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CÉLÉBRATION !



Celebrating 30 years of Montreal's grand political salon

PHOTO ROBERT J. GALBRAITH

David and Diana Nicholson receiving flowers on the evening of the celebration at the University Club.

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A moveable feast

Some thirty years ago, Diana and David Nicholson opened their storied home at 33 Rosemount Avenue in Westmount for conversations with friends every Wednesday night. Those conversations grew into a Montreal tradition that rivals the most influential political and literary salons of Washington, London or Paris. Almost every leader from the worlds of politics, finance, medicine, science, academia and any other vocation you can think of have passed through their warm and welcoming doors. And many of the

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1500 mercredis consécutifs!

Ce n'est peut être pas impressionnant si vous le dites rapidement, mais contemplez le nombre pour un instant et il est en effet impressionnant.

Since David and Diana Nicholson held their first salon in February, 1982, we've gone through seven Canadian Prime Ministers, five United States Presidents, ten premiers of

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Toast to a House

For 1495 consecutive Wednesdays this stately mansion on its quiet tree-lined street in Westmount has opened its yellow door with the admiral's port and starboard lights of red and green firmly, quietly beaming welcome to a motley crew of you and yes, I...to meet and greet, to talk and tease, and laugh and joke and sing...and ring in the changes of government, economies, birthdays, markets, years, ideas, philosophies, generations, recessions, opinions, seasons, reasons...even millennia...during times of sadness and

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LE PROTOCOLE D'OTTAWA

Des parlementaires du monde entier émettent une déclaration sur l'antisémitisme

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Pierre K. Malouf

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Ex-dramaturge, romancier persévérant, essayiste et poète à ses heures, Pierre K. Malouf fréquente des fédéralistes et des indépendantistes, des gens de gauche et des gens de droite, des jeunes et des vieux, des écrivains et des ingénieurs. Gentil comme tout, il ne dit pas toujours tout ce qu'il pense, mais pense toujours ce qu'il écrit.

LA PATRIE

POUR UNE COMMISSION D'ENQUÊTE AU MANDAT SANS LIMITE

Le Québec doit démissionner !

La société québécoise souffre de maux qui ne mettent pas sa vie en danger à brève échéance, mais qui lui causent des douleurs chroniques et des handicaps débilissants. Le Québec est un malade qui connaît ses symptômes mais qui n'ose pas nommer sa maladie, qui dispose dans sa pharmacie de tous les remèdes qui pourraient favoriser sa guérison, mais qui refuse de les avaler par crainte des effets secondaires, leur préférant des panacés qui aggravent le mal au lieu de le guérir. Pensons seulement à l'état de déliquescence de notre système scolaire, à notre dette publique colossale, à notre incapacité de mener à bout le moindre projet d'envergure (la construction du nouveau Chum est prévue pour le début du 22^e siècle), aux mouiroirs dans lesquels nous parquons les vieillards, aux malades mentaux que nous abandonnons dans la rue sans traitement et sans soutien, et surtout, surtout à la stérilité de nos débats publics.

Ainsi, il est beaucoup question actuellement dans les médias d'une soi-disant «montée de la droite», qui se manifesterait par le temps d'antenne ou l'espace journalistique accordés depuis quelque temps à gens comme Éric Duhaime (que Pierre Foglia vient de traiter d'imbécile dans l'un des articles les plus imbéciles qu'il ait jamais pondus depuis cent vingt-deux ans). Liberté-Québec constituerait une menace? Une menace à quoi? À la sclérose intellectuelle qui caractérise la pensée de gauche? Ne craignons rien, les chefs de nos trois grandes centrales syndicales veillent au grain.

Les solutions aux problèmes que je viens d'énumérer sont connues. Il arrive que l'une d'elle fasse consensus. Qu'arrive-t-il alors? Un fonctionnaire, un comité, un organisme consultatif, un groupe de pression s'interpose. Parfois, c'est le premier ministre lui-même qui jette du sable dans l'engrenage.

Rassemblons tous les citoyens du Québec dans un grand amphithéâtre, faisons sortir du rang le premier ministre, les ministres et les députés libéraux, les militants du parti Libéral du Québec et tous ceux qui voudront bien les rejoindre, qu'ils soient entrepreneurs en construction, syndicalistes ou danseuses du ventre. L'opération terminée, demandons aux six millions de personnes qui ne se seront pas rassemblées autour de Jean Charest s'ils souhaitent la création d'une commission d'enquête

sur les liens qui pourraient exister entre le monde interloppe, l'industrie de la construction (patrons et syndicats) et les partis politiques. Pas besoin d'être grand mage pour deviner la réponse : c'est oui ! J'apprends d'ailleurs aujourd'hui (ces lignes sont écrites le 17 novembre) que même la FTQ, dont le dossier n'est pas d'une limpidité exemplaire, souhaite la création d'une telle commission. La volonté de la majorité s'étant ainsi manifestée, à qui allons-nous demander de la mettre en pratique? Jetez un petit coup d'oeil au fond là-bas près de la sortie. Oui, lui! Êtes-vous sourd? Ça fait cent fois qu'il vous le dit : non, c'est non!

Jean Charest ne démissionnera pas, pourquoi le ferait-il? Mme Marois n'avouera pas avoir compris que le Québec ne se séparera jamais du Canada. Québec Solidaire continuera de promouvoir une répartition plus juste de la pauvreté. Et croyez-vous que le maire Vaillancourt va descendre de son trône? Que les entrepreneurs vont cesser de se partager l'assiette au beurre? Que la pègre va se retirer du marché? Que les corrupteurs vont renoncer à leurs enveloppes jaunes et les corrompus à leurs contenus.

Restons calmes. M. Charest est dans son droit. Son pouvoir est légitime. Il a été élu démocratiquement et exerce ses prérogatives en toute légitimité. Il ne cesse d'ailleurs de nous rassurer: la police enquête, tout va bien, le brouillard de scandale qui nous entoure sera bientôt dissipé, j'ai les deux mains sur le volant. Devant une telle fin de non-recevoir, que nous reste-t-il à faire? Signer une pétition demandant sa démission? Manifester devant l'Assemblée nationale? Déposer de l'argent dans une enveloppe brune (ou blanche) pour tenter de profiter à notre tour d'un système qui favorise la magouille? Ou tout simplement nous retirer dans nos terres et vaquer à nos occupations en attendant les prochaines élections? Ces solutions ont toutes leurs mérites, j'en ai une autre à proposer.

Jean Charest ne démissionnera pas, pourquoi le ferait-il? Mme Marois n'avouera pas avoir compris que le Québec ne se séparera jamais du Canada. Québec Solidaire continuera de promouvoir une répartition plus juste de la pauvreté. Et croyez-

vous que le maire Vaillancourt va descendre de son trône? Que les entrepreneurs vont cesser de se partager l'assiette au beurre? Que la pègre va se retirer du marché? Que les corrupteurs vont renoncer à leurs enveloppes jaunes et les corrompus à leurs contenus. Ou, pour parler de problèmes encore plus graves, que les bonzes du ministère de l'éducation vont dénoncer la réforme scolaire et le cours Éthique et culture religieuse, que les associations étudiantes vont promouvoir la hausse des frais de scolarité, que les nostalgiques de la calèche et du traîneau vont approuver la réfection de l'Échangeur Turcot, que Léo-Paul Lauzon va comprendre le bon sens?

Ces miracles n'auront pas lieu. C'est donc le peuple lui-même qui devra agir. De manière tout à fait pacifique, mais radicale. Le Québec doit démissionner et déclencher une vaste commission d'enquête portant... sur lui-même. Démissionner ne signifie pas cesser de vivre et d'agir. Quitter une fonction n'implique pas qu'on ne puisse pas en occuper une autre.

Ainsi, les Québécois qui démissionneront de leur fonction de parents indifférents pourront se mettre à valoriser l'instruction et à soutenir leurs enfants dans leurs études. Les étudiants en sciences de l'éducation qui trouvent les examens de français trop difficiles démissionneront de l'université et apprendront un métier, plus payant d'ailleurs que celui de prof. Plus merveilleux encore, les bureaucrates débureaucratés iront travailler sur le terrain. Quels terrains? Faites-votre choix. Le Québec ne manque pas d'enfants à éduquer, de malades à soigner, de ressources à exploiter, d'idées à développer, ni d'erreurs à corriger.



**Ideas before identities.
Justice before orthodoxy.**

THE MÉTROPOLITAIN



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La CSST

Le mauvais tempérament de l'époque au Québec

Les événements en société sont connexes. Parfois indirectement. Parfois ils reflètent simplement le tempérament de l'époque. Mais c'est pour cette raison que ceux qui affectent ce tempérament, ceux qui ont un poste politique important, doivent être imputables quand ils pratiquent la politique de l'annulation.

I was struck by three events over the past week. I want to share them with you. Toward the end of last week a south shore family went to a local church that was preparing food baskets for the needy. They were sent away because they were not francophone and the baskets at that church were for francophones. They were directed to another church where anglophones were served. This in the season of "Suffer the little children to come unto me..."

Some eight days before this sad incident, Quebec culture minister Christine St-Pierre applauded a citizen who was being honored. The honor being bestowed on the woman the Minister was praising was being given for having reported some 200 businesses that had supposedly violated Quebec's language laws. The Minister said that reporting was the duty of every citizen.

Deux incidents. Apparemment indépendant. Pourtant, ils en disent long sur notre société. Le premier démontre la soumission de la compassion à l'hégémonie linguistique. Le deuxième contraindrait la raison linguistique aux caprices d'une société de délateurs.

Taken alone, one could dismiss either incident as not having any broad societal impact. But it is about the temper of our times you see, and in Quebec those times can take a nasty,

brutish turn very quickly. One with lasting impact. And that is just what happened at the end of last week.

La CSST a entériné une décision qu'elle ne communiquera plus avec des employeurs québécois en anglais. Seulement en français. Elle continuera à servir des employés en anglais aussi bien que des employeurs de l'extérieur du Québec. Elle est allée dans sa petitesse et sa vénalité jusqu'à supprimer l'option « press 9 for English » de son système téléphonique.

The reason for the action was that the OQLF, our language bureau, asked the CSST and 165 other agencies to comply more strictly with Quebec's language law. Stricter language enforcement! We have truly entered the realm of the menacingly absurd. Pierre Turgeon, spokesman for the CSST, said the agency was just being a "good corporate citizen." It is frightening to think what he considers constitutes citizenship.

Alarms should be raised over this action. It is the most serious assault in years to what has been relative linguistic peace. The action contravenes civil rights, threatens the security of workers and raises the question of just who makes policy in Quebec - elected officials or bureaucrats of the language police?

Comment est-ce que les petits commerçants sont censés respecter leurs obligations ou offrir une protection appropriée à leurs employés si les procédures ne peuvent leur être expliquées? Quel droit ont les organismes du gouvernement de créer deux classes de citoyens - de fait - une violation non seulement de la charte fédérale des droits et libertés mais aussi de la charte québécoise qui garantit l'application égale de la loi? Et que veut dire cette décision pour les protections accordées

aux citoyens de la minorité au Québec par la Loi sur les langues officielles du Canada?

I wanted to find out what our elected government officials had to say. I had some of our reporters canvas some half-dozen MNAs from the east end of Montreal to the West Island. Most had their offices say they needed time to study the matter or to get instructions. One of our reporters however caught up with Premier Charest who was at a West Island event with MNA Geoff Kelley. When he posed the question of why this was done the Premier demurred to Kelley. Kelley's answer was both sad and shocking. He said that agencies have had this power since the language laws were passed in 1977 and that since companies were supposed to work in French this was an extension of that policy meant to encourage that goal.

