

# Harper's Canada

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# 1 Introduction

“The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting” *Milan Kundera, Czechoslovak anti-communist novelist, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, 1979*

“La MÉMOIRE reste un guide. Et l’OUBLI . . . un danger”. *Gilles Vigneault*

One way to get a clear vision of Prime Minister Stephen Harper is to make an analogy, to compare him with similar cases. The similarities between Putin’s Russia and Harper’s Canada are rather amazing. It starts with secrecy and centralized control at the top. Power and wealth are entrusted to a coterie of senior aids. Muzzling of the media is accompanied by reinforcing of alternate media. Opposition is systematically dismantled, starting with fledgling

opposition leaders and including the stifling of civil society and watch-dog agencies. The crowds in the streets are closely controlled. Offensive individuals are publicly pilloried and perhaps taken off the playing field all together. Investments are concentrated on short-term energy assets and resources, while technological innovation and the humanities and social science are neglected. The legislature and governing party are controlled by an inner circle of powerful advisors. The police and military are modernized and heavily subsidized. Fear is nurtured. National pride is stimulated and public opinion captured through the costly promotion of selective historical events and public festivals like the Olympics and the G-8. Both leaders have undertaken aggressive, single-minded foreign policy adventures to enhance their domestic standing with targeted clientele. The leaders’ personalities are pumped up via international visits and humanizing photo-ops (Harper has not yet been photographed bare-breasted). Democratic institutions are systematically undermined — including elections, courts, the public service and agencies.

As I meditated on this analogy, I wondered if it wasn’t too strong or simplistic. What was my surprise to come across an article that suggests we are in fact observing a new category of regime in world politics. Putin and Harper are not alone. Adnan Knan, a writer and photographer from Istanbul and Islamabad has given them the name of “managed democracies” . These “neo-authoritarian states” include Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Ukraine, Egypt, and Uzbekistan.

Khan provides the following rather unsettling definition: “A new form of democracy is on the rise in the 21st century world. Its features are disturbing: elections are held every five years or so; a winner is announced who goes on to consolidate his power at the expense of national institutions. Media freedoms are curtailed, judicial independence undermined, security apparatuses corralled to serve the governing clique, and civil society incapacitated. Those who protest are crushed, arrested and jailed, undermining open debate, the keystone for any democratic system. And then the time comes for another round of elections and the cycle begins again. . . would-be dictators cloaked in democratic garb.”

Such a description is hard for traditional Canadians to digest. One of the reasons for this booklet is to provide chapter and verse to show that the description may be harsh but it is hardly an exaggeration. Our job as Canadian citizens is to recognize the reality and to seek out a more progressive form of democracy.

As one studies Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative government, the authors, journalists and scholars who have written about him rapidly focus a search light on a number of repetitive characteristics. He is mean and vengeful. The Canadian Teachers Federation once likened him to a school yard bully. He and his party ruthlessly attack and try to destroy those they consider to be their opponents and enemies. The list is long. It includes, of course, the opposition parties and their leaders especially the Liberals, but also lawyers, unions, public servants, scientists, academics, agency heads, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as environmentalists, and journalists. Strangely enough, it can also include members of their own party. He won a seat in the House of Commons by defeating the Progressive Conservative who gave him his first job in politics. As a fresh-faced Reform MP, he undercut his leader, Preston Manning, with media leaks. He went on to call a commission of inquiry that brought his predecessor, Brian Mulroney, low and then issued a 'fatwa' against him. Today he detests Conservatives who go "off message", that is, don't follow to the letter the party line. Nor does he like the major media corporations. They too are "thrown under the wheels of the bus" as "Harper and his Conservatives have become ferocious partisans."

Stephen Harper is also single minded. He has a narrow view of the world based on his personal economic and social conservative ideology which he has spent a decade trying to impose on Canada and Canadians. He is regressive. He wants to return Canada to the past. His life work is to undo the achievements of the Liberals and of liberalism of the recent decades. Mr. Harper is a solitary man, distrustful of friends and colleagues. He never learnt the dynamics of team play. He centralizes power in his own hands and those of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). In 2014 he drew the noose of the inner cir-

cle a little tighter when he named Dustin Van Vugt as Executive Director of the Conservative party because he and his wife 'are trusted foot soldiers loyal to Harper'. To know him is to know his party. So much so that the party started producing a weekly website video called 24 Seven of propaganda centred on the Prime Minister but paid for with tax dollars. From the Party's point of view, it also has the merit of getting around the conventional media and going directly to the people.

He is secretive, hoarding information from Canadians through a calculated policy of communications and cutting off sources of knowledge and evidence such as the census. Of course, he hasn't gotten where he is through stupidity. He is smart. Harper knows how to put two and two together. He moves stealthily by little increments. He is diligent, working hard into the night. But, all in all, his characteristics are the antithesis, the very opposite, of being open, progressive, accommodating, civil and tolerant, the traits by which Canadians had come to identify themselves during the past half century.

By 2015, the Harper Conservatives (the name they call themselves) will have been governing Canada for 10 years. When Canadians go to the polls in the federal election that year, they should be aware of the immense harm Harper has done to the traditional Canada that the world had come to know and respect.

When he arrived in power in 2004 it was after four consecutive Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin. Finally the Liberals were unmercifully crucified for their abuse of money and power in the Quebec sponsorships scandal, eventually laid bare in the Gomery Commission report. Stephen Harper presented himself as a sort of Mr. Clean, a man who would bring in a Conservative government that stressed integrity, transparency, openness and accountability. As we will see, this is not at all what has happened.

As early as 2003, speaking at Civitas, a private Conservative club in Toronto, Stephen Harper laid out his plans for transforming Canada as an economic and social conservative. While admitting that Prime Minister Thatcher of Great Britain and President Ronald Reagan of the United States had already realized much of the conservative agenda he said,

in government “we do need deeper and broader tax cuts, further reductions in debt, further deregulation and privatization.” The real challenge was in confronting “the social agenda of the modern left.” “Real gains” he stressed “are inevitably incremental” . It is clear that Prime Minister Harper has been driven by a preconceived ideological agenda to turn back the clock, to overturn the progressive state and replace it with small, mean, regressive government. Even if Thatcher and Reagan had succeeded in reducing government starting in the 1980s, the young Mr. Harper wanted Canada to make a hard right turn to suit his beliefs.

I will return to the notion “the traditional Canada” in the Conclusion. Suffice it to say here that it manifests itself in our pride in Canada, our unity in diversity, mutual confidence and negotiated evolution, our need for balance and inclusiveness, a sense of fairness and accommodation, and a spirit of practical accommodation and continuous adaptation — both in national and foreign policy. At least it did until the Harper Conservatives came along. Stephen Harper and his colleagues have never been able to understand the complex roots of Canada and the foundations of its culture which is a search for balance and mutual accommodation in a country of diverse forces that need to be balanced. They have contravened all of Canada’s traditional characteristics and attempted to stand our way of dealing with each other on its head.

Prime Minister Harper has forgotten federal-provincial relations. He has hardly ever held a federal-provincial conference. Conservative successes in the West and suburban Ontario leave Atlantic Canada declining in terms of population and political and economic dynamism. National policies of all sorts have taken a beating. For instance, a multiyear funding formula for health has been announced that will transfer \$30 billion less to the provinces than the previous 10 year agreement and largely remove Ottawa from its role in promoting a national public health-care system.

We can say the same for Quebec which the Federal government has generally ignored and replace it by an Anglo-Canadian agenda of a robust military and ties to the British monarchy and British

military history. Early on, the Harper Conservatives had wooed Quebecers but turned their back on them once they won a majority government without substantial Quebec support in 2011. That year, they stripped equalization components out of programs of which Quebec is the largest beneficiary, put the ‘royal’ back in the navy and the air force, cut funding to Radio Canada, scrapped the long gun registry and refused to let Quebec have its lists, toughened criminal sentencing when Quebec favored rehabilitation, and pulled back on environmental issues Quebecers favor. This cutting Quebec adrift has been reciprocated in Quebec by the independantists boasting that Canada has no real culture or relevance. Thanks to the Harperites, we are back to the two solitudes. In fact, there are three. As soon as they came into power, the Harper Conservatives turned their back on the native peoples by reneging on the \$5 billion Kelowna Accord painstakingly negotiated between Ottawa, the provinces and the Aboriginals over the previous two years. They have never been able develop a working relationships with the native peoples. This was not helped by the Prime Minister’s statement that the murder of some 1,300 aboriginal women and girls in the past ten years was not a sociological problem, only a series of crimes.

The narrow ideology of the Harper Conservatives has been devoted to installing a more individualist, market-oriented, small-government Canada. Mr. Harper’s deep convictions have driven a law and order agenda, cutting sales and corporate taxes, and imposing spending cuts and job cuts on the public service. Their entire time in power has been used to transfer advantages to the private sector and denuding the federal government of its resources. The goal has been to give corporations a free hand and to cut their taxes. Unions have been attacked.

Instead of a balanced government, it has become more and more centralized in the single hands of the prime minister and his unelected servants in the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). Harper has been an autocratic centralizer of power, tightly controlling information, ministers and public servants. It is the traditional Canadian democracy that has suffered most under the Harper Conservative. Many institutions such as the House of Commons, the Senate, the

Cabinet, Elections Canada, have been terribly diminished. A culture of secrecy has been installed, the media brought to heel, and CBC minimalized. Harper has systematically attacked not only opposition parties but public servants and non-governmental organizations. The tradition of big-tent accommodation, fairness, mutual respect and tolerance are nowhere to be found in the Harper regime which has been dominated by divisive, negative politics. Harper stands accused of supporting, often surreptitiously, conservative social values and religious institutions to the point where he has even had an office of religious rights created in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The regime's ideology is manifested in many of the Harper Conservative policies. A harsh regime of 'law and order' ignores the roots of crime in its drive for more prisons and more people in them for longer terms – at a great cost to the society. Environmentalism, green policies and combatting climate change have been hobbled by policies which serve only to advance resource extracting industries. Every effort has been made to restrict scientific information, the census and communications so that Canada is no longer a land of progressive, evidence based governance. Billions of dollars have been cut from government social programs while agencies and departments have been emasculated. Programs and agencies such as the Status of Women and Court Challenges programs, Canada Mortgage and Housing, the Law Commission, the Long-arms Registry, the Law Commission, the Long-form Census, Experimental Lakes Area program, the Arctic Institute, and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (amongst dozens of others), many arts, culture and research programs and most environmental and fisheries activities have been eliminated or seriously curtailed.

As it is in domestic politics, so it is in foreign policy. Canada has traditionally supported efforts for international peace, order and justice and multilateral institutions like the United Nations, as the best context in which to balance American power and advance Canada's own interests as one of the world's smaller major countries. But this is no longer acceptable under the Harper Conservatives. Harper announced early on in his Civitas speech that foreign af-

fairs would be fought on "Moral grounds. . . to defend democracy, free enterprise and individual freedom" (John Ibbitson, *The Globe and Mail*, 28-04-12). Because of this orientation, Canada has become a harsh, abrasive and aggressive country. All sense of our competence as a prudent negotiator has been abandoned. We are now renowned internationally as an environmental dinosaur, the only country to have renounced its signature to the Kyoto Agreement and the African Dessertification Control Treaty. We actively thwart environmental negotiations. The Harper Conservative's one-sided support for Israel in the Middle East, the closure of our embassy in Iran and refusal of diplomatic attempts to seek reconciliation with them, our minimal help for the Darfur and Mali, our thoughtless insults to China and Russia, and our lack of respect for the United Nations have not gone unnoticed by our friends and allies. Numerous Canadian foreign policy experts have noted how our country has been diminished and Canadian pride trampled.

Although Harper has been determined to eliminate everything that is liberal, it is not really a question of being liberal or conservative. In fact, many Canadians have a strong streak of conservatism what with our continuous search for peace and stability, good government, and a slow evolutionary approach to development. Rather it is a question of being reactionary or progressive. Harper is a reactionary who wants both to turn back the clock and serve a right wing ideology.

Two final thoughts are in order before drawing this introduction to a close. The motive for producing this booklet is that it is all too easy for people to forget what has gone on in politics for the past ten years. Many may be tempted to forgive and forget. At the same time, the governing party is in a position to make vast electoral promises, and can use it's, and the government's, financial resources and communications professionals to inundate the public with its own campaign propaganda. That is why it is wise for Canadians to be aware of the long list of harms done to Canada by the Harper Conservatives. More important, when you are reading about the current situation, please keep asking yourself how we could improve what is going on at present in the Canadian government. This is the most important aspect

of the booklet. We must ask ourselves how to improve Canada — what policies, institutions and procedures — will help us improve our governance and our democracy? This is the subject to which we will return in the conclusion.

Second, this booklet is not meant to present a “balanced” picture of the past 10 years. It is a critical analysis of the Harper regime. To borrow a term from the Conservatives, the booklet is about ‘principles’ and not ‘going along to get along’. It would be hypocritical to try to be even-handed when what voters need most is an unvarnished portrait of the house that Harper has built as opposed to what Margaret Atwood called, “the kind of country we want to live in”. The Conservatives have abused tax payer money to put forth their side of the story in thousands of television ads. If you want to know about Conservative policies just watch the TV ads tonight. You do not have to accept this booklet as the only truth. But, in light of the Conservative’s abuse of knowledge and information it is important that this book be based on fact. So everything written in this booklet is backed up by references to events and to other authors, experts, journalists, politicians and academics. To save space and small print, these references are presented on my webpage at [john.trent.ca](http://john.trent.ca)

The reader should recognize that this booklet does not just come out of my head. As a politist (political scientist) I have tried to provide an empirical analysis of facts and opinions about the Harper Government using mainly the Canadian news media, particularly the daily new papers during the past six years. This being said, the facts and opinions are indeed selective. As mentioned above and in the Conclusion, my choices are based on my 30 years of efforts to interpret the Canadian identity and what has and should make Canada function best. The reader is free to agree — or not.

We will now go on to look at the Harper Conservative record in greater detail. In addition to the usual narrative form, each chapter will include some unique way of looking at the Harper record. Here, to reinforce the Introduction’s depiction of Harper’s Canada, I use a series of media quotes.

## 1.1 What has been said about the harms of the Harper Conservatives?

- “Here is a comment Harper himself made in 2009. When it comes down to it he told the *Globe and Mail*, “I don’t believe any taxes are good taxes,” which is just a short way of saying he believes that literally everything the state does is bad.” (Andrew Potter, *Maclean’s Magazine*, 26-07-2010).
- “The Prime Minister has established what could be called ‘Brand Canada’ — a land of low taxes, law and order, and a strong military, infused with a robust nationalism, rooted in the West and powered by Ontario’s affluent aspirational suburbs... There are dangers of their decline as regions drift apart and factions grow more strident... the country will be a very different place... It will be divided as never before between left and right, progressive and conservative, east and west, decline and growth — a clash of irreconcilable values... Lamenting what he calls the dismantling of the progressive state... In 2003, speaking in Toronto to *Civitas*, a private Conservative club, Harper laid out his core beliefs and priorities, we do need deeper and broader tax cuts, further reductions in debt, further deregulation and privatization...” (John Ibbitson, ‘Harper Unbound: Majority Rule: Year One’, *Globe and Mail*, 28-04-2011).
- “As an architect of Mr. Harper’s party, Tom Flanagan was complicit in the cultivation of a climate of ruthlessness that put the PM into power and has kept him there. The iron law of this political culture is that you do whatever it takes to win. People and principles are expendable. Dissent is not tolerated. Policies are props that are fashioned to appeal to voters. Everything is evaluated through the prism of whether it will help or hurt the leader.” (Margaret Wente. ‘The Conscience of a Conservative’, *The Globe and Mail*, 26-04-2114).

- “Something old: a way of doing politics — controlling, secretive, obsessive, almost paranoid. . . the Prime Minister has his hands on everything of importance in the government. He is formidably well-informed. When confronted with positions that differ from his own, he punches back, and hard. He will punch and punch again, and his opponents will go away psychologically bleeding.” (Jeffrey Simpson, *Globe and Mail*, 20-07-13).
- “The party Mr. Harper sought would be more tightly focused on fewer voters, but they would be intensely loyal and capable of being rallied around the three themes of market, family and patriotism.” (Jeffrey Simpson, *Globe and Mail*, 8-01-14).
- “If today both Harper and the party he leads are actively disliked by more than seven voters in 10, it may be because they have gone out of their way to alienate them in every conceivable way — not by their policies, or even their record, but simply by their style of governing, as over-bearing as it is under-handed, and that on a good day. . . When they are not refusing to disclose what they are doing, they are giving out false information; when they allow dissenting opinions to be voiced, they smear them as unpatriotic or worse; when they open their own mouths to speak, it is to read the same talking points over and over, however these may conflict with the facts, common courtesy, or their own most solemn promises. . . Secretive, controlling, manipulative, crude, autocratic, vicious, unprincipled, untrustworthy, paranoid . . . even by the standards of Canadian politics, it is quite the performance.” (Andrew Coyne, ‘Nasty Party reputation well deserved’, *The Ottawa Citizen*, 11-05-2013).
- “Rather than elevating political life, the Conservatives have diminished it. They disdain the rules of Parliament. They muzzle backbenchers. They avoid the media. Critics pointedly call the government nasty and high-handed. It practices the politics of slash and burn. At this, Harper’s Conservatives are masters.” (Andrew Cohen, *Ottawa Citizen*, 14-05-2013).
- “Mr. Harper seems to be further alienating most Quebecers in an almost calculated way. Consequently, the vast majority have concluded that he has written off Quebec politically. And not surprisingly, the feeling is mutual. . . Not only is Mr. Harper not the solution, he’s the problem.” (Peter G. White, ‘Quebec separatism: Harper’s costly French kiss-off.’ *Globe and Mail*, 6-05-2013).
- Ekos Research asked 4,568 Canadians, “Do you approve or disapprove of how Stephen Harper is handling his job?” By 50 per cent to 28 per cent the response was No. (Jeffrey Simpson, ‘How low can the Harper Conservatives go?’ *Globe and Mail*, 27-04-2013).
- “If you want government action to have any relation to society’s real needs, you must measure the society’s characteristics accurately every now and then. . . The Harper government is moving in the opposite direction. It will spend more money to send more of these long-form questionnaires to more people, to produce a survey with a larger sampling error so more millions of dollars can be misallocated, and citizens will have fewer independent benchmarks against which to judge any of this.” (Paul Wells, ‘Harpers got us just where he wants us’, *Macleans Magazine*, 16-08-2010).
- The Calgary West fight leaves the Conservative Party in the awkward position of appearing to repudiate its Reform and Canadian Alliance populist roots, as well as Mr. Harper’s promises back in opposition that he would never shield candidates from nomination battles. “It’s really interesting to watch the hypocrisy. It’s fascinating what a so-called populist government does when they obtain power,” says Keith Brownsey, a political scientist at Calgary’s Mount Royal University. (Stephen Chase, *Globe and Mail*, 10-02-2010).
- “. . . nothing in Canada has come close to the attention, time and effort the Harper government

puts into message managing, manipulating, and image-making. Every message from anyone, be it a minister or civil servant, has to be vetted by the Prime Minister's Office and, astonishingly, quiet often by the Prime Minister himself. . . . Every time the government gets a request for information, or a government person is designated to speak, a Message Event Proposal is prepared. . . . Worse, there is a pervasive fear within this government — fear of making a mistake, of saying something ever so slightly off message or creating the mildest unexpected controversy.” (Jeffrey Simpson, 'The price we pay for a government of fear', *Globe and Mail*, 8-06-2010).

- “The great political migration of Canada’s Jewish community from the Liberals to the Conservatives is almost reflexively attributed to Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s emphatic support for Israel: if Mr. Harper champions Israel, the Jewish community will champion him. . . . The Conservative government takes a “principled stance” or as other would have it, dirty wedge politics”. (Craig Offman, *Globe and Mail*, 30-11-2013).
- “This quiet relaunch of the monarchy forms part of a larger campaign, led by a group of fierce monarchists. . . . These men make no secret of their eagerness to erase the Liberal dominated narrative of recent Canadian history, with its emphasis on the Charter, multiculturalism, and the flag, and replace it with other, older traditions that embrace military victories and historical identification with Britain.” (Charlotte Gray, 'Reign Maker', *Walrus*, Jan. 2012)
- “The state under Stephen Harper is becoming all-intrusive. Conservatism, as defined by Ronald Regan, was about getting government off the backs of the people. Conservatism, as practiced by team Harper is more akin to an Orwellian opposite. State controls are now at a highpoint in our modern history.” (Lawrence Martin, 'Message Control: Under this PM, the state is everywhere', *Globe and Mail*, 29-11-2011)
- “The propaganda machine has become mammoth and unrelenting. The parliamentary newspaper, the *Hill Times*, recently found there are now no fewer than 1,500 communications staffers on the governing payroll . . . virtually every government communication is filtered through central command.” (Lawrence Martin, *Globe and Mail*, 29-11-2011).
- “Conservative tactics in the House of Commons — essentially to never apologize, never explain, rarely answer and always attack, while routinely misrepresenting opponents positions, have gone from bad to worse in the new session. The odious practice of routinely using omnibus legislation to ram unrelated measures through Parliament, which drew so much fire in 2012, continues apace with Justice Minister Peter MacKay’s 'cyberbullying' bill. (Michael Den Tandt, *Citizen*, 25-11-2013).
- “A government’s tone and style gradually shape an electorate’s view. Do people feel comfortable?... And this government’s tone and style are beginning to wear on more and more Canadians. The ferocious partisanship, the excessive secrecy, the negative television ads, the lying directed at opponents, the overwhelming sense that enemies abound (including most of the media, of course), the most manic preoccupation with spin and image, and now little scandals from the Senate have created the impression. . . . of a government that has ideology and agenda but not much heart, empathy, feeling or understanding for anyone who doesn’t share that ideology and agenda.” (Jeffrey Simpson, *Globe and Mail*, 5-07-2013).
- “Clear eyed Conservatives should be aware Harper has destroyed the name of Conservatives for a generation” (*Ottawa Citizen*, 11-07-2011).
- “Mr. Harper promised Canadians a different kind of government — modest, anti-elitist, and respectful of the tax-payer’s dime. Now it turns out that Conservatives can milk the system just like anyone else. And when they get caught, their buddies in high places will bail them out

- (e.g. Nigel Wright). Conservatives are like the kind of people they used to loath. But that's what happens when outsiders become insiders. People start to feel entitled. They can't resist rewarding their friends." (Margaret Wente, 'Ottawa insiders look after themselves', *Globe and Mail*, 21-05-13).
- "The National Research Council will be taking its scientific cues from Canadian industry... The move is in keeping with the Conservative government's emphasis on a business model for public policy, such as tying foreign aid to economic development." (Barry McKenna & Ivan Semeniuk, *Globe and Mail*, 8-05-2013).
  - "Close to none of his Cabinet colleagues, Harper ignores many, intimidates most, and trusts only a few. He abhors spontaneity and showmanship, fearing they open the door to mistakes and misunderstandings... He didn't learn the dynamics of team play. He seldom socializes... A room filled with people he doesn't know is Stephen Harper's idea of hell... He is a solitary guy. He is very calculating". (Jeffrey Simpson & B. Laghi, *Globe and Mail*, 4-10-08).
  - "His long-term goal, Harper said, is to make Conservatives the natural governing party of the country... a long-term determination to move it — to transform Canadian society... He is so intent on his long-term goal that he will not let mere principle get in the way of reaching that goal... This is a massive decentralization of Canadian federalism... a small government revolution... So that's the goal, a smaller federal government." (Paul Wells, 'Harper's Canadian Revolution', *Macleans Magazine*, 29-09-2008).
  - "A Conservative party that is not frightened to embrace social conservatism and a hard-core shift to the right... They include an attack on unions and public service workers, condemnation of gender-selection abortion and euthanasia, and protection of the rights of gun owners... to satisfy his core base..." (Mark Kennedy, 'PM's party tilts further to the right', *Ottawa Citizen*, 4-11-2013).
  - "It is a regression to the most primitive stage of human superstition and credulity... believing in magic... or 'gut feelings' by politicians in lieu of arguments based on reason and sound research... facts matter not at all... Reagan had no qualms about inventing things when it seemed convenient... What Reagan was ultimately able to show is that even in the political realm, repetition can overpower reality... One way of understanding contemporary right-wing ideology is to see it as a whole-hearted embrace of these new conditions. Conservatives have become the party of all intuition, all the time." (Joseph Heath & Andrew Potter, 'Sanity: Facts matter not at all. Perception is everything', *Ottawa Citizen*, 26-05-2012).
  - "We are incessantly pummeled with the right-wing litany: 'taxes are too high, workers are too entitled, government is too big and a drag on wealth creators, any restriction on the wealthy is an attack on freedom, and unions are parasites... This agenda is benefitting the richest 1% while the rest of us pay the price through reduced social services, job insecurity, environmental devastation, increased personal debt, soaring tuition, and privatization of health care.'" Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 28-06-2013.
  - On parting company with the Conservatives, the MP Rathberger... said, "the Prime Minister's Office seems to be accountable to nobody, not even the Prime Minister and that PMO staffers in their 20s operate opaquely and routinely without adult supervision." Harper can't afford to allow the perception to take root that he governs through a highly centralized coterie of unelected aides, dangerously disconnected from the rest of his party. (John Geddes, 'Last chance to lead', *Macleans Magazine*, 24-06-2013).
  - "Much has been made of the government's muzzling of the science community, its low regard for statistics, its hard line against environmentalists... there is some wonder about the motivation for these impulses... The Prime Minister is a member of the Alliance Church, more specifi-

cally the Christian and Missionary Alliance. The Church believes the free market is divinely inspired and views of science and environmentalism with what might be called scorn... Mr. Harper never speaks about his religious beliefs; much of what's said about them is speculation... Given evangelicals' strong ties to politics, the subject should not be left unexamined." (Lawrence Martin, 'Faith and Reason: Religion's fair game if it motivates politics', *Globe and Mail*, 31-07-2012).

- "It has become a commonplace of late to say Conservatives have 'lost their way'. That's not about their navigational skills but their state of mind: an acute lack of self-awareness that blinds them to what they have become, a blinkered conviction of their own superior cleverness, a closed loop of defensiveness that interprets every criticism that proves the rightness of the course they are on... They must constantly be on the attack and of course they cannot allow themselves to be weakened by internal dissent, and of course they cannot be open with the public about their plans... It is the attitude of parties that have lost touch, not just with their principles, or their supporters, but with reality... Its default demeanour is sullen, wary, bullying and moronic." (Andrew Coyne, 'Six Degrees of Stephen Harper', *Ottawa Citizen*, 22-06-2013).
- "Cui bono the Romans asked? Who benefits? If applied to most of the major laws and policies of the Harper government over the past eight years, it would reveal that the beneficiaries have overwhelmingly been the top executives, investors, and shareholders of the largest corporations. They have benefited from the massive corporate tax cuts, the privatization of public services, the attacks on unions and union rights, the refusal to curb industrial pollution, the deregulations of controls on marketing, and the lax enforcement of regulations that remain." Ed Finn, *CCPA Monitor*, Ottawa, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Feb., 2014)
- "Which Conservative MP had the bright idea to dismantle the monopolistic Canadian Wheat Board?... In a recent plebiscite, 62 per cent of farmers voted to retain the Wheat Board's 'single desk' structure... This is just more ideological claptrap from a rigid government that favours unbridled capitalism over 'socialist' grain co-operatives. Since 1935, the Canadian Wheat board has matched up grain producers with global markets. Without CWB support, how will one individual farmer cope with that daunting task?" Patricia Robertson, *Globe and Mail*, 23-09-2011).
- "Conservative Party advertisements that denigrate Justin Trudeau's past employment as a teacher are an unwarranted attack on the profession and akin to the kind of bullying schools are trying to control, says the Canadian Teacher's Federation?" (Glen McGregor, *Ottawa Citizen*, 26-04-2013).
- "The Conservatives are planning another attack on the new Liberal leader — this time using taxpayer's dollars... They are planning to send thousands of taxpayer-funded mail-outs to households..." (Lee Berthiaume, *Ottawa Citizen*, 25-04-2013).
- "Harper's inconsistencies and course corrections... He accused critics of wanting to 'cut and run' in Afghanistan... but began withdrawing Canadian forces... He was never going to downplay China's human rights abuses... until it became useful recently to ardently court China as a customer for tar sands... Other surprises: Mulroney-style Senate appointments... The use of G8 funding to help Tony Clement secure re-election... The inexcusable defence of an Employment Insurance agency that has done no work... Defunding ideologically suspect aid agencies... Expanding PMO staffing... The threat of lost jobs in the federal public service... Selling Canadian energy to the highest bidder, shipping unrefined product and jobs to other places... Meddling in the market with favorable tax treatment for the oil industry, weakening environmental reviews, and trash-talking foreign

environmentalists... Voter suppression via robo-calls... Shrill defence of the Northern Gateway pipeline... Frontal attacks on old age security..." (Susan Riley, 'Harper wins when voters snooze', Ottawa Citizen, 27-01-2012).

