



## Allard

Les dernières contestations de la loi 101

Page 10



## Laprès

L'affaire Burns-Rafay et le terrorisme islamiste

Page 11



## Delmar

The 'Shit Happens' factor

Page 12

Ensemble et libres Together and free

# THE MÉTROPOLITAIN

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## VOICES OF A GENERATION in The Métropolitain

Following a lecture I gave at Concordia, Professor Ayache suggested to his students that they write advocacy journalism essays for The Métropolitain as part of their course. Over the next few issues we will publish some forty of them. Pictured above are some of the authors. These are passionate and eloquent voices of a generation. Pay attention, they are the future.

*Beryl Wajzman, Editor & Publisher*



### Alain-Michel Ayache

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**B**eing a student is not often an easy task. Between part-time work to be able to pay the tuition, and often five courses each semester, to deal with, a student can

barely see the end.

I recall when I used to be a student and living the same ordeal, I did not have time to think what I really wanted to become. My parents wanted me to be a Medical Doctor/Surgeon; my girlfriend wanted me to be a Lawyer and earn lots of money... and me, the idealist I just wanted to liberate the world from tyranny. Well, let's say I finally decided

Continued on page 4

Beryl Wajzman Editor & Publisher

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## Stimulate this! Let's help real people, not fund fake profits

**T**he current frenzy of economic stimulus packages sweeping around us like so many forest fires will not — and more importantly, should not — work. The reasons are threefold. First, they are stimulating the perpetuation of a false economy that has caused nightmares for tens of millions. Second, the packages are based on outdated Depression-era models without taking into consideration today's much different realities. And third, they provide insufficient protection to get people through the tough three to seven years that are to come.

Through the funny-money years of the eighties and the go-go years of the nineties, the money hustle industry created a new vocabulary. The fictional Gordon Gekko in the movie "Wall Street" set the tone. "Greed is good," Gekko proclaimed. "Greed built America!" The money hustlers put a twist on that. "Debt is good," they proclaimed. "Never ending growth will pay the bills. Don't worry. Be happy. Spend." They lied. Too many bought into the lie.

Home ownership became a "right." As did the second car, the third vacation, the boat and the country cottage. Mortgages were an "asset." Borrow as much as you like. Shares were not debts owed to stockholders. They were trinkets to dole out to the public to raise IPO capital just as Peter Minuet used trinkets to buy Manhattan from the Indians. Everything became worthless because everyone knew the price of everything, but none knew the value of anything. The idea of living within one's means was considered "unfashionable." Those who did, were considered as ignorant of the "new economy."

Debt became a commodity. New games called derivatives were invented — with the blessing of the Clinton and Bush administrations as well as Greenspan's Fed. Bet on anything. Any war, any event, even the weather. Well, a Ponzi scheme is a Ponzi scheme whether in the twenties or today, and suddenly everything old was new again. The new "economy" that is.

A bubble built on bad bets, bad debts, and a self-delusion that made Sisyphus pushing the proverbial rock up the mountain look like an iron-headed realist. Okay you might say, but didn't we have the same scams leading to the crash of 1929 and the Depression that followed? And didn't FDR's stimulus packages — the national recovery programs — work? The answer to both questions is no.

It is true that the scams and schemes of the twenties blew the lid off the economy and sucked capital out of businesses much as today's shenanigans did. The critical difference is that in the thirties, though money was lost, productive capacity remained. The factories and assembly lines were there. The assets of what is called the "real" economy continued to exist. The United States, Great Britain and even Canada to a point, were the productive nerve

Continued on page 3

VELDHUIS & KHEIRIDDIN: Pas le bon remède

Page 17

MURPHY: Quebec's Poverty Wall

Page 20



# GENERATIONS

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## Beryl Wajzman

Editor & Publisher

# LA PATRIE

STIMULATE THIS! CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

centers of the western world. We made stuff! All that was needed was a stimulus — an injection — of capital that had been lost in market speculation to restart the engines. Today is different.

We don't make most of the stuff anymore. The productive capacity is in China, India and points east. Yes the United States is the largest economy in the world. But again, vocabulary has been perverted. Its size is not measured by what it produces — once called value — but by what it consumes — today called price. In other words dear readers, unlike the thirties, there are precious few economic engines to stimulate. As just one case in point, people like Japanese cars more than American.

What we do have, and what these stimulus packages are trying to save, is an economy that creates debt and hopes to keep it going with ever higher fees and interest payments. The hope behind these packages — both infrastructure spending and tax cuts — is that it will enable people to keep paying interest on existing debts by having temporary project jobs and encouraging them to spend their tax savings on more consumption acquiring more debt still. The prayer the policy makers are chanting is that some new industry will arise — like the Internet in the nineties — to save their collective skins before the massive printing of money creates uncontrollable hyper-inflation. Here's why there is faint hope for that.

The model of FDR's 1930s reconstruction that governments of the left and right are using to achieve the above did not have within it three malignancies that plague the west today. First, only some 20 percent of North Americans owned their own homes. Second mortgages were almost unheard of, and first mortgages were given under strict borrowing guidelines with equal equity ratios. There was no such thing as five percent down to buy a home. It wasn't considered a right. Today's mortgage debt is so huge that no government can print enough money to cover it. When Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac went under, the debt they had underwritten was conservatively estimated at \$5 trillion. That is \$1 trillion more than the budget of the United States of America.

Second, credit cards didn't exist in the thirties. The amount of personal consumer debt in North America is almost on a par with mortgage debt. In Canada alone there is \$30,000 of consumer debt for every man, woman and child. Third, the thirties



did not have broad-scale sector-wide union agreements in place. Agreements that today leave little wiggle room as workers are rightly furious at seeing the "masters of the universe" enrich themselves beyond the dreams of Croesus. Just last week President Obama rightly labeled as "shameful and outrageous" the news that Wall Street had paid out \$18 billion in executive bonuses. The sixth highest on record in the worst year ever.

Did our current disaster come on suddenly? No. It was about to happen in the 1990s, but the Internet industry created a new centre of productivity. Did governments learn and tell their citizens to "cool it", start saving and get out of the bubble? No. Most followed the lead of the United States that in 1999 abolished the Glass-Steagall Act. That 1933 piece of legislation was critical to FDR's restoration of the financial system. The Act mandated the separation of commercial banks from investment banks and set up firewalls between banks, insurance companies and brokerages. Financial services companies had to stick to their knitting. Other western nations followed America's lead and tore down the barriers that for more than 60 years had protected consumers.

Suddenly financial behemoths sprang up that combined banking, insurance and stocks. All money was played and the big push for more equity capital sucked from the public became a stampede. That led directly to the dot.com bubble of the first years of this decade. Today's crash should have happened then for the second time. But American Federal Reserve policies of cheap money kept the game going. One problem though. Since the west wasn't producing anything but puff, where to raise sovereign debt to finance the cheap money policies? China of course. Since China was

producing — and saving in its centralized Stalinist manner — it ended up holding up to a third of western debt. A situation that continues today and is pushing us toward a precipice overlooking a chasm even more frightening than the current crisis.

So what is to be done? We do need a stimulus. But a stimulus for real people not for fake profits. We need, as a friend of mine reminded me, a paradigm shift. To accomplish that we need statesmanship. And we need our leaders to look not to 1933 for solutions, but to 1973.

In 1973 two disasters happened. OPEC was created and America went off the gold standard. The economy went into a spiral and worse was foreseen. President Nixon, the man who it was said was the only American politician who could go to China without being labeled a Communist, did another surprising turnaround. He called in a Kennedy liberal policy specialist named Daniel Patrick Moynihan - later UN Ambassador and New York Senator - to come up with a plan to protect Americans from a coming economic disaster that could last a full business cycle. Moynihan devised a plan for a Guaranteed Annual Income. He famously quipped, "We subsidize planes, we subsidize trains, why can't we subsidize people?"

The plan, amongst other proposals, would have created a floor, 15-20 percent above poverty lines, for people starting at entry level positions in new jobs created at existing businesses through government stimulus. The GAI was not a permanent plan. It would be in place until economic recovery was achieved. It was a parallel track to government dollars going to create real jobs at functioning companies. Not government dollars going to create stop gap infrastructure

positions, or bailing out failing businesses without rewarding and encouraging successful companies to withstand the current hard times. It is the model for today. Everyone in government should be forced to read his "Politics of a Guaranteed Income."

Why do we need it? Because the suffering is greater than we are told. The current unemployment rates we read about are only those people still on the rolls. The percentage of able-bodied Canadians who can't find work, but are off the EI rolls, is far higher. These numbers are climbing. And this in a country where less than 10% of the population has a net worth of \$5,000 or more. Great Britain has poured out 23 percent of its GDP in stimulus dollars with little to show for it. That's far above the 13 and 11 percents Canada and the US are considering. Stimulus dollars won't save failing industries and shouldn't save the fast-buck artists. We need to let the economy adjust to new realities. Let the bad industries die and make room for new ones.

But these dollars can save people. Especially our \$40 billion plus EI surplus that successive governments have refused to return to Canadians. These dollars are the very dollars that should be pumped into successful businesses, to create new jobs even at below entry level salaries, buttressed by a GAI plan that could even be funneled through employers as direct subsidies or long term loans. The plan would prevent these low salaries from expanding even more our class of working poor.

Our dollars should be used to cushion people's lives until there is a real recovery, not a fake recovery doomed to quick collapse. But for even this stimulus to work we need one more ingredient.

We need our leaders to morph from politicians to statesmen. They need to find the courage to speak the hard truths of what brought us to this point and tell their citizens that things must change. That, in the words of Edward Abbey, "growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell." That consumption for the sake of consumption is quicksand. That living within our means is "in". That we can rebuild at lower levels, and that's okay. It may take three years, or five or seven. But that at the end of the day we can finally defeat the threat that Bobby Kennedy warned of 40 years ago. The revolution of rising expectations.

...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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VOICES OF A GENERATION IN THE MÉTROPOLITAIN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## VOICES OF A GENERATION

to become a part of these three professions. Indeed, without being really an MD/ Surgeon, I ended up looking for the cause of the society's problems that make it sick, sick from lies, from political games, etc. I ended up also being a lawyer but without gaining much money since the aim was becoming the advocate of the oppressed, and more precisely of freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of saying NO when I wanted to say no and YES when I wanted to say yes. I became what I wanted to be beyond all: An advocacy journalist. The choice was mine. No money, barely enough to eat sometimes, but rich with my freedom. No one had and ever will have the right to buy my conscience, and all the ideas that I had the chance to share via the media.

This was possible because of a man who gave me the chance to publish my first article in 1983. Indeed, François Lacroix to whom I owe my gratitude and my professional career in journalism gave me access to one of France's major newspapers. It was the "déclat" that gave me the strength to pursue in

this direction.

Today, as a Professor, whether with my students at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM) or at Concordia University, I try to convey the same love of this noble calling that is advocacy journalism, to all my students, giving them an equal opportunity to stand for their beliefs, to the truth, to express themselves regardless of their political affiliations or religions. I ask them to go beyond emotions, to seek for the facts, to dissociate themselves from the event and to look towards the other to better understand them. I ask them to look at both sides of the same truth and to speak out, to say loud what they have been trying to convey to the leaders, those who are busy in figuring out numbers that will enrich their portfolios and policies rather than those of the poor, oppressed or simply the student Today, my Concordia students in Poli-368/2A can finally bring to the debate new visions, their own, based on their ideas.

However, to succeed this marvellous experience, we had the choice of doing two things: either go to the Hyde Park corner in London, England; or bring the Hyde Park to us. The latter was possible mainly because of a single man who believes in advocacy journalism and in freedom of speech. That man is Beryl Wajzman to whom I say thank you!

Thank you Beryl for giving these students the chance to express themselves; I am certain that this unique experience will mark them and give many of them – if not all – the advocacy "virus" making out of them the future critics, journalists, politicians, and leaders of tomorrow which Canada needs. Thank you for believing in them and hoping that the Métropolitain will become the new Hyde Park for Canada... the same way my friend, Lebanese journalist and MP Gebran Tueni assassinated on December 12th 2005 by the Syrian apparatus and their allies in Lebanon, had given the youth of Lebanon their own Hyde Park.

## Media, ethics and bailouts

By Alana Vineberg

As a young woman edging my way closer to graduation and onto the job scene, I cannot help but feel pessimistic about the future.

