

The case for a decentralized Canada

OTTAWA — Whenever the herd goes charging off in one direction, you can usually find one thoughtful individual walking the other way.

The man challenging the prevailing wisdom in Ottawa this week is Tom Courchene, a 46-year-old economics professor from the University of Western Ontario.

At a time when most commentators are warning that Prime Minister Brian Mulroney gave the provinces too much power to shape their own social program in last week's constitutional agreement, Courchene is suggesting quite the opposite.

He thinks a decentralized social policy system is a good thing. Rather than mourning the Meech Lake accord, he sees it as a step toward a healthier, more flexible kind of federalism.

"I suspect that a majority of Canadians would opt for a more centralized social policy system," Courchene acknowledges. "No doubt some will take a dim view of the provinces experimenting in various ways with what are regarded as sacred trusts."

"But it is important to recognize that what is occurring here is the application of the economic theory of federalism," he says. "The end result of this innovation and experimentation across jurisdictions will surely be that the in-



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 National Affairs

novations that prove to be superior will be adopted."

Courchene puts forward this view in a 184-page social policy review, released by the C.D. Howe Institute this week. The study deserves a serious look for two reasons. One is that it is a lucid, well-reasoned defence of a more decentralized approach to social policy. The other is that its author, a close friend of junior finance minister Tom Hockin and a former Progressive Conservative candidate, is the kind of economist who is listened to in Tory circles.

Even those who end up discarding Courchene's policy prescriptions will find his arguments stimulating. He provides what Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's government has, so far, failed to offer Canadians: A logical explanation of how — and why — a more decentralized social policy system can work.

This is not the only theme of Courchene's paper. He tackles everything from restructuring unemployment insurance to cop-

ing with a rapidly aging population. But, at a time when the power balance between Ottawa and the provinces is about to undergo a major shift, it is Courchene's theory of "federation economics" that leaps off the page.

One of the main provisions of last week's Meech Lake agreement was a clause granting the provinces the right to opt out of new federal initiatives, such as a national day-care plan, and set up their own programs.

Liberal leader John Turner has called the federal-provincial accord a "constitutional straitjacket." New Democratic Party leader Ed Broadbent has likewise warned that it could weaken Ottawa's ability to introduce coast-to-coast social programs.

All Mulroney has said, in response to these concerns, is that "the right, the obligation and the authority of the Parliament of Canada to conduct national affairs with respect to spending is uninhibited and unfettered."

This may make fine television, but it does little to help Canadians understand why the federal government gave the provinces this new latitude. Nor does it provide any reassurance that the partnership between Ottawa and the provinces can accommodate such a change.

Courchene's study takes up

where Mulroney's rhetoric leaves off. He explains that, to a conservative, it makes perfect sense to give the provinces more manoeuvring room.

"Opting out has been one of the great elements of genius in our federation," the author said in an interview. "Indeed, one of Canada's major contributions to the art of federalism has been its ability to design programs that are national without being central or federal."

He offers several examples:

□ Although medicare is a national program, each of the provinces administers its own health care system. And it is at the provincial level that promising experiments, such as at-home medical treatment, increased use of paramedics, and the establishment of community clinics, are occurring.

□ Quebec's decision to collect its own income taxes has not harmed the national taxation system. By opting out, the province has been able to pursue its own priorities without imposing them on the other provinces.

□ There is a growing recognition, among public policymakers, that community-based job creation initiatives work better than projects dreamed up by bureaucrats in Ottawa.

Courchene says he would not find it at all distressing if one or

two of the provinces decided to opt out of Ottawa's day-care plan. Nor would it bother him if one province, Newfoundland for example, were designated as a pilot project for a full-blown guaranteed annual income scheme.

He stresses that the federal government has an important role to play in harmonizing the system and equalizing the disparities between rich and poor provinces. But he looks to the provinces to provide the well-spring of creative ideas to administer and fund social programs.

"The tendency at the federal level is to straitjacket the system," Courchene says. "That's fine for those who like a neat, tidy, safe-for-all system. But I prefer innovation and experimentation."

His analysis runs counter to the Canadian tradition of viewing Ottawa as the guardian of the national interest. And it challenges the popular notion that uniformity of social programs across the country is the best guarantee of equitable treatment for all Canadians.

"I hope it will cause some people to think," he says.

The odd thing about Courchene's study is that it should be so out of step with Ottawa thinking. It is a classic conservative philosophy. But this is still not really a Tory town.

Is the U.S. once again rethinking Iran policy?

By Joseph C. Harsch

There is evidence that official Washington has been doing some rethinking of its Iran policy.

On April 21, Richard Murphy, assistant secretary of state for Middle East affairs, stated to the House foreign affairs subcommittee on Middle East affairs that "we meet, we have met" with representatives of the main anti-Khomeini underground in Iran, an organization called the Mujahideen-e Khalq.