- "In the alternative universe that is contemporary Ottawa, secrecy is accountability, subversion is reform, communications are policy, movement is action, convictions trump evidence, and incompetence passes effectiveness." (Paul Heinbecker, 'Ottawa, the Foreign Policy Wonderland', the electronic Globe and Mail, 02-04-2014).
- "The Prime Minister's condemnation of Russian violation of international law would have carried more moral weight if he had not previously so strongly supported the illegal US invasion of Iraq and consistently turned a blind eye to the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the 550,000 Israelis illegally settled there. Outside the alternative universe of Ottawa, forgiving your friends and condemning your adversaries for violations of international law is not principled foreign policy. And it is not leadership." Paul Heinbecker, 'Ottawa, the Foreign Policy Wonderland', the electronic Globe and Mail, 02-04-2014).
- "As of Feb. 1, 2012, the number of full-time employees in the Prime Minister's Office was 94, with 21 of them making \$100,000 or more... The cost of Harper's office soared 30 per cent between 2007 and 2010, from around \$7.6 million to \$9.8 million..." (Jason Fekete, Ottawa Citizen, 13-04-2012).
- The Social Security Tribunal, which began work last month as the body that will hear appeals of employment assurance, Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security decisions has hired 46 full-time members and a chair-person. The government says the tribunal will be 'fair, credible, impartial and independent. But at least half of the tribunal members — who will earn as much as \$124,500 a year — have ties to the Conservatives... Before the Conservatives were first elected seven years ago, Mr. Harper complained about the patronage appointments that were handed out by the previous Liberal government... (Gloria Galloway, Globe and Mail, 27-05-2013).
- "Set aside for a moment the Senate expense scandal, concerning the still unfathomable \$90,000 payment to former Conservative Senator Mike Duffy from former PMO Chief of Staff Nigel Wright. Let's take a glance at the rest: Federal Court judge Richard Mosley ruled that in the May 2011 election fraud occurred in ridings nationwide... the judge found that the perpetrators had access to the Conservative Party's CIMS database. The fraud was high-tech and widespread... Next is the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and its patronage-tainted hiring of Kevin Mac Adam, a former staffer of Defence Minister Peter MacKay... One time Stephen Harper appointee Arthur Porter... was arrested in Panama this week and charged with fraud... The backdrop has been the excruciatingly public meltdown in Toronto of the Ford brothers' political dynasty — staunchly Conservative and pro-Harper." (Michael Den Tandt, 'Conservatives scandals grow by the day', Ottawa Citizen, 29-05-2013).
- "The pattern that emerges from these and other bungles... is a consistent one. Step one: Fail to gather consensus or anticipate opposition. Step two: Make no effort to disarm or to co-opt critics, but antagonize them at every turn. Step three: Attempt to bluster or to bully them into submission. Step four: Ignore warnings of imminent collision with reality. Step five: crash and burn." (Andrew Coyne, 'Harper's reputation as strategist obscures his screw-ups', Ottawa Citizen, 29-04-2014).
- "When 11 former presidents of the Canadian bar Association rebuke the government for attacking Canada's top jurist, it is fair to ask the question: How low can Prime Minister Harper's government go? ... Attacking the integrity of the Chief Justice is a very serious matter, an attack with-

out precedent in Canadian history. It shows a Prime Minister furious at the Supreme Court, angry at obstacles put in the way of his exercise of power, willing to misrepresent facts and lash out at one of the country's most respected persons... What must especially gall Mr. Harper is that he appointed a majority of the Court's current judges." Jeffrey Simpson, 'Conservatives sink to a new low', *Globe and Mail*, 7-05-2014.

- "Watching the Harper government stumble from one needless controversy to another — picking fights, settling scores, demeaning institutions and individuals alike in the pursuit of no discernible principle or even political gain — one has the distinct impression of a government, and a prime minister, spinning out of control... At what point do Conservatives of goodwill become concerned about the long-term damage being done to their party's reputation under its present leadership?" (Andrew Coyne, 'Harper's reckless smear of Canada's top judge', *Ottawa Citizen*, 6-05-2014).
- "Mr. Harper putting Pierre Poilievre in as his Minister of Democratic Reform means we will soon have no democracy at all. Mr. Poilievre would no doubt feel comfortable defending 'democracy' on the streets of Kiev with the remnants of the skinheads there. Putting this fellow who has shown little understanding of democratic principles or practices in charge of 'reforming' those practices is, in effect, Harper's way of retiring the whole concept of democracy from Canadian politics." (Fred Ryan, 'Kissing old Canada good-bye?' *West Quebec Post*, 18-04-2014).
- "He is an evangelical conservative, so dedicated to converting others to his world view that he has transformed — polarized, really — the political life of the country (Ibbitson 28-04-12)."
- "Harper's new brand Canada seems to be on the rise: aggressively patriotic, conservative on fiscal policy and on the law-and-order front, relatively unconcerned about the environment... proud of

its military and willing to spend money on it (John Ibbitson, *Globe and Mail*, 28-04-12)."

- "Opposition to a Harper dynasty will coalesce around someone with a set of opposing values voters come to prefer (ibid)."
- "Stephen Harper's Conservative Party is infused with his own dedication to economic and social conservatism. Rather than being a brokerage party, it is values based. Eventually a progressive coalition will rise to challenge it making national politics a two-party, values-based contest (Ibbitson 28-04-12)."
- "Nothing seems likely to stop the Canadian drift toward politics defined by ideological divides that Stephen Harper himself defined (John Ibbitson, 'Harper Unbound' *Globe and Mail*, 28-04-12 p.F6.)."
- Letter in the *Globe and Mail*: "For years, 'Ready, Aim, Fire' has been the Harper government's preferred approach to real or imagined problems. This government can't get passed an ideology that brooks no compromise, that sees problems where they don't exist, science as belief rather than fact, and enemies nearly everywhere" . (Edward Carson, *Toronto*, 19-06-2014).
- "Those who thought the Harper government would ease up a bit after winning a majority were wrong... If anything, the Harper government is more bullying, scornful of dissent, intent on controlling every utterance, contemptuous of the media and determined to carry on political war at all times and by any means... You might have thought that, with the prospects of four more years in office, the government might be somewhat less paranoid, controlling, doctrinaire and relentlessly partisan. Forget that naiveté." Jeffrey Simpson, "Harper Government: And the bullying goes on" , *Globe and Mail*, 16-12-2011.
- "Two protests seemingly miles apart, were about the kind of country we want to live in. a) Save our prison farms — they mean local food chains,

rehabilitation, mental health, socialization, minimum security; and b) What are prisons for — Keeping us safe? Rehabilitation? Or harsh punishment, pure and simple? The Canada we thought we knew: civic responsibility, lending a hand, second chances. This image got a boot in the face. The Prime Minister has shown a suspicious interest in the infliction of pain.” Margaret Atwood, *Globe and Mail*, 6-07-2010.

- “Que doit-on penser, que doit-on faire d’un gouvernement qui fond plusieurs de ses grandes politiques sur un monde sorti tout droit de son imagination idéologique? En matière d’environnement, de criminalité, d’aide financière, et maintenant dans le dossier du recensement de 2011, le gouvernement Harper fait constamment fi de la réalité ... pour imposer un agenda truffé d’embuches.” (Pierre Allard, ‘Quand l’idéologie domine la réalité ...’ éditorial, *Le Droit*, 2011).
- “Nycole Turmel se dit choquée qu’on utilise les événements familiaux (le Bal de Neige) pour promouvoir le début d’une guerre... C’est une fête de famille qui célèbre l’hiver. Les conservateurs utilisent cet événement pour promouvoir la guerre alors que nos soldats se plaignent qu’ils n’ont pas les ressources nécessaires pour faire face à diverses séquelles comme le stress post-traumatiques, dit-elle”. (Philippe Orfali, ‘La guerre encore au menu du Bal de neige : l’activité avait soulevé un tollé en 2012, *Le Droit*, 17-12-2013)
- “Dans ce dossier de réforme de la loi électorale, l’ébauche du projet de loi s’est fait sans consultation, ni des élus ni des autorités concernées... Pierre Poilievre n’a en rien aidé. Partisan et abrasif il a adopté sans retenu la stratégie conservatrice d’attaquer ses adversaires avec des flèches personnelles. Il a accusé le Directeur général des Élections d’être assoiffé de pouvoir et a remis en cause l’impartialité de l’exécutrice générale,” Sheila Fraser... (Pierre Jury, Éditorial, *Le Droit*, 29-04-2014).
- “Dans les officines du pouvoir, l’information est toujours filtrée. Avec ce gouvernement, déjà hostile aux médias, elle l’est davantage. Il apparaît clair, cependant, que M. Harper ne veut pas seulement changer le gouvernement. Il veut changer la société, le pays tout entier, le remodeler selon des schèmes de pensées plus conservatrices.” (Pierre Allard, ‘Le brouillard malsain de la propagande’, *Le Droit*, 9-09-2011).
- “Lettre au premier ministre Stephen Harper; Ce n’est pas ce Canada que je veux laisser à mes enfants et dans lequel je veux vivre... un Canada qui ne se préoccupe plus d’environnement, qui renie ses engagements internationaux, qui encourage les inégalités sociales, qui privilégie la répression plutôt que la prévention et la réhabilitation dans la lutte contre la crime, qui réduit les services à la population pour les questions budgétaires, tout en réduisant l’impôt aux corporations, qui se dote d’équipements militaires dernier cri, mais qui refuse de maintenir le financement de la santé aux provinces, qui dilapide l’argent lorsqu’il organise des activités G7 — G20 mais qui coupe les subventions aux organismes culturels, qui est gouverné de façon irrespectueuse par rapport à ses institutions démocratiques.” (Michel Hervieux, *Le Droit*, 3-01-2012).
- “Élu dans les sillages du scandale des commandites et des révélations de la Commission Gomery, Stephen Harper se présentait comme un ‘Monsieur Net’, comme un croisé de l’intégrité et de la transparence, comme un défenseur du Parlement et du peuple... Il n’a fallu que quelques années pour que la main de fer du premier ministre applique une discipline rigide, étouffant les dissensions dans les rangs, érigeant une muraille presque infranchissable pour les médias, faisant même fi de la volonté du Parlement...” (Pierre Allard, ‘Pouvoir et corruption’, éditorial, *Le Droit*, 21-06-2013).
- “Le groupe ‘Journalistes canadiens pour la liberté d’expression’ a attribué une note de D —

à la performance du gouvernement sur les questions de transparence. Le rapport accuse le gouvernement d'entretenir une 'culture du secret' illustré par certaines politiques et méthodes pour museler les scientifiques du gouvernement. Sa note était de F — un échec — l'an dernier. Le Canada se classe 55ième parmi les 93 pays qui ont les lois qui encadrent les demandes d'accès à l'information — à cause des lois canadiennes "archaïques"... Selon le Gouvernement conservateur il est "le plus ouvert et transparent de l'histoire du Canada". (La Presse, 2-05-13).

- "Aux prises avec un déficit record de 56 milliards \$ en 2009-2010, le gouvernement Harper prêche l'austérité budgétaire depuis deux ans. Mais il semble que certains échappent à cette austérité... Le budget de fonctionnement du cabinet de Stephen Harper a augmenté de 30% en deux ans." (Joël-Denis Bellavance, La Presse, 30-10-2010).
- "Le personnel politique du gouvernement Harper a empoché autour de 30 millions \$ en indemnités de départ, dont plus de la moitié en sommes versées à la discrétion des ministres, depuis que les conservateurs ont pris le pouvoir en 2006." (Dominique La Haye, Journal de Montréal, 1-05-2014)
- "Sur les 30 événements prévu par le nouveau Musée canadien de l'histoire à Gatineau, pour commémorer le 150ième anniversaire du Canada, 26 vont célébrer des guerres, a dénoncé le député libéral Stéphane Dion." (Stéphanie Marin, La Presse Canadienne à Ottawa).
- "Douze organisateurs et dirigeants conservateurs ont ignoré, hier, l'invitation à comparaître devant le comité de l'éthique de la Chambre des Communes qui étudie les dépenses électorales du Parti conservateur... À ces 12 personnes, on doit ajouter 11 agents officiels de candidats conservateurs lors des dernières élections, qui n'ont pas daigné se montrer le bout du nez... (Isabelle Rodrigue, Le Droit, 14-08-2008).
- "Des exemples de dérapages se multiplient depuis quelques mois. Deux ministres John Duncan and Peter Penashue ont été contraints de démissionner... Le gouvernement Harper a aussi réussi à faire l'unanimité contre lui dans cinq provinces en imposant sa réforme controversée de l'assurance-emploi... Le gouvernement fédéral a consacré 12 milliards de dollars dans la lutte contre le terrorisme entre 2001 et 2009 mais on ignore à quoi ont servi \$3 milliards de cette somme... Le gouvernement Harper a dépensé \$113 millions en annonces publicitaires pour la promotion de ses budgets depuis 2009. Les partis de l'opposition estiment qu'il s'agit de la publicité partisane... Le gouvernement conservateur a dépensé \$23 million en frais de surveillance des médias... Une douzaine de députés conservateurs ont aussi commencé à contester l'emprise qu'exerce sur eux le bureau du premier ministre." (Joël-Denis Bellavance, La Presse, 13-05-2013).

## 2 The Dumbing-Down of Canadian Democracy

"Democracy is not an easy system of governance. It is fragile and its essence cannot be guaranteed only because there is an assurance of periodic elections... This requires constant vigilance lest the people who come into power... then go astray. This vigilance can be exercised only if there is information available to the people. Thus transparency and availability of information is critical to hold the government accountable." *Social Watch E-Newsletter, sw-news-bounces@listas.item.org.uy*

"The strangest of "strange things" inherent in Prime Minister Harper's approach to government has been the willingness to attack the core elements of our democratic society, especially the two most fundamental: the courts and the management of our electoral process." *Gar Pardy, Embassy web-site*

This chapter will concentrate on the actions of the Harper conservatives that have tended to erode Canada's democratic spirit, beliefs and institutions. We need not get too fancy about our definition of democracy. Let's just use the old saying that democracy is government 'of', 'by' and 'for' the people. Normally, it is 'of' the people in that it is a representative democracy elected in fair, free and open elections on a regular basis. It is 'by' the people, not in the original Greek sense of direct government by the entire population of citizens, but because people can and should not only participate in elections but also in parties and in groups and associations that try to influence governments and politics. Finally, it is 'for' the people in the sense that government is meant to be in the general public interest and not beholden to just one power block or élite.

These are the essential basics of democracy. But in Canada there are other key elements that we should not neglect. We should note that the definition of democracy shows that it is mostly about the control and distribution of power and the processes by which this is done. It's about procedures not about purposes. At about the time the Harper government was first elected, political scientists were clear that Canadians believe in their democracy. But it is about how things get done, not about particular sorts of policies (see Dyck and Jackson & Jackson). In other words, the procedures of democracy spell out the Canadian political culture, or identity. Among the procedures by which power is limited is by Constitutional limitations (distribution of power to various political institutions), by the rule of law (each person is equal before the law), and by judicial review (the courts decide on the legitimacy of laws). These procedures are, in turn, underwritten by traditional values such as freedom of opinion, the press and association.

All this was up-dated in 2013 in a speech at the University of Ottawa by the Governor General, David Johnson. He thought it was time to give us a little lesson on civics. He recalled that we have a 'responsible' system of government in which the PM and Cabinet are answerable to the elected Parliament which is responsible to the people. He was emphatic, "Without healthy and robust national institutions we can well ask ourselves, 'What is Canada?'" Our institutions

reflect our democratic values, values which unite us as Canadians. They are therefore precious beyond measure" (Ottawa Citizen, p. A13, 30-04-2013).

At the time he was making this speech, Elizabeth May was writing the Queen to ask for a royal commission to investigate our electoral system, the Government was refusing to give Parliament basic information and was using questionable measures to cut short debates, omnibus bills of enormous scope hid amendments to dozens of laws, there was unprecedented muzzling of MPs and government scientists, and the Conservatives were using taxpayer dollars to pay for partisan ads attacking the opposition leaders. These are all practices that undermine our democratic institutions. The independent MP, Rathgeber, a renegade from Harper's Conservatives, in his extended essay described Harper's caucus meetings as briefings rather than debates. "There are no motions; there are no votes." Then enter the boys in short pants (the young staffers of the Prime Minister's Office) to tell you what to think and do. "Every time a Member of Parliament allows himself to be manipulated by a PMO puppet master, he is acquiescing to the breakdown of responsible government."

But, our description of Canadian democracy is still not complete. There is still the cultural element to consider. The political scientist, Rand Dyck, recalls that the objectives of the United States are "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" whereas those of Canada are "peace, order and good government" according to our Constitution. In other words, throughout our history, Canadians have been drawn to a peaceful, lawful society in which the rules of our democratic institutions are maintained. Further, the comparative study of the United States and Canada by the eminent political sociologist, Seymour Martin Lipset, showed that Canadians are relatively more class conscious, elitist, law abiding, and oriented toward the government, the collectivity and social groups. New evidence has shown that Canadians and Americans are actually becoming increasingly different from each other in their social values. These findings were confirmed by the pollster Allan Gregg who asked ordinary Canadians what they thought is distinctive about their country and they replied, "Non-violence, tolerance, humane treatment

of the poor and disadvantaged and official bilingualism.” (Dyck pp.240-255) One might conclude that Canadians prefer a power structure that is limited because it is decentralized, dispersed and divided. Unfortunately, we find that the current reality in Canada under the Harper Conservatives is not in conformity with Canada’s traditional identity. Looking in greater detail at how the Harper Conservatives have mistreated Canadian democracy, we will see that you can harm democracy by circumventing it, by stifling its resources, by attacking its representatives, by making people fearful, or by undercutting its institutions. Here is a list of accusations against the Harper Conservatives.

## 2.1 Up the House of Commons

For many years, Prime Minister Harper has let be known that he prefers a reformed Senate in which the senators would be elected by the provinces for a set period of time. Having been told many times that this would require a Constitutional amendment, he eventually submitted his proposal to the Supreme Court for its opinion. The Court has since stipulated that the provinces as well as the federal government would have to approve of major changes to the Senate as a federal institution.

Knowing that the court consultation would take time, Harper recognized he would have to use the Senate as it is if he wanted to control the body to get his legislation through Parliament. So it was that the person who wanted to stop nominations to the Upper Chamber **ended up making the largest number in Canadian history (62) giving the Conservatives a majority in the Senate.** Amongst this number, like his predecessors, he personally nominated several party hacks nominated to help promote the Conservative Party at the tax-payers expense. Two of these were Pamela Wallin and Mike Duffy. Both had impressive careers and were well known by the public. But there is nothing really new here.

However, as time went on they were both accused of fraudulently padding their travel and living expenses and sometimes double charging. The two senators were going to party meetings to promote the Conservatives at public expense — as they had

been told they could. As this scandal became more and more public, **Harper was caught up in trying to defend the two in question-period and then stonewalling most questions.** Eventually, it became known that the PM’s Chief of Staff, Nigel Wright, offered Duffy \$90,000 to cover his expenses and quiet the scandal. It just made the Party look more under-handed. As time went on, the Conservative Senators kicked Duffy and Wallin out of their caucus and suspended them from the Senate. Harper put all the blame on his loyal servant, Nigel Wright.

The scandal in all this was not in the nominations or even choosing party hacks. Gradually it became known **that the youths in the Prime Minister’s Office were telling the venerable Senate what to do.** Mike Duffy’s lawyer accused the PMO of approving the embattled Senator’s housing allowance and choreographing how he would respond to criticism. He went on to say that “Senator Duffy was told by the PMO that despite the truth of the matter, for political reasons, mainly because the Conservative base — the voting base — would not like this meaning the optics of state of Senate rules... he had to repay...” . The PMO even threatened to expel him from the Senate over the residency issue. “The threat seems obvious: you take the dive or the Subcommittee will throw you out” . It appears that the long arm of the Prime Minister’s Office can even control Senate committees. The Prime Minister refused to take any blame for his choices. And then, worst of all, there were the weeks and **months of lies and half-truths, stonewalling and delays, under-handed deals and behind the scenes game-playing** — all this leading to the steady destruction of the reputation of one of Canada’s two Chambers of Parliament.

The journalist, Andrew Coyne, writing in the Ottawa Citizen, came to the following conclusion about the sordid Senate scandal, “Well, that was edifying. The Conservative government and one of its Senators would appear to have spent the better part of the last year discreetly blackmailing each other. Now they are doing so openly.”

## 2.2 The Senate Scandal

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## 2.3 Attacking the basis of Canadian democracy: the electoral system

One of the mainstays of Canadian democracy is the fine reputation of its fair electoral process. Central to this process is the independent, hands-off, non-partisan agency Elections Canada which oversees each election. The Chief Electoral officer is an appointee who answers to Parliament not the government.

In 2000, Stephen Harper referred to Election Canada officials as "jackasses" . Since he came into power the federal electoral system has been in turmoil and the Conservatives have treated with disdain the laws that keep our elections fair. In the 2006 election, Elections Canada said that some of the local advertising expenses were not eligible because they had come from the federal campaign. Harper took the

agency to court but the court found that Elections Canada was right. The 2011 election was bedevilled by vote suppression tactics and illicit 'robocalls' that misdirected electors and were found to have been the work of someone with access to the Conservative party voter lists. The Court convicted a former Conservative Party staffer for the robocalls scandal in Guelph and sentenced him to jail saying that it was an "affront to the electoral process". The judge also said he believes the employee of the Conservative party did not act alone. However, Elections Canada pointed out it could never find the culprits until it had investigative powers to compel testimony and to oblige parties to keep lists of phone calls.

2014 was revenge time. The Conservative Government placed before Parliament a new, 252 page 'Fair Elections Act' that they tried to force through in several weeks. Among its many changes, the new Act would have:

- Stripped the Chief Electoral Officer of authority to appoint the Commissioner of Canada Elections and, instead, make him a subordinate of the Director of Public Prosecutions who reports to the Attorney General, a Cabinet member. The commissioner who has the main investigatory powers.
- Stopped the Commissioner from informing Canadians that an investigation is under way.
- Stopped the Chief Electoral officer from communicating with the Canadians.
- Take away the ability of people without their identification to use the vouching system to vote.
- Increased fundraising and spending limits while opening up new loopholes.
- Give incumbent politicians more power over poll-worker appointments — the on-the-spot people who verify our votes.

Fortunately, an immense rage across the country stimulated by the Council of Canadians eventually forced the Harper Conservatives to amend the Bill and many of its most destabilizing electoral reforms

were abandoned. But the new act still does not require parties to keep phone lists and there is still no ability to compel oral evidence from potential witnesses. Even worse, Canada is saddled with a new law that, according to the Globe and Mail: frightfully complicates the vouching system (thereby disenfranchising many young and poor citizens); forbids Elections Canada to educate the public; still makes the Elections Commissioner an officer of the government — one of the very groups that he is meant to investigate for electoral wrongdoing.

So here we have an example of legislation that affects the fundamentals of Canadian democracy, that is to say legislation that sets up our non-partisan electoral rules, which turns out to be a textbook example of how laws should not be drafted, debated, amended or passed.

Kate Heartfield concluded in the Ottawa Citizen, "The Elections Canada feud pits two streams of the modern Conservative party against each other: conservatism proper, which respects the rule of law and institutional authority, and the National Citizen's Coalition (of which a younger Harper was President) strain of populist libertarianism that rejects centralized state power and praises civil disobedience, at least when it comes to people refusing to obey the Wheat Board, fill out census forms or follow election financing rules."

A perfect example of Heartfield's observation was the former **Conservative MP Dean Del Mastro's reaction to the guilty verdict** of the court that found he had spent more than the legal limit in the 2008 election, had failed to report a personal contribution to his campaign, and had submitted false documents. Del Mastro had been personally selected by Prime Minister Harper as his Parliamentary Secretary and was renowned for cantankerous and misleading rants in Parliament. Like his predecessor Pierre Poilievre and his successor, Paul Calandra he knew no limits in his sheer partisan combativeness. Exiting the court he cast doubt on its verdict, saying that he and the judge had a difference of opinion. He said he would appeal and continue to sit as an MP. Several days later he finally admitted he had to resign from Parliament. As the judge said, Del Mastro "frequently distorted the truth". Many thought

he did in Parliament too, acting as though Conservative politicians thought they were both above honesty and above the law. At least the Globe and Mail was happy with the judge's decision. "PM's former pit bull gets his comeuppance" it headlined.

The Liberal candidate who Del Mastro defeated in Peterborough, Betsy McGregor, had this to say, "Voter, donors, campaign workers and fellow candidates were all denied a fair election. With his resignation, Peterborough is left with no voice in Parliament. Election fraud is not a victimless crime. It damages democracy and hurts us all."

## 2.4 The Prime Minister has all the power

The government has amassed **unparalleled executive power** in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO — Officials hire by Harper to do his bidding).

Harper has down-graded the Canadian federal system by refusing to hold meetings and negotiations with the provinces and then simply dictating new policies to them without consultation. For instance he unilaterally cut health transfers to the provinces.

The Prime Minister's **powers of appointment extend to all the offices that might be able to hold him in check** including: Cabinet Ministers, the Governor General, all Senators, members of the Supreme Court, the governor of the Bank of Canada, all deputy ministers (civil service heads of departments), presidents of Crown corporations, senior military officers, heads of the Security Services and the RCMP, Chairs of Parliamentary Committees, MPs who become Parliamentary Secretaries to Ministers, and the heads of agencies and officers of Parliament.

## 2.5 Confrontation with the courts

Prime Minister Harper is so powerful that for the first time in Canadian history he **crossed over jurisdictional lines and attacked the Chief Judge of the Supreme Court**, Beverly MacLauglin. The occasion was a call she tried to make to the Justice Minister discuss the government's list of nominees for

a Quebec vacancy on the Supreme Court. The call was never answered but a year later the PM accused the Chief Justice of interference. It turns out the short list of six names had four who were ineligible so the Chief Justice had every reason to make the call. As the Globe and Mail wrote in an editorial, it gave the impression the PM was simply spoiling for a fight with the High Court — which the newspaper said was **one of Mr. Harper's most imprudent acts**.

Later when the Court tossed out the old rules on prostitution as a violation of prostitutes constitutional right not to be beaten or murdered, the Harper government brought in new legislation which in effect flung the ruling back in the judges faces by leaving the impugned provisions mostly intact and imposing new restrictions that appear to provoke a new confrontation with the court. The Conservatives are trying to satisfy their political base by inciting the Court to forms of 'judicial activism' that enrage conservatives.

The multiple confrontations with the Canadian courts are a clear indication that it is not a clash of personalities with the Chief Justice but a very real collision of beliefs about how Canada should work. One explanation is that the Conservatives have a long history of distrusting the Constitution and a will to pick 'populist' fights that pit authoritative institutions against the gut feelings of their voting base. Even though the Supreme Court has long been known to complement Parliament, not fight it, the Department of Justice under Peter Mackay launched a legal cold war by forging ahead with legislation which they knew would not likely be upheld by the courts. And the courts are not alone. The Quebec National Assembly **unanimously** denounced Harper's decision to go ahead with the nomination of Judge Nadon to the Quebec vacancy.

The battle over the courts carries over to the mode of nomination for the Supreme Court Justices — an extremely important power as the Supreme Court makes decisions that affect all of our daily lives. After years of debate, the Liberals finally introduced reforms in 2004 that included publishing criteria for the jobs and a protocol for the selection process and an advisory committee to vet the long list of applicants. Harper added the condition that nominees

had to appear before a nationally televised ad hoc, all party committee of MPs and legal experts. But, when the Globe and Mail outed his secret manipulations to get Judge Nadon, he became so enraged that he cancelled the whole public and parliamentary participation in the nomination process. As the November 2014 date for the replacement of Justice Louis LeBel rolled around, Canadians did not know who would be consulted or what criteria would be used, or whether there would be an advisory selection panel, or parliamentary input or public engagement.

## 2.6 Trying to make the public service a part of the Conservative Party

Traditionally, the Canadian governments and people have been able to count on public servants who were rational, objective, professional and neutral. Not many years ago it was considered one of the finest government bureaucracies in the world. A variety of ways have been used by the Conservatives to **limit the voice of the public service (including foreign affairs) by making it more submissive and partisan**. For instance, when Elections Canada dared accuse the government of irregular party funding, the government took their own agency to court.

Ralph Heinzman, a University of Ottawa research professor, prepared a report in 2014 on Canada's public service for the think tank, Canada 2020. He has come to the conclusion that the public service has been 'neglected', 'devalued', and has seen its 'neutrality abused' by the Conservative government. "A big problem is that the Conservative don't value the public service as a national institution for Canada's democracy and see it as an extension of the government to be used as desired."

One very explicit measure of the decline of the public service is the fact that since the arrival of the Harper government in 2006, some 68,000 full-time federal employees have chosen to retire.

## 2.7 Sleaze Politics

**The Conservatives also resort to dirty tricks.** They hired a firm to telephone voters in the Montreal riding of Mount Royal and tell them that Liberal MP

Irwin Cotler was thinking of resigning. This was completely false at the time. House of Commons Speaker, Andrew Scheer, called the conduct "reprehensible". The Conservatives also try to sully the reputation of opposition leaders by **resorting to attack ads that journalists have called a dirt machine, sleaze, deceitful, and low-grade political standards**. A teacher from Winnipeg wondered how the Conservatives could, at the same time, use 'bullying ads' and encourage anti-bullying campaigns in schools.

The Harper Government has **been playing the card of "ethnic politics" to the hilt**. Its Israeli policy follows every wish of the right-wing Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu and anyone in Canada who does not is branded as anti-Jewish. To play to the Toronto Tamil community he refused to attend the Commonwealth Conference in Sri Lanka where the Sinhalese govern. Other leaders went to the conference to try diplomacy. Many Asian business people who support the Conservatives small-government policies are given rapid access to Canada. During the Ukrainian uprising Harper tried to attract the Canadian Ukrainian community by being pictured as a leader on the issue when he was generally at cross-purposes with other Western leaders.

## 2.8 Right wing policies undercutting Canada's democratic traditions

Typical of the Conservative **right wing policies that are undercutting Canada's democratic traditions** are the slow **destruction of Canada's world-famous public broadcaster, the CBC, abolishing the long-gun registry (at a time three Mounties were shot to death in Moncton), cracking-down on labor unions**, turning over to the provinces entire responsibility for the health system, and shrinking the government's tax base and capacity to help citizens.

## 2.9 Summary

Democracy is like a diamond: tough and durable at the core. But for those who are willing to work at it, it is relatively easy to modify its multiple facets. It is unfortunate if we ordinary citizens sit back and let

the manipulators change the meaning of our democracy before our very eyes while we do nothing about it. What we have just seen is not only the exaggerated hierarchy and centralization of power under the Harper Conservatives but also their reckless abuse of these powers. As it has been said by Andrew Coyne, “Time was when we had to wait weeks, even months for each new abuse of power by the Harper government. Now they arrive by the day, sometimes two or three at a time.” He concluded, “Several themes run throughout these: contempt for civil liberties, for due process, for established convention, for consultation, for openness, replaced throughout by a culture of secrecy, control, expedience and partisan advantage” (Andrew Coyne, Ottawa Citizen, 7-06-2014). Put simply, the last ten Conservative years have been a complete abuse of Canadian democracy. What we must learn from this is that if Canada is going to return to democracy it calls for more than a change of reigning party. We have to change our institutions and constitution to ensure that no prime minister and Prime Minister’s Office ever again has the absolute power and the abuse of democracy that we have witnessed in this chapter. Moreover, we need a change in our political culture as Canadian citizens. We must stop being fearful. We must return to the core of our democratic diamond. We must stand up to abuses of power as soon as they happen. Ten years is much too long.

Normally, one of the great things about democracy is that it is a natural ‘humbler’. It has its own built-in civilizing force. You quickly learn that if you want to speak at a meeting you have to let the other person speak. Similarly, if you want to govern, you have to let the other group have their turn, whether you like it or not. Well, the Harper conservatives have had their chance to govern and they have done so much harm to our democratic ‘play by the rules’ system that it is very unlikely that many Canadians will trust them to govern again for decades to come. You would think the Conservatives have learned nothing since Diefenbaker destroyed the magnificent Avro Arrow and ripped-up the plans — at great cost to Canadians.

