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LE CONFLIT ISRAËL / HAMAS – À MONTRÉAL?



PHOTO A. AUCOIN



PHOTO ROBERT J. GALBRAITH



Jacques Brassard
Le Quotidien

Le combat d'Israël pour sa survie, c'est aussi notre combat

Pendant quelques instants, envisagez la situation suivante : à partir de Larouche et de St-Bruno, une organisation terroriste lance sur Alma, quotidiennement, des dizaines de roquettes et de missiles et cela, pendant des années. Et ces engins meurtriers sont tirés à l'aveuglette. Ils peuvent tomber n'importe où : sur un centre d'achat, sur une école, sur des résidences, sur une église. N'importe où! Les citoyens d'Alma,

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Israël n'a pas le choix

Les Palestiniens sont les victimes de leurs « frères » et de leurs dirigeants

Le texte suivant est cosigné par Gilbert Ahsen; Richard Bastien, économiste; Germain Belzile, économiste; Claude-Marc Bourget, écrivain et musicien; Pierre Brassard, journaliste; Jacques Brassard, ancien ministre et chroniqueur; Jean-Charles Chebat, professeur; Maurice G. Dantec, écrivain; Antoine Djénandji, homme d'affaires; Ginette Dubé; Jean-Marie Gélinas, président des Amitiés Québec-Israël; Michael Laughrea, chercheur universitaire; Michèle Monette; Jean Renaud, directeur de la revue Égards; Jacques Tremblay et Andres Villarruel.

Quelque 7000 obus de mortiers et roquettes tirés sur le territoire d'Israël depuis 2001. Des dizaines de milliers de civils israéliens ciblés par des attaques

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Alain-Michel Ayache
ayache@themetropolitain.ca

Lettre à Gaza...

Pauvre Proche-Orient ! Pauvre Gaza ! Pauvres Palestiniens ! Pauvre peuple en perdition... Comme si le destin continue de s'acharner contre toi pour faire parvenir un message à l'ensemble des pays de la région, et particulièrement à tes « frères » arabes. Qu'à l'instar des leurs, tu ne représentes aux yeux de tes chefs qu'une monnaie d'échange, pire encore, une denrée périssable dont on peut s'en passer... quand tu ne sers pas tout simplement de chair à canon !

Depuis la « Nakba » en 1948 et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, les promesses de tes chefs n'étaient que teintées de mensonges. On t'avait assuré le droit du retour à la « terre des ancêtres »,

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Beryl Wajzman

Editor & Publisher

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Days that sear our souls

This week and next, we would do well to pause and reflect on the solemn and universal backdrop against which this period of time unfolds every year.

It is a period that reminds us of those historical encounters between governors and governed, when every act of the authorities exasperates the people and every refusal to act excites their contempt. A period of 12 days that should rend our souls asunder with searing intensity and pierce our hearts with rape-like violation. A period that begins with a date held sacred to all those of conscience who engage in the struggle for mankind's transcendent yearning for redemptive change. A period that ends with a date that challenges us to fulfill that struggle as we bear witness to mankind's debased desertion of any of its noble aspirations.

January 15 would have been the 80th birthday of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. January 17 is the 64th anniversary of the disappearance of Raoul Wallenberg. And January 27 will mark the 64th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Astonishingly, the United Nations, at whose entrance are carved the words of Isaiah that "Swords shall be beaten into plowshares and nation shall not make war against nation anymore," officially commemorated the Holocaust for the first time only in 2006.

The contrasts are telling, and their lessons may be our last best hope for our own humanity. Wallenberg and King personified the prophecy that the day will come when "Justice shall roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream." Without fidelity to that goal, we will be left with little more than a future of Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones, forever parched by the horrors of Auschwitz, making this world brittle and arid and stench-filled.

During these days, the heavens themselves seem to challenge us to rage.

All these sad dates stand as confirmation of the low limitations of the era in which we still live. It is an era characterized by the failure of faith, the retreat of reason and the humiliation of hope. It is an era that, with rare



exceptions, has been permeated with the odious odors of justice compromised by timidity, honor cheapened through expediency and promise mortgaged to avarice.

For the litmus test of mankind's civility is not how we treat those who are many, or agreeable, or privileged, or quiescent, but rather how we treat those who are few, and different, and alienated, and stubborn. The world is still failing that test.

The possibilities of greatness and generosity are constantly compromised by an ungracious modernity and a suffocating self-absorption filled with false pieties as excuses for inaction. Little resolve abounds to remedy the malignancies of hate, jealousy and greed with the compass of compassionate conscience and the courage of character to protect right from wrong.

Frivolous squabbings that are nothing more than promotions of petty self-interests overwhelm what King called the "fierce urgency of now" — the fierce urgency to bring to an end the spectacular and frequent failures of man. For in the dead of night we will forever be haunted by those failures as the thin, humid rivulets of sweat crawl over us like vermin.

Haunted by the mounds of ashes that once were 1.5 million smiling children playing in the streets of "civilized" Europe. Haunted by the bloated bodies floating in the Yangtze River of Mao's China. Haunted by the corpses frozen in the wastes of Stalin's Gulag. Haunted by the betrayals of the free peoples of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Haunted by the deaths of Freedom



Riders in the American South. Haunted by the killing fields of Vietnam and Cambodia. Haunted by the bodies rotting in the jungles of Rwanda and in the fetid marshes of the Balkans.

As we face today's dire challenges, we must all become Wallenbergs and Kings — ready to assume individual responsibility, each drawing strength from the sure knowledge that one person can make a difference. We have a responsibility to follow Gandhi's counsel and act quickly to arrest "the evil that staggers drunkenly from wrong to wrong in order to preserve its own immortality."

For today, as before, the consequence of failure will be dire. Dire to the billions living in grinding poverty in a world of abundance. Dire to the devastated of Darfur, whose suffering many governments still refuse to call genocide. Dire to the enslaved tens of millions in Asia living under oppressive regimes providing cheap labor for Faustian alliances of state and industrial interests. Dire to the tens of millions dying of AIDS and famine in Africa watched by an apathetic and avaricious world that still cares less about the content of a man's character than about the color of his skin.

For all our demonstrations and petitions, we have been ambivalent and apathetic toward the insolence and inaction of authority. We have perpetuated sins of silence with voices too often mute when confronted with the evils that men do. Wrapping ourselves in cloaks of charity will not absolve us of our complicity in impotent acquiescence to the daily torrent of state-sponsored deceptions and institutional betrayals.



We seem to react when it costs us nothing in terms of our personal bottom lines. We readily accept whatever manipulated mages and opinions flood us from television and magazines as reality. We eagerly digest political sound bites as quickly as any fast food. Our surrender has demonstrated nothing less than an abandonment of the possibilities of our own capacities.

Wallenberg, King and the generation of survivors refused to surrender. Their testaments are living ones to this day. Testaments to a different world where people see wrongs and try to right them; see suffering and try to heal it, see injustice and try to stop it. A world that rejects the cowardice of the fey and feckless that would have us acquiesce in our own self-abnegation.

If we do not keep faith with the memory and witness of these 12 days; if we ever forget the imperative of redemptive rage; if we stop daring to care, then we will have betrayed the visionary hope embodied in the line of the Song of the Partisans that was shared at the mountaintop by all the Wallenbergs and Kings, the Mandelas and Kennedys and the Sharanskys and Walesas: "Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte sho" — "Upon us yet will dawn the day we hold so dear."

And when the false prophets cry "Peace! Peace!", there will be none left to shout back, "There is no peace!" And then we will have nothing more to comfort us as we struggle with our own redemption than a poignant plea from heaven to have mercy.

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

LA PATRIE

LA CULTURE AU QUÉBEC

La routine

L'année 2009 nous réserve-t-elle quelque surprise ? Au Canada, et au Québec en particulier, se produira-t-il quelque événement inattendu qui ferait dire aux générations futures que nous venons de vivre un moment-clé de notre évolution ?

Ce ne sera pas le cas cette année, car cet événement historique, rien ne l'annonce et personne ne le souhaite. Il ne se produira rien de comparable en 2009 à ces événements charnières que constituèrent jadis la première victoire électorale du Parti Québécois, le rapatriement de la constitution canadienne ou l'échec de l'Accord du Lac Meech. Aucun changement significatif ne se profile donc à l'horizon et 2009 ne sera sans doute que la suite paisible de l'année 2008.

Je crois que nous pouvons et devons nous en réjouir. Ceux qui préféreraient vivre dangereusement, plutôt qu'habiter un pays si tranquille que certains y périssent de neurasthénie, devront compter sur une nouvelle crise du verglas ou sur un nouveau déluge du Saguenay pour rompre avec la monotonie du quotidien. Mais ça leur en ferait, une belle jambe, que les inondations du printemps noient les sous-sols de l'Assemblée nationale ! Ces catastrophes éventuelles, qui ne changeraient rien au fait fondamental que, parmi les habitants de la Terre, nous comptons parmi les plus privilégiés, passeraient vite au rayon des profits et pertes. Et ce ne sont ni les campagnes électorales fédérales ou provinciales, ni les chicanes Ottawa-Québec, ni la baisse du dollar, ni la crise économique qui vont y changer quoi que ce soit. Après les chicanes, les compromis ; après la crise, la reprise ; et vogue la galère. Il est cependant loin le jour où un homme politique commencera un discours par la déclaration suivante : « Canadiens, Canadiennes ; Québécois, Québécoises, le bonheur est votre lot quotidien. »

Cela dit, l'auteur de ces lignes ne nie pas l'existence dans notre société de réels problèmes. Je pense à notre système d'éducation, et plus particulièrement à nos universités dont le sous-financement asphyxie le fonctionnement, aucun gouvernement n'osant imposer des hausses de frais de scolarité dont une indémodable légende urbaine prétend qu'elles restreindraient l'accès aux études supérieures. Je pense également aux pénuries de main d'œuvre dans certains secteurs

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clés de l'économie.

Je pense aussi au débat stérile qui oppose les souverainistes aux fédéralistes. Comment ne pas citer à ce propos ces lignes du regretté Laurent-Michel Vacher : « [...] le Québec francophone est plongé depuis plus de vingt ans dans une rêverie à la fois malsaine et sottise, paradoxalement vécue comme un mirobolant triomphe d'affirmation collective. » (1) Ceux qu'on appelle les souverainistes ne sont pas les seuls responsables de cette stagnation mentale, les fédéralistes étant souvent les premiers à enfourcher le dada nationaliste quand quelque différend se dessine entre Québec et Ottawa. Ainsi, le ministre des Finances, Jim Flaherty, a déjà annoncé l'intention du fédéral de modifier les règles de la péréquation, ce qui pourrait réduire de un milliard les transferts au Québec. Si ces modifications ont lieu, justifiées ou non, elles auront des conséquences graves sur le budget que doit présenter à la mi-mars le gouvernement Charest. Parions que le premier ministre ne résistera pas à la tentation d'emprunter à la rhétorique nationaliste en dénonçant Ottawa en des termes que

ne renierait pas Jacques Parizeau. Sauf qu'il n'ira pas jusqu'à dire que le fédéralisme canadien ne « fonctionnant pas », la seule solution, c'est la souveraineté.

« [...] Ceux qu'on a baptisés "fédéralistes", écrit aussi Laurent-Michel Vacher (qui affirme d'ailleurs en être un), sont simplement les tenants du statu quo face à la question du maintien du Québec au sein du Canada (est-il besoin de souligner que nombre d'entre eux se fichent éperdument que le Canada en question soit "fédéral" ou pas) (2). » Tel est mon cas. Comment renouveler le discours fédéraliste ? En faisant silence sur la question. Le fédéralisme, on s'en fiche, c'est le Canada qui importe.

Je sens que peu d'oreilles québécoises seront sensibles à mon message. Trop de gens de chez nous ont adopté une étrange ligne de conduite : les yeux braqués sur le passé, avancer à reculons, entrer dans l'avenir en lui tournant le dos.

(1) Laurent-Michel Vacher, *Une petite fin du monde*, Éditions Liber, p. 163.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 160.

...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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LE COMBAT D'ISRAËL POUR SA SURVIE, C'EST AUSSI NOTRE COMBAT

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vivant dans l'angoisse, sont sans cesse sur le qui-vive, ne disposant que de quelques secondes pour se terrer dans des abris. Comment réagiraient les gens de la communauté agressée? Ils réclameraient avec force des actions pour mettre un terme à ces tirs de roquettes et pour mettre hors d'état de nuire l'organisation terroriste responsable de ces agressions aveugles et répétitives sur des civils innocents.