Back during 1985, when the United States was clandestinely selling weapons to the Khomeini regime through Israeli intermediaries, the official Washington line was anti-Mujahideen.

On July 24, 1985, the same Richard Murphy informed the same House subcommittee that the Mujahideen was "anti-democratic, anti-American" and a practitioner of "terrorism." He also identified the Mujahideen as having been active in bringing down the former Shah and as being Marxist.

The anti-Mujahideen stance in Washington seems to have prevailed down to early April of this year, when State Department spokesman Charles Redman said the Mujahideen had "a long record of terrorist activity."

But by April 21, Murphy was asserting that "we are not boycotting them" and that they are "a player" in Iran today.

Supporting Iran against Iraq in the six-year war has been standard Israeli policy. Israel has been delivering weapons and spare parts for U.S. weapons to Iran throughout the war. Israel was prominent in arranging the attempted arms-for-hostages deal, which blew up last year and heavily damaged the Reagan administration.

Has Israel also changed its view of that war?

Daniel Pipes, a long-time supporter of Israel, co-signed an article in the April 27 issue of The New Republic magazine advocating that the U.S. switch from a pro-Khomeini policy to a pro-Iraq policy. Specifically, Pipes proposed that the U.S. "consider upgrading the intelligence it is supplying to Baghdad to balance the military damage done to Iraq by the 'arms-for-hostage swap.'" He also proposed "opening a line of export-import credits" and reduce tariffs on Iraqi goods.

Certainly Washington, and perhaps Israel as well, has been shaken by the course of the Iran-Iraq war.

A major Iranian offensive against Iraq's second largest city, Basra, reached a climax in late January. The big battle was fought Jan. 25 to 29. The Iraqis broke through the outer defences of Basra and pushed to within artillery range of the city. They were finally stopped but only after the city was rendered virtually uninhabitable.

The Iraqis counterattacked from Jan. 31 to Feb. 8 and regained some of their lost ground, but not enough to put Basra out of danger.

On April 7, the Iraqis opened what some observers think is a preliminary to another big offensive.

The January offensive with another apparently in the making has raised the possibility of a decisive victory for Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The possibility has emerged that his forces might break through at Basra, deliver a decisive blow to the Iraqi army and emerge as the dominant military power in the whole of the Arabian peninsula.

The Mujahideen maintains an active lobby in Washington. It has found favor on Capitol Hill. It would like to be recognized as an anti-Khomeini political force inside Iran. Its leadership is currently in Baghdad. It claims to be an effective clandestine opposition to the Khomeini regime. It says that 140,000 of its people have been imprisoned by the Khomeini forces.

The serious question is whether the U.S. should go over from a policy of wooing Khomeini (which the arms-for-hostages deal essentially was) to a policy of backing the anti-Khomeini opposition inside Iran.

Whether those who favor open recognition of the Mujahideen win probably depends on whether the Israeli government is sufficiently worried at the prospect of a major Khomeini triumph to be willing to break off its own dealings with his regime.

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Gary Hart and the private lives of politicians

WASHINGTON — Gary Hart, the U.S. presidential hopeful, is today politically crippled — if not dead — after published reports that he spent much of last weekend with a former beauty queen while his wife was out of town.

Hart is struggling to fight back, insisting he did nothing immoral and that he is guilty only of putting himself in a spot that might be misunderstood.

It's a titillating question: Did Hart spend the night with Donna Rice, and if so, what does that mean about his character and his presidential prospects?

However, the hotter debate is over whether his private matters are any of the public's business, and whether a responsible press should be poking into what a politician does when his wife is out of town.

This raises another question for Canadians: Could Hart, or any politician, survive politically in Canada under similar circumstances?

Sex and power have long been close allies in Washington and on Capitol Hill — as they have been in Ottawa and on Parliament Hill. The difference is that in Canada the intimate relation is seldom, if ever, reported.

Charges of illicit sexual relations are nothing new. There have been John F. Kennedy and Judith Exner (and others); Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Lucy Mercer; Wilbur Mills and Fanne Foxe; Wayne Hayes and Elizabeth Ray. Nelson Rockefeller died while with a young woman; Grover Cleveland had an illegitimate son; Ted Kennedy is still haunted by the memory of his night at the Chappaquiddick bridge.

Canadians like to see themselves as being more tolerant than Americans when it comes to the private lives of politicians. That is only partly true. They can be mercifully forgiving, or the exact opposite.

Pierre Trudeau ran for prime minister as a swinging bachelor in 1968. Instead of being repulsed by his image, Canadians revelled in it. His dates with stars such as Barbra Streisand were widely reported, although his private life was so secret that few people knew he was going to marry Margaret Sinclair. When Trudeau ran as a separated husband with three children in 1979 and 1980, his marriage problems with



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 In Washington

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Margaret were not an issue for most voters.

Also, Canada has elected its share of eccentrics, led by Mackenzie King, the bachelor prime minister who communicated with the spirit world.

