



How Harper has imbedded Conservative Economic Policy for the Future

By Frances Russel

Although this article appeared last spring, before both the federal election and the current economic crisis, its message is still relevant, if not almost clairvoyant. Ed.

Tom Flanagan, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's longtime confidant and former chief of staff, is delighted at the Conservatives' success in "tightening the screws on the federal government" to dramatically reduce its significance in the daily lives of Canadians. The Conservatives' three budgets have left Ottawa financially incapable of offering any new national social program like affordable housing, higher education or day care.

Although overall spending went up, mostly on the military, measures were taken to deplete revenues to the point future governments' hands will be tied unless they raise taxes or run deficits, both prescriptions for political suicide. By 2010, federal revenues as a share of GDP will fall to their lowest level since John Diefenbaker left office in 1963. Three years before national medicare, revenues were 14.9 per cent of GDP. They rose to a peak of 19.5 per cent in 1974-75 but are projected to drop to just 15.3 per cent in 2009-10.

In fact, the federal Finance Department's fiscal monitor, released at the end of March, 2008, shows that revenue growth came to a sudden halt in January, shrinking that month's surplus to a mere \$600 million as the GST and personal income tax reductions started eating into Ottawa's tax take. "They've gradually re-engineered the system. I'm quite impressed with it," Flanagan told The Canadian Press in an interview last month (March). "They're boxing in the ability of the federal government to come up with new program ideas... The federal government is now more con-

strained, the provinces have more revenue and conservatives should be happy."

Harper "really didn't have the option of the cataclysmic approach because you can't do that without a majority," Flanagan continued. "So he's made the incremental approach work—all the time having the insecurity of a minority government. It's really quite a performance, I think... Over a period of a few years they've got all this in place and they never appeared to be making a radical shift. But the cumulative impact of all these together is creating a new profile."



Prime Minister Harper speaks to the C.D. Howe Institute

Not only have the Conservatives boxed in the federal spending power in general, he said, but "they're also boxing in the Liberals from being able to campaign on expensive promises." Flanagan is impressed that Harper managed to execute his stealthy revolution in Canadian public policy with barely a whimper from the public.

But that, too, was the strategy according to the University of Calgary professor and Reform party founder. "Part of the execution of the plan was that there would be conservatives attacking him, like John Williamson (of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation) and Gerry Nicholls (Harper's successor as head of the far-right National Citizens' Coalition). That's extremely useful, to have that kind of pressure there, berating the prime minister for not doing enough."

Derek Holt, economist for the Royal Bank of Canada, told CP [Can. Press] that the reduction in

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Membership Renewal

This year (2008) we are shifting to a universal membership renewal date of April 1st. There are two ways you can renew your membership during this interim year.

If your membership has expired before January 1st, 2009, please send the appropriately pro-rated portion of what you would give us for a full year. For example, if your current membership ended at the end of September, 2008 (your membership renewal is on the JUSTnews address label), which is 6 months into the new membership year, please send us $(12-6)/12 = 1/2$ of what you would give us for a full 12 months. You will be asked for a full year's renewal on April 1st 2009 through a note in JUSTnews or a Discussion Paper appearing shortly before that date.

If your membership ends in the new calendar year (i.e. after January 1st 2009), please send us what you normally do, plus a little extra to cover the months between expiration of your membership and the new universal membership renewal date of April 1st 2009. Your membership will be renewed through 2009 to April 1, 2010.

As you know, there is no set amount for dues because we want membership to be available to people irrespective of their financial circumstances. We count on the more fortunate to contribute a larger amount. As a guideline, our current average membership donation is about \$50 per membership household (i.e., mailing address) per year, or about \$5 per household per month. These amounts correspond fairly closely to the costs of printing and mailing JUSTnews and Discussion papers plus our support of some NGOs doing great work and in need of money and a constituency base.

Cheques (made out to CUSJ) and membership forms should be sent to Bob Stavely, P.O. Box 40011, Ottawa, ON. K1V 0W8.

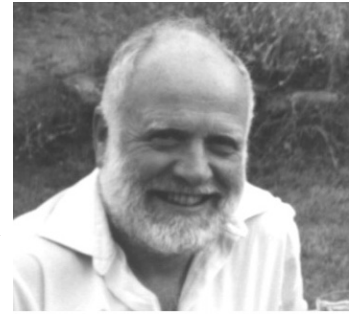
Address updates should be sent to Don McDiarmid (Membership Secretary) at drm140@sympatico.ca or 140 Roger Rd., Ottawa, ON, K1H 5C8.