Vous comprenez que j'imagine cette situation simplement pour illustrer, à partir de chez nous, ce qui se passe dans les territoires israéliens longeant la bande de Gaza. Depuis des années, les villes proches de ce que certains appellent le Hamastan, sont la cible des terroristes jihadistes lanceurs de missiles du Hamas et du Jihad Islamique. Plus de 6500 missiles et roquettes ont été tirés sur Israël depuis le retrait des troupes israéliennes de la bande de Gaza à l'été 2005. Alors, il était donc pleinement justifié de la part de l'État d'Israël de déclencher une offensive militaire (toujours en cours présentement) avec comme objectif d'éradiquer de la bande de Gaza les brigades terroristes infectées jusqu'à la moelle par la haine des Juifs et des valeurs dont ils sont porteurs (démocratie et liberté). Et cette action de Tsahal (l'armée israélienne) est sans conteste de l'ordre de la légitime défense. Il ne faut pas encore une fois confondre l'agresseur et l'agressé.

Malheureusement, les médias, plusieurs gouvernements, certains partis politiques, la gauche et l'extrême-gauche, tous les groupus-

Évidemment, à chaque fois qu'Israël décide de se défendre, les chefs d'État frileux et lâches nous ressortent la vieille rengaine sur la « riposte disproportionnée » de l'État Hébreu, pendant que les idiots utiles et les suppôts de l'islamisme, le keffieh enroulé autour du cou, hurlent « au génocide » et au « massacre ».

cules d'agitateurs plus ou moins antisémites et la nébuleuse des groupes musulmans à l'œuvre dans les sociétés occidentales sombrent encore une fois dans la mauvaise foi outrancière et la propagande obscène en victimisant le Hamas et en diabolisant Israël. Comment des occidentaux peuvent-ils sincèrement en arriver à soutenir une organisation, le Hamas, dont l'antisémitisme (la haine pathologique du Juif) constitue le cœur de sa doctrine politico-religieuse et dont l'objectif proclamé (il faut lire sa charte) est la destruction de l'État démocratique d'Israël? Comment peut-on se prétendre démocrate et attaché à la liberté de même qu'aux droits fondamentaux de la personne et, en même temps, donner son appui aux nazislamistes du Hamas? Contradictoire et incompatible! Un pareille attitude ne peut s'expliquer que par le fait que ces défenseurs du Hamas sont, soit ce que Lénine appelait des « idiots utiles » (idiots parce que ne prenant pas la mesure exacte de la nature fondamentalement terroriste du Hamas et utiles parce que

devenant un rouage de la machine de propagande et de désinformation des islamofascistes), soit tout simplement des zéloteurs lucides de l'islamisme totalitaire, obscurantiste, terroriste et barbare qui ravage la planète entière. Je crois cependant que dans les manifestations qui se multiplient en appui au Hamas, les idiots utiles sont plus nombreux.

Évidemment, à chaque fois qu'Israël décide de se défendre, les chefs d'État frileux et lâches nous ressortent la vieille rengaine sur la « riposte disproportionnée » de l'État Hébreu, pendant que les idiots utiles et les suppôts de l'islamisme, le keffieh enroulé autour du cou, hurlent « au génocide » et au « massacre ». Alors, disproportionnée l'action de l'armée israélienne? Bien au contraire. Les attaques sont ciblées avec précision : dépôts d'armes, tunnels de contrebande, caches de terroristes, édifices du Hamas, sites de lancement de missiles. En fait, si, vraiment, la riposte de Tsahal avait été disproportionnée, toute la bande de Gaza serait déjà en ruines et en

condes.

Malheureusement, mêmes ciblées, les actions de l'armée israélienne causent parfois la mort de civils. Mais pourquoi? Parce que les nazislamistes utilisent systématiquement des civils comme bouclier humain. Tel ce chef de brigade du Hamas tué avec ses quatre femmes et ses enfants. Ce salopard est le seul responsable de la mort des siens. Mais il faut ajouter qu'après avoir servi de bouclier humain, les civils palestiniens morts deviennent des objets de propagande. On les exhibe à la télé pour stigmatiser les Israéliens comme « tueurs d'enfants ». C'est là le côté le plus ignoble et le plus répugnant de l'endoctrinement jihadiste.

Israël doit maintenant faire la besogne jusqu'au bout. Il ne doit pas se laisser distraire de ses objectifs par la chorale des pleureuses de gauche, des ennemis de l'Occident, des idiots utiles, des politiciens lâches et hypocrites (tels Mammoud Abbas et Nicolas Sarkozy) et des antisémites toutes catégories. La victoire d'Israël se doit d'être sans équivoque. Car n'oublions pas que la Hamas est le maillon d'une chaîne comptant le Hezbollah, la Syrie et l'Iran. Surtout l'Iran, qui s'appête à se doter de l'arme nucléaire et qui projette de « rayer Israël de la carte ». Il faut donc que la théocratie des Mollahs prenne acte sans le moindre doute possible que le droit de légitime défense d'Israël prévaudra face à toute autre considération. Et n'oublions pas également que le combat d'Israël pour sa survie, c'est aussi notre combat, c'est le combat de l'Occident tout entier.

ISRAËL N'A PAS LE CHOIX

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quotidiennes. Les alertes plus que quotidiennes qui terrorisent les enfants dans leurs écoles et leurs garderies. Quel gouvernement peut tolérer cela ? Depuis sept ans, les brigades d'Al-Aqsa (branche du Fatah), le Jihad islamique et le Hamas se sont armés pour atteindre leur but : détruire l'État d'Israël. Imaginons un instant que les enfants de Longueuil vivent jour et nuit dans l'effroi, que les entreprises, magasins, hôpitaux, écoles soient la cible de terroristes localisés à Brossard. Qu'attendraient de leurs gouvernements les Québécois, y compris ceux qui ne seraient pas à la portée des terroristes, sinon qu'ils soient protégés de ces actes terroristes ? Aucun gouvernement ne peut tolérer que son territoire et ses citoyens soient mis en danger. Or qu'a fait Israël ? En 2005, il a totalement évacué la bande de Gaza. Un geste de bonne volonté coûteux et risqué qui devait servir la paix et amener une coopération entre Israéliens et Gazaouis. Mais ce geste fut interprété par les islamistes comme un signe de la victoire ultime sur Israël, de même que le Hezbollah a interprété le geste de bonne volonté d'évacuation du Sud-Liban par Israël

en 2000 (en vue de faciliter les négociations avec Arafat).

Après avoir pris le pouvoir, le Hamas a massacré des centaines de Palestiniens pro-Fatah. Au lieu de la paix attendue, au lieu d'administrer la vie quotidienne des Gazaouis, le Hamas s'est comporté en agent de la stratégie globale des mollahs iraniens. Au lieu de la paix, le Hamas a délibérément opté pour la confrontation directe, conformément aux instructions des dirigeants iraniens.

Terreur et misère

Israël a conclu en juin 2008 une trêve avec le Hamas, laquelle prévoyait l'interruption totale pendant six mois des tirs de roquettes et de mortiers sur Israël. Or, ils n'ont jamais cessé. Au lieu de gérer la population dont il a la charge, le Hamas a opté pour la terreur et la misère qu'il impose à sa population. Alors que le Hamas maintient que sa population n'a pas de quoi se nourrir, le Hamas s'est procuré des quantités de munitions et d'armes de toutes sortes, dont des missiles sophistiqués provenant de l'armée iranienne. Il aurait suffi que les tirs de ces missiles cessent pour que

passé tout ce dont les Gazaouis ont besoin, exactement comme c'est le cas des Arabes de Cisjordanie. Le Hamas a choisi la confrontation.

Toute amélioration du sort des Palestiniens au plan économique, social et sanitaire passe par le nettoyage des institutions palestinienne corrompues. Les Palestiniens cherchaient des leaders responsables qui mettraient de l'ordre dans leurs affaires publiques. Le Hamas a des objectifs militaires et terroristes : liquider Israël. Disciple du Hezbollah, téléguidé depuis la Syrie, pion de l'Iran, le Hamas a contribué à l'échec total de la gestion des Territoires.

Israël s'est montré plus généreux que les Ottomans, les Britanniques, les Égyptiens et les Jordaniens, qui ont dominé les Palestiniens durant les cinq derniers siècles, en donnant au Hamas la possibilité de gérer Gaza en toute indépendance. Le Hamas a-t-il tenté de remettre à flot l'économie palestinienne ? A-t-il commencé à édifier l'État auquel les Palestiniens prétendent, à construire des écoles, des routes et des hôpitaux ? La communauté internationale ne demandait

qu'à les financer généreusement, en contrepartie de quelques déclarations rassurantes, même ambiguës.

Le Hamas a plutôt choisi de cultiver la haine et la misère de la population palestinienne. Cette misère et le désespoir qu'elle génère lui apportent des troupes fraîches. Encore une fois, les Palestiniens sont les victimes de leur propre leadership. Le Hamas est manipulé par les dictateurs syriens et iraniens qui promettent de l'aide qui ne vient jamais, si ce n'est sous forme militaire et diplomatique, car ils n'ont cure des Palestiniens qui ne sont pour eux que des pions. (...)

Malgré l'abondance des pétrodollars, aucun pays arabe ou musulman n'a trouvé le moyen d'envoyer aux Palestiniens, directement ou indirectement, le milliard de dollars pour payer leur fonction publique. La Ligue arabe est muette. Sans doute les principaux pays arabes (tous sunnites) ne souhaitent-ils pas voir l'influence de l'Iran (ni arabe ni sunnite) s'étendre au Moyen-Orient grâce au Hamas. Les Palestiniens demeurent encore une fois les victimes de leurs « frères » et de leurs dirigeants.



Hate in the streets

“A totalitarian culture treats mere opponents as subversives; a democratic culture treats subversives as mere opponents. The reason is that the latter seeks never to betray its principles, while the former has none to betray.”
~ Jean-Francois Revel

It was the images as much as the issues that got to you. You couldn't intellectualize in your own mind what you were seeing. You wanted to ask the demonstrators questions.

You wanted to ask why they are not protesting the Hamas murder of some 20,000 opponents in Gaza. You wanted to ask them why they had never protested the murders of thousands, tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of

Muslims by fellow Muslims in Chechnya, in Iraq, in Somalia and in Darfur. You wanted to ask why they were not protesting the holding hostage of a million and a half Gazans by theocratic thugs who don't have the courage to come out from behind the protection of the civilian population and fight in the open. You wanted to ask what they would have free, democratic Israel do when faced with over 3,000 rocket attacks — many landing in schools and hospitals — since leaving Gaza three years ago. You wanted to ask if it would be “proportional” if Israel targeted Gazan schools and hospitals with land launched rockets as Hamas does. You wanted to ask why the lies on the signs about the deliberate target-

ing of Gaza civilians when Israel has telegraphed each attack and given time for evacuation. You wanted to ask why the lies about starving the population when only Israel is sending food and medical supplies — by the UN's own admission — and taking Gazan wounded to Israeli hospitals while Egypt keeps its border closed. But then you realize that they don't want discussions. They simply need somebody to hate. Hate to perpetuate a culture of death.

The Hezbollah and Hamas flags. The veils, masks and Korans held high. The burning of Israel's flag. The accusations of “Holocaust” and “genocide” hurled at Israel at the very moment when the masters of Hamas, the mullahs of Iran, are both denying the Jewish Holocaust and



PHOTOS ROBERT J. GALBRAITH

planning a second. The chanting of “Khaybar Khaybar, Ya Yahoud, Jaysh Mohammad sawfa yaud” harkening back to a 7th century massacre of Jews at Medina and calling for the return of the armies of Mohammad. These were the sights and sounds that flooded Montreal streets in the pro-Hamas demonstration this past weekend.

A police officer told me that here in Montreal everybody demonstrates for everything. But there is a limit. I am not suggesting legislative restriction. Freedom must remain indivisible. But I am suggesting that it is time for Montrealers to think deeply and clearly as to what we are witnessing. These are not ordinary demonstrators manifesting differing points of view. These are purveyors of hate who, for the most part, originate from totalitarian cultures. They do not even make a pretense of reason.

They want all the freedoms of a liberal society — expression, religion, association and assistance — but they reject any fidelity to the principles of liberty, veracity or loyalty to sister democracies. They separate themselves out by demanding — with stunning and revolting regularity — submission

to the most retrograde and revanchiste theocratic tyrannies. And more, they seek to shove their reprehensible revisionist historical “truths” down everybody's throats. They take us for fools. They may well be surprised that someday soon the “fools” will be on the march. If they seek a separatism to celebrate deceit, duplicity and a culture of death, they may well see themselves ostracized by a citizenry that has had enough of reasonably accommodating what Jean-Paul Sartre once called “cultures of exclusiveness and intolerance.” This time there were no leaders of Quebec civil society as there were in 2006 at the Hezbollah rally. None except leaders of Quebec Solidaire who are very good at throwing shoes at the American consulate but have yet to condemn the messages of hate and chants for the murder of the Jews.