The degree of shortsightedness and greed that has ruled Western political and economic philosophy for the last several decades has seemingly purged our self-righteous society of any moral compass.

As a future journalist I understand the implication of misinformation, the importance of balance, and diversified perspectives and opinions, but what about ethics?

The media is an industry; I strongly believe it is responsible to the public. What place do ethics have in any industry, especially one that depends on advertising revenue?

With the collapse of the financial industry and the American automotive industry, I cannot help but suspect that lack of ethical judgment played a role.

In terms of the credit crisis, collapse of the housing market, asset-backed commercial paper, plummeting world markets, and bank bailout packages, it is arguable all of them had been foreseen by many and were preventable.

Reputable and supposedly trust worthy financial institutions investing our money in asset-back paper and securing mortgages that could not be repaid is a problem that will affect us all.

From government pensions, to academic scholarship funds, to a global recession, now the public is responsible to pick up the pieces and bailout corporations that we believed were trustworthy.

The same can be said for the American automotive industry. The industry is failing because instead of being forward thinking and innovative, they continued to invest in the development and construction of larger gas guzzling vehicles knowing full well that an energy and environmental crisis is looming ever closer.

This 'too big to fail' industry employs too many people to not merit another taxpayer bailout. Even though poor decisions and government bureaucracy continue to plague this failing industry and waste billions of taxpayer dollars, there is no guarantee that these hundreds of thousands of jobs will be secure for the future.

Consumer confidence is lower than it has been in decades and advertisers will be investing less and less in both print and broadcast media.

With the already concentrated ownership in

Canada and the great indebtedness of CANWEST, one of Canada's larger media conglomerates that will surely be required to sell off some of its assets, now is the time to set new standards in terms of media ownership in Canada. If corporate Canada and corporate America cannot be trusted to use good judgment and continuously hang themselves with conflicts of interest and double standards, we should be concerned at the low level set for ethics and integrity in industry.

From a business standpoint, media corporations can very well be the next industry to fall victim to the widening financial crisis, the implications of which would result in the further narrowing of divergent sources of information. In a democratic and diverse country such as ours, allowing this to happen would be ethically irresponsible.

## What of Quebec's Future?

By Kaoutar Belaaziz

The drums sounded in December calling on Quebecers to decide who was best suited to govern. As amusing as the rivalries were to many political junkies, the recent Quebec election did not spark much interest in the general public as the U.S. presidential election did. What Quebec needs are leaders willing to forget petty politics, abandon narrow rivalries and commit to ending excluding people. What Quebec needs is an Obama Effect.

Dumont, the previous election's big surprise, was young, energetic and charismatic. His support for Stephen Harper in the federal election backfired after Harper, failing to understand the importance of the arts in Quebec culture stated he would make cuts to funding, and added insult to injury with his omnibus crime bill. Dumont's party of political newcomers lacked the ability to reach out to all Quebecers, especially in the greater Montreal area. The ADQ's performance may well lead to the party's demise.

Jean Charest sought redemption for his previous election where voters sent a clear message that they didn't like the way Liberals did business. This time out he succeeded in projecting an image of defender of Quebec Culture. The once least popular Premier in modern Quebec history, Charest became a changed man. He won a majority this time a more humbled premier who was once seen as arrogant and unsympathetic. He even overcame unpopular policies that included spending cuts, increased tuition for university students and tax cuts that helped the rich get richer.

Pauline Marois took one step forward for women and several hundred back for her idea of creating a Quebec citizenship based on perfection of the French language. The first female leader of the Parti Québécois has served in public office for many years. She has been a role model for women entering the political sphere. The usually leftist leader unleashed a shockwave of criticism when suggesting a notion of Quebec identity wherein immigrants who do not acquire the French language will not be permitted to run for office, petition the government or raise

money for political parties. She was suggesting creating a second class of citizens in this province. This left an aftertaste as bad as Herouville. Marois had promised a change in the party, a party that would be more inclusive of all Quebecers.

Quebec is a special province. It has a diverse population but the fears of the majority that they will soon become the minority and lose their heritage, language and culture are groundless. By playing on these biases, politicians will keep stoking misunderstanding if the issues keep being portrayed as us versus them.

The issues that face Quebec today, and how they are dealt with, will impact future generations to come and it is important that the now majority Charest Liberals find solutions which do not alienate others. After all, where else but in Quebec can kids grow up with the benefit of being able to learn two languages? Where else but in Quebec can one see such an ethnically diverse population living together and working in harmony? It is indeed a unique province that will surely continue to grow and as it does it will become richer for its diversity.

## VOICES OF A GENERATION

## Pay equity: how much of a real gap exists

By: Sonia Sangregorio

In the year 2009, we still ask ourselves are men being paid a higher wage to do the exact same job as women. When answering the question the obvious answer is yes and many believe that women are being discriminated in the work place when it comes to promotions, salaries and what we refer to as statistical discrimination. We refer to statistical discrimination when a person applying for a job is not taken into consideration because she or he is not part of what statistics show to be the more productive group in the society.

In my opinion, when we are analyzing a certain concern or situation in our society, the most important factor is look at the situation from all angles. Basically in order to describe a simple object we must look at it from different perspectives to better understand it. When looking at statistics referring to wage differences we do see a difference between the two groups. In my opinion it is when looking at these statistics that people might not take into consideration, the different factors that affect wages directly and could explain the differences, that we get the whole picture.

There are many factors that affect the outcome of someone's salary. The two most important are education and workplace experiences. As we are more aware of these days, there



is a positive correlation between these two factors and wages. When statistics compare the salaries of men and women with the same educational background and the same labour market experience the wage gap practically disappears.

Another factor that has to be taken into

consideration is the amount of time spent working on a weekly basis. Statistics show that men work more hours per week than women and they also shows that women work more on a part-time basis. The number of hours per week that one puts into their jobs is obviously the foundation of their salaries. Therefore someone

who works less hours, men or women, do have a lower salary. Productivity is another of the most important factors in determining wages. If someone is more productive, he or she is worth the investment of their employer in paying them a higher wage. The investment of the employer in this worker brings positive outcome to their business which can be either in their form of profits, a greater output per hour or simply in creating customer loyalty. There are many more factors that could have an impact on wages: marital status, seniority, health, training and absenteeism. These factors are all important when looking at wages differences; we cannot simply jump to the conclusion of discrimination when a woman is paid less than a man.

I'm not saying that it never happens. But my point I am making is that in this new millennium we are all too far educated and analytical to allow leaps to such extreme conclusions without looking at all the facts. In my university years, a professor once said in one of his lectures, that in order to really analyze something and to understand it, we need to look at it from all its angles. This most simple notion changed the way I see and understand events and our society's issues today. There are many factors that affect wages and when one truly examines all of them, we can really see the wage gap decreasing between men and women.

## Our Land is Your Land...or Something

by Bethea Clarke

Our society's frightening reliance on fossil fuels has been lamented ad nauseam. Frankly, we are all tired of hearing about Alberta, and if one more granola-eating hipster drops the word "sustainable" into a sentence just for kicks... well

The fact is, though, that the problem is not only environmental, but social. Do we ever consider where, exactly, the oil in Alberta comes from? Do we assume that it is just barren land somewhere up north, unoccupied and disused?

It isn't.

In fact, a diverse population of First Nations live in northern Alberta, and they have had to negotiate endlessly to protect what is rightfully theirs. The discovery of oil in the Turner Valley in 1914 dragged the First Nations into a custody

battle over their traditional lands.

At the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, petroleum was becoming more and more in demand. Between 1909 and 1920 the consumption of petroleum and its products grew from \$5 million to \$83 million. There were high hopes for Alberta.

The next big discovery was in Leduc in 1947. After drilling 133 dry holes, Imperial Oil Limited struck oil on February 3, 1947, on a farm in Leduc, 20 miles south of Edmonton. Other oil companies soon took interest in the area. Among them were Suncor Energy Inc., which began operating along the Athabasca River in 1967, and Syncrude Canada Ltd., which began production in 1978.

A crucial report was released in 1999 by the Albertan Energy and Utilities Board. Data collected from 56,000 wells and 6,000 core samples

showed that the amount of oil that could be extracted in Alberta totalled 175 billion barrels. This was estimated to be enough to cover U.S. consumption for just over 50 years.

This was news of massive proportion. Some people saw this as their salvation, while others feared this would merely act as a buffer to our impending environmental doom. The people least surprised and, ultimately, most affected, were the First Nations.

The land in northern Alberta can be categorized in three main ways: it can be reserve land, which means that it is unquestionably set aside for the use of a particular band. It can also be land which might be subject to a land treaty entitlement of some strength, or else it is unoccupied Crown land which means that the First Nations have no legal claim to the land but they do retain hunting

and fishing rights.

In order for the land to be developed by an oil company it must first be surrendered back to the Crown by referendum of the band. Then the federal government enters negotiations with the oil companies and supervises the payment of royalties to the bands who surrendered their land. Much of this is done by Indian Oil and Gas Canada. The actual payment of royalties is handled by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. This department has a reputation as being rather tight-fisted and the payments are often delayed for extensive periods of time.

This became such an issue that the Samson Cree Nation of Central Alberta went so far as to take the federal government to court on that issue in 2005. It is an ongoing struggle but the judge finally ruled that the remaining royalty cash flow

and funds should be managed by a trust fund set up by the Band and controlled by professionals. Furthermore, the federal government set up the First Nations Oil and Gas Monies Management Act, which allows bands to access and control the funds themselves, after drafting their own extensive legislation and holding a referendum to accept control of the royalties.

Ultimately, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the Samson case on May 22, 2008. It was estimated that a decision could be anticipated in six months, that would have been November. This has been a landmark case, and the Samson Cree Nation's hope is that the government will be held accountable for how it has treated the First Nations in that area in the past.

Or perhaps we will just keep relying on their oil. We need it...don't we?

## VOICES OF A GENERATION

# What does it take to be Canadian?

By Chantel Lattimore-Durant

What does it take to be Canadian? Will citizenship ever be enough? Or will we continue to ask people, “where are you from?” the infamous question that visible minorities must hear at least twice a month. The response “Canada” is never enough; it is almost always accompanied with a look of shock or disapproval, followed by “No I mean where is your family from?” The mainstream Canadian population is taught to believe, through our all excluded educational system, that all people of “ethnic origin” (non whites) just arrived in Canada 20, 30, 40 years ago. The systematic exclusion of the contributions, hardships and sacrifices that visible minorities had (and have) to face in Canada is almost never mentioned in any Canadian history book.

Although I understand their numbers may have been small a100 years ago, their stories are not. Their invigorating stories never grace the pages of mainstream history books or find their way into the lives of the Canadian society in general. Allowing the powers that be to continue painting Canada in a spectacular light of lies and



deception.

My personal family background has always led me to understand that there is more to be told in Canadian history textbooks. I always had the feeling that what I was learning in school was not complete rather it was very oblique. My topic of interest had always been black

people in Canada. I wanted to understand the make up of Canada and why so few black people lived in the western parts. To my surprise it was no coincidence, it was a well-orchestrated plan by various government officials and a specific railroad company. The idea was to “keep Canada white”, as much as

possible.

My interest later flourished to other stories and other groups in Canada that have been omitted from the pages of Canadian history. Stories such as the Chinese Head Tax or slavery in Canada were never in my high school curriculum. History plays a key role in building

many things, relationships are one of them. Minimizing a peoples existence in Canada attempts to minimize their significance in the country. A country I believe they are willing to be a part of, but that just won't fully let them in. Canadian society as a whole would benefit from the inclusion as opposed to exclusion of people. Isolation does not build bridges, indeed it breeds hate and promotes ignorance.

We need to do more to acknowledge and value the contributions that various cultures have given Canada in substantial ways, not simply in a parade or a policy. We need to work on being the great Country we claim to be.

No matter how long a ‘visible minority’ lives in Canada, he or she is not viewed as Canadian. They are treated as outsiders infringing on the lives of “Canadians.” The last I checked they are expected to pay taxes as well. Which means they are as much a part of this society as anyone else and when we can finally accept and respect that, Canada will better reflect the best of it's legacy. We need to stop hiding and start apologizing where need be. We need to make the theory and practice of multiculturalism become one.

## The independence of crossing the floor

By Ali Khan Lalani & Mark Small

It is always fun to watch when a politician crosses the floor. Whatever side is losing a member waves their arms at the injustice, the thwarting of democracy, the cynical self-interest that motivated the move, and whatever side is gaining the new member welcomes the new MP with open arms and speaks about sticking up for ones beliefs and the courage it takes to cross the floor.

Neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals can maintain a consistent position on floor crossing; their points of view depend entirely upon whether they are winning or losing. There is no doubt that party loyalists have reason to be upset when the drone they thought they were electing suddenly switches sides. Everyone else should take a moment to celebrate the fact that we still elect individuals to the House, and not all-powerful party leaders are mindless worker bees.

Unless you are an absolute die-hard traditionalist, chances are that you do change your mind from time to time about which party's policies are best. A party that you once loved can disappoint or outrage you. This was felt by then Conservative MP Belinda Stronach who claimed that the Conservative party did not represent her particular views when on May 15, 2005 she crossed the floor joining the Liberal party and keeping it's government afloat.

Her actions were seen by many as cynical, and her rise to Minister was deemed unethical by some. The Ethics Commissioner of Canada, Dr. Bernard Shapiro, refused to investigate her floor-crossing, citing that it was a constitutional right of a Prime Minister to appoint opposition members to Cabinet. The same can easily be true for a Member of Parliament, especially a back-bencher with very little say in the direction of a party.

If crossing the floor was not allowed, a member in those circumstances would be left

with three options: continue to sit with a party but vote against their policies, sit as an independent, or resign and get another mandate. None of these are practical options.

Voting against your party consistently will get you out of caucus quick enough. Sitting as an independent would be great, but independents in our system are at a massive disadvantage. It is very difficult for an independent member to ask questions during Question Period, and they do not have access to the research staff or infrastructure that party members enjoy. Furthermore, your future as an independent is necessarily limited in terms of numbers. An independent will probably never be part of a government, and never position themselves to have a real say in the way that the country is run. Running again in a by-election is, at the very least, logistically difficult and potentially politically suicidal.

First off, the Prime Minister decides when a by-election is held and they have the option of

holding the seat open for many months. Next, a member couldn't really run for the other party in a snap by-election, they probably couldn't even win a nomination. Without sitting with a party for a while, and getting comfortable with their new members the party would have no reason to trust a recent defector; it would be smarter and safer for them just to run whoever they ran in the last election. A member could run as an independent such as the late Chuck Cadman, but we know the problems independence entails and they are multiplied when trying to run without a party machine to back you up.

Certainly there are cases where a floor crossing seems particularly cynical. David Emerson is probably the most outrageous case of this, but the option to cross the floor needs to be kept open. It is the only way to preserve what little independence our members have against the power of the political party machine.



# Traffic cops rack up record city revenue

For the third year in a row, the city broke its own record as police and parking authorities managed to rack up almost \$200M for assorted parking and driving code offenses committed on the island and in the city. Based upon a 6% increase over the number of tickets issued during the previous year, informed critics and more than a few outraged drivers believe the city's draconian parking policies are nothing less than a "hidden tax".

"If the tickets are meant to encourage safety and better driving conditions in the city and on the island," said SOS Ticket legal counsel Eric Lamontagne, "Why are they handing out more tickets for more offenses? This argument doesn't make sense unless the real objective is simply to bring in more money for the city"

While police spokesman Ian Lafrenière said the SPVM (Service de la Police de la Ville de Montréal) disputes the city's traffic revenue figures, he does agree traffic violations will be making more money for the city than it made during previous years. In the past year, police issued 614,134 tickets for assorted moving code violations while another 1,219,362 assorted parking tickets were written up by the city's parking agents.

While the city expects to make over \$135 million out of last year's various traffic tickets, this sum does not include court costs and accrued interest due to late payments of assorted fines. While many believe the city's ticket revenue is mostly due to the city's draconian parking policies, police statistics over the past three years indicate there's very little difference in the number of parking offences committed over the past three years. While some may consider the city's new parking policies to be effective, others believe it's more a question of market saturation insofar as parking agents are handing out the maximum possible amount of parking tickets and can't issue any more unless the city adds further restrictions to its parking policies.

Moving code violations are another matter. Ever since Yvan

Delorme took over as Montreal's chief of police, the city's traffic department has been turned into the

789 tickets for assorted road code violations. In 2006, after Delorme took over the police force, the police

written up in 2007. Last year, the SPVM's 133 working traffic cops issued 614 134 code tickets and

(code routier) drivers will have to be even more careful.

"You can eat a sandwich, drink hot coffee and put on your make-up," said Lamontagne, "...but don't let the cops see you talking on a cell phone because you're going to be in big trouble."

As a lawyer, Lamontagne doesn't mind seeing the police do their job but he also thinks justice is in trouble when the punishment (ie: the fines) begins to exceed the importance or the significance of the original offense

"When people begin to think the law is nothing more than a means to exploit them," he said, "...then people cease to respect the law and then the whole system is in trouble."

"If the tickets are meant to encourage safety and better driving conditions in the city and on the island," said SOS Ticket legal counsel Eric Lamontagne, "Why are they handing out more tickets for more offenses? This argument doesn't make sense unless the real objective is simply to bring in more money for the city"

SPVM's new cheval de guerre. Previous to Delorme's promotion in 2005, the SPVM's overworked traffic department issued only 329

beefed up their circulation department and the tally rose to 543 0006 tickets for code violations after which another 579 650 tickets were

nobody expects any less in the years to come.

As both the province and the city continue to adapt and renew the code



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# Echoes of darker evils

*"A little sincerity is a dangerous thing and a lot of it is absolutely fatal."*  
~ Oscar Wilde

The next time labour leaders in Canada want to know why there is such antipathy to their agenda in many quarters, they need look no further than the Canadian Union of Public Employees' Ontario wing. Over the past ten days its president, Sid Ryan, has been up to his anti-Israel agitation for the second time in 30 months. This time he wants a boycott of Israeli academic institutions.

"What gave rise to it was a bombing of a university in Gaza, what we thought was a just atrocious act," said Ryan. He said his call was sparked by the Dec. 29 bombing of Islamic University in the Gaza Strip. Of course he failed to mention that the bombing was of only a part of the campus – a part where Hamas was again using civilians, and civilian infrastructure, as missile launching installations. Those were the targets. Not the university. Ryan of course never explained why his voice was mute when Hamas rockets rained down on Israeli kindergartens and schools. He did not suggest a

boycott of Gazan institutions.

Ryan said the boycott is not against individual academics but against institutional activities, like fund raising, partnerships, investment and joint projects. More than just a condemnation of Israel's actions in Gaza, Ryan said the boycott is a response to "what we figure is really the cause of all of this ... the 40-year occupation." Once again Ryan

**One need not agree with all the policies of Israel. However, to pre-meditatedly distort the truth – as the unions have done - is to be motivated by impulses far removed from any visions of social justice. These impulses are the echoes of darker evil.**

chose to create his own facts.

Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005. He has never criticized Hamas for occupying the civilian population through terror. Never criticized the killing and terrorizing of Fatah opponents and the hijacking of the Gaza "election". And never criticized Egypt for not allowing Palestinian self-determination through its twenty-year occupation

of Gaza and its non-recognition of the Arab state of Palestine as mandated by the UN in 1947. A recognition that Israel did afford while the frontline Arab states invaded, bent on Israel's destruction. Jordan then occupied the West Bank and Egypt took Gaza.

In 2006, during its war with Hezbollah, Ryan called a hurried meeting on a Saturday when many

history and forget that Francophones have a country. It's called Canada. And that Francophones are descended from one of the two European peoples who settled it in Imperial conquest. There is no moral high ground here. French Quebecers were not victims. They were conquerors. But for Parent, as for others, denial is not just a river in Egypt.

exemptions. That means that they are spending our money, too, on political hobby horses. It's time to end that.

One need not agree with all the policies of Israel. However, to pre-meditatedly distort the truth – as the unions have done - is to be motivated by impulses far removed from any visions of social justice. It is a shame that so many union leaders have forgotten that among the leaders in Canadian labour history, leaders who led the Winnipeg General Strike; who led the marches in the streets of Toronto; leaders who stood shoulder to shoulder carrying two by fours with Jean Marchand at Lac Mégantic, were many Socialist Zionists. Today's union bosses choose to ignore that in the very Islamist political jurisdictions they support, unions are outlawed.

Israel has the same rights in international law as France, Russia and the United States, to hold territory acquired after self-defense in the face of aggressive attack until peace has been achieved. Mr. Ryan, M Parent and their fellow travelers who choose to hold Israel to a different standard do so out of the basest of motives.

Of course not all union voices are as venal as Ryan, Parent and the CSN's Carbonneau. Several years ago, my Institute for Public Affairs sponsored the first ever conference between leaders of Quebec civil society and Israeli diplomats. FTQ President Henri Massé said that while not fully supporting the settlement policy, he saw nothing to condemn in Israel's policies as a whole and vehemently denounced Palestinian violence and hate. He said that an end to that is understandably a pre-condition for any further Israeli concessions. For the sake of the credibility of labour's true progressives, it is time to hear this message candidly proclaimed and clearly defended much more often.

If this is not done, Canadian labour's dream of universal social justice will be hijacked by nests of nightcrawlers purveying nothing more than parochial prejudice. And on this there can be no debate. We must always stand ready to marshal our vigilance and resolve against the Ryans and Nastovskis, the Parents and Carbonneaus. For they are the echoes of darker evils from the mists of history.

Jewish members of his union could not attend, and got an anti-Israel boycott resolution passed. Ryan certainly seems to have a problem with the Mid-East's only democracy – a social democrat one at that and the most unionized political jurisdiction in the west – defending itself against terrorist rockets.

In Quebec, CSN and CSQ leaders recently spoke and marched at pro-Hamas rallies. When asked how they could be part of manifestations where Hezbollah and Hamas flags were prominent – organizations listed as terrorist groups in Canada – and where slogans such as "Death to the Jews" and "Jews are our dogs" were chanted, they replied they couldn't know what was written or said in Arabic. Uh-huh. I guess they didn't read the front page reports in the Montreal press after the 2006 pro-Hezbollah demos that had the same chants, flags and banners including a defiled Jewish prayer shawl.

To add disingenuity to hypocrisy, the CSQ's Rejean Parent said that in any case, their fight was not with the Israeli people but with their government, and that they were trying to show solidarity with Palestinians who are "also a people without a country." Parent, like Ryan suffers from convenient memory lapses. Aside from his ignorance of Mid-East history, he – like many of his separatist friends – choose to revise

But putting truth aside, what bothers so many about unions today is their pre-meditated annihilation of institutional memory and their spending of union members and public taxpayers dollars on hatemongering, and causes that have nothing to do with their mandates. It's time to call a spade a spade. Union actions against Israel are at worst, a primordial example of a hypocrisy unmasked revealing the true face of an anti-Zionism perilously approaching anti-Semitism, and, at best, a knee-jerk Canadian antipathy to any American ally. An antipathy that at its heart is fuelled by a self-doubt driven by a jealousy of others self-belief.

The actions of CUPE, the CSN and the CSQ have nothing to do with their members' interests in obtaining higher wages and better working conditions. Theoretically, their actions and resolutions must be adopted by executives and committees at a variety of special meetings. Such meetings are usually attended by a core group of activists, many of whom are appointed by their union locals to attend. So it stands to reason, if they want paid time off to attend further meetings, they had best vote in favour of the resolutions of those appointing them. It is an egregious use of union funds.

Unfortunately, unions also are subsidized by taxpayers through various formulas, including tax

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# So-So-So-Solidarité – with Palestine

## Quebec unions and Gaza

Pro-Palestinian marchers now weave their way through Montreal's downtown core on a weekly basis since Israel began its military operation in Gaza last month. To say the crowds are diverse would be an understatement. Aside from groups whose main purpose is to defend the Palestinian cause, there are pockets supporters who wouldn't normally be associated with that movement: New MNA Amir Khadir and his Québec Solidaire party, la Fédération des femmes du Québec, housing rights group FRAPRU, the neo-Rhinoceros party, Christian groups and even the Raélians.

Among the groups that lent their organizational might behind the largest of the Gaza rallies on Jan. 10 were Quebec's major labour unions, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), and the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ). Facing an economic crisis and an increasingly unsympathetic Liberal government, why are the unions pouring their resources into weighing in on a conflict happening half a world away?

"It's an involvement that goes back many years," CSN president Claudette Carbonneau told The Métropolitain. "It is a human tragedy, where a civilian population is under attack, and we feel the need to intervene."

