

THE TROUBLE WITH CANADA AND HOW TO FIX IT

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The question, "If you were the Prime Minister of Canada, what would you do to improve the living standard and unify the country?", is audacious, even incendiary. Dropped at any social gathering it is certain to excite everyone, from simpletons to distracted visionaries. The former are unaware of the concrete difficulties; the latter dismiss them. And the normal person between these extremes knows that trying to bring meaningful political harmony to Canada is like trying to melt an iceberg with a blow-torch, or steer an ocean liner with a tooth-pick.

Notice I said "harmony," not "change." Canada has too much change already, and the people are uneasy, frightened we are wandering like feverish lemmings into dangerous waters. And anyway, change for misguided purposes is just the beginning of chaos. Canada needs harmony, not change. To get harmony, it needs coherent and workable principles and ideals.

However, as a people, we labour under conflicting and increasingly incoherent political, economic, and social policies that seem to be hardening in a sclerotic gridlock everywhere we turn. Such gridlock can only be broken by a thorough, profound alteration in our fundamental institutions and values, root and branch. This requires not change, so much as repudiation of our errors, and a return to foundational values and core beliefs.

Political philosophers from Plato to Tocqueville, have warned us keenly that the warring interests and headlong pursuit of merely individual ends so common to democracies would end in chaos, and then tyranny. That social breakdown is natural to democracy, fragmenting society such that citizens begin to feel alienated; in fact begin to feel, as Arnold Toynbee put it, that they are "in" but not "of" their society.

So as your Prime Minister-to-be, I wish to speak not about revolution, or social change, or about theory, but about what we can actually do to recover ourselves as a people. About how a conscious effort by a courageous people, first to recapture and vivify their traditional values, then to deliberately align their political and social institutions with those values in a single and coherent vision of positive political, economic and social action, will surely bring harmony to Canada and prove these skeptical philosophers wrong.

THE POLITICAL SOLUTIONS

A. J. P. Taylor once said something true of every free society; namely, that "Until August, 1914, a sensible, law-abiding person could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state, beyond the local post office, and the policeman."

Well, how far we have departed from this refreshing condition! Canada - a nearly solvent nation in 1967, with a mere \$20 billion cumulative debt from its entire first 100 years of existence - is today by population smaller than the state of California, and yet has one of the worst per-capita debts of any nation in the history of the world: well over \$1 trillion, when we tally total federal, provincial, municipal and crown corporation debt, as well as all unfunded government liabilities.

Because all forms of government debt are really just a form of deferred taxation, this means we have broken the bonds with future generations by obligating the unborn, who are not here to defend themselves, to pay for services consumed by the present generation. We are consigning them to a form of fiscal slavery, or bonded labour. All free and responsible societies of the past have attempted to improve things for the next generation, not improve their own generation at the expense of the next. This is an execrable, profoundly immoral act that is weakening the entire nation. It is felt in higher unemployment, a shrinking asset base for all, a lowering standard of living, and a kind of dispiriting lassitude. Indeed, one province - Quebec (about which, more later) - is already attempting vigorously to escape this worsening reality. More could well follow.

For the blunt fact is that Canada's total debt has been borrowed to facilitate the growth of innumerable government programs the people were obviously unwilling to fund, in the soul-numbing belief that government ought to provide as many services as possible; that what I have called the top-down state, ought to replace the bottom-up society at every opportunity.

The former view proceeds on the belief that the people and all their needs must be administered for them. That this will create a unified harmonious society. The latter view proceeds on the opposite belief, that government ought to set the rules, and referee the game, but never play it. That people must be respected as self-reliant moral agents capable of looking after themselves in the fullness of an orderly freedom.

The argument used by defenders of the top-down state is that social spending helps the needy. But about 70% of Canada's so-called social spending is in fact transferred to middle and upper income Canadians. Fully 33% of all government spending is transferred to the top third of income earners! For Culture and Recreation services, the figure is 47.4%, for health spending, 37.6%, and for education, 42.5%. This is shocking testimony, indeed, and serves to remind us that the most common product of any regime that aims to replace personal initiative - is big government, and massive debt.