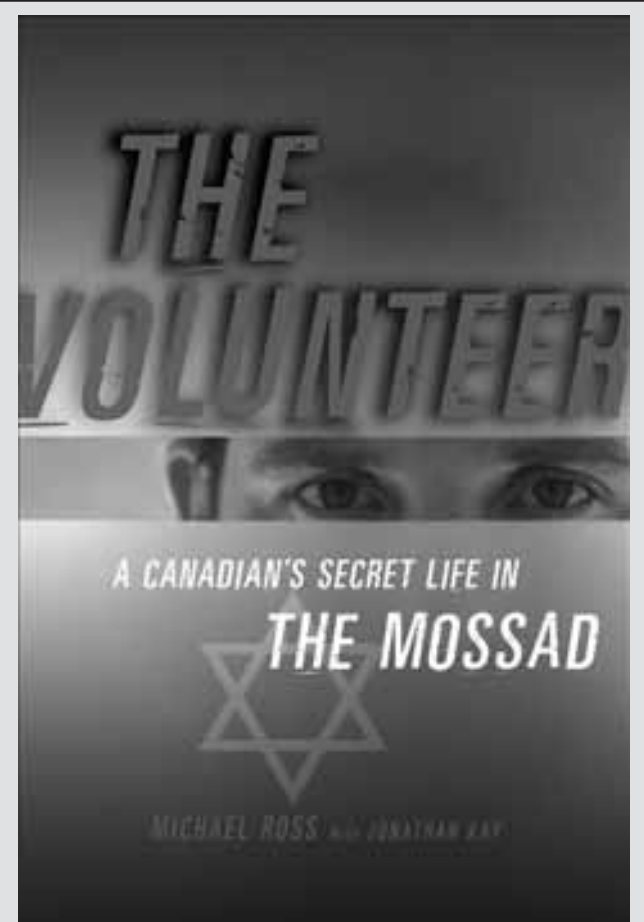
M. Kelley et ses collègues ont tort. C'est une chose d'encourager l'utilisation du Français. C'est tout à fait une autre de contraindre des organismes de l'État d'empêcher un grand nombre de citoyens d'avoir un accès aisé à de l'information publique. Aussi mauvais que les lois linguistiques peuvent être, René Lévesque n'a jamais voulu créer deux classes de citoyens. René Lévesque n'a jamais eu l'intention de compromettre la sécurité des travailleurs. René Lévesque n'a jamais eu l'intention de rendre impossible à un groupe de citoyens de se conformer à la loi. Si ces lois doivent maintenant être utilisées en tant que massue pour battre les minorités à se soumettre et comme fleur au nationalisme extrême, le gouvernement devrait le dire aux gens. Ayons un combat équitable et ouvert. C'est la seule chose décente à faire.

THE VOLUNTEER

The riveting story of a Canadian who served as a senior officer in Israel's legendary Mossad.

For seven-and-a-half years, Ross worked as an undercover agent — a classic spy. In *The Volunteer*, he describes his role in missions to foil attempts by Syria, Libya, and Iran to acquire advanced weapons technology. He tells of his part in the capture of three senior al Qaeda operatives who masterminded the 1998 attacks on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; a joint Mossad-FBI operation that uncovered a senior Hezbollah terrorist based in the United States; and a mission to South Africa in which he intercepted Iranian agents seeking to expand their country's military arsenal; and two-and-a-half years as Mossad's Counterterrorism Liaison Officer to the CIA and FBI.

Many of the operations Ross describes have never before been revealed to the public.





The Confidence Game

In mid-November, I logged on to Facebook to be treated to the following status on the profile of a friend of mine: “What’s the matter, Harper? Afraid you’ll lose the confidence of the House if you put your Afghan war plans to a vote?” My immediate response—which I promptly posted as a comment on my friend’s status—was “Probably.” Stephen Harper’s Conservative government, of course, remains parked at “minority”, theoretically vulnerable to sudden death via a no-confidence vote in the House of Commons. Given this Damoclean threat to his political survival, Harper’s evasion of Parliament did not exactly take me by surprise. Nor was I especially taken aback at reports that the Opposition Liberals had quietly acquiesced in the Tories’ artful dodging. Michael Ignatieff’s Grits have so far struggled to create the “winning conditions,” if you will, for another federal election. Those efforts might not be helped by abandoning an honourable mission that a past Liberal government initiated in the first place.

So the wily Mr. Harper looks likely to get clean away with this latest gambit. His constituents, meanwhile, are left to wonder what this portends for the state of Canadian democracy. Surely, the people’s elected representatives should play some role in determining whether their sons and daughters are to remain bogged down in this seemingly endless quagmire. Yet even on so salient an issue as this, an enfeebled legislature has again been circumvented by a dismissive executive branch. On what can we blame this Canadian tragicomedy, rather recently dubbed the “democratic deficit”? I, for one, point the finger in a most unconventional—and counterintuitive—direction. The venerable old British parliamentary tradition that governments must maintain Parliament’s confidence in order to govern has backfired horribly. Paradoxically, the very principle that ostensibly enables Parliament to hold the Prime Minister accountable has encouraged and empowered the latter to bully the former—or to bypass it altogether.

Much ink has been spilled, and much oxygen burned, on the viselike grip of party discipline on Canadian politics. In his 2001 book *The Friendly Dictatorship*, political columnist Jeffrey Simpson lamented, “Canadian parliamentary parties, especially the governing ones, are like military formations: sharply hierarchical, with a top-down command structure led by the prime minister, with all rewards demanding loyalty and all penalties taxing dissent.” The historical landscape is littered with examples to back up Simpson’s thesis. Both Brian Mulroney and Jean Chrétien punished MPs who voted against the hated GST and sundry other controversial policies by expelling them from their parliamentary caucuses. Even Opposition leaders like Reform’s Preston Manning occasionally felt the need to suspend unruly—and sometimes bigoted—backbenchers, even if it meant violating their own principle of legislative freedom. According to the Library of Parliament, 25 MPs have been suspended from their party caucuses in the House of Commons since 1990. If this leaves you unmoved, ask an American what he or she would think of a President who exiled Congressmen and Senators from their party simply for defying his legislative will.

Why do party leaders so desire to keep their MPs “singing from the same hymnbook,” as Mulroney once put it, that they are willing to crush dissident choirboys thus? Most obviously, bosses have policy agendas to fulfill; corralling their backbenchers removes one obstacle to their success. Yet Prime Ministers can also argue that any legislative defeat risks being portrayed as a loss of Parliament’s

confidence by an opportunistic Opposition. This, of course, could bring down the sitting government, triggering an election which it might very well lose. The confidence convention, then, gives Prime Ministers a perverse and pernicious incentive to manhandle Parliament or, as with the Afghan war, to sideline it.

This paradox is a shame, not only because of its lamentable political consequences, but also thanks to its twofold farcicality. First, the idea that a government whose bill has been voted down in the legislature has necessarily lost the latter’s “confidence” is both empirically and theoretically absurd. Look at the “mother of all Parliaments,” that of Great Britain, where government bills routinely go down to defeat without knocking their sponsors out of power. In Margaret Thatcher’s first term, ten or more Conservative MPs voted against her on sixteen occasions. In 1986, her “Sunday Trading” bill was slapped down by the House of Commons, thanks in large part to substantial Tory dissensions. “Cross voting” by Conservative backbenchers handed John Major at least nine defeats in floor votes in the Commons. Forty-seven Labour MPs voted against Tony Blair’s single-parent benefit bill, while 67 of them rebelled against his plan to cut disability benefits.

Not one of these governments was brought down on confidence grounds; not one of the obstreperous MPs was banished from his or her party’s caucus. The British seem to understand that a vote on one bill is not necessarily a pronouncement on the executive’s overall fitness to govern. There is no reason why MPs cannot reject a particular legislative project while still allowing the government to fulfill the mandate to which it was duly elected. Surely even the most domineering prime ministers know this. They merely capitalize on the confidence tradition as a pretext for bulldozing the pesky checks and balances that obstruct the furtherance of their agendas.

This brings us to the second farcical prong of the paradox—the secret fallacy at the heart of the confidence convention. Just what on God’s green Earth does “the confidence of Parliament” mean, anyway? No freely elected legislature is a monolith; in every responsible government, Parliament is composed of at least two separate parties with opposing viewpoints on most issues. Is “confidence” supposed to mean that the governing party cannot function without the approval of every party in Parliament? I certainly hope not. The minority parties are not called “the Opposition” for nothing; if anything, it is their job to be thorns in the government’s side. How ridiculous would it be to require a government to seek a new popular mandate because it failed to obtain the opposition parties’ cooperation?

Does “confidence” then mean that the Prime Minister must maintain the support of his own party’s representatives, lest the government collapse? As reasonable as this definition sounds at first blush, it, too, is fatally flawed. Are parliamentarians skittish beasts of burden, to be kept firmly bridled lest they turn and stampede their own leaders? At any rate, as stated above, the idea that government backbenchers who reject this or that particular bill have completely deserted their leaders is nonsensical. Practically speaking—as the British have shown—a government can lose a vote in the Commons and still live to legislate another day. It is preposterous to suggest that a government that fails to get its way in Parliament every time will never get its way at all.

Furthermore, I find it downright despicable in principle to claim that a Prime Minister must be able to emasculate Parliament in order

to govern. One of the main purposes of having legislatures at all is to check executive power. To vitiate that function is to do violence to the very notion of democracy itself. If Parliament truly must be relegated to such a rump role in political decision-making, we might as well abolish it altogether and allow an elected king to rule Canada by decree. At least this would be honest with the Canadian people about the manner in which they are truly governed.

Yet what—short of such a radical step—could be done to eliminate Canada’s democratic deficit? The answer might surprise you.

Five years ago, I made it to the final round of Magna International’s “The Next Great Prime Minister” competition. Before a judging panel composed of former Prime Ministers Clark, Turner, Campbell and Mulroney, I outlined the course I would chart, were I at the helm of the ship of state. Among other measures, I advocated reforming our system of government to elect the Prime Minister separately from Parliament. This way, I reasoned, the PM could govern without feeling the need to suppress intra-caucus dissent in order to maintain his hold on power. The last few individuals to wield that power were understandably cool to this proposal. Nonetheless, I stood by it, especially since it was achievable without amending Canada’s constitution, a pursuit fraught with peril.

Though I fell short of winning the competition, the experience inspired me to delve more deeply into the subject for my university senior thesis. In the course of that research, I discovered that nothing as drastic as presidential-style direct election of the Prime Minister would be necessary. Most of the edifice of executive power in Canada is built on rather simple statutory foundations. The Canada Elections Act, for instance, requires parliamentary candidates to obtain party leaders’ signatures on nomination papers in order to be allowed to use the party’s name on campaign literature, on signage and on the ballot itself. This and other provisions give the Prime Minister too much power to decide who gets to run for seats in Parliament and should be repealed. Each MP’s party membership or candidacy should be determined by the local riding association, not by the party leader—as is the case in Britain and other Westminster parliamentary democracies, I might add.

It is not enough—indeed, it is rather naïve—to propose, as John Turner did to me, that party leaders commit to holding more free votes in the House of Commons. The bosses simply cannot be trusted to do so consistently on their own recognizance. As soon as they feel that reform will obstruct their own political success, they will crack down on their backbenchers without hesitation or remorse. Former Prime Minister Paul Martin raised high hopes when he ended the practice of vetoing candidate nominations in late 2003. Yet he reverted to prime ministerial type after the 2004 elections, when the Liberals were busted down to minority-government status. The Tories staunchly defended Parliament’s prerogatives until they won power; since 2006, Stephen Harper has cracked the whip as unapologetically as any of his predecessors.

What Canada needs is the kind of institutional change that will give prime ministers no choice but to respect Parliament. Legislative independence should not be subject to the whims of the executive branch of government. Every vote in Parliament should be a free vote—whether party leaders like it or not. What is at stake is nothing less than the viability of Canadian democracy itself.



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These boots are made for walking...

Supporters of store owner condemn Khadir's smears of Israel

...and as far as Sharon Freedman and her friends are concerned, that's just what they'll do. On Christmas morning, at least a dozen homeless kids are going to get a stellar Christmas present, courtesy of Freedman and a few friends who want to let everyone know how a bit of Christmas charity speaks louder than anything Québec Solidaire's Amir Khadir might have to say about a St. Denis store owner's right to mind his own business.

"I'm the street's new bag lady," said Freedman as she struggled to carry her bags out of Yves Archambault's Le Marcheur in front of a small group of protesters who were trying to boycott the St. Denis Street shoe store. "But I don't care. This is a good way to show Khadir (Mercier MNA Amir Khadir) he should learn to mind his own business."

Bruce Katz, a founder and spokesman for Montreal's PAJU (Palestinian and Jewish Unity), said the whole issue is due to Archambault's decision to carry a line of shoes originally made in Rishon Lezion, Israel. "We gave him a letter stating our demands that he drop the Beautifeel line because these shoes were being made in factories located in the occupied territories," said Katz.

"This is crazy," said Archambault. "This is a business and nobody has a right to tell me how to run my business. And in any case Rishon



Lezion is located west of Jerusalem and well within Israel's original borders."

Katz also informed The Métropolitain that PAJU is working to have all of St. Denis street declared to be an 'Apartheid-free street', which is to say all of the street's retail business would be free of any products made or manufactured in Israel. Apart from the fact Jafar Khadir, Amir Khadir's father, joined the first picket lines raised against the shoe store, Khadir's Québec Solidaire has also made a point of endorsing the boycott against the small St. Denis Street shoe store.

Archambault responded that "If they're so concerned about human rights, I would like to hear what they have to say about human rights in China. I wonder what kind of protest they would make if they knew how much people are being paid to work in Chinese and Korean shoe factories and what those wages mean for the Canadian shoe business."

