a trade war could erupt that may derail the worldwide economic recovery with implications far beyond our own shores. Backroom negotiations are now underway to seek a compromise that allows the Yuan to rise enough to placate critics in the U.S. Congress but not so fast as to damage consumer purchasing power.

In short, the consumer has staged a great comeback but is winded by the journey. Wealth creation and income growth are critical to sustain the current advance, and the consumer faces a headwind of rising interest rates, taxes and prices over the next 12 months. It is for this reason that Ben Bernanke of the U.S. Federal Reserve and our own Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of Canada, emphasize that while current data is encouraging, they are still cautious in their outlook and urge governments to practice restraint as they seek new sources of revenue.

Governments can expect great resistance from taxpayers who distrust expensive new spending initiatives. The consumer will seek to protect his or her house first before they willingly send more funds to meet the needs of the collective, and justifying these tax increases will prove difficult and divisive for some time to come.



ENLEVONS LES « OMBRAGES » DU GOUVERNEMENT, SUITE DE LA PAGE 1

## Le temps pour un nouveau contrat social

wolves in sheep's clothing. Instead of getting the essentials right – the effective and efficient provision of services – they engage in social engineering with groaning bureaucracies that do nothing more than enhance their power and control over us. Public service is called just that because it is about service and services. Assuring the people of sufficient, accessible and affordable food, clothing, housing, teaching, healing, security, transport and freedom from want. It's not welfare. It's just decency. A helping hand up is not a hand out. But the institutions of social security – the highest and most noble promise of industrial liberalism – is a far cry from the statist dictates of today that so much of our taxes are wasted on. This statism seeks to change you. It goes beyond the bounds of any natural law and erodes the fundamental trust between the government and we the people. It also supports massive shadow government structures that squeeze the last cent out of our livelihoods. Structures which abnegated the sovereignty of our suffrage. Structures created in council rooms apart far from the public they are supposed to serve.

The recent provincial budget has egregious flaws. But this budget – for the first time in recent memory – also gave us a glimpse at the shadow structures whose never-ending and ever-growing funding needs seep our very lifeblood. Examining them, we can see how the state wastes our money. We can also understand what John Reed meant when he wrote that, "There comes a time in the relations between governors and governed when every action by the state excites the people's contempt and every failure to act sparks the people's disgust."

In dusty little corners of the budget we learned of "fusions or abolitions" of provincial government agencies. Agencies which in each and every case duplicated or triplicated the work of government ministries and pre-existing commissions or crown corporations. These shadow structures – shadow in the sense that they simply mirror the work of existing entities like a shadow reflects our form – seem to exist merely for the sake of expanding state control over our lives with larger bureaucracies, employing armies of inspectors, broadening ministerial powers and having convenient places to elevate political allies under the pretext of public service. In this

budget we are told that 28 such shadows will be abolished or fused into ministries or pre-existing entities. Unfortunately, we are also informed that 172 will continue. And we are not told whether the regiments of bureaucrats soldiering them will be eliminated or simply transferred to continue receiving salaries paid by the public dole.

Ce n'est pas un petit geste. Voici le cœur de la façon dont le gouvernement gaspille notre argent au Québec. 28 de fait, il ne manque que 172. Mais quand? Et où? Ce n'est pas un petit geste parce que Bachand lui-même admet qu'au Québec nous payons 26% de plus pour des services publics qu'en Ontario, et l'Ontario a un PIB de 14% plus grand que le nôtre. Combien de temps il croit que les gens se laisseront traiter comme des vaches à lait pour financer les avantages politiques provinciaux. Ce n'est également pas un petit geste parce que quelques 40% de nos fonds public sont dépensés en soins de

santé. Et le Québec est la seule juridiction politique occidentale où plus de la moitié des personnes gens payés par le système de santé sont du personnel non-médical. Ce sont des bureaucrates, plusieurs qui sont dans ces ombres regardant au-dessus des épaules de nos guérisseurs. La juridiction politique la plus rapprochée en occident de notre 52% non-médical est la France. Et la France est seulement à 37%.

Let us take a brief glance at some of these "fusions and abolitions." We have been a bit free in our translations of the names of these shadows. Our personal favorite involves transport. Now follow closely. The activities of the Fund for the sale of goods and services; the Fund for partnership in transport infrastructure; the Fund for contributions of drivers to communal transport and the Fund for the conservation and improvement of the transport network will be rolled into a new Fund for road infrastructures and communal transport!!! Four fund into

one. Not a bad deal it seems. Except what in the name of sanity were the four Funds doing in the first place? We the taxpayers were funding these bureaucracies. We have a Ministry of Transport. Couldn't these matters have been taken care of there?