Farley Mowat needs a copy of JUSTnews

According to Mr Mowat, "*The CCPA Monitor* is the only voice of reason and honesty in this God-forsaken country—or at least the only one I know about."

Farley Mowat, Port Hope, ON, in the CCPA Monitor, Nov. 2008.

From the Editor



After October's federal election in Canada, an election of a new president in the U.S. in November, municipal elections in B.C. that same month, and a provincial election in Quebec in December (have I missed anything?) the theme of this

issue of JUSTnews could hardly be anything but "Government". But bang in the middle of those first two elections came the current economic crisis, so something had to be said about that too.

Most of us have already read more than enough on both the elections and the economic crisis. I have therefore sought articles on the Canadian situation that you probably won't have read in the mainstream press (the lead article, and Fair Vote Canada's press release written shortly after our federal election). Concerning the economy you will find a piece on the recession by Richard Gwyn. Economics is known as "the dismal science", so to leaven the gloom, lighter, shorter pieces that I hope will bring a smile to your face are interspersed among the weightier ones.

Good news: past delays in appearance of JUSTnews caused by layout problems are, with any luck, over. I found an open-source (i.e., free) desktop publishing program (PagePlus SE) on the web, and have used it to produce both the latest Discussion Paper and this issue of JUSTnews. The program is easy to use, and, I hope you will agree, produces a creditable layout.

JUSTnews received several letters on "*Civilization in Crisis*". Some of these letters were long, and the material in total amounted to more than could be published in this issue. Besides, I wanted the author of "*Civilization in Crisis*" to have an opportunity to reply, if he so wished. The letters and replies are therefore planned for a future Discussion Paper.

Getting Kids to School

A coalition of government, charities, and U.N. agencies recently pledged \$4.5 billion in an effort to get all the world's children in school by 2015. The ultimate goal is to eradicate illiteracy and provide universal primary schooling.

Among the government leaders at the Education for All meeting were British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Australian Prime Minister Mark Rudd, and Jordan's Queen Rania. Also in attendance were World Bank chief Robert Zoellick and several former child labourers.

The fund's objective is to get 75 million more children into school, and put an end to discrimination against girls, who are frequently the last to be sent to school and the first to be pulled out in many countries. As a result, one in four women cannot read or write.

The Associated Press, reprinted from the CCPA Monitor November 2008.

federal revenue is only just beginning due to the Conservatives' tax cuts, particularly to the GST and on investment income.

Meanwhile, Ottawa already is teetering on the edge of a deficit. "The amount of foregone revenues is just going to skyrocket," Holt said. "Even within the first five years (of the new tax-free savings account) it's almost a \$1 billion cumulative price tag."

Longer-term, that number only multiplies by itself as the portfolios compound. Over time, they're going to whittle away at the taxes on investment income pretty aggressively over the next 10, 20 years."

Two University of Ottawa professors are onto Harper's game. Constitutional historian Michael Behiels says Harper's revolution is deconstructing the Canadian state and fiscal federalism and destroying Ottawa's control over the Canadian economy. In a forthcoming article for the Queen's Law Journal, constitutional law professor Errol Mendes writes that the Conservatives are in the process of "building firewalls" not just around Alberta but around all the provinces by hobbling the federal spending power.

"Every provincial government has different and often divergent priorities so Canada is moving towards a proverbial patchwork quilt," Behiels says. "If there is a recession... then the provinces and Canadians will have to sink or swim on their own." He points to several Conservative moves: the economically damaging but politically rewarding cuts to the GST costing \$10 to \$12 billion a year, the ongoing hefty increases to equalization payments, even to provinces like Newfoundland who don't qualify for them, and substantial increases in all fiscal transfers to the provinces via tax points and other measures.

Both Behiels and Mendes say that Canada, already one of the most decentralized federations in the world, will become almost unrecognisable if Harper triumphs—"a nation of shopping centres," a "boneless wonder," a "postal service for the transfer of federal funds."