While he doesn't know what kind of effect the weekly demonstrations are having on his business, both he and his partner, Ginette Auger, said many of their customers make a point of telling them how they came to buy something in his store as a protest against the boycotters.

Sharon Freedman (left), Yves Archambault and Ginette Auger of Le Marcheur.

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If the shoe fits...

L'ignorance, la haine et le boycottage

Les boycotts sont souvent puérils et inefficaces. En politique extérieure, ils n'ont pas plus de valeur que le geste d'un enfant braillard qui interrompt le jeu et rentre à la maison avec son ballon. En matière de boycott, de nouveaux critères d'immaturité et d'ignorance viennent d'être tracés par Palestiniens et Juifs unis (PAJU), groupe soutenu par le député de Québec solidaire Amir Khadir.

Don't let the name fool you: PAJU is a radical pro-Palestinian group that aims to unite Palestinian and Jews only in their hatred for the state of Israel and all those who, even passively, support it. Along with Khadir, they are working to transform St. Denis into what they call an "Apartheid-free zone." Cette déclaration m'a beaucoup étonné, car j'ignorais jusque-là qu'un régime d'apartheid existait dans une rue commerciale branchée du Plateau. Heureusement, la vigilance de PAJU nous permet de pointer du doigt un défenseur de l'apartheid sur la rue St-Denis : il s'appelle Yves Archambault et vend des chaussures.

Archambault and his family own Le Marcheur, a shoe store that carries one line imported from Israel called Beautifeel. Upon being presented with this information, a rational person would think the following: "Who gives a shit?" En faisant du piquetage devant Le Marcheur sous le prétexte fallacieux que ce commerce ose importer des chaussures d'un pays contrôlé par ce qu'ils considèrent être un régime d'apartheid, les membres de PAJU et Khadir se comportent d'une manière tout à fait irrationnelle.

Why are some pro-Palestinian activists obsessed with the Apartheid comparison as of late? Partly because former US president Jimmy Carter and South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu have also used the analogy and Montreal's angry activists are all too eager to act as thoughtless, squawking parrots if it serves their anti-Israel agenda. Naturally, they ignore the rational arguments that make the comparison invalid: There are no mass killings of Palestinians (though some would label casualties of war as such); Arab-Israelis have the right to vote and are represented in the Knesset; Arabic is an official language in Israel and displayed on every road sign; and so forth. There are Arab Muslim judges and diplomat as well. That being said, this is not a blanket endorsement of all

Israeli policy, which has been known to be heavy-handed and disruptive, to say the least, to the quality of life of Palestinians in the West Bank. This is rather a call for Montrealers to reject the demonization of all things Israel simply because they are Israeli. It smacks of appalling ignorance and, I fear, there could also be elements of anti-Semitism boiling under the surface. But mainly this boycott is nothing if not hateful and irrational. Khadir, qui se comporte de manière puérile — et qui boycotte non seulement des chaussures, mais qui s'amuse à les lancer sur des photos de George W. Bush — affirme ne pas vouloir punir Archambault pour avoir importé des chaussures israéliennes, mais plutôt pour lui faire prendre conscience des injustices dont il se fait ainsi complice. Permettez-moi à mon tour de faire l'éducation de M. Khadir qui, en ce moment même, porte sans doute quelque pièce de vêtement fabriquée en Chine, pays qui pratique quotidiennement la torture et la censure, mais qui jouit sur Israël d'un immense avantage : les Chinois ne sont pas juifs.

The following is a partial list of Israeli innovations exported to the rest of the World over the past few decades that Khadir will also have to boycott, or risk being labelled a hypocrite: Intel computer processor chips, firewall software, Google's search algorithm, instant messengers, the cell phone, voicemail, Tsunami warning systems, acne treatment, breast cancer detection equipment... When Khadir Googles himself every night before bed to bask in the glorious amount of publicity he's received that day, he is also tacitly supporting the so-called Apartheid state of Israel — perhaps twice! Armed with this newfound information, Montreal activists, the next logical step would be to boycott Amir Khadir. Vous voyez, il suffit d'un peu d'imagination pour mener une rhétorique de diabolisation jusqu'à des sommets d'absurdité. Plus le démon est monstrueux, plus l'indignation grandit. À moins d'être complètement insensés, M. Khadir et les militants de PAJU ne peuvent pourtant ignorer que leurs manifestations n'exercent aucune influence sur la politique de l'État d'Israël, et ne font pas avancer d'un poil la cause palestinienne. Elles pourraient toutefois avoir chez nous un impact très réel.

It is difficult enough for small

business owners in Montreal to compete against multi-national chains and big box stores; now, apparently, they have activist-losers to contend with. Will Archambault have to vigorously monitor his stock to make sure that even the tiny plastic bit wrapped around the tip of a shoelace has had absolutely no connection to Israel, lest these pests picket his store during the prime Christmas shopping season? Le choix des chaussures de M. Archambault est une simple

décision d'affaire, qui n'a rien à voir avec la politique. Aucun commerçant québécois ne devrait être soumis au traitement insensé qu'il doit subir actuellement. Je le félicite d'être demeuré ferme face à ces manifestations, se disant « dégoûté » par les affiches et ajoutant que « personne n'a le droit de me dire ce que je peux et ne peux pas me vendre dans mon magasin. »

Khadir is an elected official who should, in theory, represent Quebecers

of all nationalities, regardless of their footwear. With this boycott, he is clearly spelling out his contempt for things in Quebec that are even vaguely connected to Israel and that makes him inherently prejudiced. He can no longer serve his constituents with any semblance of credibility or maturity. I would suggest Khadir take his ball and go home, but the ball is probably derived from petroleum products imported from the Middle East — so, let's not go there.

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GLOBAL VILLAGE



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Victory in November Opportunities and Perils for Republicans

Washington, DC - The Republican Party, having won a substantial victory in the November 2 election, is about to encounter that existential challenge. Be careful of what you ask for; you may get it.

Thus, the Republicans won a smashing victory in the House of Representatives and substantially narrowed the Democratic margin of control in the Senate. Some Republican gains were unsurprising; historically, in the election immediately following a new president's victory, the opposition picks up seats. And the 2008 victory was a massive rout--a "perfect storm" favoring the Democrats. They benefitted from perceived Republican ineptitude facing the rising economic crisis; two inconclusive wars (at least one of which regarded as both bloody and unnecessary); and a highly unpopular incumbent president. Senator John McCain, for all of his personal virtues, looked like 20th century man; Senator Barack Obama radiated "hope and change" for the 21st century. As a consequence, traditionally Republican seats were swept into the Democratic column--seats that returned to their normal political orientation.

Why so? In a nutshell, the "hopey; changey" theme didn't produce. Americans are impatient; they assume that the promises, direct or implicit, of victorious politicians will be implemented. Thus at the two-year mark, Americans expected clear economic recovery with strongly rising GNP and unemployment 8 percent or lower. Instead, although technically the Great Recession ended, economic recovery is feeble and joblessness remains near 10 percent.

The Democratic approach to reviving the economy was traditional "pump priming"--hundreds of billions of dollars directed at various stimulus projects while the government provided economic support for major industries (auto and housing), banks, local, and state governments. The theory behind such spending is that it will prompt private sector economic activity and promote

private sector investment and spending. Unfortunately, this theory has simply not worked. At the minimum, it didn't work/wasn't working in the two-year timeframe necessary to salvage Democratic political fortunes.

Economic doldrums alone might have been negotiable (the answer being to blame "Dubya" for all failures of commission or omission), except that President Obama chose to push the politico-social envelope by creating an innovatively expanded health care system--a system that virtually every non-Administration observer believes will be incredibly expensive and which many citizens believe will also make health care both more expensive and of poorer quality. Moreover, the Administration simultaneously sought to raise taxes, generating intense opposition not just from "the rich"--the ostensible target of these raises--but from the skeptical non-rich who suspect they are next in the sights of the tax collectors.

Consequently, not knowing what the health care costs will be or what the tax schedule will resemble, business declined to either invest or hire. Tax revenues are nowhere near expenditures, and trillion dollar deficits into the out-years reinforced the conclusion that the Democrats "just don't get it" so far as the U.S. electorate was concerned.

Thus, while this election "storm" is not going to sink the SObama, there will be crewmembers jettisoned and extensive repair required to keep the Ship of State off the rocks--and the Republicans are unlikely to be cooperative.

For two years, Republicans have wallowed in the delights of Opposition--to oppose without responsibility. This tactical success probably heralds more-of-the-same in the next divided Congress with Republicans controlling the House and Democrats the Senate. Republicans are vocally focused on making President Obama the President Carter of the 21st century--a one-term wonder. For Republicans the trick of victory will be transforming the implicit requirement to "do something"

against the reality that any president controlling the Executive Branch--and the Senate--can stymie Republican initiatives. The stimulus provided by "Tea Party" activists will be a double-edged sword: their desire is smaller, cheaper government, which is hardly the course projected by President Obama.

Most likely on the horizon is vituperative deadlock--not akin to Canada's QP but one that de facto

prevents any new spending initiatives (cap and trade; tax raises) while frustrating proposed Republican cuts, e.g., not funding health care or legislating further tax reductions.

The bitterly unfortunate reality is the need for substantial cuts in all discretionary spending areas (Why should the U.S. defense budget match combined security spending of most of the rest of the world? Can we afford retiring "boomers"

with ever escalating benefits?). Moreover, there must be tax increases wherein all pay. The co-chairs of the independent Deficit Commission scheduled to report in December telegraphed elements of such a plan--to the horror of all listeners who saw not just the whales harpooned but the guppies gutted. Indeed, the United States is not yet willing to read the handwriting on the wall--and probably will not until our back is up against it.



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Five Reasons Why I'm Not Neutral

As the Taliban now run shadow governments in all but one of Afghanistan's provinces (the Panjshir) amounting to a government-in-waiting, and one by one NATO governments announce their withdrawal dates, there is a glum resolve here among many aid workers that one day very soon the government we may be dealing with in Kabul will be a Taliban one. And so some are starting to seek engagement with the Taliban now, hoping they might be more accommodating than the miserable years of 1996-2001, when the overwhelming majority of organizations fled, and those who stayed, worked within bizarre and frustrating restrictions, many of which barred aid to women and girls. Overall, the restrictions and the fickle and unpredictable behaviour of the host government then meant aid simply could not reach all of the most vulnerable, and many lives were lost as a result.

With the possibility that the Taliban will return to power in whole or in part, humanitarian and social justice organizations are being counseled in some cases to be "neutral" towards the Taliban.

Here is why neutrality on the part of aid workers and aid organizations is impossible:

1. Neutrality is the approach argued for in order to preserve the ability to deliver aid in Taliban-held territory, without endangering the aid beneficiaries and aid workers. The problem with this argument is that the Taliban kill beneficiaries and aid workers anyways. Three days ago, they beheaded two Afghan women in Helmand province who ran micro-finance programs for women. On a weekly basis, Taliban kidnap Afghans who work for both national and international NGOs. They regularly assassinate nationals who run aid

programs, work as drivers or guards for aid organizations, and set up illegal check points on highways across this country where they search for Afghans who have English names in their mobiles' address books or documents identifying them as affiliated to NGOs or to any foreigners. They pull these individuals aside from the line-up of cars, or from the passengers on a bus, and they shoot them, sometimes with their family members looking on. The majority of the Afghan victims of the Taliban are not affiliated to NATO and have done nothing to cause the Taliban to believe they are parties to the conflict. They are perceived as enemies simply for delivering aid, because that aid is rendered possible by the NATO presence here, and their overall aim is to destabilize Afghanistan.

2. The Taliban's ideology promotes the murder of "infidels", meaning non-Muslims. It does not matter if the infidels are working for NATO, the Afghan Government, or for an organization that has nothing to do with either: they are considered fair targets. In fact, it doesn't even matter if they are Muslims too, even Muslim converts sympathetic to them! In 2008, the Taliban kidnapped and have now likely murdered Canadian Khadija Abdul Qahaar (formerly Beverley Giesbrecht), whose website, jihadunspun.com, was criticized by the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies for being "a Canadian pro-terrorist website." The Taliban called Qahaar's friends in Canada seeking money, to secure her release. Similarly, the Taliban regularly rob and pillage the offices of aid organizations and convoys of aid supplies. It would seem their motivations are those other than purely submission to Allah and defense of their country from "infidels", but simply the pursuit of old-fashioned greed

and exploitation.=

Two Canadian aid workers, Jacqueline Kirk and Shirley Case, from the completely independent international humanitarian organization, the International Rescue Committee, were murdered along with another international and their Afghan driver in August 2008 by Taliban in Logar province. Following the attack, the IRC temporarily suspended its aid program. In October 2008, a South African woman, Gayle Williams, was shot in Kabul. She was a volunteer, on her way to work in Kabul, where she helped Afghans with disabilities. In August 2010, 10 medical aid workers were murdered in Nooristan province. The Taliban's spokesperson, Zabiullah Mujahid said they were killed for "spying for the Americans" and "preaching Christianity." They were doing neither. In fact, the organization the 10 worked for had been peacefully and independently delivering aid to Afghans since 1966, and the organization stated it no longer knew whether it could continue to do so following the murders. Every year in Afghanistan, there are more stories like this.