I propose first, therefore, in the interests of harmony and unity, to radically de-politicize and re-federalize Canada by vigorously returning to our roots. Our wise founders, creating this nation at a period of history that had just seen the Terror of the French Revolution (mounted in the name of egalitarian democracy), and then the bloodbath of the American Civil War (fought to defend democratic states' rights), feared rampant democracy as well as the tyranny of big government. They envisioned Canada as a balanced set of sovereign provinces within a sovereign nation, and our British North America Act of 1867 reflected their vision in its strict division of federal and provincial powers, a division intended to check the growth of government by forbidding federal involvement in certain provincial affairs, such as health, and education, and in turn inhibiting the excessive power of provincial governments by forbidding them to borrow beyond their own credit. They must live within their own means, was the imperative. But these wise restrictions have been aggressively circumvented in successive betrayals of our own constitutional limitations.

These betrayals of our founding vision were deliberately initiated from the late 1960s onward for the specific ideological purpose of strengthening federal powers, and weakening provincial powers - which in turn have rapaciously weakened traditional municipal powers. Ask any Mayor.

This long process has everywhere disempowered, overregulated, and dispirited the people as a whole by robbing them of local initiative. According to Statistics Canada, we currently have, not one government employee for every 15, or 18, or even every 10 citizens, as in many countries - but one for every 5.5 citizens! A more honest calculation removing dependent children and elders from this number, would divide by taxpayers, and not by citizens, and thus produce a figure closer to one government employee for every 3 productive (taxpaying) citizens!

Canada is close to the disastrous situation of Sweden, where for the first time in the history of the free world, we find a country the majority of whose citizens receive most of their income from the state, either in subsidies, or pay, or some combination of these two. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that when the majority of the citizens of any nation are beholden to government for their living, democracy, in any meaningful sense, is finished, because the people will always vote for their paymaster.

So the radical depoliticization proposed here would restrict our federal government to a maximum of seven ministries to deal with truly national matters only, such as transportation and energy, justice and police, banking, communications, defence, foreign affairs, and interior affairs

(not the close to forty ministries and sub-departments we habitually have). And no further ministries could be created without leave of the people. Switzerland has run its federation this way for hundreds of years through a conscious effort to restrict big government, on the theory that no federation, regardless of size, needs more than this handful of federal ministries.

Re-federalization, in turn, requires a return to the strict division of powers of the BNA Act, precisely to curtail the growth of the sort of socialist-style government we now have. Unity and harmony will flow naturally from ten sovereign provinces (sovereign, that is, within their own constitutional powers) in a sovereign nation, in which a people will feel united, not by universal medicare, or welfare handouts, but by shared principles of liberty, responsible self-government, and spontaneous local community. The ultimate purpose of both the above actions is to concretely free the people - indeed specifically require them by law - to look after their own lives and affairs within each province (our original B.N.A.law), state (original U.S. law), or canton (current Swiss law), accordingly.

A corollary action required is the more philosophical idea of subsidiarity, which I would entrench in our highest constitutional documents. This term refers to the idea that concrete solutions to all human problems must be found at the lowest level at which the problem is generated, and no higher level of government may be invoked unless there is clear failure at the lower level. I would entrench this notion as a matter of national philosophy in our constitution, thus mandating a continuous devolution of power.

Accordingly, municipalities, provinces, and the federal government, would be required to solve their own problems, each at their own level (as detailed in our constitution). Unfortunately, Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms reversed this common-sense prohibition of interference by placing a duty on central government to equalize all citizens and regions through transfers and entitlements, thus offending what was in effect our original subsidiarity principle. The predictable result was dependent regions, full of too many dependent souls. We now have one or two giver provinces, with the rest taker provinces, and a population that has learned to make claims for so-called "positive" goods and services (meaning real things such as cash subsidies, or health care services) as rights to be delivered by governments (that is, by other citizens currently, or by future, including unborn, taxpayers). This has been a vast sea-change from all prior traditional concepts of free societies in which citizen rights were "negative;" meaning, they were concepts and laws specifying what governments could not do to citizens.