There will also be a merger into one agency of the Fund for health research, the Fund for research on nature and technology and the Fund for research on society and culture. Are we the only ones asking – what in blazes? What do they have in common and why did they exist to begin with? The crown corporation on asbestos will be abolished. And we had one why? The Fund for the horse racing industry will be abolished. Again, why did we have one? What happened to the free market? And we thought the government did not want to encourage gambling. The Council on seniors will be integrated with the Secretariat on seniors which in turn is part of the Ministry for Seniors. Why three levels? Not to be forgotten, The

Permanent Council on Youth will be integrated to the Secretariat on Youth which reports to the Minister responsible for Youth. Again, why three levels? Why weren't all these areas handled by policy advisors to the respective Ministers? Just one more, the Council on the family and early childhood will be integrated into the Ministry for the family and seniors. And again...why wasn't it there to begin with?

Notre utilisation moderne du terme « contrat social » provient des écritures du philosophe français Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Ses pensées ont inspiré la révolution française. Nous au Québec avons brûlé les bâtiments du Parlement en 1839. Alors que nous réfléchissons comment réparer notre contrat social aujourd'hui - tellement mal compromis par une malfaçon financière et budgétaire spectaculairement non-partisane - les leçons de l'histoire devraient être maintenues dans l'esprit de tous nos principaux acteurs politiques.



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# PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain) II and the Greek crisis

Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany is being confronted with some very difficult choices. Does she participate in an active bailout of Greece and incur the wrath of the German electorate or does she commit German funds, and possibly save the EU from collapse. For a collapse of the EU means the disappearance of the once mighty Euro.

This decision might very well have been made for her as spreads on Greek debt soared to levels not seen since the

writing of Maastricht.

On April 11, European leaders agreed to offer the tormented Greek government a financial olive branch of up to 30-billion Euros in three-year loans at a most attractive 5 per cent rate (this rate, however, was above the rate which Germany must pay, hence providing a possible profit on the deal). When you include the IMF contribution, which could be around 10-20-billion Euros, it would have covered Greece's financial requirements through 2010.

Hold your horses. The deal is not yet done. With credit spreads widening so much (the Greek bonds were trading north of 7 per cent), it seemed possible, if not likely, that Greece might just default. Needless to say, Germany would not wish to be exposed to a possible massive loss on its share of the 40-billion and default could be as damaging for EU as Lehman's bankruptcy was for the US and the global economic community.

On April 19, German finance minister Wolfgang Schauble pleaded

with his German citizens to back the joint EU-IMF bailout worth up to 45-billion Euros. The risk associated with a failure to respond positively, he said, would be a financial meltdown.

In Der Spiegel he said, "we cannot allow the bankruptcy of a Euro member state like Greece to turn into another Lehman Brothers."

"Greece's debts are all in Euros, but it isn't clear who holds how much of these debts.

The consequences of a national bankruptcy would be incalculable. Greece is just as systemically important as a major bank," he added.

"Investors are not going to believe in a rescue deal until every 'i' is dotted and every 't' is crossed," said Marc Oswald from Monument Securities.

There is real fear that a Greek failure could bring down the whole house of cards.

There was a time, not that long ago, when the PRC envisioned the Euro as a possible successor to the US dollar, or at worst, an alternative. As China began to "diversify" its currency holdings by reducing its vast position in the US, it began to accumulate Euros.

IMF data shows that China &

emerging markets have accumulated \$4.8 trillion in foreign reserves. Roughly \$1.7 trillion is invested in Euro zone bonds.

Investors are also very concerned with growing hostility within Greece; of the austerity measures being proposed, which if carried, will represent slower growth and growing unemployment. When all else fails, fire the people. This is the fear of the Greek citizenry and the powerful labor unions.

Greek leaders appear to be playing a waiting game, perhaps hoping for a better deal and better terms, or perhaps a debt restructuring that might result in extending the pay period, and providing some breathing room. Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics, has proposed a multi-year restructuring that would extend the duration of the debt and ease the pain of debt service.

It is becoming increasingly clear that a Greek default would begin to look like Bear-Stearns and Lehman. A bailout will likely result in the PIIGS coming to the trough, and resemble those handed to CITI, Bank of America, GM and AIG.