Maybe we are finally ready to act on the challenge Daniel Patrick Moynihan gave us some three decades ago. “Everybody has a right to their own opinion,” Moynihan declared about the United Nations, “but nobody has a right to their own facts.”



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New financial consumer watchdog groups needed to watch banks and investment industry

OTTAWA - With Canada's big banks reporting a total of \$16 billion dollars in losses and writedowns mainly because of their irresponsibly risky investments, Canada's leading bank accountability coalition called on federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty to work with opposition

parties and protect financial consumers by requiring banks to prove their credit card, other consumer and small- and medium-sized business loan interest rates and service charges do not amount to gouging, empowering the Competition Bureau to evaluate the lending record and competition level

in basic banking services nationwide, and requiring banks and other financial institutions to facilitate the creation of watchdog groups.

The Canadian Community Reinvestment Coalition (CCRC), established in 1997 and made up of 100 citizen groups from across Canada with a collective member-

ship of more than three million citizens, proposes first that the federal government empower and mandate the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) to examine for the past 10 years, and annually in the future, the levels of profit of the credit card and basic consumer and small business loan

divisions of the banks and other federally regulated companies, as well as profits from basic banking service charges.

The FCAC would keep key company information confidential, reporting only the profit margin for

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City still working on anti-poverty initiative with Quebec

Food banks still desperate

Just before Christmas the ruling majority at City Hall voted down a request for an emergency \$500 000 donation to the city's desperate food banks.

Food banks have become an essential feature of life in Montreal. Their resources are stretched to the limit. As the director of Cuisines Communautaires, Elaine Groulx said a growing number of her

clients could be described as "...working poor." After paying for rent and the winter's onerous Hydro bills, these people have very little left to pay for food or anything else....and Christmas makes it worse, especially when there are children in the house."

City Hall spokesman Martin Tremblay said the city refused to pass the motion because discussions were

being held with provincial authorities to work out a three year anti poverty initiative which includes help for the city's many food banks. As matters stand the city hopes the province will invest progressive amounts of \$7M, \$8M and \$9M in various urban anti-poverty initiatives over the next three years.

Annie Samson, the mayor of one of the city's poorest boroughs, angrily

said "It's a pity some children went hungry this Christmas just because the city's administration wants to wait for the province to come up with a three-year anti-poverty plan,"

While food bank directors all over the city agree they could use a long-term government policy to help them develop their agendas, they also said they need immediate help to deal with the constant pressure to

maintain their services with a shrinking supply of both food and other resources.

"It's thoughtless," said Wendy Baker. As the co-coordinator for the NDG Food Depot's direct activity services, Baker said municipal leaders know how the city's food banks fill in the gaps between poverty's real needs and the grim realities of a monthly welfare check.

New financial consumer watchdog groups needed to watch banks and investment industry

Continued from page 6

these divisions of each company. If the FCAC found excessive profits (above the corporate average of 15-20 percent), the public would know, and likely that pressure alone would cause interest rates and service charges to drop.

Second, the federal government must order the Competition Bureau to audit the lending records of the banks (by tracking number of applications, number of approvals/rejections, and number of called loans in all consumer and small and medium-sized business loan categories), and to evaluate the actual level of basic banking service competition in communities across Canada, for the past 10 years.

Third, the federal government must require the banks and other federally regulated financial institutions to enclose twice each year in their mailings to customers a one-page pamphlet that invites them to join a financial consumer watchdog group. The federal government must also do the same for all federally incorporated companies, requiring them to enclose a one-page pamphlet in their annual mailing to individual shareholders that invites them to join an investor watchdog group. This method has been used successfully in four states in the U.S. to form broad-based, self-sustaining watchdog groups for utilities.

Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has talked a lot about ensuring Canadians are charged fair prices for banking, but has done nothing except meet with bankers behind closed doors a few times, and give them a no-strings-attached \$95

billion total subsidy.

No corporation has a right to gouge or cut services, especially when providing an essential service such as banking or trying to recoup self-caused losses like the banks are suffering from, so the least the Conservative government can do is protect Canadians from being gouged or losing their loans by requiring banks to prove their consumer and business loan interest rates and charges are fair, and by auditing bank loan records and banking competition in communities across Canada. Every survey done in the past decade has shown 90 percent of Canadians believe banking is a service essential for functioning in society.

To balance the marketplace and lobbying power of Canada's big banks and investment companies, the federal government must also, finally, implement the recommendations of the 1998 task force and House and Senate committees by requiring financial and investment companies to distribute a pamphlet in their mailings to customers and investors that invites them to join citizen watchdog groups to watch over the financial industry and federal government. At little or no cost to the federal government or the financial services industry, consumers and investors can be given a very easy way to band together to help and protect themselves through forming their own watchdog groups.

According to Fortune magazine's 2007 Global 500 report (based on FY 2006 annual reports), Canada's

big five banks were all within the top 35 banks in the world in terms of profits as a percentage of revenues, and profits as a percentage of assets (before their irresponsible investing led to billions of dollars of losses and writedowns in the past two years).

In addition to having the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) examine profit levels for credit cards and service charges for the past decade and annually in the future, and the Competition Bureau examine lending records and competition levels across Canada for the past decade and annually in the future, the federal government should finally actually regulate Canada's banks and investment companies through the following actions:

- * If FCAC study shows gouging in the past decade, require banks to refund customers;

- * If the Competition Bureau shows lack of competition in any community, require banks to open branches or subsidize credit unions opening branches;

- * Every government in Canada contracts money-handling and credit card business to the banks, and should award contracts based on which bank serves the most people well;

- * As proposed above, facilitate the creation of a Financial Consumer Organization (FCO) and an Individual Investor Organization (IIO) to help consumers by requiring banks and other financial institutions to enclose an FCO or IIO pamphlet in their mailings to

customers, inviting people to join the watchdog groups, and;

The federal government has allowed a two-tier banking system to operate in Canada where the people who can least afford it pay more for essential basic banking

services and basic credit. Any government that wants to help Canadians with low incomes, and help the Canadian economy overall, will regulate Canada's big banks to ensure they serve everyone well at fair prices."



GLOBAL VILLAGE



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LETTRE À GAZA

Suite de la page 1

tandis qu'en même temps ils touchaient des millions de dollars pour financer les plus belles villas en Europe et ailleurs...

On avait rejeté l'accord des Nations-Unies qui avait proposé un partage équitable avec l'Israélien. Au lieu de cela, ils avaient préféré faire de toi un réfugié manipulé et à leur merci !

On t'avait submergé de slogans antioccidentaux et des appels à la résistance contre le sionisme, et voilà qu'ils étaient les premiers à aller chercher la bénédiction des Occidentaux pour sauvegarder leurs règnes... et leurs profits !

On t'avait promis de « libérer » la Terre Sainte et de te la rendre, et voilà qu'ils continuent d'accumuler défaite après défaite, que leurs discours propagandistes transforment « miraculeusement » en « victoires divines » !

On a cherché à internationaliser ta souffrance, et ils ont réussi ! Non pas en drainant une sympathie des gouvernements occidentaux, mais une apathie totale et, dans de nombreux cas, une antipathie pour ta « cause », si « cause » il restait !

Tu es devenu, grâce à eux, un terroriste, un réfugié indésirable, un extrémiste intolérant, un endoctriné et un tueur d'enfants, de femmes et de vieillards. Tu as kidnappé des avions et tué des innocents. Tu as déstabilisé des pays qui t'ont apporté leur aide et massacré nombres de leurs citoyens, avant que tu ne deviennes toi-même victime de massacre des « frères », aussi bien musulmans que chrétiens ! Tout cela au nom d'une libération « hypothétique » utilisée jusqu'à l'usure par tes chefs... à leur unique profit.

Faut-il répéter les chiffres financiers divulgués après la disparition de ton principal chef, feu Yasser Arafat, et ce qu'il est advenu de cet « héritage » ? T'es-tu posé la question de savoir comment un leader « révolutionnaire, prétendument de gauche » en est-il arrivé à amasser une telle fortune ? La réponse, tu l'as sans doute donnée toi-même quand tu as élu le Hamas au pouvoir ! Et pourtant, tu pouvais encore faire un choix nouveau, celui de dire non à la corruption sans pour autant plonger dans l'extrémisme.

Pourquoi ne pas enseigner à tes enfants les arts, la culture et la musique, entre autres, piliers princi-

aux de toute société qui se veut progressiste et ouverte à l'autre quel qu'il soit, au lieu de te limiter à l'endoctrinement politique et extrémiste ? Où est passée la culture de tes ancêtres ? Cette culture arabe qui était à l'origine de tant de découvertes aussi bien dans les mathématiques que dans la médecine, et j'en passe... alors que l'Occident vivait – comme aiment le répéter tes chefs quand cela les arrange – dans l'obscurantisme du Moyen Âge !

En un peu plus de 60 ans, « tes ennemis », qui ont commencé plus pauvres que toi, ont réussi à bâtir un pays, une démocratie... où même les tiens siègent à la Chambre des représentants, la Knesset ! Ils ont même été dans l'espace !

Tu iras jusqu'à affirmer qu'ils contrôlent les médias et les banques et sont même à l'origine d'un « complot mondial » ! Admettons, ne serait-ce

que pour une seconde, cette « théorie » : qu'as-tu fait de toi-même ? Tu vis de la même façon dégradante et primitive, presque privé de l'essentiel des besoins quotidiens pour survivre, et ce, depuis plus de 60 ans. Tu es réduit à quémander et à vivre des quelques aides que l'Occident débloque de temps en temps pour toi quand tes dirigeants se calment un peu. Tu acceptes que tes chefs usurpent ton droit à la libre pensée. Tu es réduit à l'esclavage intellectuel et forcé à haïr l'autre... et pourtant, à bien regarder, très peu de choses vous séparent toi et ce dernier !

Combien de fois as-tu eu à faire avec des Israéliens sans que la police secrète, la tienne, ne soient présente pour te dire comment te comporter ? Combien de fois as-tu réellement regardé intérieurement pour savoir si tu as véritablement raison de blâmer l'autre au lieu de faire un mea culpa ?

Combien de fois as-tu pensé que tes

enfants ont le droit à un meilleur avenir avant que ce lendemain ne soit confisqué par tes chefs... au nom d'un « jihad » à la recherche d'une cause plausible aux yeux des masses ?

Pourquoi cet aveuglement orné d'entêtement, de racisme, voire de haine que l'on endoctrine à ta jeunesse au nom d'un idéal qui ne correspond en rien, ni à l'Islam, ni à la volonté d'un peuple de sortir de sa misère ?

La « résistance » devrait se faire contre soi, contre la haine, contre la confiscation du libre choix... Ouvre-toi à l'autre, troque ta haine contre le dialogue et tu gagneras en fin de compte. Ta « cause » sera alors écoutée. Tu ne seras plus le terroriste. Tu seras le délaissé, celui qui est à la recherche de son droit. Ton honneur restera sauf et personne ne t'obligera à mourir pour une cause qui n'est plus tienne depuis longtemps. Une «

guerre » de pouvoir et d'argent que tes dirigeants mènent en t'utilisant comme pion, comme chaire à canon. La preuve, tu la vis au quotidien en payant des tiens... souvent les plus chers !

C'est ton droit de te révolter contre l'injustice. Aucun peuple ne doit être soumis. La doctrine de la liberté est universelle. Mais pour y souscrire, il faudra avant tout que tu sois toi-même libre de tes choix. Cela ne sera pas possible tant et aussi longtemps que tu accepteras, sous la contrainte certes, de laisser les ennemis de la liberté, tes ennemis, tes chefs, utiliser ta maison pour lancer leurs missiles vers des innocents ou tes enfants comme bombes ambulantes.

Enfin, n'oublie pas que le chemin du paradis éternel se franchit avec de bonnes actions charitables et basées sur l'amour de son prochain... seul moyen susceptible de mettre fin à la loi tu Talion.

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Keep real Gaza facts in mind

As the situation between Israel and Hamas continues to dominate headlines, and the calls for Canada to have an "even-handed" approach and to condemn Israel's "disproportionate" policies are renewed, it might be appropriate to step back a bit and review a few indisputable facts.