Because of such deleterious effects, I would therefore scrap Canada's 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This popular, yet widely misunderstood document, may yet ruin Canada, for

reasons not yet clear to the people, who often defend what they believe is their free democratic Parliament, alongside the Charter. Yet the moment the Charter became effective, every law of Parliament suddenly had to face the possible judicial scrutiny of unelected officials to remain law. Suddenly, law-making in Canada meant a face-off between elected representatives, and unelected judges. The most dangerous effect of the Charter, therefore, has been to neutralize the prestige of Parliament (ostensibly the voice of the people) by placing a Supreme Court of philosopher kings and queens in a supervisory position. I say this is dangerous because these judges cannot be dislodged by any power in the land, and whether from right, left, or the middle, they have the understandable habit of interpreting the abstract words of the Charter according to their personal political enthusiasms and beliefs. As a result, instead of merely judging conflicts or errors in law – as judges traditionally have done - they now too often make law, by "reading into" abstract charter words meanings that are not specified there. In this respect we have been radically transformed from a nation grounded in parliamentary sovereignty to one grounded in judicial sovereignty.

But perhaps the worst effect of the Charter is that hundreds of interest groups, steered mostly by radicals who know the people themselves would never vote for their programs, have quickly learned techniques for influencing the courts and the entire legal community via the faculties of law, through law journals, political correctness programs for judges, and other organs designed to change law from the top and circumvent the democratic function of Parliament. These modern radicals hate democracy (the people and their values). But they love the Charter (which delivers their own radical programs). Scrapping the Charter would help neutralize all such interest groups. Not incidentally, I would scrap every penny of subsidy to all interest groups, including businesses.

I have argued elsewhere that Canada's recent exercises in constitution-making - the Charter, the Meech Lake Accord, and especially the Charlottetown Accord - were not, properly speaking, constitutional. A true constitutional document must be about the rules and principles by which a people and their governments are permitted to make their deals. *But it should never, never in itself, be a deal.* However, all the aforementioned documents were just that. They resulted from deal-making and horse-trading between politicians, and hundreds of disgruntled interest groups.

A despicable spectacle.

So I would replace the Charter with a basic constitutional amendment to ensure the following: Canada's constitution shall refer to "citizens" only, and shall not distinguish among political groups of citizens in any way. In turn, the same laws shall apply to all citizens equally, and neither governments nor their agents shall be above any law (as many agencies, agents, tribunals,

and commissions of government now are). Neither shall governments be permitted to act in ways forbidden to the citizens. For example, to discriminate, when citizens are forbidden to do so (as is not only permitted, but encouraged under Section 15). All forms of official discrimination by governments, at all levels, regardless of how "affirmative" in intent, shall be outlawed, on the grounds that we can never discourage immoral or unsavoury behaviour by practicing it.

Basic rights to free speech, trial, property ownership, justice, trade, religion, and language use shall be defended vigorously, in keeping with the common-law traditions of our people. Our one-sided, inefficient program of official bilingualism would be scrapped, devolving such official language mandates to the provinces (Quebec has already managed this. French is the official language of Quebec). Further, there shall be no "constitutional ranking" among groups of citizens by gender, ability, colour, race, religion, or any other feature of humankind. Neither shall Canada's constitution mandate any social engineering via economic transfers (as it does now), via claims or rights, among persons or regions. The idea of freedom of opportunity must be protected and promoted, not the debilitating notion of equal outcomes or social goods as national entitlements. The immediate effect of this change would be to transform regions and provinces from stagnating recipients of redistribution, into competitive entities, each vying to please the citizen taxpayer. Finally, I would propose a change in our basic constitution to the effect that all residual powers (all things not specified in the constitution) revert to the provinces, and not, as currently, to the federal government. This is a most important way to institutionalize our devolution of power, because it means that any new task requiring government action not specifically mentioned in the constitution would have to be managed provincially, not federally.

The general idea of rights in our constitution must explicitly be defined and defended as "negative," not "positive" rights (as explained above) on the grounds that the key function of a good people's constitution must be to protect them from the encroaching power, and stipulating openly that such encroachment - which always erodes subsidiarity - is the greatest danger to their political and economic freedoms, especially to their ability to produce such goods and services for themselves through free markets and private initiative. In other words, this key constitutional amendment must stress immunities, not amenities!

As mentioned above, the highest political documents of any people must reflect their basic values. In Canada, they do not. The Canadian people as a whole have never been socialist, collectivist, or for that matter redistributionist in their thinking or traditions. But their modern elites have. At heart, when pressed to articulate their philosophy of life, they more often than not say that they believe in what I have called the Four Fs: Freedom, Family, Free Enterprise, and Faith.