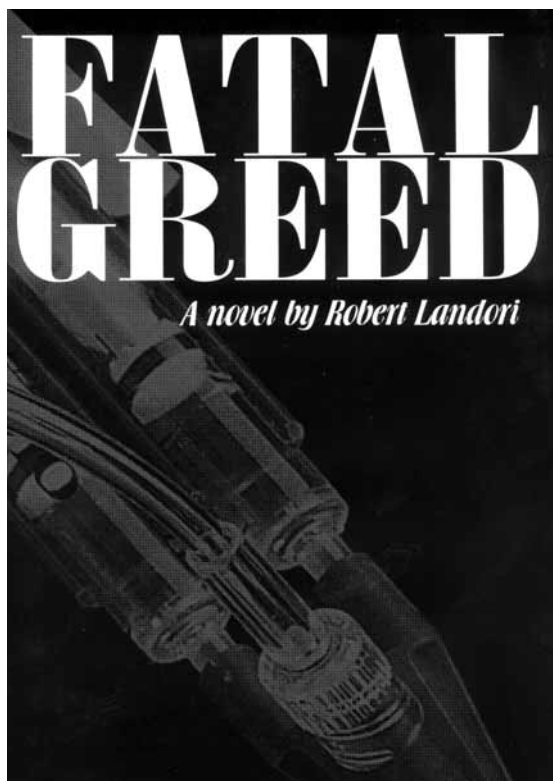
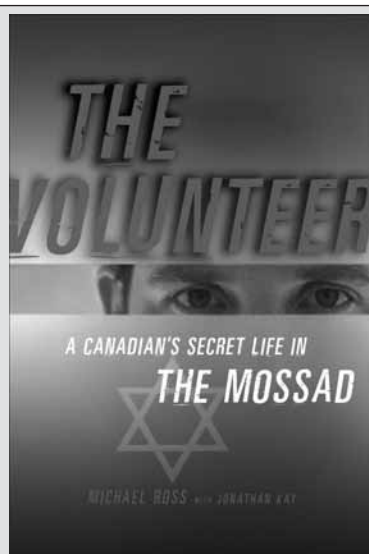
We wish you well, Angela Merkel.

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# Religious daycare: Pick your cultural battles

Quebec is the most militantly secular of all Canada's provinces. Its intellectuals and cultural elites are resolutely committed to the ideal of a lay society. References to the Church in the media positively bristle with thinly-sheathed scorn. Yet the Quebec government is inconsistent when it comes to religious instruction in publicly funded institutions.

On the one hand, the state is very generous in funding the secular portions of religious day schools – a generosity one does not see in other provinces – and just recently, for example, bent over backwards to accommodate six private Hasidic Jewish schools' demand for an extra day a week of religious schooling.

On the other hand, it recently decreed religious education will no longer be tolerated in government-subsidized daycares. Annie Turcot, spokeswoman for a coalition of publicly funded daycares on the island of Montreal, justified the measure as an aid to immigrants' acculturation: "The mission of (early-childhood education centres) is really to help families integrate into Quebec culture."

On its face, this sounds like a plausible and worthy objective. Who can object to children "integrating" into Quebec culture? But in fact, this lofty ideal can't possibly gain purchase within the constraints of the daycare reality.

Exactly how much integration can be accomplished in the first five years of a child's life? Do you remember anything before the age of five?

Even if he could remember, until the child is more developed, religious education can't be communicated, except in such broad and crude strokes. All daycare activity up to that point is devoted to physical caretaking and socialization. Whether a child is drawing a Christmas tree, a stick man or a house, it's all about play and learning hand-eye coordination, not theological concepts.

There is approximately one year – from the age of four on – in which a day school can make any educational impact on a child. But in any case, whatever is communicated conceptually during that year – and by conceptually we're talking about very simple ideas at that age – won't amount to a hill of beans beside what the child is learning at home and what he is absorbing from his social environment.

The whole question of religious education in daycare only arose because an internal government audit revealed that about 20 state-funded daycares were including religious instruction in their programs. It turned out the Ministry for Families granted a permit a few years ago to an Islamic association to open an 80-place centre in Laval, whose declared mandate was to "spread Islamic education among Muslims and non-Muslims."

"Non-Muslims?" Get real.

What is the cultural composition of those 20 daycares anyway? Likely children from the religion these centres promote. These are children who are already absorbing their parents' religious values by osmosis, a process reinforced by their constant association with children from like-minded households. They are already being "educated" – it is now a question of whether they will marinate in their cultural heritage for up to 16 hours a day.

Say these centres were told they can't teach religion. Does anyone seriously think people who got into the daycare business for cultural reasons will not find a way around such a prohibition?

How exactly would you monitor these centres? If, just before Passover, a member of the newly-formed "religious instruction police" were to observe a teacher in a Jewish daycare overseeing a matzo-baking class, is that religious instruction or a cooking class? What about painting Easter


eggs? Art class or religious instruction? What about story books about a prophet called Mohammed? Literary-building skills or religious instruction?

You would think that the Quebec government has all it can handle at the moment with Bill 94. The

banning of the niqab in public institutions was a very popular and, in my opinion, courageous act. The niqab is an objective reality. Everyone knows what it looks like and many feel it's a socially aggressive challenge to Quebec's cultural values. Banning the niqab is


straightforward.