3. The parties to the conflict in Afghanistan are not created equal. One, the Taliban, deliberately targets independent aid workers and any and all foreigners. The other, NATO, does not. It's really hard to be "neutral" towards a group that wants to kill you, and will always want to kill you.

4. When it comes to Islamo-fascist terrorism, I want to be clear with myself where I stand. There is only one side that history will forgive, and it's not the side of the Taliban nor the side of passivity. The Taliban kill, and when it comes to life-and-death matters, one should know where they stand.

The Taliban, along with other insurgent groups like the Haqqani Network and Hezb-i-

Islami, are akin to modern-day Nazism. They are, fundamentally, fascist terrorist groups. It's difficult to imagine any modern-day aid organization which, knowing the history that we know now, would today claim to be "neutral" towards Hitler or Stalin, or other European fascist movements of the past. If only our historical memory could stretch into insight into the present.

"Insurgents" is a convenient catchall phrase for these actors, but it is a euphemism that ultimately fails to communicate the danger of the ideology these groups espouse. It's an ideology to which I don't want to be neutral towards, and I don't think any aid organization or aid worker, in good conscience, can be neutral towards. The Taliban are, simply, antithetical to the purpose of aid organizations. Neutrality is far too close to tolerance. As Sally Armstrong has said, "there is no such thing as an innocent bystander."

5. Aid organizations have mandates to serve their beneficiaries. Serving your beneficiaries means working in their best interests, which necessitates consideration of both the short-term and long-term impacts of the organizations' actions and decisions. Engaging with, or being neutral, towards the Taliban today might allow some organizations to deliver aid over the short term. But in the long-term, failing to speak against the Taliban, or working with them as a legitimate governing force might contribute to the consolidation of their regime. Is a Taliban government ultimately in the best interests of the Afghans whom aid organizations are seeking to serve? Clearly, its not.

Lauryn Oates wrote this during her 17th trip to that country.

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Le Protocole d'Ottawa

Des parlementaires du monde entier émettent une déclaration sur l'antisémitisme Cotler mène la CILA à un accord historique

Des parlementaires de six continents étaient sur place pour émettre le Protocole d'Ottawa - un document qui représente la coopération globale dans la lutte contre l'antisémitisme à la fin de la deuxième conférence de la Coalition interparlementaire de lutte contre l'antisémitisme (CILA), cofondé par le député de Mont-Royal Irwin Cotler.

La conférence était la plus grande de sa sorte, et a donné l'occasion pour que les délégués puissent explorer des données et échanger sur les meilleures manières de combattre l'antisémitisme autour du monde. La CILA rassemble 46 pays et plus de 250 parlementaires du monde entier pour mener le combat contre la résurgence de l'antisémitisme global.

La déclaration des parlementaires indique : « Nous sommes alarmé par l'explosion de l'antisémitisme et de la haine sur Internet, un média crucial pour la promotion et la protection de la liberté d'expression, de la liberté d'information, et de la participation d'une société civile. » Un souci important, elle indique, est le manque par plusieurs pays de respecter leurs engagements pour maintenir des statistiques fiables au sujet de crimes antisémitiques ainsi que d'autres crimes de haine.

Le Protocole d'Ottawa est une extension d'un autre émis à Londres en février 2009 à la conférence fondatrice de la CILA. Irwin Cotler, président de la coalition internationale, a indiqué que le protocole est révolutionnaire. Pour la première fois, il fournit des définitions détaillées de ce qui constitue l'antisémitisme et met en écriture ce que le groupe voit comme la distinction entre l'antisémitisme et la critique légitime de l'Israël.

« Soyons claire : La critique de l'Israël n'est pas antisémitique, et le dire est faux », indique le protocole. « Mais cibler l'Israël pour la



Back row (left to right): Congressman Chris Smith (USA), Minister Yuli Edelstein (Israel), Guillaume Ngefa (Democratic Republic of Congo), Gert Weisskirchen (Germany), MP Vivienne Teitelbaum (Belgium), Father Norbert Hofmann (The Vatican). Front row (left to right): Hon. Dr. Fiamma Nirenstein, MP (Italy), Hon. Irwin Cotler, MP (Canada), MP John Mann (UK).

condamnation et l'opprobre sélectif - encore moins nier son droit d'exister ou solliciter sa destruction - est discriminatoire et haineux, et ne pas le dire ainsi est malhonnête. »

Durant son discours à la conférence, le Premier ministre Harper a dit que le combat contre l'antisémitisme doit être implacable et qu'il est disposé à faire ce qui est nécessaire pour défendre l'Israël. « Mais tant et aussi longtemps que je serai premier ministre, que ce soit à l'ONU ou à la Francophonie, ou à n'importe quel autre endroit, le Canada prendra position, peu importe le prix », a-t-il dit.

Le Ministre de l'immigration Jason Kenney, qui a participé à la

Conférence de Londres, était heureux que la réunion d'Ottawa ait eu lieu et a indiqué que : « Nous avons déterminé à Londres que ceci devait être une entreprise continue, que nous ne pourrions pas simplement se rencontrer, avoir une conférence, se disperser et retourner à nos affaires quotidiennes. » Il a dit que le gouvernement conservateur est investi à mener le combat par des programmes éducatifs et une meilleure tenue d'archives par la police des crimes de haine. Le gouvernement Harper a décidé l'année dernière de boycotter Durban II, la conférence onusienne contre le racisme. Le Canada était parmi seulement quelques nations qui ont

refusé d'envoyer des représentants par peur que la conférence ne devienne un forum pour critiquer l'Israël et favoriser l'antisémitisme.

Les rapports des incidents antisémitiques augmentent dans le monde entier ainsi qu'au Canada, où B'nai Brith a rapporté un total de 1 264 incidents en 2009, le nombre le plus élevé depuis que le groupe a commencé son audit annuel il y a 28 ans.

The Protocol states the following:

We, Representatives of our respective Parliaments from across the world, convening in Ottawa for the second Conference and Summit of the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism, note and

reaffirm the London Declaration on Combating Antisemitism as a template document for the fight against antisemitism.

We are concerned that, since the London Conference in February 2009, there continues to be a dramatic increase in recorded antisemitic hate crimes and attacks targeting Jewish persons and property, and Jewish religious, educational and communal institutions.

We remain alarmed by ongoing state-sanctioned genocidal antisemitism and related extremist ideologies. If antisemitism is the most enduring of hatreds, and genocide is the most horrific of crimes, then the convergence of the genocidal intent embodied in antisemitic ideology is the most toxic of combinations.

We are appalled by the resurgence of the classic anti-Jewish libels, including:

- The Blood Libel (that Jews use the blood of children for ritual sacrifice)

- The Jews as "Poisoners of the Wells" - responsible for all evils in the world

- The myth of the "new Protocols of the Elders of Zion" - the tsarist forgery that proclaimed an international Jewish conspiracy bent on world domination - and accuses the Jews of controlling government, the economy, media and public institutions.

- The double entendre of denying the Holocaust - accusing the Jews of fabricating the Holocaust as a hoax - and the nazification of the Jew and the Jewish people.

We are alarmed by the explosion of antisemitism and hate on the Internet, a medium crucial for the promotion and protection of freedom of expression, freedom of information, and the participation of civil society.

Photo by Victor Tunoa

We are concerned over the failure of most OSCE participating states to fully implement provisions of the 2004 Berlin Declaration, including the commitment to:

“Collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about antisemitic crimes, and other hate crimes, committed within their territory, report such information periodically to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and make this information available to the public.”

We are concerned by the reported incidents of antisemitism on campuses, such as acts of violence, verbal abuse, rank intolerance, and assaults on those committed to free inquiry, while undermining fundamental academic values.

We renew our call for national Governments, Parliaments, international institutions, political and civic leaders, NGOs, and civil society to affirm democratic and human values, build societies based on respect and citizenship and combat any manifestations of antisemitism and all forms of discrimination.

We reaffirm the EUMC – now Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) – working definition of antisemitism, which sets forth that:

“Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.

- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective – such as, especially but not exclusively – the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy, or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.

- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.

- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).

- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.

- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.

Examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the State of Israel taking into account the overall context could include:

- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.

- Applying double standards by requiring of it behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g. claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.

- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel.

However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.

Let it be clear: Criticism of Israel is not antisemitic, and saying so is wrong. But singling Israel out for selective condemnation and opprobrium – let alone denying its right to exist or seeking its destruction – is discriminatory and hateful, and not saying so is dishonest.

Members of Parliament meeting in Ottawa commit to:

1. Calling on our Governments to uphold international commitments on combating antisemitism – such as the OSCE Berlin Principles – and to engage with the United Nations for that purpose. In the words of former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, “It is [...] rightly said that the United Nations emerged from the ashes of the Holocaust. And a Human Rights agenda that fails to address antisemitism denies its own history”;

2. Calling on Parliaments and Governments to adopt the EUMC Working Definition of Antisemitism and anchor its enforcement in existing law;

3. Encouraging countries throughout the

world to establish mechanisms for reporting and monitoring on domestic and international antisemitism, along the lines of the “Combating Antisemitism Act of 2010” recently introduced in the United States Congress;

4. Encouraging the leaders of all religious faiths – represented also at this Conference – to use all means possible to combat antisemitism and all forms of hatred and discrimination;

5. Calling on the Parliamentary Forum of the Community of Democracies to make the combating of hatred and antisemitism a priority in their work;

There continues to be a dramatic increase in recorded antisemitic hate crimes and attacks targeting Jewish persons and property, and Jewish religious, educational and communal institutions.

6. Calling on Governments and Parliamentarians to reaffirm and implement the Genocide Convention, recognising that where there is incitement to genocide, State parties have an obligation to act;

7. Working with universities to encourage them to combat antisemitism with the same seriousness with which they confront other forms of hate. Specifically, universities should be invited to define antisemitism clearly, provide specific examples, and enforce conduct codes firmly, while ensuring compliance with freedom of speech and the principle of academic freedom. Universities should use the EUMC Working Definition of

Antisemitism as a basis for education, training and orientation. Indeed, there should be zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind against anyone in the university community on the basis of race, gender, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or political position;

8. We encourage the European Union to promote civic education and open society in its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and to link funding to democratic development and respect for Human Rights in ENP partner countries;

9. Establishing an International Task Force of Internet specialists comprised of parliamentari-

ans and experts to create common indicators to identify and monitor antisemitism and other manifestations of hate online and to develop policy recommendations for Governments and international frameworks to address these problems;

10. Building on the African representation at this Conference, to develop increased working relationships with parliamentarians in Africa for the combating of racism and antisemitism;

11. We urge the incoming OSCE Chair, Lithuania, to make implementation of these commitments a priority during 2011 and call for the reappointment of the Special Representatives to assist in this work.



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Obama's Recovery from Ahmadinejad's Politics

Two are not fit for a political office: the religious man, if he is sincere, and the true intellectual. The religious system is based on sacred constants, while the political system is chaotic based on constantly changing variables. No compromise can exist on religious dogmas, but politics is the art of negotiation and settlement. Policy maneuvers are not void of plots and deceptions, while bargaining is off-limits to the true religious, either you accept all of God's commands or you exit the circle of the pure faithful. So, how could a dogmatic cleric turn into a professional politician?

Saddam launched a deadly war, which Khomeini maintained for eight years, exhausting a youthful generation in its fires. No holiness to a religious cleric meddling in politics. Some Islamists leaders such as Hassan Nasrallah, the current Secretary General of Hezbollah, may use procrastination policy to maintain his alleged purity from political assassinations and party's involvement, but he does not bargain. His rigid position has cost his people their lives and may cost Lebanon another civil war.

The bookworm intellectual is the other person who is unfit for politics. It is not necessary for a politician to be an intellect or a thinker. Education cultures ordinary people to step up to the rank of the ideal. A truly intellectual person is honest with himself and with his ideals. He has attitudes and ethics forcing him to be sincere with others. From here stems the misery of the intellectual with his political life. Form here too comes the failure of Arab intellectuals (and they do exist) in their political life, where the uneducated soldiers succeeded. The latter are professional realists undeterred by ideals of culture and humanity.