By this I mean that, regardless of their political party, they will normally defend the idea of individual freedom, and the notion of persons behaving responsibly as moral agents in pursuit of the good life. This is what they teach their children. While they will defend any individual's right to live as he or she wishes, they will also fight hard for the traditional idea of the natural family as a married mother and father living together with their dependent children. They are deeply disturbed by the strenuous efforts of governments to dilute this definition, effectively ending traditional family protections in law and social policy.

They also very much resent the endless march of higher and higher taxation, and more and more regulation of enterprise, whether through income taxation, special corporate levies, wealth taxes, or the GST (which, they half-joke, means "Go South Today"). For many businesses governments are now dictating who must be hired (employment equity quotas), how much to pay them (minimum wage and pay equity requirements), and how much may be charged a customer (dictated allowable price ceilings in many categories of business). Such multi-level controls eventually spell the end of free enterprise.

And finally, because over 90% of Canadians declare themselves to have a faith in God (and 90% of those say they are "Christian") they are frightened that governments have so carelessly marched against their free expression of religious belief, both in the public square and in the public schools, despite the fact that the Preamble to our present Charter states that Canada "is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law." (This is God's one and only cameo appearance in Canadian constitutional documents. And the rule of law, as indicated, has been turned to radical purposes.)

In short, they continue to believe there is a law higher than government, by which they try to live, however inadequately. This single belief is itself indelibly connected to their belief in civic freedom - for once firmly under God's law, you can never be wholly under Caesar's. Every nation in history that banned the fourth F soon became a tyranny. There are no exceptions.

For all these reasons, our constitutional amendment must include our commitment to these four pillars, defending them vigorously, repudiating and reversing in every way the explicit welfarism, economic dirigism, and rights-philosophy found in our current Charter. This will be a traditionalist initiative of the highest order, through which the people insist that their highest political document must reflect their society, not the state. The state must be the servant of society, not the reverse, and our constitutional amendment must specifically require this.

As for our institutions themselves, I believe the House of Commons should continue to be representative by population, and the voting method used to send representatives there must be altered to ensure majority rule. We should never have the situation so common to our first-past-the-post system wherein the simple arithmetic of voting may result in the whole people being governed by a minority. This possibility defeats democratic philosophy at its very heart, creating public disrespect for democracy.

As for the Senate, or second house, the basic purpose of which is to check the impulsivity of Parliament, I believe the provinces should be represented there equally, whatever the total complement may be, thus protecting smaller provinces from domination. Traditionally, second houses are comprised of gifted older citizens - architects, not bricklayers - appointed for their leadership qualities. They are expected to deliberate on national issues from above the fray and pressure of party politics. In theory, appointment preserves them from party influence-pedlars. This is a fine ideal, aiming at wisdom, not popularity, and one worth preserving. But in a corrupt society, where this ideal is impossible, a judicious elective system – perhaps one from within each province - may have to be used to fill the senate. This would at least have the merit of diluting appointive corruption (if not elective corruption).

This dilemma – the tension between wisdom and popularity - suggests why a virtuous democracy always comes down to culture - to the quality and ideals of the people. Why public good depends on private virtue. For no institutional methodology for choosing leaders, whether by lot (as in ancient Greece), by universal franchise (as in Canada, where even criminals get to vote), or by random selection of candidates, will guarantee wise leadership if the people are not wise.

Which brings me to the matter of direct controls over government. Democracy, as we know, may be direct, where the people vote themselves on all law, as in some ancient Greek cities, in the early New England colonies, and in some Swiss Cantons today. Or, it may be indirect, as is usual in large federations where we delegate this law-making responsibility to chosen representatives.

Let it be said that there is no particular guarantee of wise choices from any method. Leaders may be wise or corrupt, and so may the people. And if wise, representative democracy is certainly more efficient, for the people may tend their cows and hat shops, while their delegates tend to government.