First and foremost, Hamas makes its own decisions of where to place rocket launch sites, missile and armament factories, training facilities and bases for its 20,000 man army. It chooses to put them next to, in the midst of or close to civilian homes, schools and hospitals. It cannot be said that the citizens of Gaza (by now) are unaware of such placements. Therefore, they are either kept as hostages and sacrificial lambs by their elected government, or they willingly accept these military targets and are themselves prepared to die for such a privilege - leaving aside the fact that Israel warns the population in advance of its impending attacks.

Secondly, whatever may have been the pros or cons about Israel's occupation of Gaza, that situation came to an end in 2005 when every Israeli soldier and civilian left Gaza. There was nobody left to rule Gaza except Gazans. At that point the choice was very clear: create a

peaceful State or continue to attack Israel, despite the withdrawal of Israel from Gaza.

Thirdly, Hamas was elected by Gazans in 2006, when there was a choice: elect a party devoted solely to fighting Israel, or elect a party that was prepared to deal with Israel. They chose the former and by 2007 Hamas controlled that Strip, lock, stock and barrel.

Fourthly, one must assume that the voters of Gaza (or at least the majority) were aware that Hamas's policies included not only a total rejection of Israel's right to exist, but also that Hamas intended to pursue that goal and continue with its militaristic attacks upon Israeli civilians, rather than contend itself with diplomatic initiatives to overturn the State of Israel. Thus the continuation of rocket attacks into Israel, due to the absolute control of Gaza by Gazans / Palestinians / Hamas, even during the "ceasefire", with what must be assumed to be the support of the majority of the population.

Fifthly, Hamas chose to import into Gaza, rockets, launchers, weapons and other military material needed for the express purpose of attacking Israel, rather than medical supplies, foodstuffs, generators and other civilian essentials. This also

meant that scarce financial and donated resources were channeled for war purposes, rather than necessities of life. The endless call for "more humanitarian aid" by some NGOs and the usual cacophony of political parties and governments seem to ignore the fact that Hamas chooses how to use and distribute its fiscal and other

resources - and it continually chooses to ignore its peoples' plight, with their apparent acquiescence, in order to continue its military campaign against Israel.

Sixth, Hamas continues to wage war despite the fact that its territory is intact and within its control and despite the fact that Gaza's boundary with Israel is along the pre-1967

armistice lines. In other words, there is no disputed or occupied territory - except the very existence of Israel, which Hamas has vowed to bring down, and to do so militarily. According to opinion polls, most Gazans support this.

Those who mourn the loss of civilian lives in Gaza ought to keep the above in mind.

Hamas chose to import into Gaza, rockets, launchers, weapons and other military material needed for the express purpose of attacking Israel, rather than medical supplies, foodstuffs, generators and other civilian essentials.

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The Inaugural Inspiration

All US presidents eventually reveal their flaws, but the ones who are remembered in spite of their flaws are those who inspire Americans - and by extension all free people - to serve and make a difference.

Barack Obama, it has been said, won the presidency on just one speech - the one he delivered at the Democratic Convention in 2004 and now he will be expected to top that flash of inspiration with his inaugural address. It will be the 56th such speech in American history, and will be the first on YouTube.

The best leaders, as John Stuart Mill wrote are the ones who can articulate that, "the worth of the state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it." Or as Jill LePore writes in the latest issue of the *New Yorker*, "Presidential rhetoric is worth keeping an eye on. ...a rhetorical presidency begins to look a lot better after some years of a dumfounded one."

What presidents say when they are sworn often sets the stage for what is to come. Inaugural speechmaking serves four purposes, according to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, in their book, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*: reunite the country after a divisive election campaign, emphasize shared and inherited values, set forth policies, and inspire people to envision a better future.

Bill Clinton's remarks 16 years ago were certainly prescient: "Our rich texture of racial, religious and political diversity will be a godsend in the 21st century," he declared. "Great rewards

will come to those who can live together, learn together, work together, and forge new bonds that bind us together."

Obama fulfills that promise in ways Clinton could never have imagined. Unlike a Speech from the Throne in Canada, or a State of the Union Address in the United States, an inaugural speech is meant to have substance.

President Taft called it "a summary outline of the main policies of a new administration." But it is more than that. A great speech can go a long way to mask a leader's deficiencies. Phrases are coined that either inspire Americans to sharpen their skills as citizens or leave us unmoved, anxious or even dispirited.

Remember, It was eight years ago, on Jan. 20, 2001, even before the attack on the World Trade Towers, that George W. Bush signalled his intention to "confront weapons of mass destruction, so that a new century is spared new horrors." At the time Bush also pledged to "show purpose without arrogance," a vow that today, seems laughable. At least no can say he didn't warn the world of what was coming.

And Ronald Reagan anticipated the present economic crisis in his inaugural in 1981, when he declared, "we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children's future for the temporary convenience of the present. To continue this trend is to guarantee tremendous social, political and economic upheaval." But Reaganomics only added to the

problem. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who took office in the darkest day of The Depression, inspired confidence with the first paragraph of his frank and bold address: "First of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy also tapped into public sentiment with his inspired call to "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own."

Obama will be hard pressed to match that kind of confidence. But he's no slouch when it comes to making a good speech, and apparently is a student of inaugural speeches. Obama's famous declaration "there's not a liberal America and a conservative America; there's only the United States of America," could have been inspired by Thomas Jefferson, who said much the same thing at his inaugural: "Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have been called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as

monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated and where reason is left to combat it."

That kind of speech making appears to have declined over the past century. Instead of speaking and taking the public into their confidence, presidents have been pandering to public opinion, and in place of evidence and argument offer platitudes, partisan gibes, and sloganeering. George H. W. Bush compared freedom to a kite, and talked gibberish about a thousand points of light. And what does one make of Jimmy Carter's assertion: "It is that unique self-definition which has given us exceptional appeal, but it also imposes upon us a special obligation to take on those moral duties, which, when assumed, seem invariably to be in our own best interests." Vacuous in comparison to the magisterial speeches of the 19th century. But then, speeches back then were meant to be read, not heard. John Adams managed to write a 700-word sentence near the end of his inaugural address. Try speaking that in one breath.

No inaugural speeches are better than Abraham Lincoln's. At his first inaugural he stood firm in his constitutional position, and tried to prevent a civil war:

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land,

will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The words of Lincoln's' second inaugural, after the war, are so eloquent they are carved in stone on his memorial: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds... to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Woodrow Wilson, the only president with a Ph.D., managed to bore the public with his academic inaugural address on March 4, 1913. He tossed around words such as "vouchsafed," but he managed to get off a few good lines, such as, "Here muster, not the forces of party, but the forces of humanity." George Washington gave the shortest inaugural address when he was sworn in for his second term - less than 150 words. By contrast, William Henry Harrison spoke for nearly two hours during a snowstorm at his inauguration on March 4, 1841.

He warned against the corrupting influence of office, upheld the freedom of the press, and peppered his remarks with classical references to Octavius, Anthony, Brutus, the Curtii and Decii, and Camillus and the Scipios.

It was the longest inaugural address ever given. Many say it killed him.

Harrison died of pneumonia one month after delivering it.



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Israel is disproportionate. Disproportionately restrained.

The recent outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Hamas should give us an opportunity to reflect, once again, not only on the current belligerents, but on the role of the obligatory third party to the conflict. I refer to the ground troops of the armies of the liberal-left, aka the Western media, who inevitably tilt the balance of the war they are “covering” in favor of their confederates or, what amounts to the same thing, against the side they reprove. Thus, from the media’s squint-eyed parallax, Hamas is more sinned against than sinning and Israel is either wholly, largely or, at best, equally responsible for the “renewal” of violence in the region.

“Renewal,” of course, is the wrong word in the context, since the six month “truce” prior to the latest round of fighting was consistently broken by Hamas and its affiliate terror groups; and a veritable barrage of Kassams, Katyushas and Grads preceded the belated Israeli response.

But we would hardly have known this had we relied solely on the mainstream press whose reporters, as usual, have been recruited to shill for the enemy. Echoing Mission Control—the UN, the NGOs and many Western politicians—even those news outlets which profess to be “even-handed” invariably fault Israel for using “disproportionate” force to counter the torrent of missiles upon its towns and kibbutzim. Reports almost always describe Hamas rockets as makeshift, innocuous and sporadic. After all, why should a couple of stray missiles per day falling on one’s community like annual precipitation, maybe killing or maiming one’s neighbour—or oneself—disturb one unduly? But as Liat Collins mordantly observes, “just how many missiles a day are acceptable depends on how far you are from their range” (Jerusalem Post, December 28, 2008).

As noted on FrontPage, “a ‘proportionate’ response would involve firing rockets targeted at innocent civilians rather than military targets,” taking a page out of Hamas’ war manual. One could go further and

say that the Israeli reaction has undoubtedly been disproportionate, but in the reverse sense—it has been entirely insufficient and it has been so for years. This is the real meaning of “disproportionate,” the failure of a country under attack to adequately protect its nationals. One recalls the remark of a Russian diplomat apropos the Iranian takeover of the American embassy in Tehran during the Carter administration, to the effect that had the Iranians tried that stunt on the Russian embassy, there would have been no Tehran the day after. Talk about disproportionate.

Nevertheless, a meagerly non-proportionate, which is to say, deficient Israeli response to years of terror and violence is interpreted by the media as pejoratively disproportionate, which is to say, excessive. Such flagrant media bias has become endemic, not only in regard to Israel, we might add, but to any Western government improbably willing to acknowledge, let alone confront, the growing Islamic threat, however it may manifest. Today it is Israel’s turn, yesterday it was the United States on the hot seat, tomorrow who knows? Perhaps they just take turns, a do-se-do orchestrated by the media.

But what is most astonishing in the present situation is the almost complete lack of common sense and simple realism evinced by the sprawling cohort of journalists, broadcasters, correspondents, commentators and analysts who clutter the scene. Like their political compatriots, they seem unable or unwilling to realize that, regarding the Israeli/Hamas imbroglio, a rudimentary equation holds: no rockets launched into Israel = no helicopter gunships over Gaza. What could be more obvious? (Similarly in connection to the West Bank: no terrorists blowing up Israeli buses = no security fence.)

Of course, the media give credence to the overly simplistic canard that, despite the total Israeli pullout from Gaza in 2005, it maintained a “blockade” on the territory which reduced Gaza to economic mendicancy and near starvation.

Palestinian activist Hanan Ashwari, quoted on CBC News (December 30, 2008), claims that if the putative blockade had not been imposed by those dastardly Israelis, peace and cooperation would gradually have emerged from the chaos.

Ashwari, like her media interlocutors, is equally math-challenged. The equation that applies here does not require a Hamas rocket scientist to figure out: no munitions-smuggling tunnels and seaborne gun-running = no blockade. Elementary, my dear Ashwari! But the whole idea of a blockade is also problematic, as it fails to take into account the humanitarian aid and domestic supplies flowing through the transfer points from Israel (except when the border crossings are closed courtesy of Hamas mortar and rocket fire), Israeli hospitals regularly treating Gaza residents, Israeli funds reaching 70,000 Hamas personnel via the Palestinian Authority, Israeli

The media should strive to play a preceptorial role in informing the public judiciously about civil and foreign affairs, but the opposite is far more often what we see, hear and read, in particular with respect to Israel.

currency as the means of exchange (e.g., NIS 100 million transferred from Israel to Gaza on December 10, 2008), and the Ashkelon electricity generator supplying 75% of Gaza’s power needs. Some blockade!

Where have we read the sort of yellow journalism that prevails in the present conflict before? Déjà lu all over again. It was no different during the Lebanon war of 2006, when most of the world’s major dailies and news networks, like The Guardian, the New York Times, Le Monde, the BBC and a numberless host of others, condemned Israel for inflicting collective punishment on Lebanon’s fragile economy and traumatizing its people. No mention of Israel’s damaged economy. Little recognition that dozens of Israeli towns and cities had been bombed, or that many of its northern forests, set ablaze by rocket fire, would require fifty to sixty years to regenerate, or

that one quarter of the country’s population had been paralyzed for the duration of the war.

Can any reasonable person deny that the treatment of Israel has become pure boilerplate, one of the reigning clichés of the times? The fact is that Israel is always denounced as the “aggressor,” in a cynical attempt to impugn the Jewish state and isolate it from the concert of nations, like Pluto banished from the planetary family.

Journalists have either not read, forgotten or shrugged off the admonition of Albert Camus when he commented in an editorial on the role of the journalist for the Resistance newspaper Combat: “he is a historian of the moment, and truth must be his primary concern.” On the contrary, most of the time what we are actually witnessing is advocacy journalism dressed up as neutral reporting. Even more subtly but probably no less effective is the

use of historical or mythic archetypes to further what we might call a semiotic message.