## 2.10 Harper headlines

“Democracy in Decline” , Ottawa Citizen, 26-04-2014

“PM HAS ALL THE POWER” , Ottawa Citizen, 7-06-2014

“There’s no stopping our march to the right” , Globe and Mail, 10-06-2014

“Bill proposes beefed-up powers for MPs” , Globe and Mail, 30-11-2013

“Canada’s democratic gap” , Ottawa Citizen, 28-04-2014

“The Conservatives and Elections Canada” , Ottawa Citizen, 05-02-2014

“Tories move to halt elections act debate” , Ottawa Citizen, 06-02 -2014

“Ontario PCs face big fines for robocalls” , Ottawa Citizen, 29-05-2013

“Parliament at the point of no return” , Ottawa Citizen, 20-10-2012

“Absolute Power (2011 — 2015): How politics changed Stephen Harper and how he is changing Canada” , Ottawa Citizen, 20-09-13

“Letter to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, requesting a Royal Inquiry to restore Canada to a free and fair democracy” , Elizabeth May, MP, admin@elizabethmaymp.ca

“Muzzling scientists is an assault on democracy” , David Suzuki, The West Quebec Post, 12-04-2013.

“Farewell to a building block of democracy” , Amy Kaufman and Jeff Moon, Ottawa Citizen, 04-11-2013.

“What is Harper’s problem with Elections Canada? robocalls, overspending, candidates inappropriate contributions, in and out expenses” , Kate Heartfield, Ottawa Citizen, 5-10-2013.

“You won’t believe what the press just did: their jobs on the public’s behalf.” Elizabeth Renzetti, Globe and Mail, 19-10-2013.

“Le député Del Mastro reconnu coupable: dépenses électorales dépassées en 2008” La Presse Canadienne, 1-11-2014.

### 3 Stifling Science and Information, Muzzling Critics

“The facts cannot alter contempt for science: The latest research on safe injection sites is unlikely to spur any change in Canadian drug policy. The Conservative government’s disregard for evidence on harm-reduction practices is part of a persistent trajectory of governing through indifference to scientific evidence.” *Lisa Wright, Ottawa Citizen, 11- 08-2014*

“For the greatest part of history, the bulwark of not-knowing has been superstition, dogma, and orthodoxy”. *Allan Gregg, CCPA Monitor, Nov. 2012*

#### 3.1 Silencing the scientific lambs

Over the years there have been widespread misgivings about how the Harper Government uses data and evidence, or refuses to use it, in making policy. This is closely associated with a related problem that access to information is a basic foundation of democracy. Our entire notion of progress has reason at its core — reason based on facts. Government scientists, who of course, work for the Canadian people, are not only a core part of the public service’s professionalism and specialized competence but also a fundamental source of information. But in 2007, the Conservatives laid down a rule that any media interview with Environment Canada scientists would be “co-ordinated” by communications staff. Recently it was also reported that Canadian scientists going to international conferences were accompanied by a government ‘minder’ — as the KGB did. The KGB used the same practices during the Soviet Union to keep scientists and academics under control. Other scientific departments and agencies in the government soon followed suit.

Thus it was not passing strange to find in the summer of 2014 that Canada’s information Commissioner was investigating seven government departments in response to complaints that they were ‘muzzling scientists’.

This was just the end of a long series of complaints. A submission from the University of Victoria’s Environmental Law Centre and Democracy Watch alleged that the federal government is preventing media and the Canadian public from speaking to government scientists for news stories. There have also been complaints from the Canadian Science Writers’ Association and the World Federation of Science Journalists. In 2012, hundreds of scientists marched on Parliament Hill to mark the ‘death of evidence’. In 2013, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada published its survey, “The Big Chill: Silencing Public Interest Science” and in 2014 they followed up with “Vanishing Science: The Disappearance of Canadian Public Interest Science”. Both reports demonstrated the barriers to scientific communication and collaboration imposed on government scientists by the Harper Conservatives. Then another study from Simon Fraser University and the Evidence for Democracy group showed that most scientists working for the Canadian government are not adequately protected from political interference or assured of being able to speak freely. As we saw, some departments explicitly forbid scientists to speak to reporters without preapproval or without a department spokesperson monitoring the conversation.

Here is an example of what this can mean. The Canadian Press asked for an interview with a scientist, Max Bothwell, of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans who had just published an article in an important scientific review. He is a specialist on invasive seaweed. It must be a very secretive and dangerous field of research, because it took 110 pages of e-mails with 16 different officials and still the interview was never obtained. Or, as another example, we can take the case of the federal scientists who keep a close watch on the Arctic ice and wanted to hold a strictly factual press conference to inform the public about the extraordinary events unfolding in the North. As the Ottawa Citizen reported, it would have taken *nine levels of approval*, but the press con-

ference was killed by the sixth level. Again, at the end of 2014, former Department of Fisheries and Oceans scientist, Michael Rennie, reported that communications practices were even worse than Conservative policies, “Never in four years did I receive communications approval to speak with media by deadline”

As Allan Gregg put it, “It seems as though our government’s use of evidence and facts as the basis of policy is declining, and in their place dogma, whim and political expediency are on the rise.”

In some things, the Harper Conservatives were very, very consistent. You can find their basic thinking in the least of their gestures. Take, for instance, their decision to rebuild the Museum of Science and Technology in south-east Ottawa for \$80.5 million. Nothing there you would say. But underneath one finds the Conservatives’ deeply engrained disdain for science and for Canada’s capital. For years, for decades, the museum, housed in a former bakery, was falling into dilapidation and finally had to be closed. For years, all sorts of people had called for a new national home to honor Canada’s scientific and technological achievements at a central site. For years the Harper government refused to budge. But, with the closure the embarrassment was too much so they announced their piddling plans to refurbish the old building. The Ottawa Citizen’s headline read, “A stingy, small-minded museum plan: Tories don’t believe capital needs cultural institutions.”

The Conservatives did not restrict themselves to hampering communication, they actually stymied scientific progress. The Harper team had learned to treat specialized wisdom (from government scientists and researchers, economists, lawyers, academics, foreign policy experts etc.) with a certain disdain. Among the scientific, research and policy endeavours shut down by the Harper Government, we should stress the following:

### 3.2 Shutting up and shutting down our scientific experts

- Eliminating the position of National Science Advisor in 2007 and closing the Council of Science and Technology Advisors.

- Muzzling government scientists by impeding their talking to journalists.
- Shutting down the Experimental Lakes Area, world renowned for its forefront research on fresh water (partially taken over by Ontario).
- Eliminating the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, set up by Prime Minister Mulroney to bring together expertise from the scientific, corporate and governmental sectors.
- Dismantling the Long Gun Registry.
- By 2008, the prestigious British journal Nature was already slamming Harper’s “manifest disregard for science” .
- Cutting \$137 million from the budgets of the three federal, research granting Councils in 2009 and leaving out completely ‘Genome Canada’.
- Canceling, in 2010, the ‘long-form’ census – the comparative, long-term basis of much statistical data on Canada that is the country’s ‘navigational system’ used for the diagnosis and verification of policy. Two dozen senior leaders from business, labour, government and academia warned that dropping it would skew future statistical results and make it impossible to read and project trends. Despite an outcry from more than 370 organizations and tens of thousands of citizens, the Harper Government refused to reconsider its decision.
- Not informing its advisory National Statistics Council of its plans for the census.
- Cutting the Goods and Services Tax (twice) – against all economic advice — thus helping to create future government deficits.
- Refusing to meet with, and then to fund, the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences.
- The Canadian Polar Commission was left without a board of directors for more than two years.

It was founded by the Mulroney government in 1991 to oversee scientific research in the polar region, including work on climate change.

- Making mandatory minimum sentences the core of the Conservative 'tough-on-crime' agenda – against all the evidence-based advice of criminologists.
- Continuous opposition to Vancouver's pioneering, medically approved, safe- injection site to aid drug users, even after the B.C. Court ruled it falls under provincial authority.
- The president of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission was fired.
- Using enormous omnibus budget bills to hide legislation and decimate environmental protection laws including sweeping cuts to water, air and wildlife monitoring programs, a total restructuring of federal environmental reviews, and the downloading of responsibility for lakes and rivers to the provinces.
- Environmental groups opposing pipeline plans have been denounced as "radicals" , accused of taking funds from "foreign special interests" and subject to special audits regarding their charitable status by the Canada Revenue Agency.
- As part of the 19,000 cuts to the federal public service in 2012, 50% of Stats Canada were warned their jobs were at risk; 20% of Library and Archives Canada were put on notice; CBC got a 10% reduction; 30% of the operating budget of Parks Canada, was cut, thus eliminating 638 positions, 70% of whom were scientists and social scientists. But, the Canada Revenue Agency received an \$8 million increase to investigate not-for-profit and charitable organizations.
- Among the hardest hit departments were the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Agriculture Canada which had responsibility food recalls and meat safety.
- Transport Canada announced it would be downsizing aviation security inspectors and reducing its maritime security operations.
- Defence Research and Development Canada lost 242 jobs, 15% of its workforce.
- The National Roundtable on the Environment, National Council on Welfare, and Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Science were "vaporized" .
- A January 2013 report on environmental performance using indicators such as air quality and bio-diversity, ranked Canada 15th among the world's 17 most developed nations.
- In 2013, close to 1,900 scientists received layoff warning letters.
- Funding boosts have favoured applied science and commercialization over basic research. The government shifted the National Research Council's mandate from doing basic science to aiding industry. From 2006 to 2012, the Council's publication output dropped 80% and its rate of new patents by 95%.
- In 2014, the Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans shuttered all its labs monitoring pollutants in our coastal waters.
- The Chief Public Health Officer of Canada was amputated from the power of his Agency which will henceforth be directed by its own president with CPHO acting as an 'advisor to the minister. Some analysts saw it as muzzling a scientific officer who could have had independent voice.
- In 2014, funding was eliminated for the National Centre of Nuclear Magnetic Resonance one of the most powerful research instruments in the world. The original \$12 million investment in the Centre which had permitted Canada to be at the forefront of research for ten years will now be lost as the Centre closes down.
- Core funding was eliminated for the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network and its provincial agencies that look after adult literacy and essential skills. The whole organization shut down.

- The charitable status of 'Dying with Dignity Canada' has been eliminated. The Canadian Revenue Agency said its activities "to expand choice in dying" is a political activity! The Conservatives appear to be opposed to promoting choice and dignity at the end of life.

No wonder that as scientists paraded in the streets of Ottawa in the summer of 2012, they chanted, "No science, no evidence, no truth, no democracy". They repeated the protest in 18 cities across Canada in 2013. It is hard to deny that the anti-science policies of the Harper Conservatives have one objective: to disarm well-informed and well-educated critics of government policies. Nevertheless, it operates on the theory of the 'big lie', which when repeated often enough tends to become the 'truth'. In 2013, the Minister of State for Technology sent an e-mail to the media claiming there were no problems with government policies. "Our government is committed to science and technology..."

This hacking at Canadian science follows extremely well from Harper's 2008 declaration that, "Grand blueprints done on the blackboard and endorsed by experts with no practical experience in the economy or society, are disastrous". This is quite a pretentious statement for a guy who never had an entrepreneurial job in his life and only worked for political parties and interest groups.

As we saw, the Harper conservatives, used omnibus legislation to gut environmental protection laws and cut funding for environmental departments. Environmentalists have been branded as "radicals", "un-Canadian", and "money-launderers" by government spokesmen. As a result, the Canadian Climate Action Network discovered that the "Media coverage of climate change science has been reduced by over 80 per cent" — which, of course, was one of the specific goals of the Harper government. Along with its systematic attacks on Statistics Canada, it is not unreasonable to conclude that this indicates a deeply held anti-scientific bias among Harper Conservatives. On the other hand, William Robson, President of the C.D. Howe Institute wrote that the statistical information is an essential tool for Canadians seeking to ensure that the state's use of its vast powers is "effec-

tive and benign" ...so we can "judge how well these systems work" ... "and demand better performance" .

Nevertheless the 2014 report from Professional Institute of the Public Service, entitled "The disintegration of public science in Canada, showed that between the budgetary years of 2012-2013 and 2015-2016, ten department and agencies with a scientific function were forecast to lose \$2.6 billion. The Conservatives would cut these front line public services to be able to claim they had 'balanced the budget'.

The whole sad process (sad for Canada) came to a head in the autumn of 2014 when the anger and frustration of the international scientific community bubbled over in a full page advertisement in the form of an "Open Letter for Canadian Leadership in Science" addressed to Prime Minister Harper by 800 academic researchers from the United States and other countries. They referred to barriers that inhibit collaboration with the media and with scientific colleagues in Canada and around the world. They asked the government to remove excessive and burdensome restrictions and barriers to research and communication aimed at overcoming threats to the planet and public health. It referred to an editorial in New York Times which described the restrictions as "an attempt to guarantee public ignorance" .

### 3.3 Cutting off Canadian access to information

Ottawa's obsession with controlling the message has become so all-encompassing that it now threatens both the health of Canada's democracy and the country's reputation abroad...it's like an Iron Curtain has been drawn across the communication of science in this country. *Jonathon Gatehouse, Maclean's Magazine, 13-05-2013*

In 2005, the leader of the Opposition, Stephen Harper said, "Information is the lifeblood of democracy" . Since becoming prime minister, his government has consistently shown a disregard for openness. It started with the abolition of the 'long form' census document which is the crucial underpinning of most

basic, comparative information on the Canadian society and economy. A letter to the Globe and Mail on July 29 2010, explained the government's motivations: "The decision to eliminate the long form census is a political tactic, pure and simple. Its point is to eliminate benchmarks. Marginal groups will find it much harder to call attention to their cause or to the effect government policies are having on their interests... This is the hidden agenda we were warned about when Mr. Harper first took office".

By 2015 the results were in. The cancellation of the long-form census has damaged research in key areas, from how immigrants are doing and also the middle class to cities not being able to ensure their tax-dollars are well spent. The result has been less data for more money. Toronto, for instance, says it has become more expensive and requires more staffing to obtain data that is of less quality. The key areas of concern are tracking long-term shifts and understanding what's going on at the neighbourhood level. An opposition private member placed a bill before the House of Commons to reinstate the mandatory long form census.

Then the government stopped the annual release of federal cabinet records after the traditional 30 year holding period; in trade talks, only the government negotiators and big business representatives know what is going on — not even MPs; every bit of information is micro-managed. This caused the Ottawa Citizen to conclude in an editorial that, "A government that doesn't listen and thinks it can do what it wants unencumbered by the institutions that underline our democracy, **is an elected dictatorship.**"

One of the major objectives of the Harper Conservatives has been **cutting off access of Canadians to information.** Supposed threats to 'public security' are used to 'black out' huge sections of public documents requested through Access to information. Even worse, the important government information registry (the Co-ordination of Access to Information Requests System) was simply eliminated. The government also stopped publishing the plans, priorities, performance and annual reports of its top secret Communications Security Establishment. Departmental studies that do not reflect well on the

government's theories are buried. On the other hand, the Hill Times newspaper has demonstrated how the number of 'information officers' in the Harper government has exploded. Their job is to conceal as much information as possible.

After one year in power, here is how an obviously enraged journalist, Lawrence Martin of the Globe and Mail described the way Conservatives managed their relationships: "Don't answer questions in the Commons. Just slam the other side's previous record. Don't wait for elections campaigns to run your cheap attack ads. Run them before the new Opposition leader is out of the gate. Don't open the information channels, as your transparency campaign promised. Shut the channels down. Don't listen to critics. Silence or smear them. Don't admit a mistake. Act like you know everything."

Not only is the access of scientists to the media controlled by the government's central machine but so is the right to speak of Cabinet Ministers. Even the RCMP Commissioner is gagged. He, like other top officials must have all meetings even with parliamentarians approved by government officials. Civil servants are under orders not to provide information to people outside the government without the written consent of the central authorities in the Prime Minister's office. Then there is the case of the Commissioner of Access to Information. That is something the Conservatives really wanted to shut down. In 2014, the federal information commissioner reported a one-third increase in complaints that the **Harper government is blocking or delaying 'access to information' requests.** These delays included a decline in staff and budget. But the Conservative parliamentarians were not mean. They proposed increasing the fees for each request for information so the Commissioner's burden would decline — even if Canadian citizens went without their information.

To help surmount this hurdle, Harper and Tony Clement named a new Privacy Commissioner. He is Daniel Therrien, a career bureaucrat closely linked to government data-monitoring programs that have been criticised as too invasive. A letter from two dozen experts in the field told the Prime Minister that his **nomination of a state security specialist to the highly sensitive position of privacy**

**commissioner was “indefensible”.**

Another way the Conservatives found of blocking access to information was to close libraries. The first to be targeted were scientific libraries. For instance, seven of the eleven regional libraries of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans were closed with their decades of aquatic research being scooped up for private use by companies or hauled off to the dumpster. But this soon extended to most of the libraries in the various departments and agencies of the federal government such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and the Canadian Transportation Agency. These closures do away with much specialized knowledge and irreplaceable documents as well as our capacity to do research and understand Canadian history. As it has been said, “librarians are our best search engines” .

### 3.4 Politicizing Canadian History

We have already seen that the Harper Conservatives want to ‘re-form’ Canada and the way Canadians think. It is the first government to come into power with this sort of agenda. Of course they never brought it up in their election platform and Canadian electors never gave them a mandate to transform the Canadian culture. Nothing is spared. They are even working to re-write Canadian history. References to ‘Diefenbaker’ this and ‘Macdonald’ that started popping up all over. The Harperites also want Canada to be like most other states — aggressive and warlike. Conservatives could not stand Canada being unique. So they started to glorify the history of the War of 1812 and using scarce funds to build war monuments. Then they moved on to glorifying the two world wars without a word about Canada’s trend-setting record as peacekeepers.

Next they took an ax to the unparalleled Canadian Museum of Civilization and turned it into the Canadian Museum of History. Some observers thought it was a refreshing commitment to Canadian history until they understood the true intentions of the Conservatives. As the professor and author Andrew Cohen described it, “The government’s record is disturbing. Its telling of history is consciously selective and relentlessly political. . . What we’re getting is Conserva-

tive history. In the choices it makes, in what it commemorates and doesn’t, it reflects a narrow, partisan perspective” . A Conservative was heard to claim that they want to eliminate the five decades from 1963 to 2013 from public conversation — it was too Liberal.

### 3.5 Government communications controlled and misused

The Harper Conservatives stand accused by their critics of being less not more accountable, of using the tax-payers money to pay for party promotion, of blurring the lines between political and administrative functions. All this can be seen best through the lens of government communications procedures. Small Communications Branches were originally set up in the federal government to funnel information to the media. But by 2014, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation estimated that there were 3,325 information officers costing \$263 million a year working for the public service. Even so the problem is less with the numbers than with what they do and how they do it.

Traditionally the public administration was meant to be neutral and to be part of the constitutional balances of political powers in Ottawa. Still, citizens need to believe in that balance. And the lines between the public service and their political masters need to be kept as distinct as possible. Under the Conservatives the opposite has happened. At the top, the lines have been blurred between the political staff of the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) and the administrative staff of the Privy Council Office (PCO). This does away with the PCO’s role as a neutral, expert advisor to the PM.

Because both the PMO and the PCO come under the prime minister, the Conservatives have worked hard to use them together to advance party as well as government communications. By 2008, the 40 people who worked for these two offices in the 1940’ and 50’s had escalated to 234 — just to serve the prime minister. By 2011, the PCO’s budget alone had topped out at nearly \$160 million for the PM’s secretariat. This was to allow them to carry out their new communications and publicity functions of managing

the Government's \$136 million saturation advertising campaign to promote the 'Economic Action Plan' — even if it is doubtful the prime minister can legally or ethically employ the public service for strictly self-serving marketing purposes. Especially, when in 2013 a Canadian Press survey revealed that the public considered the on-going ads to be “Political advertising, a waste of tax-payers money, or junk” . **Such reactions indicate that the government's co-opting the public service institutions for party purposes is diminishing public confidence in government and democracy.**

The *Globe and Mail* editorialized, “The Harper government has indulged its unfortunate habit of using federal dollars for partisan ends — from ads touting a post-recession economic plan that continued to air years into the recovery, to the attack ads aimed at the country's biggest telecommunications companies...to ads trumpeting a child-care tax credit regime that had yet to be approved by Parliament — in an egregious misallocation of public funds.”

Of course, this is not all there is to the Conservative's control and abuse of government communications. The Prime Minister **rarely holds press conferences** — only photo ops. He sidesteps the Parliamentary Press Gallery (which is meant to inform the public) by catering to the local and ethnic press, on-line social media, and a large network of Conservative bloggers. Reporters for the national media are prevented from questioning ministers on their way to cabinet meetings. News is presented by ministers in question period or by ministerial aids doggedly repeating approved lines. Glen McGregor of the Ottawa Citizen wrote, The Conservative Party “fundraises by exploiting the fantasy that the Press Gallery is a den of Commies intent on misinforming Canadians about the triumphs of the Harper government” . The anti-media campaign extends to controlling government employees who are not allowed to talk directly to journalists until they go through a lengthy, centralized vetting process.

Another form of misleading communications related to the idea of the big lie is to use names for legislation that in fact disguises the substance of the law. For instance a law sub-titled “The Safe streets and Communities Act” was really about stiffening

penalties for the possession of pot and building more prisons. The “Marketing Freedom for Grain Farmers Act” aimed at dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board. This is just another part of a program of secrecy, message control and misdirection. Tyranny demands ignorance.

As one journalist has written, “The Conservative government has a reputation for muzzling civil servants and lording over independent agencies and tribunals so as to crush any potential dissent.” They went as far as subverting the 'Integrity Commissioner'. In choosing a replacement, the Conservatives jumped over three highly qualified candidates (too highly qualified) to snatch out of the cupboard the former associate deputy minister of agriculture (not too highly qualified). In three years in the position from 2007 to 2010, 228 disclosures of wrongdoing came before the Commissioner but she only investigated seven, five of which were closed with no finding and two were left hanging in limbo. It is said that she was bound and determined to protect deputy ministers and Stephen Harper's ministers from potentially harmful disclosures. When you have the power of government and of appointment, there is more than one way to skin anyone who appears to disagree with you.

### 3.6 Spreading fear in Civil Society

Did we mention that Canada under the Conservatives has become like Putin's Russia?

In June 2014, Canadians learned that the **Harper government is monitoring 'all known demonstrations' in the country**. Reports are collected in a central registry in the Government Operations Centre. Obviously tolerance, dissent and civil liberties do not rate high among Conservative values.

Ottawa **also wanted to go after “whistle blowers”** that is public servants who believe it is their duty as citizens to denounce wrong-doing. The government used its powers to open more than 25 inquiries on media leaks in six different departments since 2005.

Not only is the right of peaceful protest under pressure, so is the right of peaceful association. All the private associations, community organizations, ad-

vocacy groups, churches, unions and charitable organizations are collectively called civil society. The **Harper government has worked aggressively to silence civil society and spread fear of advocacy.** In 2014, Ottawa continued its destabilizing and threatening approach to civil society by suddenly replacing its long term partner, Canadem, for the observation of difficult foreign elections by two alternates without any experience, at the last minute and without explanation, to observe the crucial Ukrainian election. You can see even the agencies they worked with were expendable on the high altar of some hidden Conservative reason. Many other groups were simply abandoned such as the Institute on First Nations Statistics, the Institute on Governance, the National Organization on Aboriginal Health, the National Council on Social Welfare and the Canadian Council on Learning. Also disposed of was the Research and Analysis Services on Remuneration, which was the only independent unit furnishing comparative data on salaries in the public service and the private sector.

At the same time, the Conservatives had the Canada Revenue Agency, one of its strong-arm guardians, hard at work ferreting out every last financial document of – you guessed it – Canada’s charities! These are the associations that are usually considered to be the handmaidens of governments for reaching out into society at least cost and also the protectors of democracy by having a first-hand knowledge of what government is doing in specific fields. The field is often called ‘advocacy’ and if the taps of advocacy are turned off the whole bottom falls out of active, participatory democracy and we become exactly like other authoritarian states. It almost appears that this is the aim of the Harper Conservatives.

You see, to have enough money, charities have to have ‘charitable status’ that exempts them from income tax and gives their donors tax deductions. And it is the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) which controls charitable status. You can imagine, all they have to do is start investigating you and it takes up days and days of your energy and time and instills a fear which hobbles advocacy. So the CRA becomes a bureaucratic tool the government can use to subtly

intimidate and silence its critics.

The onslaught began in 2012 when the Conservative government ordered the CRA to undertake a wave of political and financial activity audits — eventually some 60 religious, foreign aid, environmental, democratic and developmental associations were in the government’s sights. The cost to the taxpayer is an additional \$13 million in the CRA’s budget to create a special team of auditors. Some of the most popular associations were included: the Suzuki Foundation, the United Church, Amnesty International, Tides Canada Initiatives Society, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Oxfam and Equiterre. Some audits stretch for more than two years (how are you meant to get any work done?) with repeated demands for detailed paper work, translation of all documents, reports on the political activities of foreign partners etc. Government spokespersons have alleged these organizations were associated with terrorists, money-launderers, and foreign radicals. In international development, Canadian agencies were steered away from inequality and human rights toward the conservative goal of economic growth.

All audited organizations had one thing in common: at one point in time they had dared criticize the Harper Conservatives. The results have been: “censorship by audit” , “selective targeting” , “advocacy chill” , “gagging charities with red tape” and “self-censoring for fear of displeasing the CRA” . Silencing and discrediting were the goals. If you speak out you were defunded. People became afraid. There is an implicit questioning of civil society’s capacity to advocate and the rights of citizens to be critical of political authorities. The very basis of modern democracy is under attack.

Thus it was that in September 2014, more than 400 intellectuals wrote to the Canada Revenue Agency to demand that it stop its audit of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, an Ottawa think-tank. The group maintained that the Conservative government was attempting to intimidate, to muzzle and to reduce to silence its detractors. The first wave of audits targeted the environmental groups which were criticizing Conservative policies on energy and pipelines. They then went after organizations fighting poverty, promoting international aid and protecting human

rights. Gradually, there was an “emasculatation of advocacy” as civil society organizations became obliged to self-censure and spend their feeble resources on accountants and lawyers. Conservative think-tanks were not targeted.

## 4 Speak loudly and carry no stick at all: Harper’s Foreign Policy or Abusing Foreign Policy to Build Local Support

I would like to take credit for it, but actually the title of this chapter was contained in a letter to the editor in *Le Droit* which was comparing Harper’s style to that of President Teddy Roosevelt’s as summarized in his famous saying about foreign policy, “Speak softly and carry a big stick”. The title is just one of the tongue-in-cheek aphorisms used to describe Harper’s foreign policy including: ‘megaphone diplomacy’, ‘bullhorn diplomacy’, ‘hit and run foreign policy, and ‘policy without vision’. The other generalized description of Harper’s foreign policy is that it is ‘pugnaciously simplistic’ because it sees the world as ‘polarized’ between ‘good and evil’, ‘right and wrong’. Both these tendencies are captured in the saying that ‘being moral takes less sacrifice’.

In the future, should anyone ever care to look back at Prime Minister Harper’s foreign policy it will be noted for the following:

- A general lack of understanding of the complexities of international politics and, therefore, a simplistic, black and white, for or against, choice of policies.
- The rejection of decades of Canadian learning about world politics, in particular prudent liberal internationalism, diplomatic negotiation through the United Nation and other multilateral forums, and contributing to peace and security. This was based on the incorrect assumption that these were policies of the Liberal Party rather than a well-developed, bipartisan

program of the Liberals and Conservatives. The consequence was a drastic decline of Canada in the eyes of the world.

- A dependence on gut feelings and ideology rather than foreign affairs expertise.
- An attempt to change Canada and its culture from a peace-making society into an aggressive war-making country.
- A one —sided support for Israel in Middle East politics.
- Being the recipient of multiple awards for obstructing climate change progress.
- The lack of a defence policy.
- Northern confusion
- Trashing Canada’s international development program

I could have included Harper’s idea of a ‘principled forum policy’ but it is such a simplistic, self-serving notion (Were all previous Canadian policies ‘unprincipled’? Is one-sided support for Israel principled?) that this pompous concept will disappear like the fog in the morning sun.

Let us now deal with each of these traits in turn. But, before we can understand the foreign policy of the Harper government it is necessary to situate it in its historical context. For an introduction to Canada’s current foreign policy, I have turned to the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark’s recent book, *How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change*. In this book he has a chapter on ‘Canada’s Policy Today’. As a former Prime Minister and long serving Foreign Minister as well as coming from a Conservative tradition, Mr. Clark has excellent credentials for providing us an overview of Canada’s foreign policy at the present time.

Clark starts off by reminding us that international issues have played virtually no part in the elections won by Stephen Harper, nor in the platforms or prominent policy positions of his Conservative party or in House of Commons debates. Nonetheless, his

party has encouraged a more aggressive, macho characterization of Canada's role in the world and stepped up Canada's profile as a war-fighting nation with, at least a few years ago, considerably increased defence spending. Even so, there is no coherent and consistent approach to defence policy. As a counterpart, there has been a steady and deliberate decline in the funding and priority assigned to Canada's diplomatic and development capacity. Except for technical editing of documents produced by the Prime Minister's Office, advice of officials in the Foreign Affairs Department is generally not sought on crucial issues and, when offered, is usually discounted or rejected. The Conservatives wanted a harder-line position reflecting what Harper referred to as a "principled foreign policy" .

The Harper government explicitly rejects even-handedness in the Middle East. "Israel has no greater friend in the world today than Canada" Foreign Minister John Baird told the American Jewish Committee. Harper's hostility toward the United Nations, Clark maintains, is framed regularly in the context of solidarity with Israel. And yet this is precisely the time when Israel could benefit most from constructive examination of its options, the author suggests. On the other hand, in the fields of the environment and international development Canada has become a denier and an outlier.

One of Clark's major themes is that this government has been steering steadily and quietly away from traditionally important areas of Canadian concern — diplomacy, pursuing broad multilateral relations, partnerships with civil society and NGO's, international development and fighting poverty, a balanced role in the Middle East and robust support for the United Nations. Harper maintains he doesn't want "to court every dictator with a vote at the UN" . Also at the UN, our participation in peacekeeping missions has fallen from first place when it began to fifty-fifth in 2012.

One would think that in a proudly democratic society like Canada, the reasons for these changes should be stated clearly and justified in open debate. This has not been how Harper conducts his foreign policy. Clark points out that this is a notoriously controlling prime minister, who dominates his govern-

ment's domestic and international policy more rigorously than any of his predecessors. The instinct to marginalize or repudiate past successes and to treat respected NGO's as adversaries, not allies, is risking Canada's international reputation. "Canada now talks more than we act and our tone is almost adolescent — forceful, certain, enthusiastic, combative, full of sound and fury" .