But if representatives promote a system of laws increasingly opposed to the core values of the people, as at present, there will always be a clamour for direct control. The people call for lower taxes? They are raised. The people call for capital punishment for heinous crimes? About 1,200 convicted murderers walk about on parole, and so-called young offenders burgle, rape, and murder with near impunity. Fraud is epidemic and almost always goes unpunished in modern Canada, even where there are rare convictions. The people call for more emphasis on family values? The entire concept is diluted beyond recognition. Fully 94% want standardized evaluation in schools? They cannot get it. And on it goes. So it is no surprise that we see a high level of distrust and disgust, and that the people want to make the laws themselves, or at the least want the right to revolt against their incompetent governors by firing and replacing them at will.

For this reason, and provided the methodology is sufficiently arduous as to dissuade simple cranks from using it, I would institute referendums on basic nation-changing questions - especially those dealing with taxation, budgets, and government action, and size - so that the people as a whole could "own" their democracy. The best rebuttal to critics of the referendum technique, is that if the people find they have made a stupid choice at any one time, they may alter it. Although individuals, as Edmund Burke put it, may be often be stupid - given enough time and opportunity to correct themselves, the people as a whole will be wise.

I would also institute so-called "citizen initiatives" - which means an ability of the people to generate a law their representatives have wilfully delayed or refused to make. The Swiss do this regularly. They may also, by such procedures, annul a law their delegates have made if they think it bad. This has the happy effect of checking power at its source, and making most laws conservative in nature.

Also necessary in a corrupt age such as ours, where men and women perform politics as often for career and personal glory, as for honour to the laws and their nation, I would institute a recall procedure enabling the people to fire delegates who have committed proven malfeasance, or who simply have not done what they said they would do. For a politician, this ensures a healthy conflict between party and people that will give almost certain priority to the people and the bottom-up ethos that keeps democracy vital.

THE ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS

A great insult to believers in the social welfare state is the philosophy of free enterprise; of individuals and their families left free to work as hard as they wish, to make as much money as they wish, to buy and sell what they wish, and otherwise determine their own economic futures.

The insult arises from the fact that in such a system, the people, through a kind of "dollar democracy," in effect determine economic outcomes for the whole nation. For the collectivist - who thinks he always knows best how to spend the wealth of others - this is sheer irresponsibility.

But I believe that for an enterprising people, there is almost nothing a free market cannot be persuaded to make in abundance - provided there are willing customers. And if there are not willing customers, then why would anyone, especially governments with their renowned inefficiency, want to make it? And so, as part of a general philosophy of limited government in a free society, and only with the exception of certain basic services such as defence, police, and perhaps some aspects of infrastructure for public transportation, communication, and recreation, the free market must be encouraged to operate widely and imaginatively, with government's purpose to protect both the market framework, and the people, from force or fraud. The opposite philosophy has been a disaster.

In 1960, Canadians surrendered about 30% of GNP to governments at all levels. Today, they surrender around 50%. Tax freedom day is now mid-June (mid-July if deficit repayment is included). Since that time, the Consumer Price Index has risen about 400%, while the Consumer Tax Index has risen 1,200%. But our roads, though more numerous, are no better. The public schools – public education – is in lamentable shape. And Canadians, despite a universal pre-paid "health-care" system that eats up more than a third of provincial budgets, are no more healthy than they were. Perhaps less so. Certainly bigger, fatter, weaker is the trend for each successive generation of children. For all this, we have our \$1 trillion dollar debt to show - a debt that is already restructuring Canada, whether we wish it or not.

Clearly, as governments cannot restrain themselves, they must be restrained by the people. This means we need a fiscal guillotine, by which I mean a method to restrain or fire governments that try to plunge the people into debt. My suggestion is that in addition to balanced budget legislation, any government that runs a debt two years in a row may be put to election at the will of the people.

Further, and perhaps most radical of all in the service of a traditional society, central government should have no right to tax citizens directly, or if so, only at a minimal level fixed by referendum. It should receive the bulk of its funds as a fixed percentage of the Gross Provincial Product of each province, to be spent only on matters proper to it under the constitution, the common percentage to be decided periodically by the provinces, and fixed by referendum and by law.