Although the CSN is making headlines over their involvement with the Palestinian cause, Carbonneau says the union lends their support to the needy in various parts of the world, particularly in Africa and South America. Similarly, the head of the CSQ said their international work is not limited to Palestine; Réjean Parent said his group has spoken up recently for Afghans, the Sudanese in Darfur and other civilian populations worldwide facing the hardships of war.

"We have four values: Solidarity, democracy, sustainability and pacifism," said Parent. "Today, we're talking about the Gaza strip. But we're also favourable to the development of peace in many other areas."

Both union leaders chose their words carefully: They don't

condemn the Israeli people, of course, but instead their government for committing what they call an illegal war crime. They don't support Hamas' military tactics, but Palestinian people in distress.

"The State of Israel has defied U.N. resolutions," Carbonneau said. "We can not remain indifferent."

It is unclear how many union members – average, working-class Quebecers – were in attendance at the Jan. 10 protest, although they were certainly a minority in the crowd. During that protest, some masked demonstrators waived Hezbollah flags, while chanting vile slogans. "Slaughter the Jews," and "the Jews are our dogs," were among the highlights. CSN and CSQ brass marched in the same demonstration, but Carbonneau and Parent are now distancing themselves from the extremist elements present that day.

"Never would the CSN support hateful slogans," Carbonneau said. "That doesn't mean that the government of Israel should be sheltered from all criticism."

"When the slogans are in Arabic, we can't repudiate them," Parent said. "A culture of hate has no place in the Middle-East and certainly not in Quebec."

That won't cut it for the Canadian Jewish Congress, who has asked the unions to publicly apologize for participating in the march. During a similar event in 2006, former PQ leader André Boisclair and Liberal MP Denis Coderre both expressed regret for walking alongside Hezbollah supporters. The CJC's director of community relations, Enza Martucelli, expects the CSN and CSQ leaders to do the same and wonders how they missed the Hezbollah flags; large, bright yellow with Arabic writing and a machine gun printed on them.

"You would think they would be a bit more careful this time," Martucelli said. "I don't buy their arguments. They validate these kinds of demonstrations by placing their names on the event. They were out giving credibility to the devilification of Hamas. It was irresponsible."

Martucelli also questioned if union

members really approved of their dues going to support these kinds of political protests.

"The union leadership is reflexively critical of most things that Israel does," she said, "but the rank-and-file – no. I don't think the unions have a place in deciding their views. I don't believe a vote was

taken or if it was brought up in their meetings."

"I think that the majority of our members think we're standing up for values that affect our base," Parent said, adding that his predecessor, Monique Richard, went so far as to go on a fact-finding mission to Palestine. Carbonneau

said the sympathy her union and Quebecers in general have for the Palestinian people goes beyond a desire to support innocent victims of war.

"We stand in solidarity with Palestinians," she said, "because they're in a similar situation: A people, a nation without a State."

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# Une autre occasion manquée

## Les dernières contestations de la loi 101

En décembre dernier, la Cour suprême a entendu de nouvelles contestations de la Charte québécoise de la langue française. Elles avaient pour objet la loi 104, adoptée en 2002 par l'Assemblée nationale, qui visait à « colmater une brèche » dans la loi 101, par laquelle les élèves allophones pouvaient fréquenter l'école publique anglaise s'ils avaient fréquenté une école anglaise privée non subventionnée pendant au moins un an.

Il n'en fallait pas plus pour qu'André Pratte, éditorialiste en chef de La Presse, mette en garde ses lecteurs, les juges et les politiciens des « risques » potentiels advenant une décision de la Cour suprême de modifier « ne serait-ce qu'une virgule » de la loi 101.

Cette exhortation au statu quo rassurera certes nos vaillants politiciens fédéralo-nationalistes qui carburent au consensus, et calmera les « purzédurs » même s'ils sont toujours en manque de crise linguistico-identitaire. Mais il décevra une fois de plus ceux qui se préoccupent des libertés individuelles. Ceux-là (il en existe tout de même quelques uns), seront d'autant plus déçus que le silence n'est pas demandé seulement aux juges, mais aussi à toute personne qui voudrait ouvrir le débat sur la question de savoir qui peut envoyer ses enfants à l'école anglaise.

Ce silence est espéré par les élites et par les nationalistes pour deux raisons. Tout d'abord, les parents contestataires, selon notre révolutionnaire intelligentsia québécoise, seraient des « magouilleurs » profitant de brèches et des créateurs de subterfuges prêts à tout pour assimiler leurs enfants et, si on leur laissait un peu de temps, la « Nation » au grand complet. Si on en parlait trop, cela pourrait en plus donner de funestes idées à d'autres parents. Mais il y a pire encore : ces citoyens dénaturés s'attaqueraient à ce qui existe de plus précieux au Québec, c'est-à-dire le sacro-saint consensus autour de la loi 101.

L'absence de débat, de questionnement, voire simplement de doute, de la part des Québécois francophones eux-mêmes sur le bien fondé et le caractère moralement acceptable des clauses contestées de la loi 101 (ou des autres lois qui visent à en colmater les « brèches »), en regard des limites aux libertés individuelles qu'elle entraîne, est l'un des traits les plus sournois et les plus désolants de notre démocratie.

Ainsi, face à l'unanimité quasi-corporatiste en faveur de la loi 101, ses opposants, isolés par et dans leur « individualisme malsain », sont contraints de se faire entendre via des procédures juridiques extrêmement coûteuses, par le biais de leurs avocats et des juges de la Cour

suprême qui sont les ultimes garants des libertés individuelles. Les opposants à la loi 101 sont tour à tour traités de « traîtres » ou de « parents dénaturés », tout simplement parce qu'ils souhaitent donner une éducation différente à leurs enfants. Aux yeux de la majorité, leurs aspirations ne sont pas légitimes et leur volonté d'envoyer leurs enfants dans des écoles anglophones doit faire l'objet d'un jugement moral implicite, parfois explicite.

Mais il faut être aveugle pour ne pas voir que cette « crise » tant appréhendée devra avoir lieu tôt ou tard. À chaque fois que des libertés individuelles sont mises entre parenthèses, même pour défendre de soi-disant « droits collectifs », on retrouve les ingrédients pour la révolte. Par exemple, la « Révolution tranquille » ou la révolte des Patriotes été des événements mis en marche et accomplis par des individus frustrés de voir leurs libertés, leurs droits et leur dignité bafoués.

La majorité francophone et ses gouvernements nationalistes successeurs devront vite comprendre qu'ils sont eux-mêmes devenus des « oppresseurs », et que seules deux options subsistent : soit la loi 101 est expurgée de tous ses éléments s'opposant aux libertés individuelles, ou soit commencer à fourbir les armes rhétoriques qui les

enfonceront encore plus dans l'unanimité idéologique nationaliste.

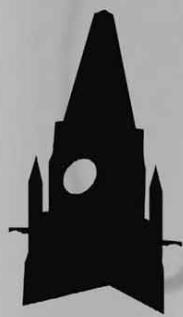
On peut s'attendre à ce que les premiers soubresauts de la crise viendront des nationalistes radicaux, qui ne manqueront pas de déchirer leur chemise et d'en appeler à la « mobilisation générale » contre les institutions canadiennes et en fulminant des édits contre les « traîtres » qui osent contester et défier le dogme. La majorité des Québécois francophones, à qui l'élite nationaliste a fait accepter le dogme de la loi 101 depuis 30 ans, seront entraînés dans le sillage de ces radicaux. En effet, malgré tous les gains réalisés depuis, ils continuent de se percevoir comme une espèce en voie de disparition, pour laquelle la préséance morale des droits collectifs de la majorité sur les droits individuels irait de soi.

Malgré ces vociférations, ceux dont les choix de vie n'entrent pas dans le cadre imposé n'en continueront pas moins de se mobiliser et de revendiquer leurs droits. Un jour, des Québécois francophones, fussent-ils des Tremblay ou des Nguyen, voudront envoyer leurs enfants à l'école anglaise et, constatant que la loi les en empêche, ils prendront le chemin des tribunaux pour, tôt ou tard, gagner leur cause. Ceci dit, ils devraient pouvoir bénéficier du droit de le faire sans se faire traiter de « traîtres

» ou de « magouilleurs ».

Parce qu'on craint la résurgence d'un « crise » linguistique, on s'empêche de réfléchir sur les notions concurrentes de libertés, de droits individuels et de droits collectifs. La maîtrise des concepts, idées et arguments autour de ces enjeux ne peut être rendue possible que par l'existence d'un débat. Les débats autour de l'indépendance du Québec, aussi lassant soient-ils devenus, nous ont au moins permis de réfléchir collectivement à la notion de fédéralisme, de connaître d'autres sociétés divisées et de mieux comprendre leurs façons de gérer leurs conflits, et ce quelle que soit notre position sur cette question. Les débats sur les accommodements religieux, en dépit du malaise qu'ils ont pu susciter, ont eu un même effet positif : nous sommes un peu plus conscients des implications morales des diverses positions en jeu.

Les récentes contestations de la Charte de la langue française nous fournissent quant à elles l'occasion d'ouvrir un débat sur l'importance des libertés individuelles et sur la place qu'elles ont occupées dans l'histoire du Québec, de la révolte des Patriotes à la « Révolution tranquille ». Ce débat ne manquerait certes pas de vigueur, mais il nous permettrait, entre autres avantages, de témoigner d'une plus grande maturité collective.



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# L'affaire Burns-Rafay et le terrorisme islamiste

Dans l'édition du Métropolitain du 27 novembre dernier, je présentais les grandes lignes des tactiques appliquées par la GRC pour contraindre, en laissant planer des menaces graves, des innocents à s'auto-déclarer coupables de crimes violents. La cause de Sebastian Burns et d'Atif Rafay (voir [www.rafayburnsappeal.com](http://www.rafayburnsappeal.com)), par laquelle j'ai pu illustrer ces méthodes policières plus que douteuses, comporte également l'implication potentielle d'un groupe islamiste relativement peu connu, nommé Al Fuqra, une organisation désignée en 1999 comme terroriste dans un rapport du Département d'État américain, intitulé *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (pour plus d'informations, voir [www.alfuqraexposed.com](http://www.alfuqraexposed.com)). Mais, malgré des indices crédibles et des pistes très solides ayant surgi au tout début de l'affaire Burns-Rafay, les corps policiers américain et canadien concernés n'auront procédé à aucune enquête sérieuse, ce qui fait que nous ne sommes pas encore habilités à mesurer l'implication d'Al Fuqra dans cette affaire.

Tariq et Sultana Rafay, victimes des meurtres pour lesquels leur fils Atif et son ami Sebastien Burns ont été injustement accusés, étaient des personnalités influentes au sein de la communauté musulmane de la côte Ouest. Ingénieur, Tariq Rafay avait notamment été le président et fondateur de la Canada-Pakistan Friendship Association, une organisation aux vues religieuses et politiques libérales et modérées. Son épouse, Sultana, était quant à elle connue pour ses enseignements du Coran. Le couple Rafay se distingua avec le temps comme deux « hérétiques » aux yeux de ceux qui prônent une vision extrémiste et fanatique de l'Islam : Sultana pour, en tant que femme, avoir osé enseigner l'Islam, ce qui constitue une abomination selon les islamistes, et Tariq, pour avoir notamment créé un programme informatique qui montrait qu'en Amérique du Nord, les Musulmans, durant leurs prières, n'étaient pas réellement tournés vers la Mecque, ce qui provoqua les fureurs de certaines branches islamistes.

Le fait a été plus d'une fois avéré que des menaces de mort avaient été proférées à l'encontre de Tariq Rafay par des leaders religieux islamistes. Entre plusieurs autres témoins crédibles, deux informateurs de la police, l'un agissant auprès de la GRC

et l'autre auprès du FBI, avaient rapporté avoir entendu des leaders islamistes appeler à la mort de M. Rafay. Le rapport du FBI (dont j'ai copie) indique d'ailleurs les noms, adresses, numéros de téléphones, numéros de plaque d'immatriculation, d'une liste d'individus ayant été associés à ces menaces. Tel que mentionné dans le rapport du FBI, il s'agit de membres ou sympathisants d'une organisation islamiste nommée Al Fuqra, qui se caractérise par l'assassinat des personnes de foi musulmane considérées comme hérétiques aux yeux des éléments fondamentalistes de cette croyance religieuse. Dans son livre intitulé *Qui a tué Daniel Pearl ?* (éditions Grasset, 2003), le célèbre auteur français Bernard-Henri Lévy consacre d'ailleurs tout un chapitre à la description de cette organisation, notamment connue pour avoir été derrière l'assassinat de plusieurs personnes au Canada et aux États-Unis. On se souvient que le journaliste Daniel Pearl, du *Wall Street Journal*, avait été kidnappé et atrocement assassiné alors qu'il enquêtait au Pakistan sur cette organisation terroriste.

