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QUÉBEC 2012

The Aftermath



No mandate!

A prejudiced, "not-ready-for-prime-time" government

Beryl Wajzman

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One thing is clear from the narrow election result in Quebec - it gave the PQ no mandate for any of its radical agenda. It was to be hoped that we could take Pauline Marois at her word that she not only respected, but understood the will of the people. However, from the inflammatory rhetoric, the sparking of new language friction and the irresponsible fiscal policies it was perhaps too much to hope for. The only sign of hope are the endless flipflops and reining in of her Ministers that she has done.

Two-thirds of Quebecers - anglophones, allophones and francophones - voted for the federalist, free-market alternatives. Mme. Marois must take that into account and we all must hold her accountable.

Quebecers gave her no mandate to hold a referendum.

No mandate for the Identity Act creating two classes of citizens

No mandate for any extension of Bill 101.

No mandate for her draconian increases in personal and corporate tax rate.

The Parti Québécois was returned to power with a minority government. The results, in seats and percentage of popular vote,

were almost a mirror of 2007. The PQ has 54 seats, just seven seats more than it had in the last assembly. The Liberals dropped to 50 seats and the CAQ captured 19 with Québec Solidaire at two. The PQ's 32% of the popular vote was only 1 per cent more than the Liberals, and very much where the party has been at for the better part of the year. It's lowest plurality ever.

The Liberal showing was remarkably better than almost all pundits predicted. Most commentators credit the strong performance to a passionate Jean Charest who in the last two weeks of the campaign showed the same "feu sacré" as he did when he led the referendum forces in 1995.

The CAQ came in considerably below expectations. But it was clear that it sapped some Liberal votes. The CAQ took 27% of the popular vote compared to the ADQ's 17% in 2008. That made the difference. The irresponsible "change for the sake of change" vote.

But this result should not be about breathing a sigh of relief. It should be about wading into the fight. It is about becoming more engaged as Quebecers. That is the challenge to all communities.

It is about no longer accepting the palaver of the talking heads who constantly apologize for Pauline Marois and her cohorts. Who constantly say, "They don't mean that." It is time to demand that they prove that don't mean the extremism they espouse.

Quebecers showed they reject the politics of division and discord. They showed they reject the messages of nullification and the

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Des promesses qu'il valait mieux ne pas tenir, sauf une !

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Élu le 4 septembre avec 31,9 % des suffrages exprimés (0,7% de plus que les libéraux) et 54 sièges sur 125, le gouvernement dirigé par Mme Marois ne pourra pas tenir la plupart de ses promesses. N'étant pas totalement réduit à l'impuissance, il a quand même pu prendre quelques décisions douteuses découlant de son programme électoral. J'en mentionnerai quelques-unes. Le moratoire complet sur l'exploitation des gaz de schistes annoncé, moins de vingt-quatre après son assermentation, par la nouvelle ministre des Ressources naturelles, Martine Ouellet, est le premier exemple qui me vient à l'esprit. Pourquoi ne pas avoir attendu que le Comité de l'évaluation environnementale stratégique sur le gaz de schiste ait terminé ses travaux ? Tout simplement parce que Mme Ouellet est une militante écologiste fondamentaliste. Bombardée ministre, pourquoi se retiendrait-elle de prendre des décisions dont la rationalité est plus que douteuse ? Comme elle sait fort bien, ainsi que les autres ministres du gouvernement Marois, que son parti ne demeurera pas très longtemps au pouvoir, elle a décidé

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LA PATRIE

Des promesses qu'il valait mieux ne pas tenir, sauf une ! suite de la page 1

de mettre la population devant le fait accompli. Dans quelques mois, le prochain gouvernement, qui, si Mme Marois et ses ministres continuent de multiplier les bourdes, ne sera pas formé par le PQ, sera sans doute en mesure de prendre à propos des gaz de schistes une décision plus éclairée.

Un autre qui s'est mis les pieds dans les plats avant même que la soupe ne soit chaude, c'est le ministre des Finances, Nicolas Marceau. Contrairement à sa collègue des Richesses naturelles, il a dû faire marche arrière. De mémoire d'électeur, je ne me rappelle pas avoir assisté à un si burlesque numéro de patinage de fantaisie de la part d'un politicien. Mais quel mouche l'a piqué ? Le ministre n'aurait pas été forcé de se ridiculiser publiquement, s'il n'avait agi avec tant de hâte. Surtout que les mesures annoncées à propos de la Contribution santé, allaient bien au-delà des promesses énoncées pendant la campagne électorale par le Parti québécois. Hausser les impôts des « riches » et augmenter, rétroactivement dans les deux cas, les taxes sur les gains en capitaux pour compenser la disparition de contribution santé, était une idée à la fois inique et stupide. Le ministre n'a que lui-même à blâmer pour les rires étouffés qui accompagnent désormais chacune de ses apparitions.

Autres promesses tenues : l'annulation de la hausse des droits universitaires et l'abolition de la loi 12. Pour ma part, je désapprouve, mais sans en faire un plat. Le problème du sous-financement des universités n'est pas réglé, mais il le sera un jour. Par ce gouvernement, peut-être, ou par le prochain, dans quelques mois. Quant à la loi 12, considérons les faits sereinement. Après tout, les clauses primordiales de la loi, c'est-à-dire la fermeture des institutions perturbées par le boycott étudiant, et la remise au mois d'août des sessions interrompues, a produit les effets bénéfiques attendus bien avant le 4 septembre. Abolir la



loi, c'était jeter à la poubelle un flacon de médicaments des mois après que les antibiotiques qu'ils contenaient aient sauvé la vie du malade. Quant aux aspects « fascistes » de la loi : l'obligation d'annoncer une manifestation huit heures avant sa tenue et de prévenir les corps policiers du trajet qu'elle devait emprunter, ils n'ont en pratique jamais été appliqués. Les manifestations ont continué d'avoir lieu. La liberté d'expression d'aucun carré rouge ou tête brûlée n'a été brimée, sinon la liberté (ou la licence) de « s'exprimer » dans le langage propre aux écervelés : le lancer du caillou, l'injure scatologique et le crachat, qui de toutes façons n'avaient pas besoin de loi 12 pour être interdits ou réprimés. Des policiers (et en particulier une policière) ont commis des excès, c'est évident. Mais les mêmes gestes auraient été posés si la loi 12 n'avait pas existé. Son abolition n'a donc eu en pratique aucune conséquence négative. Au contraire, puisqu'en y allant de cette décision Mme Marois a permis aux carrés rouges de se calmer les casseroles. Jusque-là, ça va. Mme Marois a eu tort, mais elle n'a pas causé grand tort. Sauf que...

Que soient maintenues les améliorations au régime des prêts et bourses promises aux étudiants par le gouvernement précédent, voilà qui passe les bornes de la décence. Mme Marois n'arbore plus le carré rouge, mais elle en dissimule sûrement un sous le revers de son tailleur. N'est-il pas tristement hilarant que pour désamorcer la crise des étudiants (que je me refuse à appeler la « crise étudiante »), Mme Marois décide d'emprunter à Jean Charest l'une de ses meilleures idées en l'appliquant dans un contexte où elle devient une grossière erreur ? Cette acrobatie mentale qui s'apparente à l'exécution du grand écart par une contorsionniste arthritique risque de coûter cher en courbatures politiques à celle qui s'y est livrée. En attendant, ce sont les contribuables qui paient la facture. Il faudra voir ce qui va ressortir du sommet sur l'enseignement supérieur que le ministre Pierre Duchesne est en train de concocter. C'est drôle, mais j'ai l'impression que les étudiants actuellement « minouchés » par le PQ vont en ressortir avec quelques égratignures. Mme Marois ne pourra pas toujours jouer dans les plates-bandes de Québec solidaire. Il faudra

bien que le principe de réalité ait un jour préséance sur le principe de plaisir.

Très critiquées sinon clairement condamnées par la majorité de la population, les mesures mentionnées ci-haut, de même quelques autres décisions du gouvernement péquiste, ont évidemment beaucoup plu aux deux élus de Québec solidaire. « Marois applique les idées de QS, jubilent Khadir et David », titre *Le Devoir*, du 27 septembre⁽¹⁾. Parmi ces décisions du gouvernement, les élus de QS mentionnent l'annulation du prêt à la mine Jeffrey, qui aura comme conséquence inévitable la fin de l'exploitation et de l'exportation de l'amiante chrysotile. Je me demandais si j'allais trouver élément positif dans le début de règne de Pauline Marois, en voici un !

Un médecin expert déclarait à la radio il y a quelques semaines : « Il n'existe pas davantage de moyen sécuritaire d'exploiter l'amiante, qu'il n'y a de moyen sécuritaire de sauter du quinzième étage ». La chute se termine toujours en catastrophe. Ainsi, celui qui se jette dans le vide a beau se dire en passant devant la fenêtre du premier : « Jusqu'ici tout va bien ! », il ne perd rien pour attendre. Toute comparaison a ses limites. Celui qui plonge est celui qui meurt en s'écrasant au sol. Il n'y a pas substitution pendant la chute. Au contraire, celui qui extrait le chrysotile s'en tire sain et sauf, car nos exploitations minières sont parfaitement sécuritaires. « Jusqu'ici, tout va bien ! », peuvent affirmer la compagnie minière. et les mineurs qui y travaillent. Celui qui va crever à cause du poison qu'on lui vend habite loin, très loin. Sauter par la fenêtre nous rapporte un peu d'argent, mais il y a quelqu'un là-bas qu'en paie le prix.

⁽¹⁾ Article d'antoine Robitaille.

⁽²⁾ La CAQ serait allée dans le même sens si elle avait pris le pouvoir, — mais sans tannuler toutefois le prêt de 58 millions.



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NO MANDATE - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

metaphors of segregation. Now, anglophones and allophones, must show that they are confident of their place in this society and engage fully in Quebec. To prevent another resurgence it is necessary to do that. It is also right. And there will be a lot of allies.

There was a troubling aspect in the coverage of the unprecedented series of debates in the provincial election. Too many commentators were paying attention to everything from hand motions to smiles and smirks. They should have been paying attention to what was said. And so should have all voters.

This was the most important vote since the 1995 referendum. The reason? After a spring and early summer of social insurrection organized and mobilized by the radical CSN union, the PQ and the QS as much as by students, we enter a fall and winter of public sector union negotiations with a sword of Damocles of more urban paralysis and economic atrophy caused by more demonstrations and marches. It was important for voters to have used intellectual rigour to look at actions and results and not just body movements.

The Charest administration's tough stance on the students must be credited to a great degree in getting most of the students to vote to go back to class. Charest made it clear that he would continue to protect the economic engine of Quebec. Marois has capitulated to student demands and cancelled the tuition hike and now the students want more. Totally free education. Nobody knows where the money will be coming from except taxpayers pockets.

This was an election not only about economic stewardship, but about the toughness required to maintain a society of free thought and a free economy. Only Charest expounded that. But there was another dark shadow that hung over the vote..

I have used the title "A Matter of Prejudice" once before. In a column in October 2007. The prejudice then was the push by the PQ for a Quebec Identity Act. That proposition would have put egregious and draconian limits on citizenship, rights to stand for election and even communication with elected officials. All those who did not speak French would have those rights compromised.

Pauline Marois has raised that spectre again. She is still talking, now as Premier, that her government would pass a law that would not allow anyone to run for public office, not even for a city council seat, if they were not fluent in French. Basically she intends to re-introduce the infamous

Bill 95 that Don Martin, then of the National Post, termed "Racism – in any language."

The Quebec Identity Act would not only provide a rationale for intolerance, but institutionalize it beyond anything we've seen before. Marois would create two classes of citizenship. She does not understand that laws must be of universal application that respect, with equitable treatment, the rights of every single individual.

Too many commentators have over the years, and still do today, explained away separatist rhetoric and that all the laws and all the power-sharing arrangements with Quebec were necessary to subdue nationalist fervor. That as long as language and culture were protected, no laws would ever appear that would threaten basic democratic rights. Marois may prove them wrong.

The debate on identity that Marois is rekindling, including her "lay" charter that would do away with religious symbolism in the public square save for that of Christians, goes to the heart of the blackest delusions of the Quebec malaise. The Marois proposals should not be glossed over or apologized for as so many are doing.

In his historic speech made upon his departure from office Lucien Bouchard sounded a clarion call for freedom. He said, "When issues are matters of principle, there is no room for negotiation. We touch here clearly at the heart of what is essential. I wish to affirm with absolutely no qualifications, that citizens of Quebec can exercise their right to vote, in whichever way they want, without being accused of intolerance." Marois and today's PQ, in a desperate bid to pander to Quebec's hard-line exclusivists, are ready to jettison those noble sentiments to the dustbin of Quebec history.

For those who thought that once in power Marois' PQ would show intelligence and maturity, they too were proved wrong. The original Saturday Night Live cast members were once known as the "Not ready for primetime players." That appellation can easily be applied to this after an astonishing first few weeks that evidenced an audacious lack of comprehension of public finance, manifested a total disregard of its meager minority status and demonstrated the paucity of talent in its caucus.



This government is unprepared to govern a province, much less to separate and govern a nation.

For all the normal election bombast, one almost has the impression that the PQ – in its deepest council rooms apart – really did not think it was going to win this election. MNAs with little or no experience have been appointed to not one, but in many cases, to two critical Ministries at the same time. Put

aside the typical PQ display of taking the oath to the Queen behind closed doors and having the Canadian flag moved out during the ceremony, the choice of Cabinet members seemed nothing less than a haphazardly game of musical chairs.

Announcements seem to be made by Mme. Marois in machine-gun fashion – almost off the cuff. She seemed like nothing less than a vaudeville performer afraid the big cane was going to pull her off the stage by her neck.

Nicolas Marceau, a UQAM economics professor first elected to the National Assembly in a by-election on September 21, 2009, is now not only our Minister of Finance but is also responsible for Economic Development. That former Ministry was so important that it attracted some of the most able people from the private sector – like Clément Gignac – to shoulder the sacrifices of public service. Now it seems that the PQ is relegating economic development to backburner status.

In the midst of the Charbonneau Commission, Mme. Marois has given 42-year old Sylvain Gaudreault the enormous Ministries of Transport and Municipal Affairs. Exactly the domains the Commission is investigating. And naturally, despite having obtained one of the smallest pluralities in history, Marois named 35-year old Alexandre Cloutier as Minister of State for Intergovernmental relations and for "sovereignist governance."

And the decisions taken in her first few weeks have been outlandish. Mme. Marois managed to add billions of dollars of expenses onto the treasury that we will have to make up. She cancelled the meager tuition hikes and the health tax. Those alone are a billion dollars. If she thought she would buy the loyalty of the students she was wrong. Within 48 hours student leaders announced they now wanted free education.