I would also end the "progressive" income tax system so dear to the socialist set. It is plainly discriminatory, and discourages wealth-creation. It would be replaced with a simple flat tax, applicable to all. According to a wide variety of tax specialists, left and right, the optimum level for a flat tax is somewhere between 20 and 24%, and it has the further benefit of eliminating all "loopholes" and a byzantine, undecipherable system of tax accounting and law. Further to this, all taxation would be indexed, to avoid the invisible tax of inflation, and its corresponding "bracket creep." All capital gains taxation would be eliminated in order to stimulate the buying and selling of properties and businesses now forestalled by the disadvantageous economics of capital-gains taxation. Business deals ought to be executed primarily for market reasons, not for tax reasons.

Many serious economists around the world are now arguing that the income tax ought not only to be changed, but replaced entirely, because it discourages work. They favour a general consumer tax. You pay when you spend. This would likely create larger capital pools, therefore cheaper lending, thus stimulating business formation and simultaneously raising employment and the standard of living. I would recommend this as a second stage reform.

Perhaps the most electric economic (and social) policy change would be a pro-family tax policy of allowing all legally married couples (only) to split income before taxation (to file what used to be called a "joint tax return"). This would instantly do away with the nefarious penalization of traditional married couples when one parent (usually a mother) wishes to stay home and raise her children. A husband earning, say, \$60,000 per annum, would report only \$30,000, and his wife would report the same. Besides a handsome reduction in their total tax bill ensuing from this - about \$7,300 less in taxes paid - such a policy would economically validate a mother's role in society, thereby healing the old gender wound of "unpaid" labour.

Other important pro-family changes would be to return to a system of vastly increased dependent-child deduction. Currently, there is almost none. Instead, the government sends parents a cheque, a form of non-taxable child welfare payment (from \$1,000, up to \$2,000 per year, depending on circumstances). This should be increased to about \$4,000 per child, and deducted by the taxpayer, thus eliminating a branch of welfare. I would also implement maternity bonuses as Quebec has done, to offset the disastrous declining birth rate in Canada, now at only 1.65 children per woman (when the replacement rate required to stabilize any population is 2.1).

Other pro-family policies 9an important form of positive discrimination for the good of

society) designed to strengthen traditional society by discouraging single-parenting and common-law unions, would be to allow full mortgage interest deduction, as well as fifty-percent higher RRSP contributions for any legally married couple (not available to common-law couples) with a dependent child(ren) under 18 living at home. An important further feature, would be a tax deduction equivalent to the child deduction (\$4,000) for "same-home" care of sick or elderly parents or other older relatives, or disabled people. And finally, in order to drive government out of family life, I would forbid all welfare - and unemployment insurance - for children of the rich (unless wards of the state), and for all individuals under 25 from families earning more than the average family income. Furthermore, unemployment insurance should be just that: a pool of capital, fully funded by the workers themselves to insure them when out of work - not an unfunded general welfare scheme, as at present. The law would specify: if it isn't funded, you don't get paid. In general, because there is always a moral with the money, so to speak, we must focus on policies that drive individuals away from government dependency (government is always broke, anyway) and toward work and their families.

THE SOCIAL SOLUTIONS

Canada must stop using its equality-based Charter-style arguments about discrimination to spread formerly targeted and exclusionary social benefits to all citizens. *All social policy is inherently and intentionally exclusive*, and therefore discriminatory. You must qualify for it. For example, you cannot get a veteran's pension if you have not fought in a war. Married benefits require being married. Welfare requires straitened circumstances. And so on. But the modern trend has been to call this essential positive exclusionism "discriminatory," and then spread benefits to all classes of people in order to get more votes. But if social policy is not discriminatory in some positive way, it is simply another form of general welfare. The important thing, therefore, is to decide in what positive direction we wish a policy to discriminate, and then make sure it does so.

In addition to the economic policies above that have obvious social ramifications, I would add these more narrowly social policies.

First, divorce. The idea of "no-fault" divorce has led to the idea of "no-responsibility" marriage. As a society we must stop thinking of the happiness or complaints of adult individuals, and focus instead on the happiness and welfare of the nation's children, and of the social fabric of the nation itself. The idea that one party to a solemn agreement can dissolve it at will, whether or not the other - who may have honoured the marriage vow in every detail - agrees, is dangerous to all society. Responsibility and stigma against divorce must be re-introduced and, where children are born to the marriage, a longer waiting period, of, say, five years, should be required.