Religious education in daycare, on the other hand, is difficult to define with precision, has a negligible effect on society and is impossible to enforce. Quebec should pick its cultural battles with more care.





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## NEIGHBOURHOOD RENAISSANCE

# Shaughnessy Village A Neighbourhood's Rebirth

It's springtime in Shaughnessy Village and the residents are out-and-about after a long hibernation. It has a wealth of cultural diversity. What an amazing mixture, a true melting pot, of not only cultures, but people from different social status. On one block alone there are Indians, Germans, Ukrainians, Italians, Haitians and Irish. Anyone thinking of purchasing property in the area would be joining actors, lawyers, architects, authors, a dentist, an opera singer and a playwright.

The residents also include students from Lasalle College and Concordia, who make the Village their temporary home. They arrive in late summer droves, vans packed to the brim with possessions - parents usually in tow, to check out the neighbourhood. Then there are the down-

and-outs that frequent Cabot Square, the druggies, and graffiti artists who express themselves on the walls of private property. All are part and parcel of any urban community, and Shaughnessy Village - named for the house once owned by Lord Shaughnessy, which is now Canadian Centre for Architecture - is no different.

For the past 10 years, Shaughnessy has been going downhill, mushrooming down-at-the-heel restaurants along Ste. Catherine Street coupled with the slow disintegration of the block housing the remains of the Seville Theatre.

The stretch of broken down buildings between Chomedey and Lambert-Closse is now slated for development.

The so-called Seville Block is named after a



once proud lady: The Seville Theatre. Built in 1929 as a movie theatre, she was turned into a stage theatre in the 1940s. In her heyday, she showcased some of the top names in the entertainment world including Nat King Cole, Tony Bennett, Peggy Lee, Sammy Davis Jr., Frank Sinatra and Louis Armstrong. In the 60s, she was turned back into a movie theatre.

Residents originally wanted the theatre to be restored. But despite being named a heritage site by the city in 1990, she was left to the elements and the pigeons, her outer walls finally having to be supported by beams to prevent them from falling.

The recent news that Stephen Bronfman, along with real estate developer Prevel, intend to build up the area with commercial spaces and middle-income condominiums suggests the problem may be solved. The old theatre's façade will either be rebuilt or remembered in a photo montage. Nice - if the words become actions. The city has promised to fast-track the project and all agree that sooner is better than later when it comes to the Seville Block.

A new concern is also rearing its ugly head. A nearby Ste. Catherine Street restaurant asked permission from the city to open a terrace that would accommodate 710 people. The thought of late-night revellers leaving the bar in the early hours and spilling onto the residential streets has some Villagers concerned.

So, what's the draw to this little hub? This tight-knit community is served by an elected organization (The Shaughnessy Village Association, formed in 1981) that holds get-

togethers throughout the year. Auctions are held at these events to raise money and collect food for charities in the Village. There is a keen interest in the historical value of the area. Homeowners work at maintaining its heritage by conserving the integrity of the older homes, greening the alleys and holding a seasonal clean-up day and beautification contest every year.

The residents lobby the city for better traffic flow. The organization has also provided lane lights for areas heavily used by drug dealers, thus cutting down on the problem. The Montreal Heritage Society gives weekend walks through the Village during the summer, showcasing its old homes and rich history. The Montreal Children's Hospital, restaurants, grocery shopping and a library are all within walking distance. A movie theatre is nearby. There is even a theatre group, The Shaughnessy Village Players.

I have lived and worked in Shaughnessy for over 20 years. I remember Pascals, the York Theatre, Stanley Cup parades on Ste. Catherine, the St. Patrick's parades, Nick Auf de Mauer walking along Tupper, hat pulled down, cigar in mouth. I even remember the occasional hockey riot.

Shaughnessy Village is many things to many people. Certainly a lot can be said for the convenience of living near stores, public transit, or being able to walk or ride a bike to work. But it's the cultural mosaic that grabs me, along with the friendships made and the comfort of being a part of a warm and caring neighbourhood. It's home.

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## NEIGHBOURHOOD RENAISSANCE

# Namur Jean-Talon An eco-utopic condoville?

Car dealerships, cheap office space, a cemetery, barren lots and a handful of sub-par apartment buildings; such is the makeup of the neighbourhood becoming known as NJT – Namur Jean-Talon. Within ten years, it is expected to undergo a complete transformation and the worth of the area is expected to increase tenfold. NJT is a project twice as valuable to the city as Griffintown, but without the high profile and ensuing scepticism.