Deux jours après le meurtre de la famille Rafay, le 14 juillet 1994, la police de Bellevue, qui enquêtait sur le crime, avait été mise au courant par le FBI de la forte possibilité que les victimes aient été assassinées suite à un ordre exprès des dirigeants d'Al Fuqra. Mais le détective chargé de l'enquête, Bob Thompson, n'entreprit aucun suivi des pistes qui lui avaient été expressément livrées par nuls autres que ses collègues de la police fédérale américaine. Donc, aucune enquête n'a été effectuée, personne n'ayant été interrogé ni même contacté parmi les individus dont les noms et coordonnées personnelles se trouvaient sur la liste fournie par le FBI.

Thompson, dont le grave degré d'incompétence tout au long de cette affaire se sera révélé tout à fait scandaleux, aura préféré désigner en tant que seuls suspects ceux qui étaient à sa portée immédiate, c'est-à-dire ceux qui ont les premiers découvert la scène du crime, soit Atif Rafay et Sebastian Burns. Comme autre indice de l'incompétence de Thompson, on peut d'ailleurs relever un fait s'étant déroulé en 2001, soit sept ans après les meurtres : les avocats de Sebastien Burns venaient alors tout juste de découvrir l'existence d'un rapport de la

GRC, rédigé en 1994 et dont Thompson était au courant depuis ce temps, qui mentionnait qu'un individu proche des milieux islamistes avait affirmé s'être fait proposer un contrat en vue d'assassiner Sultana et Tariq Rafay. Or en 2001, Thompson n'avait pas encore ne serait-ce qu'essayer de contacter cet individu. Mais, pris au dépourvu par la découverte des avocats, Thompson s'est aussitôt précipité à Vancouver pour rencontrer l'individu en question, dont on ne sera pas surpris d'apprendre que, sept ans après le crime, il n'aura rien su tirer. À lui seul, ce fait, qui n'est pas unique dans le genre dans toute cette affaire, autorise donc, dans la cadre d'un crime aussi grave, à remettre sérieusement à remettre en question la compétence de Bob Thompson en tant que responsable de l'enquête policière.

Malgré donc le fait que, en plus de très solides preuves circonstancielles qui plaçaient Atif et Sebastian ailleurs au moment où les meurtres ont eu lieu, toutes les preuves matérielles trouvées sur la très sanglante scène du crime (ADN, empreintes digitales, examens corporels minutieux des deux jeunes hommes, etc.) disculpaient entièrement et hors de tout doute Atif et Sebastian, le détective Thompson aura plutôt choisi de prendre les moyens requis pour que des preuves soient de toute pièce fabriquées contre les deux jeunes hommes. En effet, c'est après leur retour chez eux, à Vancouver, qu'Atif et Sebastian furent l'objet de l'opération « Mr. Big » sous les soins de la GRC, après que Thompson ait fait appel aux services de cette dernière dans le but de faire accuser les deux jeunes hommes du crime crapuleux ayant eu lieu à Bellevue le 12 juillet 2004. Et puisque quiconque se voit assujéti à ce type d'opération policière ne peut en bout de ligne que passer aux « aveux », compte tenu des menaces de mort à peine voilées employées par les policiers agissant sous le couvert de caïds du crime organisé, l'arrestation et la mise en accusation de Rafay et Burns purent avoir lieu.

Suite à l'extradition de ces derniers du Canada vers les États-Unis, un procès fut tenu en 2004 à Seattle. Le juge, Charles Mertel (dont la bêtise et l'incompétence se seront révélées proverbiales), avait carrément interdit aux avocats de la défense d'évoquer durant le procès, et de quelque manière que ce soit, les faits relatifs à Al Fuqra. Les mots parlant par eux-mêmes, voici

en quels termes, totalement incohérents sinon aberrants, le juge Mertel annonça sa décision à la Cour :

"It just simply would require too much speculation, I guess, as the cases indicate, as to motive, opportunity, and connection, and it - well, I guess that is about all I can say in that analysis. There doesn't seem to be any motive - well, no, that's not true. The motive would be the disagreement over religious interpretations of the Koran would be as the motives urged by this court. Much beyond that, I simply can't satisfy any of the other criteria. The FUQRA is also to be excluded, Mr. Robinson, but thank you for clarifying that, so that nobody was misled, because I did not mention that group called, and I am sure I am not even pronouncing it correct correctly, FUQRA, or whatever."

C'est donc dans de telles conditions que la défense se vit privée du droit de présenter des faits qui, loin d'être fantaisistes et ayant été fournis par le FBI lui-même, auraient pu permettre au jury de considérer le fait que les meurtres auraient pu avoir été perpétrés par d'autres personnes que les deux accusés. Or, tout ce que les jurés auront pu voir pour fonder leur verdict, c'est une courte bande-vidéo du passage aux « aveux » tel qu'orchestré par la GRC, ceci sans que, bien entendu, l'épisode d'intimidation psychologique et de menaces physiques proférées par les agents aient, quant à elles, été entendues et vues par les mêmes jurés. C'est donc au terme d'un procès qui s'est déroulé dans des conditions aussi injustes que, sans grande surprise, Atif Rafay et Sebastian Burns se sont vus infliger un verdict de culpabilité, pour ensuite être condamnés à l'emprisonnement à perpétuité. La cause est toutefois en appel, et il faut espérer que justice sera enfin rendue à ces deux victimes des révoltantes méthodes employées par la GRC contre eux.

En janvier 2003, un autre assassinat eut lieu, cette fois dans la région de Vancouver. La victime, Riasat Ali Khan, fut la cible d'une rafale de coups de feu dans le stationnement de sa résidence. M. Ali Khan était une personnalité très connue en Colombie-Britannique, ayant notamment été très impliqué en tant que militant en vue du parti libéral du Canada ; plusieurs ministres et députés libéraux fédéraux assistèrent d'ailleurs à ses funérailles. Il était également connu en tant que

musulman modéré qui prônait le dialogue et la compréhension entre tenants de croyances différentes. De plus, Riasat Ali Khan était aussi président de la Canada-Pakistan Friendship Association... c'est-à-dire la même association qui avait été fondée par Tariq Rafay, le père d'Atif, qui lui avait été assassiné neuf ans plus tôt dans la banlieue de Seattle. M. Ali Khan, qui était un proche ami de Tariq Rafay, était également l'un des rares visiteurs qu'Atif recevait dans sa prison et il croyait dans l'innocence d'Atif.

Il est enfin à noter que, près de six ans plus tard, l'enquête sur l'assassinat de M. Ali Khan, qui a été confiée à la GRC, n'a jusqu'à présent permis d'aboutir à aucun résultat. Il est aussi plutôt singulier de constater que, suite à cet événement, plus personne ne parle en Colombie-Britannique, et cela depuis déjà longtemps, de l'assassinat d'une personnalité aussi connue dans la région, comme si ce même événement n'avait jamais eu lieu.

Devant de tels faits, et aussi devant l'incroyable incompétence policière apparente dans l'affaire Burns-Rafay, on est en droit de se poser certaines questions. Serait-ce que les victimes de l'extrémisme islamiste ne sauraient jamais, au Canada et aux États-Unis, obtenir justice ? Serait-ce que les autorités concernées, qu'elles soient policières, gouvernementales ou judiciaires (comme le montrent les propos aberrants du juge Mertel), préféreraient faire condamner des innocents plutôt que de courir le risque de soulever certains faits socialement et politiquement perturbants quant au fait que plusieurs assassinats ont été commis, au Canada et aux États-Unis, par des fanatiques islamistes organisés et toujours présents dans ces deux pays ? Et aussi, pourquoi le silence officiel reste-t-il maintenu sur la présence au Canada et aux États-Unis d'une organisation terroriste comme Al Fuqra ?

Le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est que ces questions sont encore loin d'avoir obtenu les réponses qu'elles méritent. Il est plus que temps pour le public de s'y intéresser, ne serait-ce que parce que deux de nos compatriotes, Atif Rafay et Sebastien Burns, paient de leur liberté, et cela depuis beaucoup trop longtemps, l'incompétence des autorités concernées, ce qui, en soi, devrait nous être intolérable à tous.





# Is it a paradigm shift ?

The Democrats have retaken the White House after eight long years of soul-searching. I look upon this historic occasion with all the hopes and dreams of my generation. However, to believe that one man can change the world is perhaps dangerous. There are no saviours, but certain politicians can push history in the right direction.

I had the great privilege of going on a road trip with five friends to Washington D.C., to witness the transfer of political power in our neighbouring superpower. As we braved the great crowds, a sense of wonder and amazement filled the air. The locals we spoke to told us rare are the occasions when African-Americans frequent the Mall (monuments, museums and government areas). What we witnessed was black and white singing and dancing together, hoping together; white folks wanting blacks to be included; black folks wondering if this was all a dream.

As we walked past the White House and looked toward the Washington monument, I thought of how opposed to the politics of the United States I have been for most of my adult life. The administration leaving office had damaged the image so greatly that no one could imagine it might be different some day. As we looked deeply into the sea of people, we could sense a certain resolve; we were witnesses to the other version of America that we hadn't seen in some time now. We did feel that we could hope for a more measured America in international affairs and consequently we could hope for a better world?

Rare are the occasions when we sit on the cusp



of a paradigm shift, a parting of ways of the old and the new. So as we walked, we all asked ourselves if the world had changed with the arrival of a new man in the White House. As I write these words, I know that much is being written about the first African-American President, and know that I will be part of that cacophony, but even at the cost of not being original, one feels compelled to be a part of it in some way. However, this is more than the story of one man, it is the American journey, but also the Western promise of the hopes of more chances for more people, or dreams centuries old becoming living breathing reality.

Perhaps, there is also a feeling that Western nations are closer than ever before, this was the sentiment in our microcosm. Our expedition

comprised of 3 Americans, one dual citizen of France and of the United States, one bilingual Canadian of a North African mother, and myself, a French-Canadian Métis. However, despite different backgrounds and upbringings, it is surprising how we relate to the same events, that the popular culture of the West has permeated our experience profoundly. Is this why we are inspired by the universalist appeal that seems to be espoused openly by the new American administration?

The credo that all men and women should have the freedom to pursue their hopes and dreams without reference to race or religion opposes the nationalist creed of blood and belonging. We returned from Washington with the knowledge

that our world is changing in ways not even perceptible yet, and it's not all bad.

If the new administration is to succeed, it will have to get help from all strata of society, and this will be no easy task. The hard realities of two wars, one world economic crisis and two very different versions of the USA are quite daunting, sobering even, far from the euphoric sentiment we felt in D.C. The new American President wants us to join him, reminding us that we should always be the change we want to see in the world.

Can we hope? The answer is that we should always hope for a better world, but in the end, this new administration will not succeed by goodwill and hopefulness. Change will come if the resolve of the new President can convince the goodwill that we find in all people, to repair decades of bad politics. Change is not thinking about or wishing; change is doing. As we left D.C, we learned that among Barack Obama's first executive orders was to schedule the closing of Guantanamo prison: this is doing!

This last week we traveled to discover America anew. We could feel a sense of what the last eight years had been like for the people who had showed up in droves to be witnesses to the changing of the guard. Such moments in history are turning points that offer not only a collective betterment, but also willingness to bestow trust toward our countrymen, and even our neighboring countries. A political window has been opened here, but no one knows how long the people and politics will let the breeze in before it closes again.

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

- George F. Lengvari, Sr.





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# Obama's Megatrillions for Change

## Who's got the cash to buy America's next wave of debt?

Many around the world celebrated as they watched the inauguration festivities in Washington DC. Barack Obama warned Americans that the challenges they face as a nation are numerous and grave, requiring individual sacrifice and difficult choices to plot a path back to prosperity. While he spent a few minutes speaking to the world, he avoided asking them for their contribution to America's renewal; the purchase of \$5 trillion of new US debt to cover a half decade of enormous budget deficits.