Mendes cites Harper's numerous denunciations of the federal spending power as "abusive," "domineering and paternalistic" and "outrageous" to warn Canadians that the Conservatives intend to cripple, if not completely abolish, "one of the most vital instruments to create a unique society in North America that emphasizes community, caring and sharing before survival of the fittest or at least survival of the fittest province."

This article appeared in The Winnipeg Free Press updated on April 16, 2008.

Letters

Appreciation

I want to tell you how very touched I was when I opened JUSTnews on the bus on the way to work today [May 1st, 2008] and saw the memorial notice of my father.

Dad would have been very pleased to see himself described as "a staunch Unitarian warrior for social justice". Thank you also for including the reference to his website.

I have been wondering how we can acknowledge and celebrate in an enduring way the wonderful work of so many CUSJers who are becoming older or who have died. It's a peculiar problem—as Unitarians, most of us believe that all there is to this life is the "here and now", so it seems almost contradictory to want to remember people who have lived their lives with such a commitment to peace and social justice "in the now" after they are no longer here. And yet we all have so much to learn from our history.

Marlene Koehler

The JUSTnews Editorial Board is discussing how we might handle historical documents and biographies. Ed.

On December 4th, 2007, then CUSJ president Bob Stevenson wrote an e-mail to Prime Minister Harper, with copies to various Ministers and members of the Public Safety Committee, noting that on February 23rd, 2007, the Supreme Court had ruled that provisions of security certificates in the Immigration Act were unconstitutional, and violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The following reply was received from Committee Member Penny Priddy (NDP). Ed.

December 5, 2007

Dear Mr. Stevenson,

Thank you for writing to me and adding your voice to the vital public debate on security certificates. I was recently appointed the NDP Critic for Public Safety, and I am glad Bill C-3 was the first legislation I had to speak to in this capacity. Ensuring Public Safety is essentially about protecting Canadians' quality of life, something we all support.

New Democrats believe quality of life is about balance between being free and being secure. With Bill C-3, the Conservatives have once again failed to find balance. This legislation doesn't make Canadians any more secure and it undermines our fundamental freedoms.

We in the NDP believe terrorism is a serious crime and there should be serious consequences. If a person in Canada is plotting terrorist actions, they should be arrested, charged for their crimes, convicted and put in jail for a significant length of time; that is what will make Canada a safer place. The

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Conservatives' out-of-sight out-of-mind approach to national security just isn't good enough.

Security certificates also seriously undermine core values of our justice system by circumventing due process that is a fundamental right in any democracy. There are serious consequences to being named in a security certificate, such as the loss of liberty, a deportation order, and the possible removal to torture.

Because there are serious consequences facing those named, strong procedural safeguards are required. This legislation does not go far enough in protecting civil liberties. Inserting special advocates into the security certificate process does not adequately address concerns around the right to due process. In the United Kingdom and New Zealand, where special advocates are used in similar judicial processes, it has been found that the accused's rights are still not being protected.

I voted against Bill C-3 because the Criminal Code already has all the tools we need to protect our national security while honouring our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Unfortunately, with the Liberal and Conservative votes the legislation was passed and is not being reviewed by the Public Safety and National Security Committee. As a member of that committee I will do everything in my power to ensure this fundamentally wrong legislation does as little harm as possible.

Sincerely,

Penny Priddy, MP
Surrey North
NDP Public Safety and National Security Critic

President of the Canadian Unitarian Council writes on UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples

September 11, 2007

Dear: Prime Minister Harper, Minister Strahl

The Canadian Unitarian Council is writing to express our concern that Canada is expected to vote against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 13, 2007 at the United Nations General Assembly. Canada is one of only a few countries planning to vote against the adoption of the long awaited and much needed Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We feel the Declaration would be a major step towards eliminating the human rights violations suffered by 370 million Indigenous people worldwide....

We urge the Canadian government to support the two resolutions of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs by endorsing the Declaration as it is today. More than twenty years in the making, the result of

active consultation and democratic participation by Canadians as well as those of other nations, the Declaration is, we believe, the strong international human rights instrument that Indigenous peoples need in order to address the widespread human rights violations affecting them globally.

Sincerely,

Jean Pfleiderer, Ph.D., President, Board of Trustees,
Canadian Unitarian Council - conseil unitarien du Canada.

Liberals and Conservatives live on Different Planets

Sir, the polls show us running well in the active cingulated cortex demographic.