The Toronto Globe and Mail for December 29, 2008, for example, blazons an above-the-fold color photo of a Palestinian family fleeing their home—mother, father and child, a facsimile of the Holy Family transposed to Gaza. They are plainly running for shelter from the Israeli Herod seeking to destroy them. But I have not seen a comparable photo of Israeli parents and their children trying to evade Hamas missiles in Sderot, Netivot or any of the Gaza belt communities. Not holy enough, I guess. Or not sufficiently “historical.”

Possibly this form of manipulation is unconscious or half-conscious. Possibly not. But there is no question that what is generally at play here is an amalgam of ignorance and malice. No matter how astute or “ear

to the ground” the majority of our newsmen believe they are, their knowledge and intellectual preparedness, their understanding of complex situations and events, is lamentably shallow and frugal. As a result, it is relatively easy for them to slant their reports and evaluations to align with a specific parti pris founded in prejudice or false erudition, or both. Spite mixed with callousness again. For the most part, they do not know what is really going on. And even should they have some inkling of the real state of affairs, the pertinent information is, more often than not, either dutifully suppressed or cleverly massaged to suggest its antithesis.

Properly speaking, the media should strive to play a preceptorial role in informing the public judiciously about civil and foreign affairs, but the opposite is far more often what we see, hear and read, in particular with respect to Israel.

“Journalists often proclaim their commitment to seek ‘truth,’ but the fact is that they have powerful incentives to avoid complexity,” said former U.S. Secretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas Feith; they have to adapt their stories to the liberal views of the “prestigious news outlets” and “signal[] to the audience which side to root for...” (Address delivered to the Ariel University Center of Samaria, November 18, 2008). Or the obverse, which side not to root for.

As Michael Crichton wrote in an article for Wired magazine (Sept/Oct 1993), what he called the “mediasaurus” is far more interested in “selling the sizzle, not the steak,” consequently betraying the mandate to strive for objectivity. Today, especially, the “steak” is what is in the skillet, the “sizzle” is liberal-left cookery. And the meal served up to a carnivorous world is Israel.



David T. Jones

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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Political Correctness--the Curse of Civilization

We can be confident that, as soon as our long ago ancestors started living in caves, there was "correctness"--social, political, tribal, etc. Just where do you throw your bones after cracking them open and sucking out the marrow? Just where do you perform your bodily functions? Or who speaks (grunts?) in what order in the group meeting?

And as civilization advanced, we have become aware in historical records of the intricacies of court life and which infelicities (an inconvenient wife conveniently dying) may get you banished from court. Or it wasn't so much what Oscar Wilde did--but with whom. Or the Aunt Jenny maxim of carriage etiquette, "I don't care what you do, so long as you don't frighten the horses."

But as societies become more intricate, the rules change; old ones are dropped

(none of the 200 horses in your auto engine are frightened regardless of what is happening in the back seat), and new ones come to the

fore. Sometimes, the new rules are even more confusing than the old ones--or a reverse of historical precedent. Just what is wrong about Thomas Jefferson sleeping with Sally Hemings--even if he did which is far from proved--and who should give a second thought to yesteryear's relationship that wouldn't get a second thought today?

And the more multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious, multi/multi societies become, the more shards of the society are open to offense. Or their representatives become "injustice collectors" seeking to expand their sociopolitical space by reducing that of others with the linguistic equivalent of sharp elbows. In that vein, little more than a decade ago at the University of Pennsylvania, in an incident that still arouses heated discussion, a noisy party featuring some large African Americans, prompted a non-African American to shout out a dorm window, words to the effect that "you water buffalo should take your noise to the zoo." The student comments were deemed

offensive, and he was scheduled for sensitivity training. But then a variety of First Amendment advocates took up his cause, the university president was pilloried in national press, and sanctions against the student were suspended. However, you can also be sure that nobody since has employed the words "water buffalo" on the Penn campus above a whisper.

Thus it is not that Canada is unique in being politically correct, but rather in an era of carefully calibrated correctness, Canadians do it with greater inane panache than elsewhere--and not just in human rights commissions.

Toronto's Tongue Troopers.

It was stunning in November that Queens University should announce it was empowering six "student facilitators" to monitor discussions that may contain "racist or homophobic remarks." Somehow these six Solomons were to take advantage of "spontaneous teaching moments" to teach--what? That the individuals being spontaneously

taught had said a naughty word? Expressed verbally a discordant thought? Why does this leave the shiver/shudder down the spine of anyone even vaguely aware of the political monitoring that dominated communist states during the Cold War? This (how soon we forget) generated circumstances wherein children were encouraged to report parents who love for the Great Leader was less than fawningly obsequious.

And just what was supposed to be the consequences for the individual who rejected the opportunity to engage in a spontaneous teaching moment? Or responded disrespectfully to those attempting such instruction, e.g., according them a verbal "Trudeau salute"?

Denatured as university has become, there is still supposed to be the opportunity for vigorous exchange--even of discordant ideas.

White Man's Disease.

And then Carleton University in Ottawa decided to cancel its annual fund raising campaign for cystic

fibrosis when its Students' Association voted

17-2 against supporting a disease "recently revealed to only affect white people, and primarily men..." Although a furious public reaction resulted in a quick retraction of this ban, sometimes an event epitomizes a type of blithe stupidity couched in bland correctness that is hard to differentiate from deliberate viciousness.

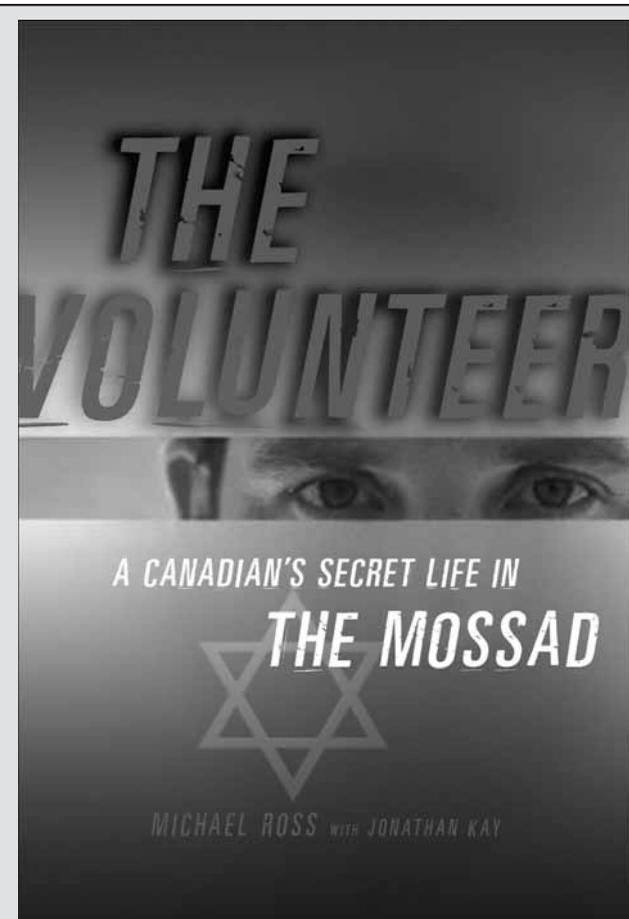
Frankly, it is irrelevant that the rationale cited by Carleton's student association was wrong; to wit, cystic fibrosis affects males and females equally and is hardly limited to whites. It is, *intra alia*, the intimation that white males deserve to suffer and die or that only diseases from which all humans suffer deserved Carleton's attention. No, in the evolution of the Carleton conscience something has been lost--the appreciation that human suffering is universal, not divisible by gender, race, religion, and that the humane society does not differentiate between the qualities of such suffering.

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.





Secteur automobile : une aide éhontée

Depuis plusieurs mois, les accusations à l'effet que le marché serait incapable de se corriger seul se multiplient et appellent à l'intervention massive de l'État. L'accusation est ridicule puisque, depuis des mois, les gouvernements multiplient les interventions qui empêchent le marché de se corriger. L'exemple le plus pathétique est celui de l'aide au secteur de l'automobile.

L'économiste autrichien Joseph Schumpeter a inventé le terme le plus magnifique de la science économique lorsqu'il a mis sur papier le concept de « destruction créatrice », en vertu duquel les nouvelles découvertes innovatrices éliminent les procédés moins efficaces, notamment parce qu'elles parviennent à produire plus avec moins. Ainsi, le niveau de productivité augmente et davantage de richesses sont créées parce qu'on peut satisfaire plus aisément nos désirs. Ainsi l'iPod s'est substitué au CD qui a remplacé le vieux disque de vinyle, ou encore le DVD a remplacé la vidéocassette. Bloquer ce mécanisme, c'est exactement

comme si on avait demandé à Apple de ne pas développer l'iPod parce que cela pourrait faire mal à l'industrie du CD.

Le même raisonnement s'applique à l'industrie automobile. À la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale, les producteurs étrangers (notamment japonais) ont adopté de nouveaux modes de gestion, de nouvelles technologies ainsi que de nouvelles approches stratégiques qui ont fait en sorte qu'ils sont devenus capables de produire plus efficacement que les producteurs Nord-Américains. C'est pour cela que les producteurs automobiles d'Amérique du Nord ont vu les producteurs étrangers gruger leurs parts de marché. Les consommateurs en sont les gagnants principaux, puisqu'ils bénéficient d'automobiles qui sont moins chères (et moins chères à opérer, l'efficacité énergétique des automobiles légères a augmenté de 71% depuis 1973 et l'indice composite d'efficacité de tous les véhicules a augmenté de 43% entre 1973 et 1991).

Les consommateurs ont donc plus d'argent dans leurs poches, qu'ils peuvent dépenser en faveur d'autres

industries ; ils font donc plus avec moins. Il est encore plus intéressant de comparer les bilans de GM et de Toyota : pour un volume de ventes similaire, GM a accusé des pertes de \$38,7 milliards en 2007, tandis que Toyota a déclaré des profits de \$17,1 milliards. Par véhicule, GM a perdu

À la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale, les producteurs étrangers (notamment japonais) ont adopté de nouveaux modes de gestion, de nouvelles technologies ainsi que de nouvelles approches stratégiques qui ont fait en sorte qu'ils sont devenus capables de produire plus efficacement que les producteurs Nord-Américains.

plus de \$4 000, alors que Toyota a fait plus de \$1 800 de profit par véhicule. Si Toyota fait un tel profit, c'est parce que cette entreprise offre aux consommateurs ce qu'ils désirent au meilleur prix possible. General Motors n'en est apparemment pas capable.

De fait, depuis les années 1970, on

s'affaire à aider les producteurs inefficaces de manière considérable par des subventions, des garanties de prêts et même en convaincant les pays exportateurs à restreindre « volontairement » leurs exportations. Alors que d'autres produisent plus efficacement, on s'entête à envoyer

des ressources publiques à des gens qui ne sont pas capables d'en faire un usage productif. C'est injuste pour ceux qui sont plus productifs, puisqu'on les taxe implicitement en aidant des concurrents qui vendent des produits plus chers aux consommateurs qui préfèrent les produits importés.

Normalement, ces entreprises qui vivent des deniers publics auraient du mourir il y a fort longtemps et le processus de destruction créatrice aurait agi. Nos ressources limitées auraient servi à produire plus de richesse réelle, nous permettant ainsi de réaliser nos désirs. Comme le

disait Schumpeter, « le capitalisme constitue, de par sa nature, un type ou une méthode de transformation économique et, non seulement il n'est jamais stationnaire, mais il ne pourrait jamais le devenir ».

Donc, arrêtons de vouloir rester stationnaire en aidant les producteurs qui périssent inexorablement.

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

- George F. Lengvari, Sr.





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Quebec at the crossroads: the recession as Charest's Odyssey

Many Quebecers remain fixated on the economic problems in the United States and their spillover effect into Canada, notably the potential bankruptcy of one or more of the Big Three US automakers and the devastation this would wreak on central Canadian manufacturing. Quebecers should be paying more attention to what our newly re-elected Liberal government plans to do to get us through the recession, given that they live here, not in Ontario or the US. Will Charest avoid the expensive and ill-conceived industrial engineering policies of past governments, or will Quebec's special interest groups like its unions and the aerospace industry suck away funds from more worthy projects? To learn more about what he may do, we have to examine Charest's mindset in conjunction with his policy platform from the recently-concluded election.