In the Toronto Star the journalist Haroon Siddiqui summarizes Clark's arguments in an article entitled, "Harper has ignored Canadian ways while destroying our reputation" . He says of Clark's book, "It's a damning critique of how Harper has changed Canada's image in the world, from a nation admired for its sophistication in mediating, peacekeeping, and working co-operatively in multilateral institutions to one that's belligerent, divisive and dismissive of the United Nations and other international institutions, such as the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, and the Organization of American States" .

Joe Clark is not the only former prime minister who can help us understand Harper's foreign policy. Former Conservative Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, used a series of interviews in September 2014 to "stick his stiletto into Harper" . Mr. Mulroney battered the Harper orientation to foreign policy, climate change, the Supreme Court and his so-called incrementalist governing approach. He told CTV "When Canada, for the first time in our history, loses a vote at the United Nations to become a member of the Security Council . . . to Portugal, which was on the verge of bankruptcy at the time, you look in the mirror and say I think we have a problem" .

#### **4.1 Little knowledge of foreign policy explains simplistic approach**

When he came to government neither Harper nor the members of his cabinet had ever traveled much outside of Canada let alone had any experience in international relations. So, lacking any knowledge of foreign policy, their basic approach has been to apply their world view (ideology) to world affairs, to try to replace liberal internationalism with a belligerent Canada, to use the world stage to attract domestic ethnic audiences to their electoral base, and to

use bluster and bullying on the world stage just as they do at home. As former diplomat, Harry Sterling wrote, “Harper has yet to demonstrate he understands the fundamental difference between pursuing policies which are in Canada’s own national interests from those which primarily seem based on serving his own political and ideological objectives.” To make this work, it has been the Prime Minister’s Office which has developed Canada’s foreign policy. The expertise of our diplomats and Department of Foreign Affairs has generally been ignored.

We have been provided few insights to the sources of Harper’s world view. He appears to be totally indifferent to the views of others in pursuing his highly personal approach to international relations. It has been said that, “our Prime Minister has a very British-centric approach to the world. He’s from a Loyalist family; he’s long been an admirer of their system and is a loyal Economist reader; his role model was Margaret Thatcher; and he says ‘God save the Queen’ in his speeches.” Perhaps this explains his attachment to the monarchy and the return to the ‘royal’ appellation in our armed forces. Another theory is that Harper is under the influence of his evangelical church which brings him to defend the Judeo-Christian heritage and defend Israel. Another is that he uses foreign policy for domestic politics to collect money and votes from selective ethnic communities.

A more compelling explanation for Harper’s international outlook comes from his Civitas speech in Toronto in 2003 when he provided a few clues to his foreign policy beliefs. He wanted, he said, to “re-discover” the traditional conservatism of the political philosopher Edmund Burke, which valued “social order” , custom and religious traditions and the preservation of historic values and moral convictions. The emerging debates on foreign affairs should be fought on moral grounds of right and duty. Dealing with terrorism and its sponsors and battles with modern tyrants are battles over values. “What motivates Harper?” asks journalist Mark Kennedy. “It’s about the simplicity of right and wrong, of good and evil.” Thus, he chose Israeli democracy over Islamist terror. You have to emphatically choose a “side” . Mr. Harper must be one of the few political leaders to find moral choices to be simple.

As a result, Harper’s foreign policy has been severely criticized over the years on almost every front:

- Scarce attention to the environment to the point that Canada has been called a “climate pariah” for actually blocking progress in combatting climate change.
- His early approach to gratuitously insult China for its human rights record and then pursuing it as a major trade partner.
- His one-sided policies on the Middle East. Calling Israel’s devastation of the civilian population in Lebanon a “balanced response” to missile attacks by Hezbollah as he later called the destruction of Gaza simply an expression of Israel’s “right to self-defence” .
- Cuts to funding of NGOs (non-governmental associations) promoting human rights in the Middle East and the dismantling of Canada’s world recognized Rights and Democracy council when they tried to give balanced support to Palestine.
- The government avoids public consultations and does not welcome independent sources of policy advice. Rather it plays to a partisan base and sees little reason for funding non-governmental actors that do not fall in with its agenda.
- Denying the repatriation of child soldier Omar Khadr from Guantanamo Bay.
- Continually stonewalling Parliament’s access to secret foreign policy records.
- A diminished interest in African problems where embassies have been closed, in part because Africa was a ‘Liberal issue’.
- Refusing to include funding for abortions and contraceptives, critical to the safeguard of women’s health, in his Maternal and Child Health Care program.
- Resistance toward peace talks in Afghanistan.

- The denigration of the United Nations, the world's one global forum.
- As early as 2007, polls showed Canadians wanted collective security, not selective security, negotiation instead of confrontation.
- Canada's nascent and successful cultural policies were abandoned in favour of a focus on Afghanistan and the fight against terrorism by the new "muscular Canada" .
- The liquidation of internationalism by a more insular Canadian government.
- This country and its people, although certainly not reviled, are no longer accorded the admiration and esteem that, until recently, was the norm. We enjoyed confidence, trust, and respect — the bedrock of diplomatic practice.
- Canada has fallen from first place (for much of the 1990s) to 11th place in the UN Human Development Index.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Development budget has been severely slashed by some \$400 million (?) by 2014-15. The Canadian Studies Program was eliminated as was the Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Centralized control over all communications by the Prime Minister's Office has virtually eliminated Canadian public and digital diplomacy.
- By 2014, Canada was the only country to have reneged on the Kyoto Environment Treaty, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the Cluster Munitions Treaty and the only NATO country not yet to have signed the Arms Trade Treaty.
- Instead of working for diplomatic influence on Sri Lanka as other countries like Great Britain did, Canada simply boycotted the Commonwealth meeting there.
- In 2007, at a huge photo-op, a beaming Harper and Bill Gates announced a remarkable joint venture to speed up HIV/AIDs vaccine. Three years later the plans to build an \$88 million, non-profit vaccine manufacturing facility in Winnipeg were unceremoniously scrapped because, it was said, none of the bids were good enough. There were questions of conspiracy with the pharmaceutical industry, great frustration and anger.
- The former Prime Minister of Australia has said, "If you want to kill children and women, cluster bombs are the weapon of choice" . And he has said Canada's proposed ratification legislation, "Contravenes both the spirit and the letter" of the treaty to ban the use of cluster mines.
- Despite Canada being a long-time advocate of global arms control, the Harper government has not yet signed the Arms Trade Treaty which would reduce the harm caused by irresponsible and illegal trade in weapons — because, it seems, of misrepresentation of the treaty by Conservative friends in the gun control lobby.
- Here is a real turn around. "In the eyes of China's academics. Stephen Harper is 'Canada's George W. Bush', a leader who has overseen a sullyng of the country's international reputation as its national character is rewritten by the push for dirty oil-sands crude. . . Canada once took seriously its role as a 'defender of peace in the international community, a sincere mediator of international arguments and a good global citizen'. . . 'Canada's function as a model country is weakening', said the report. In the worst case, 'its unique status globally will disappear as a consequence'." (Nathan Vanderkuppe, 'Canada's image in decline', says Chinese report by the Centre for Canadian Studies at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Globe and Mail, 16-05-2014).
- Nevertheless, over the years, the Harper conservatives have managed to enunciate a number of "principles" in foreign affairs. 'Soft power'

does not matter so multilateral organization and diplomats do not really matter. On the other hand, for the Conservatives Canada's future prosperity depends on the extractive resource sector. So, for example, the government gave Natural Resources Canada a \$16 million increase in its advertising budget in one year, presumably for lobbying in the U.S. to approve our pipeline projects.

- After 40 years as one of the world's preeminent leaders in development thinking, the North-South Institute had its core funding eliminated by the Harper government and it was forced to close its doors in 2014.
- Now, to end with here's a real contradiction. Harper is always going on about sovereignty but when it comes to really doing something about it he runs in the opposite direction. At the end of 2013, Harper placed Canada under the authority of the International Centre for Settlement of Investor Disputes, a part of the World Bank which allows foreign companies to sue countries. The companies get to by-pass courts and use special tribunals where the review process is handled by arbitrators named by an America, the president of the Bank. It is a one-way process where countries cannot sue corporations. Awards have run in the billions of dollars. This process can stop countries from legislating in fields such as health, social welfare or the environment that companies may not like. It is the same process used in Mr. Harper's trade deals. He appears to like business more than he likes Canadian sovereignty,

He does not aspire to middle rank. Harper has rearmed the Canadian forces and placed economic diplomacy at the centre. Immigration must serve Canadian interests. Development aid is integrated to trade and commerce. With government acting as an enabler for the free market, his principal policy goal — in his own mind — is to build the Canadian economy. Bilateral and multilateral relations are focused on those forums where there can be economic gains.

In a book called *The Ugly Canadian*, Yves Engler has proposed that the two common **threads of Harper's foreign policy are growing militarism and support for corporate interests**. We will look at militarism below. We all know that the Alberta tar sands are perhaps the biggest extraction enterprise in the country but few will know that overseas investment by Canadian mining companies rose from \$30 billion in 2002 to \$230 billion in 2011. Accordingly, the federal government provided \$15 million for a new Canada School of Energy and Environment, essentially an industry think tank. At the same time, our diplomats have been retrained as apologists for the tar sands and mining. Our development projects lend moral support to corporations and diplomats pressure foreign governments not to enact stricter mining laws. Unfortunately, a report from the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada concluded: "**Canadian companies have been the most significant group involved in unfortunate incidents in the developing world**" — incidents include: the displacement of indigenous communities, environmental damage, and violent confrontation with protesters.

By 2012, as the *Globe and Mail* journalist Jeffrey Simpson pointed out, the Conservatives were running on **blind ideology blended with profound parochialism** of the kind that was giving Canada a reputation as an outlier except in military interventions. Foreign Affairs and aid budgets were seriously cut, embassy residences in prime locations sold off, staff at missions hollowed out, consulates closed, and budgets for outreach reduced. Canada, Simpson maintained, "Had retreated into an anglospheric worldview coupled with a focus on trade deals, but lacking any sense of a wider conception of international affairs."

'**Hit and run**' diplomacy, it has been said, does not work because it does not bring opposing sides together or give Canadian diplomats a chance to make a difference. On the other hand, Canada being a small, open economy we must recognize that being a negotiator, 'an honest broker', is still the best role that we can fulfill in international politics. The world does not need another aggressive state full of threats and bluster. And yet this is exactly what the Harper

Conservatives have given us. They decided to take a hardline on Iran and closed our embassy their thus cutting off all diplomacy. When a new government was elected in Iran, the U.S. and Europeans started to negotiate with it. The result was a seeming halt in Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief in trade and financial sanctions. Canada followed Israel in scoffing at the deal, further marginalizing itself in the Middle East and with the United States.

Along came the Ukrainian crisis and once again Harper and Baird outdid themselves in their insults to Vladimir Putin as the **West's "most vocal hawks" with little to back it up except bluster**. In the Conservatives own literature, Mr. Harper is described as a "Cold War warrior at heart" who has never trusted Russian under Putin — but also recognizes that his hard line on Moscow plays well with Canada's Ukrainian and Polish populations. Nevertheless, when it came to direct tangible help to Ukraine there is a great gap between the lip and the act. Our \$200 million support was long delayed and was only a loan and not a gift. A raft of other contributions such as training for horticultural farmers amounted to a measly (in light of the needs) \$38 million. There was not much for Ukraine's real military needs.

The Conservatives boast of standing up to dictators, but **their democracy agenda does not meet their rhetoric**. In 2008, Harper promised to establish a new multi-party, democracy promotion agency. But by 2010 the atmosphere for multiparty cooperation had been poisoned; the agency had disappeared from the government's agenda; the existing Democracy Council was disbanded; funding was terminated for the Forum of the Federations; the Office of Democratic Governance within CIDA vanished; the Democracy Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs was folded in with other units, and then they closed the internationally respected Rights and Democracy agency. Ottawa went on to disband the Sudan Task Force at a time of renewed fighting in Darfur and the need for support of South Sudan. This coincided with the expiration of the government's Global Peace and Security Fund. But, the Conservatives still spend \$5 million annually on an Office of Religious Freedom.

## 4.2 Down with the United Nations

Until the arrival of the government of Stephen Harper, Canada had played a leading role at the United Nations. Since its founding, Canada has been one of its great champions. It was a Canadian, Prof. John Humphrey, who was the principal architect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Canadian diplomacy has supported the broadening of membership, decolonization, North-South Dialogue, the Rio Summit on Environment and Development, negotiations to halt ozone layer depletion and acid rain, and efforts to end apartheid in South Africa. More recent Canadian initiatives include campaigns to ban land mines and curtail the trade in blood diamonds, the establishment of the International Criminal Court, and orchestrating awareness of the plight of child soldiers.

But, Canada did not just go along with the wave. We have never thought the UN was a perfect institution. Canadians have always tried to improve and reform the UN. Former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in introducing peacekeeping to the UN. For years, we worked to improve the openness of the Security Council. More recently, Canada funded the Commission that created the idea of the international community's 'Responsibility to Protect' citizens. "R2P" is slowly reconstituting notions of sovereignty so that the world can get on with modernizing international relations. Roland Paris's recent research suggests that Canadians still strongly support both the UN and liberal internationalism. Thus, in the past, Canada has been an active and successful player at the UN because of our understanding of diplomacy and of international politics.

This is no longer the case. Over the years, the Conservatives have accused the UN of 'moral relativism', 'going along to get along', and 'having to please every dictator in the UN'. Liberal internationalism (of which multilateralism and the UN are among the key components) was caricatured as "weak and wrong". It is clear that the Harper Government's aim has been to diminish the UN in the eyes of Canadians and indeed of the world.

Increasingly the government of Canada is under-

mining the UN and global cooperation. Some recent examples: We have not signed the treaty to regulate the arms trade; Canadian diplomats at the UN make lacklustre contributions to debates on the Responsibility to Protect; we have withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and the Convention on Desertification; Canada sent one airplane to join a UN peacekeeping mission to help Mali — a country we used to support; our draft legislation to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions would nullify its intent. Our record on the issue of climate change has been so deplorable that we have received several 'fossil of the year' awards. In addition, cuts to the Department of Foreign Affairs and to the salaries of its officers have reduced our diplomatic capacity. We have drastically reduced the number of refugees Canada accepts and our aid program has been cut and folded in with the Department of Foreign Affairs. Where Canada was strong, it is now weak; where we were once prudent we are now hostile to much of what the UN does and represents.

Canadians who listened to their Prime Minister's speech at the 2014 United Nations opening general debate were probably disappointed. Many had hoped that his decision to address the General Assembly would also mark a turning of the page, a renewal of Canada's former strong commitment to the world organization. However, Mr. Harper gave no indication of any change in Canada's withdrawn and at times derisive approach to the UN. In fact, Mr. Harper, by emphasizing his one international project for Maternal and Youth Health, and ignoring current crises and the pressing agenda of programs in which Canada should be re-engaging, has demonstrated once again the narrowness of his understanding of the United Nations and indeed of foreign relations.

Also while Harper was in New York, a record 120 heads of state attended a world summit on climate change and heard important commitments (including from the U.S. and China) that improve prospects for a renewed Climate Treaty at the 2015 conference in Paris. However, Mr. Harper was a no-show, and Canada remains a pariah in international climate politics.

High level talks are also being held on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, where a

Secretary-General's draft Outcome Document lists 17 priority objectives that will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But, Canada's main aim is only to ensure that its Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) program remains among the world's priorities.

### 4.3 Harper supports Israel

The Harper government explicitly rejects evenhandedness in the Middle East. "Israel has no greater friend in the world today than Canada" Foreign Minister John Baird told the American Jewish Committee. Harper's hostility toward the United Nations, Joe Clark maintains, is framed regularly in the context of solidarity with Israel. And yet this is precisely the time when Israel could benefit most from constructive examination of its options.

Harper's binary approach is brash, with little respect for diplomatic politesse. On supporting Israel, Harper is unequivocal. He is also doubtful about the value of multilateralism and the norms of international law. Harper's political goal is to polarize Canadian politics into a right-left contest to eliminate the centre-straddling Liberal party. He will build a conservative Canada by shifting power to the West, and enlisting new Canadians who favour less government and emphasise law and order.

On the other hand, it is human rights and the rule of law that should guide our policy with regard to **Israel**. The Israeli author Ari Shavit has warned that Israel needs to confront the "moral, demographic and political disaster" that is the military occupation of Arab lands and the expansion of Israeli settlements. These two practices go against international law and Palestinian rights. Unlike other international leaders, Harper steadfastly refused to bring up these issues on his 2013 trip to Israel. It is here that we see that Harper has most obdurately reversed Canada's balanced foreign policy as a 'helpful fixer' in the Middle East (or elsewhere). One wonders why? Some suggest it is for electoral advantage. It indeed appears true from the Conservatives efforts to woo Jewish voters and turn their money away from the Liberals.

But even the Conservatives know there are more Muslims in Canada than Jews. So there must be

more to it than that. Harper has indicated it comes in part from a strong personal instinct. Jeffrey Simpson writes in *The Globe and Mail* that it comes from Harper's 'Manichean' view of the world, seeing it simply as a battle of good and evil — a binary view of which we have often accused the Americans. In an interview with *The Ottawa Citizen* on the eve of Prime Minister Harper's trip to Israel and the Middle East, Jason Kenney, Employment Minister, said Canada has a 'moral obligation' to support a secure homeland for Israel in its daily existential struggle for survival and stop the rise of "new anti-Semitism". In the end, Harper has intentionally reversed Canada's traditional 'balanced' policy because he mistakenly believed it was a 'Liberal' policy.

All Canadian governments have always supported Israel's right to exist in security ever since the first UN vote on the State of Israel in 1947, of which Lester Pearson was one of the architects. What has changed is Harper's single-minded, abrasive support of Israel right or wrong. The problem with this is that it is neither in Canada's interest nor in the interest of effective diplomacy. Our interest, as a country with both Arab and Jewish citizens is not to work for either one but to strive for a more secure Middle East for the good of everyone. It is un-Canadian for either of these groups to seek Canadian support for a foreign government. Harper's unilateral policy increases a sense of division that fuels strife. As retired diplomat Jeremy Kinsman has written in the *National Post*, "Helping Israelis find an equitable solution, rather than mere cheerleading, is what friends are for". A diplomatic role for Canada would be for us to seek to work with others in a complex situation — even if our influence in the region is minimal. Now, according to Kinsman, "We're out of it", because we are no longer trusted by the Americans or by the 57 members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

In his speech to the Knesset, to bolster his support for the "Jewish State" of Israel, Harper particularly insisted on the arrival of a "new strain of anti-Semitism". This strain, Harper claims, turns anger from the Jewish race/religion to the State of Israel. Thus, for Harper, criticizing Israel is tantamount to being anti-Semitic and full of hate. This is sheer non-

sense. It is quite possible to be critical of Israeli policies without being anti-Israel. Canadians are critical of many countries, even their own. Many different people, including Jews, criticise Israel. As Tom Friedman wrote in the *New York Times*, "If Israel doesn't stop the settlement madness, denying the Palestinians a West bank state, it will fit the caricature of its worst enemies". During the second Gaza crisis in August 2014, 120 Quebec intellectuals and writers published a text in *Le Devoir* flaying the Harper government for 'Abandoning Canada's Peaceful Vocation'. They deplored the Conservatives betrayal of Canada's traditional force for peace by offering their unconditional support to the Israeli government. At the same time, 300 Holocaust survivors and their descendants condemned Israel's 'genocide of Palestinian people' in an advertisement in the *New York Times*.

What we see here is another example of Harper's divisive politics. To make his point, he insinuates that anyone who disagrees with him is his enemy. He vituperates against a 'balanced' approach to foreign policy as "weak and wrong" and "moral relativism". He finds "dark corners" in civil society, on campuses and at the United Nations. This is an obvious attempt to paint everyone who disagrees with him on Israel as racist, full of hatred. The opposite is the truth. It is those who truly admire Israel for its culture and courage who are most upset when they think some Israeli politicians are not behaving in the country's best interests. Besides, as André Pratte of *La Presse* headlined his January 21st editorial, "In whose name is Harper talking?" He is right. The Prime Minister has never deigned to discuss his Israel policy with Parliament or the Canadian people. It is simply dictated. Canada would be much better advised to return to doing the best it can, as a respected honest broker.

In reality, Harper's unblinking support for Netanyahu's Israeli government is a microcosm of all that is wrong with his foreign policy. It is simplistic, seeing everything in black and white. Harper's aggressiveness was carried over to the UN where Canadian diplomats were ordered to block resolutions even mildly critical of Israel. Even at the G8's 2011 meeting in Deauville, he vetoed any mention of Israel's borders in the final document. Baird, on becom-

ing Foreign Minister, told the Department of Foreign Affairs he did not want to hear the opinion of their experts because he and the government had already fixed their positions on Israel and the Middle East. The Conservative's bellicosity marginalizes us in the eyes of our friends and allies like Great Britain, France and the United States all of whom pleaded with Israeli to come to terms with the Palestinians. No one talked to Canada. Washington, we were told, took exception to Canada's servile approach to Israel and thoughtless hostility to Iran. As the editorialist in *Le Droit* wrote, 'Canada does not facilitate peace'. In fact, it stirred up the flames. Critics condemned Harper's bullhorn diplomacy which had replaced Canada's traditional 'quiet diplomacy'.

#### 4.4 The Ups and Downs of Defence under the Conservatives

'Inconsistent' is the one word that describes the defence policy of the Harper Conservatives. In fact, the historian and military expert Jack Granatstein went so far as to claim the Conservatives had no defence policy at all. The lack of consistency can be seen throughout their defence initiatives but here we will concentrate on the ups and downs of the defence budget, the on again off again procurement policies, the fragility of the armed forces and the inhuman treatment of our veterans. But, we should never forget that the man that spent more than 18 billion of our dollars in Afghanistan was one of the first to run away leaving behind a state of warlords, Taliban and narco-traffickers where women can't go out without a male guardian.

The bare facts are striking enough. Determined to give Canada the means to be a 'warrior state', the markedly pro-military Stephen Harper increased the Department of Defence's budget from \$15 billion in 2005 to \$21 billion in 2011. But, in 2013-14 the budget was cut by 22% or \$3.1 billion. The public accounts for 2013-14 showed that for the third consecutive year the expenditures for military equipment, arms and infrastructure had significant reductions. This brought the budget down to the lowest level since the Second World War, just one per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In real terms

this means the Defence budget will decline from On another level, the World Federalists of Canada issued a 2014 report showing that Canada had only 34 UN peacekeepers out of a world total of more than 100,000 serving the UN.

Mind you, this did not stop the Conservatives from spending a quarter of a million dollars on new army insignia to replace the maple leaf with the older British 'pips' and crowns as part of the government's push to re-instate symbols of the monarchy. That will likely go down well in Quebec.

Still, money talks. The Canadian military is now woefully underequipped as a result of budget cuts and poor procurement policies by the Conservatives and previous governments. Our ancient CP-140 Aurora airplanes started patrolling the Arctic in 1980. Costly upgrade projects launched in the 1990s are still going on. Still, the government has announced once again it will not buy new surveillance aircraft even after 35 years of use.

Similarly, our jet fighters are so old that they were bought under Pierre Trudeau, also in the 1980's. In 2010 the Conservatives announced they would buy the largely U.S. built Joint Strike Fighter only to freeze the file in 2012 to make a new review which still has not been made public. There is no decision on a replacement fighter, nor even a decision on how a decision will be made. But, then, the sneakiness came back. A leaked, classified high-level Pentagon briefing revealed that there were back-channel dealings of Prime Minister Harper's government secretly seeking early delivery in 2015 of four of the F-35 deep-strike fighters. A signed letter of intent would be a firm commitment to buy the rest of the order while officially maintaining that Canada is abiding by an open and transparent evaluation of Canada's combat aircraft needs — and all this while not informing Parliament and continuing to deceive Canadians.

At the same time, the Navy's supply ships are being decommissioned without replacements in sight and other ships are years behind schedule and over budget. This is so, Canada's Auditor General says, because the government took what were to be initial estimates and locked them in as actual project budgets. The problem is procurement process and politics he says.

The list of Conservative military equipment blunders is revealing of their back and forth decision-making. According to Prof. Elinor Sloan of Carleton, as of September 2013:

- There had been no delivery on marine helicopters promised in 2008.
- No request made for proposal for Search and Rescue aircraft anticipated in 2005
- No start of support ships promised for 2012.
- No design chosen for Arctic Patrol Ships planned for delivery in 2013.
- No design for replacement destroyers now expected for first delivery in 2022.
- Government cancelled the army's Close Combat Vehicle.
- The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter still under review.
- The promise for three armed, heavy ice breakers died after a year.
- The National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy failed to deliver a single vessel three years after the shipyards were chosen in 2011.

Such a perilous state of affairs led the columnist Michael Den Tandt to ask, "Question: For how much longer can the federal Conservatives shamble along with a national defence and procurement posture that is disjointed, underfunded, poorly understood, chronically secretive, obviously unequal to the challenges at hand?"

All of this was disquieting background for the run up to the government's decision to participate in the war against the Islamic State (ISIL) using its decade's old equipment. The government was given plaudits by some for acting to support its allies against a barbaric terrorist movement. Others including the opposition parties said the government was once again reacting in its typical black and white, controlling, only- one- path, mode. The Conservatives decided all alone, never taking the opposition or the public

into their confidence. Baird talked about humanitarian assistance but there was little effort or much delivery and as of 2014, Canada, the previous champion of refugees, had only agreed to help (perhaps) 1,300 Syrians (mostly paid for by private sponsors) compared to Sweden's 30-40,000.

There is a major gap between Harper's rhetoric about countering Putin and ISIL and his slashing of military budgets. His preference for military history, monuments, medals, ceremonies, parades and words of praise do not help with equipment, deployment, veteran's services and budgets, as Jeffrey Simpson has pointed out. "A string of broken promises, delays, cost overruns, policy reversals and braggadocio have characterized the Harper Government's defence procurements efforts."

Andrew Coyne was much less tender. Analysing what he called the 'F-35 fighter fiasco', he concluded, "In sum, virtually every safeguard that was supposed to protect the public purse and public interest was subverted, evaded, or rolled over. Ministers failed to exercise oversight over their departments; Parliament was prevented from exercising oversight over ministers; the public was kept in the dark throughout... If ever proof were needed of the weakness of our democratic institutions — and of the urgent necessity of reform — this is it."

## 4.5 Abuse of veterans

Let us now turn to the issue of the Conservative's abuse of our veterans. It was the Veteran's Affairs Minister Julian Fantino who arrived late one evening to meet a delegation of veterans, proceeded to fight with them and then stamp out. This is also the government that wanted to stop the public from seeing the bodies of our Afghanistan heroes being brought home. But these insults were nothing in comparison to the abominable treatment of veterans by a government that flatters itself to be a champion of the military.

According to the veterans and the Royal Canadian Legion, the government of Canada in the person of Prime Minister Robert Borden had created a sort of Social Compact with veterans when he said during the First World War, "You need not fear that the

government and the country will omit to recognize the valour of the service you are making to the country.” This promise was generally kept until the arrival of the Harper Conservatives. This is no small matter. There are some 700,000 veterans of which 200,000 were in contact with the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2013. Under this government some 40,000 Canadians fought in Afghanistan and more than 2,000 were wounded physically or mentally. In 2013-14, 18 soldiers committed suicide. They obviously needed our help. What did Ottawa do?

The Conservative government simply says it has no obligation to honour the decisions of former governments. Thus, in 2006 it instituted a ‘New Charter for Veterans’. One of its principle weapons was to condemn wounded veterans to a one-time pay out supposedly of maximum of \$300,000. In reality, the government only gave out an average of \$45,000 during the first seven years of the program — whereas wounded veterans used to receive a non-taxable annual stipend of \$31,000. The difference is staggering. When veterans sued the government to get the money back, the Harper government tried in vain to stop it going to court and then dragged its feet during the trial. The Minister was given \$4 million more to advertise false claims of aiding veterans on TV.

But there was more to come. The Conservatives next took an ax to the Veterans department budget by \$226 million, equal to 30% of its administrative funding for 2011-2014. It was one of the deepest ministerial cuts. Then to add insult to injury, the Conservatives took away the Integrated Centres of Personal Support and the nine regional bureaus of Veterans Affairs Canada that were attached to them. For wounded veterans these centres were their lifeline for help, treatment and information from the government. I have a feeling that if most Canadians were to know about this they would be sick to their stomachs — but not the Conservatives.

All this came to ahead in November 2014 when two new facts were revealed. The Department of Veterans Affairs had 900 fulltime positions eliminated between 2011 and 2014, representing 25% of its workforce. Veterans were waiting for up to eight months for service because the remaining public servants each had between 750 and 1200 files to deal with. Then

it became known that the Department had returned \$ millions of its unexpended budget that had been voted by Parliament! That is why the Veterans had all their services cut. In his attempt to explain the situation, Pat Stogran, the first Veterans Ombudsman, said in his view, the senior bureaucrats run Veterans Affairs like an insurance company, “just trying to write these people off as an industrial accident” rather than as an agency to help vets. Mind you, the Government certainly encouraged them in this view. It offered senior bureaucrats some \$5 million in bonuses when they trimmed their budgets and had unexpended funds to return to the Treasury Board..

Finally, the veterans began fighting back. A group of Afghan veterans started a lawsuit against the federal government (what a spectacle) over their pensions. Six other groups of veteran advocates had formed a coalition to boycott government announcements and galvanize votes against Conservatives. Others plan to crisscross the country campaigning against the Conservatives.

## 4.6 Arctic Farce

Since being prime minister, Stephen Harper has made an annual summer visit to the people of the Canadian North to show them they are loved by Ottawa. This is all well and good. Of course, it is also an opportunity for a picture such as the Titanic like photo of our hero on the prow of a ship plunging through the ice with a Canadian flag streaming in the wind behind him. Like the Titanic, Harper’s Arctic policy was soon to sink.

The Conservatives had decided to mutate Canada into a war-fighting state and to turn its back on peacekeeping traditions. This can even be seen in the vaunted ‘**Northern Vision**’. In 2007 Harper promised an Arctic port at Nanisivik, the construction of eight Arctic patrol ships and the construction of a fleet of three heavy duty ice-breakers. Due to budget cuts, regulatory snags, and some short-sightedness there is uncertainty about when or if the Nanisivik port can start. The three ice-beakers have reportedly become one and the plan for the patrol ships cut back from eight to five. Seven years later, **nothing has been done** except to make a start on

the first highway to the Arctic. While Canada blusters, Russia has moved ahead on all fronts.

Harper has also worked to make polar sovereignty a foremost priority. There are triple goals: keeping control over the 1,500 kilometer Northwest Passage as global warming opens the possibility of shipping (52 vessels made full transits in 2012 and 2013); preparing for resource development; and cultivating a Conservative legacy as a champion of the North. But the leitmotif is sovereignty. As Harper told Steven Chase of the *Globe and Mail*, “The government’s position is unequivocal. Canada’s Arctic is sovereign territory.” To which northern specialists, Heather Exner-Pirot and Joel Plouffe respond, “It is in Canada’s interest to use its position to advance common interests in the circumpolar world. But Prime Minister Harper’s sovereignty rhetoric is proving detrimental to Canada’s ability to do so.”