New research that bodes ill for these contentious times has found evidence that not only do liberals and conservatives believe differently, they literally think differently, and not just about politics.

In an experiment that tested the ability to refrain from knee-jerk reactions, researchers from New York University (NYU) and UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) found differences in how the brain processes information among subjects from across the political spectrum.

In the tests, subjects sat in front of a monitor as it flashed a series of Ms and Ws; Ms outnumbered the Ws four-to-one, so the clicking had a tendency to get habitual.

According to the New York Times, "Each participant was wired to an electroencephalograph that recorded activity in the anterior cingulate cortex, the part of the brain that detects conflicts between a habitual tendency (pressing a key) and a more appropriate response (not pressing the key). "Liberals had more brain activity and made fewer mistakes than conservatives when they saw a W," researchers said. "Liberals and conservatives were equally accurate in recognizing M." Lead author David Amodio of NYU says conservatives were found to be "more structured and persistent in their judgements"; in tests they had "higher average scores" on measures of the personal need for "order, structure and closure." Liberals showed "higher tolerance of ambiguity and complexity."

Right now, I can sense the pressure building behind a few eyeballs out there, so let's get to the caveats quickly. Amodio hastens to emphasize that his work is not saying one cognitive style is better than another. (I am not so reticent: inflexibility and intolerance of ambiguity and complexity are recipes for disaster.) The researchers know that this test had a narrow range and that political views run along a continuum, are shaped by myriad factors and can be inconsistent. But the results do support the idea that our cerebral wiring contributes to a divide across political and other social issues between people who sometimes seem like they're living in different worlds. To some degree, they are.

An anonymous letter to "Good Morning Silicon Valley" e-news.

The 2008 CUSJ AGM

This year it was decided to hold our Annual General Meeting (Friday May 16, 2008) away from the college campus where the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) was meeting. We wanted to see how the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) presented the story of social justice in the Canada Hall. After a visit to the Hall there was a question and answer session with the Curator, Dr. Rhonda Hinthner. She was enthusiastic about our visit and encouraged us to voice any concerns to the President of the CMC with a copy to her.

This discussion was followed by our business meeting including the passing of a motion on the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan (see JUSTnews Discussion Paper No. 15, Autumn 2008). Incidentally, the UU Ministers Group also passed a motion re Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. Unfortunately our CUC did not deal with this issue in its Social Responsibility session.

The nominations committee was unable to find replacements for retiring president Bob Stevenson. Vice President Julia Varga was unable to become acting president because of her commitment as President of First Unitarian Church of Victoria. Also, while Debra Mair remains on the Board, she resigned as secretary. These two important positions therefore remain vacant.

Several Board Members offered to help keep the organization running, recognizing, however, that they could not maintain the high output of letters to government ministers and other officials that retiring president Bob Stevenson had maintained so successfully. Subsequently, Don McDiarmid, membership chair, has pulled together Executive and Board meetings, the organization continues to function, and a solution to the lack of president and secretary is being sought.

Adjournment of the AGM at 1:00 pm allowed time for visits to other exhibits at the CMC including the Face to Face display of 25 outstanding Canadians. Three are Unitarians: Lotta Hitschmanova, Arthur Lismer and Vilhjalmur Stefansson.

The Editor thanks Bob Stevenson for an earlier version of this report circulated on the CUSJ e-list.

If you would like to help reduce JUSTnews costs by receiving your newsletter by e-mail, please contact Bob Van Alstyne at vanalstyne@shaw.ca

Intelligent people and God

By Graeme Paton

People with higher IQs are less likely to believe in God, according to a new study. Professor Richard Lynn, emeritus professor of psychology at Ulster University, said many more members of the “intellectual elite” considered themselves atheists than the national average.

A decline in religious observance over the last century was directly linked to a rise in average intelligence, he claimed. But the conclusions—in a paper for the academic journal *Intelligence*—have been branded “simplistic” by critics.

Professor Lynn, who has provoked controversy in the past with research linking intelligence to race and sex, said university academics were less likely to believe in God than almost anyone else.

A survey of Royal Society fellows found that only 3.3 per cent believed in God—at a time when 68.5 per cent of the general UK population described themselves as believers. A separate poll in the '90s found only seven per cent of members of the American National Academy of Sciences believed in God.