Charest the Emboldened

As the first premier to win three elections since Duplessis, Charest may be reflecting on his first two mandates with an eye to what he can accomplish in his third, regardless of whether or not he intends to seek a fourth mandate later on. In his 2003 election, he campaigned on a platform to re-make Quebec, to slaughter the sacred cows of our over-coddling social safety network that encouraged structural employment and under-employment for so many. As well, he wanted to end the heavy handed intervention in our private-sector economy via state-directed funds like the SGF, the CDPQ (our pension fund) and even the labor-sector investment arm, the Fonds des travailleurs du Québec.

While he succeeded in reducing taxes, his confrontational style of governing and thinly-experienced front bench of ministers did not create the climate necessary for structural reform to Quebec's social programs and industrial policy. While the venture capital arms and state pension funds are operating along more market-oriented principles, there is a lot more to be done if we are to avoid the day of reckoning foreseen by Lucien Bouchard and his Lucides. In his brief second minority-mandate, he reverted

to a cohabitation model of governing that avoided confrontation, allowing his popularity to recover to achieve a majority in the National Assembly on a very short list of substantive accomplishments. Politically, this would be considered a success, but it is not in our province's long-term interests to avoid the structural changes that would result in socio-political discord in the short term.

A recession provides a fantastic opportunity to make changes that upset the status quo, since industries that have been heavily subsidized in the past may not receive the same largesse in the future because funds are desperately needed elsewhere to sustain consumption, like expanding unemployment insurance payments. A case in point would be the aerospace

billion to \$41 billion, some of which has been targeted to specific projects in Montreal like our hospitals, public transport and highways. Indeed, this program has already been in place for a year and was perfectly timed to help Quebec's construction industry shift more human resources away from a slowing homebuilding market to municipal and institutional infrastructure. The key here will be the nature of the projects chosen for fast-tracking; not only do they have to be ready to go now, but they also have to represent top value for Quebecers. Otherwise, we will end up blowing billions on quick-build projects that no one really needs that cost money to maintain once they are completed. Charest has made a good start on this initiative; let's hope he and his cabinet make the right

There is no way to artificially create demand for wood products as long as the US housing industry is in freefall; firms that receive a reprieve from the reaper today may not survive long enough to see an uptick in new home construction without another round of expensive taxpayer-funded subsidization. On a cost per employee basis, this money would be better spent on fostering the service industries of tomorrow rather than the traditional manufacturing of the past. However, there will be little debate on this issue since all three parties in the house need rural ridings where these plants are located. If we are going to spend a couple of billion on the forestry industry, then we should be brave and really transform it; let the older plants with high structural costs close, while

new hydroelectric power already underway. Charest is not off to a good start; Geoff Kelly would have been a much better choice to deal with Quebec's native peoples, but there were already too many Anglo Montrealers around the table to carve out a place for him.

Freer-trade initiatives: Quebec used to try hard to protect its specialized laborers in the construction industry by impeding inter-provincial mobility for tradespeople. Not anymore: now Quebec wants to take the lead on worker mobility across the country and is working closely with Ontario to create a more fluid labour market. Quebec also wants the federal government to pursue a free-trade agreement with the European community, but this is more showmanship than anything else; the EU has created a plethora of non-tariff trade barriers with technical requirements that many North-American goods cannot meet. Well, we do have an agreement with France to recognize each other's professional qualifications, so we can have medical personnel exchanges, but not necessarily job creation. The worker mobility initiative is valuable in the long run, but will not alleviate increasing unemployment during the current recession.

Let's hope that Charest feels emboldened to make the tough decisions that eluded him in his first mandate.

industry: Bombardier received a generous "loan" package from the federal and provincial governments to launch the C Series, largely because governments around the world habitually do the same thing to support their own airplane manufacturers. It is unlikely that the public would tolerate the same kind of package today, while many traditional manufacturers could have their jobs supported at a fraction of the cost of a single aerospace job. If the same sentiment exists among the publics in other aircraft producing nations, then now is the time to negotiate an international subsidization withdrawal program for the aircraft industry.

Let's hope that Charest feels emboldened to make the tough decisions that eluded him in his first mandate. Here is a short list of what he could do to steer Quebec through the recession and to a better future.

Infrastructure: the PLQ platform from the election already promised a boost in the five-year plan from \$37

choices for the next 18 months to two years.

Industrial policy: Quebec has a miserable track record of showering money on losers or giving money to firms that did not need it in the first place. Readers will remember fiascos like Sidbec-Dosco, the Hyundai auto plant in Bromont, or, more recently, Bernard Landry's showering of \$100 million on CGI just to move offices to a new downtown high-tech campus. Charest must resist spending money on yesterday's losers and instead create the economic incentives to allow small and mid-size businesses to train and recruit new personnel and innovate to create world-class products. In the PLQ platform, there are interesting initiatives to stimulate invention and promote new patents with a ten-year fiscal holiday.

More troubling is the intent to spend another \$400 million in loan guarantees to the forestry industry to help it restructure, on top of the \$1.4 billion previously committed to the sector.

allowing newer plants to take their place to exploit the same tracts of forest. Quebec should study how the BC forestry industry changed its product mix to provide high value lumber to Japan, getting much more for their wood than was possible with standard US dimensional lumber products.

Le Plan Nord: this is the kind of vision that Quebec needs – we have great riches in the north, but there has to be a push to develop them. The initiative involves hydroelectric power (several projects are already underway) mining for nickel, copper, gold and silver, and even solar and wind alternative energy. The trick will be negotiating with the native peoples of northern Quebec – few have forgotten Bourassa's failure to secure the rights to proceed with the Great Whale hydroelectric project in the 1990's, which would have been on a much grander scale than the additional 3500 MW of power projects that have been proposed on top of the 4500 MW of

Quebec has made a good start

In a way, Quebec is fortunate that it does not have Ontario's auto industry. Quebec manufacturing will have its problems, but it is not facing the calamity of its western neighbor. Quebec need not commit to excessive deficit spending to stimulate its economy; Prime Minister Harper will handle the fiscal stimulus. Quebec has to make better choices that it has in the past, and not be afraid to restructure our social benefits at the same time, with more emphasis on linking income support to retraining and continuing education. Charest has made a better start than the last three premiers in dealing with an economic downturn; we can only hope that he looks back on his promises from the 2003 campaign when he considers what his legacy will be, and finds the strength within to become a transformational leader rather than a transactional manager.

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Proud to be Canadian?

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

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

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

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

Make Democracy a Guiding Principle

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

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

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The New Frugality

Will 2009 be the year we finally learn financial common sense? History and the emerging field of behavioural finance suggests that we won't.

"Once in a while, (the market is) rational," said Hersh Shefrin, professor of behavioural finance at Santa Clara University. "But we are very vulnerable to our emotions wrecking havoc."

Shefrin tries to understand human behaviour in the financial markets by looking at finance, economics and psychology as a whole. What he sees isn't pretty.

Last year "we learned that a lot of supposed financial experts had no clue what they were doing and that what lies beyond greed and fear is irrational exuberance and panic," he said.

Or as one student wrote in an online paper: "Risk resides not only in the price movements of dollars, gold, oil, commodities, companies and bonds. It also lurks inside us – in the way we misinterpret information, fool ourselves into thinking we know more than we do, and overreact to market swings."

Tom Velk, economics professor and chair of North American studies at McGill university freely admits that classical economists are fallible.

"They get it wrong sometimes because of bubbles, speculation and foolishness," he said.

"These waves of irrationality are for a psychologist to explain. But it seems to sweep the population. They shouldn't have the idea they'll turn \$10 into \$100 overnight. You just can't make money that fast."

But bubbles, booms, and busts emerged right alongside the first modern market. Traders in 17th century Holland experienced the first speculative bubble.

In 1636, the tulip was a rare and coveted commodity made even more precious by the presence of a the mosaic virus - a disease that infected the flowers and made them more beautiful and delicate than today's varieties.

Prices rose to where one bulb of the beautiful Viceroy flower was recorded as being traded for the price of four fat oxen.

"The price of these things grew

astronomically," said Mike Dash, journalist and the author of Tulipomania. "That you could make a lot of money by putting a bulb into the ground and sitting back for six months seemed like a great idea."

Speculators needed only to leave a 10 per cent deposit to acquire a bulb and trading traditionally took place in taverns under a haze of inebriation.

"The mania sucked in so many people," he said.

When the bubble burst, growers were left with worthless flowers and many merchants - who had mortgaged the tools of their trade to buy into the market - faced bankruptcy, forcing the Dutch government to intervene. In May 1638, a government commission ruled that tulip contracts could be annulled if buyers paid 3.5 per cent of the agreed upon price.

"There are clear things you can

see paralleled today," Dash noted. "The key one is greed - you can get something for nothing."

George Grantham, associate professor of economics at McGill University calls it the casino instinct.

"Individuals are not rational all the time," he said. "When a lot of people aren't rational at once - that's where the bubble occurs. There's a tension between the short-run and the long run. When faced with the possibility that in two or three months you'll be rich beyond your wildest dreams, the short view will dominate."

Examples of this casino instinct litter the last four centuries of economic history. The Mississippi bubble from 1719 to 1720, when a monopoly on trading rights in the French colonies promised 120 per cent profit for shareholders, the Vienna stock market crash of 1873

caused in part by overbuilding in railway construction, the bull market of the roaring 1920s that boasted a new era of economic fundamentals, and the Japanese bubble economy where one square metre of land in the trendiest part of Tokyo went for \$1.5 million U.S.

Lesser examples include Sweden's housing bubble and the dot-com bubble of the 1990s.

People always jumped at the chance to make a quick buck.

"It's like that in a bubble, people become very short sighted," said Grantham. "It affects your brain. There's a lot of psychology involved in this. If you were successful in the early stages, you could walk away with tens of millions of dollars. The incentive is there to jump in and join the ride."

But booms come with busts and panic buying comes panic selling.

"Buying as if trees will keep

growing clear to the sky gets us into these messes," said Shefrin. "What gets us out, usually with a lot of pain, is enough people waking up and suddenly noticing that the trees have stopped growing."

Bankruptcies, recessions, depressions follow on the heels of the buying mania. We become fearful mattress-stuffers instead of spendthrifts.

"Maybe we'll all just get more sensible for 10 years and that'll do it," said Velk. "Maybe for a while we'll have to hunker down and take it."

So is it time to accept that frugality is the new black and we're forever doomed to repeat our mistakes?

"Yes," said Shefrin. "Unless people learn the lessons of behavioural finance and how to put those lessons into practice."

Happy hunkering.



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Humanity 2009

The sum of human knowledge doubles every 18 months or so. Our understanding of everything is moving along in leaps and bounds. There are more scientists per capita than at any other time. These men and women are working in fields such as nanotechnology, the human genome and renewable energies. World literacy has progressed from 62% in 1970 to 82% in 2007. As we speak, 1.5 billion human beings use the Internet on a regular basis. Global life expectancy is rising; there is peace among Western nations, and on and on goes the fact sheet. This bodes well for innovation, sustained economic growth, and hopefully, for a culture more oriented towards the scientific method, and a much deeper attachment to sustainability issues.

The current economic crisis is scaring many, but we must understand that in the end this crisis will not be cataclysmic. Capitalism is here to stay. Some may tell us radical Islam is on the march or that the religious right is slowly eroding the United States from the inside. While these subjects deserve more than a fleeting glance, for these forces are obstacles to progress, we are nonetheless on the cusp of a new and hopeful era.

As we start 2009, we can be pleased to see Barack Obama at the helm of

the United States, for he is a clear symbol that the global zeitgeist is on the move. The world we live in is one where there is hope of a better future for all of humanity. In spite of the current financial crisis and the activities of terrorist organizations, there is an undeniable trend toward better lives for more people. During the last 15 years we have been witnesses to the greatest transformation the world has ever seen: one billion human beings have escaped the clutches of abject poverty. Obviously the rise of India and China has a lot to do with this phenomenon; in fact, they are responsible for the changed global dynamic. Will the trend continue? I would like to answer a resounding yes! However, great challenges still need to be met with equally great willingness to change.

There is great peril facing our global civilization. Africa and the Middle East's chronic problems in adapting to modernity have caused them to fall ever further behind the rest of the world. These billion human beings are presently doomed to live in countries that have no viable institutions, where civil war and the omnipresent threat of civil war are the norm. The "bottom billion" is a great challenge, for there are no easy solutions, every country having its own set of realities. However, in the next decades we may

The current economic crisis is scaring many, but we must understand that in the end this crisis will not be cataclysmic. Capitalism is here to stay.

see more focused aid initiatives, channelling our aid dollars to countries that have already demonstrated that they have vigorous institutions and stable political systems. This would mean that we prop up stable emerging countries instead of financing failed states like the Congo, where foreign aid has translated into billion dollar Swiss bank accounts for the Mobutus of the world. This could be a better way to reward countries that want to escape the poverty trap.