NJT development is moving along at lightning-speed, by city planning standards. Conceived by the urban planning department of the Côte des Neiges-NDG borough only about three years ago, nearly half of the projects are already being delivered, under construction or in the planning stages.

The area to be developed will be worth \$800-million by 2020. It is on the northernmost tip of the borough, bordering the Town of Mount-Royal, contained by Jean Talon St., de la Savane St. and Mountain Sights Ave. Local attractions include the Baron de Hirsch cemetery (the final resting place for many in Montreal's Jewish community), Volvo and Kia dealerships, and an indoor go-carting circuit.

The cemetery isn't going anywhere, but everything else in NJT is fair game for developers like Sam Scalia of Devmont Construction, who was the first to test the waters. His new condo project in the neighbourhood, Côte Ouest, is now being delivered and a second, more upscale project dubbed Rouge, will soon break ground on a long-neglected lot on the corner of Jean-Talon and Victoria Ave.

"I was looking to do a project with the SHDM (Société d'habitation et de développement de Montréal)," Scalia recently told *The Métropolitain*, adding that he quickly saw enormous potential in NJT because of its proximity to two Metro stations and two autoroutes. The partnership between the SHDM and Devmont allows first-time homebuyers to receive tax breaks and grants to put toward a down-payment. "The help of the borough brought credibility to the project."

Côte des Neiges-NDG is not just facilitating the entry of 3,200 housing units to the area, but encouraging



DAN DELMAR PHOTO

developers to adopt their "green" vision. There is little room for the automobile inside of NJT proper; a chunk of Victoria north of Jean-Talon will be completely closed to traffic. The planned community would encourage residents to give up their cars in favour of walking, cycling or taking public transit. One idea the city is toying with would involve a tramway line beginning on the southern end of NJT, heading along Côte des Neiges Rd. and into the downtown core.

It is inspired by similar industrial-turned-residential developments in warmer cities like Vancouver, where the trendy Arbutus Walk neighbourhood has all essential services within walking distance of one's home. An interesting concept, in theory, but how appealing will it be for Montreal pedestrians in, say, mid-January?

The lack of space set aside for cars is one concern raised by the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM), the city agency which hosts and analyzes the feedback from open consultation meetings with citizens.

« Le peu de disponibilité de places de stationnement extérieur et à prix modique constitue un enjeu réel à moyen terme à cause de l'arrivée de plusieurs milliers de nouveaux usagers et à cause des aménagements qui seront requis pour les commerces et les places d'affaires que l'arrondissement veut conserver sur le site, » they wrote. « Rappelons que le dynamisme du futur secteur repose sur la proximité des services et sur l'animation que créera la présence de commerces et de places d'affaires... Le manque de places de stationnement à prix modique risque de faire perdre aux commerces et aux propriétaires d'édifices leur avantage

concurrentiel dans le marché du bureau en périphérie du centre-ville. »

The OCPM applauded borough planners for environmental-friendliness and noted that the inclusion of many trees and green spaces could become a major selling point for the area. The number of condos for sale, as opposed to apartments for rent, was also an issue addressed in the report.

Despite Côte des Neiges-NDG mayor Michael Applebaum's best intentions, it is clear that NJT is not a response to the low-income housing crunch in the borough. With the median annual income of a borough resident being

under \$29,000, it will be difficult for many to afford their first home in NJT.

Many of the condos being built are considered "affordable housing," by the city's definition. Political posturing aside, in practical terms, how many borough residents will truly be able to afford these condos? Residents on nearby Mountain Sights Ave., where many rental units are in desperate need of rejuvenation, told the OCPM that, so far, NJT will simply not meet their needs.

« Des taux allant de 20 % à 50 % de logement social sur le site ont été mis sur la table tout au long du processus de consultation. La notion d'« abordabilité » de la Stratégie d'inclusion a également été remise en question, car les prix des logements dits abordables les rendent inaccessibles à une bonne partie des résidents de Côte des Neiges. »

Rental units are, for the moment, completely absent from plans within NJT proper. The borough is requiring that Devmont build 98 rental apartments on Sax St. at Labarre St., a few blocks outside of NJT. With the approval of Devmont's 400 Rouge condos, which start at \$170,000, comes the "social obligation," as Scalia put it, to build 15

per cent of that number in social housing; they are surpassing that amount, reaching roughly 25 per cent.

The OCPM noted that 44 per cent of housing projects have already been planned; one quarter, approved. The concept of a balanced housing mix is, so far, a foreign one inside this neighbourhood. If trends continue, NJT could end up being an isolated, environmentally-friendly condoville; a pocket of moderate wealth, surrounded by some new social housing and a few old slums.

Aside from the occasional promotional piece in the Home section of the major newspapers, there have been few words written about this project, which involves more development than Griffintown and, eventually, more revenue generated for the city.