Professor Lynn said most primary school children believed in God, but as they entered adolescence—and their intelligence increased—many started to have doubts.

He told *Times Higher Education* magazine: “Why should fewer academics believe in God than the general population? I believe it is simply a matter of the IQ. Academics have higher IQs than the general population. Several Gallup poll studies of the general population have shown that those with higher IQs tend not to believe in God.”

He said religious belief had declined across 137 developed nations in the 20th century at the same time as people became more intelligent.

But Professor Gordon Lynch, director of the Centre for Religion and Contemporary Society at Birkbeck College, London, said it failed to take account of a complex range of social, economic and historical factors. “Linking religious belief and intelligence in this way could reflect a dangerous trend, developing a simplistic characterization of religion as primitive, which—while we are trying to deal with very complex issues of religious and cultural pluralism—is perhaps not the most helpful response,” he said.

Dr Alistair McFadyen, senior lecturer in Christian theology at Leeds University, said the conclusion had “a slight tinge of Western cultural imperialism as well as an anti-religious sentiment”.

Dr David Hardman, principal lecturer in learning development at London Metropolitan University, said: “It is very difficult to conduct true experiments that would explicate a causal relationship between IQ and religious belief. Nonetheless, there is evidence from other domains that higher levels of intelligence are associated with a greater ability—or perhaps willingness—to question and overturn strongly felt institutions.”

Graeme Paton is Education Editor for the Telegraph (UK), 12 June 2008.

Board Members of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

Julia Varga (Vice President) (B.C.) Julia is currently President of First Unitarian Church of Victoria.

Bob Stavely (Ont.) Bob Stavely (Treasurer) is a retired statistician from Statscan. He has a MBA from Queen's, and a BSc from McGill Universities. He has been a member of Ottawa First Unitarian Congregation since 1995. His particular interest lies in the struggle to correct injustices committed both in our own society and in foreign lands.



Debra Mair, First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa (Ont.) Debra is concerned about the excessive power of large corporations. Specifically, she has been active in climate change, human rights, peace and social justice. Her long-standing interest in Central America is currently expressed in work on the activity of Canadian mining companies in El Salvador.



Don McDiarmid (Membership) (Ont.) has been president of two UU congregations. He served on the Canadian Unitarian Council's recent Social Responsibility Task Force and was part of the study group that produced the CUC Peace Resolutions. He is currently treasurer of the UU Fellowship of Ottawa.

Margaret Rao, Toronto First Unitarian Congregation (Ont.). Margaret is the Chair of the Toronto First Unitarian Chapter of CUSJ. (Ont.). Margaret is seeking to repeal the 'Anti-Terrorism Act' and the use of 'Security Certificates' that detain possibly innocent people indefinitely under the guise of national security. She is also a member of TASC, 'Toronto Action for Social Change' which recently completed its second 'CARAVAN AGAINST TORTURE' in the company of the three Muslim Canadians whose detention and torture were the subject of the 'Iacobucci Report' which partially exonerated them. These men are now seeking a full apology from the Canadian Government.



Bob Manson, Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship, Thunder Bay, (Ont). Bob is active in local social responsibility projects such as Empty Bowls Dinners, Friends of Africa

(Stephen Lewis Foundation), and shelter house. He initiated a local War Resisters Support Group. He feels honoured to be on the CUSJ Board with such a group of inspiring people.



Pauline Heinonen, First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, (Ont). Pauline focuses on women's issues and the environment. Caring for these will help us all.



Ruth di Giovanni (Quebec): Unitarian Church of Montreal. Particular Interests: Freedom and rights of individuals and groups. As a member of a family that came to Canada in 1937 from Germany, she was especially astounded and appalled by the CSIS Certificates issued by our own "democratic" government.



Jim Hackler (B.C.) First Unitarian Church of Victoria. Since retirement as a professor of criminology, Jim has concentrated on translating good research findings into brief summaries that would influence social policy. Puzzling through his role in the CUSJ, he wonders how such organizations make meaningful contributions. What sort of activity leads to constructive change in contrast to efforts that are ineffective?



Karen Hobbs (B.C.)

Gerri McNally (B.C.)

Adina Lyon (Alberta) Unitarian Church of Calgary. Adina is carrying on the Unitarian interest in founding and supporting memorial societies. Having served on the board of the Calgary Co-operative Memorial Society for nine years, she currently administers the office as Membership Manager. Adina's perpetual new year's resolution is to better contribute to justice work by having a clearer focus.