In government, President Obama seems to be that intellectual: eloquent in his speeches, slow in his decisions, hesitant in his actions. These same criteria have undermined his achievements

(education system reforms, health care extension, financial market regulations) rendering them unpopular. They were seen as either negligible by their proponents, or relying heavily on the state by their opponent in a country that worships individual initiatives and the drudgery of work.

President Obama is still an intellectual mystery. The liberals accuse him of not bringing enough change as his campaign

President Obama is still an intellectual mystery. The liberals accuse him of not bringing enough change as his campaign slogans have promised; the conservative right suspect him for being a socialist, where socialism in America is an affront requiring a firm denial; and the racial and religious right taunt him for his color and his father's religion.

slogans have promised; the conservative right suspect him for being a socialist, where socialism in America is an affront requiring a firm denial; and the racial and religious right taunt him for his color and his father's religion. Hence, his aides and advisors began to abandon him, withdrawing one after the other from his intellectual and political circle.

Today, intellectual Obama packs what is left of his will and youth, returning alone to a Republican House and a more polarized Senate, trying to save his party after what seems to be an electoral disaster. These midterm elections mark a watershed moment before this President, who is threatened with further political paralysis and the possibility of non-renewal in November 2012.

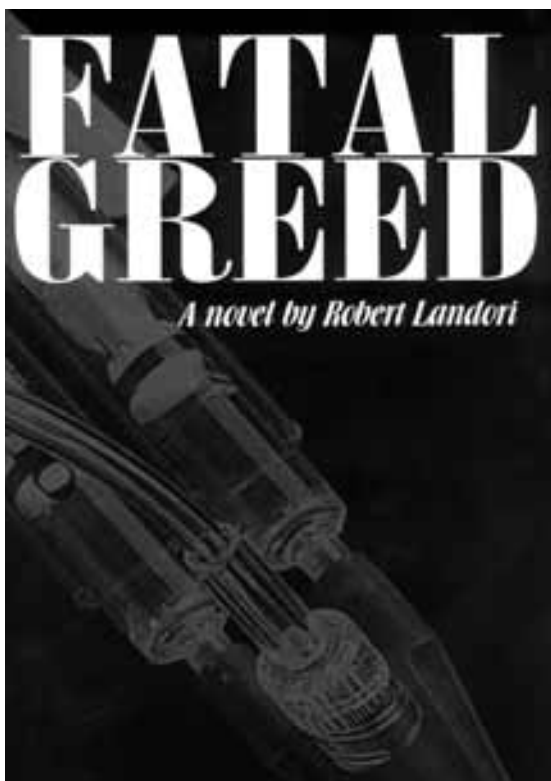
One of the biggest foreign policy problems of an intellectual Obama is his weak stance on Iran's nuclear ambitions. It seems

that his dreams of a multipolar world free of nuclear weapons stand in a sharp contrast to Ahmadinejad's cunning and quest for power.

The U.S. laggard attitude, the deep divisions between Arab political factions, and the weakness of the Arab official position have been encouraging Iran to breakthrough Arab spheres of influence on all fronts with professional slyness. Obama's

administration, until now, did not manage to exploit and expose the contradictions of the Iranian project to the Arab audience which is deluded by the camouflaged Iranian propagandas: sectarian in Iraq, doctrinal in Lebanon, and Islamic in Gaza.

So, what has changed from the age of Bushes' ignorance to the age of Obama's enlightenment? Despite Obama's efforts to bridge Islam and the West, the political hobbyist lost in the face of the political professional Ahmadinejad. But due to this failure, the Islamic world has already moved from a culture of "rejection" to Israel to a culture of "opposition" to all that is American, including its relationship with Israel. This sets a difficult stage ahead of a Republican government that is seen as more hostile to the Islamic world than its Liberal counterpart, making it harder for the U.S. to protect and advance its interests in this region.



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Wednesday Nights

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SOCIETY

A MOVEABLE FEAST, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ideas from these Wednesday Nights have found their way into our collective consciousness. They have affected our lives for the better. They have affected those who affect our public discourse. They have made all of us who participate wiser, more generous and more compassionate. But most of all, these special Nights have forged friendships that have made us all family. Our hearts and spirits have been touched as much as our minds. I have been fortunate to have been going for just over a

decade. But The Métropolitain has another connection to this special place. One of our colleagues, Albert Sevigny, was raised in that house. His father was Defence Minister Pierre Sevigny and it was the Sevignys who sold the house to the Nicholsons. And indeed Pierre Sevigny was a participant at many a special night. Wednesday Night at the Nicholsons is a Montreal tradition. The salon has been covered in several of our daily newspapers. Tonight will be the 1500th consecutive Wednesday

Night. It will be a grand celebration at the University Club. We wanted to pay a special tribute to this remarkable and unique moveable feast. Ernest Hemingway once wrote that, "If you were lucky enough to have lived in Paris then – for the rest of your life – it stays with you. It is a moveable feast." That's the way I feel about this very special band of brothers and sisters. Even though the Nicholsons have moved from Rosemount to Haddon Hall, the Feast is no less sweet.

Alan Hustak
hustak@themetropolitain.ca



1500 MERCREDIS CONSÉCUTIFS, SUITE DE LA PAGE 1

Quebec, eight periods of negative economic growth, four economic recessions, and two Quebec referendums. The ramifications all of which have been either debated, dissected, discussed or dismissed by those who have kept the flame of friendship burning at their table for 28 years. There have been Wednesday nights on Christmas Eve, even on a Leap Year a Wednesday in 1992. Through it all there has never been an occasion when no one has shown up.

Alors quel genre de personnes

ouvrirait leur maison à des étrangers chaque mercredi, semaine après semaine après semaine sans faute? Grégaire? Convivial? Idiosyncratique? Sociable? Toutes ces choses et plus. Diana et David ont gardé vivant l'art de la conversation intéressante et du débat public civilisé. Des hôtes inspirants, ils nous ont diverti, stimulé notre réflexion et en même temps ils ont approfondi nos connaissances, toujours dans le but, comme le proverbe d'Horace (et je ne me réfère pas à Horace Baugh, mais à

l'autre Horace), aut delectare aut prodesse est - à plaire ou à éduquer.

And while the always animated evenings are often fueled by copious quantities of wine, disagreements are occasionally vocal and tempers sometimes flare, only once has an unruly loudmouth been evicted.

J'écris ceci en tant que « novice » aux soirées du mercredi. J'ai connu Diana en tant que journaliste à l'expo 67, mais j'ai entendu parler pour la première fois des soirées du mercredi de Mark Harrison, le

rédacteur dur et exigeant de la Gazette, qui les a décrites comme un endroit de réunion des plus brillants cerveaux de la ville et un trésor de contacts pour n'importe quel journaliste. Mon introduction est venue après la publication de mon livre sur Sir William Hingston en 2004 quand David m'a invité pour la première fois. Ça s'est avéré que j'étais en retard à la tradition, faisant mon apparition au #1273. C'était en juillet 2006 quand Don Boudria est venu d'Ottawa comme remplacement de dernière minute

pour le chef libéral Stéphane Dion, qui avait deux engagements pour cette même soirée.

Boudria n'avait jamais été auparavant, et moi non plus. Mais il a dit exactement ce que j'allais dire.

"If there were more Wednesday Nights here would be more people thinking, and if more people were thinking, it would force people in public office to react to a critical mass of thinking, which could only do good."

Do more good. Keep the flame alive.

Wanda Potrykus
info@themetropolitain.ca



TOAST TO A HOUSE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

madness...of plenty and of want...while it has steadfastly borne the brunt of countless openings and closings, farewells, hallos, and bon voyages...swinging shut for the final time behind some...but opening more often than not...for the crew of long time regulars...with or without their varied guests...and pasts...

It never asked to be so used...but the freedom of speech, swoop of ideas, changing of gears ...and zest of life displayed each week behind its timber frame...wouldn't bring shame to any board room, meeting hall, news room, council, parliamentary chamber, school, summer camp...or even fraternity or sorority house sited on myriad university lands across this continent of ours...while the spirited exchanges it has witnessed, whether fuelled or not

by the countless bottles of...water...and yes, red and white wine...and the odd rosé... and, of course, champagne...that have passed its threshold...and the nuts and pretzels scoffed (or is it more scarfed down?) during the vibrant debates that have often...taken place around its candlelit table...in the panelled dining room...have...I have no doubt... imprinted themselves upon the very timbers of the house that Diana...aka the Mouse...and David have inhabited and cared for...but now must leave...for their time within its walls is done...and the fun they have provided us with here...moves to a different space and place.

We all will grieve in our own ways the ending of our weekly visits to this home... their magical

domain...where for almost 30 years the Wednesday Night discussions, book launches, art shows...and cultural events have gladdened our hearts and...enriched our minds and souls...and the house at 33 Rosemount has been the silent witness to our names and games and fights...and flights of fantasy and rhetoric.

The Christmas trees, the seasonal hot punch, the mince pies, the strawberries...the cakes ...the tall tales...and puns...the arias, the guitar, piano and violin recitals...have regaled us...and in the distant

past, the all-night chats...the strobe lights...the then...novel... sound and multi-media wall, the trapeze swing and water playground in the basement... that some of us remember witnessing and playing

with...in the after hours...is just one of the gifts that lives on in our collective memories...as I doubt the new proprietor will leave the floor and pipes that way for future occupants...to wonder at...but the house will... without fail... remember...and add this occupancy...by the Thèbaud-Nicholson family...to its integral DNA...as we say:
Thank you Number 33... Rosemount...for sheltering them and us and all their other friends and guests...for we've been truly blessed by the welcome and good cheer ...and knowledge and imagination bounty...we have witnessed weekly here...

So, goodbye house...goodbye to David...and to Mouse...let's lift our glass to wish you...and it

well...then...hell...it's off to Haddon Hall...that has the temerity... the gall...to think it can supplant...the history that you've made here...we'll have to see...don't you agree?

Bon courage...good night and a gros merci...to 33... Rosemount...Westmount... and to all!

Note: While originally penned as an ode, these words do not adhere to a formal stanzaic structure, but in classical Greece odes were performed at public festivals or as part of a drama, which Wednesday Night at 33 Rosemount over the years has undoubtedly been. So, although offered as a farewell toast, in my heart it remains an ode to a wonderful house and home. It will be missed.

© Wanda Potrykus, OWN October 27, 2010

Wednesday Nights

Wednesday Nights

PHOTOS ROBERT J. GALBRAITH

Celebrating 1500 Wednesday Nights

December 1, 2010, University Club Montreal



Left to right: David Nicholson, Diana Nicholson, Prof. Gerald Ratzer and Westmount Mayor Peter Trent at the silver anniversary celebration of Wednesday Night Salon.

PHOTO ALLAN MASS



Wednesday Nights

Lasting connections

By Helen Forbes

I think my late boss, Richard J. Kaiser and I started going to Wednesday nights in 1981 or '82. Sometimes there were 20 or 30 people, sometimes as few as 10, often in the summers when people were away. Richard J. ended up giving up on the late nights as he had kids to get to school the next morning but I kept going. I was very young and very awed by the people we met there: John Ciaccia, the late Carl Beigie, Peter Trent, Ron Meisels and so many other movers and shakers in the political and economic scene of Montreal, Quebec and Canada at the time. We (by which I mean mostly the others) debated the state

of the world, the country, the province, the city and our own local neighbourhood and we had answers to all that ailed the collective above. RJK moved to the States, I kept going, Carl and I became friends and then I brought the late Richard Coghlan along. He was also welcomed into

Wednesday nights, when he could be there and until he, too, moved to the States. For a time, I worked in David's office doing charts with him and kibbitzing with Diana at every opportunity. I kept going to Wednesday nights until I married and husband was not interested in intellectual discussion. I quickly had kids, divorced and again, for the odd time, would show up at a Wednesday night when I could.

I miss all that give and take, the equal footing around that table, at least until David introduced the night's special guest, who would then hold court for as long as they wanted. It's always been a great memory, that I was there close to the beginning and heard things I never would have been privy to otherwise, great stories from people who normally appeared staid and dignified in public life, but around that table, the gloves came off, hair was let down, a few secrets came out and some great, lasting connections were made.

Thanks for letting me get that out.



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Wednesday Nights

Symposium on the Saint Lawrence

A tribute to Wednesday Night

Kimon Valaskakis

In Plato's original symposium which took place in the house of the tragedian Agathon, seven Greek philosophers compared thoughts and experiences on the subject of love (Eros, Agape but primarily love of wisdom which is the etymological meaning of philosophy itself). This started a long historical tradition of erudite discussions over the dinner table (and was probably even the precursor of the modern day business lunch).

In the 16th century, the French introduced the notion of salons litteraires where ideas and theses were presented in an informal manner and discussed between men and women of

letters. This led to the creation of the Encyclopédie of the 18th century, the clubs politiques at the time of the French Revolution and beyond, and the present propensity for forums, discussion clubs, breakfast meetings etc.