Perhaps that is because, unlike the quaint old Irish slum neighbourhood, it seems that in NJT there will be little lost with the addition of a slew of new condos, apart from the odd car dealership or abandoned warehouse. There are no heritage homes, church ruins or fabled stables; not a single brick dates from the 19th century. There is only a vision of what could be, and that vision is awfully narrow in scope.



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## NEIGHBOURHOOD RENAISSANCE

# Griffintown The limits of loss

Decades after there will be nothing left of Montreal's Griffintown except for the name and Mary Gallagher's headless ghost, more than a few urban planners will continue to wonder why so little was done with such a magnificent opportunity for truly sustained and modern urban development.

"This is such an incredible opportunity to build a real 21st century city," said Montreal urban activist Judith Bauer. "Why can't these people think of empty urban space as something more than just another opportunity to build another pile of condos?"

Bauer was talking about the city's recently revised plans to help developer Devimco, go ahead and begin to build the first phase of their new scaled down Griffintown condominium complex. While many, including city executive committee member Richard Bergeron, consider the new plan to be nothing less than a "night and day" improvement over Devimco's original \$1.3 Billion proposal, the new Griffintown 'Lite' proposal still includes 1 375 new high rise housing units piled high in a series of multi-floor urban condominium buildings with just

enough retail and commercial space for the new stores required to service the community. To be fair, the new plan also includes up to 20% of available green space for parks along with six parking spots for every 10 units. Although this is only the first of a four- phased construction schedule, the original plan's critics will be relieved as none of the district's streets will be swallowed up by the new construction, there will be no expropriations and there will be no elevated passageways over Peel Street.

Compared to the developer's original proposal, Devimco's new project will probably face little opposition because, apart from the fact the condominium's seem to cater to city's confirmed singles population, it's nothing but small beer compared to what both Devimco and the Tremblay administration had in mind when they first began to talk about Griffintown's future development. Among other details, their old plan included two massive big-box stores à la Wal-Mart, massive parking lots for passing trade, a concert hall, and two hotels. The old proposal also included a number of



high rise apartment buildings of varying height (up to 20 floors!) which would include 3680 condominiums along with designated homes for both seniors and students along with some social housing and enough retail space to service the entire community.

After seeing the original Devimco plan for the first time, McGill University Urban Planning Professor Rafael Fischler said it had "...all the charm of a post-war Soviet housing

development."

As one of the city's more vociferous opponents to the Tremblay administration's real estate initiatives during Mayor Gérald Tremblay's previous administration, Projet Montréal's Richard Bergeron often accused the mayor of being far more concerned about what he could do for the city's various real estate promoters than he was about the city's overtaxed citizens who were often forced to pay for some promoter's latest fantasy. As one of the three city councilors who voted against Mayor Tremblay's motion to alter the city's urban plan, Bergeron continued to carry on his singular fight against the Griffintown plan even after the city's opposition rolled over and accepted the mayor's motion without a single comment against the project. Following last year's election and his nomination to the city's executive committee, Bergeron has now become one of the mayor's biggest allies. As of last week's announcement of the new Griffintown 'Lite' project, Bergeron is now one of the plan's core supporters even if members of his own party say it doesn't do enough to attract families to the area.

"The original project was horrible—it's true," he said, "...but with other housing projects we've got planned for the district, we're going to create a very beautiful urban neighborhood."

Local activists and urban planning specialists don't agree. As Bauer put it, one of the key elements of sustainable development is to know how the

promotion of growth must always include the implicit limits of loss. And as far as Griffintown is concerned, Bauer believes profit margins will push the new development's vertical architecture high into the sky which will destroy what's left of Griffintown as we know it.

"More towers, she said. "More people walking their dogs in a tiny park the size of a postage stamp alongside soaring concrete walls, tiny balconies and wind-swept streets... That's no way to build a community."

Referring back to Montreal's ill-fated 'Corrid' Art' project which earned the city a lot of attention from the globe's contemporary art community before former Mayor Jean Drapeau ordered it torn down because he was of the "I don't know much about art but I know what I like" school of art appreciation, Bauer said city planners could build another world famous Corrid' Art stretching from Old Montreal right up to the city's Sherbrooke Street museums.

"Keep the six floor limit on new construction because that will create an environment where people aren't alienated by the scale and size of their own environment. After citing Paris as a good example of what happens when cities spread out on a horizontal axis instead of a vertical axis, she described Baron Hausmann's Paris as an urban environment where museums, parks, shopping areas and plazas provide the common experience which begins to define a community and its people.

"If the city is serious about culture," she said, "... you can find all the culture you want in a line stretching from Old Montreal right up to the Sherbrooke Street museums.