If you thought that the measures Marois

announced would be paid for by the development of our natural resources, you would have been wrong. She announced permanent moratoriums on the development of South Shore natural gas and Anticosti Island oil. Montana, North Dakota, western Pennsylvania and central Texas have achieved almost full employment through development of their natural gas fields in just the past two years. But that's not good enough for this government. It even led former PQ Premier Lucien Bouchard to question this government's economic rationality. And, oh yes, let's not forget nuclear power. France gets 75% of its energy from it. Ontario, 50%. But Mme. Marois is going the other way. She announced the closure of Quebec's only nuclear plant called Gentilly 2. There was a bit of an "Oops" moment when she was informed it would take billions of dollars and ten years to close it down and safely move the nuclear waste. The PQ's response came a day later. The government rationalized that the costs of a shutdown would be spent in Quebec, while the costs of refurbishing the plant would see some 40% of the money spent to buy equipment and technology from Ontario. So of course shutdown is better.

Almost unnoticed was her decision to allow Public Security Minister Stéphane Bergeron to look at the possibility of a public inquiry into the conduct of the Montreal police – yes the police, not the marchers – during the student riots that cost Montreal taxpayers some \$12 million.

But the cherry on the cake were her announcements of how she expects to fund Quebec. Tax increases of course! The traditional way. Increases ranging from 3-7%, depending on income, from the already highest taxed citizenry in North America. Increases in income taxes, capital gains taxes and of course corporate taxes since our economy is so completely recovered from the world economic crisis. And to add insult to injury, she wants to make some of the tax increases retroactive. Some question whether that is even legal but when asked, Finance Minister Marceau said that this had been stated by the PQ in the campaign. Well, nobody can find where that was stated.

This government is completely divorced from reality. As we write this, images of anti-government riots in Spain and Greece are flashing across television screens around the world. We hope that Quebec's "not ready for prime-time government" doesn't drive this province to the same point of desperation. One is reminded of Caesar's commentaries on the campaign in Gaul. "We made a desert and called it peace."



Ideas before identities.
Justice before orthodoxy.

THE MÉTROPOLITAIN

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Tolerating intolerance in Quebec

Anglophone pundits, myself included, were targeted recently by the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, a radical sovereignist group founded in 1834, whose ideas are barely more evolved than they were 178 years ago.

SSJB president Mario Beaulieu was so crass as to accuse some in Anglo media of creating a climate of hate that led a madman to shoot up the Parti Québécois' victory celebration, killing Denis Blanchette.

Beaulieu had some trouble with my use of the manufactured term "francosupremacy." This seems particularly ironic considering the SSJB invited actual supremacists – in the truest sense of the word – to one of their ultranationalist parties in 2006. This is the same gentleman who sought to ban musical acts with English members from a Fête Nationale celebration in 2009.

Not that it's constructive to engage in an "I know you are but what am I" argument, but you know what they say about people who live in glass houses...

Used previously by some Anglo bloggers, "francosupremacy" is laced with satire. If Beaulieu could see past his own hypocritical self-righteousness to read the body of my texts, he would have realized that the use of the term is not a literal comparison of PQ ideas to those of Nazis (which would be, of course, hysterical and inaccurate).

His objections are also ironic because Beaulieu himself is an admitted fighter for the supremacy of the French language in Quebec.

He, along with the more extreme language zealots in the PQ, claim to encourage the promotion of the French language when they are instead more preoccupied with the demotion of other languages, particularly English.

There is an important distinction to be made between referring to some PQ policies as xenophobic, and Pauline Marois or other individual péquistes as racists. Beaulieu and many in Quebec (and even Canadian) media don't seem to understand that very crucial distinction. It is a distortion used by those desperate to win an argument by demonizing their opponent. The "racist" accusation is simply inapplicable if for no other reason than its use implies that actors in this debate are of different races – which is, in itself, a racist statement.

"Xenophobia" is applicable because it literally refers to a fear of the other. It's not a pretty word. It pains me to use it when describing those who shape the discourse in my home province. When Quebec nationalists speak incessantly about the "Anglo threat," what word, pray tell, would be more appropriate? Words matter – to borrow the slogan of the other accused Quebec-bashers at The Gazette.

There's no denying the furor that would ensue if Quebec politicians spoke of the "Arab threat," or the "Chinese threat." When one of the province's most popular radio hosts, Benoît Dutrizac, mocks the Anglo accents of veteran, bilingual Montreal city councillors, where is the outrage? And had Charles Adler imitated a

Québécois accent; what then? The double-standard is shocking: It is perfectly acceptable in Quebec to demean Anglophones as a form of over-compensation for past abuses. Institutionalizing that debasement is equally tolerated.

To continue with the hypotheticals: What would be the reaction had Rob Ford proposed to ban Ontarians from running for any public office if they did not speak English at an adequate level? What if Dalton McGuinty wanted to secularize all government institutions, while granting exemptions only for Christian symbols? What if Stephen Harper proclaimed that there were too many minorities in Toronto and measures should be put into place to ensure that English Canadians would forever remain a majority in that city? These scenarios may seem far-fetched, but all are based on PQ policies unveiled during this past election campaign.

Thankfully, there are those who preach tolerance in the Rest of Canada to counter the Quebec-bashers at the Post.

"When you are part of a minority," Jeffrey Simpson writes in The Globe and Mail, "you have collective nerve ends that people from the majority cannot easily comprehend."

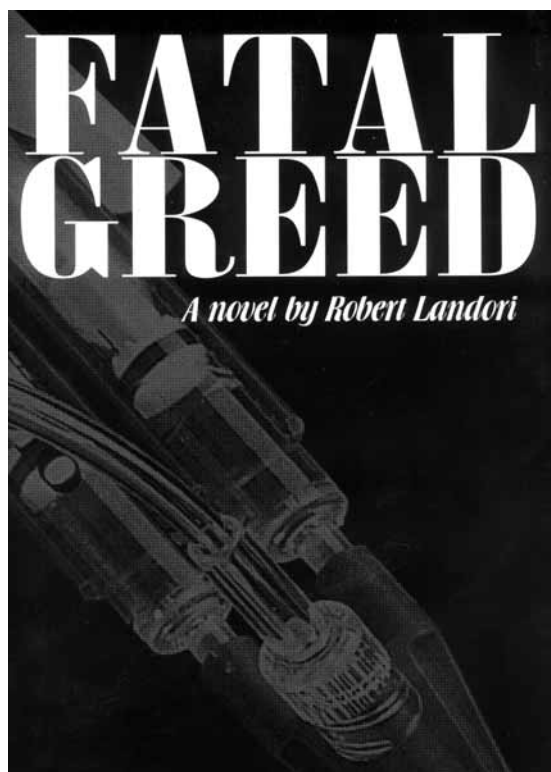
Indeed, understanding the underlying insecurities of Quebec culture when it comes to its linguistic minority status in North America is key to proper analysis. However, ensuring the prominence of the French language through government-sanctioned repression of other languages is the furthest

thing from constructive; it's combating perceived rhetorical intolerance with practical intolerance.

As someone with progressive values, it offends me to see Anglo progressives in Quebec and in the ROC bend over backwards to tolerate the intolerance of some Québécois political and media figures. If so-called progressives condemn the concept of dissuasion in crime policies, they should be just as quick to condemn it in cultural policies. It is in no way virtuous to, without scepticism, accept divisive and demonstrably xenophobic rhetoric, even if it is coming from a minority group trying to preserve their culture.

Quebec will never strengthen the French language by artificially repressing English; no such linguistic death match exists in everyday life. It is a battle waged almost exclusively in politics, media and on the radical fringes.

It's time to put all Quebecers, regardless of language, on a level playing field. In 2012, there should be no more excuses for intolerance. Anyone, on either side of this argument, who preaches that a group of people pose a threat simply because of their cultural origin and presence, are, by definition, xenophobes and should be condemned unanimously. Anyone who equates a critical look at Quebec society with inciting violence, as Beaulieu has, is simply attempting to further split populations along linguistic lines, perpetuating more intolerance and furthering an obsolete agenda. It's time to end the politics of fear and division.



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Once upon a time in Quebec

I'm not sure what to make of the recent Quebec provincial election. To be sure, the results were hardly surprising, given Jean Charest's long-dwindling popularity. It's a shame that the outcome appears to vindicate the anti-tuition-hike movement's unreasonable goals and undemocratic tactics. (In truth, it does no such thing, at least not without proof that the tuition issue moved more votes than, say, the Charest government's corruption. Alas, in politics, perception always trumps reality.) Nonetheless, since the Parti Québécois was first elected in 1976, Quebecers have consistently given each major party exactly nine years in power before trading it for the other.

I have to admit that I heaved a sigh of relief upon learning of the outcome. With a minority government and a paltry third of the popular vote, Pauline Marois' Péquistes will be able to do relatively little damage—for the time being, at least. Nonetheless, the times don't exactly call for complacency on federalists' part. Even without the "winning conditions" for another referendum anytime soon, Mme Marois can still make plenty of mischief through the jurisdictional fights she has promised to pick with Ottawa. How successfully the separatist movement will be able to milk those spats will depend on how ordinary Quebecers react to them. The history of a belle province suggests that it's impossible to predict what political developments will reinvigorate Quebecers' persecution complex.

It's worth mentioning that Marois' strategy of pushing Quebec's envelope with the federal government is not fundamentally new. It harkens back to a common Péquiste reaction to the Meech Lake Accord's offer of "distinct society" status for Quebec a generation ago. In 1987, former PQ cabinet minister Claude Morin—the man who quarterbacked the 1980 referendum strategy—publicly mused that the Accord was a win-win opportunity for the independence movement. Even if Meech had been enacted, a future PQ government would have exploited its additional powers to the hilt, thus bringing Quebec incrementally closer to de facto independence. Eventually, the federal government—the Supreme Court, if not the elected branches—would have drawn the line against any further nationalist power grabs. At that point, the PQ could have turned to Quebecers and said, "See? They never really meant to give us any meaningful freedom. The English have lied to us and humiliated us yet again. This country ain't big enough for the two of us nations."

The question, of course, is whether the Péquistes could have made enough political hay out of such a clash to call another referendum and win it. That same question confronts us again, as we wait to see whether and how

Premier Marois instigates the promised conflicts with Ottawa. If past experience is any indication, the answer isn't exactly comforting.

What kinds of incidents tend to cause upswings in separatist sentiment in Quebec? It has been suggested that widespread English Canadian opposition to Quebec air-traffic controllers' demand to work in French in the mid-1970s helped elect René Lévesque's PQ government in 1976. Given the nationalist hysteria over the patriation of the Constitution over Quebec's objections thirty years ago, one would think that separatism would have gotten a boost in the early 1980s. Yet opinion polls from that era suggested that most Quebecers either approved of the constitutional deal or were at worst indifferent to it at the time. The patriation did nothing in the short run to stop the Lévesque government's eventual slide into unpopularity. Nor did it create the conditions for a follow-up referendum that PQ hardliners

Too many Canadians today forget that the infamous sponsorship scandal did not only lay the once-mighty federal Liberals low. It also breathed new life into the sovereignty movement at a time when many thought it was down and out.

were demanding at the time (and that they've never stopped demanding since).

Only in the late 1980s, in the midst of the Meech Lake controversy, with Québécois federalists in power in Quebec City and Ottawa, did support for separation begin to rise again. In 1988, the Supreme Court's invalidation of the part of Bill 101 that required the exclusive use of French on outdoor commercial signs particularly helped separatism surge. The failure of Meech Lake in June 1990 pushed support for secession into the 60-something percent range in some polls. These levels of support ebbed and flowed throughout the 1990s, but stayed dangerously high for some time after the 1995 referendum vote. Not until the November 1998 election, when Lucien Bouchard's Péquistes narrowly lost the popular vote to the Charest Liberals, did it become apparent that Quebecers were beginning to tire of the never-ending sovereignty debate.

The Meech Lake debacle understandably convinced many federalists that any policy that antagonized Quebec nationalists would cause separatist sentiment to spike again. Quebecers' muted reactions to the Clarity Act of 2000, however, cast serious doubt on this idea. The Act, you'll remember, represented the Chrétien government's attempt to get tough with the separatists after the appeasement of the

Mulroney years failed. It reserved to Parliament the right to decide up front whether a proposed referendum question was clear. It also empowered Ottawa to refuse to recognize a Yes vote based on an unclear question or an insufficiently large or durable majority.

The Péquistes—and every other political party in Quebec—predictably bleated about the Clarity Act's restrictions on Quebec's ability to leave Confederation. By limiting Quebecers' freedom to secede as the spirit moved them, they argued, the Act violated the principle of self-determination to which even Quebec federalists pay homage. Many of the latter feared that Quebecers would bristle at this latest federal affront to their right to control their collective destiny. Yet in the end, Quebecers did nothing of the sort. No groundswell of popular resentment of the Clarity Act occurred. No winning conditions for another referendum materialized.

After this and other developments of the early 2000s—such as Bouchard's resignation in 2001 and the Quebec Liberals' return to power in 2003—English Canadians could have been forgiven for thinking separatism dead. The Charest Liberals had barely taken office, however, before this overconfidence was proven wrong—dangerously wrong.

Too many Canadians today forget that the infamous sponsorship scandal did not only lay the once-mighty federal Liberals low. It also breathed new life into the sovereignty movement at a time when many thought it was down and out. In the 2004 federal election, the Bloc Québécois came roaring back from its early-2000s doldrums to dominate Quebec's delegation in Parliament once again. The piles of mud slung at the sensational Gomery Commission inquiry only prolonged Quebecers' outraged reactions well into 2005. Polls at that time actually indicated that support for sovereignty had risen above 50% for the first time since the 1990s. Only the fact of Liberal rule in Quebec City at the time spared Canada the third referendum that a PQ government would certainly have called.

Quebecers' righteous anger over the sponsorship scandal makes no more sense in hindsight than it did back then. As many noted at the time, most of the key figures in that boondoggle were themselves Québécois; this

was not some English-Canadian plot to do francophones dirt. The sponsorship program admittedly came across as an attempt to buy Quebecers' loyalty to Canada through subsidies, distribution of Canadian flags and the like. There was nothing offensive in principle about English Canada's attempts—however clumsy—to convince francophone Quebecers of the perks of Canadianness. Quebecers had no more reason to be irate than anyone elsewhere in the country.

One of the few lasting lessons of Canada's national unity troubles is that there is no telling what Quebecers will take the wrong way. Political contretemps with no meaningful national-unity dimension can be taken as affronts to Quebec's honor, while controversies that actually pertain to la question nationale are often shrugged off. So how is Ottawa to know what moves to avoid so as not to ruffle Quebecers' feathers? The Supreme Court has already killed the Harper Government's plans to establish a national securities regulator. Yet will Quebecers follow their government's lead in rejecting Harper's proposal for the popular election of Senators? What about his recent plan to increase the number of seats in the House of Commons held by Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia? We can certainly expect the Marois Government to oppose a plan that would dilute Quebec's voting power in Parliament thus. Might it so antagonize ordinary Quebecers as to drive them into the referendum camp, too? No one can say.