The Nicholsons Wednesday Night Salon, by its longevity (over thirty years) and its informality has contributed to the intellectual life of English speaking Montreal and has become a useful sounding board of ideas, before they are presented to a wider, more critical audience. But, in addition, with its active website and the diligent efforts of both co hosts David and Diana Nicholson, the Wednesday Night deliberations have

become, food for thought for a much larger public, courtesy of Google and modern technology.

I have had the pleasure of attending and participating (armed with my own propaganda in favor of better global governance), in the Wednesday Night Salon for twenty of its thirty years. It was, an off and on participation, since being present every week, other than by the most faithful, would be defeating the purpose of cross fertilization through diversity. Some scarcity is needed to create value. There is a danger in overexposure.

At the beginning, I was reluctant to attend because I belonged to the Society for the Abolition of Wednesdays, a fact

I have managed to hide from the Nicholsons for all these years. The Society for the Abolition of Wednesdays claims that a four day week is best. 10 hours of work on Monday and Tuesday then Wednesday off and then another 10 hours on Thursday and Friday before the weekend. Thus, with the prospect of never having to work more than two days in a row, productivity could become maximal.

The revolt against the mediocrity of mid-week by abolishing it all together turned out to be unnecessary. When I realized that the abolition of working Wednesdays would be fully compatible with the informal atmosphere of the Nicholson's Salon, I joined with enthusiasm. In time I was even elevated to the lofty title of O.W.N. (Officer of Wednesday Night), a sort of 'senate' appointment in the Wednesday Night community, usually entitling me to a front bench position at the table, a prized privilege which was much appreciated for an essayist and the propagandist that I really am.

What has the Wednesday Night salon brought to me over the years: much food for thought, lasting friendships, convivial exchanges, learning about things I would not usually care to investigate and the

opportunity to test new ideas. The latter fulfilled then the same functions as the French literary salon.

Conducted by the inimitable David Nicholson and his lovely and erudite wife Diana, the Symposium on the Saint Lawrence was rarely focused for longer than fifteen minutes on any one issue. But, paradoxically, that is what made its charm. It was, in its 33 Rosemount Incarnation a precursor of surfing the internet where hyperlinks take us on all sorts of interesting tangents. It was also like the front page of a newspaper, where political news stand in apposition with sports results, local events, and miscellaneous scandals. Who wants coherence on the Front Page?

The Wednesday Night Symposium Incarnation One was pure serendipity. It must be remembered that Serendipity is a propensity for making fortunate discoveries while looking for something unrelated. The word has been voted as one of the ten English words that were hardest to translate in June 2004 by a British translation company. However, due to its sociological use, the word has been imported into many other languages. The first noted use of this word was by Horace Walpole (1717-1792). In a

letter to Mann he said he formed it from the Persian fairy tale The Three Princes of Serendip, whose heroes "were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of"

Discovery by accident was, for me, the underlying theme of Wednesday Night 1.0. The Symposium on the Saint Lawrence version 2.0 is likely to be quite different. Because of the smaller venue, it will have to be more focused with fewer hyperlinks but with more sustained repartees and rejoinders, perhaps closer in this sense, to the original platonic symposium with its seven members than the wider literary salons of Madame de Recamier. There is a trade off here: less free and relaxed learning but perhaps a greater probability of finding meaningful solutions to today's problems and bridging the gap between thought and action.

Whatever it is, I hope to continue to be part of it and to maintain my 'senate' appointment and the perks which come with it - among which are closer access to the peanuts and to the red wine - privileges inaccessible to the unfortunate back benchers...

All the Best then to Haddon Hall, Worthy Daughter of 33 Rosemount Avenue. Count me in.




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Thank You

By Paul Shrivastava

Thank you for this grand celebration of Wednesday Night, and of Diana and David's leadership in creating and sustaining community discourse. For a new comer to Montreal like me, Wednesday Night offered it all - an introduction to the city's buzz, latest political news and gossip, lofty analysis, Punditry at its best, the seduction of a Parisian salon, an open, inviting and friendly atmosphere. It was a pill that made me feel instantly like an "insider". At least once a week I felt like I knew exactly how things really were. The

discussions were well researched, erudite, and incisive, the disagreements were friendly and civil, and the video tapes archive is there to prove it.

Wednesday Nighters are a noisy, contentious, expressive, chatty, family - but mostly it is family. I have thoroughly enjoyed the intellectual kinship and camaraderie of this group. They are warm and caring people seriously concerned about human affairs of our times.

Thank you David and Diana for your dedication to open inquiry, and for letting me be part of it. I wish you both another 1500 Wednesday Nights.

Wednesday Nights

The quiet charms of fascinating people

By Steven Lightfoot

It all started for me 20 years ago. My friend Marina knew I was interested in ideas and the sharing of them, and she had run across this really interesting couple living in Westmount. They held what could only be described as a 19th century Parisian salon right in their home. They had been doing this literally every Wednesday Night for years, which sounded implausible, but was true.

I went a couple of times, but moved on to other interests, and for a long time remembered my visits there very fondly. I would smile

whenever I would read a newspaper or magazine article about them.

Fast forward to 2005, and I was ready for new intellectual challenges in my life. I thought, what better way to re-charge my brain than by calling Diana, and asking to visit again. So I did, and have been a regular for some years now.

In my time as a frequent visitor to WN, I have come to appreciate the charms of so many fascinating people who I would never normally have the chance to meet.

Regulars like Robert the photographer, Tony the economist, Kimon the ambassador, and

Mark the doctor have allowed us to get an insider glimpse into professional worlds in ways we would never otherwise have the opportunity to see.

And then there are the visitors, movers and shakers some. I specifically remember the visit of US Ambassador David Wilkins who graced WN with his presence. And Canadian politicians, from Charest to Dion, the list goes on and on.

And on a more personal note, I had the privilege of attending the very first Wednesday Night in Vancouver, an offshoot of our beloved WN at 33 Rosemount. Spearheaded by the

tireless and insightful Alexandra, the West Wing of WN carries on the tradition in a British Columbian setting.

Attending WN has broadened my outlook in ways I couldn't have imagined, all in such a warm and respectful setting. It's maybe a bit like ancient Greece, learning and absorbing wisdom from so many experienced people in civilized discussion. Many lessons have been learned, not the least being that you learn a lot more by listening than by talking.

Wednesday Night and David and Diana are a Montreal, Quebec, and Canadian treasure. Thank you both.

No small feat 1500 sparkling nights...and one cracked chair

By Roslyn Takeishi

Intellectual Salons have been a social reality from the 16th century onwards, starting as an Italian invention, then flourishing in France throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. They are the place for the exchange of ideas. David and Diana Nicholson have been hosting their Salon for over 28 years in their Westmount home. On December 1, 2010, we celebrate 1500 Consecutive Wednesday Nights, a seriously committed undertaking.

Over the years, a group of us have hosted Wednesday Night in their home, even during their absence. While they were on the other side of the world at their son's wedding, a group of us took turns hosting Wednesday Night in their home, one evening being 1066, a funky memorable evening, during which we



donned period outfits.

Then, of course, was the not to be forgotten evening when I brought the Rt Hon. Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec, as my guest. A fun, entertaining evening, with a full house, standing room only, which didn't exactly please his bodyguard! At one point, deep in contemplation, Jean leaned back on his chair, we heard a loud CRACK! And then watched both Jean and the chair

tumble to the floor, the chair in pieces. After it's repair, the chair became lovingly known as 'Jean's chair'!

The most extraordinary part about this particular Salon, is that over the years we have received Heads of government, senior politicians, writers, economists, philosophers, lawyers, scientists, doctors, students...the whole gamut of the society of ideas.

Diana and David have somehow succeeded in coming up with a varied list of guests and subjects every week for over 28 years. To hold this Salon for 1500 consecutive Wednesday Nights is no small undertaking.

Friendships have been forged which have endured. It is certainly never boring.

All love and best wishes to this extraordinarily generous couple on the celebration of this amazing milestone.

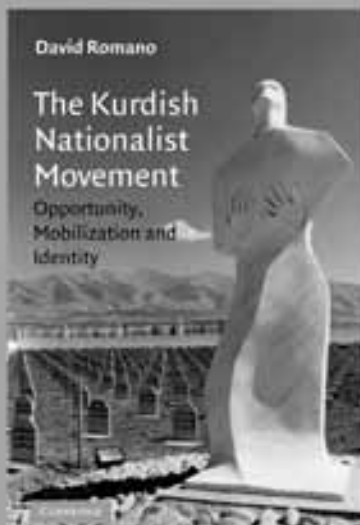
Something to look forward to

By Antal Deutsch

Wednesday Night is a delightful microcosm of educated Anglo and Allo-Montrealers. The overall tone is leftist, in the let-us-save-the-world style of the early seventies. There are a couple of sacred cows that are carefully not discussed: Israel vs. the Palestinians, and the suppression of individual rights (nominally language, but really economic) in the name of "collective rights" in Quebec. The over-all leftist tone notwithstanding, much attention is devoted to the stock-market.


Dissenting views are provided with voice, and are respectfully listened to. The sessions are lively, and often spiked with humor. The host and the hostess are gracious beyond the call of duty. Regulars develop bonds of friendship that emerge and live outside the once-a-week sessions. Wednesday Night is not only an experience to enjoy, but also one to look forward to, starting the Thursday morning the week before.

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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Wednesday Nights

Montreal's Source of Enlightenment: « Les beaux esprits se rencontrent »

By Alexandra T. Greenhill

As a traveler crossing the desert in hope beyond hope happens upon an unexpected lush oasis, so did we stumble upon Diana and David's miraculous Montreal institution, at which political, social, artistic, and scientific questions are discussed weekly with never ending passion and an abundance of new perspectives. This

is what the Salons of the French 18th century Age of Enlightenment must have felt like and the impact of these gatherings is of similar scope to be felt for decades to come.

Having been sent on a mission to establish the Wednesday West Wing in Vancouver, it has been humbling to realize how much thought and work goes into what Diana and David make look so effortless and easy. Real discourse, both in terms of insightfulness of

content and elegance of expression, combined with an impressive array of interesting people and hosted with skill is a customized formula for a unique noteworthy element of Montreal's cultural expression and we are all grateful to its unwavering weekly presence, both in the real and on-line worlds.

Alexandra Greenhill (OWN member) and James Greenhill, co-hosts of Wednesday Salon West

Thinking that's outside the box

By Margaret Lefebvre

It was the year 1991 and all was not well in the Canadian nation.. The Meech Lake Accord had collapsed, Quebec was feeling even more alienated than even after the "night of the long knives"; Canadian unity was at a crisis point, hoist on a feather, and rumblings of passionate discontent could be heard throughout the land.

Brian Mulroney appointed Keith Spicer to Chair a "Citizens Forum on Canada's Future" to ask them what Canadians thought were the values and characteristics fundamental to the

well being of Canada. The results were to be presented in a document that came to be known as The Spicer Report.

Consultations were to be held from coast to coast, and Wednesday Night was chosen to be one of the forums to be consulted.

David and Diana were in Florida so the task of hosting Wednesday Night fell to Mark Nicholson who found himself confronted with the designated member of the Citizens Forum and we all showed up to be polled on our views.

It was clear from the outset that the consultation was to be one that had to conform to strict procedures and guidelines and all answers were

to fit the pre-determined categories.

The key question of the evening was – "What do you consider will be the most important issue for Canada in the years ahead?" From the back of the room, Ron Walker answered in one word: "water".

There ensued several moments of silence, and then the questioner, who had been madly rifling through her papers, looked up in frustration and announced, "It can't be –it's not on my list!"

And so, once again, Wednesday Night continued the fine tradition of thinking outside the box without regard for dogma, political correctness or the tyranny of the printed form.

1500 Wednesday Nights and a very special friend

By Catherine Gilbert

My thoughts about Wednesday Night always centre on the atmosphere created by the Nicholsons in their wonderful home. The open door, the hugs and handshakes and the glass of red wine is the right way to make anyone feel perfectly at home. Although I have lived in Canada for almost 50 years I never really felt as if I belonged until I discovered Wednesday Night. No longer the outsider looking in, I have found a place where I am free to hold any number of contrarian positions without being considered an imposter. As in an Oxford Common Room, divergence of opinion is the staff of life for Wednesday Night.