As Michael Den Tandt summarized in the *Citizen*, “The search for Franklin alone does not comprise and Arctic sovereignty strategy.”

In reality, in his Northern policy, Harper has been building on the shoulders of previous Canadian governments and diplomats who negotiated the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea which gives Arctic coastal states the right to enact laws against maritime pollution. In addition, Article 76 of the Convention, accords coastal states rights over “an extended continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles”. Countries wishing to make this claim must submit supporting scientific evidence. Norway filed its claim in 2006. But despite Harper’s recent claim of the North Pole, Canada still had not made a complete submission by 2014. But even more, there is a strong questioning of the relevance of basing development of the North simply on notions of sovereignty. The people of the North would like to see transport and living subsidies that would make living in the Arctic region more economical and open it to development projects. Also, it has been said that only one thing can overcome the challenges of weather and distance in the great white North, and that is ‘cooperation’. In an era of global politics, Harper’s ‘sovereignty’ rhetoric is out-of-date. It is our increasing isolationism that is most dangerous to Canada’s interest in the Arctic. Perhaps the best way to use our claim of sovereignty would be to

cooperate with the others in the Arctic Council to advance our common interests.

#### **4.7 Despite Government Rhetoric, Canadian Humanitarian Aid Goes Via UN**

It is ironical, but even under the Harper Conservatives the favoured channel by far for Canadian government humanitarian dollars is the United Nations. Humanitarian aid goes both to natural disasters and human conflict zones in situations fraught with chaos, starvation and violence. When such emergencies occur, donors look for the best and fastest ways of delivering assistance. About 10 per cent goes through the Red Cross, 25 percent through NGOs and the bulk, usually more than half, through the UN. The main UN, on-the-ground, agencies are the World Food Program, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Childrens’ Fund (UNICEF), the Development Program (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) — among others. The UN is also responsible for coordination through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and also for information, advance warning and research. We all know from the media that relief efforts are always under-funded and often leave much to be desired. All the more reason, then that an alternate foreign policy would be working hand and fist to strengthen and improve the UN’s herculean responses to humanitarian need. The same is true of our once robust acceptance of refugees. Despite repeated cries for help from Syria, the UN and friends and relations, by 2014 Canada had barely accepted 1,000 of the millions of Syrian refugees while Sweden alone had accepted some 40,000. The government even closed our Embassy and Consulate in Damascus to make it really difficult to get a visa to Canada.

#### **4.8 Development Assistance Goes Down the Drain**

But there is more to humanitarian assistance than disaster aid. In the long run there is also on-going hunger, poverty, unemployment, sickness, lack of ed-

ucation and a myriad other challenges. Canadians used to think they had a responsibility to help the poorest in the world. What is Canada's response under Harper who came to power distrusting Canadian aid? By 2011 one could see the start of a move to a Conservative approach to aid. Before she was kicked out for her \$15 a glass orange juice, the Minister of International Cooperation, Bev Oda told international organizations and NGOs that they better be ready for change and they should practice transparent accounting. As Pierre Bergeron editorialized in *Le Droit*, "We speak about accounting when the world wants to hear us speak about humanity."

Having given warning, the Conservatives followed through by cutting the budget of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) by \$377 million (7.5%) in 2012. In 2013 they found a new way to hack at the foreign aid budget. They simply did not spend it and sent \$1 billion back to the treasury. Project proposals had been sitting on CIDA Minister Julian Fantino's desk (yes, the same man) for months. It amounted to massive cuts without transparency as none of this was reported to Parliament for debate. The next step was to insert Conservative concepts of foreign aid which is to get maximal yield for its 'investment', a healthy management of 'risk', a strong belief in development 'banks', aid projects built around 'commercial interests', particularly mining, and a profound faith in private enterprise. Remember, this is the field in which we are meant to be helping the needy. The goodly sum of \$25 million was given to an 'Institute on mining and development'. There was \$20 million for the International Finance Corporation to promote private-sector development. Then came the final act. CIDA was simply folded into the Department of Foreign Affairs. International development no longer has a distinct Canadian presence. There are no longer any articles or debates about foreign aid. It is hidden away. Another Canadian legacy has been smashed.

The aftermath is rather astounding but barely provable. In 2014, Mr. Harper was lauded by the World Bank, the World Health Organization and the UN for Canada's more than \$5 billion contribution to maternal and child health. The Prime Minister's Office liked the programme because 'the results of the

investment would be relatively easy to measure and it would improve the Party's image for being concerned about global poverty and foreign aid.' It is also almost exactly the amount of CIDA's \$5 billion budget when it was folded in DFAIT-D. A coincidence?

In the autumn of 2014, the flag ship of Canadian development policy analysis, the North-South Institute was obliged to close its doors when the Harper Conservatives withdrew the government's core funding. Its loss was mourned by three former party leaders, Paul Martin, Joe Clark and Ed Broadbent and also the President of the Canadian Council for International Development (CCIC), Julia Sanchez. The Institute was Canada's only international development think-tank and contributed to global debates on poverty reduction, gender inequality, the role of the private sector, resource governance and more. Canada's aid levels at about 0.2% of national income are now amongst the lowest among wealthy countries. And yet the government felt we could afford to jettison this world recognized Canadian tool for development leadership and the dissemination of knowledge.

## 5 Economic and Political Policies: Mostly for Business and the Rich

Chapter 1 was an overview of how to remember and to think about the great harms the Harper Conservatives have done to Canada. The second, third and fourth Chapters looked at the specific damages done to our democracy, intelligence and world reputation. In this last chapter, before the conclusions, we look at various types of injurious Conservative policies, both economic and political. Obviously it is impossible to cover all policy areas, certainly not in great depth. The objective will be to cover the main preoccupations of Conservative and show briefly how they have marred the integrity of Canada and its citizens.

So let us first get an idea of the general orientation of Conservative policies. In general, we may say the following: from the beginning the principle objective has been to minimize government and to serve business interests and aid the wealthy. We can see this

with regard to support for the resource industries, free trade, tax reduction, income splitting, and child care. Often this comes under the Harper heading of 'stimulating economic growth'. Poverty, temporary foreign workers and refugees did not fall under this heading. The Conservatives hung on to policies through thick and thin that would satisfy their electoral base, especially their social concerns such as crime and guns. They also had pet enemies like the CBC, the telecommunication companies, unions, the environment, and government regulations and services. In fact, it is well known that the Harper Conservatives did not much care for government in general and the public service and Ottawa in particular. Some things they just didn't seem to understand very well such as Quebec, the native peoples and health policy. It was as though these subjects flew under their political radar. Now, let us turn to the various policy areas, one at a time, starting with economic policies.

## 5.1 The Canadian economy: Not a National Action Plan

One of the great boasts of the Harper Conservatives is that they know how to manage the Canadian economy. The actual record shows this boast is false. Let's look at a list of the economic setbacks during the Conservative hold on office:

- Instead of seeing government as a tool for economic innovation and investment and for promoting social justice, they destroyed the federal government's economic capacity to lead and protect;
- Like a one-eyed man, they focused only on balancing the budget and reducing taxes, thus neglecting Ottawa's role in growing the economy;
- Being half-blind, the Conservatives looked after the rich and the business class while leaving the poor and the middle class to fend for themselves.
- The Conservatives took a wrong-headed and short-sighted approach to economic develop-

ment. Instead of investing in jobs, technological innovation and reinforcing leading edge industries, they threw Canada back into dependence on oil and other resources — usually sold off without further profit producing treatment and refining.

The Conservatives didn't lose any time in showing their colors in their first round of \$1 billion program cutbacks in 2006-7. The targets clearly indicated Conservative political orientations. They included: end to medical marijuana science funding; smaller cabinet; consolidation of foreign missions; cancellation of High-Frequency Surface Wave Radar Project; cuts to museums; reductions to Status of Women Canada; elimination of Court Challenges Program; elimination of Centre for Research and Information on Canada; cutting of Law Commission of Canada; elimination of RCMP drug-impaired driving program training budget. In other words, the Conservatives found that spending on women, museums, law, research, foreign affairs and science was expendable.

To go into a little greater depth, let us start with **the issue of the federal budget**. Stephen Harper believes his Master's Degree in Economics allows him to call himself an economist. Whatever the reason, he felt justified in keeping his Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty, on a short leash when he moved to Ottawa, after having made a botch of the Ontario economy under Premier Harris. So we can name the Canadian economy for the eight years from 2006 to 2014 as the Harper-Flaherty economic caldron. What happened?

**They inherited a \$14 billion structural surplus from the Liberal government** and then, for purely ideological reasons and against all economic advice, the Harper-Flaherty duo cut the GST by 2 percent which wiped out the surplus and went on to cost the federal treasury \$115 billion between 2006 and 2015. If one adds the GST tax cuts to the income tax cuts of \$17 billion a year and the corporate income tax reductions of \$13 billion annually, we find the federal government \$43.4 billion a year poorer since 2005. In other words, "Canada doesn't have a deficit problem. Canada has a revenue problem" .

The deficit justified them in a policy of expenditure restraint which is still leading to cuts in Ottawa's

programs. The Conservative ideological reasoning is simple and clear. If they can starve Ottawa of its tax revenues they can justify cuts to the federal government's services to avoid budget deficits and thus shrink the government's role in the economy while liberating the private sector to rule the roost. The government's balancing role is destroyed.

The second major economic jolt appeared to be contradictory – in the short run. In 2008, Harper-Flaherty, despite the rapidly worsening economy, denied that Canada was going into recession. Brought up short by Harper's participation in the G-20 international economic meeting and by the threat of being usurped by a coalition of the opposition parties, Harper-Flaherty did a 180 degree about face and adopted the largest temporary stimulus package ever with increased expenditures of \$45 billion over three years — **leading to a \$55 billion deficit in 2009-10, the largest federal deficit ever**. Of course, they did not want to do it, but were forced to save the Canadian economy by the opposition parties — and then went on to call it their 'Economic Action Plan' in all their advertising. In fact, their few economic successes were handed to them on a platter by the previous Liberal Government which had reduced the debt ratios to their lowest level and had strengthened the bank sector by refusing mergers of the giants and increasing bank capital requirements. That is what saw Canada through the great recession of 2008. But the seeming Conservative ideological reversal did not last long. They were soon back to what they like best: firing people in the public service, cutting back services so as to reduce the deficit, and generally reducing the size of government.

Two former leaders in the Finance Department, Scott Clark and Peter De Vries, recorded the tragedy that followed, "During the time Flaherty was Finance Minister from 2006 to 2014, **Canada's federal debt increased by \$160 billion**, the country recorded record trade deficits, investment growth stalled, economic growth declined year over year, the unemployment rate remained stuck at seven per cent and the labor force participation rate declined, as did the percentage of the adult population employed." The principal error was to fixate on austerity and deficit reduction to the exclusion of investment and economic

growth during a fragile economy. It took, the Bank of Canada until the end of 2014 to announce for the first time that the economic recovery might be 'broadening'. Now, remember that this is the party which keeps trumpeting that only it can manage the economy!

The third slap of Harper-Flaherty to Ottawa's economic integrity was to **hobble budgetary transparency**. Information and data became unavailable and the public defender, Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, came under attack — unjustly as it turned out. Then the Conservatives hid the 2012 and 2013 Budget particulars and much additional legislation in mammoth budget 'omnibus bills' stretching to nearly 1000 pages and designed to avoid in-depth parliamentary review. Since becoming a majority government, the Harper Conservatives has used vast omnibus budget bills not only to camouflage their financial plans but to hide away from the opposition and the public other important legislation, for instance on the environment, public servant pension plans and Canada's fisheries.

**The omnibus budget bills of more than 400 pages were a stab in the back for Canadian democracy**. In the case of Bill C-38 in 2012, MPs were forced by the government to vote for 8 consecutive hours into the night so the government could use its majority to turn back each and every one of the 1,600 opposition party amendments. "These omnibus budget implementation bills subvert and evade the normal principles of parliamentary review of legislation... involving complex technical legal matters... with flaws and hidden implications lurking in their hundreds of pages" , stated parliamentary expert, Prof. C.E.S.Franks.

Fourth, Harper-Flaherty **spurned tax fairness and after-tax equity**. For instance, the income-splitting policy only benefitted the rich as did the Tax Free Savings Accounts which may cost the treasury some \$10 billion annually. After years of concentrated Conservative propaganda against 'tax and spend' Canadians have forgotten that it has often been the intention of Canadian governments to 'tax and build'. As a result of Harper's cutting in half the federal government's contributions to the Canadian economy, we are now living in a stagnating country

where standards of living have flat-lined, the middle class is shrinking, productivity and competitiveness rates are down and deficits and debt are exacerbated — in the provinces if not in Ottawa.

Fifth, as in other policy areas, **Harper-Flaherty didn't bother consulting the provinces** when they decided to cut the Health Transfer to provinces by \$30 billion and to increase the age of entitlement for Old Age Security by two years.

The Harper Conservatives like to claim that the average Canadian is paying less in taxes now. The Conservatives have reduced the Goods and Services Tax (the infamous GST), some people have received personal income tax reductions and also various targeted tax credits for specific groups (children's sports, art lessons and firefighters), Harper's favourites, the corporations now only contribute 14 per cent of total federal revenues (it used to be 23 per cent), and there are lower tariffs from free trade deals.

So if Ottawa is going to balance the budget (a turn-around of \$29 billion) from where do all the federal revenues come? Surprise, surprise! They will come from the average Canadian tax payer. It is all slight-of-hand. Here's how it works. The government is predicting that, aside from cutting expenditures on services (3 per cent), total take from income taxes will grow by about 5 per cent a year from 2012 to 2019. This is because the economy will supposedly be growing, more people will be working, and people will move up the tax scale. Et voilà! The annual income taxes that we average Canadians pay will rise from their present \$126 billion to \$168 billion, that is, they will grow from 46 per cent of Ottawa's income to 50 per cent. So that is how economists can claim that as a **share of what the Government is taking in, the average Joe is paying more**. Of course, this whole house of cards could collapse if the tanking commodity markets rob the government of their revenues. But then Harper will find someone else to blame — just as he did with the budget. Canada no longer publishes an annual budget.

The other sources of the turn-around in the federal budget were program cuts and, as we learnt in the last year, **enormous amounts of unexpended funds that were voted by Parliament**. The federal government held on to \$7 billion of what were

called "stealth cuts" in the last fiscal year bringing to a total of \$18 billion in lapsed spending from 2012 to 2014. The Conservative government sat on billions in planned spending to balance its budget by the 2015 election, while many departments and agencies were starved for funds. For instance the Defence Department, with lapsed spending of \$1 billion had to park many of its military vehicles, cut back on training, and cancel the purchase of spare parts.

Not only are Canadian finances not what the Conservatives claim, but **Canada's wealth inequality is a national disaster**. The past 13 years have seen a pronounced increase in wealth in Canada, but that wealth has flowed into the hands of a relatively small group of the rich. For every new dollar of real wealth generated in Canada since 1999, 66 cents have gone to the wealthiest 20% of families, 23% to the middle class and 10% to the other 60%. In general, Canada's richest 20% take home almost 50% of all income. 70% of all wealth belongs to the richest 20%. Inequality has reached such extremes that according to the Canadian Business magazine, the 86 wealthiest Canadians hold the same amount of wealth as the poorest 11.4 million Canadians combined. In dollar terms, under the guidance of the Conservatives, the net worth of this small group has grown from \$120 billion in 1999 to almost \$180 billion in 2012.

On the street what this means is that in Ottawa, one of Canada's wealthiest cities, the number of poor people forced to use the Food Bank jumped by 34% during 2014. For Ontario, the **average increase for the use of food banks during 2014 was 20%**. Poor working conditions were the main cause including unstable jobs and the absence of regular salaries along with the increases in the cost of living. During the past seven years of Conservative government, the number of people using food banks in Ontario grew from 314,000 to 375,000 on average per month. As Ed Broadbent has written, evidence shows that more equal societies do better for everyone for health, life expectancy, levels of social trust, opportunities and upward mobility. A large majority of Canadians also believe that severe inequality is bad for our democracy.

Another indicator of poverty and inequality are the poor living conditions of the **one million Canadi-**

ans, representing the nearly 20 per cent of the workforce, who are forced to work part time and have no health benefits or pensions. Nor are things getting better. Part-time work accounted for 80 per cent of net job creation in 2013-2014. Not only are these people poor but their lives are thrown into turmoil, they have no guarantee of minimum hours and their savings have evaporated. They live on the edge in a brutal world where employers use them as a tool to cut costs. And they are not alone. After Margaret Wentz wrote in the Globe that Harper deserved to be re-elected because in the eight years he has been in office the Conservatives have managed to increase average weekly earnings by a whole 9.9 per cent, a letter from Richard Goldman was received by the newspaper saying that Wentz had neglected to mention that unemployment is up, that household debt-to-income ratio is up from 120 to 150 per cent, and that the poverty rate is up from 10.2 to 12 per cent. We also know that the percentage of those working for the minimum wage between 2006 and 2012 (under the Conservatives) has grown by 59 per cent. The widespread effects of poverty go beyond personal finance to reduce consumer demand and economic growth.

At the other end of the spectrum is **the unending support of the Harper Conservatives for the wealthy, for business and for the resource industries.** The Toronto Star reporter, Thomas Walkom summarized the process in his analysis of the 2010 budget. As always with the Harper Conservatives, he writes, the real nuggets are in the fine print. In the Arctic, environmental regulations are “streamlined” to make it easier for oil companies to drill and mining firms to dig. Federal environmental assessments are to be moved to the more industry-friendly National Energy Board. Reminiscent of Ontario’s Harris government (the home of Baird, Flaherty and Clement) a “red-tape commission” will be set up to eliminate all kinds of federal regulations deemed to interfere with business. Foreign ownership restrictions will be further weakened for the telecommunications sector. Canada is ranked by KPMG as the most favourable tax environment for business in the developed world. On the other hand, foreign aid is to be indefinitely frozen. This help to friends is all

in addition to the distribution of tax cuts. Remember we just saw that Ottawa had reduced its taxes by \$43 billion. Guess where the benefits went? According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the bottom fifty per cent of Canadian households averaged benefits of \$1,130 while the richest five per cent of households received tax breaks of \$4,170, almost four times more.

**The unmitigated Conservative support for the resource industries and particularly for the oil sands of Alberta knew no limits.** Canada became an international climate change denier so Alberta could increase its pollution. We insulted the Americans (remember Harper saying “It’s a no-brainer” ) over the southern pipeline to carry Alberta crude to the southern states. Harper even put \$200 million into a land link to the Arctic by building the 137 km. road to Tuktoyaktuk to reduce costs of petroleum exploration in the Beaufort Sea. As one example of clearing the path for resource development, the Conservatives eliminated 100 jobs in 2013 dealing with green energy and the energy economy in the Natural Resources Department. We put all our economic eggs in the resource industry basket to the neglect of innovative energy exploration. In 2000, raw resources accounted for 40 per cent of Canada’s economic activity. By 2011, it had risen to close to 65 per cent. It was a first class blunder for the management of the Canadian economy (remember Harper proclaiming, just like Putin, “Canada is an energy super-power” ). The ramifications of resource dependence hobbled the development of the entire economy. The few years of easy money pumped up our currency and high labour costs hurt other export and service sectors. Competitiveness plunged. We lost interest in innovation and research and development in other industries. Because money was cheap we ran up our national and international debt. We became dependent on imported goods. This is the wrecked economy the Conservatives have bequeathed to Canadian citizens.

## 5.2 Signs of disintegration of the Canadian economy under the Conservatives

“You know, there’s two schools in economics on this. One is that there are some good taxes and the other is that no taxes are good taxes. I’m in the latter category. I don’t believe that any taxes are good taxes.” Stephen Harper July 10, 2009 *Geoffrey Simpson, Globe and Mail, 14-07-2009*.

The Bank of Canada warned at the end of 2014 that current statistics suggest the market is ‘slack’. High household debt loads are a threat to financial stability; annual wage growth has slowed; the number of hours worked has little changed from a year ago; and the country’s participation rate in employment, still at 66 per cent, is the lowest in nearly 13 years.

There are roughly 265,000 fewer young people with jobs today than there were in 2008... Two-thirds of the vanished jobs were full-time positions... Actual spending on the federal Youth Employment Strategy fell by over \$50 million between 2010 and 2013 and it is planned to fall a further \$30 million by 2016. *Armine Yalnizyan, CCPA Monitor, May 2014*.

“The indulgence of one becomes the burden of another through excessive taxation” fulminates Pierre Poilievre of the Conservatives... See the problem? The countries in trouble tend to be on the low end of social welfare spending while the big spenders are in much better shape. *Dan Gardner, ‘Don’t blame the Euro welfare state’, Ottawa Citizen, 20-06-2012*

A very important element of the world mess has been the growth of the ‘new economy’... It is an economy that contemplates permanent unemployment, lack of social investment, reduced taxation for large capital, the marginalization of trade unions, and a reduction of the role of the state as

the regulator and guarantor of social justice. *Roberto Savio, English-bounces@other-news.info. ‘Ever wonder why the world is a mess?’ Other News, 30-06-2014*.

Canada has slipped further down the ranking of the world’s most competitive economies, as the country’s lagging innovation puts it at a disadvantage, the World Economic Forum said. It ranked Canada 15th down one position from last year and the lowest ranking since 2006 on the index. *Globe and Mail, 3-09-2014*.

Employment in Canada’s private sector is at a standstill. While monthly employment figures have seesawed through the year, one trend is clear: companies are in no mood to hire, having shed a record number of jobs. Month-to-month measures have been volatile but the longer term view shows full-time and private positions have barely budged in a year, while eight in ten new jobs have been part-time. *Tavia Grant, Globe and Mail, 2-09-2014*.

One of the Conservative’s flagship economic programs, an income tax credit of \$550 million for small businesses is likely to create less than a 1,000 jobs in 2015 and 2016 according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. This will be at a cost to the taxpayers of \$550,000 per job, annually. At the same time, freezing the level of contributions for employment insurance at a high level will likely do away with 10,000 jobs during the same period. (Canadian Press, 10-10-2014). A year after the announcement of the tax, the new Finance Minister, Joe Oliver, admitted the Finance Department had not made any internal analysis of it because it had already been done by the lobby group, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

As Canadian exports declined in August 2014, it was acknowledged that the “Bank of Canada has been repeating concerns regarding the lack of momentum in both exports

and business investment in the current 'expansion'" . *Gordon Isfeld, Financial Post, 4-10-2014.*

The disappearance of 60,000 full-time jobs in July 2014 confirmed Canada's fall from economic grace. Labour participation is now lower than any time since 2001. The Canadian labour market is mired, five full years after the 'recovery' began. It has been since the Harper government started putting on the fiscal brake in 2011. In the meantime, the Americans are tolerating larger budget deficits, near-zero interest rates, quantitative easing and a deliberately weak dollar to get their economy moving ahead much faster than Canada's. *Jim Stanford, 'That strong recovery? It was just a myth', Globe and Mail, 11-08-2014.*

Since Harper was re-elected in 2011, Canada's employment rate grew more slowly than any country in the G7 except Italy. *Campbell Clark, 'Jobs report bad news for Harper', Globe and Mail, 14-07-2014.*

The Conservatives took bows for an economic stimulus plan that opposition parties forced on them...getting undeserved credit... In fact some 140 countries are projected to grow faster this year than Canada. *Lawrence Martin, 'Taxes? Check. Trade, jobs, pipelines? Stalled', Globe and Mail, 9-07-2014.*

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, established by the Conservatives in 2006 to provide greater accountability, was obliged to take 60 federal departments to court after failing to persuade them to reveal their deficit reduction plans. The Opposition says without basic information they cannot intelligently vote on budget bills. *Gloria Galloway, 'Budget watchdog takes feds to court', Globe and Mail, 22-10-2014.*

One thing remained constant in Flaherty's budgets. Program spending has been held flat in real dollar terms since 2010. This

means that with inflation added in there have had to be cuts to federal programs. The result is the federal government's gradual retreat from Canadian public life... that is starting to be the hallmark of Harper's career. *Paul Wells, 'What Harper is hiding', Maclean's Magazine, 15-04-2014.*

Although it had only announced it would cut 19,000 public service jobs between 2012 and 2014, the Conservative government in reality wiped nearly 37,000 people off the federal payroll, or 8 per cent of its workforce. The cuts for some departments — such as Statistics Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development, Veterans Affairs, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency — were massive, varying between 20 and 35 per cent. The public servants providing benefits for Veterans lost 32 per cent of their effectives. Obviously, the front line services offered by all these public servants will also be lost to the public. By 2015, spending cuts will hit \$14.5 billion a year. This is how the Conservatives will be able to deliver their promised surplus and tax breaks. *Kathryn May, 'Budget Cuts bigger, sooner, report says,' Ottawa Citizen, 13-11-2014.*

The Auditor General's report shows that the federal government has lost all trace of \$3 billion that was meant to be devoted to public security and the fight against terrorism. He also points out that Revenue Canada doesn't seem to be able to trace the \$29 billion in unpaid income tax. *Philippe Orfali, 'À la recherche de 3,1 milliards \$, 1-05-2013.*

Canada will purchase a fifth giant C-17 Globemaster transport plane from Boeing for a cost of \$415 million, double what other countries are paying. By way of explanation Defence Minister Rob Nicholson said "It's part of the negotiations we have undertaken...It's one of the last 10 that will

come off the assembly line.” He did not say if Canada had asked why Boeing was stopping production of the C-17 or what would replace it. *David Pugliese, 'C-17 costs Canada \$415M — double what others paid', Ottawa Citizen, 20-12-2014.*

Despite their pretensions to the contrary, when all is said and done, the Canadian economy has been scandalously mismanaged by the Harper Conservatives for the past ten years. The federal government is weaker; deficit reduction has been the focus to the exclusion of all else while the federal debt remains high; foreign companies can sue us under Harper’s trade deals; Canadians have been misinformed or not informed about economic policies; legislation has been hidden from public view; policies have not attained their objectives; money has been squandered — or just lost. But, what is worse is what the Conservatives have not done. Canadians still have to live with high unemployment, high levels of personal indebtedness, poor trade, low competitiveness and innovation, weakened research and development, and high levels of poverty and inequality and continuing pollution and global warming.

Under the cover of this mismanagement, the Conservatives have quietly, continuously and surreptitiously been inserting their economic ideology into the mainstream of Canadian life. They use the old magicians trick. Keep the public’s eye focused elsewhere while you prepare new tricks behind the screen. Thus, all eyes are focused on deficit reduction (not debt reduction we must notice) while what is really going on is reducing government, getting rid of regulations, and minimizing government’s sway in the economy so that private wealth and power can be increased and predominate.

### 5.3 Policies that destroy

**Federalism = -1, Quebec/Francophonie = 0, Native peoples = -2**

Federalism: At the beginning of 2015, Lawrence Martin in the Globe and Mail wrote a short paragraph that pretty much sums up Mr. Harper’s relationship to federalism. He wrote, “Today’s solidar-

ity of Canada is evident in spite of the presence of a federal government frequently described as polarizing. The approach is more often confrontational than conciliatory. It’s a government that steers away from national programs and national projects. Its leader won’t bring together all the premiers. It is a government woefully short of support in Quebec.”

The Prime Minister of Canada has not met together with the premiers of the provinces since 2009 — five years. And they say a week is a long time in politics! Not only will Harper not call a federal-provincial meeting, he will not even accept an invitation from the Council of the Federation to meet with the premiers. He says he meets with them individually, one at a time except of course for Kathleen Wynne in Ontario who he refused to meet for over a year. One can see the objective: Harper prefers command and control to cooperation and conciliation. All his predecessors hosted federal-provincial meetings, usually at least once a year. In 2012, Liberal Leader Bob Rae told reporters, “I don’t know any other federation in the world where the first minister refuses to have a meeting with all the premiers. It’s without parallel in the world.”

The reason Canada needs meetings is very simple. We have a federal structure because we have strong regional differences. If we want a country that works and that can develop strong national policies then we have to have meetings where we can talk together. As Joe Clark wrote in his book, *How We Lead*, Canada desperately needs to get back to having national ‘conversations’ which we have been missing ever since Stephen Harper came to power. That is why as far as a national consensus on major projects is concerned, the country is rudderless and adrift in a sea of globalized pressures.

What we get instead of national ‘conversations’ is a series of dictatorial policies from Harper’s Ottawa. He tells provinces what they must do, like it or lump it. This is the way it has been with health policy, economic decisions, pipelines and equalization payments. For instance, Ottawa simply told the provinces that starting in 2014 and going until 2024 the Canada Health Transfer will be reduced by \$36 billion. That is a fair piece of change! The provinces pointed out that this means the federal

contribution to health costs will drop to less to 20 per cent — when it used to be 50 per cent. They said there were no discussions before this decision was taken. Their comments had no effect. That describes federal-provincial relations under the Harper Conservatives.

**Quebec:** One of the biggest pieces of the federal mosaic is Quebec and the associated question of relations between French and English-speaking Canadians. To give him credit, Mr. Harper greatly improved his spoken French and the Conservatives made a concerted effort to obtain seats for the party in Quebec. This worked out with a certain number of seats around Quebec City. But their efforts were inconsistent and the party quickly showed it either did not really care about Quebec or that it simply did not understand it. The results were that by 2013, the Harper Conservatives had the support of only 9% in a CROP poll — down from the mid-twenties at the time of the 2011 election. Mr. Harper himself was only preferred by 7% of the respondents. The attachment of Quebecers to Canada suffered the same collapse under the Conservatives. Between 2003 and 2012, the sense of strong affection of Quebecers for Canada had plummeted from 50% to 34%. The point is that under the Conservatives the country can never attain a consensus of all its major components to make the major decisions that are required to make our way in this fractious world.

What caused this dislike of the Conservatives in Quebec? The general answer is their lack of sensitivity to the nuances of cultural difference and their lack of recognition of the specificities of Quebec as a province and a people. Some examples will amply explain the gap between the Harper Conservatives and Quebec. The disenchantment with the government in Ottawa got its greatest boost from something seemingly insignificant. Ottawa quietly and without warning banished seven cultural support programs greatly appreciated in Quebec, especially ones helping to export Canadian music and art etc. The cultural interest groups rose up as one and attacked the Conservatives while dragging public opinion with them. There was an equally strong reaction across the population when the Conservatives abolished the long gun registry which had largely been created in reaction

to the killing of the 14 female students at Polytechnique in Montreal. Then Harper refused to turn over the names on the registry to the Quebec government which challenged the decision in the courts. After that, it was a long list of unilateral, insensitive and thoughtless decisions by Harper, one after the other: minimising climate change when the Quebec government and public opinion was going in the opposite direction; heightening the place of the British monarchy — a red flag to Quebec; ignoring the Constitution in his efforts to change the Senate which in some ways protects Quebec (eventually refused by the Supreme Court); trying to create a single national financial regulator perceived as eclipsing Montreal's exchange; an attempt to impose a Federal Court judge in Quebec's position within the Supreme Court; a unilateral change to the equalization payments formula in 2009 which Quebec claimed it cost them dearly.