Federalists have not wanted for overconfidence in the past; indeed, their predictions of separatism's demise tend to be followed by its resurgence. In May 1976, Pierre Trudeau crowed that separatism was dead; six months later, the PQ won power for the first time. In April 1984, Trudeau Cabinet minister Marc Lalonde claimed that "as a political force that carries away the new generations, in my opinion, it is dead." By the end of that decade, it was Canada that looked to be on its last legs. It is folly for federalists to rest on their laurels in dealing with the Quebec question.

Canada's first Francophone Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, is said to have remarked about a century ago that "French Canadians have no opinions, only sentiments." To be fair, this is no truer of the Québécois than it is of most ordinary people in most political contexts. Yet Quebecers are among the relatively few peoples whose fickle sensibilities can hold entire free societies to ransom. The dwindling number of English Canadians who are determined to keep Quebec in Confederation at all costs should beware. It ain't over till it's over.



Revenue Quebec reforms regulations

Minister and Director-General take action after problems brought to light

When we take on advocacy cases and causes they usually center on an individual. An individual who has suffered a prejudice that is demonstrative of a broader systemic problem whether in a government department or within a major corporation. Individual cases that have within them issues illustrative of universal applicability. But sometimes it can't be done that way. Fear and impotence stand in the way.

Fear of retribution, and impotence in the face of a maze of ever-changing rules and regulations that baffle even experts. That is the way it is for most citizens who feel victimized by Revenue Quebec and have no idea what to do about it. Many call us.

For whatever reason, the calls increased exponentially this year. We decided to do something about it. More importantly, universally respected former Finance Minister Raymond Bachand, his special assistant for Revenue Cody Barker-Greene and Revenue Quebec's President and CEO Jean St-Gelais listened to our presentations and acted to make things right. Compassionate authority working in concert — expeditiously and efficiently — to help citizens. This is the way government is supposed to work.

Some four months ago I finished a review of the many complaints and calls we received. Roughly eight out of 10 fell into one of three categories. The first was seizures of bank accounts and garnishment of wages within 30 days of one notice being sent by Revenue Quebec. The regulations were so fixed that it seemed the authors never considered that a taxpayer may be out of the country or dealing with a personal crisis.

The second was the problem of estimated assessments sent out to late filers that bore no relation to the past earning history of the taxpayer.

They were meant to get the attention of the taxpayer. Sometimes they were as high as five times the amount the taxpayer ever earned. Most who received such an assessment never bothered to look at the back of the letter where it set out the 90-day period in which to file and correct. They went into a panic. Some were so shocked they attempted suicide. And more than one heart attack had been reported by recipients.

The third problem was a disregard of due process that is sacrosanct in every western democracy. Legal actions taken by Revenue Quebec against taxpayers without notice of a court date. Revenue Quebec had the power to go into court and, based on a certificate signed by any RevQue officer, get a judgment against a taxpayer from the clerk of the Superior Court. It was unprecedented power. An annulment of equitable due process.

In our initial conversation, Minister Bachand gave us full consideration and said that if these problems existed, they should be fixed immediately. As I reviewed the issues with St-Gelais and Barker-Greene it became clear that this was not the first time they had heard of some of these problems. And when I pointed out that a great part of the problem lay in the fact that some front-line Revenue Quebec officers, those that first met the public, were not schooled in the law nor the interpretation of regulations. Too often some also had an attitude of a presumption of guilt, rather than innocence, when meeting a taxpayer.

The experienced St-Gelais, who was formerly head of the Autorité des marchés financiers, wanted to have a look at the regulations that governed the actions of the front-line officials. He thought the problem may lay there. And he hoped



Former Quebec Finance Minister Raymond Bachand and The Metropolitan editor Beryl Wajzman.

that it would because changing directory regulations to protect the public was within his purview. New law would take much longer to write and pass.

As it turned out he was right. It was not so much that the regulations gave the bureaucrats these specific powers, as that the regulations were too general in wording. St-Gelais immediately ordered the agency's lawyers to start drafting based on recommendations we had given him. After a week of work with him and Barker-Greene, the new regulations were published in the Revenue Quebec manuals for its officers.

The new rules are included in two sections. The first under the heading of "Consequences of non-production of a tax report." The second heading is entitled "Third party seizures and certificates in court."

As a result of our efforts the following changes are now specified in the rules: 1. No estimated assessments will be done before two letters have been sent out, the second by registered mail, over a 60-day period; 2. estimated assessments will now be based strictly on an average of historical data on

the taxpayer's previously declared earnings and not just using a "shock" number; 3. if there has been no response to the assessment, Revenue Quebec officers must endeavour to reach the taxpayer by phone and letter over a 10-day period. If there is still no co-operation or response, only then will Revenue Quebec officers proceed to seizure of bank accounts and/or garnishment of wages; 4. after all these options have been exhausted, only then may Revenue Quebec officers proceed to court with a certificate attesting to non-production or non-payment but the taxpayer will still have the right to use any and all "mechanisms of opposition" available in the Court of Quebec; 5. the final reform we argued for and is now included in the regulations is that if at any time a taxpayer feels that his file has not been dealt with "fairly and equitably by Revenue Quebec or any of its officials or agents" the taxpayer may complain directly to the Chief Ombudsperson for Revenue Quebec who reports directly to the President and CEO of the Agency.

These changes will help, literally, hundreds of thousands Quebecers obtain just and fair treatment. Front-line Revenue Quebec officers now have clear directives. And, as I wrote above, government worked the way it should, efficiently, effectively and expeditiously. Were it only always so. Minister Bachand and Mr. Barker-Greene are now in the process of leaving their positions given the change in government. We shall miss them and wish them well. They embody the highest principles of public service. Mr. St-Gelais has been promoted to the post of secrétaire-général et greffier du Conseil exécutif, the head of the entire public service of Quebec. Sometimes nice guys do finish first.

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Some Federal Electoral Boundaries proposals are questionable

The Federal Electoral Boundary Commission is proposing major changes to the electoral map and citizens and community groups have only a few more weeks to register to comment.

The Commission is mandated by law to review the electoral map on a periodic basis taking into account population shifts. This time the task is complicated by the decision of Parliament to increase the number of seats nationally from 305 to 338. Quebec's representation goes from 75 to 78 which has provoked major changes in boundaries many of which will give citizens pause as it often appears that the principles of physical integrity of neighbourhoods and community identity have not been respected.

There will be public hearings in Montreal. Information on the proposals and the process can be found at <http://www.redecoupage-federal-redistribution.ca/content.asp?section=qc&dir=now/hearings&document=index&lang=e>

The recommendations for Montreal ridings are major. For example, St. Laurent riding disappears and this cohesive community is cut in three into the new ridings of George Etienne Cartier (mostly comprised of Ahuntsic), Macdonald-Langstaff (largely Cartierville and Pierrefonds) and the bizarrely shaped John Peters Humphrey riding (marrying Dorval, Cote St. Luc, parts of Snowdon, a chunk of St. Laurent, Town of Mount Royal and part of the Borough of Villeray-St. Michel-Parc Extension (!)).

Indeed, the new John Peters Humphrey riding is already under fire as the proposal excises a large part of Snowdon traditionally part of Mount Royal riding to transfer those voters to Outremont while adding new voters from Dorval and Parc Extension. It seems that for this riding the principle of joining neighbourhoods that have at least some affinity with each other has not been respected.

Some of the Commission's proposals however do respond to criticism leveled during

the last revision. The Commission now recommends reuniting the entire Notre Dame de Grace neighbourhood as part of the the new riding of Wilder Penfield, is an idea I support.

The division of Notre Dame de Grace along Hingston Avenue into the ridings of Notre Dame de Grace - Lachine and Westmount-Ville Marie in the previous electoral map was one that caused a great deal of discontent in the community given Notre Dame de Grace's strong sense of being a unified neighbourhood.

The new riding which would join Notre Dame de Grace and the City of Westmount with the Town of Montreal West would appear to be far more natural than the previous Notre Dame de Grace - Lachine riding that also included the City of Dorval. I will be supporting this recommendation.

The Commission has changed many riding names to replace them with names of individuals. Lachine, separated from Notre Dame de Grace, will be part of the new Lachine-Lasalle

riding but Notre Dame de Grace and Westmount will henceforth be called Wilder Penfield riding. There is no apparent reason why some ridings retain geographic names and others have their identifying neighbourhood names suppressed.

I recognize the inestimable contributions of Dr. Wilder Penfield to the field of medicine and understanding the desire of the Commission to name ridings for those who have made important contributions to Canadian society but feel nonetheless that the name of Notre Dame de Grace - Westmount should be given to this riding. I think to facilitate public comprehension and foster a sense of community that it is better to attribute geographic place names to Federal ridings.

In many cases the proposed boundaries cut communities in half and dilute their voting strength. I believe the Commission will be surprised by the push back it will receive but I urge citizens to make up their own minds and to provide the Commission with their thoughts.



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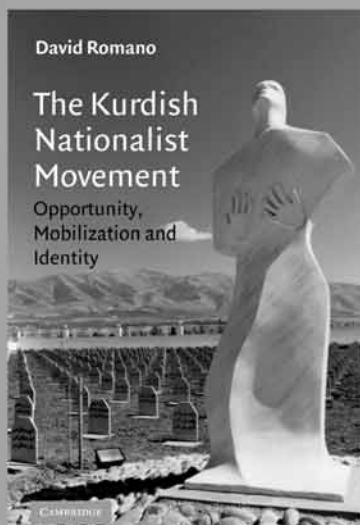
Quelques questions pour J-F Lisée

Prenez deux individus, les deux parlant bien le français, le premier de Bordeaux et le deuxième de Shanghai. Le premier parle français à la maison, et donc selon la logique du PQ vaut plus que le deuxième. C'est intéressant puisque on réussit de cette façon à contrôler non seulement la langue utilisée au travail mais aussi la langue utilisée à la maison. Est-ce que le PQ réfléchit aussi à une façon de

contrôler la langue dans laquelle les individus pensent ? Maintenant, ajoutons un troisième individu au mélange. Un juif sépharade dont la famille est arrivée au Québec du Maroc avec le grand exode des juifs du monde arabe en '48. Il parle français à la maison. Il parle le français à la maison, mais il est orthodoxe. Donc, il porte le kipa par conviction et, pour cette raison, ne peut travailler pour la fonction publique québécoise.

Selon cette deuxième logique, il vaut moins comme personne que l'individu de Bordeaux, présumément d'origine catholique et peut-être portant une croix (ce qui est parfaitement acceptable). Lorsqu'on compare la valeur de l'individu de Shanghai avec la valeur du juif sépharade, laquelle des deux logiques prédomine ? Est-ce que l'individu de Shanghai vaut plus ou moins que l'individu d'origine marocaine ?

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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Religion and a secular charter for Quebec

I grew up in Montreal when the French-speaking Roman Catholic Church was literally present everywhere, from the opening prayer at a hockey tournament to the blessing of a beauty salon. The hierarchy and the local clergy were the Church. They were placed on pedestals with the expectation that they could solve all problems and do no wrong. The religious, priests, brothers and religious women (nuns) ran the schools, hospitals, orphanages and every institution that dealt with the lives of French-speaking people in Quebec. The educational system offered a classical education which meant that the French-speaking students were not introduced into the world of science where progress was exponential and the system also left them without an understanding of the impact of economic development.

The English-speaking system of education was guaranteed by the British North American Act and science and economics became their foundation. Two solitudes ensued. As a result, anti-clericalism ensued from an overly dominant Roman Catholic Church. The Church faced its greatest challenge during the world-wide cultural revolution of the 1960's, and, in Quebec, it became known as the "Quiet Revolution." The Church fell into disarray, its power was reduced, close to extinction, and it was confined to a role in liturgical ceremonies and in the family. Religion was being privatized.

The Revolution resulted in secular French-speaking Quebecers succeeding at an incredible pace and soon the Church that had been so

influential was left without any influence in the public domain. The world of Quebec was becoming more and more secular. In Civil Law, the laws regarding marriage which had been drawn from the Church's Code of Canon Law were replaced with laws adjusted to a new secular Quebec. Secular society adopted the new Civil Code; while the Church functioned outside the current Civil Code and continued to follow the Code of Canon Law. The separation of Church and State is not a Constitutional reality in Canada or in Quebec, as it is in the United States; it is a recognized practical norm for society. In Quebec, in the 1960's ninety percent attended Church weekly; today the numbers are less than eight percent who practice regularly.

Canadian and Quebec societies had, prior to the past 40 years, welcomed immigrants from Eastern Europe who were generally of a Judaeo-Christian heritage. Now, immigration provides a religious diversity not seen or experienced before. Quebec was no longer a Christian society. The immediate difference was that of dress. The Hijabs and Burkas of Muslims were strikingly different; carrying a ceremonial knife, a kirpan, became a contentious issue; and the building of Mosques and Sikh temples changed the architectural outline of Montreal neighborhoods. The influx of these external realities caused consternation.

The Judaeo-Christian label was transformed into an inter-faith cacophony of language and traditions, a conglomeration of

customs they brought from their homelands. A society that was transforming itself in a "quiet" revolution into a secular society now saw the new secular-religious confrontations as retrograde. Society would not go back on what it had worked so hard to accomplish. The only option was to privatize all religions, remove all the externals, forbid their presence in the public domain, and offer a secular charter to the people of Quebec for the purpose of harmony among all people secular and religious.

Christian Catholics in Quebec would do well to recover a period of its history when Christians were

called upon to adapt the expression of their faith that was well-rooted in a Jewish culture to find a new expression of their faith in a Hellenistic culture. In fact often in its history the Roman Catholic Church has had to adapt its cultural expression of Christian Catholic faith. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) is described by Pope John XXIII as a Pastoral Council of the Roman Catholic Church and he indicated that the greatest challenge of the Church is to express faith in a contemporary context of culture.

In Quebec, Christian Catholics face a rare opportunity to build a new local Catholic culture to express faith in a culture that is

secular and this is no greater a challenge than that faced in its Hellenistic adaptation of faith, or, at any other time when adaptation of faith to culture became necessary. The Universal Church has declared this year a year of faith, *Porta Fidei*, and the title of the Synod of Bishop in October is *A New Evangelization: The transmission of the Christian faith*. It will take a measure of evangelical creativity and boldness to renew the ordinary pastoral activity of the Church of Quebec and to find an expression of Christian-Catholic faith in a new Catholic culture adapted to a secular society that has developed a secular charter.



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The Hon. David Kilgour is Canada's former Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific and for Central & Eastern Europe and the Middle East. He is a tireless international human rights campaigner and has co-authored, with David Matas, the seminal study on the tragedy of organ harvesting in China. He is the co-author with David T. Jones of *Uneasy Neighbours*.

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The problems with Nexen

The proposed buy-out of Nexen Inc., Canada's sixth largest oil company, for \$15.1 billion by the government-owned China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC) obliges the Harper government to decide whether or not to approve the purchase under the undefined "net benefit" and "national security" tests in the Investment Canada Act. Here are some concerns.