Rosemary Falconer (Alberta)

Carolyn Humphreys (Maritimes)

Sharon Flatt, Unitarian Universalist Church of Saint John (NB). Sharon hopes that the connection between a sustainable environment, good health and the economy will be realized by legislators, educators and citizens before we



for Social Justice (CUSJ.org).

have lost our children's future. She loves earth-based spirituality and practices alternative health care. Her favourite NGOs include the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (Conservationcouncil.ca), the New Brunswick Environmental Network (NBEN.ca) and the Canadian Unitarians

New Brunswick Chapter Report

This past summer and fall have been as busy as usual with fun and educational CUSJ-NB film nights, tough environmental and social justice challenges and engaging actions with the Fredericton Peace Coalition and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick. We are active in both Saint John and Fredericton and are happy to be able to engage Unitarian Universalists from two congregations as well as many non-UU's who support the Statement of Purposes.

Our film night, which is on the first Saturday of every month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Saint John, is loads of fun! We start our evenings with a finger food potluck and then share our thoughts after the film with a post-film discussion. Two of the films we've viewed that I recommend are "What Would Jesus Buy" (great buy-nothing day and pre-Christmas film) and Michael Moore's "Slacker Uprising" (Yeah! This time the Slackers Won!).

The need for groups such as ours is obvious when accessing New Brunswick's challenges. These challenges continue to be more than the small population can respond to. From nuclear power plant madness to the planned 2nd oil refinery and from child poverty and a 58% illiteracy rate to the clear cutting of our endangered Acadian forests—the problems are many. To keep up with the uranium mining companies and the natural gas folks who continue to come up with new ways to possibly deplete or contaminate our watersheds, we need to inspire by example. I know the rest of you are also facing similar challenges and the CUSJ folks in New Brunswick extend our thanks to you as well!

Book review reprinted from the CCPA Monitor, November, 2008.

The Soul Solution

The Soul Solution: The Need for a Theology of the Earth, by Bob Harrington with Linda Harrington, Hancock House Publishers Ltd. Sussex, B.C., 154 pages, \$19.95.

In a forward to *The Soul Solution, the Need for a Theology of the Earth*, environmentalist David Suzuki notes that Bob Harrington has spent a lifetime pondering such matters as "humanity's awesome duality, the capacity for love and compassion, and our terrible destructiveness."

In this work, Harrington looks forward to the dawn of a day when humans develop loyalty to the Earth and realize that it is "a majestic being itself, and a vital cell in the body of the Universe. Hence he issues a call to arms for an "enthusiastically supported Earth theology that could open the doors to spiritual renewal."

Harrington defines an Earth theology as "respect for the creation wrought by the Creator."

"Suddenly we would be able to work at the task of restoring to health and purity the precious Earth that we have fouled and desecrated," he writes.

Quoting authorities from many cultures and periods of history, Harrington discusses a wide range of concerns, including the soul as the root of life, prayer and silence, the great chain of being, self-restraint, the media, life itself, and the need to re-integrate separated interdependent beings, including humans. *Bob Harrington, the author of several books and feature articles for newspapers and magazines, and his spouse, Linda Harrington, live on a forested acreage at Galen Bay, B.C.*



Finally, the Fredericton Peace Coalition of which we are members regularly sends out letters supporting groups in other parts of the world who, like us, speak out against injustice. We meet with NB Power officials who

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are continuing to buy coal from Columbia where workers are murdered for trying to unionize for better working conditions. We host anti-nuclear experts to tour our province to speak against the insanity of boiling water by splitting the atom. (Ever wonder where our depleted uranium goes? The American military buys it to coat their weapons). We help make radio and you-tube ads to get folks thinking about how important our forests are, and we meet with government officials to lobby for a Provincial pesticide ban and to stop the City of Saint John from pouring raw sewerage into the Bay of Fundy.

As you can see, we are in trouble here in New Brunswick. Yes, we have made progress in some areas like legalizing gay marriage, but we are so far behind in other social and environmental justice issues that it is laughable (better than crying!).

Please remember us in your dreams of a sustainable Canada. It is so beautiful here—for our children's children sake, let's keep that vision strong. We would love to have you visit, and if you ask anyone who has already visited, they will tell you we are great hosts!