The matter of abortion and adoption policy, must be considered together. Fully 70% of Canadians oppose abortion on demand. At least they do so when told that most aborted babies are healthy and many are second and third trimester and weigh many pounds. Yet we have no law against unlimited abortion. Canada's open season on killing the unborn must stop, and a law must be created restricting abortion to the traditional reasons of incest, rape, unsustainable life, or real threat to the mother's life, decided by community jury. For it is indefensible that total control over the life or death of a defenceless unborn child should be held by a single person, especially by the one person who stands to benefit by its death. At the same time, adoption should be encouraged (and would be by the increased child deduction suggested above).

Concomitant with this, we need strong social stigma against errant fathers, and a determined effort to force them to honour their parental obligations. The low standard of living in single-parent homes is mostly due to the absence of working fathers. But paternity cannot be taken seriously when from early youth, boys are informed that the life or death of the unborn child is the mother's only, to decide; that they are not allowed nor expected to have any voice in the matter. It is simply wrong that a mother may kill the father's child if she wishes, without consulting him, but if she decides to give birth, can claim financial support from the father for 18 years. Rather, both mother and father ought to be responsible for the welfare of their child from conception. Failing this, we can expect a lot more abortion (already 27 per 100 live births in Canada; only 3 per 100 in 1970), illegitimacy (about 24% of all births; only 4% in 1961), negligent fathers (who knows how many?), a larger, very angry underclass, and more youth crime - now the most rapidly accelerating class of crime in Canada.

On the matter of community moral standards it is important to understand that our Charter has had the effect of disempowering and discouraging local communities. Whether on the matter of sex education, religious teaching, or pornography, local communities have learned that protest is of little use because they and their communities do not count. Unknown judges, two or three thousand miles away, will decide. To counter this dangerous a-moralism, we must permit municipalities and provinces to pass local laws governing their local communities. Laws governing moral behaviour should be bottom-up, not top-down, as at present. Mothers ought to be able to march on the local variety store to protect their kids from pornography - and get results. Better the diversity of standards that will result, with a fully engaged community, than no standards at all. As things stand, in order to counter the current morals vacuum, people either give up. Or they cocoon. Or they drop out of society.

Or if they can afford it, they send their children to private schools. Living standards correlate highly with educational level. Which lands me on one of the most important policy changes

needed: choice in education. I believe that the whole idea of government-run schools is contrary to the values and principles of a free, private, and family-based society. Canada has no crisis in education. It has a crisis in public education. And when all is said and done, that is because public schools (no matter that there are some very good ones, usually in good neighbourhoods) in general must serve the state and its ministries, not the consumer of education, which is the private family.

Public school systems are so horrendously bureaucratized they too often fail to produce an educated child. Public education costs have gone up 300 per cent in constant dollars over the past thirty years, and salaries are up 50%. But dropouts are variously between 20 and 30 per cent, according to who you read (it's bad, either way). Educational results are almost (intentionally, I think) unmeasurable. Radical, mostly leftist unions and bureaucrats control almost all educational policy and curricula. And illiteracy and innumeracy are shameful - up to 38% of the population by current Statistics Canada measures, cannot attain the "everyday" level. After a century of effort, it is by now clear that public schooling is the most visible failure of socialism in North America.

That's why I would immediately implement a voucher system permitting parents one voucher per school-aged child for the pro-rata amount of the education budget, to spend at any school of their choice, public or private. Such a method would end by semi-privatizing the whole system. Education would then reflect more society, the community, and the private family, than the government and its collectivist ideology. This is not a perfect idea, because it simply returns tax dollars to parents, and only partially eliminates government. But importantly, it eliminates government's worst effects, by introducing immediate competition to a moribund school system. Bad teachers hate the idea, but good ones welcome it. Families in poor areas of America such as Harlem, where it has been tried, especially like it. Over forty U.S. state legislatures currently have either fully operating (if partial and experimental) "choice in education" programs, or legislation on the books that is struggling for passage against massive opposition from collectivist ideologues, education bureaucracies, and unions. (Speaking of unions, I would also invoke immediate "right to work" laws permitting employees to work without any obligation or pressure to join a union, and removing Canada's infamous "Rand formula," by which employees must pay union dues even if they choose not to join a union.)