The Economist makes important points about the functioning of China's model of state capitalism (21 Jan. 12), including:

The Chinese party-state is the largest shareholder in the country's 150 largest companies and directs thousands of others. A culture of corruption permeates China's economy today, with Transparency International ranking it far down its list at 75th place on its perceived corruption index for 2011.

The magazine quotes a central

bank of China estimate that, between the mid- 1990s and 2008, 16,000-18,000 Chinese officials and executives of state-owned companies "made off with a total of \$123 billion" and concludes, "By turning companies into organs of the government, state capitalism simultaneously concentrates power and corrupts it."

"The Party," published in 2010 by Richard McGregor, former China bureau chief for the Financial Times, documents the Communist party's continuing grip on the government, courts, media and military. Among the book's conclusions:

Top leaders adhere to Marxism in their public statements, even as they depend on a ruthless private sector to create jobs. The Party preaches equality, while presiding over incomes as unequal as anywhere in Asia. It has eradicated or emasculated political rivals; eliminated the autonomy of the courts and press;

restricted religion and civil society; denigrated rival versions of nationhood; centralized political power; established extensive networks of security police; and dispatched dissidents to labor camps.

The takeover of Nexen by CNOOC would constitute its nationalization by the party-state in Beijing. CNOOC is controlled by its parent, China National Offshore Oil, which is wholly owned by the government of China. It is a self-serving error for advocates of the buy-out to term it a commercial transaction. A similar offer was made by CNOOC for Unocal oil of California in 2005, but was halted in the face of strong opposition in Congress and by American public opinion.

China Minmetals began a run the same year at Noranda, then Canada's largest mining enterprise, but abandoned it when Canadians became aware that Minmetals was a

branch of the mines department of the Beijing government.

The board chair of CNOOC, Wang Yilin, is also the secretary of CNOOC's party committee. Charles Burton, the academic and former Canadian diplomat in Beijing, explains, "CNOOC's party committee has a party discipline inspection group whose head, Zhang Jianwei, is also a senior member of the CNOOC board. Mr.

Zhang's job is to make sure that all the leaders of Nexen comply with the secret directives of the party leadership in Beijing. Woe betide those who don't follow the party's will for CNOOC. CNOOC is a function of the Chinese party-state, and it is difficult to believe this will all go the way CNOOC, its Canadian lawyers, PR agencies and 'pro-China' Canadian supporters say it will - at least, not by what we know of how the Chinese Communist Party operates domestically. What the

party claims are its practices and what it actually does under the cloak of secrecy are rarely the same. Nasty and deceitful and dishonest things go on, and Beijing sees this as justified by the greater good of 'the sacred mission' of China's comprehensive rise to power under the leadership of the Communist political and business elite."

The conduct of Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) globally is outrageous. When the China National Petroleum Corp took a stake in Sudan's oil fields in 1996, Beijing backed the al-Bashir regime in Khartoum, selling it arms and providing diplomatic cover at the UN Security Council. Bashir and his agents were committing systematic atrocities in south Sudan and Darfur. Many Africans accuse Chinese resource companies of underbidding local firms and not hiring local residents. In Zambia, Chinese mining companies banned union activity and in two instances were charged with attempted murder after opening fire on local employees protesting work conditions.

In Canada, the SOE Sinopec flew 150 Chinese workers into Alberta in 2007 to build a storage tank on an oil project. Two were killed and two were injured when the tank roof collapsed. When the Alberta government laid charges against Sinopec for failing to protect its workers, Sinopec's construction company denied that it had a presence in Canada. Major national corporations are effectively above the law in China and routinely ignore safety, environmental, and employment legislation with impunity. They will demonstrate no more respect for the rule of law in Canada than they do in China and will act always as agents of the party-state that controls them.

Beijing would not for a moment allow a foreign company or government to buy control of one of its natural resource companies. Prime Minister Harper should block the proposed takeover and make it clear that any state-owned enterprise, regardless of national origin, will be limited to a minority share-holding in any Canadian business.

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David Jones, co-author of *Uneasy Neighbo(u)rs: Canada, the USA and the Dynamics of State, Industry and Culture*, is a former U.S. diplomat who served in Ottawa. He now lives in Arlington, Virginia."

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Now Is the Time for Anger

Washington, DC - Americans are now reaping the results of the "Arab spring." The out-with-the-old; in-with-the new upheavals in 2011 were supposed to demonstrate a surge of democracy, human rights, personal freedoms, and liberties akin to those in Eastern Europe, following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of Soviet tyranny in 1991. Commensurate, albeit ancillary, was the expectation that the United States, the "shining city on a hill," as the exemplar of democracy and human rights, would be appropriately appreciated by these flower children of spring. It would be the culmination of the Middle East "reset" epitomized by President Obama's Cairo doctrine speech in June 2009, emphasizing U.S. respect and appreciation for Islam.

However instead of a flower garden we have an unforgiving landscape of noxious weeds. And there is little likelihood that we can apply Agent Orange, plow them under, and reseed. They are more likely to mutate into even more dangerous vegetation than to grow flowers.

If for a generation, we managed and manipulated with varied success a set of under-perfumed

villains (notably Ghadaffi), old-line dictators (Mubarak) and family kleptocrats (Tunisia, Syria) it was not the worst of worlds. Perhaps we could not have prevented the system from being "broken" but all our enthusiastic cheerleading has not led to a "fixed" system. And perhaps there is more breakage pending (Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Bahrain) where current rulers are certainly nervous if not terrified over the future.

At a Washington lecture earlier this month, one panel member noted Muslims/Islam regards the West, despite U.S./Canada being multi/multi societies, as having no/no right to comment on ANYTHING associated with the Islam/faith. It is not our thing, and we have absolutely no standing to remark on/critique it regardless of what its adherents may say/profess/do within Islamic circles. This differed, the panelist said, from our "right" to oppose/resist/comment/critique Marxist-Leninism globally as Marx/Lenin were of the "West" and hence we could comment, criticize, critique, etc. So the content of the film trailer *The Innocence of Muslims* is essentially irrelevant. A Muslim doesn't need to see it, and its amateurish,

barely "PG" trivia is beside the point. Simply because we have addressed Islamic attributes/personalities justifies any level of fury.

But they will not accord Western religion and culture similar respect. Muslims believe they are unalterably correct--and they have the right, indeed, the duty to proselytize relentlessly against all others. This may be an extreme personal interpretation, but you do not hear vigorous, public counter commentary by Muslims to the effect that all faiths are worthy, that Islam should be subject to doctrinal and historical examination, etc. To take such a position leaves a Muslim vulnerable to blasphemy accusations which are highly dangerous, often stimulating either personal attacks/murder or legal charges. Where there is push back from committed Christians or other religions, e.g., in Africa and South Asia, there is bloody conflict.

Thus we have a stack of dead diplomats, a crawfishing USG diplomatic reaction half-heartedly defending First Amendment free speech while full-throatedly apologizing for the

offensive nature of the film. This circumstance is beyond embarrassing; it is pathetic—and while it may placate momentarily, its basic proposition that we are in error is self-defeating.

Likewise, *Innocence of Muslims* – the puerile little item that ostensibly prompted this frenzy, is a feeble film that wouldn't win a high school film festival. However, it should get wide distribution—Americans should see how trivial an action produces violence—and decide whether we are going to censor our lives to accommodate those who just hate our existence.

We need to seize control of the situation. We must end cringing apologies. We must consider blunt retaliation for the savagery inflicted on our citizens and coreligionists. There is a perhaps apocryphal tale from Cold War days: Muslim pirates were seizing ships/oil tankers off the Angola coast. A Soviet special forces team lay in wait for them and, upon being attacked, killed the pirates, decapitated them, and stuffed the heads in pig carcasses. No further problem with pirates.

There is a lesson here worthy of consideration.

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L'échec de l'Occident dans la confrontation avec les "fous d'Allah"

Jerusalem, Israël - Depuis les attentats spectaculaires du 11 septembre 2001 contre l'Amérique, le combat inlassable contre le terrorisme n'a pas cessé un seul jour, mais il a fallu plus de dix ans à la CIA pour réussir à tuer le chef commanditaire, le tristement célèbre Oussama Ben Laden.

En dépit du combat tous azimuts contre l'Axe du Mal, les islamistes de tous bords, chiïtes et sunnites, continuent sans crainte à dicter leur loi fanatique et à propager le culte de la mort. Ces groupes extrémistes tels qu'al Qaïda rêvent d'instaurer un sinistre objectif, à savoir un califat de l'Indonésie au Nigéria dont le centre serait al Qouds...

Ces "fous d'Allah" se permettent de ravager, d'incendier et tuer tous les objectifs infidèles. Ces barbares ont franchi toutes les lignes rouges, couleur sang! Désormais, les ambassades, lieux sanctuaires des diplomates ne sont plus protégés, les

lois internationales sont bafouées; les drapeaux des pays occidentaux dont celui de l'étoile de David sont piétinés et brûlés avec une haine féroce et devant des foules en délire.

Après une longue décennie de confrontation nous constatons que les résultats sont néfastes. L'Occident a échoué dans sa politique et cet échec est cuisant sur tous les plans et dans tous les domaines. La peur d'affronter directement les "fous d'Allah" dépasse l'entendement. Des reportages éloquentes diffusés ces jours-ci à la télévision israélienne prouvent que la crainte est criante. La perplexité sera toujours à double tranchant. Culpabilisée par la colonisation en Europe ou complexée par le racisme noir en Amérique, les deux continents hésitent à agir sans merci pour des raisons également mercantiles, par manque de leadership et surtout d'audace.

Par manque de vision, par sous-estimation du monde islamique et par

l'absence de renseignements fiables, les Occidentaux ont perdus fidèles alliés et toute influence dans les États devenus islamistes. Plus grave encore, ils risquent ainsi de légitimer indirectement les "représailles" des "fous d'Allah" contre la moindre tentative d'éclairer les esprits et d'apporter des aspects et des versions différentes de l'Islam. Hier le déchainement était contre Salman Rushdie pour la publication de son roman "les versets sataniques", puis contre des caricatures du prophète Mahomet publiées dans la presse et notamment à la une de Charlie Hebdo, et récemment contre la diffusion d'un film insultant sur la vie du prophète. Certes, nous condamnons vigoureusement la provocation et nous devrions respecter toutes les religions, mais il est inadmissible que des extrémistes nous dictent leur loi en imposant un agenda obscur et ennuyeux empoisonnant la vie quotidiennement! Les

barbares devraient savoir qu'en Occident et dans toutes les démocraties, les règles sont différentes et les hors la loi sont jetés en prison. La liberté d'expression est chez nous sacrée contrairement à ceux qui la qualifient de sacrilège!

Après l'attaque contre le consulat américain à Benghazi, il ne s'agit pas simplement de condamner, de renforcer les effectifs et de promettre que justice sera faite. Les terroristes islamistes comprennent un autre langage. Rappelons qu'en juin 1982, Menahem Begin avait lancé son opération militaire contre l'OLP au Liban au lendemain de l'attentat contre notre ambassadeur à Londres Shlomo Argov. Et que le président Ronald Reagan n'a pas hésité en avril 1986 d'expédier 45 avions de chasse et larguer plus de trois bombes sur des casernes, camps militaires et aérodromes en Libye en apprenant que Kadhafi était responsable de l'attentat d'une discothèque fréquentée

par des militaires américains à Berlin-Ouest. Ce fut une autre période où les terroristes tremblaient et n'osaient sortir de leurs trous. On respectait la force des Américains et la dissuasion l'emportait tout naturellement.

Aujourd'hui nous vivons dans un monde où les voyous dictent leur loi et les chérifs tremblent avant de tirer sur la gâchette. Comment ne pas interpréter de casus belli l'assassinat de l'ambassadeur et trois autres diplomates américains, ainsi que la mise à sac et à feu du consulat à Benghazi? La défaillance des services américains n'est-elle pas flagrante? Les autorités libyennes ne sont-ils pas responsables du fiasco sécuritaire dans un pays toujours plongé dans le chaos total?

Pour Israël, qui demeure le plus fidèle des alliés cela est grave et très inquiétant. Devant la menace la plus dangereuse du siècle, celle de la bombe atomique des ayatollahs, nous devons rapidement tirer des leçons.



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Occupy Wall Street Blues

New York - On my way to the subway station in mid-September, I was somewhat startled to glimpse a community newspaper headline screaming “OCCUPY’S ONE-YEAR BLUES” on a newsstand. Then I remembered that, lo and behold, the first anniversary of the Occupy Wall Street protests was fast approaching. I realized that I was momentarily taken aback by the headline because I had almost totally forgotten about Occupy Wall Street.

Less than a year ago, the airwaves and the Internet were burning up with talk about this audacious and potentially game-changing new movement. Now, in the middle of an election campaign that will determine whether and how Washington will address OWS’ concerns, the movement itself seems moribund. What happened?

In truth, I had a feeling it would turn out this way. It’s a symptom of a blunder that is commonplace on the

hard Left: a delusional obsession with street protests as engines of political change. OWS should have pivoted early on from staging rallies to pressuring elected representatives to bring about concrete change in Washington. Instead, they steered clear of elections and lobbying—the main channels through which political decisions are made—and clung to the streets. If OWS is now down (if not necessarily yet out), its defeat is of its own making.

I remember the first day of the OWS demonstrations well. September 17th, 2011 was the day of my twenty-sixth birthday party. There, a left-leaning friend of mine said some words in praise of the thousand-odd protesters who had begun rallying in Zucotti Park, next door to countless financial institutions in Lower Manhattan. Another guest, a fellow libertarian, remarked to me (facetiously, I hope) that he and I should be down there marching in defense of Wall Street—resisting the Occupation, if you will.

Not wanting to sully my socializing with a divisive political debate, I deftly changed the subject. Had I taken the bait, however, I would have replied, “Oh, hell, no.” We libertarians, you see, reserve special contempt for the crony capitalism that Wall Street has come to symbolize ever since the TARP bailout of 2008 (if not earlier). Such corporate welfare violates free-market principles, shielding firms from the consequences of their incompetence and irresponsibility and removing incentives for them to do better business. At least defenders of the welfare state and economic protectionism can fairly claim to be defending the little guy. “Crapitalism,” pardon my French, has no such excuse. Surely the worst kind of welfare is corporate welfare; there is no worse socialism than socialism for the rich.

So I never have looked on OWS with unmixed scorn. I share their abhorrence of the corrupt collusion between Big Business and Big Government; I merely differ with most of their statist approaches to combating it. The movement errs insofar as it posits that market-distorting, tax-dollar-wasting cronyism represents authentic capitalism—or that handicapping or abolishing free enterprise will solve it. Even if I agreed with the movement’s stated ends, however, I would still urge its members to eschew their silly, self-defeating means.