Americans, you see, have had a negative savings rate for the last decade and do not have the personal savings to buy new federal debt issues. The last time America faced an enormous demand for debt was during World War Two, and Americans could comply because they had a positive savings rate and there were few consumer goods for them to purchase with their dollars, since most production had been redirected for the war effort. Corporate America and the banks are in no condition to help either, with business profits down and the banks receiving government bailouts or quasi-nationalizations. Smaller nations like Canada may have some lending capacity, but we will need our liquid resources as well to absorb our own coming federal deficits.

Where are the US's traditional lenders, China, Japan and, to a lesser extent, Russia? The US Treasury may be surprised to find that they lack the



funds to absorb new US debt as they have over the past 15 years. The Japanese are suffering from a relatively high Yen that is reducing their foreign income and the worldwide recession is exacerbating the problem by reducing demand at the same time. The Japanese economy suffered a prolonged decade-long recession during which their government accumulated massive debt and deficits of their own, compromising their ability to act as a relief banker for the US. Much of the US real-estate that the Japanese invested in during the 1980's is falling in value as the US housing meltdown is morphing into a commercial real estate decline as well. In short, the Japanese are in no position to help out.

The Chinese were able to purchase over a trillion dollars of US debt because they were receiving much

more than that in income from the consumer goods that they sold to Americans up to this point. The decline in US consumption has provoked a recession within China; massive job losses and factory closings have shocked the population into curtailing their spending as well. Not only are the Chinese without their habitual foreign income, they are now forced to spend trillions of Yuan to stimulate local demand and investment. The Chinese were already uneasy about the nearly \$1.5 trillion in US debt and securities that they already hold; they do not have the desire, nor the capacity, to acquire further US-denominated financial instruments.

The Russians have enjoyed an economic resurgence due to world demand for their oil and gas reserves. Plunging prices for oil, from \$147 per

barrel last summer down to the mid-\$40's today, coupled with natural gas prices below \$5 US per thousand cubic feet have created an income crisis for that country as well. While energy prices are likely to recover into 2009-10, Russia's uneasy relationship with the US as it seeks to reassert its presence on the world stage means that it is unlikely to share its wealth with its old rival. Russia is better off buying new debt from the EU countries that will be running massive deficits of their own, in order to gain influence with their governments and delay or halt the expansion of NATO into previous Soviet-block nations.

Obama has already declared that there will likely be a \$1 trillion or higher deficit for fiscal 2009-10 with no foreseeable decline in that figure on an annual basis for several years to come. The current US federal debt stands just short of \$11 trillion; by the end of Obama's recovery period, that debt will likely rise to \$16 trillion. So where is the buyer for all those bonds yet to be issued?

America may have to turn to its own people to find the money, at least for the first few trillion while their traditional international bankers rebuild their economies and redevelop the capacity to lend internationally. Obama will have to create a bond-drive program similar to the war bonds campaigns of WWII, asking Americans to invest in their government and their own future.

There are several problems facing Obama as he seeks to finance from within. Since the US savings rate is still negative, Americans will have to de-leverage their consumer debt in order to be able to free up the cash flow to purchase government securities. America's financial institutions and pension funds could also purchase US government debt, but this would likely remove these funds from the commercial and residential credit markets that are already starving for new sources of financing. The irony of this problem is that if the US government is successful in selling its new debt to Americans, it is likely to prolong the recession or stretch out the recovery as it "crowds out" other potential avenues for the same money

in the marketplace.

Can Canada find buyers for its debt?

In comparison to the US, Canada is well positioned to sell new debt to cover the federal government's return to deficit spending. Last week, the government announced that the federal deficits for the next two fiscal years would total \$64 billion Canadian dollars. Canada's Liberal and Conservative government's paid down over \$120 billion in old debt since the federal government began posting surpluses in the mid-1990s and our economy will not suffer a recession nearly as deep as the ones underway in the US and the balance of the G7. Indeed, if energy prices recover through 2009 as many expect, our economy may not post negative growth for 2009 and tax revenues may be higher than currently expected. Bank of Canada Governor Carney is calling for a substantial contraction in the first quarter of 2009, then recovery; he may be too pessimistic in his predictions depending on how quickly China and India redevelop their appetites for oil and metals.

Prepare for tensions and jealousies across the border

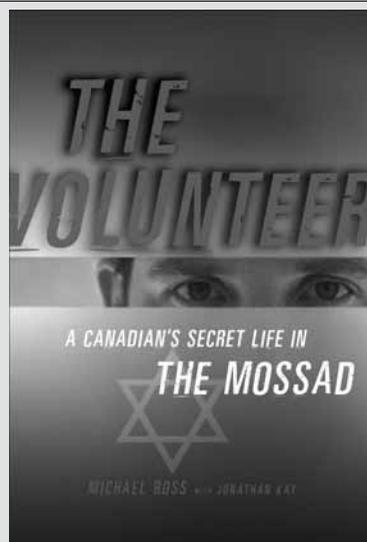
The US and Canadian economies will be on divergent paths for some time; Canada will suffer a shallower recession and will recover more quickly, resulting in proportionately less financial strain on our government. US lawmakers, looking to protect US jobs may incorrectly conclude that Canada is enjoying unfair advantage under NAFTA and will pressure Obama to make good on his election-campaign promise to re-examine the agreement. Obama may have to put this item on the agenda in exchange for congressional support for stimulus initiatives in subsequent years' budgets. Canadians should not be smug that we are better positioned than our US brethren. Our economic fates are tied together, and the Canadian government should try to coordinate economic recovery policy initiatives with the US in order to demonstrate our view that we have a North American economic partnership that should not be allowed to devolve into a rivalry.

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

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**ÉCONOMIE**

# Les « plans de relance » ne sont pas le bon remède

La plupart des groupes d'intérêts, des économistes, des politiciens et des journalistes appuient des hausses massives de dépenses publiques afin de « stimuler » l'économie. Le gouvernement du Québec ne fait pas exception, le premier ministre Jean Charest préconisant des dépenses accrues pour les infrastructures et la formation des travailleurs et s'opposant à des baisses d'impôts.

Malheureusement, le premier ministre a tout à l'envers : ce sont les dépenses publiques dans des « plans de relance » qui ne fonctionnent pas – et non les allègements fiscaux. Si nos gouvernements ont véritablement à cœur d'agir pour le mieux en regard de la situation économique, la solution consiste à réduire les dépenses publiques et à diminuer les impôts de façon permanente.

Ceux qui croient que les dépenses publiques de relance sont la réponse doivent se demander d'où provient l'argent. Tout plan de relance nécessitera de plus gros emprunts de la part du gouverne-

ment, c'est-à-dire que ce dernier devra retirer de l'argent à certains Canadiens (qui en auront moins pour dépenser ou investir sur le marché) afin de le donner à d'autres (ou de le dépenser pour leur compte). Le résultat final est une redistribution accrue plutôt qu'une croissance de l'activité économique.

En réalité, les options de relance qui sont actuellement étudiées ne stimuleraient tout simplement pas l'économie.

Les subventions aux entreprises, le sauvetage de celles-ci ou les prêts d'urgence à des secteurs en difficulté (automobile, forestier, etc.) ne feront que retarder le jour fatidique pour ces industries.

Bien que les infrastructures canadiennes et québécoises aient désespérément besoin d'améliorations, les initiatives liées aux infrastructures sont rarement « prêtes pour la première pelletée de terre » et celles qui le sont rarement celles qui procurent les plus grands avantages économiques.

Si l'expérience passée se répète,

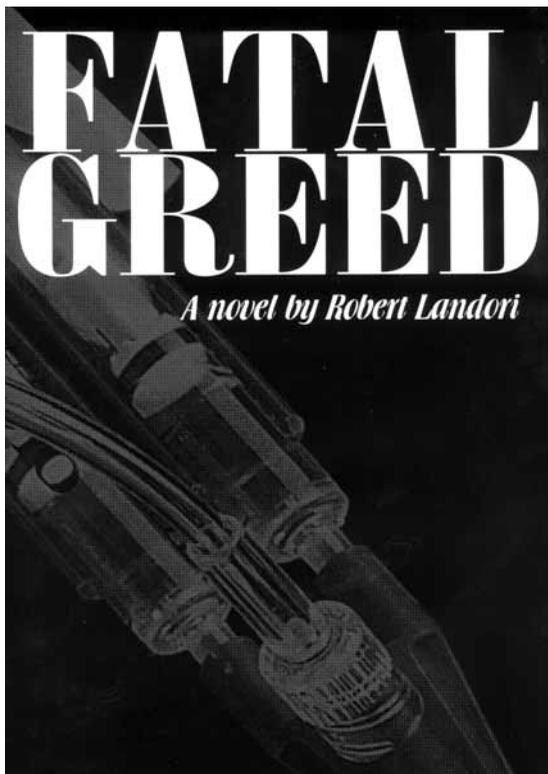
les hausses de prestations d'assurance-emploi vont au bout du compte mener à un plus grand taux de chômage et à de plus longues périodes pendant lesquelles les gens seront sans emploi.

Plutôt que de concevoir des plans de relance, le gouvernement fédéral devrait réduire les dépenses publiques et se concentrer sur un allègement du fardeau fiscal. Ceci améliorerait les incitations à travailler, à investir et à se lancer dans des activités entrepreneuriales.

À cette fin, le gouvernement devrait d'abord s'inspirer de plusieurs ménages canadiens en coupant le superflu. Avec des réductions de dépenses, des réductions d'impôts permanentes (et non temporaires) pour les particuliers et les entreprises sont possibles. Plus précisément, le gouvernement devrait songer à réduire les tranches d'imposition moyennes et supérieures, à éliminer l'impôt sur les gains en capital et à accélérer la réduction de l'impôt sur les bénéficiaires des sociétés.

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# Laïcité « ouverte » : une nouvelle trahison des clercs ?

« Aussi longtemps que les hommes croiront en des absurdités, ils continueront à commettre des atrocités. » Voltaire.

La première question qui me vient spontanément à l'esprit, lorsque l'on parle du cours Éthique et culture religieuse, est son libellé même : Pourquoi Éthique et culture religieuse? Pourquoi pas Éthique et culture philosophique? Craindrait-on d'exposer les enfants à la philosophie, qui serait un « danger mortel pour l'humanité », disait Nietzsche ? Est-il préférable de maintenir la jeunesse dans le cocon douillet des fables religieuses ? L'éthique et la morale ont-elles leur source dans les religions? Avons-nous besoin de religion pour nous comporter moralement ? Et toutes les religions de ce monde n'ont-elles pas, au cours de l'histoire, agi très immoralement en plus d'une occasion, et ne le font-elles pas encore aujourd'hui ?

Lorsque Jean-Paul II, et Benoît XVI après lui, interdisent expressément l'utilisation du condom dans des pays où sévit le sida, n'est-ce pas là agir très immoralement ? Et quelles raisons invoquent-ils pour ces prêches inhumains ? Parce qu'il est écrit dans un vieux livre que ce serait la volonté divine que « l'œuvre de chair » se fasse sans condom ou truc du genre ? On condamne, sur la foi du même vieux livre, le mariage des prêtres, l'ordination des femmes et le droit à l'homosexualité, ou même encore le droit, selon Jean-Paul II, d'étudier scientifiquement le problème de l'origine de l'univers, qui relèverait de Dieu seul et qui ne serait pas du domaine de la science, selon le Vatican. Que ne croit-on pas dans toutes les religions qui sont un défi au bon sens et à la raison ? Vous croyez, vous, à l'existence de Satan et des anges gardiens ? Les papes infaillibles qui déraisonnent au Vatican y croient, eux, pourtant.

Il me semble utile de rappeler que, contrairement aux religions qui sont en grande partie fondées sur des fables, le but ultime de la philosophie a toujours été la recherche de la vérité et de la justice. C'est pourquoi, comme beaucoup de mes concitoyens, je préférerais plutôt que nos écoles offrent une formation basée sur la philosophie, de la première année du primaire à la dernière du secondaire, selon l'approche développée, depuis plus de trente ans, au Mountclair Institute of Philosophy for Children, au New-Jersey, que j'ai eu le plaisir de visiter au début des années 1980; j'avais alors pu rencontrer le fondateur de cet Institut, Matthew Lipman, et étudier cette approche pédagogique pendant le court séjour que j'y avais fait. Le ministère de l'Éducation du Québec a toujours refusé de créer les cours s'inspirant de cette démarche, qui me semble être la « seule valable » pour une formation intégrale de la jeunesse.