Finally, most Canada-watchers have already figured out that our flagship social program - universal medicare - cannot forever withstand current debt pressure and restructuring. Medical services (we already have sometimes year-long waiting lists for specialists and various forms of surgery), facilities (hospitals are amalgamating and shutting down whole wings) and research (always in search of more funds).

But the enormous monies spent on health care, have little to do with health. There are many nations that spend half the per capita amount on health care that we do, and have a population just as healthy by international standards. So where is the money going, and for what?

My view is that we don't ask citizens to insure their neighbour's car, or house, or boat. They would be morally outraged at the thought. So why should we ask citizens to insure their neighbour's body? Clearly, free market insurance should be brought back at once. Let's free physicians and patients from government control. Let the government's only role be standards of care, and a pool of insurance for catastrophic coverage of those too poor or careless to insure themselves of their own accord.

THE UNITY SOLUTIONS

Disunity in any nation starts in a felt dissociation from core values and the public perception that political institutions no longer reflect these. Or worse - that such institutions are poised to attack core values.

A sore point for most Canadians on the matter of unity, is current immigration policy. My view is that Canada has had a long historical struggle with one large ethnic group - the French - that always threatens to divide. The voluntary importation of other large ethnic groups may cause the same sort of grief, locally, or nationally. I would therefore lower all immigration intake to half the present level, and impose a quota-system based on the current ethnic make-up of Canada, so as not to further upset our ethnic balance. This would mean that Canada would allow immigration as a reflection of itself, and this would bring an immediate reduction of anxiety to the public.

But there are much larger matters of unity. My basic contention is that the wholesale imposition on Canadians of a burdensome welfare-state ideology over the past half century (an idea now entrenched in our Charter), with its concomitant (and utterly predictable) massive debt, has caused the erosion of our wealth-creating potential, a politics of envy, a rights-based society, and increased national discord. In such circumstances many provinces will naturally begin to weigh the costs and benefits of unity at the first opportunity. Nationhood, under such a regime, gets diminished to the dismal and uninspiring level of cost-benefit accounting.

Which leads me to the question of a province wishing to separate from Canada. Let it be said as simply as possible: all federations ought to have some mechanism to allow the separation of

an unhappy part of the whole, on well-defined and preferably difficult terms that are agreeable to the whole. Canada's somewhat imprecise method for separation currently requires amendment of the constitution, and approval by 7 out of 10 legislatures having between them fifty per cent of the entire population. Any other method is contrary to Canada's constitution. In fact, it is likely treasonous. That's because Canada's provinces, as they now exist, have no legal status except as provinces of Canada, and there is simply no existing national or international right for any part of a federation to break up the whole at will by a simplistic fifty-percent-plus-one-vote referendum. Nor ought there to be. Even if permitted, a matter so serious ought always to require a special majority of sixty-six percent, or two-thirds of the whole people, to whom the whole country belongs. This provision of a special majority for separation is essential because simple majoritarianism embodies a paradox: if both sides of a question are equally balanced, then only one person who decides to walk across the floor, so to speak, controls the decision. Total power will reside not in either side, but in a single citizen. Special majorities avoid that eventuality.

As things stand, and with respect to threats of separation, Canadians have not yet realized the meaning of their own confederation. Which returns me to the body of my argument. Quebec's eagerness for separation has heightened in the measure that Canada's interventionist, centralizing welfare state has increased its threat to the Quebec way of life. To defend itself at every turn, Quebec has therefore negotiated separate accords permitting it to run its own medicare system, pension plan, immigration system - you name it. What Quebec has always wanted, is absolutely minimal federal interference. For what? Ironically - to run its own welfare state inside Quebec! Fine. I say let Quebec do it - but with Quebec's money.

And that is my proposal for the whole nation.

It is also what was proposed by our founders, who limited each province to borrowing funds solely on its own credit, thus hoping to stave off big government. In other words, the basic idea of sovereign (or "distinct") provinces, in a sovereign nation, was written into our original constitution by our founders.

So it strikes me as timely and necessary that by adopting the proposals given here, we could very well solve both Quebec's problem, and our national problem of unity at one stroke. For such a happy, harmonious reconstitution of Canada, we do not need to be radical, or visionary, or utopian.

We only need the courage to be ourselves.