Last but not least there is the case of the strange misunderstanding by the Conservatives that showing off the RCMP and Ottawa's law and order campaign would actually be attractive to Quebecers, when the opposite is the case. For example, Quebecers generally believe in rehabilitation rather than simply punishment for young offenders. When the Conservatives went in the opposite direction in their omnibus legislation — C-10 — on criminal justice, the Quebec Minister of Justice Jean-Marc Fournier travelled to Ottawa to try to reason with them. He came home empty-handed saying, "I do not recognize a Canada that can make this sort of decision. It is not a government for Canada. It is a government of the Reform Party." Ottawa was accused to being "tone deaf" to Quebec issues.

**The Francophone Community:** Closely related to the Quebec question is the effect of Ottawa's policies on bilingualism and the promotion of French-speaking minority communities. Although there are always disputes over these policy areas, things have not gone very well under the Conservative regime. In his 2013 report, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser lamented that bilingualism in the federal public service was eroding slowly but surely as a consequence of the previous financial crisis and because of carelessness on the part of the government. Numerous federal institutions do not respect

their bilingual obligations. Too often, French is relegated to a 'symbolic' level. Senior bureaucrats just say a few words in French for the form at the beginning or the end of their talks. In addition, there have been distinct failures during his mandate, according to Mr. Fraser. Under the Conservatives, parliamentary briefings are now only given in English. Levels of linguistic competence in bilingual positions have been lowered. Pressure to use English in the office has increased. There is a lack of resources for language teaching.

The president of the Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities, Marie-France Kenny says this sense of "serious drift" in bilingualism in the Federal public service has been a source of collateral damage for the promotion of French. Too often, one neglects to take into consideration the side-swipe effect of budgetary reductions on language policy. When he announced his retirement from politics at the beginning of 2015, the NDP defender of official languages, Yvon Godin gave a "fat zero" to the Harper government for official languages. "It is the Conservatives who violate the language laws." There has been a definite decline. You just have to go out into the population to see how budget cuts have had an impact on the official languages and the services to the people.

In addition, under the Conservatives there were a whole series of offences to the goals of the Francophone minority. Unilingual Anglophones were nominated to senior positions such as judges and the auditor general. Harper even once felt obliged to apologize. But this did not stop the Conservative Party from voting against an NDP private bill to ensure that Supreme Court judges would have to be bilingual at the time of their nomination. Right from the beginning of their mandate, the Conservatives started off by a fundamental blow to bilingualism by eliminating two of the three questions on language in the census. The question on mother tongue remains but the questions on the language most often spoken in the home and on knowledge of official languages were shot down by the minister Tony Clement. One may wonder what a minister was doing nosing around in the Census, but the result was to seriously reduce the possibility of comparative research on long term

trends in linguistic viability.

Equally serious was the attack on Francophone immigration by the elimination of the last existing program which helped with the employment of workers competent in French. Then the citizenship online system, Express Entry, was produced without a French version. Finally, just to show how small minded senior Conservatives can be, it was discovered that when he was named Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird had printed unilingual English business cards. Oh, yes, he also had them embossed in gold, considerably reduced the name of Canada so his own name could be larger, and took off the name of the Foreign Affairs building which just happened to be Lester B. Pearson, a former Liberal prime minister. It did not take the Conservative ministers much time to act with impunity.

**Relations with Native Peoples:** Relations between the Harper government and the native peoples began with an unmitigated disaster and never really recovered. Ten years lost. Recently a group of high level Canadians, including Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats came together to try to pick up the pieces. In 2005, after 18 months of consultations, the federal Liberal government of Paul Martin along with all the provinces and territories and representatives of the native peoples — all of them — signed the Kelowna accord. It was worth \$5 billion and covered education, employment and living conditions. The Toronto Star headlined, 'Kelowna Accord holds key to native renewal'. As soon as he came to power, Stephen Harper threw it into the wastepaper basket. He never explained why. So we have to assume that it was pure spite because it had been done by the Liberals. No wonder the natives say that the white man speaks with a forked tongue. Since then, Harper has tried several times to renew relations with the aboriginal population but without much success.

It took until 2010-11 for the Harper Conservatives to start to re-establish negotiations with the native peoples. With Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, the federal government started negotiations to transform the schools, economies and quality of life on reserves. Reports said 60% of First Nations youths in their early 20s do not have a high school diploma, compared to

10% among non-aboriginals. The discussions were always wobbly. Already in 2011, Native groups in one province after the other started to withdraw from the National Panel on Education. By 2014, however, the government introduced 'historic' legislation, the 'First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act' (Bill C-33). By April 2014 some chiefs were saying the bill fell short of providing sufficient funds for schools on reserves, was prepared without adequate consultation, and gave the federal government control of the system. The criticism became so strong that Chief Atleo felt obliged to resign and the legislation was withdrawn and that is the last we heard of it.

But it was not the end of the Native Peoples conflicts with the Conservatives. From 1980 to 2012 more than 1,000 aboriginal women were murdered according to the RCMP. Aboriginals make up just 4 per cent of the Canadian population, but 16 per cent of female murder victims and 12 per cent of missing women. Newspapers like the Globe and Mail editorialized that this is a deep sociological problem - even worse an epidemic - and it needs a concerted study to discover the causes. But, for years, the Conservatives have systematically refused to name a study commission. Justice Minister MacKay brushed it off by saying there have already been lots of studies. But then along comes James Anaya, the UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples who also made a call for a national inquiry. His report on the conditions of the native peoples in Canada found that since the UN's last report in 2004, "little progress" has been made in improving the social and economic well-being of the indigenous population. Mr. Anaya's report did not alter the Conservative's position.

The Federal Government has for some years been providing a \$60 million northern food subsidy called Nutrition North to help offset the horrendous costs of ordinary food supplies in Nunavut. Even this simple program does not work. The Auditor General, Michael Ferguson, revealed that the program's overseers are in the dark about whether it is doing anything for the people it is meant to help. There is no transparency, no accountability. It is claimed that some retailers are skimming off the subsidy before it gets to lower the price of food stuffs. The Conserva-

tives changed an older plan that provided transport subsidies and instead transferred it to the retailers. Slapping the other side of the face, the Harper Conservatives also passed the First Nations Fiscal Transparency Act to force them to publish the compensation paid to Chiefs and Councillors. It has been found that the average tax-free payment (Including salary, honorariums, per diems and travel costs) is about \$60,000. There does not appear to have been much resistance to these salaries by the band members.

Unexpectedly it was the journalist, Terry Glavin, who wrote the epitaph for relations between the native peoples and the Canadian government. "The conditions that torment aboriginal Canadians to this day are no less a disgrace than the dead-end impoundments so many African-Americans find themselves in. Aboriginal Canadians and African-Americans suffer from a nearly identical suite of maladies: high rates of cancer, of heart disease, mental illness, suicide, spousal abuse, drug addiction, alcoholism, fetal alcohol syndrome and tuberculosis." The median annual income of natives on reserves is \$14,000 and for the rest of Canadian wage workers is \$48,000. Their unemployment rate is twice that of the rest of the working population. Roughly one-third of them are on some form of welfare assistance. The incarceration rate of aboriginals is ten times higher than non-aboriginals. Over the past decade, the aboriginal population in federal prisons has grown by more than 50 per cent. Some 30 per cent of native peoples have less than a high school education. Gavin concludes, "It's not clear that the arc of the moral universe is even bending in their direction at all."

## 5.4 And More Policies that Hurt

**Scrapping the environment:** This whole booklet could have been about the environment, but the influence of the Harper Conservatives on environmental policy is relatively clear and simple. They have systematically scrapped it during the past ten years. Efforts were made to abolish or defund any group in the government with the word 'environment' attached to it. Environment Canada lost personnel and budget. Scientific research establishments were aban-

done and scientific facts ignored. Environmental regulations and pollution controls were downgraded so they would not get in the way of resource corporations. Our carbon emissions reduction targets will not be met. Environmental charities and interest groups have been attacked and had their funding challenged. Carbon pricing has been ridiculed. On the international scene, under the Conservatives, Canada became a 'climate pariah' renowned not only for opposing attempts to deal with global warming but actually blocking negotiations. Species at risk have also been ignored. It has been said that the Conservative tactics are to ignore the climate issue as long as they can, then proclaim they are doing wonders, and then attack the opposition. The simple result is equally clear. Canada has lost both its reputation and a decade of 'green' sustainable development, all in the name of Harper's infatuation with the oil industry. At the beginning of 2015, scientists from Japan and the United States informed us that 2014 was hottest year since records started to be kept 135 years ago. Costs of natural disasters are rising exponentially.

**Tough- on-crime means weak-on-thought:** Despite all evidence and all professional advice to the contrary, the Harper Conservatives have persisted in their tough-on-crime theory to satisfy a little rump of their voters. As a result, there is more harsh legislation, more people are behind bars (especially aboriginals), the cost of prisons has skyrocketed, and the parole system weakened – and all this at a time when homicide rates are at their lowest. Improper rates of solitary confinement have been maintained. Some call it 'torture'. The federal government prefers punishment to rehabilitation even if: this goes against criminology; against the beliefs of Quebecers; and against recent trends in the United States which has turned its back on the tough-on-crime belief. When the government attacked opposition parties for being 'soft on crime' they became afraid of taking on the ridiculous Conservative policy that simply does not work. The recently retired former director-general of corrections and criminal justice, Mary Campbell said the Conservative policies "reflect a deep, visceral nastiness . . . and actually do nothing to reduce or address crime. . . ." She added, 20 years ago Canada was

regarded as a "world leader" in the corrections field. Today it has reached its "lowest point" . Much of their legislation had to be defeated in the courts.

**Contradiction:** Is scrapping the gun registry part of the tough-on-crime policy? Again, presumably to satisfy a part of their supporters and the arms lobby, the Harper Conservatives passed the Law C-19 to abolish the long gun arms registry — and this against the advice of police chiefs and in defiance of international obligations. An RCMP expert reported that terminating the registry might save just \$1.5 million but would have 20 'costs' such as increased risks to the public and the police, less efficient investigation, and less accountability. Police would not know what arms were in a house they were investigating. But the Conservatives had buried this report so the Opposition would not have access to it during the debates. It will be recalled that one of the major incidents spawning the gun registry in the first place was the brutal murder of 14 female students at École Polytechnique in Montreal. Thus Quebec has remained very attached to the idea of a gun registry. The Quebec government appealed to Ottawa to transfer to it the Quebec portion of the registry. To add insult to injury, the federal government adamantly refused the request. Quebec took it to court. Later, the federal government passed new measures allowing store owners to stop collecting and keeping information permitting the identification of arms purchasers; easing rules on transporting restricted guns, and giving Cabinet the power to classify guns. One has to presume these are new way of being tough-on-crime.

**Hurting the poor and increasing inequality:** The Conservatives give the impression of helping us by reducing taxes. But it is all a game of smoke and mirrors. The two reductions in the TPS gave the federal Conservatives the aura of lower taxes but, in reality, they just shovel the services down the line to the provinces and municipalities and forced them to increase their taxes, fees and licenses. The taxpayers get nothing for free. At the same time the Conservative government uses the excuse of a bare financial cupboard to say they have to cut government services. And it is these cuts that really hurt the lower and middle classes — more than the reductions in their already low taxes ever could. So, during the

Conservative regime we have watched the continuing transfers to the provinces for health services be reduced by \$10 billion; the (un-) employment insurance payments become much more limited; and the Partnership Strategies for the Fight Against Homelessness ended. Canada is now a mediocre performer when it comes to health care. Former Premier Roy Romanow says one cause is the absence of the federal government which currently believes its job is over once it transfers money to the provinces. Not so Romanow says. Successful nations need a unifying infrastructure. Only leadership from Ottawa can guarantee a common set of programs and standards.

Child care is another policy that has been debated since the 1970s. It gave rise to a Federal-Provincial program worth \$5 billion over four years signed by Paul Martin and the Premiers. It was thrown out the window by Harper. The Conservatives have continually refused to support a national daycare program that would have provided a better system of education and favoured working parents and gender equality. Instead it doled out pitiful income tax credits that barely cover a couple of days a week of child care (no education). It is now proposing a program of 'income-splitting' for stay-at-home parents that will only benefit the wealthy — which even Flaherty disagreed with. Together these two programs will be costing the government more than \$5 billion a year — with still no additional daycare centres for working parents. The federal government is also accused of hampering pension reform. In 2014, all the premiers had agreed, based on sound economic advice, that the best way of improving pensions is to go ahead with topping up the current Canadian Pension Program (CPP). Only Flaherty disagreed. To this day, working Canadians still have grossly inadequate pension programs. To top it all off, James Moore, Minister of Industry declares on a radio program, "Is it my job to feed my neighbour's child? I don't think so" (he later apologized but people got the Conservative message).

So what sort of country and world do we live in since the Conservatives came to power? Indigenous children are two and a half times more likely to live in poverty than white ones. In a typical month, nearly 882,000 Canadians are obliged to feed themselves at their local Foodbank. This number has grown by

31% since the 2008-9 recession. During the past 10 years we have seen lots of trade deals but also the losses of thousands of well-paying jobs in manufacturing, forestry and industry. There is no coherent national policy addressing violence against women. At the upper end of the totem pole, the 100 richest Canadians saw their fortunes increase by 15% in 2013 while in comparative terms most Canadians have seen their incomes stagnate. Still we have to compete in a world where Oxfam has reported that by 2016, the richest 1% of the world will own 50% of its wealth! Think of it! It is indeed staggering. And their wealth is growing rapidly. The top 80 billionaires saw their assets grow by \$600 billion or 50% in the past four years while the poorest 50% saw their wealth drop by \$750 billion. At the most extreme end, a Swiss boss of a multinational corporation walked away with a retirement allowance of €58 million. Inequality is truly the most urgent and striking political problem Canada faces and yet the Conservatives have done nothing about it.

**The Federal Public Service:** Side-lining a noble institution: I know no one wants to think nice thoughts about bureaucrats. But behind the scenes they are the oil that keep the government wheels turning — or at least they are meant to. From the 1940s to the 1980's, the Federal Public Service had one of the best reputations in the world for merit, integrity and competence. Under the Conservatives it has been abused, attacked and ignored. There have been continuous budget cuts. Pensions and sick leave have been clawed back. Unions are under attack and new legislation alters their capacity for negotiation. There has been little supporting analysis for major government initiatives. Programs are understaffed and whole policy and research sections eliminated. At the same time, billions are spent on outside contractors. Front-line services are reduced. People who step out of line tend to be sacked.

But the unkindest cut of all is the fact that the public service has been ignored, side-lined. As a result it is losing its sense of worth and its policy competence. All of this was best summed up by a person who should know best, Mel Cappe, former Clerk of the Privy Council Office, head of the public service and chief advisor to the prime minister. In a 2013

guest lecture at the University of Ottawa he said, “Ideology doesn’t need analysis, and if you have the answers you don’t need questions, and that is where we are these days” . Cappe worries about ministers who come to the table with ready-made policies while public servants are ignored, told to implement them or asked to shape the evidence to support them. “The public service runs the risk of being in decline and if this continues to happen, Canadian will be worse off.” All this despite the fact that three-quarters of Canadians want politicians and the public service to collaborate and 66 per cent think public servants should “actively” provide expert advice and recommend policies, compared to 18 per cent who say their job is simply to implement the desires of politicians, according to an Environics and Institute on Governance survey.

**The CBC is burning:** It seems to be very obvious: the Harper Conservatives do not like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC — Radio Canada, RC). They have sliced it apart, one budget cut at a time. The attack has been relatively quiet, but remorseless since 2006 when the party started to announce they wanted to review the entire CBC mandate. Why do the Conservative dislike the CBC so much? It is a difficult question. Perhaps from an ideological stand point they simply do not like public, state-run operations. They think we should follow the American model where all is private. Maybe they think that a public broadcaster is bound to be full of pinko-commie-liberal mouthpieces. Possibly they have found it an irritant, too often seeming to take the side of issues that the Conservatives oppose. But, to the degree any of this conjecture is correct, it is strangely misplaced. The CBC was established in the 1930s by a Conservative government to protect the Canadian airwaves against a massive American invasion. Almost all the Western, advanced countries have public broadcasters and Canada contributes to the CBC an average of just \$29 per inhabitant, well-beneath the average of \$82 expended on public broadcasters in all the 18 countries. And, if the United States has no public broadcaster it certainly does has a massively large state-run sector of its economy — just start with the military sector. So, on a purely rational basis it is difficult to understand why the Harper Conservatives can’t stand the CBC. Perhaps

it is simply that politicians do not like to be criticized!

Poor CBC – there is no help in sight. Our public broadcaster (note: not state) is meant to be independent but has become a slave of the party in power. The Conservatives named Hubert Lacroix as president — a lawyer and party supporter with no media experience and surrounded by a board of friends of the party. Further, the Omnibus Budget Bill gave the federal cabinet the explicit power to give the CBC orders about how they should negotiate with employees, both unionized and non-unionized. This was called a stealth attack on the corporation’s journalistic freedom. To make up for its budgetary losses, the CBC was given authority to sell advertising — which infuriated both its audience and competing private broadcasters. Recent cuts to the budget have meant that Radio-Canada no longer has the resources to cover the activities of the Francophone community according to the Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities. But it is the French Canadians who should be the most satisfied with Radio Canada’s often brilliant programming. Plans by CBC management for so-called ‘Strategies of Transformation’ are like “saving the furniture while the house is on fire” . And the mismanagement by CBC executives of such high level scandals as the Ghome-shi affair hardly give much hope to the corporations ‘friends’ who would like to preserve it.

But it is the budget cuts that are potentially lethal. After promising stable, long-term funding for the CBC in the 2011 election, Harper went on to slash the CBC budget by \$130 million and 675 jobs in 2014. The Corporation is ‘underfunded and over-tasked’. It has to operate over five time zones and two official languages plus eight aboriginal languages, as well as covering the North and Parliament and overseas. Between 2009 and 2014 the CBC-Radio-Canada lost 2,000 positions. Sports have been cut back as has been drama. Then the block-buster came. In June 2014, the president Hubert Lacroix announced the Corporation was expecting to lose another 1,500 employees and another \$150 million. By 2020 the CBC expects to lose around 25% of its present work force. Therefore it needs a ‘transformation strategy’. It will get rid of half its office space and will become ‘a media public enterprise giving priority to mobile

services' — whatever that means. Gone will be in-house production, many shows, and maybe all television broadcasting. It will be replaced by partnerships with private producers. It would seem the Conservatives will win their. There was no need to up-set the CBC's supporters by attacking it head-on. Just keep cutting the budget and the Corporation will implode.

**Still enough money for building ideological monuments!** While the Harper Conservatives were letting a Canadian monument like the CBC fall into ruins, they were able to find lots of taxpayer's dollars to lavish on ideological history lessons and monuments. While we were fighting in Afghanistan, Mr. Harper thought it was necessary to build up our identity as a 'war-like people'. Of course, anyone who knew a tiny bit about Canadian history already knew that we had acquitted ourselves very well in two world wars and the Korean War. But the Conservatives thought they should spend \$30 million dollars on TV lessons about the war of 1812 — hardly a Canadian war. But just to make sure we got the point they squandered more money on a lavish monument to the war on Parliament Hill. In addition, the Conservatives announced plans to earmark \$83 million up until 2020 to commemorate military history via public education, ceremonies, events and remembrance partnerships. This is probably all required to get Canadians away from the quaint idea that it was good for Canada to promote peacekeeping. Publicity to remind us about Confederation in time for the 150 anniversary of the founding of Canada will cost another \$6.5 million. Then, to link in with their one-sided support of Israel in the Middle East, the Conservatives thought we desperately needed a monument to the holocaust at an anticipated cost of \$8million. But they were not finished. There was still another Conservative ideological cause from the past that required a special monument. Thus, at a cost of \$6.5 million, a huge 'Memorial to the Victims of Communism' will appear to block the view of our Supreme Court building. This serious remembrance unfortunately served to engender mockery as writers wondered when we would get equal monuments to victims of capitalism and colonialism. All of this from a cash-strapped government that reportedly could no longer find the money to invest in the conservation of our heritage

structures.

**The politics of compassion: the Syrian refugee crisis:** This was the title of a series of articles in the Toronto Star in November 2014. The subtitle went on to read, Canada has resettled 200 Syrian refugees while Sweden, which has only a quarter of Canada's population, has taken in more than 30,000. These articles plus angry voices raised across the country must have hurt the Harper Conservatives. Just two months later, by January 2015, the government announced it will accept another 10,000 Syrians — over three years. The in-depth articles went on to describe the disarray of the present Canadian immigration and refugee system. The main problem, one director of refugee services said, is that "somehow we became the worst ever resettlement processing country". Canada's average processing time for privately sponsored refugees from Lebanon is two years, from Pakistan 4-5 years, from Egypt 3-5 years and from South Africa 4-7 years. Meantime, in countries like the U.K., Germany, Sweden and Norway the maximum is one year and the average is four to six months. The delays, the Star concludes, point to a system riven by politics and struggling against bureaucratic lethargy.

By 2011, Canada already had a backlog of 21,000 sponsored refugee applications. We have to understand the words. These are private not government sponsored refugees. These are families, churches and associations who have set aside \$12,000 for an individual and \$26,000 for a family of four to support refugees for a year (housing, clothing and food). To deal with the backlog, in 2012 Citizenship and Immigration created a new 'Centralized Processing Office' in Winnipeg to proceed toward an initial application review in 30 days. A departmental assessment at the end of 2013 reported that, "It is estimated it will take the Office over two years to clear the existing inventory of cases, in addition to almost two and a half years to process projected 2014 applications". Sponsors were not receiving case decisions for almost a year. Many were returned after months for an inconsistency in the spelling of a foreign name or a missing address. Groups indicated their frustration was with the Minister's office, not with civil servants.

As though this insulting situation were not bad

enough, an earlier a crucial piece of federal legislation prohibiting provinces from requiring any minimum period of residence for refugees to qualify for social assistance was wiped out by the Conservatives in the 2015 budget. In 2012 the federal government abruptly slashed the Interim Federal Health program denying basic health care to thousands of refugee claimants who had just suffered unimaginable physical and psychological trauma — without consulting with anyone with knowledge of the potential results. Nor did there appear to be any studies to support the Conservative’s false ideological conclusion that “the Canadian taxpayers were footing the bill for gold-plated health care coverage for illegal immigrants and bogus asylum claimants. . .” By the summer of 2013, health care workers were staging rallies in 19 cities to get Ottawa to reverse its decision. They claimed that vulnerable people are being denied care, that taxpayers are paying even more money, and the health of other Canadians is being put at risk. Clinics and hospitals have to pick up the costs, emergency wait times are increased, and sick refugees with communicable diseases who cannot access primary care are left wandering around in the public. By 2014, five provinces had to provide basic coverage and the Federal Court declared the budget cuts constituted ‘cruel and unusual treatment’ and violated the Charter of Rights.

The cuts to health service were part of sweeping changes to our refugee system by the Conservatives. These included assembling a list of 35 countries of origin where refugee applications will not be accepted; a detention system that can imprison people who arrive without proper identification; and an accelerated time line for document submission that undermines fair hearings. The result has been a dramatic decline in refugee claims. In 1957 we accepted 37,000 Hungarian refugees in one year. In 1968-69, 11,000 came from Czechoslovakia. In the 1970s there were chartered flights to bring Tibetans and then 2,000 refugees came from Chile. Between 1979 and 1981 we brought in more than 50,000 Vietnamese ‘boat people’. In 1999 it was 5000 Kosovars. Between 2002 and 2014 there was only one modest effort for fast-tracking some 3,300 Haitians after the earthquake. What has happened to Canada? Have we become

too poor to help others or is it just the Conservative way of thinking? And we haven’t even begun to discuss the hallucinating problems facing landed immigrants trying to get Canadian citizenship. . . !

**Security and Freedom:** Our parents used to tell us that there is a right way and a wrong way to do everything. It has been one of the traits of Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s reign that because he is driven by his political obsessions he almost always choses the wrong way to do something. When it came to such a sensitive issue as announcing his new anti-terrorism Bill C-51 at the start of 2015, instead of doing it in Parliament to initiate a respectful national debate, he chose to do it in front of huge flags at a carefully orchestrated pre-election rally for TV consumption in southern Ontario where he desperately want to win seats. Polls show a large number of Canadians want action against terrorists at home and abroad. So Harper’s political antennae told him to wrap himself in the Canadian flag and pretend to be the great saviour of the nation. Indeed most writers agree there are some elements of the new law that will be useful such as sections aimed at someone who might commit an act of terrorism, making it easier to obtain peace-bonds, extending the use of no-fly lists, and giving new powers to CSIS (the Canadian Security Intelligence Service) to disrupt threats rather than just collect intelligence. And this latter extended power will require a judge’s warrant and political approbation.

As usual the problems are as numerous as the potential benefits. Prime Minister Harper rejected out of hand concerns that security measures should be balanced by protection of civil liberties. Instead he just jabbed at the opposition for being weak-kneed. Similarly – and most damagingly – Harper refused any review boards and Parliamentary oversight — even though all our close allies have effective oversight by legislators. Harper does not appear to believe in Members of Parliament or the traditional, prudent Canadian faith in legal safeguards and institutions to protect our freedom from a police state. Nor does he seem to trust any of his police and security agencies to whom he refused to provide additional resources and budgets as they have been demanding for some time. There was no explanation of how this new law

will make Canadian's safer — especially in light of the fact we already have generally unused anti-terrorism legislation from 2001, 2002, 2011, 2013 and 2014. Every time we get a new act or threat of terrorism, the politicians like Harper give us a new law rather than improved security agencies. In a poll-fueled pre-election atmosphere political positioning is more important than security or freedom.

## 6 Conclusion: The Necessary Renewal of Canada

I am not an advocate for frequent changes. . . but laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more, enlightened, as new discoveries are made. . . institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. Might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him as a boy as civilized society to remain under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors. *Thomas Jefferson*

Injustice is a classic trigger of anger. In such instances, not only is anger appropriate — it is necessary. Moral outrage can mobilize counter measures. *Dr. Scott Schieman, Globe and Mail, 24-12-2014.*

**The Conclusions:** I hope I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters the numerous harms the Harper Conservatives have inflicted on Canada. These include:

- Confronting the social agenda of the modern left by using an “inevitably incremental” technique that flew under the radar. It was brilliant. No single harm was sufficiently large enough to mobilize a country-wide opposition. Prime Minister Harper was driven by a preconceived ideological plan to overturn the progressive state and replace it with small, regressive government.
- Forgetting federal-provincial relations. Harper has hardly ever held a federal-provincial conference. National policies of all sorts have taken

a beating including the national public health-care system. Quebec's distinctiveness has been generally ignored and replaced by an Anglo-Canadian agenda of a robust military and ties to the British monarchy and British military history. Aboriginals have been brushed aside. Harper has highlighted Canada's divisions.

- Installing a more individualist, market-oriented, small-government Canada. Mr. Harper's deep convictions have driven a law and order agenda, cutting sales and corporate taxes, imposing spending cuts and job cuts on the public service and generally transferring advantages to the private sector while attacking unions and denuding the federal government of its resources.
- Down grading democracy by having authority more and more centralized in the hands of the prime minister and the unelected Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Harper has been an autocratic centralizer of power, tightly controlling information, ministers and public servants. Traditional Canadian democratic institutions including the House of Commons, the Senate, the Cabinet, Elections Canada and even the courts have been terribly diminished. A culture of secrecy has been installed, the media brought to heel, and CBC minimalized.
- Muzzling any and all opposition: scientists, civil society, parties and the media.
- Hobbling environmentalism, green policies and combatting climate change have by policies which serve only to advance resource extracting industries.
- Restricting scientific information, the census and communications by any means possible so that Canada is no longer a land of evidence-based governance.
- Changing foreign affairs so they would be fought on “Moral grounds. . . to defend democracy, free enterprise and individual freedom” . Canada has become a harsh, abrasive and aggressive country renowned internationally as an environmental

dinosaur actively thwarting environmental negotiations. One-sided support for Israel in the Middle East, our refusal of diplomatic attempts to seek reconciliation with Iran, our thoughtless insults to China and Russia, and our lack of respect for the United Nations have not gone unnoticed.

- “Several themes run throughout: contempt for civil liberties, for due process, for established convention, for consultation, for openness, replaced throughout by a culture of secrecy, control, expedience and partisan advantage” (Andrew Coyne, Ottawa Citizen, 7-06-2014).

This portrait of Harper’s Canada can lead to only one conclusion. Canadians owe it to themselves to vote him out of power.

**The Renewal:** You hear all the time that people want to get rid of Harper. This raises a whole bunch of questions. First, we must ask ourselves why we want to get rid of him by defining what is wrong with Harper Conservatism and what its opposite, a more progressive philosophy, might look like in contrast. Second, Harper has worked hard to bring about change in Canada, and many authors think he has succeeded. So, it is not enough for us to just change the governing party. We must also have ideas about what a new government should do. To be consequent with ourselves, we should think about the sort of Canadian society we want. One way of answering is to look at the Canadian traditions that have governed us over the past century — the very traditions Harper has worked to destroy. But, of course, traditions are not enough. We must also ask ourselves what sort of challenges we are facing as a country in a globalized world — challenges Harper does not want to face. Third, we should want to know if there is some expectation of success in changing Canadians society from conservatism to progressivism. Is there some hope of achieving our goal?

**Harperism and its opposite:** The confrontation between the Harper Conservatives and the rest of Canada, in its elemental form, is simply a part of the age-old dispute between the forces of ‘I’ and those of ‘We’. These represent the two sides of the human

personality and the eternal social struggle between right and left. When we get up in the morning we are more likely to think about what ‘I’ need to do today before thinking about family or friends. Most family squabbles are a result of us thinking about ‘I’ rather than ‘We’. How many of us refer to ‘my’ daughter, ‘my’ son? This goes back to fundamentals. Most of the time, we think about looking after ourself. Looking after No. 1 is the root of our careers, our identity and our will to achieve. That is, until we need others – such as our family, our union, our neighbourhood or our platoon – to help us look after ourself.