Cela dit, il est souhaitable sinon nécessaire, il me semble, que la jeunesse québécoise soit informée de l'existence des grandes traditions culturelles de l'humanité dans des cours gradués d'histoire des civilisations, dans lesquels seraient rappelées toutes les composantes d'une civilisation qui se développent dans le temps: les mœurs, les arts, les techniques, les croyances religieuses, les connaissances, la morale, le droit, l'économie, la politique. Toutes les religions ont marqué à des degrés divers jusqu'ici et de façon indélébile, positive ou négative, toutes les sociétés dans lesquelles elles ont fleuri. Pour la plupart, elles étaient au centre de leur culture. Mais les sciences et un humanisme séculier prennent maintenant la relève, avec lenteur,

faut-il dire et le regretter.

Depuis septembre 2008, des cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse remplacent les cours de religion et de morale, qui étaient jusque-là offerts en option aux élèves du primaire et du secondaire. Ces cours sont dorénavant obligatoires pour tous les élèves, sauf ceux du troisième secondaire.

Il tombe pourtant sous le sens qu'on peut développer le sens moral de l'enfant par d'autres moyens que celui qui consiste à leur inculquer les diverses croyances religieuses présentes dans sa société. Ce cours d'Éthique et de culture religieuse n'est qu'une manœuvre pour perpétuer la présence de l'enseignement religieux confessionnel traditionnel dans nos écoles, un détournement d'intention, un retour en arrière sous des dehors de modernité et d'ouverture, un tour de passe-passe, une nouvelle trahison des clercs. En un mot, il s'agit de faire indirectement ce qu'on ne peut pas faire directement.

On nous dit que l'on ne doit pas couper les jeunes de la tradition, qu'il est essentiel qu'ils connaissent la religion de leurs pères et mères, que la religion de la majorité possède des droits, que l'on ne peut vivre sans religion. Pourtant, la tradition change continuellement, depuis qu'il y a des hommes et des femmes qui vivent en société sur cette terre; personne n'interdit aux Catholiques d'enseigner leur credo. C'est dans des cours d'histoire que l'on peut transmettre la connaissance de ce que fut le passé et la tradition. Et c'est aux paroisses qu'il revient de faire connaître le catéchisme aux familles qui le veulent bien; et toutes les religions jouissent de la liberté de défendre et d'illustrer leur foi. La mission de l'école, quant à elle, consiste à former des citoyens aptes à comprendre et à

rendre habitable ce monde étonnant dans lequel nous vivons pour un temps.

La croyance religieuse et la croyance humaine ordinaire sont deux choses fort différentes. C'est une chose que de croire en la divinité et la résurrection du Christ, à la résurrection des corps ou à la transmigration des âmes, à la transsubstantiation, à l'immaculée-conception, au péché originel, à la vie après la mort, à un dieu trine, ou encore au supposé miracle à l'origine du centre de pèlerinage du Cap-de-la-Madeleine. C'est une toute autre chose que de croire aux grandes valeurs attachées à la liberté de conscience, aux droits humains, à l'égalité des sexes, à la valeur de la démarche scientifique basée sur des faits et des preuves.

Les croyances proprement religieuses ne sont fondées, en grande partie, que sur des illusions, sur une volonté et un besoin irrésistible, souvent infantile, de croire. Les croyances communes à la base de nos sociétés et de nos savoirs vérifiables sont, quant à elles, le fait d'une adhésion prudente et progressive de notre part.

« Seule une conception du monde qui a accompli tout ce que le rationalisme a réalisé, rappelait Albert Schweitzer, a le droit de condamner le rationalisme. » C'est pourquoi devant toutes les religions de ce monde, il me semble qu'il faut raison garder. La vérité, nous dit-on, nous rendra libres. Cherchons-la, ensemble. Voilà, à mes yeux, la réponse qu'il faut donner aux défis d'un pluralisme démocratique de bon aloi et d'une laïcité ouverte à la raison, à la liberté et à la justice. L'Éducation n'appartient pas à l'État, ni à l'Église, ni même aux parents, elle appartient à l'enfant et à sa future liberté, disait Bakouline.



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## Quebec's poverty wall

Quebec gets both top marks and failing grades when it comes to fighting poverty in the province.

First, the good news.

Along with Newfoundland, we're the only province in Canada to have a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy backed by laws to combat extreme need and social exclusion. In 2004, Quebec's government announced a total of \$2.5 billion to be allocated over five years to carry out the provisions of the Act against poverty and it seems, at least initially, that the measures are working: available data show the proportion of people living on low incomes in the province decreased steadily between 1997 and 2005.

In other positive news, our current minimum wage will be the second highest in Canada (after Nunavut, at \$10,00 an hour) once the Liberal government bumps it up to \$9 from the current \$8.50 next May. There are also signs the government is beginning to look seriously at the

province's homelessness problems after the National Assembly's committee on social affairs studied the issue last fall. (One of the committee members recently told *The Metropolitan* that previously, homelessness had not even been on the radar for any of the political parties.)

Finally, in December, the Quebec government upped funds transferred to Montreal for anti-poverty initiatives by \$9 million over three years and Montreal mayor Gerald Tremblay announced that tackling poverty would be the priority for 2009.

But many Quebecers were, and remain, impoverished.

Eight years ago, the Canadian Council for Social Development named Montreal the poverty capital of Canada due to its whopping 41 per cent poverty rate. While that number had dropped to 34 per cent by 2007, the city still ranked first place for poverty in all major urban centres in Canada - including Toronto,

Vancouver, and Winnipeg.

Some of the hardest hit are Quebec seniors, who have the highest rates of poverty in Canada (9.3 per cent, compared to the country's lowest in Saskatchewan at 1.9 per cent, according to 2004 statistics) and lone-parent families, almost 60 per cent of which live under the poverty line. Montreal also had the most neighbourhoods facing deep and persistent poverty.

Ian Renaud-Lauze, the spokesman for *Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté*, a Quebec City-based organization that was instrumental in getting a comprehensive anti-poverty plan in the province, said that while the plan has been helpful in getting some Quebecers out of poverty, it has worsened the situation of others because the plan itself is biased towards families and low-income wage earners.

"We're going in the right direction," he said, "Sadly - and this is the big concern - it's not an integrated vision into poverty. We've fallen into the idea that there's deserving and undeserv-

ing poor."

Single people and couples without children who fall under the poverty line, and those facing severe constraints to employment, actually have less revenue than they did five years ago. Many of them fall under the category of working poor. Labour laws that haven't been updated to protect the current freelance, contract, and part-time workers compound the problem.

The current economic downturn will push more Quebecers into poverty, Renaud-Lauze added, and so the government also needs to ensure strong public service programs to support the poor. He also wants to see a boost in welfare, a move that is supported by Denis Levesque, a coordinator with the anti-poverty group *Project Genesis*.

"For people who are receiving the lowest welfare benefits, it needs to be increased," he said, adding that 100 per cent of the money spent on welfare goes straight back into the economy.

Both men say that the government needs to focus on anti-poverty initiatives that aren't based solely around creating employment.

"They focus most of their efforts on employment," Levesque said. "But there will always be people who are rejected or excluded from the work force."

Many Quebecers, due to physical or psychological illnesses or disabilities, are unable to work, Renaud Lauze said.

"We need to look at the employable and the unemployable and we need to help them as a matter of human dignity," he said. "We have to redefine the meaning for someone who contributes to not just mean they bring in a pay check. People that we abandon - it's a human debt."

But with all the economic doom-and-gloom hitting Quebecers daily, Renaud-Lauze has one positive message:

"What we proved in Quebec is that when you want to improve the situation, you can."



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## Réjean Thomas et le SIDA

Une vérité qui n'est dite qu'à demi ne sert nullement la cause que l'on défend. Grand défenseur d'une cause dont on ne peut que le féliciter, Réjean Thomas, à chaque fois qu'il apparaît en public, occulte néanmoins une partie importante de la vérité, et nuit en fin de compte à la cause qu'il défend.

Ce fut encore le cas la veille du Nouvel An, lors de son apparition à l'émission *Tout le monde en parle*. Le docteur Thomas aura ainsi manqué une autre occasion en or de désigner l'un des grands responsables de la propagation du sida dans le monde : l'Église catholique et son chef Benoît XVI. Que lui aurait-il coûté de dénoncer cet état de fait ? L'usage du condom sauve des vies. Si c'est bon pour nous autres, pourquoi ce ne le serait pas pour les autres ? Pourquoi le docteur ne

profite-t-il pas des tribunes qui lui sont offertes grâce à sa notoriété pour dénoncer l'Église catholique qui interdit l'usage du condom dans les pays africains ou d'Amérique latine, là où elle occupe une place dominante ? Que craint-il ? Serait-ce donc qu'il n'est pas libre de parler ou que le faire serait menaçant pour lui ? Alors, le sida ferait également une victime de plus, mais à un autre niveau. Et combien d'autres qui n'osent le dire.

Faut quand même donner crédit à Raymond Gravel qui, lui, n'a pas craint de dire la vérité, bien qu'en tentant maladroitement de défendre l'Église, dans un texte paru dans *Le Devoir* du 8 juillet 2008, où il affirmait : « Il serait dangereux de condamner Henry Morgentaler pour génocide ou pour crime contre l'humanité parce qu'il serait responsable de la mort de milliers de fœtus

humains, comme il serait injuste de condamner l'Église qui, en refusant l'usage du condom aux pays d'Afrique, aurait provoqué la mort de centaines de milliers d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants ayant contracté le virus du Sida. »

Or, si un prêtre catholique ose le dire (quoique de manière fort ambiguë), à plus forte raison un professionnel de la santé a-t-il le devoir de dénoncer une institution qui nuit aux efforts pour éradiquer ce fléau mondial. Existe-t-il une raison suffisante pour accepter dans certains pays une conduite aussi assassine ? Accepterons-nous encore longtemps cette forme de terrorisme de la conscience exercé par une religion, quelle qu'elle soit ?

Les églises et les religions de par le monde peuvent bien s'occuper des choses divines tant qu'elles veulent. Ça les regarde. Mais pour ce qui a

trait à l'humain, elles sont d'une totale incompétence. Depuis des siècles, l'Histoire nous montre que leurs dogmes et doctrines sont contredits par la science. La médecine, qui s'appuie sur l'expérience, montre mieux ce qui est nécessaire à l'homme pour conserver la santé que tous ces principes éthérés de la religion qui nuisent à la santé et au bonheur de l'homme sur terre. Il est donc de la responsabilité de ceux qui connaissent la vérité de la dire à ces peuples qui souffrent inutilement.

À l'heure de la mondialisation, il devient inacceptable de tolérer un tel état de fait alors que des organisations humanitaires existent à peu près partout dans le monde. Qu'attendent-elles pour offrir une meilleure éducation et pour dénoncer l'Église catholique et ses funestes abus de pouvoir ? Cette

Église, qui s'arroge même le droit de torturer les consciences, préfère maintenir les pauvres dans l'ignorance pour mieux les maltraiter, en leur faisant croire que leurs souffrances apaiseraient la colère d'un Père qui se repaît de voir ses enfants expier leurs supposées fautes dans les douleurs les plus atroces. Un tel « Père » est rien de moins qu'ignoble.

Alors que l'être humain est fait pour le bonheur sur terre, qu'il le veuille donc pour lui-même et pour ses semblables. Ceux qui cherchent à l'éloigner de ce but fondamental ne lui veulent que du mal et finissent par parvenir à leurs fins.

Alors, je reviens à vous, Docteur Thomas : votre silence serait-il une approbation tacite des édits malsains de l'Église catholique au sujet du Sida ? Ou sinon, qu'est ce qui vous musèle ?



# Shirley Valentine

Shirley Valentine, at the Centaur Theatre until February 22, is a harmless feminist fantasy about a middle-aged housewife who skips out on her husband on two week Aegean holiday to find her self.

It's an entertaining two hour monologue that thrills women of a certain age without ever offending their self-satisfied husbands who have been dragged along into to the theatre.

Vancouver's favourite actress, Nicola Cavendish, has been doing the show across Canada for so long she delivers a deliciously full-bodied, unglued performance.

Cavendish portrays the heroine who is married to a lout of a husband whom she describes as, "not bad, but no bleeding good."

Her children are grown and to escape her boring marriage she accepts the invitation from a gal pal to fly off to Greece.