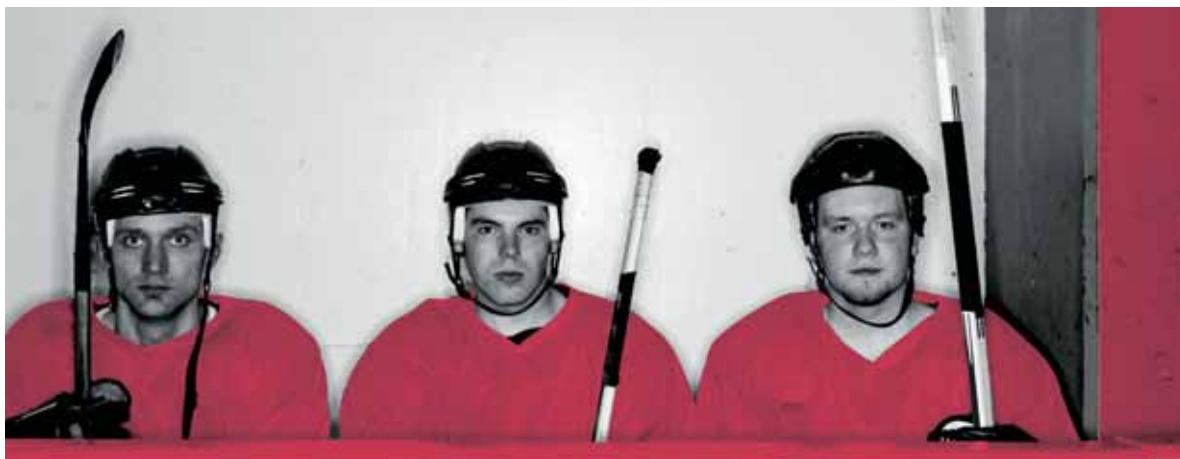
Strategically, demonstrating for months or years on end is rank foolishness. Protests serve awareness-raising purposes first and foremost; the first couple of months of chanting and drum-beating more

than did that trick. Rallies and demonstrations alone were never likely to influence the financial sector’s behavior meaningfully. Actually “occupying Wall Street” was never possible; the authorities would—and should—never have allowed it. Any Wall Street Occupiers with a grain of sense in their heads would have followed the Tea Party’s lead, lobbying lawmakers to move the nation’s economic policy leftward wherever possible. Tax cuts cannot be repealed—nor bailouts denied, nor industries re-regulated, nor corporate greed checked—in the streets.

Worse yet, Occupy Wall Street went on to employ methods that seemed almost calculated to alienate the very middle- and working-class people whose support it needed to win. They tried to “occupy” public parks, with the result that various provocateurs, vagrants and sundry other interlopers infiltrated the parks and contributed to unsanitary and unsafe conditions. They tried to block traffic on bridges and to organize “general strikes” and other events that would disrupt the day-to-day conduct of business and other general public affairs. These and other methods were never bound to accomplish anything other than to bring the wrath of the police down on the movement. Who ever saw turkeys so eager for Thanksgiving?

The onset of winter was the perfect time for the Occupiers to migrate from the streets into the party process, where the shots are really called. They could then have organized to wield genuine political clout in the 2012 elections. Yet all that enthusiasm has been wasted, rendering the movement more or less irrelevant in this campaign—exactly when it should matter most. Not for nothing has one Occupy Boston activist described it as a failed “political Woodstock that went on a little bit too long.”

Occupy Wall Street has largely petered out so far because too many of its participants remain childishly infatuated with radical 1960s tactics that are no more effective now than they were back then. One year on, the movement faces a stark choice: grow up and wise up—or be consigned to the dustbin of history.



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Le réveil macabre d'Arafat et la tragi-comique justice de François Hollande

Jeudi 11 novembre 2004, 3 heures du matin, Yasser Arafat est décédé à l'hôpital des armées Percy à Clamart... Quelques heures après, sur le tarmac de la base aérienne de Villacoublay, le cercueil d'Arafat est recouvert du drapeau quadricolore palestinien et porté par huit soldats français de l'armée de terre. Au son de la marche funèbre de Chopin, trois compagnies de la Garde républicaine en tenue d'apparat rendent les honneurs...Après la sonnerie aux morts retentit l'hymne national palestinien et la Marseillaise, joués par la fanfare militaire. Des drapeaux français et palestiniens en berne flottent au vent tandis qu'un avion Airbus de l'armée de l'air s'envole avec la dépouille vers les cieux escorté par un autre avion de la République française avec, à son bord, le chef de la diplomatie...

On convient que cet hommage sans précédent et orchestré par Jacques Chirac a dépassé l'entendement et toutes les directives protocolaires. Jamais dans les temps modernes, un pays occidental et laïc n'a réservé à un chef "guerrier" à savoir à un chef terroriste d'un Etat étranger virtuel, une telle admiration en grande pompe et aussi solennel...En ce jour du 11 novembre...le jour de l'Armistice du premier conflit mondial de l'Histoire!

Et voilà que sept années plus tard, la France de François Hollande décide d'ouvrir le dossier médical qui pourtant a été profondément enterré et dont des médecins militaires français y étaient eux mêmes responsables et n'avaient trouvé aucune anomalie ou empoisonnement quelconque. Ils savaient parfaitement



qu'Arafat avait un certain âge, souffrait d'une cirrhose du foie très aigüe et quelques années auparavant son avion s'était écrasé dans le désert libyen. Qu'Arafat avait échappé belle mais que ce crash néanmoins valu deux hémorragies cérébrales, et enfin, ils étaient conscients qu'Arafat fut atteint aussi de la maladie d'Alzheimer, sans oublier le Sida... Donc pourquoi ce camouflet à l'encontre des médecins? Pourquoi relancer une nouvelle tragi-comédie? Ne s'agit-il pas d'un acte purement politique pour ressusciter un dossier palestinien oublié et agonisant face à l'impuissance devant les turbulences islamiques, la

crise syrienne, et l'approche de l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU afin d'assurer la reconnaissance de l'adhésion de la Palestine...et par la même occasion satisfaire les caprices de madame Souha Tawil-Arafat et justifier l'enquête d'al Jazzera...la chaîne d'une principauté arabe "très chère à la France..."

Depuis plusieurs décennies, la France se distingue par un traitement singulier et étrange de la solution du problème palestinien. Pour rafraichir nos mémoires rappelons quelques jalons marquants, inspirés et dictés par le Quai d'Orsay: la rencontre Sauvagnargues-Arafat à Beyrouth. L'ouverture d'un bureau de l'OLP à

Paris. La libération d'Abou Daoud, cerveau du massacre des 11 athlètes israéliens à Munich. L'invitation d'Arafat à l'Élysée, le jour même de la commémoration de la Shoah, l'hospitalisation d'Arafat en France, et ouverture d'une enquête sur sa mort approuvant indirectement la thèse de "l'empoisonnement" par Israël... Reconnaissance de la Palestine au siège de l'UNESCO à Paris... Ouverture d'un réseau diplomatique et consulaire dans les territoires palestiniens et une "ambassade de France auprès de la Palestine" dans le quartier ouest de Jérusalem... L'inquiétude du Quai d'Orsay et son attachement à la liberté de circulation vers et dans les territoires palestiniens approuvant et encourageant ainsi les initiatives des opérations de "Bienvenue en Palestine" par des anarchistes et antisionistes voulant semer la pagaille et attirer l'attention de l'opinion publique internationale. Ont-ils programmé d'aller manifester à Damas ou dans les rues de Paris contre les massacres quotidiens en Syrie?

Dans son dernier discours devant les ambassadeurs de France, le président François Hollande nous "recommande de reprendre le chemin de la négociation dès lors que les Palestiniens ont levé bon nombre de préalables" Ah bon, lesquels? Il est temps que le président français nous révèle les concessions que les Palestiniens ont fait dernièrement...N'ont-ils pas en effet lancé une campagne de dénigrement et de délégitimation de l'Etat juif dans toutes les tribunes internationales et particulièrement à Paris?!

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

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

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Vivre en plein milieu du peuple

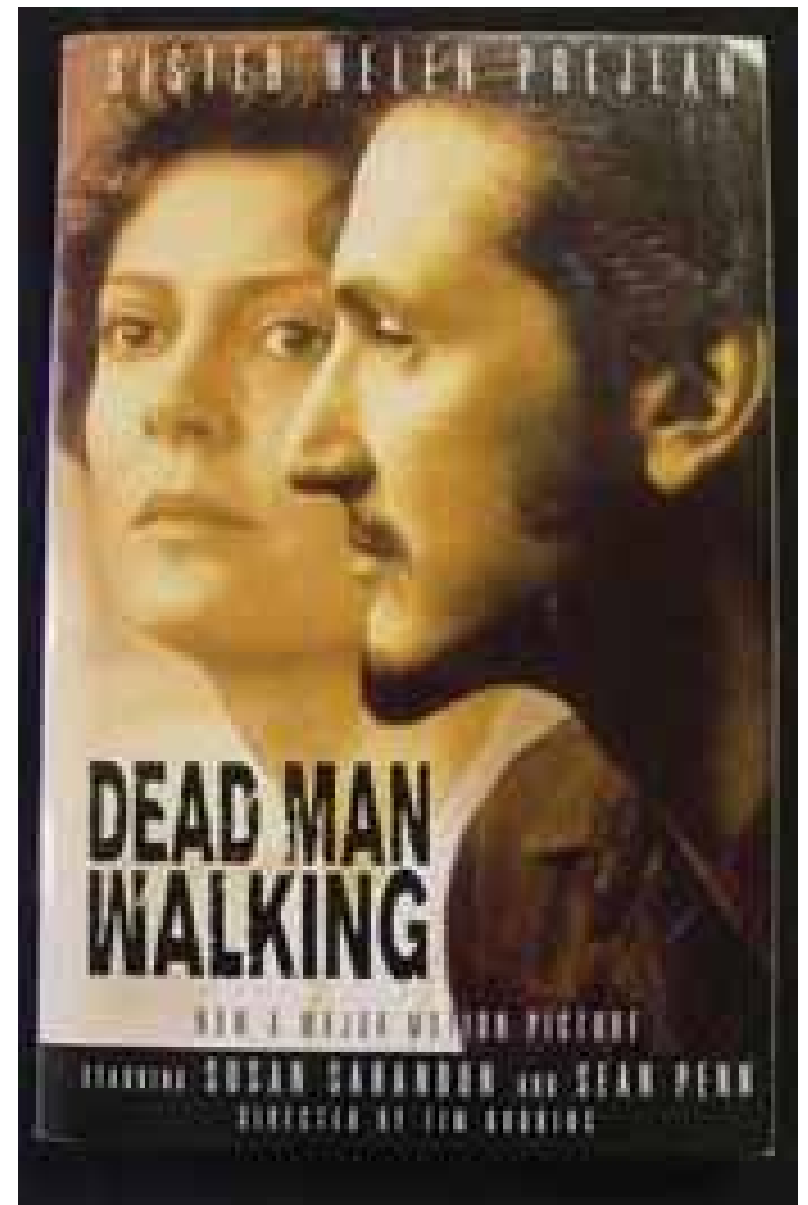
Un jour j'ai rencontré Sœur Hélène Préjean, l'auteur du livre *Dead Man Walking* et consultante majeure du film du même nom, dont Susan Sarandon a obtenu un « Oscar » pour le rôle de la religieuse. J'ai pu l'interviewer à la radio et j'étais surpris quand elle me disait que la vie à Nouvelle Orléans cote « suburbia » était une vie tranquille. Mais, un jour elle a déménagé l'autre cote de la ville, quartier pauvre, et le premier soir quelqu'un cognait à la porte. Elle ouvre la

porte et une femme me poussait de cote et entra brusquement, un homme la suivait avec un couteau à la main. La surprise qu'elle me révèle : ce soir-là mon Dieu a changé complètement.

Dieu n'était plus un Dieu tranquille de banlieue mais un Dieu dérangeant enraciné dans le milieu ou la vie-même était une vie dérangeante. A partir de cette expérience elle a accepté l'invitation de visiter un homme qui a tué un jeune ado et a disposé du corps à la

manière de Luka Rocco Magnotta qui a disposé du corps de l'étudiant de l'Université Concordia, Jung Lin, ici à Montréal. Dieu change encore une autre fois.

Il y a presque un an et demi que je suis devenu locataire d'un condo sur une rue très tranquille, un sens unique, et en dépit du son de la cloche pour commencer la journée à l'école deux rues de chez moi, Dieu pour moi était un Dieu à l'aise, un peu fait à l'image de ma retraite. Mais Dieu n'aime pas être fait à



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notre image, mais qu'on soit fait à son image.

Dieu change. Un soir cinq portes de chez moi, un homme a matraqué sa femme avec un couteau devant leur fille d'âge d'ado. Elle est morte immédiatement. Deux jours plus tard sur une rue avoisinante un homme de trente-et-un ans s'est suicidé. Dans le parc Angrignon, encore près de ma maison, on trouve la tête du jeune Jung Lin.

Je suis obligé de repenser le Dieu en qui je croie. Je ne peut plus croire en Dieu « Providence » qui nous tiens à cœur et nous protège .. ou est-il pour les plus démunis, les plus souffrant de femmes et d'hommes? Je dois réinterpréter la providence à partir d'un Dieu du milieu, un Dieu qui se dit lui-même dans la Bible, un Dieu d'histoire, le Dieu qui passe à travers notre vie quotidienne. Autrefois on enseignait d'un Dieu qui vivait parallèle à notre histoire

mais aujourd'hui ce Dieu, on le sait bien, n'existe pas. La providence doit être réinterpréter comme une affirmation de notre humanité, non pas parfaite mais imparfaite, nous dérangeant pour qu'on s'engage à penser à nos voisins.

Mon Dieu change. Un simple geste m'encourage de voir Dieu autrement. Durant les plus chauds de jours de l'été un voisin se tiens à l'entrée des garages ou se trouvait un jour les poubelles d'ordures et un autre jour les récipients de recyclage. Il attendait l'arrivée des grands camions avec une ou deux bouteilles d'eau froide à la main. Un gros merci et une sourire de la part des récipients me dit bien que Dieu vie encore sur ma rue même si j'étais obligé de changer encore une autre fois ma façon de voir Dieu. La gratitude vient du fait que le Dieu en qui on croit est un Dieu qui est excité de nous voir sur terre.



Dieppe : un épisode terrible, mais pour le Canada, une force unificatrice

Le 19 août dernier, les Dieppois et de nombreux Français ont commémoré le 70^{ème} anniversaire du raid de Dieppe. Le 19 août 1942, des milliers de soldats canadiens ont combattu avec grand courage dans le cadre de ce débarquement mémorable, mettant ainsi la table pour les opérations du Jour J et l'Invasion alliée de Normandie plus de deux ans plus tard (Opération Overlord). Les Français se souviennent encore vivement de ce raid et continuent de le célébrer, bon an mal an. Les Canadiens devraient, a fortiori, se souvenir avec autant de ferveur des énormes sacrifices de leurs compatriotes.