In society it is much the same. Generally, societies allow their members to look after themselves and their families. This is what Conservatives want. Don’t interfere with ‘my’ firearms, my wealth, my company, my freedom. But, every once in a while, the community takes precedence: for instance in wars, calamities, or the need for health care. But it doesn’t take long before people want to cast off the social shackles and get back to doing their own thing. It did not take long for the British to throw out Churchill, their wartime hero. However, in the past hundred years or so, societies have gradually learnt there are many things we can do better for ourselves if we cooperate with others through taxes, good governance and associations.

It may seem strange but sometimes the aims and practices of ‘I’ and ‘We’ get mixed up and people start contradicting themselves. Harper is loath to spend money or build government programs. But, when it came to a choice of losing power to the Coalition or investing in infrastructure, he decided he would spend on infrastructure. He spent more than any other prime minister in our history. As another example, when he was in the opposition he used to love to criticize the Liberal government for its secrecy and its lack of transparency. He was going to do better but, in reality he has done much worse. Never has a Canadian government been so secretive and so hidden in its behaviour. Never has Ottawa been so little democratic, so controlled by one man. Lack of accountability and governmental authoritarianism go not just against Harper’s earlier beliefs, they also go against Conservative values.

Then there is that nasty old problem of power as in the expression “all power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely” . It never takes long for the 'I' and the 'We' — the right and the left – to exaggerate their positions and start becoming too powerful. And this is what we must conclude from the demonstrations in this booklet: the Harper Conservatives have exaggerated and abused their power. They have gone too far. They have concentrated too much on serving the 'I', the individuals, and they have persistently ignored the 'We', the common good of Canadians. Harper minimized government while exalting corporations. He has been free with tax hand-outs but we cannot have childhood education. He declares war but he won't look after our veterans. He supports oil companies but ignores climate change. And so on. . .

The third anomaly of over-concentrating on the right or the left, the conservative or the liberal, the 'I' or the 'We' is that it becomes destructive. The good society must search for 'balance'. Canada before Harper excelled at seeking balance. Just look at the vocation of our parties: Progressive Conservatives, Social Democrats, Centrist Liberals. Just as Harper turned his back on Canada when he got rid of the 'Progressive' Conservatives, so Canadians must turn their backs on him.

Poor Stephen: he has labored so strenuously to make Canada over in his own dark, dour, destructive, retrogressive conservative image. He has never been able to recognize that most Canadians already have their own conservative image — progressive conservative. Harper's conservatism wants to turn the clock back to before the enlightenment and modern progress. He is against evidence-based policy and indeed scientists; he is against public knowledge; information is to be hoarded and controlled; he refuses evidence-based ideas preferring ideology and religion as guides. He orients his politics to acquisitive individualism and corporate greed. This is entirely unlike the sunny disposition of the progressive conservatism of Brian Mulroney, Jean Charest, Lucien Bouchard, and Joe Clark who brought us cooperative, negotiated individualism, respect for the environment, constructive constitutionalism, and friendly foreign relations. Canadians will seek to forget Harper's dark decade of 2005 to 2015 the same way Quebecer's pre-

fer to ignore the 'la grande noirceur' of the Duplessis years. Canadian electors are unlikely to allow themselves to be governed by a conservative government — until a new leadership and a new party brings back Progressive Conservatism.

Thus, this booklet brings us to one major conclusion: Harper and his Conservatives must go. Each of the chapters has reminded us with facts and critical analysis how much harm the Harper Conservatives have done to Canada, our ideas, our institutions, our democracy, our standing in the world and to our government policies. It is now up to us to decide what needs to be changed and how to get rid of our embarrassing government

#### **Canada's political and economic traditions:**

To know where we want to go we have to know where we have come from and where we stand now. For most of its modern life Canada has been composed of conservative, liberal and social democratic strains.

From World War II to the 1970s, the liberal-progressive strain predominated, pushed by the social democrats and accompanied by the 'progressive' conservatives. Largely it stood for a capitalist economy using active government as a balancing factor to promote our basic values of equity, social services and a diverse society. The role of government was to assure that all Canadians benefitted from Canadian wealth, security and potential.

From the 1980's to the present our country, following world trends, has been dominated by conservatism of an increasingly non-progressive nature. This type of conservatism is based on the idea of each individual for himself. Unrestricted individual rights are the aim of a society with less government, less governmental interference in the economy, fewer social services, less taxes and less public regulation.

To this socio-economic dimension our society we may add a geographic and cultural aspect. For decades, Ontario and Quebec held a preponderant position in Canada. However, as the Prairie Provinces and British Columbia gained in population and resource wealth they came to increasingly resent their minor position in the federation. With the election of the Conservatives of Mulroney and Harper the West has worked hard to gain national power. This desire was also imbedded in a more Americanized,

individualist political culture. The East-West rivalry remains just under the surface with the Conservatives in power and will have to be dealt with by the other principal parties.

**Canada's traditional political culture:** These books also speak to our traditional sense of Canada, first mentioned in the Introduction. The meaning of 'traditional Canada' must be explained. It must act as our anchor during present storms and our ethos for the future. Many other successful countries have founding myths and dominant communities which have kept them united. Not Canada. Our country is the result of a series of at least five tensions that are never long-absent from the Canadian agenda: ethnic disputes centred on French-English relationships, the desires of native peoples, and multicultural relations with new waves of immigrants; federal-provincial controversies of centralizing and decentralizing power struggles, regionalism, and Quebec-Canada and East-West disputes; religious disagreements starting with Catholics and Protestants and now including Evangelists and Islamists and other religious groups; economic power struggles between unions and owners, public and private enterprise, individual and collective rights and on-going attempts to define social equity; all overshadowed by the overwhelming presence of our American neighbour.

These complex 'forces in tension' have, in fact become the basis of Canada's modern identity. In part because they come along one on the tail of the other so we never have time to resolve them completely — they are in endless evolution — but mainly because they have created a distinct pattern of behaviour, a Canadian personality. And this in two senses: first as a set of institutions developed to try to deal with the tensions and second as a process for dealing with each other, a sort of 'procedural consensus'.

Our basic institutions are federal, democratic, and parliamentary: federal to respond to regional, religious and ethnic diversity; democratic to allow participation and dampen authoritarian tendencies; and parliamentarian to counterbalance the first two with strong and effective government. Right from our 1867 Constitution, Canadians have adapted to POGG: peace, order, and good government — all three together. These have slowly been twinned with a capi-

talist, mixed economy and with cultural institutions: we define ourselves as a society that is officially bilingual, multicultural and diverse. Our complex and cumulative pressures have created recognition that we are a society of contending groups, none of which can be dominant, a society of minorities, each of which can only win in coalition with others. We have had to learn to deal with each other civilly. We have learnt accommodation. We search for balance among our multiple tensions.

However it is our procedural consensus for dealing with each other that is the crown jewel of Canadian identity. This is the soul of Canada. The process of mutual acceptance is buttressed by attributes of civility, tolerance, fairness, balance, and compromise. They are the genuine result of the pressures of contending groups. Thus the dominant notion is the need for balance. For instance, even in a free enterprise economy, Canadians expect government to be an active but not all powerful player. They believe government is a legitimate instrument for achieving common goals, for protecting human rights and as an arbiter of social equity and stability. The rule of law must be supported by social justice. Rights and human dignity have their own worth beyond the logic of the market place. The idea of balance is like a high wire acrobat with her balancing pole being pulled in different directions while she seeks to move ahead and bridge the gap. Don't get me wrong. We all know that these competing tensions mean that is rarely easy sailing in Canada. All too often we are shouting at each other and making wild demands. But the point is that beneath the rough seas is a calming set of mutual behaviour.

As shown by polls, surveys and academic analysis, Canadians have been pleased by these common characteristics. The greatest harm the Harper Conservatives have done to Canada is to try to undermine our national identity. As we look ahead to re-launching Canada we must make sure to preserve our most noble traditions: a sense of civility, accommodation, tolerance and balance and a government that has just enough power to help us achieve common goals — all the characteristics that have been denied by the Harper Conservatives.

**Expectations of success:** So much for the past

and the present, now where do we go for the future? If we look deeply, we may perceive that the worm is beginning to turn. There is a growing refusal of the main ideas of right-wing conservatism and indeed of the Harper conservatives. Ideas are important. Usually it's great books that announce a change in fundamental thinking in a society. They provide the new concepts that push people to change their understanding of major social values. They create the ripple effects of a stone thrown in a pond. This idea was best said by the British economist John Maynard Keynes who taught us that, "The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually slaves of some defunct economist." Let us look briefly at four transformational books.

Definitely an example of a non-defunct economist is Thomas Piketty whose book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* has been debated around the world during the past year. The *Financial Times* called it the economic book of the year. It is already changing the debate and setting the agenda for international economics.

Piketty uncovers key economic and social patterns of the last three centuries in some 20 countries and compares it with the renewed concentration of income in ever fewer hands over the past three decades. Thus, the commanding heights of the economy are dominated not by effort and merit but by inherited wealth. The principal destabilizing force is that the private return on capital can be significantly higher for long periods of time than the rate of growth of income and output. He finds there is an average return on capital of 4 to 5 percent while he predicts the growth rate of our economies will not exceed 1 to 1.5 percent in the long run. In simple terms, those who have investments make much more money than those who have productive jobs and the economy as a whole. Top earners can quickly separate themselves from the rest by a wide margin. These top managers by and large have the power to set their own remuneration. Their gains then join the pile of inherited wealth. "When the rate of return on capital signifi-

cantly exceeds the growth rate of the economy... then it logically follows that inherited wealth grows faster than output and income" (p.26). In more picturesque fashion, Piketty declares that, "The past devours the future" (p.571). This is generating extreme inequalities that stir discontent and undermine democratic values (what Piketty calls 'destabilization'). Such high levels of inequality, Piketty maintains, are incompatible with the meritocratic values and principles of social justice fundamental to modern democratic societies.

The resurgence of inequality after 1980 is due largely to political shifts. It cannot be reduced to purely economic mechanisms. "The history of inequality is shaped by the way economic, social and political actors view what is just and what is not, as well as by the relative power of these actors and the collective choices that result" (p.20). However, there are ways, according to Piketty, that "democracy can regain control over capitalism and ensure that the general interest takes precedence over private interests, while preserving economic openness and avoiding protectionist and nationalist reactions" (p.1). Investment in training, knowledge, and skills diffusion, abetted by open borders for trade, is the key to overall productivity growth as well as the reduction of inequality. But it is more likely that countering these effects would require a progressive global tax on capital which will require a high level of international cooperation. To move in this direction will require greater regional integration (Europe is the model), new forms of property and democratic control, and new forms of participation and governance. This in turn, will depend on the availability of economic information to each of the involved parties. Economic and financial transparency is essential for democratic governance and participation. This would require the publication of detailed accounts of private corporations (pp. 569-70).

A second book with transformational potential is best-selling author, Joseph Heath's *Enlightenment 2.0*. It moves us from economics to culture, that is, how we think and communicate in current societies. The original Age of Enlightenment (or simply the Enlightenment or Age of Reason) was a cultural movement of intellectuals begin-

ning in late 17th-century Europe emphasizing reason and individualism rather than tradition. Its purpose was to reform society using reason, to challenge ideas grounded in tradition and faith, and to advance knowledge through the scientific method. It promoted scientific thought, skepticism, and intellectual interchange. The Enlightenment was a revolution in human thought. This new way of thinking was that rational thought begins with clearly stated principles, uses correct logic to arrive at conclusions, tests the conclusions against evidence, and then revises the principles in the light of the evidence.

Over the last twenty years, the political systems of the western world have become increasingly divided—not between right and left, but between crazy and non-crazy. What’s more, the crazies seem to be gaining the upper hand. Rational thought cannot prevail in the current social and media environment, where elections are won by appealing to voters’ hearts rather than their minds. The rapid-fire pace of modern politics, the hypnotic repetition of daily news items and even the multitude of visual sources of information all make it difficult for the voice of reason to be heard.

The answer to this state of affairs Heath argues lies in a new “slow politics”. It takes as its point of departure recent psychological and philosophical research, which identifies quite clearly the social and environmental preconditions for the exercise of rational thought (i.e. the mental capacity to draw conclusions). It is impossible to restore sanity merely by being sane and trying to speak in a reasonable tone of voice. The only way to restore sanity is by engaging in collective action against the social conditions that have crowded it out. In Heath’s defense, his whole point is that restoring sanity won’t be easy, and will involve a lot of hard work, counterintuitive thinking, and bucking of prevalent trends. He also understands that for social change to be effective the rule is to go big or go home and that at best only incremental changes are even on the radar.

Our third book about the possibility of transformative change is *Transforming the United Nations System: Designs for a Workable World* by Joe Schwartzberg. It concerns the most difficult problem facing the human race: how to make world-wide de-

isions that are reasonably fair to all of us. Global problems require global solutions. Individual states, no matter how powerful, can solve international problems. However, the United Nations, as presently constituted, is incapable of addressing many global problems effectively. Decisions made on the basis of one nation — one vote fail to reflect the distribution of power in the world at large. What is fair about a nation like, say, Malta with a population of 413,000 having the same voting power as a country like India with its 1,173,000,000 inhabitants? In the Security Council, the allocation of power is both unfair and out-of-date, giving permanent veto power to the five victors of the Second World War in 1945. As a result, the Council has become unrepresentative, undemocratic and ineffective. Hence, member countries are reluctant to endow the UN with the authority and the resources it needs. Extensive reform, even transformation is essential.

This book is rooted in the proposition that the design of decision-making systems greatly affects their legitimacy and effectiveness. It proposes numerous systemic improvements, largely through weighted voting formulae that balance the needs of big and small. It advocates both inclusiveness and fairness. The designs for each agency are appropriate to the functions to be performed. Rules for weighted voting depend on the tasks to be performed. The author indicates ways by which the interests of regions can supplement those of nations and by which the voices of civil society and ordinary citizens can also be heard. In numerous contexts, it promotes meritocracy and gender equity. Essentially, the author proposes that a few key and highly noticeable reforms might become internal catalysts for further transformation.

The aim is not to create an unrealistic utopia, but rather to establish a workable world, a world in which the force of law supplants the law of force, a world committed to sustainable development. Given the many threats confronting our planet — such as the threat of nuclear annihilation, global warming, pollution, health pandemics, economic crises, depletion of biodiversity and vital resources, and the obscene gap between rich and poor — the time frame for decisive action is short. The task before us is daunting, says Schwartzberg, but, in light of the urgency, we

must and can find ways of mustering the will and imagination to do the job. He does not throw up his hands in despair. The genius of this book is that instead of just looking at the size of the challenge the author submits it to rigorous analysis and shows how we can take one step at a time to surmount the interrelated institutional blockages. The lesson for us is that no matter how difficult the problem we confront, we can seek workable solutions. Schwartzberg knows that it's political will that is lacking. But he believes that if ideas and rational thought can open up the perspective of political solutions then politicians might be persuaded to walk in that direction.

These three, deeply researched, books tell us that in the wider world new trends of economic, cultural and political thought are appearing that call into question many of the basic tenants of conservatism that have dominated the landscape since the 1980s. The first book tells us that market-led economics, without political correctives, have meant that inherited wealth is concentrated in fewer hands and captures a greater rate of growth than that of the economy as a whole. "The past devours the future". Extreme inequalities are generated that undermine democratic values of merit, effort, and social justice. But, democracy can regain control through education, knowledge, information and the tax system — all of which the Harper Conservatives have turned their backs on. The second book moves us from economics to social culture and philosophy. The author calls for a return to the ideas of the Enlightenment which aimed to reform society using reason, to challenge ideas grounded in tradition and faith, and to advance knowledge through evidence-based thought and intellectual interchange. The rapid-fire pace of modern politics, the hypnotic repetition of daily news, advertisements and government slogans all make it difficult for the voice of reason to be heard. The only way to restore sanity is by engaging in collective action against the social conditions that have crowded it out. The third book on reforming the UN tells us the world must deal with international organizations, the environment, global cooperation, surmounting inequality and decision-making institutions that base their legitimacy on inclusiveness and fairness. These traits have not defined the Harper

Conservatives.

Now, how do these three transformative books help us understand the current problems in Canada and what to do about them? For the past three decades, we have been submitted to the conservative ideology that promotes the 'new economy'. According to this way of thinking, government was too big, taxation too high, and regulations too intrusive. Government should not be big brother. Initiative should come from business leaders and they should be compensated for their work. Greed is good, might is right. All these thoughts have been implanted in the minds of the public by big business which controls big media, big think tanks, and right-wing, fundamentalist religion. They were supplement by trends in mainstream media worldwide that have basically eliminated analysis and concentrated on events and what those who control the media say.

The result has been an economy that accepts permanent unemployment, reduced taxation for large capital, the marginalization of trade unions, and a reduction of the State as the regulator and guarantor of social justice. Single-minded tax-cutting means the government can no longer promote social justice because it has been starved of the funds to do so. Deregulation and greed led to the financial disaster of 2007-8 from which we have only recently started to recover. Many families lost everything. Wealth creation has pushed aside other social values such as lending a helping hand or giving a second chance. Canada's outstanding public service has been diminished to a shadow of itself. Environmentalists have been gagged. The quality of education was lowered, wait lines at hospitals became endemic and Canadian scientific leadership diminished. Veterans are neglected. Concentration of wealth and the outrageous incomes and bonuses of executives — including those who made no profits — served to enhance social divisions, make our society more litigious, and undercut such Canadian values as sharing, compromise and tolerance. Briefly stated, these are the wrongs that must be righted.

**The Renewal in Concrete Terms:** Unless we have a little revolt, the only way to get rid of Harper is to vote the Conservatives out of office. In concrete terms, that means electing a majority of candidates

from the current opposition parties as Members of Parliament. But, even then, our job is not done. At the present time, the pollsters tell us that neither of the opposition parties will have a majority by itself. If they do not cooperate together, Harper may have a sufficient number of seats to continue governing if the votes of the other parties are split. What to do?

The answer would have been simple enough if the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party (NDP) had been public-spirited enough to work together in a Coalition. Then we could vote for the Coalition and our job would be done. So let us give a little thought to the idea of coalitions. I am not going to talk about the Greens, even if I admire them and their leader very much. The polls suggest they are unlikely to come anywhere close to holding a balance of power. The same thing can be said about the Bloc Québécois which recently has been losing members and electoral support. From what one hears from the media, there are several in the leadership circles and in the party memberships of the Liberals and the NDP who would support a coalition. But it seems the present leadership will not accept it. Sometimes this is for petty, selfish reasons. The leaders – and by this I mean the MPs at the head of the parties and the backroom boys and girls — persist in thinking that they know best and only their party can govern the country. Sometimes it is because of their reading of history. For some of the NDP, the Liberals have always been the demon that stole their ideas and kept them out of power. For some of the Liberals, the New Democrats are a bunch of soft-headed socialists who cannot be trusted with the country's finances. Probably both are wrong and a level-headed look at the realities would tell them that they have much more in common than either of them has with the Conservatives.

The idea of 'coalitions' also got a bum rap in 2011 when a group of parties almost succeeded in dumping Harper. He started flailing around to protect his power. He told Canadians that the Coalition of opposition parties was illegal and unconstitutional. This is wrong. Any group of MPs which musters a majority in the House of Commons and has the structure to maintain itself automatically becomes government. Harper's insults and injuries about coalitions discour-

aged Canadians from thinking about the many benefits of parties grouping together to govern. The reality is that most modern democratic countries are governed by coalitions and they seem to work quite well. They oblige parties to work together, to learn from each other, to develop common policies and thereby to bridge some of the harsh divides and ideological hang-ups of their societies. I insist on the constitutionality and the benefits of coalitions because it is quite likely that, despite the current protestations of New Democrats and Liberals, Canada will end up being governed by a Coalition by the end of 2015 — including the Greens.

So, if we do not go into the autumn election with a coalition, all those who are determined to get rid of Harper will have to do it the hard way. They will have to vote strategically. This means that in each riding across the country we must all decide on which opposition candidate is most likely to win and then vote for that person — whether or not the candidate represents the party you support. You can still work for the party you prefer, but when it comes to voting you vote for the one who can win and beat the Conservative candidate. To judge who is likely to be the strongest candidate, do not be swayed by the wishful thinking of your preferred party. They all are convinced they are going to win — until they don't. So watch the media coverage and then turn to [www.threehundredeight.com](http://www.threehundredeight.com) a website that provides up-to-date projections of the popular vote in each riding. Then vote 'strategically' to win. Now if we all follow this advice and we elect a majority of Liberals and New Democrats, without a clear winner, our job is still not finished. We must get on the phone and write letters and use the social media plus personal conversations to convince our preferred party that they must form a coalition. So, you see my friend. This is not a time for apathy. This is an election that can be decided by citizens — us.

## 6.1 The Renewal Agenda

Let us start off with one last reminder of what we are trying to overcome before going on to wonder about how one sets an agenda for renewal and then setting out some suggestions about the issues a new

government will have to consider to set Canada on a new course.

**Reader's letter to Maclean's Magazine  
10 Nov. 2014**

**Harper's 'liberal' bona fides? Er, No.**

Your Oct. 27 editorial attempts to paint Stephen Harper's regime as 'liberal'. This despite so much evidence to the contrary:

- Gutting the long-form census;
- Virtually muzzling government scientists;
- Shutting down government science libraries;
- Shutting down the long-gun registry;
- Slashing staff and budgets at Environment Canada;
- Wasting more than \$100 million on ads touting the government's so-called 'Economic Action Plan', instead of spending the money on job creation;
- Wasting \$28 million 'commemorating' the War of 1812, instead of spending it on real live veterans;
- Maintaining a one-dimensional foreign policy in favour of Israel in the Middle East;
- Repeatedly burying many pieces of unrelated legislation in massive 'omnibus' budgets, in order to prevent detailed discussions and debates;
- Eliminating valuable advisory bodies such as the National Roundtable on the Environment;
- Attacking the integrity of professional public officials, including the parliamentary budget officer, and the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

The Harper government 'liberal'? Nice try but it doesn't succeed

*Geoff King, Ottawa.*

The accompanying box is included for two reasons. It confirms that your author is not the only person keeping tabs on the harms of the Harper Conservatives. Some citizens do it just as well and much more briefly. As a matter of fact, I have an almost identical and even more virulent letter in French! Secondly, it lays out one last time and in very succinct form the wrongs wrought by the Harper Conservatives. It thereby starts to lay out the agenda of wrongs which must be righted by a new government. To this pointed list, one might add that the Harper government has damaged our democratic institutions; increased partisanship, voter apathy and low electoral turn out; widened economic inequality; tarnished the Senate; instituted authoritarian government by Harper and the youngsters in the Prime Minister's Office; governed in secrecy; diminished Elections Canada and the electoral system; politicized the public service; down-graded government services; side-lined the media and castrated the CBC; made puppets of parliamentarians and hobbled parliamentary committees and debates; instituted vicious, personalized attack ads against opponents; pilloried environmentalists and other Canadian activists; suppressed science and evidence-based policy making — truly the list is endless.

Despite ten years of these depredations, the Canadian people are not duped. Surveys conducted for the Department of Finance in February 2014, showed the extent of the disconnect between government policies and the priorities of Canadians. Among the 12 focus groups questioned, the economy, trade and energy exports — dear to the heart of the government — did not register among the respondents' priorities. Their priorities were elsewhere and included: education, health, and the retirement benefits of veterans. They were particularly worried about the potential environmental consequences of the Northern Gateway Pipeline. You can fool some the people some of the time. . .

**National Conversations:** To start building a renewal agenda, we have to open some doors and windows. The last thing we want to do is to follow the path of the Harper Government. Its path was characterized by authoritarianism, ideology, control, secrecy and single options defined by the leader. What

we want now is the opposite. Our method for defining the renewal of Canada should be open, analytical, participative, accessible, and the result of a deliberative process that leads to consensus.

In his 2013 book, *How We Lead*, the former Progressive Conservative Prime Minister of Canada, Joe Clark, severely criticised the Harper Conservatives and then went on to make a profound proposal: we should recommence our habit of holding 'national conversations'. He wrote that, "Many of Canada's own defining initiatives flowed from serious national conversations — royal commissions on cultural institutions, or health care, or free trade; first minister's conferences; parliamentary debates and election campaigns that reached beyond mere personalities and into the realm of ideas. Those conversations lifted us over our usual divides of culture and geography and specific interests. But for two decades now, our country has gone silent. We need to renew pan-Canadian conversations, and a discussion of our presence in the world is an excellent place to start." (p. 8).

Clark went on to say that most of us see the world from our own perspective and are blind to those living in different circumstances. Hence, the need for us to meet each other and to talk. And Canada has plenty of solitudes that we have had to learn to bridge. We have done it so well that we have become trusted as international interlocutors, moderate voices and 'connectors'. Rapid changes and new technologies have reduced the priority we once accorded to understanding, persuading and co-operating. After our constitutional debates people wanted to 'get back to business'. Then along came the years of austerity and we looked to housekeeping and not house-building. We narrowed our vision and gradually silenced our inclusive conversations. The last meeting of first ministers in Canada took place in 2008. The last royal commission was in 2002. There were a few judicial commissions but these were investigations not conversations. Election campaigns have come to focus on the narrow and the negative. So we have to get back to national conversations.

If we agree on this goal, then the next question becomes: which issues should be the subjects of national conversations? Now there is a question: how do we and should we set the national agenda? The

answer is not easy. But everyone knows the question is crucial. The one who sets the agenda for a meeting has a great chance of affecting its outcome. As Clark has pointed out, aside from the policy orientations of our various governments, a great deal of the path Canadians have trodden was laid out as a result of a haphazard collection of diverse ways of holding 'national conversations'. While the path had the merit of being democratic, it was also very erratic, lengthy and sometimes subject to failure. Away back in the 1980's there was a wave of 'futurologists' who suggested many more rational methods for analysing trends and strategies. Without achieving this nirvana, let me suggest that, because the question of agenda setting is so basic, it should become one of the first topics for a new government. Setting up a 'Secretariat for National Conversations' would help Canada address the future in a more orderly fashion. It could be an agency of the federal government but would perhaps better be located in the Council of the Federation or as a standalone institute in a university. Its task would be to receive and evaluate suggestions about issues requiring national debate and continuously publishing lists of proposed 'Conversations'. It would be the obligation of the federal and provincial governments to respond regularly on how the conversations should (or should not) be held. The governments (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal) may take the lead and set a topic up as a policy field or establish a commission, request a white paper, hand it to a legislative committee, or sponsor a conference. On the other hand, the governments may decide to help private institutions to study an issue: universities, think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or combinations of these and others. The advantages of the Conversations Secretariat would be that it could help rationalize and publicize national issues, set up agendas, and keep the country focused on future scenarios. These are also the reasons it would best be established on 'neutral' territory such as the Council of the Federation.

So I now will establish myself as a one-man secretariat to propose, first, a series of 'Canadian Conversations' and then a more pointed, short term series of 'National Projects' on topics that have been in the line-up for some time and which seem ripe for urgent

government action. In both cases, the criteria for my choices are my sense that there is a palpable national need and the fact that they have already been picked up by the 'national radar' and are reflected in books, studies and the media.

## 6.2 The Renewal of Canada: Possible Topics For Pan-Canadian Conversations

- Canada's Presence in the World: A New Global Policy
- Rethinking Democracy: Elections, Parliament, Mores
- A New Look at Women's issues
- Federal-Provincial Linkages and Cooperation
- How does the Quality of Education and Access to it compare internationally?
- Stimulating Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Taking the Long View
- Inter-generational Fairness
- The meaning of Progressive Government
- Reconnecting the Bases of Society: the 'Village Effect' and 'Unifying Ideas'
- The Whole of Health Care: Psychological, Optometry, Dentistry, Pharmaceutical
- Enhancing our Municipalities
- Reducing inequalities
- Canadianizing our head of State
- Refurbishing our public service
- A National Energy Policy: production, transportation, sustainability
- Renewal of the St. Lawrence Seaway
- Looking After the Experienced Canadians (formerly the Elderly)
- A Fast Train from Quebec to Windsor
- Infrastructure and Rapid Transit
- A National Day Care Program
- Dealing with the Environment
- Commission on Native Women
- Healing the CBC/Radio Canada
- Inter-modal transport
- Inter-Provincial Free Trade
- A Pan-Canadian Power Grid
- Enhancing Canadian Identity: TV, Film, Social Media, Culture

## 6.3 National Projects Requiring Action

- Back to Kelowna: Coming to a Deal with the Native Peoples

These two lists have very important messages for the opposition parties who want to become the new government of Canada. First, we have a lot of work to do. The Harper Conservatives are leaving Canada with a terrible backlog of unattended opportunities. Second, Canadians don't just need a new government. They need a better one. This election must be seen as an opportunity for improving Canada, not just changing it. Third, Canadians are not likely to put up with a new team of back-room boys and girls. The country needs up-front policy making. The opposition parties must not think that the policies they have dreamt up are the end of the road. If Canada is to regain its democracy, the people must be consulted regularly and continually. Election 2015 must not be squandered.

## 6.4 Thinking about specific topics on the Renewal Agenda

**Canada's Presence in the World: A New Global Policy:** Countries now have three forms of security: national, human and global. Some 15 years ago, the world set out to tackle the UN's Millennium Development Goals to lessen poverty, promote gender equality and ensure sustainable development. There have been some successes. Now we must tackle the post-2015 development agenda. An ambitious report delivered to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described five priority 'transformative shifts' for post-2015:

- Leave no one behind
- Put sustainable development at the core
- Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth
- Build peace and effective, open and accountable public institutions
- Forge a new global partnership

There have been other reports and recommendations as we head toward a consensus plan. Essentially the three challenges of the future are poverty, exclusion and environmental sustainability. But these 'transformative shifts' show us just how great is the global task before us. In an alternative foreign policy, the government of Canada will play a leading role in tackling the world's problems in cooperation with other countries. To do this Canada has to be active where the debates are held and the decisions made. Canada has a great team of diplomats, legal minds, public servants, financial specialists, committed civil society leaders and academics whose life in service for a better world has given them great experience and potential to help others. People like Simon Hacker who Patrick Martin of the *Globe and Mail* profiled in the January 17, 2014 edition. From South-Western Ontario, Simon is a humanitarian logistician who coordinates food aid for the four million Syrians that the UN World Food Programme has identified as being at risk. As the article said, "Every day thousands of humanitarian workers risk their lives to help

the most vulnerable and sometimes pay the ultimate price". One of the government's tasks should be to encourage the contributions of its citizens.

But the overall global task is much larger. We must study what works and does not work in development aid policies. Even more, as John McArthur of Brookings proposes, we have to ask what minimum standard of services would be required to reach all of humanity. Then we have to put in place the required global infrastructures. And finally we will need to clarify how governments and corporations can be held accountable for their actions. Canada will require a super-ministry approach to its foreign affairs combined with the support of civil society to help the world attain these global goals.