In the U.S., a presidential candidate must be seen as a solid family man, with his wife at his side at all times. Ronald Reagan is divorced, but he ran for the presidency with his second wife Nancy at his side. No successful American presidential candidate since James Buchanan in 1856 has been a bachelor.

But while Canadians were kind toward Trudeau, they have been hard on Joe Clark and John Turner. Questions about Clark's marriage to Maureen McTeer are raised so frequently that McTeer has lashed out at reporters who even hint at the issue. For Turner, many voters never forgave him for his "bum-patting" incidents in the 1984 election, believing the acts said more about Turner than any words he spoke.

Voters in both countries watch every twitch of a candidate who has a serious chance of winning. While they will pardon a minor challenger for slips, they are relentless when assessing a frontrunner.

For Hart, that spelled disaster. He is a deeply troubled candidate. Questions linger from his 1984 campaign about his womanizing, his age and name changes, his credibility.

By keeping company with the Miami model while his wife was in Denver and while the political climate was hot with gossip about his affairs, he proved that his judgment is badly flawed.

During the next Canadian election, the private lives of all candidates will be watched more closely than ever. In the TV



Trudeau years: Pierre and Margaret Trudeau's split didn't affect his career.

age, both Americans and Canadians base their leadership choices more on personality than policies. Voters rate candidates by whether they look sincere and trustworthy. Candidates in both countries now sell themselves in 30-second commercials aimed at creating the right image. Even when not dared by a candidate — as Hart challenged U.S. reporters to "put a tail on me" — the press has a duty to illuminate what lies behind the TV image.

If Hart had been a leadership candidate in Canada, he may have fared better. He

may have escaped the intense media glare, because most Canadian journalists — frightened by stricter libel laws or comfortable with a cozy relationship with politicians — are less aggressive than many American reporters.

But regardless of where politicians run, they must realize that the press will seek to expose their blemishes, and the public wants to read about them. If they fail to understand that, then they likely lack the judgment — indeed, perhaps the desire — to be in politics at all.

Teachers are better trained but criticized more

By Jack Quarter

In 1971, a provocative book, *Education And Jobs: The Great Training Robbery*, was published by American academic Ivor Berg. Its theme was that over the years there had been a marked increase in the years of schooling required for most jobs — without a resulting change in jobs.

The teaching profession is a case in point. In the late 1950s, it was possible to become a teacher with Grade 12 plus two summers of teachers' college. Eventually, the training requirements increased to Grade 13 and then a BA plus a year of teachers' college (subsequently university faculties of education).

Now the provincial government, in last week's Throne Speech, is saying it will make teacher training even more demanding, and the current series of stories on education in The Star reveal a heavy demand for that. As well, there is a new report, *Teacher Education In Ontario*, by Michael Fullan and Michael Connelly of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. It proposes that prospective teachers be required to have at least a four-year undergraduate degree, one year at a faculty of education, and then a four-year apprenticeship, which would start with 60 per cent of the time in the classroom — the classroom time gradually increasing to 90 per cent in the final two years. If Education Minister Sean Conway makes this recommendation the basis for revamping teacher

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training, it would require at least nine years of post-secondary education to receive a permanent teacher's certificate.

Recall this is the same profession that one generation ago needed only Grade 12 plus a couple of summers at teachers' college. Has teaching really changed that much? I doubt it. What has changed, though, is the labor market and the status of the profession.

In the late 1950s, the children of the post-war baby boom were flooding the system and there was

a shortage of teachers (and other professionals as well). In labor market terms, this was a sellers' market — with professionals such as teachers being able to pick the job of their choice.

In recent years, the market conditions have changed: There is an over-supply of teachers and other professionals. Under these circumstances, the buyers of labor are able to demand more. More, in this case, is more training.

Presumably nine years of training would act as a disincentive to prospective teachers and bring the supply more into line with the demand. However, nine years of training would also — in all likelihood — change the face of the

teaching profession in other ways. Women have been attracted to teaching because it has permitted them to combine childrearing with a profession. Nine years of training (even if there would be partial pay during the apprenticeship) will probably discourage many women and people of modest economic means (including members of other minority groups) from entering teaching.

The clear beneficiaries would be the teacher-training profession. During the past decade, this profession has been in decline because of cutbacks in university funding in general. For example, at the University of Toronto, only about half of the revenues that flow to the university for faculty

of education enrolments become part of that faculty's budget; many members of U of T's faculty of education are retiring, and there has not been a new appointment for 10 years.

I have always felt that teaching is more of an art than a science. And the greatest difficulty in maintaining the vitality that goes with this art is the tedious routine and the stress of having to work with large groups of students who would often prefer to be elsewhere.

I doubt whether a prolonged training stint would ease the burden on teachers. In fact, such a lengthy apprenticeship may hasten the burnout problem.

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