I started attending Wednesday Night after I retired and I have been fortunate to find friends who have enriched my retirement with their fund of knowledge about the world and how to travel in it – where to go, what to see and how to survive. One of my luckiest encounters was with the author and

forensic accountant Robert Landori. I first heard of Robert when he was a guest of Bernie St. Laurent on CBC Radio's Home Run. The story of his horrifying experiences as a child in Hungary during World War Two were riveting and his feeling of being alone in the world at such a young age

struck a chord. I was determined to meet this man and so when he arrived at Wednesday Night the following week my wish was granted. This friendship has certainly enriched my life. I was encouraged by Robert's descriptions of the beauty of the cities and stories from the time of the Hapsburg Empire to spend a couple of excellent weeks in Eastern Europe this summer. Here I could indulge my interest in baroque architecture and my fascination with dysfunctional families to the fullest. I have learnt to mitigate my admiration for the achievements of the Cuban revolution with a healthy dose of realism concerning the costs of dictatorship, as is so ably demonstrated in Robert's latest book, Havana Harvest. I have learnt more about how dirty money is moved around the world, the background story of Fatal Greed, than I ever expected to know; although quite how I am going to put this information to use I am not quite sure. Best of all, I have been entertained with exciting anecdotes from someone who has had more adventures in one lifetime than most of us could ever dream of.

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Wednesday Nights

An unending stream of the best and the brightest

By David T Jones

It seems like forever; it seems like only yesterday that I first encountered David and Diana Nicholson and enjoyed a "Wednesday Night." In the winter of 1993, I was political minister counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, and I attended this first Night as "spouse of" my wife Teresa who was the economic/commercial officer at the U.S. consulate in Montreal.

It was a unique and fascinating experience, entering a mansion that could have been a museum or a television studio and meeting individuals that epitomized the full range of excellence across Montreal specifically and Quebec generally. I quickly concluded that it was the last surviving example of a European salon transplanted to North America wherein there was an unending

stream of the proverbial best and brightest with expertise that was ever new and engaging coupled with vigorous but never mean-spirited exchanges within the group. It was, and has remained, unique and fascinating with individualistic touches ranging from snacks limited to peanuts (and wine) to a rapid fire collage of television snippets of the key events of the week.

For an individual entranced by Canadian society and politics, the Nicholsons are always a source first resort--for insight, explanation, and introductions (as well as a place to arrange for senior opposition politicians to quietly visit for private discussions).

Endlessly hospitable, endlessly charming, endlessly engaged with life and friends, who ever thinks of them as other than "David and Diana"? It has been an honor and a privilege to be a "Friend of Wednesday Night"--leaving only the ongoing mystery of "How did 'mouse' originate?"

A True Salon

By Teresa C Jones

In 1992, when I arrived in Montreal to replace the number two at the U.S. Consulate General in Montreal, I had a few days of overlap with John Riley, my predecessor. He told me all about this fascinating salon that he attended and that I should attend. He even took me to a Wednesday night meeting. Coming from Washington and the interagency maze of experts, it was refreshing to find a group who actually thought as well as they talked. Diana and David had the magical ability to draw out the best of the discussion and the discussants. The topic didn't matter. The wit and the intelligence were wonderful, and I always left there wiser. It was also refreshing to find a salon where people did not parrot each other but were able to engage in civilized debate. I made sure that my husband (who was then political minister counsellor in Ottawa) and my future Ottawa boss (the economic counsellor) had a chance to attend. Both Fiona and Mark led some sessions also and showed that this was definitely a family talent.

Since my husband and I retired from the Foreign Service, we have enjoyed the salon even more during visits to Montreal as we now have a bit more time to really appreciate the marvelous chemistry or maybe alchemy that David and Diana created for all of us.



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Wednesday Nights

Wednesday Night

The Cardinal would feel at home

By Margaret Duthie

Wednesday-Night – for me is a coming-together in what I imagine to have been the style of the French Cardinal Richelieu who founded the French Academy (Académie française) in 1635., but was also famed for his literary 'salons.'

Here in the heart of Montreal, is a forum for different points of view and debate, all ably orchestrated week after week by David and Diana Nicholson in their home by invitation only. The celebration of 1500 consecutive Wednesday-Nights is scheduled as an exceptional event at another location on Wednesday December 1st 2010.

I first met the Nicholsons several years ago, at a dinner party where David got me talking about my pet enthusiasm, raising awareness of celiac disease and the gluten-free diet. I was invited to speak about this and of course accepted. In turn medical professionals were also invited and the discussion was written up on the Wednesday-night website which receives up to 10,000 hits per week.

Since then, I have attended many times, revelling in the flow of discussion across world affairs, to the work of local artists and authors. You never know if you'll be sitting next to a bright IT student, a Hong Kong investment banker, a board member of your pension fund, a member of parliament, a consul, a university professor, or a journalist. Eloquent speakers expound on conflicting viewpoints of the same situation such as climate change, the cost of gasoline, or oil barrels and all are listened to respectfully. It is such a privilege to be invited to attend. Thank you David and Diana.

1500 Wednesdays

By Prof. Gerald Ratzer

David and Diana Nicholson have to be congratulated for what is clearly a record setting contribution to the social and intellectual fabric of Montreal. From what started as an after-class get together with her McGill professor Carl Begie over a drink, this has expanded into a well researched and documented salon, few in the world can revival.

Both David and Diana have web sites with invitations, links to articles, photos, videos, charts and more. To manage to do this for 1500 Wednesdays and attract high level individuals with international connections and opinions has added to the world view which their salon provides. No matter whether a Wednesday falls on Christmas, New Year, or any other important day, David and Diana would open their lovely home on Rosemount Avenue and invite in an interesting group of people from their wide circle of friends.

From my own background, I draw an analogy of the Wednesday Night experience to dining at high table at an Oxford or Cambridge college. Each time you go you know you will be meeting some well known friends and also some new faces. Each time there will be an interesting intellectual discussion, most likely on a topic which is outside your own field of expertise. This is your chance to learn from other experts and discuss topics from many different areas. The analogy goes further in the David and Diana has participated at many Oxford and Cambridge events in Montreal, and in fact hosted the Fall Oxbridge cocktail party at their Rosemount home, just three days before they moved!

Their contribution has been outstanding and I will vote that they both be put forward for the Order of Canada.

It changes lives

By Katherine Waters

My husband David and I weren't sure what to expect at our first Wednesday Night. We'd heard that several economists, stockbrokers, investment counsellors, bankers attended. Would a journalist and an English Lit professor of socialist inclinations and little disposable income fit in? Well, the "business world" people were not only interesting, but articulate and witty. And there were plenty of attendees with political, social, and human rights concerns and expertise. And most of all there was David, our courtly and intellectually curious moderator; and Diana, passionate, informed, and charming. If Dick Cheney had attended, it might have changed his life!

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Wednesday Nights

A magnificent and unanticipated pleasure!

By Prof. Guy Stanley

The Italian historian Benedatta Craveri remarks in *l'Âge de la conversation* (Gallimard 2002) that the conversation of the Salon over the course of a century or more, beginning in the 17th century after the French wars of religion, developed a civilizing ideal of social conduct based on courtesy and mutual pleasure. Over the course of its development, as other historians noted (e.g. Anne Martin Fugier in her account of *Les salons de la Troisième République* (Perrin/Tempus 2009)) the ideal of sociable conversation deepened as participation broadened to include writers, artists, and politicians. In the WN salon, participants include –besides the above-occasional special guests, economists, investment counsellors, fund managers, engineers, physicians, scientists, professors and ...neighbours, friends, friends of friends, and refreshingly, often the children of participants. The ideals of sociability rule as issues are discussed and Chairman David Nicholson keeps the proceedings moving a-clip under the watchful eye of his accomplished spouse, Diana. The conversation, while well-informed, is not infrequently informed as well by passion—for justice, for reason, even for factual accuracy—as well as the delight of spirited interchange

and occasional bon mots.

My introduction to the WN Salon came in the mid 1990 when, as a prof at HÉC, I was invited to tag along with a colleague. The price of entry was a bottle of wine and, for someone relatively new to Montréal at the time, the accent on sociability was evident in the warm reception accorded me by the far more experienced veterans. A magnificent and totally unanticipated pleasure that continues was the evening they introduced me to the woman who subsequently became my wonderful wife, Yvette. So I guess it's fair to say that WN changed my life dramatically and very much for the better.

Over the course of the last 15 years, although I have missed many a WN, the hosts never have: rather, they have unfailingly opened their doors, maintained a web site, and ensured the participation of a well-seasoned mixture of guests literally every WN of every year, with the exception of some holidays. As a devoted participant, I offer my deepest appreciation for the privilege Diana and David have accorded me over the years and salute them for their extraordinary contribution to the quality of life in Montreal, Québec and Canada. Bravo and Congratulations on WN 1500!

A Special Thanks to David and Diana Nicholson for Wednesday Nights

By The Hon. John Ciaccia

We are grateful for the opportunities you have given us to meet, to talk, to sometimes dispute but always to enjoy your company and that of the many and varied people who have joined you on Wednesday Night.

You have opened your home and your hearts to us all. We have been fortunate to have had this oasis in the midst of apathy inattention and confusion. A place where the events of the time will have been reviewed, discussed, discarded, embraced but never overlooked. They have enriched us all- and left us yearning for more.

Who can forget the discussions on the “distinct society” and on the thesis that violence has accompanied all changes in the world (including the fear of violence (Star Wars) in the dismantling of the Soviet Union). We may regret, but not forget.

The discussions have known the whole gamut of reactions—from approval to indignation and contrariness, but always (well, almost) with politeness.

Times have come and times have gone-but you go on forever. We are grateful for your unique contribution and thank you. A millions times.

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- George F. Lengvari, Sr.



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To be or not to be, is still the big question

While death and taxes continue to be the two immutable factors of modern life, questions raised by legal euthanasia seemed to be less concerned with the inevitable end of life as opposed to the where, when and especially how the lights get turned off.

“It’s not so much about if we’re going to die,” said Dr. Stephen Liben. “It’s all about how we’re going to die.”

During a recent panel discussion held in the McGill University Medical Faculty’s Palmer Auditorium, almost two hundred people listened to Liben and five other panelists discuss the medical and legal ethics of euthanasia. Produced by the CBC and hosted by Sunday Morning radio host Michael Enright, the panel’s sometimes heated discussions went on for an hour before the audience got their chance to line up at the microphones to pose their own questions. Besides Dr. Liben, other members of the panel included pain relief specialist and emergency room nurse Mary Griffin, patient rights advocate Linda Couture, *The Métropolitain*’s publisher Beryl P. Wajzman, euthanasia advocate Alain Jarry and McGill’s medical ethics and law specialist Margaret Somerville. Apart from Jarry’s defense of what he described as a patient’s ‘right to die’, Wajzman’s passionate defense of the individual’s right to make his or her own decisions almost immediately shoved the debate out of the hospital (where life ends for over 80% of the population) and into the courts which affect us all.

“Death is lousy,” said Wajzman. “...But in the end, people must be allowed to make up their minds about what they’re going to do with their own life.”

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled by a vote of 5 to 4, that giving someone a lethal injection, regardless of intent, is nothing less than murder worth a minimum of 10 years in jail. Even if a recent poll indicates over 70% of the province’s population said they believe euthanasia would be an accept-

able medical option for the sick and the helpless.

Liben said euthanasia would do far more harm than good, Somerville extended his argument when she told the audience that the state and the medical profession cannot cross the line and begin to kill people.

“There’s a big difference between death due to natural causes as opposed to a death caused by a lethal injection,” said Somerville.

Citing their extensive medical and professional experience

with both the sick and the dying, both Liben and Griffin also provided the audience with eloquent arguments about the validity of palliative care as opposed to the possibility of a quick, expedient and efficient final solution which Liben said would free up a lot of beds probably save the government’s health services a lot of money.

Wajzman agreed.

“Make no mistake,” he said. “The government is pursuing euthanasia because they want to save some money.”

Liben said euthanasia would do far more harm than good, Somerville extended his argument when she told the audience that the state and the medical profession cannot cross the line and begin to kill people. “There’s a big difference between death due to natural causes as opposed to a death caused by a lethal injection,” said Somerville.



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Guns and money running for the exits

Timidity and introspection characterize the latest G20 and NATO summits

Two important international meetings took place in November – the G20 met in Seoul and NATO met in Lisbon. While one is an international economic forum and the other is a military alliance originally conceived to prevent Soviet aggression, their outcomes are linked by a lack of vigour and funding. The flaccid direction from both of these summits does not bode well for the near future of economic cooperation nor for a coordinated response to serious threats from Iran, the Taliban/Al Qaida and North Korea.