Il y a soixante-dix ans, c'est une armada de presque 14,000 hommes qui prit la mer dans la nuit du 18 au 19 août 1942 pour ouvrir un front dans le Nord de la France et capturer de l'intelligence ennemie. Parmi eux, 4,963 soldats canadiens, arrivés en Angleterre depuis la fin de 1939 et impatients d'en découdre avec l'ennemi après près de 3 ans d'attente, débarquèrent sur les plages de Berneval, Puys, Dieppe, Pourville, Varengeville et Vasterival, codées jaune, bleu, blanc, rouge, verte et orange pour l'occasion. À eux se joignirent également 970 hommes provenant de commandos britanniques et l'ensemble de ces soldats furent appuyés par 7,700 marins, aviateurs et officiers anglais, secondés par un groupe de Français Libres, qui virent au transport et à la protection des troupes et du matériel.

Or, durant cette nuit d'août 1942, ces braves soldats alliés firent face à d'innombrables écueils et obstacles en



ce que tout ce qui pouvait mal tourner de fait tourna au désastre. En effet, la météo capricieuse causa des retards qui firent que les navires arrivèrent parfois en plein jour plutôt que dans la surprise de la nuit, et à marée haute de surcroît. La rencontre inopinée et imprévue d'une flottille allemande au passage, de même que les insurmontables falaises et les redoutables bunkers (blockhaus) allemands, firent en sorte que le raid de Dieppe fut l'un des plus meurtriers de la Seconde guerre mondiale. Des 4,963 soldats canadiens qui ont participé à l'Opération Jubilee, 907 périrent au combat ou en captivité et 1,875 furent fait prisonniers de guerre.

Les leçons tirées de ce débarquement avorté permirent sans nul doute

d'assurer le succès de la Libération de l'Europe, et du monde entier, de la tyrannie nazie. En effet, cette Opération fut l'idée du Premier ministre Churchill qui avait en tête d'effectuer une «répétition» pour jeter les bases du débarquement triomphal qui serait lancé à Arromanches en Normandie plus de deux ans plus tard, le 6 juin 1944 (Opération Neptune), prélude de la plus grande Invasion alliée de l'Histoire, et dont l'immense succès fut en partie redevable au terrible sacrifice des Forces canadiennes à Dieppe il y a 70 ans.

Les commandos canadiens à Dieppe provenaient de tous les coins du Canada, du Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, au Calgary Regiment Tank

en passant par les Fusiliers Mont-Royal et le South Saskatchewan Regiment, pour ne nommer que ceux-là. Le souvenir de cet «impossible débarquement» grave à jamais notre identité nationale en tant que Canadiens.

En effet, dans ces circonstances effroyables, des soldats canadiens d'expression française et anglaise ont combattu bravement, côte à côte, avec un seul but en tête, à savoir de libérer la France du joug du despote nazi, pour la plus grande cause commune de la liberté et de la démocratie.

Plusieurs leaders sécessionnistes québécois nourrissent à ce jour le mythe d'un complot anglophone d'envoyer des francophones à une mort assurée. D'autres déplorent

qu'un nombre démesuré de Canadiens aient été envoyés de façon insouciante comme chair à canon par les hautes autorités impériales britanniques. Ces affirmations sont tout simplement fausses. Quoiqu'il en soit, dans une immense guerre aussi terrible, on ne devrait jamais compter de cette façon mais plutôt s'attarder à l'effort de guerre global.

Qui plus est, cette lourde perte pour le Canada à Dieppe aura contribué à unir les Canadiens de toutes origines en vue de combattre ensemble un redoutable ennemi commun. Du même coup, cette bataille aura également servi à rehausser le statut du Canada à titre de nation forte et indépendante dont on doit tenir compte, non seulement au sein du Commonwealth, mais également de par le monde entier, à commencer par la France. Cela a fait de nous un meilleur pays, un pays uni qui se bat courageusement au nom de la justice et de la liberté, ce dont nous pouvons à juste titre être immensément fiers.

Si la bataille de Vimy du 9 avril 1917, dont on a récemment commémoré le 95^{ème} anniversaire, fut l'occasion d'une grande démonstration de courage des soldats canadiens (11, 285 y laissèrent leur vie), nous avons aussi toutes les raisons, à l'instar des Dieppois, de célébrer le souvenir de nos 4,963 valeureux compatriotes canadiens qui participèrent à l'Opération Jubilee. Ces hommes contribuèrent de manière remarquable à l'effort de guerre et, surtout, au rétablissement de la démocratie et de la primauté du droit dans le monde.

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The sexiest shade of grey

I was brought into this world by tremendously attractive parents. Each, on their own, stood to be the object of admiring glances and at times, even quite forward propositions.

Together, however, they made an awkward pair. Their relationship was overly ambiguous for the comfort of bystanders.

Separated by nearly two decades, two languages, two cultures, two almost anything imaginable- my parents still managed to make it work for nearly twenty five years... Until two too many turned into three- which was plenty and each went their own way.

Regardless of the years between them, their age gap never really lived up to its nomenclature. In fact, rather than creating a wedge, I think it was actually the tie that bound and bonded them.

Without the prying questions of tactless friends and strangers, I would seldom grow conscious of their age difference. But of course, it would take only one impolite individual to launch me into a well-rehearsed tirade: "My parents are 16 years apart"... "No, this isn't their second marriage"... "Yes, I'm their oldest child"... "No, my mother/ father has no interest in going on a date with you..."

This little spiel aroused unease and disgust in those who dared probe ... and to be quite honest, I never understood how or why my parents so boldly decided to scorn social convention in such a visible manner. Until of course, I met him.

Prior to him, I never even permitted myself to fantasize about older movie stars. It had a creepy quality to it. It might have been the residual effects of my parents' marriage or maybe I simply wasn't attracted.

With him, it was different. I was attracted, in a magnetic way. He was older. Much older. Elegant. Suave. Confident. He wore ties and suits... and he loved the color grey- perhaps

because he was aware of the added sophistication it imparted to him (not that he was ever lagging in that field). He knew about a time before I was born; in great detail, mostly because he lived it.

He would so patiently enthrall me with his recollections of those times, as I would let him momentarily take on the persona of a history professor.

But it would not be long before I became a restless student, and longed for a little

Our age gap never precluded our intellectual discourse. It facilitated it. By seeing ourselves through the prism of our different, respective life experiences we learnt and grew together; personally and professionally. Our pillow-talk exchanges often made it to the boardroom; and the impact and combination of my youth and his years put us in privileged positions.

recess...to return to play with my silver-maned lover.

He played so well.

He did everything well.

Experience had its benefits... I regaled and quenched my various desires with his.

I learnt the intricacies of international politics and world religions, philosophy and even science- over a cocktail glass. But it was he alone who could intoxicate me, and appease my thirst for knowledge the way no course at my Ivy League ever did.

I took pleasure in learning from him, through him and about him. I embraced the cliché of the 'older man as teacher'- with gusto!

But my love for this older man ventured far beyond the clichés, to depths I hadn't ever known in any of my previous liaisons. The distinguished, respectable je-ne-sais quoi that he so naturally flaunted penetrated our own

romance almost instinctively.

It prevented me from ever playing into the humiliating role of a blonde big-breasted bimbo (mind you, so did the fact that I was an overly-educated brunette with an enviable b-cup.)

We developed a mutual respect and admiration; and an equal partnership, despite the fact that he was richer in years.

He made no issue of that... As I said previously, he generously shared the heaps of

experience and the cerebral fortune he had amassed prior to meeting me. In return, he demanded I share the same- regardless of how flimsy my riches were in contrast. He encouraged me to teach him. I obliged because it would be a crime to have the wonders and wisdom of Facebook, YouTube and iPads lost on such a man.

More seriously though, our age gap never precluded our intellectual discourse. It facilitated it. By seeing ourselves through the prism of our different, respective life experiences we learnt and grew together; personally and professionally. Our pillow-talk exchanges often made it to the boardroom; and the impact and combination of my youth and his years put us in privileged positions.

My youth and his years worked symbiotically in the various realms of our lives. In the bedroom, my energetic elasticity served as a natural dose of Viagra for him. In turn, his

impassioned appetite and my struggle to keep up with it made me wonder if he was really as old as he claimed. (I would resist carding him not to ruin the mood.)

But even outside the bedroom, it seemed like 'the mood' never went out of style. We fed each other's constant cravings to explore and discover. Sometimes I would uncover the answers at the bottom of the furrows that framed his baby-blue eyes. Other times, we would talk for hours until we would realize the answers were yet to come.

Occasions presented themselves, where our roles were reversed- where a rough day or week, would require me to embody the nurturing spirit of a mother, to a man who could biologically be my father. I played the role flawlessly following his lead.

We built a home peppered with the most desirable ingredients, values and lessons inspired by my youth and his maturity; among them: playfulness, wisdom, patience, passion and love.

That love (for lack of a stronger, more accurate term) often causes me to gaze at him for hours in a state of wonderment. I recognize the same overwhelming radiance characteristic of my parents' eternal beauty. Who revealed to them the fountain of youth?

It turns out they uncovered it together, as we did the day we laughed at age in its wrinkled face. The day we fell in love, we felt compelled to make an unspoken pact to forever renew our romance and re-conquer each other like the very first time. It has kept us and our love young, like my parents.

My grandmother never really appreciated any of this. She often asks me when I will leave this 'old man' and settle into a more conventional romance.

My answer is very simple: I'll leave this 'old man' only once he begins to feel a bit too young for me!

AVOCADO MAN

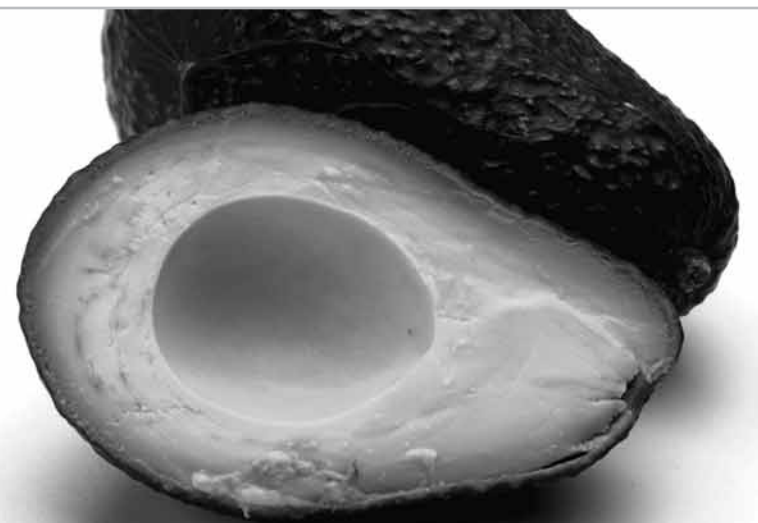
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Insights from homelessness: There is much to learn from those who live far from the madding crowd

The majority of people in Montreal, and elsewhere, pass a homeless person on the street and they are unable to go beyond what their eyes see. The very presence of a homeless person on the same street where people have their daily route to work disturbs some people; others, walk on as if they do not exist.

The homeless are no different from you and me. No different. They laugh, they cry, they feel pain and they are struggling to make sense of their lives. Each of us hasn't a story to tell, we have a history to recount. It begins with birth and ends with death. History unfolds in one's upbringing, one's childhood, youth, adolescence and adulthood. The road less travelled is that of the homeless people.

There is much to learn from these people who are outside the norms of what many refer to as "normal." Their persistence in the face of insurmountable odds would cause the "average" and "normal" person to give up and withdraw from society. Suicide would not be outside the realm of possibility for anyone who would have to walk in their shoes. The real lessons they can teach society are many.

They have little concern for material wealth. They are content with the clothes on their backs, a few cents for the odd Tim Horton's coffee, maybe a visit now and then to MacDonald's; our consumer society has not swallowed them up. Our culture places so much emphasis on what we have amassed



ROBERT J. CALBRAITH PHOTO

in terms of things; the homeless demand little of life and are happy when people simply greet them with a smile and say "hello."

They tell you who they are, not what they have. Today's world is a competitive world where people are always trying to outdo the other; the homeless have abandoned competition, they live without judging others.

Our culture drives people to plan for the future and to see success down the line; the homeless live in the present, one day at a time. Above all, the homeless teach society that it must take responsibility for those who live apart from the madding crowd, those who have not given in to the insane stress of success, those who live a simple life not one complicated with passing thrills, and that responsibility is not to only care for the homeless but to listen to the homeless and become homeless.

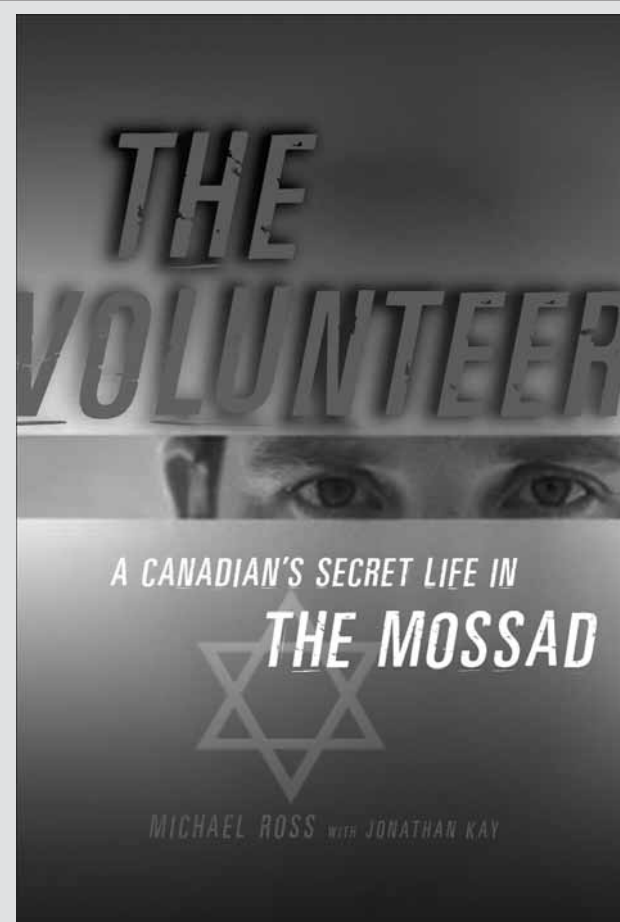
Society will have learned the lessons of the homeless when people choose to be "homeless" and realize that they are but pilgrims passing through this life and that they need not spend all their time worrying about tomorrow. The "homeless" have learned from within the trials and tribulations of life itself all that life all life can teach us. Anyone who takes only a half-hour to sit and speak with a homeless person will soon find they can be "at home" with their own lives if they learn the insights from homelessness.

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.





Quebec's Debt: Who manages better?