Sharon Flatt.

Governmentium

Research has led to the discovery of the heaviest element yet known to science. The new element, Governmentium (Gv), has one neuron, 25 assistant neurons, 88 deputy neurons, and 198 assistant deputy neurons, giving it an atomic mass of 312.

These 312 particles are held together by forces called morons, which are surrounded by vast quantities of lepton-like particles called peons. Since Governmentium has no electrons, it is inert; however, it can be detected, because it impedes every action with which it comes into contact. A minute amount of Governmentium can cause a reaction that would normally take less than a second to take from four days to four years to complete.

Governmentium has a normal half-life of 2-6 years; it does not decay, but instead undergoes a reorganization in which a portion of the assistant neurons and deputy neurons exchange places. In fact, Governmentium's mass will actually increase over time, since each reorganization will cause more morons to become neurons, forming isodopes. This characteristic of moron promotion leads some scientists to believe that Governmentium is formed whenever morons reach a critical concentration. This hypothetical quantity is referred to as critical morass. When catalyzed with money, Governmentium becomes Administratium, an element that radiates just as much energy as Governmentium since it has half as many peons but twice as many morons. *Origin unknown.*

Electoral dysfunction, yet again

Press release from Fair Vote Canada October 15, 2008

Once again, Canada's antiquated first-past-the-post system wasted millions of votes, distorted results, severely punished large blocks of voters, exaggerated regional differences, created an unrepresentative Parliament and contributed to a record low voter turnout.

The chief victims of the October 14 federal election were:

- Green Party: 940,000 voters supporting the Green Party sent no one to Parliament, setting a new record for the most votes cast for any party that gained no parliamentary representation. By comparison, 813,000 Conservative voters in Alberta alone were able to elect 27 Members of Parliament (MPs).
- Prairie Liberals and New Democrats: In the prairie provinces, Conservatives received roughly twice the vote of the Liberals and NDP, but took seven times as many seats.
- Urban Conservatives: Similar to the last election, a quarter-million Conservative voters in Toronto elected no one and neither did Conservative voters in Montreal.
- New Democrats: The NDP attracted 1.1 million more votes than the Bloc, but the voting system gave the Bloc 50 seats, the NDP 37.

"How can anyone consider this democratic representation?" asked Barbara Odenwald, President of Fair Vote Canada.

Had the votes on October 14 been cast under a fair and proportional voting system, Fair Vote Canada projected that the seat allocation would have been approximately as follows:

- Conservatives - 38% of the popular vote: 117 seats (not 143)
- Liberals - 26% of the popular vote: 81 seats (not 76)
- NDP - 18% of the popular vote: 57 seats (not 37)
- Bloc - 10% of the popular vote: 28 seats (not 50)
- Greens - 7% of the popular vote: 23 seats (not 0)

Odenwald emphasized that any projection on the use of other voting systems must be qualified, as specific system features [such as strategic voting] would affect the exact seat allocation.

"With a different voting system, people would also have voted differently," said Larry Gordon, Executive Director of Fair Vote Canada. "There would have been no need for strategic voting. We would likely have seen higher voter turnout. We would have had different

candidates—more women, and more diversity of all kinds. We would have had more real choices.”

Fair Vote Canada also has data for each province on the number of seats won and number of seats actually deserved by each party.

***Fair Vote Canada** (FVC) is a national multi-partisan citizens' campaign to promote voting system reform. FVC was founded in 2001 and has a National Advisory Board of distinguished Canadians from all points on the political spectrum*

Long recession in U.S. is inevitable

By Richard Gwyn

The fall of the Berlin Wall, and so the end of the Cold War. The 9/11 attacks by Islamic terrorists on the World Trade Center Towers in New York.

And now the financial crisis on Wall Street: it's of the same transformational, things-will-never-be-the-same-again, historic order.

About the nature of the coming new order, it's of course impossible to make any pronouncements with any confidence.

But about what the future may hold my own guesses about it follow below. There is one defining aspect that can be stated with complete confidence.

This is that almost no one has yet got it right, or even come close. As is even more relevant, all the guesses by all the experts have erred, massively, in the same way. They've all been far too conservative, far too optimistic, and too anxious to avoid making things worse by sounding too gloomy.