In a city where so many mistakes have been made because of its leaders lack of political courage and imagination, Bauer hopes the city will use its head and have the courage and imagination to do what's right in Griffintown because if it doesn't, Mary Gallagher won't be the only one wandering the streets looking for her lost head while trying to figure out what happened to Griffintown.

## The System is the Scandal!

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# Send in the clowns

## Canada at Shanghai's world's fair

**T**oo little thought has been given to Canada's national pavilion at the World Exposition in Shanghai, opening May 1.

Whatever one may think about the previous Canadian government's decision to take part in the Shanghai World's Fair which just opened as yet another showcase for the totalitarian Communist regime, once a sovereign nation has signed onto to an agreement it is customary that it is an obligation on future administrations of whatever party. It is not like the Olympics. This is a state commitment to put Canada's best foot forward.

Shanghai is, after all, on the other side of the world. The tangible effects of participating in a world's fair are difficult to gauge, and there aren't that many votes to be gained at home by putting Canada's best foot forward in Shanghai. So the government has fused entertainment with culture and has given over the whole thing to the Cirque de Soleil.

The Cirque is highly regarded for its slick international salesmanship, but a world's fair is, as The Globe and Mail's architecture critic Lisa Rochon reminded us, supposed to be "an Olympics of architecture and art." At World Expositions, the national pavilion itself is supposed to be an exhibit - the most obvious examples being Mies Van De Rohe's German Pavilion at Barcelona in 1929 and Buckminster Fuller's U.S. Pavilion at Montreal in 1967, both of which are still standing.

Canada has produced crowd-pleasing architecture at previous Expos; ingenuity that was not only dazzling but emotionally engaging. Think of Vancouver architect Bing Thom's seductive pavilion at Seville in 1992, with its zinc façade and cool turquoise courtyard of shimmering mirrors and light. It was so highly thought of by the Spaniards that it is the only international pavilion from that fair still standing in Seville. Thom, in fact, is so highly regarded that he was selected by the Chinese to represent Canada and to design the master plan for the Shanghai fair.

But Heritage Canada hired the Cirque du Soleil to manage things instead - not to perform, mind you, but to execute the program and design the pavilion.

"The reputation and unique Cirque du Soleil brand is well known and highly respected around the world, including China," explained Heritage Minister James Moore. "The government of Canada entered into a collaborative arrangement with the Cirque to develop the overall concept and design for the pavilion and to create the public presentation program for visitors, and to manage Canada's cultural program at the Expo."

"Canada, in its wisdom, downloaded its risk to the private sector. The Cirque surfaced, and a contract was signed," Thom told The Métropolitain in an interview from Vancouver. "Every participating country except Canada and the United States - which didn't really want to go Shanghai in the first place - has held their own design competition. It is not that the Cirque isn't a famous brand, it is. But surely that is not all that Canada is about. It is after all a World Exposition, not Disneyland."

While it is risky to judge a building still under construction, architecture doesn't seem to be the Cirque's strong suit. Its production designer, Johnny Boivin, has come up with a building that resembles a looped ribbon shaped into a stylized 'C' (China? Canada? Cirque? Creativity? Confusion?). The result is inspired by the world of strip mall packaging rather

than the art of architecture. For \$28-million, Canadians will be getting a perfectly utilitarian stainless steel building, clad in red cedar with a green inner court that has all the appeal of a vast automobile showroom. There is no apparent spatial richness to the design, no luminous whole, no continuity, and no commitment to the Expo site on the Huangpu River.

Even more puzzling is that while Saia Barbaresi Topouzanov Architectes, a Montreal firm known for its work on the Palais de Congrès and the Benny Farm redevelopment master plan, was asked to refine Boivin's concept, it gets no design credit.

In fact, no one involved at the firm is allowed to talk about the Shanghai project without the Cirque's permission.

The Cirque promises a program featuring 150 Canadian musicians, dancers, actors, authors and entertainers of all sorts, including Gregory Charles, Bedouin Soundclash, The Damelahamid Dancers, Hey Rosetta, Daniel Lavoie, Kreesha Turner, Shane Yellowbird and Mark De Jong.

Canada, it seems, is content to dazzle the Chinese at Shanghai with our footwork rather than engage them with our artistry.

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## Macabre Madonna

The Madonna Painter, The Birth of Painting at the Centaur, is a richly imagined, sacrilegiously macabre, exercise in which playwright Michel-Marc Bouchard delves into long-discarded French-Canadian Catholic ritual and rural ignorance, “the way a flea market hawker displays sacred objects that have been stolen and disguised for resale.”