It depends on what's an investment and what's an expense

In the aftermath of the Quebec election, taxpayers wait with clenched teeth for a coherent taxation strategy to make up for the lost revenue from the cancellation of the tuition hikes, the abolition of the health care tax for some (with an increase for others) and the cost of the PQ's election promises. Looming large over Mme. Marois and Nicolas Marceau, her finance minister, is the increased scrutiny that any separatist government faces when it comes to the annual deficit and the Quebec debt. It has been the practice of the financial markets to put greater pressure on PQ governments to deliver good financial management than their Liberal equivalents since the threat of sovereignty would increase the required yield on Quebec debt. As long as Liberal governments were cooperating with Ottawa, there was no threat that Quebec would go it alone and there was implied support from their federal partners. If Quebec were to seek to acquire further powers in an effort to distance itself from Ottawa's intrusions, then the corollary would be that it would also withdraw from the fed's support as well, most notably concerning transfer payments. Quebec cannot move out of its parent's house and still expect the old homestead to help it make ends meet at the end of the month – the other provinces would have nothing of it. The question Quebecers need to ask themselves at the outset of this government's mandate is whether or not, based on historical and current activities, the PQ government can be expected to deliver sane financial management within which investment and employment can continue to grow.

If readers were to base their conclusions on the improvisation of their first five weeks in power, the answer would be no. However, in the past week it is clear that the top civil servants in the finance department have explained to the government that their plans to kill the health care tax and their intention to raise the effective tax rate on capital gains and dividends are non-starters. Observers should note that the government is now moving into a rationalization phase, the euphoria of the election victory is over and the reality of meeting the National Assembly as a minority government is setting in. Mme. Marois does not wish to face another election within the first year of her mandate, and having a taxpayer and corporate revolt would embolden the opposition parties to bring down the government over its first budget, expected in April 2013. So, with a renewed commitment to continue the deficit reduction process undertaken by the Liberals, expect very few surprises over the coming session when it comes to economic policy – the fight will focus instead on language and culture, most certainly to satisfy the party's hardliners and to demonstrate that at least they will attempt to legislate that portion of their election promises.

The table compiled by Sebastien Lavoie looks at the net public debt of Quebec since 1975, right before the election of the first PQ government under Levesque. Note that this is the net debt, which deducts the approximately \$60 billion that is considered to be "investment" in Quebec infrastructure and corporations, and is not the product of deficit spending for yearly, recurring items. Quebec adopted this new accounting policy in 1998 to essentially take money off the books, simply saying that if we spend \$100 million on a bridge, it counts as an investment and not as expenditure for annual deficit purposes. If this sounds like cooking the books to you, you would be right – but when you are the government you can make up your own rules, so let's just avoid ten thousand words of explanation and go with the analysis at hand for now.

The overall picture is that regardless of government, the debt

just kept on growing. Under Levesque (1976-1985) the debt ballooned from practically nothing (a few \$billion) to approximately \$35 billion. Now, during the late 1970's, all the Western economies were dealing with the aftermath of the oil shock and stagflation (inflation and unemployment) that ramped up spending on the social programs that were adopted during the 1960's. Yes, the PQ's performance was terrible, but everyone was doing it and debt levels against GDP were relatively low, so no one really cared. This problem was for future generations to deal with at that point.

The Liberals return from 1985 to 1993 and ride a wave of relative prosperity generated by the Reagan revolution to the south, our surging exports under Free Trade adding to Quebec's coffers. The debt kept rising, just more slowly – about \$20 billion of debt was added under Bourassa II's (and a little Daniel Johnson) tenure. Now, Nixon told us in 1973 that "we were all Keynesians now" so Bourassa, that economics whiz-kid, should have generated surpluses that would have reduced the debt. That has hardly been the case – Quebec continued to run deficits all through this time.



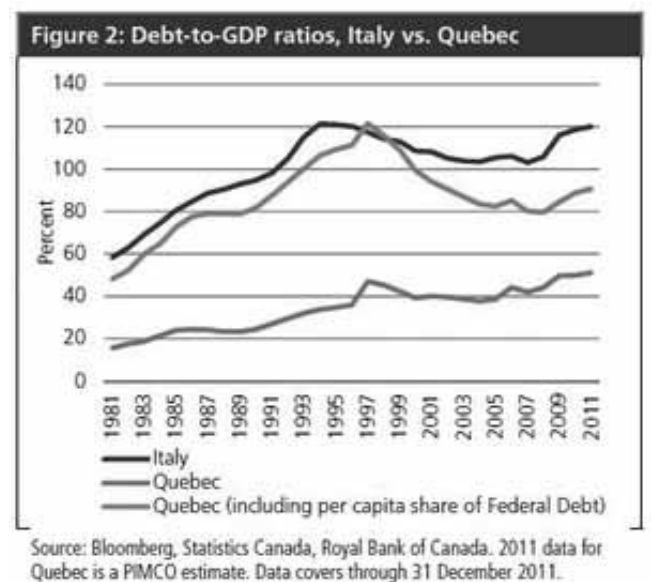
The Parizeau-Bouchard-Landry era brought us two significant economic events – first, the zero deficit crusade of Lucien Bouchard in the post-1995 referendum era that actually generated event number two – one real year of a balanced budget, 1998-99, with a slight surplus of \$126 million. That was the first and only time over 40 years that the budget was balanced. Recall that this was after the rule change that took expenses considered as investments off the books.

The Charest Liberals came to power with a plan to re-make government in Quebec and slaughter its sacred cows – and the cows won. During Mr. Charest's tenure the net debt rose by another \$45 billion and if you were to use the old accounting method, that number is more like \$60 billion. When Mme. Marois accused M. Charest of adding 50% to Quebec's debt during his time in office, she was absolutely correct – and when Mr. Charest answered that he was forced to invest in Quebec's infrastructure that had been neglected for 30 years, he was right as well. His defense was that his debt was "investment" under the PQ's law and should not be treated as current deficit expenditures.

So, the conclusion is that regardless of who was in power over the past 40 years, the debt continued to grow through good economic times or bad, federalist or separatist governments, cooperative with Ottawa or not. We have grown government in Quebec without creating a base of new wealth to fund its sustainability. The incoming government is confusing wealth transfer with wealth creation through growth, and is

forgetting that human and financial capital is increasingly mobile. The great irony for Mme. Marois will be that to create a Quebec economy that can stand on its own outside of the Canadian cocoon it will have to create one of the most pro-business environments in the Western Hemisphere in order to do so. The socialist side of the PQ is unlikely to let this happen, and the PQ government is going to have a hard time retaining talent here, raising taxes from new growth, and its revenue projections will fall short as a result.

Why does any of this really matter? Look at the PIMCO analysis below that compares the Italian debt situation to Quebec's. The PIMCO study indicates that Quebec's debt as a sovereign nation (assuming that it accepts its share of the federal debt) would be close to the Italian levels that caused Italy to lose the confidence of international investors and face unsustainable 7% yields on its national debt. Quebec is shielded from this scrutiny as a member of the Canadian federation and benefits from the sound financial management of the central government. Were Quebec outside the Canadian Federation, investors would impose the same scrutiny on Quebec as they did to the PIIGS of Europe (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain) and would likely demand similar interest rates of the new Republic of Quebec. Quebec would be unable to sustain the interest payments on such a high debt level – why do you think separatists argue that they are not "obliged" to accept their full portion of the federal debt? It would cripple the new nation and force it to seek the same recourse to the IMF as some of the European debtor nations. The Europeans have a troika helping them out – The IMF, The European Central Bank, and the European Union – where are the other two members of Quebec's troika? Are Canada and the US going to ride to Quebec's salvation? Not very likely.



If you are a federalist, there is a silver lining to Quebec's massive debt. The conclusion to the analysis above is that Quebec is ill-equipped financially to go it alone anytime soon. It would take a decade or more of restraint and reform for Quebec to get its debt to GDP ratio down to a level that a new nation could support. The nastiest revelation for Mme. Marois is that her predecessors, whether separatist or federalist, have made her dream far tougher to realize than her supporters imagined.



A Dark and Comic read: Bluebeard's Seventh Door

Bluebeard's Seventh Door
by Andre Vecsei
Published by Eva Hollo Vecsei

Sex, guilt, music, Serbian-Croatian politics and the atrocities committed by the fascist Croatian Ustasha revolutionary movement during the Second World War figure prominently in *Bluebeard's Seventh Door*, Andre Vecsei's didactic novel which his wife has published posthumously. The title comes from one of the author's favourite operas by Bartok in which pentatonic chords reminded him of "The antagonism between men and women."

Vecsei, a Montreal architect who died of cancer six years ago could never quite forget the horrors he endured growing up in Budapest during the Second World War when his native Hungary was under the influence of Nazi Germany. As a Roman Catholic teenager, Vecsei was caught by the Gestapo trying to obtain false identification papers for one of his Jewish friends. Lined up before a firing squad with others who were shot, his life was spared, presumably because he was still a kid. As an adult he was an insomniac who apparently wrote the book over a number of years to stave off nightmares.

From its very beginning at a funeral in 1975 for a socialite identified as the femme fatale, until its epilogue in California, it is a dark, sometimes funny, sarcastic read that capitalises on the elements of random chance. At its centre is a twice-divorced musicologist who is conducting a love affair with a Croatian maid who happens to be an illegal immigrant, and who like Scheherazade, captivates him with her stories. The protagonist is a mass of contradictions, and early on tells us "he want us to be thought provoking without being provocative." So we get any number of aphorisms such as "Creationists are not necessarily athiests," or "Lawyers are today what doctors were in the time of Moliere."

The tale is front loaded with characters straight out of cold war

movies, and it is distractingly academic and often cerebral at times. Vecsei has a jaundiced view of war and espionage in which men often do the wrong thing for good reason. He writes tellingly of ethnic lunacy in the post war Balkans, pointing out that "well deserved punishment went hand in hand with paranoid vengeance, and ethnic prejudice was called patriotism, fanatics were called trustworthy, and cruel butchers were called committed guards of the revolution. It was madness all right, because the hatred of the Serbs was justified, only there was no time and no way to be selective."

Vecsei is at his best describing the musicians sexploits, especially a licentious lecture tour in New York state. He returns to discover that his Schererazade, has run away with a colleague and learns the end of her story from a "a fat old fabulist".

Publishing an unedited manuscript after a man has died is not without its shortcomings. One can only wonder what changes Vecsei or an editor might have made to the text. As it stands, while some readers will find much to admire in the writing, others may feel being inside the author's head a little too demanding.

It is available for \$20 in paperback from <http://bluebeard.micro.org>.



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Yoga gets off the mat and tries to help part of the world

Local instructor Lauren Rudick is only Quebecer among hundreds participating in worldwide effort

Many people think yoga is a discipline practiced by those privileged with the time and means for proper instruction and a certain degree of self-absorption. Somewhat removed from the harsh realities of life that beset most people. It is of course not that at all. And for the past several years, adherents to a certain school of Yoga have set out to

demonstrate just that.

The Global Seva Challenge, a program of "Off the Mat into the World", adopts a cause every year and hundreds of yoga instructors around the world adopt personal projects to raise money for the goal. This year the Seva Challenge is to help victims of sex trafficking. Off the Mat into the World is a non-profit organization

whose mission is to use yoga to inspire conscious, sustainable activism and to ignite grass roots social change.

Sex trafficking is considered by international law enforcement to be the third most profitable criminal industry in the world ranking right behind illicit drugs and arms. Readers may recall that CNN's Hero of the Year last year was a diminutive Indian



woman who helped rescue Nepalese girls from sex traffickers and the brutal conditions they were forced to lead their lives in. It's that high profile a problem.

Two hundred participants worldwide are involved this year in raising funds for four projects in India, considered one of the globe's most troubled areas for sex trafficking. Montrealese Lauren Rudick, founder of Avigna Yoga, is the only Quebecer in the challenge. So far Seva challenge participants have raised over \$344,000 this year.

Rudick's goal is to raise \$20,000. How she's doing it is truly novel. Working with talented local photographer Pazit Perez, they have produced a calendar - that coincides with the September start of the school year - showing Rudick in tastefully nude, yoga poses. The treatment of the photographs was Perez' idea. And the outcome is singularly unique. Their idea was to celebrate the female form, showcasing the strength and power that yoga can cultivate. The photos combat notions of submission and meekness of women that fester in areas where sex trafficking is prevalent. Rudick is hoping that the sale of the calendars will get her to her goal.

All the money raised will go to four initiatives in India. The first is the Sanlaap Rehab Shelter for 25 girls rescued from red light districts. This will be Sanlaap's fifth shelter. The four already in operation help 250 girls. The second initiative is the expansion of the Made by Survivors Employment Center that trains and employs over 60 survivors of sex slavery as artisan goldsmiths in Kolkata and Mumbai. The third is the Clean Himalaya (Rishikesh) Waste Management Project that operates door-to-door garbage collection from



over 400 registrants. The final beneficiary of the funds will be the Mother Miracle School Vocational Skills Training Program School that serves 600 children from the lowest caste system and community. It is the only free school and community center of its kind in the slums of Rishikesh.

The calendars are Rudick's biggest fundraising push but in the fall she plans to put on a large Yogathon, collaborating with several teachers and studios throughout the city as an additional fundraising event and to bring further awareness to the cause. It will feature yoga sessions with various teachers, silent auctions and a raffle.

Rudick's calendars are available in Montreal at Westmount Stationary, the Sunshine Gallery, the UNI training center, at Studio Bliss and Pur Art. In New York City they are available at the Namaste Bookshop and may be purchased online from anywhere in the world at www.avignayoga.com. Interested vendors can contact Avigna Yoga and Rudick will make sure that calendars are shipped to their stores.



Un cynique chez les lyriques

D'abord, on se demande pourquoi un titre pareil. Puis, nous traversons le préambule pour découvrir les intentions de l'auteur, Carl Bergeron. Soudain, s'impose comme une envie d'en savoir davantage, de dévorer ce livre ou mieux, d'écrire, exactement de la même manière que l'on constate l'urgente nécessité, tous les printemps, de préparer le terrain afin que plantes, fleurs et fruits puissent planter ses racines. En fait, cela va encore plus loin que la parole ou l'écriture. Plus loin que la sensibilité. Nous parlons ici de cynisme, comme analyse symbolique et philosophique des films de Denis Arcand. En tant que rapport au monde également, dans un regard en surplomb -comme celui d'Arcand-, scrutant l'horizon au tant de l'intime que du collectif, notamment en ce qui a trait à la situation québécoise actuelle.

Le cynisme d'Arcand, paraît-il, ne date pas d'hier. Le saviez-vous ?