As we enter 2009, the current economic crisis strikes at the difficult relationship between liberalism and state regulation. These two poles will be vying for power for the foreseeable future, the equilibrium resting somewhere between them. We should remain hopeful that a better world is

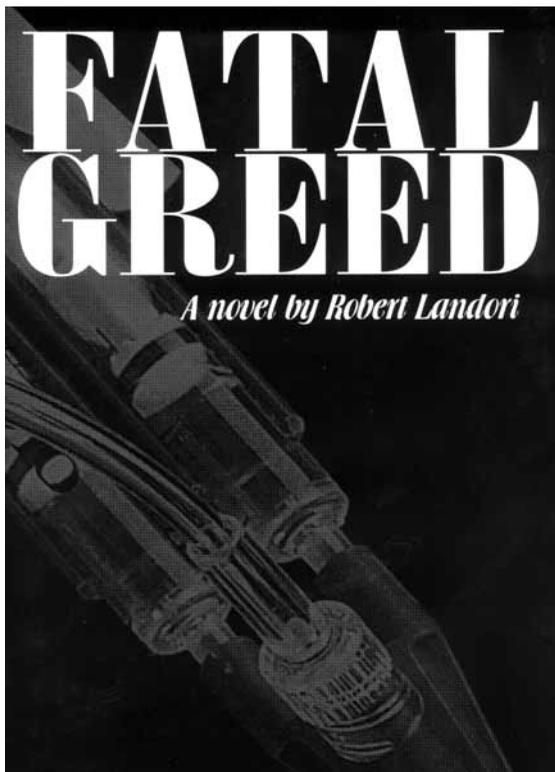
possible in the decades ahead of us, despite the eternal scourge of poverty and ignorance. There is something happening that makes us more aware of our place as the leading species on Earth. Is this global consciousness speaking to us loudly enough? Not yet!

Our survival depends on how we attend to the responsibilities we have taken on during the last century. With industrialisation has come education of the masses and the great possibilities of science, including longer and fuller lives for more people. But these achievements have come at a terrible price. This process has not listened to the cries for sustainability, which has put life, including humanity, in danger.

Our present administration of earthly resources is in a way, corrupt. We have gained complete governance of life on

our planet but have failed in becoming the managers we must become. Changing the present course will be our real crucible. Our capacity to reach global consensus around all issues relating to environmental sustainability will be the key to the continuation of our walk out of the shadows of poverty and ignorance and onward toward a brighter, more enlightened future.

Despite the fact that we are talking a lot about global warming and the Kyoto accord, the changes we need will have to be more profound. The most difficult change of all, for it is a deep cultural change, must be to reconcile capitalism and the environment; us and nature. So as we start off 2009, let us hope that we will make the right choices, for the stakes are high: they are all-encompassing for our humanity.



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Michèle Demers

President, PIPSC

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Federal employees DO NOT earn more than private workers!

For the fifth time in a row, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has issued a flawed analysis alleging “widening gaps” between public and private-sector employee compensation. The problem is that the CFIB study does not compare wage differences for individual occupations -- only groups of

the private sector.

It was precisely this recruitment and retention problem that Treasury Board Secretary Wayne Wouters had in mind when he told KPMG that the Canadian federal public service needed to find ways of counteracting the effect of comparatively low pay on attracting highly-qualified personnel to the federal public

professionals’ earnings in the federal public service – should be understood in this context. It is intended to provide ammunition for the federal government’s imposition of real wage cuts on federal employees by denying their Charter

right to collective bargaining. We, at PIPSC, shall continue to pursue our demands and policies in protecting our members regardless of the government in power. The collective bargaining and dispute resolution process must be permit-

ted to resume. Treasury Board should live up to its duties by agreeing to a viable solution for those workers who form the backbone of the Canadian institutions. Their name is still... Public Service Employees!

The problem is that the CFIB study does not compare wage differences for individual occupations -- only groups of occupations. This allows the CFIB to lump financial auditors, lawyers and civil engineers together with office clerks, secretaries and janitors in order to imply that federal public-service professionals are overpaid relative to their business-sector counterparts.

occupations. This allows the CFIB to lump financial auditors, lawyers and civil engineers together with office clerks, secretaries and janitors in order to imply that federal public-service professionals are overpaid relative to their business-sector counterparts. This sleight of hand disguises the fact that while high levels of unionization in the public sector improve wages and benefits for non-professional employees in particular, private-sector professionals enjoy variable pay, lump-sum bonuses, stock options and generally higher salaries not available to their public-service equivalents. Indeed, in response to competition for professionals’ specialized skills and qualifications, the federal government has been forced to implement special recruitment and retention allowances to prevent public-service professionals from jumping ship to

service. He stated, “We need to brand the public service and sell it better to graduates and experienced hires. We don’t pay as high as the private sector but we can offer a varied and interesting career and the work is challenging.” (KPMG International, 2007, page 15). Coming from one of Canada’s most senior federal executives, this statement succinctly summarizes the compensation reality in the federal public service.

The day after releasing the study, CFIB President and CEO Catherine Swift sent a letter to the leaders of the main federal political parties urging them to cut spending, starting with public sector compensation. The CFIB’s study – carefully avoiding an occupation-by-occupation comparison of public and private compensation that would reveal the truth about



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King Jack

As one of Canada's richest industrialists and media barons, a biography of John Wilson McConnell, the President of St. Lawrence Sugar Refineries who once owned Holt Renfrew and the *Montreal Star* newspaper is certainly long overdue.

McConnell, who died in 1963, was a self made man, who by all accounts bore himself so regally « in the manner of a royal personage or a film star," that he was once described as "The King of Montreal."

During his lifetime "Jack" McConnell was a philanthropist who gave generously of his wealth, his organizational skill, and his talent for fundraising in support of any number of institutions including the The Montreal Neurological Institute, the McConnell Engineering Building on the McGill University campus, and The Griffith-McConnell Home as well as a establishing a pension fund for United Church ministers.

His incredible generosity lives on through the same foundation that bears his name and subsidized author William Fong to write a 700-page bloated biography: *J. W. McConnell, Financier, Philanthropist, Patriot*, that even the most ardent McConnell enthusiast will find difficult to absorb. In his introduction, Fong suggests his book, as published by McGill-Queen's University Press, "is less than a quarter

of the length of the original text," and that what we are left with is an "abbreviated story."

It's a rags to riches story in the best Horatio Alger tradition. McConnell, we are told, always kept an old worn brown tweed jacket hanging in his private washroom to remind him of "where he had come from."

McConnell came from Muskoka, Ont., where he was born in a split-log cabin on July 1, 1877. He began working as a salesman for a Toronto dry goods importer, before joining the Standard Chemical Company and coming to Montreal to run the outfits local office. Within six years he was second vice president of the company, then went on to make a fortune as a stock broker and promoter selling shares in Western Canada. He eventually became President and Managing director of St. Lawrence Sugar, and to add to his millions, he became director of Montreal Light, Heat and Power, Canada Steamship Lines and Sun Life Assurance.

That McConnell did so well, according to his biographer, was that he he was able to create "an image of confidence, and all his life McConnell exuded a powerful presence: an ingratiating blend of Methodist rectitude, Irish charm and geniality, and transparent commitment to success. There was nothing pompous or condescending or pretentious about him."

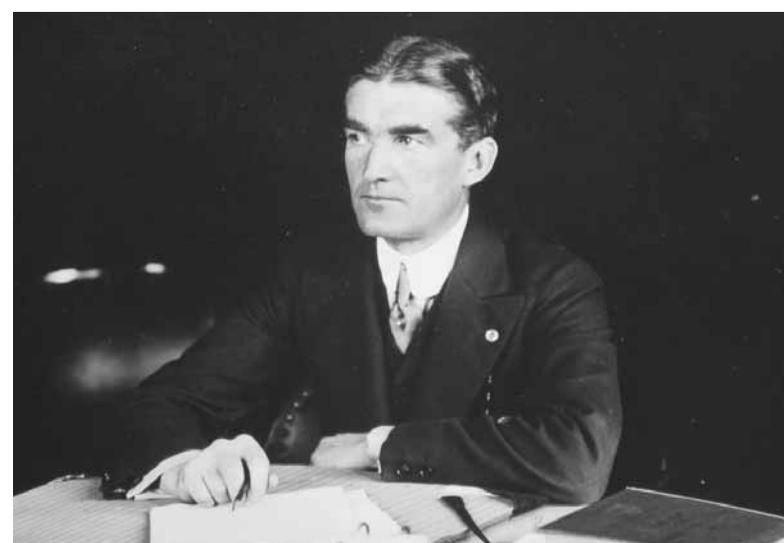
Religion played an important part in his life too. McConnell was a devout Methodist, who believed in "systematic giving," which made sharing one's wealth with others, «"a habit and a rule of life."

He was a great newspaper publisher. When McConnell bought *The Daily Star*, from Lord Atholston, he abandoned his many company directorships to run the paper as "a public trust." He believed that although he owned the paper, his first duty was to his readers.

"McConnell took his responsibilities as a newspaper owner very seriously," Fong writes, "perhaps, paradoxically, too much so to make much of an impression as one."

As a publisher, McConnell believed that newspapers were much more than "mere vehicles for advertising." As soon as he began running the paper, he raised salaries, invested in improving the editorial content to boost circulation, and "interfered surprisingly little with the editorial policy," trusting "professional newspapermen to separate the wheat from the chaff."

During the Second World War he continued to pay his reporters who enlisted for military service part of their salaries. In spite of McConnell's close friendship with Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis, *The Star* was a liberal paper, and steadily reported increases in both circulation and



John Wilson McConnell.

advertising during the years McConnell ran it. The profits did not go to McConnell, but were reinvested in the paper.

The story of McConnell's progress as told by Fong is, unfortunately, diminished by the author's obsession with minutiae. For example, in reading about McConnell, do we really need to know that on a trip to India aboard the *Empress of Britain* in 1936, McConnell played tennis with Col. Henry Cockshutt, the former lieutenant governor of Ontario or that Sir Edward Lutyens designed the Viceroy's palace in New Delhi or that "the Jews of Toronto grew from 534 in 1881 to 1,425 in 1891, and 3,044 in 1901?"

Interesting asides in themselves, but

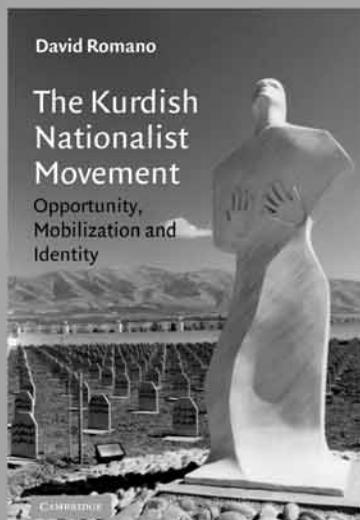
not in the least relevant to McConnell's life. Also Fong's decision not to lay out McConnell's life chronologically is terribly distracting. It is hard to follow a story that bounces back and forth as this one does: Chapter 8, starts in 1925, Chapter 9 in 1911, and Chapter 11 in 1901.

Make no mistake about it: Fong is a magnificent, meticulous researcher. But research is only one element of good biography. Fong mines McConnell's life and times, more than anyone had, but he is so consumed by his research he doesn't really use it to shape a meaningful portrait on his subject.

Because of his wealth, McConnell

Continued on page 23

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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The Childrens' Theatre turns 75

When I interviewed him at a Montreal Actra Awards ceremony, William Shatner recognized a number of Montreal theatre icons as being instrumental in creating a strong foundation for his career in acting.

The conversation started off with him asking me about Norma Springford who ran the Mountain Playhouse atop Mount Royal - I remember lowering my voice to more serene tones and telling him she had died. And that the Playhouse had been razed to the ground.

He then asked about Rupert Kaplan, who produced and directed the best radio dramas at the CBC in the 50s. Once more I lowered my tone and announced that he, too, had passed on. And that, alas, Radio Canada no longer did Radio

Dramas.

The interview was quickly disintegrating to black comedy.

Until...! Shatner recalled taking Saturday acting classes with two ladies (One of whom he admitted to having a crush on). He remembered being one of the few boys in his class and loved playing Prince Charming and having the opportunity to wave a sword around. Only guys got the sword. (Clearly they did not mount Shaw's Saint Joan.)