The play takes place in northern Quebec during the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic when a handsome, idealistic young priest (Graham Cuthbertson) arrives in a backwoods community and commissions an immigrant Italian artist (Alessandro Juliani – who incidentally is the best thing about the production) – to paint a fresco of the Virgin Mary to protect his parishioners from the ravages of the disease.

The villagers are convinced that English-Canadian soldiers returning from the war are deliberately spreading the virus through Quebec to decimate French-Canadians. The emphasis in the Centaur production is on the play’s subtitle, The Birth of Painting. It is all about how the



Jean Leclerc and Graham Cuthbertson.

work involves both the mortification and the celebration of the flesh.

Originally staged in French, Linda Gaboriau’s translation doesn’t quite capture the winsome poetry of the original. Three young

girls in the village compete to be the model for the triptych, Marie-Louise (Lucinda Davis), who picks through other people’s laundry to read their secrets, the sassy Mary Ann (Amelia Sargisson), and the chaste Mary Frances (Stefanie

Buxton).

The seductive Italian artist, however, decides to be inspired by Mary of the Secrets (Meg Roe), who has a mysterious, troubled past of her own. The painter turns out to be a misogynist who seduces his

models then abandons them to capture their painful expressions on canvas.

Then there’s the agnostic village doctor (Jean Leclerc), who dissects bodies looking for their souls. As the doctor, Leclerc seems to have wandered on stage thinking he is still on Broadway playing Dracula.

“It is not so good for a man to be so handsome, especially a priest,” he warns the cleric in a booming ghoulish voice. “Someday, when you are ready, I would like to do your autopsy.”

Sure enough, Graham Cuthbertson’s priest ends up being brutally victimized, but his anguish needs to be reigned in a bit. It has all been directed with an over-emphatic hand by Roy Surrete. The stylized set by Pierre Etienne Locas puts a kitchen sink front and centre, and it winds up being used as a holy water fount, a forest spring, and a bloody hospital basin. It gives nothing away to say the most shocking scene has nothing to do with bloodied sacred hearts and other amputated body parts, but a bit of good flagellation. Sadomasochists will have a good time.

## Bunny Good Time

The good news about the Segal Centre’s revival of Harvey, the play about an absentminded man who befriends an imaginary six foot tall rabbit is that it is a hare brained delight.

The not so good news, is that it only runs until until May 9th.

It’s a sweet, harmless work whose first version in 1944 won a Pulitzer prize, then was immortalized on film in 1950 by Jimmy Stewart in the role of the eccentric Elwood P. Dowd and Josephine Hull won a best supporting Oscar for her portrayal of his socially embarrassed sister Vera. The author, Mary Chase, was inspired by the mythical ‘pooka’, a shape shifter, which in Celtic tradition takes the form of a rabbit. In the Segal production, sensibly directed by Diana Leblanc, R. H. Thomson makes Dowd his own character. He invests the part with a devastatingly zany deadpan performance that is often filled with quirky, endearing surprise. Thomson is every inch believable as someone who wrestled with reality for 40 years and is happy



Nora McLellan and RH Thomson in Harvey at Segal Centre.

to state that he finally won out over it. Nora McLellan as, Vera, who thinks he’s off his rocker and plans to have him committed, is also an equally striking foil. The rest of the versatile cast, too, is solid and positively irresistible. There is Alex McCooeye as psychiatrist Lyman Sanderson, David Francis as head psychiatrist, William Chumley, who brings a sense of urgency to the proceedings, Moria Wylie, surely one of the city’s finest actors, is Betty Chumley, and Walter Massey is the beautifully spoken Judge Omar Gaffney. Other s in the cast are equally respectable, if not quite as strong. The play occasionally shows its age; there’s a workplace situation that borders on the edge of what today would be consider sexual harassment, but that’s nitpicking.

John Dinning’s set is, as always, an architectural wonder; James Lavoie’s period costumes are bang on. Incidentally, the play is also being revived this year at the Shaw Festival at Niagara – on- the Lake with Peter Kranz playing Dowd.



# Proud to be Canadian?

Canada provides hundreds of million of dollars in aid to dictators, tyrants, and corrupt governments around the world.

Of the 25 countries named in the new International Policy Statement as key recipients of Canadian aid, only 6 are deemed by Freedom House to be free, while 19 are unfree or dictatorships. All 25 are identified as having corruption as a major problem, combined with weak parliaments, a lack of transparency and little respect for the rule of law.

Instead of working to bring about positive change, Canadian aid allows these dysfunctional and sometimes tyrannical regimes to remain intact while we apply band-aids to the symptoms.

Canada consistently fails to support democracies around the world such as India, Taiwan, America and Israel. In many cases, we actively work against them. And with the exception of Ukraine, Canada refuses to take measurable action to support the billions of people aspiring for democracy, freedom and accountable governments around the world.

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