En effet, Denis Arcand possède une œuvre magistrale, allant des films de fiction « On est au coton » (1971) jusqu'à « L'âge des ténèbres » (2007), sans oublier son œuvre documentaire, forte et critique. Le cinéaste, en effet, est profondément ancré dans la réalité; même lorsqu'il aborde la fiction, il est parfaitement en phase avec les aléas sociaux et culturels du Québec d'hier et d'aujourd'hui. Cela en fait un artiste profondément bouleversant. Justement, ce livre de Carl Bergeron « Un cynique chez les lyriques » est un cadre de réflex-

ion essentiel sur l'œuvre magnifique de Denis Arcand, en plus de mettre en lumière, comme peu d'auteurs l'on fait, une véritable rencontre entre les deux hommes. Une surprise de taille vous attend donc puisque la réunion entre ces deux esprits n'épargne rien, dans la géographie humaine, culturelle et politique du Québec. C'est que le cynisme philosophique d'Arcand ne date pas d'hier, en effet, et c'est bel et bien à un portrait sensible du célèbre cinéaste que Carl Bergeron nous convie, avec ce brillant essai. Ainsi, tel l'artiste créant une œuvre, Arcand affirme : « Le Québec est une histoire impossible » ; en lisant ces mots, on ne se sent pas très à l'aise. C'est que l'œuvre de l'artiste, Arcand à l'occurrence, tranche nettement avec celle des autres, de par la somme des regards graves qu'elle suscite, ainsi que par la réflexion des personnages, lesquels ne sont pas tous également intéressants, même parmi ceux que Denis Arcand semble privilégier. Justement, comment faire une œuvre, notamment de fiction, au Québec, si on est, comme Arcand, profondément lié à son pays d'origine, amoureux de sa culture historique, et dans sa complexité schizophrène (oui, mais non) même? C'est que le Québec profond, c'était hier : on revient de loin, assurément, et de cette vision du monde, Arcand l'embrasse ardemment, marqué par le poids des rapports de forces, de son œuvre, et de l'Histoire. En effet, la plupart des Québécois ont parmi leurs ancêtres, un fermier ou un coureur des

bois, de qui ils ont hérités le respect et l'amour de la nature. Des souvenirs pas toujours très glorieux. . . Dans les faits : la condition humaine et québécoise dans ce qu'elle porte de plus difficile, de plus désenchantée, et parfois de plus tragique, mise en lumière, notamment dans l'œuvre documentaire de Denis Arcand, mais également dans « Gina », une femme déclassée, laquelle voile également une grande espérance, tel un secret bien gardé : le mariage ! Or, à la sortie du film, en 1975, Arcand revisite lucidement la blessure, persiste, et signe : « le mariage est le tombeau de la classe ouvrière ».

Savoir choisir ses batailles

Ainsi, Denis Arcand possède une poésie originale : c'est un inclassable ! Il n'est pas nécessaire, en effet, de chercher vitam aeternam une raison à son anti-lyrisme notoire, ni de cette tendance naturelle à se méfier de toutes entreprises et tentations passionnelles, « que cela soit dans le registre de l'amour ou de la détestation » : nous avons affaire à un être de raison, lequel pose « son regard de plomb » sur l'environnement, lequel façonne tous les êtres. Dans son film « Jésus de Montréal (1989) », nous avons là, peut-être, son sujet le plus personnel, le plus intime, le plus sincère. Ainsi, un artiste ne peut évoluer seul; alors que fondamentalement, il appelle cette solitude de tous ses vœux. Dans les faits, il a besoin des autres, il a besoin de la société. Son désenchantement viendrait-il de là ? Savoir, par avance, que nous

serons incompris, voire blâmés, avant ou après avoir été loués, pour paraphraser la célèbre citation ? C'est qu'il faut éviter les impasses. Les écrivains, les poètes, les artistes, ne font pas du porte-à-porte; ils sont intimidés ou silencieux, et rarement l'œuvre coïncide avec les définitions qu'on en donne de l'extérieur. Il y a un hiatus quelque part, que l'artiste doit prendre sur lui, afin de conserver sa liberté de créateur. La fiction, c'est la place qu'occupe un film, ou un livre, dans cette machine; exactement comme on dirait systématiquement de ce moi comme cinéaste, ou mieux du rôle que l'œuvre a joué dans la vie d'une autre personne. Les artistes sont enfermés dans une sorte de cercle vicieux : produire une œuvre implique que tu fasses partie de ce monde-là. C'est cette présence qui devient gênante; il y a une différence entre aimer aller vers les autres, et d'obliger le corpus artistique à intégrer l'œuvre. Par contre, avec une ouverture directe sur le public, il arrive qu'un artiste puisse se porter tout seul. Cela est impossible en littérature, toutefois dans d'autres disciplines, il arrive que ce soit possible; sinon, ce sont les œuvres qui vous portent, jusqu'à dénaturer l'image et l'œuvre, laquelle s'abandonne trop souvent, hélas, à sa myopie et son goût du pouvoir.

Ainsi, après cette réflexion, située au cœur de l'œuvre, par nostalgie peut-être, nous devons plonger en somme dans un climat plus infernal que bucolique, lequel parfois est franchement fantastique, en dépit de la misère, de l'injustice, et du



mépris, triples facettes d'une même face. Or, tout le pessimisme d'Arcand vient de là, lequel puise sa source à la fois dans une lucidité têtue, un réalisme machiavélien, et un cynisme inattaquable. Ce tableau est criant tant qu'à l'avenir du Québec, notamment culturellement et politiquement, à plus long terme : comment fera-t'il pour se définir, se redéfinir, se réinventer ? Le spectacle de cette misère est en effet palpable chez Arcand. Simplement exister, en tant que nation, que pays, est difficile à supporter à certains moments; dans le contexte de l'œuvre de Denis Arcand, le propos n'est pas neuf, certes, mais il acquiert une éloquence incontestable. Tellement que nous en somme, nous-mêmes, étonnés. Bref, allez lire ce livre en courant : « Un cynique chez les lyriques », de Carl Bergeron, publié aux Éditions Boréal. Vous m'en donnerez des nouvelles !

Bergeron, Carl, Un cynique chez les lyriques, Édition Boréal, Montréal, 2012.

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

- George F. Lengvari, Sr.





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The Not So Perfect Martini in New York City

Martinis and Kraft Dinner have much in common. One can spend hours comparing techniques, add-ons, personal preferences and anecdotes and reach no conclusions as to the ultimate Martini or bowl of Kraft Dinner. Do you like your Kraft Dinner, milky, cheesy, al dente and with chopped up hot dogs in it? Do you like a gin vs. vodka Martini, dirty Martini, with lime twists or with or without vermouth? Do you like to eat your Kraft Dinner right out of the pot with a soup spoon or in a bowl? Would you like your Martini shaken in front of you or be content to hear it be shaken twenty feet behind you? Do you want it stirred or shaken? All these questions are deep and serious worthy of contemplation by both philosophers and probably not wine writers who should keep their snouts out of Martini stemware.

New York City has a buzz about it and I am told there are people who like to chill out over a Martini in quiet little alcoves particularly in snowstorms! A little well prepared juice to take the edge off Manhattan. If Holden Caulfield from "Catcher in the Rye" can act like a big shot and have a Martini in New York City anyone can. So let's delve into a tiny tad of what New York City has to offer Martini wise. First of all let's review how we might want to score Martinis which, no doubt, may cause a firestorm! Note that some say the standard New York City Martini weighs in at ten ounces. I think it better be revised to read about six ounces. Holy Mackerel! In Canada you'd be sentenced to 10 years for anything over 5 ounces!

50 points: Does it look, smell and taste like a Martini? In today's bar and restaurant world Martini glasses just might be used for shrimp cocktails and ice cream Sundays. Do you really want to slurp a Martini that smells like some curry dish has been served in it?

10 points: Is it sufficiently chilled? Not that any of you have woken up with someone you regretted staying the night with but something less than an ice cold Martini reveals a nasty side to vodka and gin where they become raw industrial ingredients better suited for manufacturing plastic or pesticide than what they can be if treated with respect and coldness. The maintenance of gin and vodka in a freezer is essential. Glasses must be equally chilled either in the freezer or in cold water and ice cubes. An icy mush floating in the glass in minute fashion is acceptable but may indicate too small hollow ice cubes that may disintegrate upon shaking and create ice shards.

10 points: Stemware quality. No one likes a martini in a clumsy, thick and cheap glass. Plastic stemware gets you a big fat zero.

20 points: Yes taste is important so why award it 20 points in a scoring category? Well if all the other elements are in place taste just falls into place. After all aren't we dealing with just vodka, gin and vermouth?



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10 points: Pomp and Circumstance deserves some recognition. Is the Martini treated with the respect the way it is served? It is a very special concoction and really deserves to be treated as the special little darling it is. It should be gingerly deposited on the table underneath a cocktail napkin with preferably and OldWorld Expression, "Sir, your Martini is ready." Is the server particularly enthused when it is deposited in front of you?

THE PLAZA HOTEL (The Rose Room on Fifth and Central Park) 93 POINTS

We can lament the recent closing of The Plaza's Oak Room which was a significant New York institution. The Rose room with its rose coloured lighting harkens back to yesterday's dark, wood panelled old men's club atmosphere. I prefer the natural lighting of the downstairs' Champagne Bar. However their \$21 premium martini is prepared and served to excellence. Great little nut and nibble tray. A crisp and sharp Martini.

GABRIELS (11 West 60th) 90 POINTS
Once again a very good Martini with a

direct pour in front of you. Great deference and care shown in this neo classical bistro. Oprah is seen in here occasionally as well as Mayor Bloomberg and Henry Kissinger. Crisp, clean and clear. Scott is one of the most affable barkeeps in NYC and knows precisely when to hover in and hover out.

CASSIS BISTRO (225 Columbus Avenue) 82 points

Like some good moules et frites in a simple bistro environment? Cassis far off the beaten touristic path may be for you. A good end product in the glass but not sufficiently chilled, served in thick and clumsy stemware and without ceremony at all. A bit of a shame but a good Martini is more than cold booze. Give it the respect it deserves.

HUDSON PRIVATE PARK (356 West 58th) 74 points

For \$18 you can see how bad a Martini and service can be. For this inflated self-service price you can walk up to the bar and order a Martini. A cafeteria Martini! How loathsome. Decent stemware, chilled decently but a cut wedge of lemon as opposed to a twist of lemon. No nuts. Worst of all the Martini has lost any alcohol identification and is watery and dilute. A lovely setting wins the Martini a few bonus points as you are in an outside bar surrounded by high-rises. Big New York feel. I feel like Jack Lemmon in Billy Wilder's "The Apartment". What a shame the vodka died a watery death. Mr. G agrees and we barely manage to polish off the insipid brew.

RITZ-CARLTON (50 CENTRAL PARK SOUTH) 97 points

Mr. G has his pants charmed right off as I am running a few minutes late and the staff asks him if they can get him a glass of spring water in an earnest and "non-bullshit" type of way. Yes that is the Ritz-Carlton Central Park South! The Martini is shaken in front of us and poured into a well-chilled glass. A nice big bang of alcohol knocks up the taste buds. No dilution. A real Martini served with enthusiasm and pride with a delicious selection of nuts. Love carried peanuts with a Martini. A glass of ice is delivered to Mr. G and I as this is an early afternoon Martini the staff knows how the slow down the explosive effects of their Martinis. How perceptive! I am so impressed with the Martini who cares about the price! Do these guys have a PHD in Martini's? Of course my Martini is the best in the world. But these guys are tops on the list as far as commercial Martinis go. And there big plans afoot at the Ritz-Carlton Central Park South to serve Martini flights with local Vodkas sourced from all over New York State. What a brilliant idea! Locally sourced vodka is becoming a big thing in the U.S.A. and the Ritz-Carlton is riding ahead of the pack on this one! Vodka from Brooklyn! Love it!



CREATURE MYTHOLOGIES

St. Henri gallery combines art and interior design

NostraCasa a new concept gallery opening in St. Henri represents a felicitous marriage of contemporary art, interior design and eco-luxurious furniture.

A dozen artists are represented at the gallery's opening art exhibition Creature Mythologies, a show that features fairy tale beings, astonishing animals, and esoteric creatures that dwell in an artist's deep flight of fancy. It is an usual concept that combines the surreal with conceptual photography and sculpture.

"People want a supernatural edge in their world," says the exhibition's curator Summer Geraghty, a recent MFA graduate from Concordia University. "People are increasingly looking for something that is not ordinary"

The multi-media show features paintings, sculptures, prints and photographs that depict human related but fantastical creatures. "The pieces I accepted had to be not only beautiful and intriguing, but they had to be developed in the sense

that they had to be professional. They had to have their own thematic, their own vocabulary."

On view are imaginative works by Montreal artists Rachel Tremblay, Emma Kate Guimond, Farrah Allegue Dustyn Lucas and Kim Billing, William Parrick and Morgan Sea, with Dani Holtz; Toronto's Kirsten McCrea, Gillian King of Winnipeg, Emily Jan from Oakland, Calif, and Jalal Abuthina, who is from Dubai.

The artists borrow from imagery



and illustration, fuzzy furry and sometimes harrowing creatures. Look carefully and you just might see familiar images from your childhood dreams.

The gallery's partners include

Maha Al Sakhaf, Claudia Cavallini, a specialist in imported Brazilian furniture, and interior designer Mirelli Antunes.

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Guys and Dolls revisited

This is how my strange and wondrous experience happens.

I am floating around Writers Valhalla, which is in a place called Eternity, chatting with wise guys Willie the Shakes and North Side Hendrik, when Big Mouth G.B. Shaw butts in.

"Damon, Dear boy..." sez He, "You talking to me?" sez I.

"Indeed" sez He "Did you base your Salvation Army sister Sarah Brown on my Major Barbara?"

"Big mouth Bernie, old chap" sez I "I have not considered that possibility. I truly wish

I am able to do so".

Next thing I know, I find myself in a burg called Montreal, which is in a place called Canada at a very fine theater called, I believe, the Seagull Centre although I do not spot any such birds hanging about.

Lo and behold, my old gang is being portrayed and with finger snapping music by some talented Guys and Dolls indeed. They are backed by a very commendable orchestra of eight musicians, heavy on the winds.

My eyes tear to see Nicely-Nicely Johnson (Mike Paterson) still rocking the boat.

Big Jule from Cicero Illinois (Massimo) is still packing his Betsy while gambling at the floating crap game run by good old reliable Nathan Nathan Detroit (Frank Moore). Miss Adelaide (Susan

Henley), Nathan's long time fiancée, pleads with him to marry her as she instructs others to take back their mink and pearls.

Super gambler Sky Masterson (Scott Wentworth) urges Luck to be a lady tonight as he woos the Salvation Army's Sergeant Sarah Brown (Tracy Michailidis) who urges sinners to follow the fold. She needs lots of sinners to satisfy General Mathilda B. Cartwright (Jane Gilchrist) and justify keeping the mission open.

After the show, Sarah tells me she loves Major Barbara and does see they have a lot in common. I plan to relate this to Big Mouth Bernie later, even though odds are that this will only encourage him to bend my ear endlessly.

I cannot report in greater detail on this huge cast of 24 singing 18 hit songs and doing a lot of truly superior hoofing in the limited time and space I have on my brief return to this here mortal coil. So sue me.

What can I say? On a scale of ten, this show rolls a double six. As Sarah's gramps, Arvide Abernathy (Sam Stein) croons, More I cannot wish you. This outfit is as good as any I ever seen on Broadway which is in Manhattan which is in the state of New York,

Guys and Dolls continues at the Segal Centre until October 28. 514-739-7944


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