As she cooks chips and eggs for her husband in her crisply sterile kitchen, she knocks back a bottle of wine, and invites the audience into her predicament before she fulfills a dream every housewife has entertained at least once in her life: She tacks a note to her husband on the fridge door that reads: Gone to Greece, Back in Two Weeks.

The script by Willy Russell, who also wrote *Educating Rita*, is filled with wry musings such as "Marriage is a little bit like the Middle East, isn't it? There's no solution. The best you can do is hold your head down and hope the cease fire holds."

Normally, Shirley would be frying steak for her husband, who expects the same meal every evening. But she's fed the meat to a dog whose owners have raised him to be a strict vegetarian just for the pleasure of seeing the dog devour it, and at the same time, one suspects, for the delight of annoying her husband.

Cavendish talks to the walls as she gossips cheerfully about the minutiae of her boring life including her grown children, a selfish daughter and a feckless son. There is an especially hilarious story about her son's disastrous appearance in a Christmas pageant. Cavendish is one of those performers who can bring down the house with a gleeful expression or a turn of her head. Her message is trite, but clear: Life is short, and "some people die long before they're dead."

Clearly, she is not about to be one of them. With the help of a Greek waiter she meets on her vacation, she discovers what it means to be a woman all over

again.

Centaur artistic director Roy Surette, who has been coaching Cavendish along in this one character show for almost 20 years, continues to illuminate the work.

Cavendish, who concedes she was "way too young" when she first stepped into the character's skin in 1989, says doing the show for so long has helped her discover a resonance in the part that wasn't there at the beginning.

"For maturity, for life experience, I'm exactly on the money now. There's a richness to Shirley's palette that wasn't there before. Its not lines now' Shirley is at a cellular level for me."

The costumes by Phillip Clarkson are right on the money, Anne Séguin Poirier's set elevates kitchen sink drama to a new level, and her vision of a Greek Island in the second act (beautifully illuminated by lighting designer Luc Laprairie) is cheerfully detailed, right down to the tiny, Aegean village atop distant mountain - but you have to look carefully to see it.

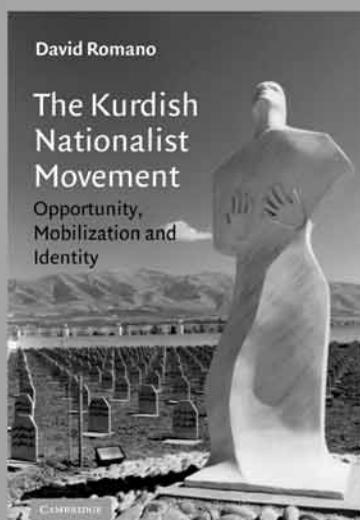
After close to 600 performances as Shirley Valentine, Cavendish can claim the role as her own.

It's worth a trip to the Centaur just for the pleasure of seeing her again.



Nicola Cavendish as Shirley Valentine.

## 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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# Peace for Piaf

She was born in Belleville, Paris in 1915 and died at age 47 in 1963. Little did she know the lasting affect that she would have on generations of music devotees the world over. She was once the most highly paid star in the world, but when she died, much of her savings had been spent on alcohol and a drug habit.

Books have been written about her, museums dedicated to her, movies honour her life. The last, *La Vie en Rose*, won a Best Actress Academy Award for Marion Cotillard.

Piaf - The woman, the songstress and story-teller. Piaf. The tortured soul.

All are succinctly brought to life in Roger Peace's *Piaf: Love Conquers All*, on at the The Centaur Theatre until February 8.

This is a must see for the die-hard fan. There is no embellishment here, just pure Piaf relating stories and singing.

Written by Montrealer Roger Peace in 1992 for Patsy Gallant, the show was part of a trilogy of plays on strong women who had all suffered difficult lives and left their marks on society. Edith Piaf had a life that is great fodder for any writer. (Even her name had drama attached to it. She was named Edith after Edith Cavell, the British nurse who was executed in World War 1 for helping French soldiers escape from their German captors.) The second part of the trilogy, 'Songs and Stories of the Red Hot Mama', created for Geraldine Doucet, focused on Sophie Tucker who, because she was

overweight, also suffered difficult times as a Vaudeville performer, as did Billie Holiday who was brought to life by Rane Lee in 'White Gardenia'. All written by Peace.

Each unique, each tormented, each very talented, these ladies drew on their painful pasts for inspiration.

That's exactly what drew Peace to the women. "Somehow when women have suffered, it stands out and affects you more. Look at Piaf. If you tried to make up something like that, no one would believe you: She was blind from age 3 to 7, her only child died of meningitis at the age of 3, she had to pimp herself so she could get money to bury the little girl and later in life she was also accused of murder.

And yet, she believed, she believed

that love conquered all". In fact, a relic was found on her possession after she died that had those very words engraved on it. And she truly did believe it.

All of that pain and suffering is reflected in her music, "she sings her stories - stories of love and passion". Fire and passion that reaches out to people and speaks so profoundly.

Peace has isolated these very qualities and written most eloquently about the lady who has tugged at the heartstrings of so many.

Alan Sandler produced the original production of *Piaf: Love Conquers All* at La Diligence in English and French starring Gallant, and it did so well, it was transferred to Place des Arts towards the end of 1992. She received

standing ovations for her performance every single night.

More recently, the show enjoyed great success off-Broadway with Montreal's Naomi Emmerson in the lead. It won 'Outstanding Musical' at The Fringe Festival in New York and was so popular that it was given a three month extended run at The Soho Playhouse. Prior to that it was chosen by the Toronto Fringe Festival as 'Most Popular Show' of 300 productions.

And now, here it is, once again, at The Centaur Theatre with Emmerson in the lead.

Emmerson was first introduced to the show when she was asked to play Piaf on television in "Here's to the Ladies" (including Holiday and Tucker). Gallant wasn't able to continue due to contractual obligations. She was off to Paris with 'Starmania'.

While an actor may breath life into a role, it is the writer who digs out the juicy bits, deciphers thoughts of the real life character, transfers them to the page and pulls everything together into a tight package of emotions and rich story-telling for our entertainment.

Peace has created a tight, very focused and profound piece of work into which Emmerson can throw herself with complete artistic abandon.

Piaf was a tiny lady, usually dressed in black. In fact, her tour of the US nearly came to a halt because she lacked what most North Americans saw intrinsic to a French singer - sophistication.

Perhaps she hadn't the sophistication or class. She was, however, a lady of grace. That is what audiences in North America finally recognized in the diminutive form that walked out on stage to sing in a language they couldn't understand. Her persona was hypnotic, her voice compelling.

Watching Emmerson, its hard to see her as anyone else but Piaf. There was lip-synching in the 2007 movie. But not here. Just great acting and a voice incredibly like the little Sparrow's. Deep, moving and wasted. Ahhhh, but that's acting, isn't it. And Emmerson does it so well.

And as for the author: well done Roger Peace. Which is the next of the great ladies to grace your pages? Judy Garland?

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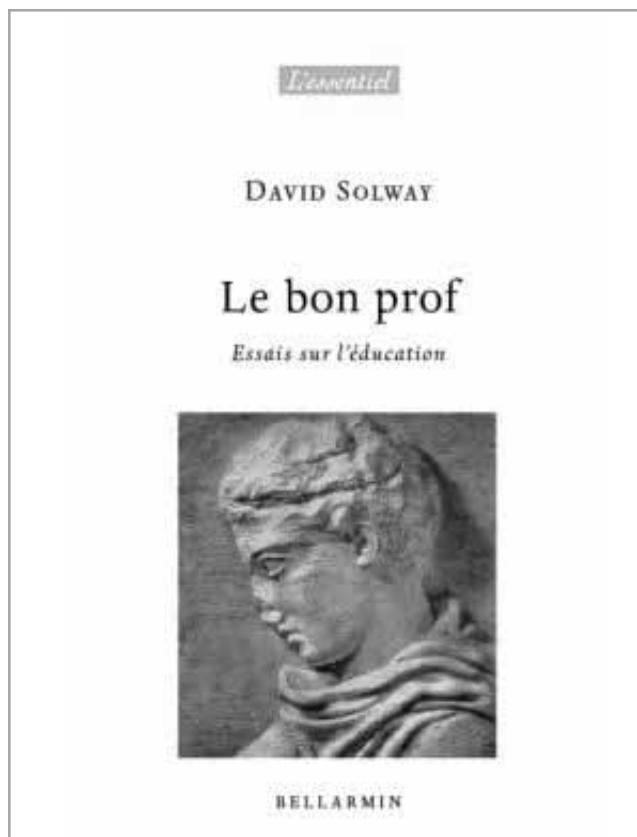
# Le Bon Prof

David Solway, *Le bon prof : essais sur l'éducation*, Montréal, éditions Bellarmin, 2008, 280 p.

Le Québécois David Solway, écrivain anglophone et poète reconnu qui s'est notamment mérité en 2004 le Prix littéraire de la ville de Montréal, est l'auteur de l'essai sur l'éducation *Le bon prof*. Dans ce livre, on entre en conflit frontal avec la « nouvelle vérité ». En effet, en plein « renouveau pédagogique », voici un ouvrage qui décape, littéralement, et nous sort de ces tristes zones embourbées jusqu'au cou par le prêt-à-penser de la pensée unique. *Le bon prof* est un essai franc, porteur du goût du risque. Le ton y est rapidement donné : « La plupart des profs qui ont exercé une influence déterminante sur mon développement et dont j'ai gardé le souvenir, n'auraient sans doute pas décroché le bac dans une faculté d'éducation ».

Au fond, le débat sur le malaise en éducation, Solway en parle en allant plus loin que d'établir un simple constat de sempiternelle défaite. Il parle du plaisir d'enseigner, d'instruire, et d'éduquer. Il parle des professeurs qui ont marqué sa vie, des élèves aussi, forcément. Cependant, on devine qu'il revient de loin. L'auteur a connu le désespoir, l'enfer dont notre littérature est pavée. Il a connu une vie ingrate dans l'enseignement. Il a connu aussi un bon prof, qui, de toute évidence, l'a sauvé de ce triste théâtre d'observation d'un univers marqué par les jugements à l'emporte-pièce et la pauvreté d'esprit. Sur le plan littéraire, il a néanmoins construit tout seul cet outil de référence qu'est cet essai audacieux qu'il vient de produire.

Idéaliste, cet essai n'en est pas moins réaliste, en mettant en lumière les injustices, la violence, les mentalités entêtées et



remplies de préjugés, et en déplorant l'insulte facile. Ainsi, il s'en prend avec humanité à la peur atavique de l'inégalité : « L'éducation doit humaniser ! » Ce regard bienveillant est

une réelle bénédiction dans ce monde de fous plus ou moins furieux. De plus, l'éducation, c'est également la communication. La capacité de communiquer, d'écrire dans ce but, de s'objecter à la domination d'un pouvoir corrompu et soumis à un état d'esclavage hypocrite.

En effet, le système d'éducation étouffe, les élèves et les professeurs étouffent, tout cela tandis que de plus en plus de voix s'élèvent : non à la torture, non à l'esclavage, non à la répression, non au totalitarisme. Dans le monde entier, la conscience collective a eu des impacts tout de même importants. Ainsi, Solway met en lumière l'architecture de nos sociétés, notamment la société occidentale, et les malaises découlant des clivages et des débats où se pratique l'art de « couper les cheveux en quatre ». Ainsi, dit-il, « Nous aurions pu, comme peuples, comme écrivains, journalistes, poètes et professeurs, être fort différents de ce que nous sommes, si nous avions eu plus d'ardeur à défendre les injustices, si nous avions recherché la beauté et l'éloquence, au lieu de nous complaire dans la médiocrité ambiante, de bon aloi, d'un conformisme béat qui a peur de tout, surtout de lui-même. En somme, nous aurions pu être très différents si le libéralisme du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle avait gagné la partie. »

Aussi, Solway nous rappelle il n'est pas nécessaire de se livrer à la poésie active, c'est-à-dire écrite, pour goûter le bonheur et « la joie de l'expressivité heureuse et de l'impression profonde ». Un poème, c'est avant tout autre chose un véritable chant. D'où le fait que l'auteur nous invite à considérer l'enseignement non pas comme un exercice technique requérant mille gadgets technologiques, mais plutôt un véritable art oratoire, qui doit se vivre « a capella ».

“You will find *true*  
**SUCCESS** in those *efforts*  
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*heart and soul.*  
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