The manner in which Prime Minister Stephen Harper conducted his foreign relations harks back to the monarchical system where policies were elaborated, in secret, by a tiny elite and then dictated to the unwashed. We desperately need new 'White Paper' studies on Foreign Affairs and on Defence, but we must also elaborate an effective, on-going system of public deliberations and parliamentary debates about international relations. Public approval is one of the three supports of foreign policy. The second is a set of skilled, professional diplomats who can counsel the government. The Department of Foreign Affairs must be given back its self-respect instead of having policies and strategies dictated from the Prime Minister's Office. The third foundation is a sound military. The Conservatives have recently returned to the old Canadian 'elevator' practice of up and down defence budgets. This has to stop. We need to grow up. Canada is an enormous, wealthy but vulnerable country. We must have a professional military with top notch equipment and training. Defence purchasing must be modernized and sped up. Studies have shown that Canada has always punched above its weight in NATO — in the Balkans, in NATO's Stabilization Force, in Kosovo, in Afghanistan and in Libya. Presumably our military will continue to do so if we give them the means.

One of the most informative studies of Canadian foreign policy during the Harper Regime was carried out by Roland Paris of the University of Ottawa. He did an intensive and creative survey of public opin-

ion to see if it still supported Canadian traditions of 'liberal internationalism' (liberal with a small 'l' and in the sense of 'democratic') or whether it had been taken over by Harper's more aggressive, in-your-face, nationalist, warrior foreign policy. Paris studied the three mainstays that symbolize 'liberal internationalism': support for the UN, peacekeeping and the military. He found that this support for liberal internationalism has been maintained. The Canadian public has not adopted Harper's priorities. Not only that, but the support is found across Canada including the Western provinces, across party affiliations, and includes men and women and new Canadians.

Highly significant is the way Canadians think about peacekeeping which the Harper Conservatives tried to replace with an image of Canadian soldiers as 'valiant fighters', not peacekeepers. Despite these efforts Canadians seem to persist in "associating peacekeeping with a broader array of behaviours, all of which could be grouped under the heading of 'diplomatic peace-maker'. This phrase may encapsulate a role that most Canadians believe their country plays and should play in the world... The fact that the world is changing does not diminish Canada's stake in working toward a stable international environment based to the greatest extent possible on the rule of law, not the law of the jungle. The strategy of seeking to strengthen multilateral cooperation and norms has always made sense for a country in Canada's position", maintains Paris. Those who seek to govern Canada would do well to read Paris' study to see what the Canadian public wants in their foreign policy.

## 6.5 Rethinking Democracy

The strangling of democracy by the Harper Conservatives demands that our first task is to take a broad approach to rebooting democracy so that it once again corresponds to the expectations of Canadian citizens. One such approach would be for a new government to set up a 'deliberative democracy' assembly to give a thorough airing to our democratic aspirations in a public forum. The essential elements of such a 'Deliberative Democracy Assembly' would be that it would have a structured, pan-Canadian, representation of, say, 750 volunteer citizens. They would be

informed about the comparative, international elements of democracy by a balanced corps of experts. The deliberations might take a month. A Reporting Committee would develop a consensus or majority report for presentation to the public and the government. All proceedings would be open to the media and would be televised to include an informed wider public.

We have seen that democracy can simply be defined as: government 'of', 'by' and 'for' the people. But, what we have learned in the past 10 years is that it is the complexity of democracy which the Assembly will have to study. An elected Parliament is a good place to begin. But is the electoral law and funding fair and approved by all parties? Is there an independent authority with adequate powers to oversee the electoral process? Can the parliament be shut down by the executive (the prime minister)? Or, is there a constitutionally mandated division of powers between the executive and the legislative branches that would put controls on the prime minister? Is there a constitutionally written definition of the positions of head of state (the Governor General) and of prime minister and the relationship between them? And what about a clear definition of powers between the political and administrative sides of government where the come into regular contact as between the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office or between deputy ministers and ministers? Last but by no means least, how do we spell out the authority of Cabinet Ministers vis-à-vis the Prime Minister? Surely the task of the PM is to convince, not to coerce. In Canada, at the present time, the answer to all these questions is in the negative with the consequence that Mr. Harper has been able to bully his way through the government and do pretty much as he pleases. Our Constitution could use some updating. In fact, it could also use some modernization in the field of federalism where the structure of relationships between Ottawa and the other orders of government could really benefit from some definition.

What about government 'of' the people. Is our parliament actually representative of the people of Canada and does the government represent the majority of the electors. Again the answers are in the negative and will always be so until we return to

a two party system or change our electoral laws to proportional representation to recognize our multi-party system. And once elected, we have seen from Michael Chong's proposed, private Reform Act that the whole issue of the rights and powers of MPs vs. the party leadership is a loaded issue ripe for change. MPs are no longer able to hold the government to account. We should not forget the question of electoral finance. Should access to people with deep pockets be the only criteria? We should recognize that there have been suggestions for 'democratic funding' in the form of assignable vouchers provided equally to each citizen by the office of elections. Who should have an oversight of government advertising?

The notion of government 'by' the people brings up the question of the role of civil society and of political rights. Over the past several decades we just evolved into a system where government appreciated being seconded by private associations of interested and competent citizens. But there were no specified rights. So Mr. Harper was able to shut down group after group in the government and to threaten outside groups with a loss of funding or charitable status. The government has abused the 'Access to Information' system to the best of its ability. The chill was in. How can we recognize and protect the role of civil society in Canada? How solidly implanted are our political rights? The protections offered by the Supreme Court appear to be fairly robust — although this has not stopped the Prime Minister from doing his utmost to change the composition of the Court. This brings to mind the need to institutionalize the whole process of nominations of judges to our court system. A linked issue is to reform the court system so it would be more financially accessible to citizens who are not millionaires. As for our broader 'human rights' their fragility has been underscored by the debate over 'security' vs. protection of rights. It's another area for a 'Deliberative Democracy Assembly' to consider. So should the whole issue of adequate checks and balances. Another is the question of an adequate flow of information. As the Supreme Court has decreed, Canadians should have the right to hear as well as to speak. If so, will we ever deal with the concentration of ownership of the media? As to the question of governmental information, one would

never have expected a government of Canada to unilaterally modify the Census or to shut off the supply of scientific information and to close down research centres and libraries. But that is what the Harper Conservatives have done and we have to ask if there are any limits on the powers of a party that takes over the government? We could also ask if there are any protections for the agents of government and of parliament that the Conservatives have decided to attack.

But even before a Deliberative Assembly, we can look at the record of the Harper government and see that its effect on Canadian democracy has been to make it autocratic, secretive, centralized, controlled and frightening — the very antithesis of what democracy is meant to be. Studies have shown that the Canadian public faults the government for its concentration of executive power, an inadequate electoral system, the handling of policies, and abuse of democratic institutions. There have been plenty of suggestions for improving our democracy by research books, think tanks, and dozens of journalists and individual critics (see bibliography). Prominent among these suggestions are the following. Canada should follow the lead of its Commonwealth cousins like Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand and codify the rules of parliamentary democracy so everyone will play from the same rule book. Rules about such things as prorogation, dissolution, election dates, a parliamentary calendar, and votes of confidence need to be codified so they are understood by all. To overcome the fact that Canada has "the heaviest, tightest party disciplines of all the advanced parliamentary democracies" , we must restore the power of party caucuses to dismiss party leaders and give riding associations the right to choose their candidates without the leaders' interference. To reinforce the power of MPs and Parliament, control over the party's finances must be transferred to the caucus and organizing and interpreting the use of polls should be run by a party committee. The staff of the Prime minister's Office should be cut in half as should be its budget. MPs on parliamentary committees should elect their chairs and members of committees should be named for the duration of the session, so as to gain expertise.

## 6.6 Reducing Inequalities

Many people are of the opinion that the two worst scourges in the world today are inequality and global warming. Let us start with the first. There are many sorts of inequality but here I will only deal with economic inequality that is, the growing gap between the very rich and the poor. The basic figures are pretty well known but just to recapitulate let us recall that Canada shares this particular misery with the rest of the world. A UN report stated that the richest one per cent of the world population owns 40% of world assets and the bottom half shares just one per cent. In recent decades, despite steady economic growth, inequality has risen in most countries in nearly every region of the world. A report by the economist Branko Milanovic of the World Bank confirmed that inequality between individuals has improved very little. From 1988 to 2008 people in the world's top 1% saw their incomes increase by 60% while those in the bottom 5% had no change in their income; moreover, 8% of humanity takes home 50% of global income.

Of the advanced economies, the U.S. has some of the worst disparities. Although its gross domestic product has more than quadrupled in the past 40 years, most of the benefits have gone to the very top. In 2012, the top 1% of Americans took home 22% of the nation's income while 95% of all income gains have gone to the top 1%. The median income of Americans hasn't budged in 25 years. The economist Joseph Stiglitz claims the inequality upswing began 30 years ago along with tax decreases for the rich and the easing of the regulations in the financial sector. It has worsened as the U.S. has underinvested in infrastructure, education, health care and social safety nets. The ILO estimates that CEOs in America make 500 times more than their ordinary workers. Mobile capital has demanded that workers make wage concessions and governments make tax concessions to the multilateral corporations. There has been a race to the bottom for wages and working conditions. But, greed also plays a role. The Justice Network estimates that between \$21 and \$32 trillion is hidden offshore, untaxed. This results in a tax loss of \$260 billion to the U.S. every year.

In Canada, the picture has been much the same.

Canada's richest 20% of families take home almost 50% of all income and, even worse, 70% of all Canadian wealth belongs to Canada's wealthiest 20%. And it has been getting worse. For every new dollar of real wealth generated in Canada since 1999, 66 cent has gone to the same 20% wealthiest families. Figures from the Canadian Business Magazine show that the 86 richest Canadian individuals and families hold the same amount of wealth as the poorest 11.4 million Canadians combined. Their net worth had grown to \$180 billion in 2012. Few Canadian taxes apply to wealth or capital directly. One of the largest loopholes is that capital gains are taxed at half the rate of normal income. When the income from the private companies they control directly or indirectly is included in their revenues, the top 1% of Canadians took home an average \$500,000 in 2011. What these figures mean in practical terms is that at the other end of the scale four million Canadians were affected by some form of 'food insecurity' in 2014, which is almost half a million more than five years previously.

The inequality gap hinders people at both ends of the spectrum from having a common vision of their society and from desiring to undertake common projects. The rich tend to secede from society leaving only 'trickle-down meanness' in their wake, as former Clerk of the Privy Council, Alex Himelfarb, has said. In other words, inequality subverts the quality of democracy. It also has a harmful effect on the economy. As the French economist, Thomas Piketty who we met above has pointed out the rate of return on capital (profits from investments of the wealthy class) is usually higher than economic growth. Income from wealth grows faster than wages. This both continues the process of concentrating wealth and slows down economic development. It leads to the virtual stagnation of the purchasing power of the lower and middle classes. Recent research indicates that the very wealthy can hardly be described as entrepreneurs but they are very good at tax avoidance. It is not certain that CEOs earn their vast salaries and bonuses. On the other hand, surveys in 2014 for the 'Americas Barometer' have shown that the Canadian public generally worries about income inequality and expects government to reduce the disparities. Canadians have historically supported gov-

ernment as a nation-builder and protector of 'collective well-being' and the survey show they still expect government will look out for society's disadvantaged. Another survey for the Broadbent Institute showed that 64% of respondents wanted more action from the federal government. But, under the Conservatives and their austerity programs, the government's role in wealth redistribution has been reduced.

This somber picture of wealth concentration underlines the need for a 'National Conversation' on reducing inequalities, as called for by former Senator Hugh Segal. However, as Jeffrey Simpson points out, so far, none of the party leaders have shown they are willing to ask citizens about the less fortunate. Solutions to poverty require good data — as in a long form census. It was his investigation of centuries of data that permitted Piketty to propose a progressive global tax on capital along with boosting minimum wages and improving education and training opportunities for the poor and middle class. A technologically driven world requires new skills and industries. Because such a global tax is a long way off, two Canadian economists have proposed a small tax on money exchanges and on sales of securities. Such taxes would target those with money and bring in billions of dollars but at low levels of tax and without harming the capital of the rich. The idea should be easier to sell. Of course, this would likely require some restraints on the ownership of the media and the capacity to buy elections. Also required are affordable housing programs and daycare programs coupled with basic education. The Child Benefit Supplement has not been increased for seven years and the child tax benefits should be increased beyond mere subsistence. The goal should be equal opportunity, say Ed Broadbent.

In the final analysis, surmounting inequality will be a question of Canadian values. So let me leave the last word to Jeff Turnbull, past president of the Canadian Medical Association, writing in the Citizen of July 12, 2012. "As Canadians we have always been able to transcend our differences for the greater good, united by our shared values as a confederation — values such as compassion and caring, fairness and equity, and the importance we place on peace and diversity. This generation's legacy will be measured

by the extent to which we have upheld these values. What virtue exists in the number of fighter planes we buy or how many people we put in prison? There is, to be sure, the need for prudent fiscal management. This, however, cannot be at the expense of what binds us together as a nation... Government's must not balance the books on the backs of some of our poorest and most vulnerable citizens." Dr. Turnbull went on to conclude that, "Fundamental change can only take place when individuals and organizations representing large sectors of our society set out expectations for our elected officials and hold them accountable for meeting them."

## **6.7 A National Energy Policy: production, transportation and the environment**

In November, 2014, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change gave its starkest warning so far about the dangers of human-driven climate change. Forests will burn, cities will flood, and infrastructure will collapse as a result. One week later it was revealed that the G20 countries were flagrantly ignoring these warning by continuing to prop up fossil fuel exploration to the tune of \$88 billion in subsidies every year (only a portion of the total of \$775 billion in supports around the world). For their part, the Conservatives have slashed financing for climate science, closed facilities that do research on climate, portrayed the tar sands industry as environmentally benign, attacked "environmental and other radical groups" , and continued to give subsidies to the oil industry. This was in addition to decimating our environmental legislation and removing safeguards for water safety.

Nicholas Hulot, the French President's special envoy for the protection of the planet, came to Canada to reiterate that China and the United States have started to act because the costs of natural disasters and of pollution which are rising exponentially. Businesses are realizing that energy efficiency means productivity. The costs of renewable energy are plummeting. But Canada risks being left behind in the economic gains of clean energy if the federal gov-

ernment doesn't get on board. In 2013, \$207 billion (U.S.) around the world was invested in clean energy deployment, not far below the \$270 billion spent on fossil fuel power generation. Canada's investment in clean energy in 2013 was a paltry \$6.5 billion. The Harper Conservative government has not set renewable energy targets, or joined in international climate change bodies, or recognized we can build economic growth while reducing climate change. Prior to the major international climate change conference in Paris in 2015, countries must submit national plans for reining in greenhouse gas emissions with rich countries taking the lead, but Canada has not even taken action to fulfill its emissions reductions targets set in Copenhagen five years ago.

For a path forward, we cannot do better than turn to one of Canada's best environment experts, Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party. She proposes a seven point program for tackling the climate crisis. We will start with federal- provincial conference (i.e. a 'National Conversation') to ensure a national plan to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and the end the practice of their subsidization. Next is placing a price on carbon. It might be like BC's carbon tax which is used to reduce other tax burdens and is therefore 'tax neutral'. Together, Canadians would set shared goals for energy security, maximising jobs, and the transition to a low carbon economy. Coal-fired power plants would be phased out. At the same time we should work with municipalities to emphasize the up-grading of critical infrastructure such as transportation and water works. Finally, Canada's vital Environmental Protection Act would be restored along with the Fisheries Act and Navigable Waters Protection Act and a restored National Round Table on Environment and Economy. David Suzuki added his wish that Canada would emulate 110 other countries that have enshrined environmental rights in their Constitutions. Of course, the environment is not just about energy and climate change but, it would be a major step ahead.

## 6.8 A New Look at Women's Issues

In preparation for a special UN session on women, the Harper government sent the UN a report on

Canada saying everything is going fine and we are getting more women in universities and the workforce, for example. Shortly thereafter, the UN received another report from the Canadian Feminist Alliance and the Canadian Labour Congress saying that there has been a "systematic erosion" in the status of Canadian women since 2004. It cited 'backward' progress in everything from pay equity to child care and the elimination of funding for advocacy groups. Although there are more women in the work force, the wage gap between men and women has actually grown. Similarly, there are more female students in academic institutions but hiring and promotion of women in universities has not kept pace. Men are still likely to have twice as many full-time positions as women. The report also pointed to the closing of 12 of Canada's 16 Status of Women Offices, the elimination of funding for court challenges and the loss of the \$5 billion child care program which was dismantled when Harper came to power. As a result Canada fell from 14th to 25th place in the World Forum's gender- gap index. Hence, there is a strong need for a new Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

But, the problem is more urgent than that say some. Pointing to the fact that many of the issues of 30 years ago —child care, pay equity, violence against women, and women's role in global peace and security — are still as pressing today, Caroline Andrew, Director of the Centre on Governance at the University of Ottawa, has called for the party leaders to hold a debate on the status of women during the forthcoming election. The last leader's debate on women was in 1984. Women still form the majority of people living in poverty, they do twice as much of the family tasks at home, and 8,000 women and children are forced to seek protection in a shelter on any given day — so the struggle to ensure the equal rights of women is far from over. Only a leaders debate can shine a strong enough light on these issues and what future governments will do about them.

## 6.9 Enhancing our Municipalities

In February 2015, the mayors of Canada's largest 18 cities met to consider their common concerns prior to

the next federal election. These cities contain almost two thirds of the population of the country and are motors of employment. They agreed that, although each has its particularities, all have the same need for financial resources for infrastructure, housing and transport. Social and environmental development is not far behind. They calculate that 120 billion \$ are required just for their infrastructure needs. What they want is for the federal government to sit down with them to discuss reliable forms of revenue, transferred in a timely fashion. Ottawa needs to develop an 'urban strategy'. For instance, at present a portion of gas taxes are refunded to municipalities for infrastructure costs. Similar mechanisms could be negotiated for other priority expenditures. Sounds like a plan to me.

Needless to say, large cities do not in themselves represent all of the needs of Canadian municipalities — and we must not let the powerful hug the spotlight. Even so, it is good to note there is hope for the future. At the end of 2014, the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton signed a new agreement with the Premier of Alberta that the Globe says may be a new model for giving municipalities new powers and reworking the way they are financed.

## 6.10 The Conservatives: Bad Economics, Worse Management

The Harper Conservatives like to portray themselves as the economic saviours of the nation and prudent managers of the public good. I don't like to disappoint you but their propaganda is just not true. The Conservatives have made all the wrong economic choices and have unhinged our public wellbeing.

The data on Canada's economic decline can be found in the media — if one reads carefully. In 2014, Canada dropped to 15th rank among the world's most competitive economies (out of 144 countries) from 9th rank in 2009. According to the prestigious World Economic Forum, the biggest long-term concern about the Canadian economy is the underinvestment in innovation and technology. Private sector spending on R&D ranks 27th in the world; university/industry collaboration ranks 19th; and as for government procurement of advanced technology —

a key driver of technological innovation — Canada ranks 48th. Canada is also slipping down in higher education and training, falling to 45th rank in post-secondary enrolments. Student debt is rising. This is also reflected in youth employment. Despite the fact there are 265,000 fewer young people employed today than in 2008, the Harper government has cut its Youth Employment Strategy by \$80 million between 2010 and 2016. They have been told to boost their Strategy and to ensure corporations have to advertise their positions to Canadian youth first before turning to foreign workers.

As far as general employment is concerned, Canada lost 112,000 private sector jobs in 2014 — almost 500,000 since 2004. The participation rate in the labour market was only 66% in 2014, the worst in the last 13 years. We lost 14% of our quality jobs during the last 13 years. Tourism plunged by half between 2000 and 2014. Exports also dropped from 44% of GDP in 2000 to 30% in 2013, again despite Harpers high-flying trade deals. The result was that since 2008, our debt to the rest of the world grew by \$290 billion. A lot of this was attributable to the inexorable rise in the value of the Canadian dollar (until very recently) which was endorsed, even celebrated by James Flaherty as a public indicator of Canada's supposed strength. As to the income gap, the average compensation for each of Canada's top 100 corporate bosses was some \$8 million in 2012 while the average wage sat at \$47,000. Not much balance or incentive there. Generally speaking, the behind-the-headlines news is that, under Harper, the Canadian economy is in free fall.

There is more and worse. Because of Harper's two key economic strategies, the Canadian economy has been going in the wrong direction for the past decade. The first bad decision was to put all his apples in the resource extraction basket. He wanted preside over a 'world energy super power'. As we have just seen, the Canadian government should have been presiding over technological innovation and development while the resource industries were left to do their own thing rather than being buttressed by billions of dollars in subsidies and enormous federal efforts to promote their pipelines and trade.

One has to ask why the media and the public have

not been aware of our economic decline and the perils of dependence on resource extraction. Canada has once again become a 'hewer of wood and drawer of water'. It was because of Harper's second economic wrong turn — the focus on the federal deficit. The first problem was that as an act of economic theatre drama it masked what was really going on. It was all Harper talked about so it was all the media had to report. Of course, conservative economists didn't want to look further. More fundamental was that the debt drama was false and misleading and led to a cascade of other economic errors. It was misleading, first, because Harper has driven down the federal government so far that in the overall picture it is now a minor part of the Canadian economy and not worth all the focus he has placed on it. Second, has been the cost of this focus. It has permitted Harper to cut some 47,000 federal jobs since 2011 (we were meant to be in a period of economic recovery, remember); to clobber the federal government with another \$27.5 billion in tax cuts announced last year; and all this aided and abetted by a 2013-2014 total of \$18 billion in 'lapsed', Parliamentary approved spending that was returned to the treasury (the Citizen called it "not frugality, it's a broken promise" ). In turn, having starved the federal government for funds, Harper was able to claim that he had no other choice but to cut federal spending by \$14 billion a year since 2011 all ending up with "shuttered veteran's offices, deteriorating statistical data, questionable rail and food safety, unavailable military hardware, and ridiculous waits for benefits" . The deficit drama was false because it masked the real tragedy. The Conservatives had, according to the Royal Bank, driven up the Net Federal Debt by \$134.5 billion to a total of \$615.8 billion since coming to power in 2006.

If you were planning to vote for the Conservatives because of their propaganda claim that only they can manage the economy, well we now have the prove that any other party would do better — unless they have been bamboozled into believing in conservative economics.

This background gives some hints about what we should be doing for the Canadian economy. First, we should have learned years ago that foreign corporations are not going to invest in much research

and development in Canada. Governments and universities (funded by governments) have to pick up the slack if we are going to be competitive in international business and development. This is not an argument for big government. If we have learnt anything from the conservatives it is that governments do not have 'do' everything. They will be doing quite enough if they lead, encourage, coordinate, plan, and support businesses, civil society and universities to undertake the required efforts in research, production and trade. Secondly, recent opinion polls reported in the Citizen show that the public is increasingly off-side with conservative values. Those considering themselves to be 'small-l liberal' have gone from 24% of respondents in 2008 to 47% in 2014. Increasingly they support "progressive" values on law enforcement, marijuana, foreign policy and — especially — the role and size of government. They believe the role of government is to invest in new areas such as job creation, public infrastructure, government regulation and stronger social security.

But, government can also prod the private sector, guide it and give it support. For instance, government should be subsidizing resource industries to design, produce and export extractive machinery. For too long we have been on the receiving end. Our resources should be a 'value-added' industry. Similarly, in the green sector, we should be designing and building energy efficient housing and transportation for ourselves and for export. The goal is to maximize energy efficiency. Again, government can help by sponsoring research and development and helping to expand international markets. Another idea whose time has come is the field of energy. All our governments, along with the private sector and experts, should be working together to produce a national energy and energy transportation strategy. There is a growing national and international consensus (except for the Harper Conservatives, of course) that we should establish a national —provincial carbon tax, probably modeled on that of British Columbia which works well and is tax-neutral. Another field in which research has produced agreement is that Canada should be exporting its know-how in services and its expertise in all manner of fields. Government should be helping small companies and individ-

uals with special knowledge and talents — including artists and academics. We should be expanding our stock of skills via pan-Canadian education and apprenticeship goals. On the other hand, we should be very careful about trade deals which only open potential markets without helping Canadians to exploit them, while allowing foreign corporations to decide what we can and cannot do because they can turn around and sue us in international tribunals when they don't like our policies. In other words, government economic policy should guide Canadians and help them to 'make the world their oyster'.

### 6.11 Vote Progressive

It is to be hoped that this little booklet will have persuaded you that to defeat the Conservatives in the coming election, you must get out and vote for the strongest opposition candidate in your riding — and then you must make sure that candidate and her or his party are supporting progressive policies. Which leads us to the last question: what is a 'progressive' party and government. Unfortunately, like others, my preoccupation with Harper has distracted me from presenting a clear portrait of what it means to be 'progressive' as opposed to 'conservative'. First, let me note that any party can be relatively progressive — the Social Democrats, the Liberals, the Greens even the 'Progressive Conservatives' in the old days. It is not the label but the contents that count. So you have to check out the ideas and policies of the leaders and the candidates. There is no automatic short cut. We each have to have a good idea of what it means to be progressive, so that we will get what we want. And we will not be alone. Another survey at the beginning of 2015 by the public relations giant Edelman, showed that Canadians want more government regulation of the food and beverage, banking and health industries at a time when confidence in big business and corporate leaders is waning because they "failed to contribute to the greater good". The good news is that Canada and Germany are tied as the second most trusted countries in the 27 surveyed, which leaves the door open for a renewed Canada to take its place in the world.

Essentially, being 'progressive', means believing

that government can be a tool for helping citizens and for reducing disparities between them. Let us be careful. Government can also be a tool for domination — of the left or the right. It is hard for me to say it but Thatcher, Reagan and Mulroney were correct in the 1980s to claim that government had become too big and too domineering. While they were right, Harper is not. He is an ideologue who has taken the idea of minimalist government to its extremes. To be more precise, let us consider some point by point orientations of what a progressive party should propose.

- A progressive party would advocate the Canadian values of balance, sharing, civility, tolerance and mutual accommodation.
- Primordial to progressives would be the reestablishment of our basic democratic institutions and welcoming rather than attacking and penalizing our civil society associations.
- Progressives would work assiduously to reform our multi-party electoral system so that all citizens will be represented on a fair and equal basis.
- A fair tax policy can help rebuild social programs, reduce gaps between rich and poor, restore environmental responsibility and revitalize Canada's democracy. Instead of the tax hysteria of the political right, it recognizes we have to pay taxes to have good roads, schools, hospitals, health care and social services. Fair taxes would seek the least punitive ones such as financial transaction taxes that are already used in 40 countries.
- The Magna Carta is 800 years old this year and it should remind us no one is above the law but all should have the protection of the law. We need to reform our penal system and our judicial rights — in particular making sure that people have access to justice and the courts at reasonable costs.
- Progressives know that the people and the governments of Canada must work with the native peoples to insure their just inclusion in the benefits of the Canadian society.

- A progressive party would promote environmental sustainability and surmount economic inequality. It would promote mass transit and green energy and would go beyond concerns for the 'middle class' to deal with poverty.
- Progressive policies are based on evidence and usually supported by scientific research and information.
- In the current age, to be progressive is to want to restore social connectivity and community spirit including the organization of effective 'national conversations'.
- Progressive policies would be intergenerational — seeking to be much fairer to our youth, reduce the costs of education and protecting our elders.
- While it will be the subject of debate, progressive economic policies would likely increase the minimum wage to a living wage, support the rights of workers organizations, and tax absurdly high incomes and profits.
- Progressives will favour not only federal-provincial collaboration to maintain the stability of our health care system but its extension into pharmacare and homecare and halting the abuse of antibiotic drugs..
- Both poverty and the middle class will be helped by a child care and early education program and also increased affordable housing.
- Progressives would want to see greater citizen participation in the design and delivery of all these programs. The government should aid citizen study circles.
- A progressive party would support the principle of Canadian multicultural diversity by returning to policies that would welcome refugees instead of keeping them away and financially penalizing and incarcerating them once they are here.
- Canada must return to its position as a leader in multilateral organizations in the world with support for environmental values, prudent diplomacy, and the reform of global institutions.

- To achieve all of these goals, Canadians must enhance their entrepreneurial spirit.

Being progressive, then, is a mixture of values, goals, projects and programs. It is the opposite of Harper's conservatism. Using this point- by-point description we can hold our political candidates feet to the fire and see whether or not they intend to head in a progressive direction.

## **6.12 It ain't over yet: In 2015 the Harper Conservatives continue to harm Canada**

I finished writing this booklet in February 2015. But, as I terminated the writing I was struck by the reality that the Harper Conservatives were continuing to perpetrate their harms to Canada. While they were trying to look all warm and cuddly in time for the election, under the surface there are plenty of signs that they are just as mean and vicious as they have been at any time in the past ten years. So when the election comes along, please do not imagine that the leopard will change its spots. Here are a few examples:

- Reports show that the percentage of unemployed Canadians who qualify for 'Employment Insurance' (EI) has now fallen below 40%. Therefore 1.3 million unemployed workers do not qualify for traditional benefits or job training.
- Having silenced most people who dared to criticize them, the Conservatives got one of their backbench MPs to propose a private members bill to put the fear of God into parliamentary officers who caused them problems such as the Access to Information Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner and the Parliamentary Budget Officer by forcing them to expose their personal political histories.
- Mr. Harper once again refused to meet with the provincial premiers at the meeting of the Council of the Federation.
- Mr. Harper, unlike the leaders in our allied countries, showed his disdain for our Members of

Parliament by refusing to have a Parliamentary oversight committee for the new police powers of our intelligence service (CICS).

- The Rideau Lakes region of Ontario reported that its tourist industry has been decimated by the lack of lock masters due to cuts in the Parks Canada budget.
- Canada ranks last of 11 advanced countries for timely health care for seniors.
- The Prime Minister's Office invites the RCMP to take over responsibility for security on Parliament Hill – without consulting the Speakers of the two Chambers who have constitutional authority over the precinct, or consulting the responsible Parliamentary Committee or even the RCMP itself.
- The Conservatives politicize their legislation on terrorism rather than providing adequate funding to our security agencies — because it might upset their budget.
- The Conservatives propose life sentences without parole ('life means life') for certain categories of killers – until forced to backtrack by public opinion.
- The union for the 3,400 federal government health workers stated the government was trying to force them to strike by refusing binding arbitration.
- With other countries moving toward 'super-trains', the Conservatives cut Via Rail's subsidy by 60% since 2011.
- The renegade Conservative MP, Eve Adams, who quit to join the Liberals criticized the Conservative leadership for being "mean-spirited", "fear-mongers and bullies". She took aim at the "profoundly unfair" income-splitting tax plan.

### Remember!

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John E. Trent

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