Well, Mr Shatner, those two ladies also died a number of years ago. But the little school lives on, bringing the world of Theatre into the lives of Montreal children - giving them the opportunity to develop emotionally, physically and artistically. And to develop what will probably become a life long addiction to the stage. (Once bitten

by the bug, you are totally done for.)

It was 1933. Montrealers were in the throws of the Great Depression, when Violet Walters and Dorothy Davis decided Montreal children needed some exposure to the dramatic arts - Theatre. The Montreal Children's Theatre School born when jobs and money were hard to come by. Under normal circumstances, persuading parents that movement and elocution classes and plays to act in, were important to their children's growth, wouldn't have been all that easy but to attempt it during a depression was quite a feat. To succeed, an even bigger feat.

And succeed they did. At one point, 400 hundred students were enrolled in the school in five different locations across the city.

Consider Montreal in 1933:

St Catherine was a two way street with lines of tram tracks stretched along it.

The 1933-34 Montreal Canadiens season was the team's 25th season of play and the Canadiens qualified for the playoffs, finishing third in their division.

Premier Robert Bourassa was born.

The Montreal Neurological Institute was but an embryo! A shell of a building with no working teams in it. Wilder Penfield was the young visionary whose brilliant and illustrious career stretched ahead of him.

As did that of The Montreal Children's Theatre School. In 1933, it opened it's doors to 25 students and blossomed into what was to become a Saturday morning meeting place for miniature thespians to be, rich and not-so-rich alike.

The first class was actually held in a basement.

Walters and Davis started the school, not necessarily to create young actors and actresses, but with the premise that good speech, self-esteem and confidence were primary goals - if a talent for theatre reared it's head then there was due encouragement. And with that, the ladies ran the school until they were in their 90s.

Davis, who studied at The Westminster Theatre School in London, England, probably came to love theatre through her mother who was also in theatre. Walters, too, had always loved theatre but was forbidden any involvement in it by her grandparents. Her encouragement also came from her mother and, thus, she studied dance and became a professional dancer.

Not too much has charged over the years. The school, now called The Children's Theatre, is run by Erin Downey-Silcoff and Danusia Lapinski who are equally committed to the ideals set up so many years ago by the two ladies. Many of the skills that are overlooked in every day teaching but are fundamental to success in any profession are focused on. Learning a script forces children to read and to exercise good memory skills. They learn to listen and, importantly, how to work as a team. All good, solid basics to get ahead in the big world of commerce, industry and yes, theatre.

The Children's Theatre is celebrating 75 years of service to Montreal children on June 13th at Victoria Hall. If you, or anyone you know of, studied there please contact the school at info@childrens-theatre.ca.

Dorothy Davis and Violet Walters loved theatre and they loved children and what better gift could they leave behind them but an institution that continues to develop the young minds and spirits of our children? An institution that teaches them to trust themselves and dare to do.

An institution that teaches respect for the Theatre and for those who tread the stage boards.

To The Childrens Theatre and the two ladies that started it all - thank you - here's to many more years of success - 'Merde-a-tous'!!

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Nous sommes tous Kafka

Nuria Amat, *Nous sommes tous Kafka*, Paris, Éditions Allia, 238 p.

« Est-ce que j'allais finir par devenir un écrivain ou un cheval ? »

On commence à ouvrir les yeux lentement sur les vrais rapports qui lient l'auteure à Kafka, et cela, dès la première page. Les métamorphoses, c'est bien connu, s'opèrent lentement, de fil en aiguille ; mais pas ici. C'en est presque frustrant, car déjà on sait que le suicide, réellement la mort, est imminente, à la toute fin.

Maudite littérature... tu ne sauves donc pas ? Eh non ! elle ne sauve pas, et ici moins que jamais. L'auteure n'a t'elle donc aucun remords en décrivant ainsi son personnage principal, son Kafka idéal, à la manière froide d'un seul geste, avec, entretemps (et sur 238 pages !) le désir de nous laisser croire qu'on croyait enfin détenir la clé ; et puis non. Presque du policier... mais tellement littéraire que cela se lit mal, je veux dire le cœur a des problèmes. C'est trop dépouillé, ou pas assez, c'est que tout est nécessaire, vital.

On voudrait bien arriver à extraire le noyau des sentiments, mais comment faire avec une histoire pareille ? Justement, de l'histoire, parlons-en ! Ça raconte quoi d'après vous ? Je vous le donne en mille : eh oui, nous sommes tous Franz Kafka, tous, même

madame Kafka ! C'est presque enfantin, tellement, que c'en est à se demander si l'auteure idéalise à ce point son père, le père d'une petite fille, un père qui est évidemment lui aussi Kafka. Pourtant, la lecture de ce livre révèle en fait que Nuria Amat fuit la mort : « La littérature, me semble-t-il, me sauvera de mon chemin vers la mort ». Oui, sauf qu'entretemps, elle ne sera jamais écrivain ? Jamais pianiste de concert ? Tout ce qu'elle fera, c'est de lire, et de lire encore, lire avec la peur au ventre devant la cruauté humaine ? Eh oui, le monde est cruel, le vrai Kafka le savait bien, lui dont on a jamais encouragé le talent d'écrire, même dans sa propre famille.

Écrire c'est devenir fou

Et lire aussi ! Surtout un livre où l'histoire est que tout le monde est Kafka, de près ou de loin. Est-ce un exercice visant l'immortalité ? Si oui, voici un tonique dont le monde littéraire avait bien besoin ! Aucune incisive ironie ici, l'auteure, de toute évidence, a été tellement influencée par le style de Kafka, qu'il demeure la vérité, sa vérité. Cela a quelque chose de touchant.

Pourtant, moi, je n'accroche pas, mais je salue le travail littéraire de ce livre, que dis-je, le travail quasi artisanal de cet exercice d'écriture, lequel s'efforce de donner du sens à la

littérature, favorisant une démarche de légitimité de l'écriture. Par exemple : « Quand l'écrivain pense à l'amour, il pense aussi à l'acte d'écrire ». Bien sûr, tous les écrivains ne vivent pas comme des moines ou des ermites, loin s'en faut, et l'auteure (on s'en surprend à peine) rêve d'épouser Frank Kafka. Mais voilà que ça devient plus complexe encore, car il vient un moment où il faut tuer le père, selon la psychologie à trois balles, à moins d'être un génie soi-même et de n'avoir aucun risque que le père porte ombrage à sa vie.

Bref, c'est à moi, lectrice, que revient cette tâche ingrate. Comment ? L'auteure nous dit d'imaginer que nous ayons une fille, et que celle-ci épouse James Joyce, qui ouvre à peine la bouche dans les réunions d'artistes où serait convié son mari. Tandis que l'apprenti-écrivain confie à Joyce ses rêves d'écrivain, l'écrivain se dit à lui-même qu'elle serait toujours plus jument qu'écrivain et que cela pourrait la protéger de tous les inconvénients d'un couple d'écrivains.

Avec l'écrivain et la lectrice, il ne se passerait pas la même chose qu'avec le couple mythique Beauvoir-Sartre, dans lequel la femme écrivain prenait bien soin de stériliser le potentiel littéraire de Sartre, de même que le penseur se chargeait de diminuer le talent, sans aucun doute

philosophique, de sa compagne. Sans l'amour concurrentiel du Castor (surnom que Sartre donnait à sa compagne Simone), Sartre aurait pu être le créateur du mot au lieu d'occuper le fauteuil de premier bouffon de la philosophie. Sans les tracas amoureux et calculateurs de son compagnon Sartre, Beauvoir aurait pu passer à la postérité comme l'une des rares philosophes de son espèce. Et à cause de cette disharmonie artistique, nous lecteurs, nous retrouvons asphyxiés face à des romans qui ressemblent à des biographies (Beauvoir) et à des essais qui ont des complexes de romans (Sartre). À force d'insister pour plaire à l'autre, on termine par devenir ce qu'il y a de meilleur chez

l'autre, de même qu'en agissant de cette façon, chacun jette par la fenêtre ses meilleures qualités personnelles.

Et voilà, c'est cela, selon l'auteure, la métamorphose. Vive la littérature !



King Jack

Continued from page 21

was feared and reviled, yet his philanthropy, Fong tells us, "was not an issue of mere pity or charity, but a way of enabling people to get on" in life. He was sure that others could emulate him if given the right tools.

McConnell was an intensely private man; his own newspaper was prohibited from writing about him or reporting on any of his donations. He destroyed most of his personal papers and files before he died, and picking through what remains demands an

intense focus on the subject.

But good storytelling requires context and better balance, some objective assessment that's missing from this massive work. Fong tells us, his book is "but a start to a fresh evaluation of him," and that there will "probably be others who can argue about McConnell better and with more information."

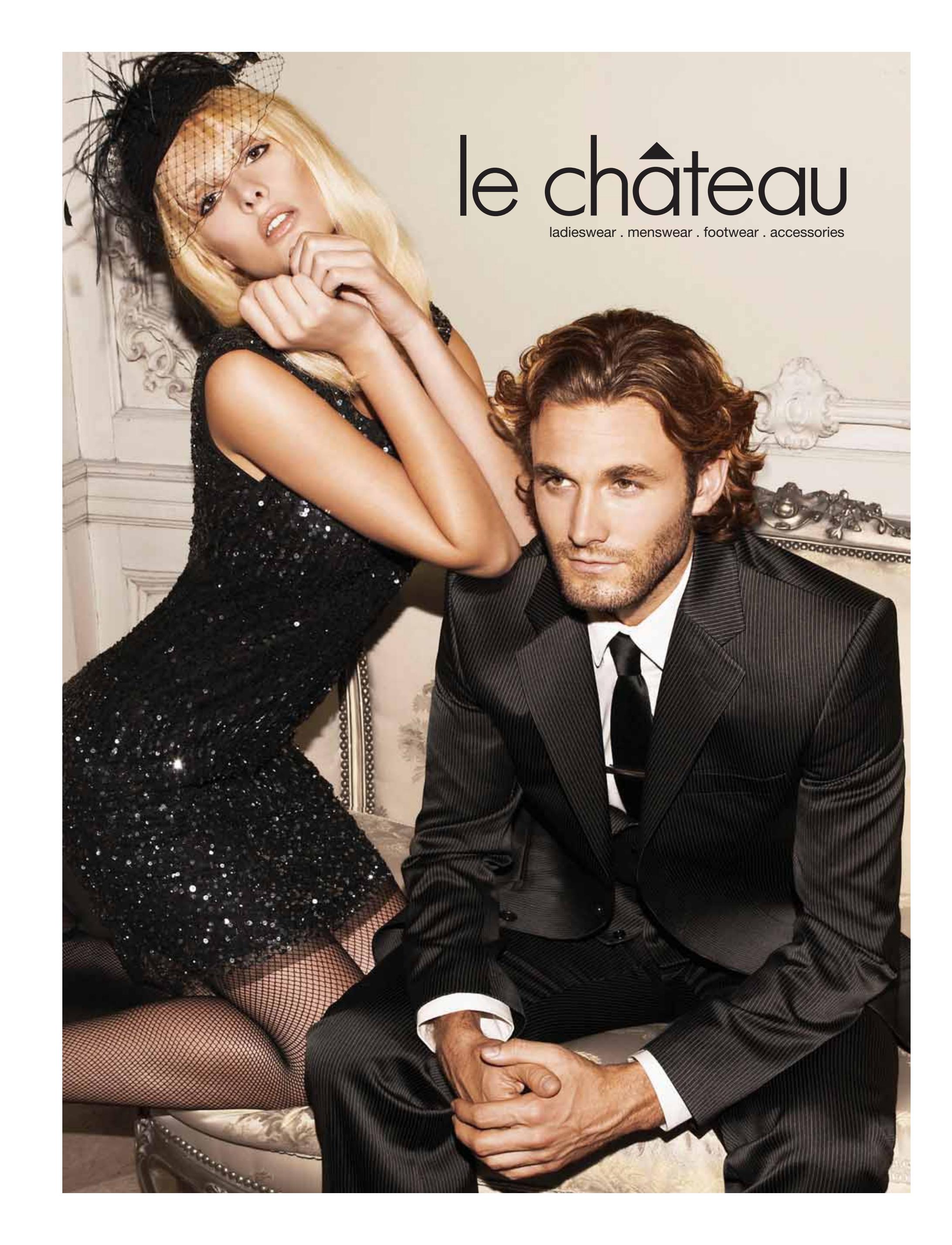
One can only hope.

The whole point is not just to write a biography, but to write a McConnell biography that people will actually want to read.

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