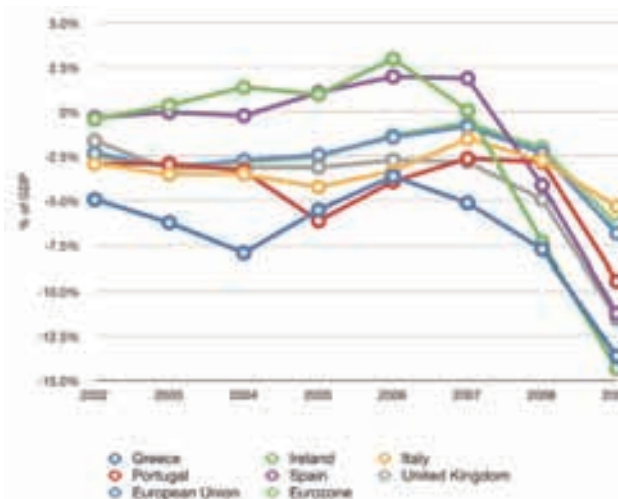
First to the G20 in Lisbon – where the member states complained about each other's policies and resolved to "monitor" each other's bad behaviour for possible correction in the future. In response to China's refusal to allow its currency to rise in value enough to reduce serious trade imbalances and the US' refusal to reneg on debasing the world's reserve currency, the G20 have created the "Mutual Assessment Process (MAP) to promote external sustainability. (We) will strengthen multilateral cooperation to promote external sustainability and pursue the full range of policies conducive to reducing excessive imbalances and maintaining current account imbalances at sustainable levels."

The gobbledegook above basically says that the G20 intend to watch member states pursue their race to the bottom in currency valuations and if it gets too bad, call each other on the carpet. Since China and the US will not change their respective policies, one can expect that the US Dollar will continue to lose value as a reserve currency and currency diversification among creditor nations (like China and the oil producers) is likely to push up other currencies as a result, whether those nations desire it or not. Russia, for example, has announced that it has added the Canadian Dollar to its reserves. Other nations will certainly take note. As well, gold purchases continue among the central banks of creditor nations since it is seen as a true hedge against further USD devaluation with the second round of quantitative easing (QE2) now underway in the US. When the US Federal Reserve announces that it intends to purchase \$600 billion in US government debt to inject cash into the economy, learned economists around the world translate this policy into its more familiar moniker, "printing money." The Chinese would be more vocal in their disappointment with this policy except that they already hold about \$800 billion in US government debt among their \$2 trillion or more in reserves. The more noise they make, the less their investment will be worth. To those who believe that the bull market in bonds will continue indefinitely, a careful review of G20 policies would indicate that debtor nations will engage in debasement and the ensuing inflation to reduce their debt to GDP ratios in the long run.

Among European nations, the revolving credit crisis continues. Greece gave way to Ireland; Portugal is next, and then Spain. Bond traders are making the rounds of the PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain) and pushing bond prices down (and yields on debt up) as they expose the overextension of each sovereign nation's debt. Even though the IMF has just announced a doubling of its capitalization to \$750 billion USD, this would not be enough if the IMF alone had to bail out all the PIIGS. Germany cannot be called upon to save all other nations, even with the aid of the IMF. Spain, whose debt crisis is scheduled for early in 2011, is too big to save and

too big to fail. So far with Greece and Ireland, the debt reorganization packages have not forced any debt holders to "take a haircut", meaning, write off part of their debt. With Spain, that will have to change, since there is not enough money in IMF and German pockets to "extend and pretend" (a real estate term currently popular in the US, when debt is rolled over to be dealt with hopefully under better times later on).

PIIGS Federal Budget Surpluses/Deficits to GDP, 2002-2009



The chart above shows the PIIGS annual budget deficits up to 2009, with the UK and Eurozone nations thrown in for comparison purposes. It demonstrates that all of the major European powers will have to make serious budget cuts over an extended period of time, and no area of spending will be considered taboo. That will include military spending, and that's where the NATO summit comes into this equation.

The top contributors of troops to the international effort in Afghanistan are NATO members, and most of them are Europeans. The chart here details the current levels of commitment in the field as of late 2010.

Keeping a soldier deployed in a combat environment costs about \$1 million USD per year; it's no wonder that the Eurozone nations want to extract themselves from Afghanistan as quickly as possible. After nine years of war, the Taliban is still able to mount credible resistance and seeks refuge in Pakistan to regroup over the winter months; NATO does not dare intervene overtly in the Pashtun region of Pakistan due to fears of further destabilizing that nation. With no end in sight, NATO has picked a date to remove itself from the battlefield: 2014. One should not expect all the major contributing nations above to remain fully committed in their current roles until then – Canada will revert to a training role early in 2011 which will cut its troop commitments and costs by more than half. The European nations in the midst of budget crises and dissipating voter confidence look longingly at Canada's extraction from a combat deployment role and wonder how they can revise their own commitments downwards, no matter how small they may already be.

Table of ISAF/NATO Contributors⁽¹⁾

Country ⁽²⁾	Number of Troops ⁽³⁾	% of Total Troops ⁽⁴⁾	Troops per one million population ⁽⁵⁾	Troops per \$1 billion (USD) GDP ⁽⁶⁾
United States	90,000	68.7%	288.5	6.17
United Kingdom	9,500	7.2%	155.2	3.56
Germany	4,341	3.3%	52.7	1.19
France	3,850	2.9%	60.3	1.35
Italy	3,688	2.8%	61.9	1.60
Canada	2,922	2.3%	87.7	1.95
Poland	2,519	1.9%	66.1	4.77
Turkey	1,790	1.3%	24.2	2.41
Romania	1,648	1.4%	77.0	8.11
Spain	1,576	1.2%	35.4	0.98
Australia	1,550	1.9%	73.5	1.52

In the old days of the Vietnamese war, this was called "Vietnamization" – getting the host nation's troops to do their own fighting. It didn't work in Vietnam, and at the moment there is no reason to imagine that the Afghan army would be able to sustain the fragile, marginal and corrupt Karzai regime. It is for this reason that US commanders are beginning to look at their opponents as "good" Taliban, those that can be co-opted, and "bad" Taliban, those firmly entrenched with Al-Qaida. It worked in Iraq with some of the Sunni militants, and it will have to work in Afghanistan if the NATO plan for gradual extraction will have a chance of succeeding.

It is never good strategy to tell your enemy when you plan to remove your best troops from the battlefield. The Taliban are likely to engage in backroom negotiations with the ISAF/NATO forces to curtail significant military offenses while they prepare for the day that they will face purely Afghan troops on the ground. The Afghan nation has never been held by an invading army for any significant length of time for nearly 1000 years and waiting out another set of invaders for four years is no big deal – especially if you know that they are out of money.

The G20 and NATO are each practicing their own game of "extend and pretend", keeping things going in the hope that conditions will be better at a later date and the problem will be easier to deal with. Well, the impending Spanish debt crisis, the Iranian nuclear threat and an offensive North Korea are unlikely to create sunnier days for either organization. It's a bit like running from a crumbling building to one about to catch fire – the self-congratulatory phase is likely to be fleeting and will give way to grave disappointment with the outcome.

Among European nations, the revolving credit crisis continues. Greece gave way to Ireland; Portugal is next, and then Spain. Bond traders are making the rounds and pushing bond prices down (and yields on debt up) as they expose the overextension of each sovereign nation's debt.



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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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Canada's foreign policy is centred around three Ds (Defense, Development and Diplomacy). CCD believes that our policies should be guided by a 4th D, Democracy. Canada must make ending corruption, respect for the rule of law, and open, accountable and transparent governments key foreign policy priorities. If you agree, become a member of the CCD.

Founded in 2003, the Canadian Coalition for Democracies (CCD) is an organization of concerned Canadians dedicated to the protection and promotion of democracy at home and abroad. CCD will influence the Canadian political process and public opinion to achieve a more pro-democracy foreign policy.

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Will the IMF bailout help Ireland recover from the debt crisis?

How will the Irish economy recover from the debt crisis? Will the bailout plan work? And will the Irish economy bounce back quickly? How will the Irish people be affected by this situation? These are some of the questions one can ask after the events of the last few weeks.

From 1995 to 2007, Ireland saw its economy grow substantially and was known as the “Celtic Tiger”. As Irish people tend to own their houses from a relatively young age, banks easily gave out cheap loans on houses and construction projects without asking many guarantees. House prices were continually rising and eventually in 2008, like in the United States, caused the housing price bubble to burst. In the wake of the ensuing crisis, the Irish government decided to bail out its banks, recapitalizing or nationalizing most in the process. The government guaranteed savings, checking accounts and bonds that they sold to investors on behalf of Irish banks that attracted foreign investment for a while, but as the situation worsened in other countries, this money inflow soon disappeared. At the same time, the government’s injection of money was not sufficient to re-launch the economy, and the country high budget deficit no longer permitted it to cover the banks’ liabilities.

In May 2010, as Greece accepted the International Monetary Fund’s bailout terms, Ireland’s prime minister stated that his country’s economy was not like that of Greece and didn’t need help. As described by Robert M. Dunn in his book “International Economics”, Countries are generally reluctant to ask for the IMF’s help as it imposes drastic measures that render it hard to “manage economic and financial affairs”. Even though the IMF ensures investors to see their money again, its intervention stigmatizes the government; its ability to maintain a stable economy is questioned, and is often seen as a political embarrassment. When budget deficits are maintained for long periods of time, and trade deficit widens, the constant depletion of foreign exchange reserves will bring the economy to a halt, to the point where the government will have to wait until it receives money from its exports to pay its bills.

Today, numerous European countries are owed important quantities of money by Irish banks. For example, as Simon Johnson, a former chief of the IMF and author of “13 banks”, has declared: “German banks are owed \$139 billion (4.2 % of German GDP),



The margin for manoeuvre of the Irish government is limited. Yes they are introducing an austerity plan, and the IMF bailed them out, but there is little hope for the Irish economy to undergo a growth of 2.75% within the next 4 years as announced.

British banks are owed \$131 billion, (~5 % of Great Britain’s GDP), and the French ones are owed \$43.5 billion, (~2 % of French GDP).

It is clearly not in their interest for Irish banks to fail, as it is then more likely that given the present state of its finances, the Irish government would not be in a position to cover their debt. As the situation deteriorated, it was only a matter of months before the more important Euro zone countries would pressure Ireland into seeking their help and that of the IMF.

At first, Ireland would not give in, but on Sunday November 28th 2010, a €85 billion package was imposed with the obligation for the government, like in Greece, to put in place an austerity plan with constraining fiscal policy to compliment the bailout. It consists of cutting Ireland’s social welfare budget by 15% in an effort to save 4 billion a year and widening the source of tax, to make money

from low-income workers who pay no tax and public pensioners. As stated by Paul Mason, the economics editor for BBC’s Newsnight “each Irish family will pay an extra €3000 in tax.” In the process, 25,000 public sector jobs will be terminated, and the nation’s hourly minimum wage will be cut by 1 euro (-13%). Finally, the government spending on health-care will be cut considerably. All will be done in the hope of stimulating job creation and reducing budget deficit from 32 to 3% of GDP within the next 4 years.

France and Germany also asked Ireland to increase its corporate tax, as did the EU Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee who wish to enforce a standard of 25% for all Euro zone members to level competition. But the Irish government resisted this, as this measure has allowed the country to attract foreign investment and create jobs and as David McKittrick reported in the Belfast

Telegraph: It “is to remain unchanged at 12.5 %, Dublin having argued that it was one of the engines of its one-time prosperity and could be so again”.

Since the inception of the Euro currency on the 1st of January 1999, Euro zone advocates had highlighted its advantages, particularly the fact that it had eliminated exchange rates between the 16 countries, thus facilitating trade between them. However, with the debt crisis, we can see that the very ties implemented by the single currency which were bragged about during periods of growth, have facilitated the contagion throughout the Euro zone. As a result of the record high Irish debt combined with the depletion of their foreign exchange reserves, the Euro has depreciated substantially in the last few weeks (close to 8%), even though it only forms two or so percent of the Euro zone’s GDP.

Investment confidence has vanished and speculators are now turning their attention to Portugal and Spain. In that context, European political leaders are trying to reassure investors, and Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the leader of the IMF, has stated that “the Irish economy will come back on track rather rapidly”.

But the reality is that investors are still skeptical, and in my opinion, rightly so as the margin for manoeuvre of the Irish government is limited. Yes they are introducing an austerity plan, and the IMF bailed them out, but there is little hope for the Irish economy to undergo a growth of 2.75% within the next 4 years as announced. Indeed, the single currency hinders Ireland’s ability to conduct an export-led growth whereby it cannot devalue its currency to increase net exports. For Paul Mason, “it is dependent on a more general recovery across the Euro zone and/or successfully competing for high value inward investment by, for example, speculative finance industries or high tech, high value global operations.”

Besides, there is continuous pressure from other countries to increase their corporate tax. This, if it were to be implemented would have a catastrophic impact on the recovery, as it would tremendously reduce foreign investments. At the end of the day, it seems to me that, no matter what they do, the Irish government cannot control their own destiny and very much depend on what will happen in the Euro zone and particularly in Iberia: only time will tell.

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