In fact, at least one shining exception to the near-universal analytical timidity does exist: back in 2003, billionaire investor Warren Buffett described the new financial gimmicks then being peddled by Wall Street as “financial weapons of mass destruction.” He went on to describe those peddling these gimmicks as “madmen.”

Today it's time to err on the side of pessimism.

That's my own mood anyway. Here are my guesses:

A recession is inevitable. And it will be a long one, say of three or four years, quite possibly longer.

Canada is in incomparably better shape than the U.S. Our banks and insurance companies are far better regulated, and by nature are conservative and responsible.

Our government finances are similarly in incomparably better shape than those south of the border.

Luck also is on our side. We have lots of resources. The next-door market for our oil, minerals, potash and

the rest will contract. But many major markets, from China to India to Brazil, will continue to grow.

The U.S., though, matters the most to us by far.

As it goes down, so will we, if less dramatically and painfully.

The U.S. recession will not just be long and painful, but brutal. The collapse of its giant automobile corporations, GM, Ford and Chrysler, which are all now trying to get \$25 billion in subsidies out of Washington, is a distinct possibility, with potentially harsh consequences for Ontario.

The reason for the scale of the pain ordinary Americans will have to endure is because of the scale of the gains, largely artificial, that they have granted themselves in recent years.

South of the border, everyone's been living on credit. The nation is in debt, with huge unfunded liabilities such as social security and medical care still to be factored in. Individuals have maxed out their credit cards. Corporations are deep in debt, often, as shown by the collapse of giants like Lehman Brothers and AIG, far deeper than either their own executives or their regulators knew.

Just one remedy exists: deep cuts in government spending matched by tax increases to bring in additional revenues. Out on America's Main Street, though, the consequence will be job losses and income losses, and therefore a longer and deeper recession.

The U.S. is about to go through an agonizing rethink about its place and role in the world. It can no longer afford the war on terrorism. The annual cost of the war in Iraq at some \$300 billion is the equivalent of all the corporate bailouts that have just been executed. The military can't escape the general cuts in spending.

Watch, therefore, for the U.S. to turn inward, although not necessarily isolationist. Watch for an early withdrawal from Iraq and an early acceptance that the war in Afghanistan is unwinnable.

Watch for the Middle East to become a very unstable and unpleasant place. Watch, therefore, for oil prices to soar.

No one would be happier than me if all these predictions turn out to be alarmist and exaggerated. But we'd all be a lot happier today if the chair of the Federal Reserve Bank or the U.S. treasury secretary or, as the least likely possibility, the president had been as alarmist as Warren Buffett.

TheStar.com. September 19, 2008. Richard Gwyn's column appears Friday. Gwynr@sympatico.ca

Threat of Global Warming Justifies Breaking The Law

By Michael McCarthy

The threat of global warming is so great that campaigners were justified in causing more than £35,000 worth of damage to a coal-fired power station, a jury decided yesterday [Sept. 10, 2008]. In a verdict that will have shocked ministers and energy companies the jury at Maidstone Crown Court (UK) cleared six Greenpeace activists of criminal damage.

Jurors accepted defence arguments that the six had a “lawful excuse” to damage property at Kingsnorth power station in Kent to prevent even greater damage caused by climate change. The defence of “lawful excuse” under the Criminal Damage Act 1971 allows damage to be caused to property to prevent even greater damage—such as breaking down the door of a burning house to tackle a fire.

The not-guilty verdict, delivered after two days and greeted with cheers in the courtroom, raises the stakes for the most pressing issue on Britain’s green agenda and could encourage further direct action.

Kingsnorth was the centre for mass protests by climate camp activists last month. Last year, three protesters managed to paint Gordon Brown’s name on the plant’s chimney. Their handiwork cost £35,000 to remove.

The plan to build a successor to the power station is likely to be the first of a new generation of coal-fired plants. As coal produces more of the carbon emissions causing climate change than any other fuel, campaigners claim that a new station would be a disastrous setback in the battle against global warming, and send a negative signal to the rest of the world about how serious Britain really is about tackling the climate threat.

But the proposals, from the energy giant E.ON, are firmly backed by the Business Secretary, John Hutton, and the Energy minister, Malcolm Wicks. Some members of the Cabinet are thought to be unhappy about them, including the Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, and the Environment Secretary, Hilary Benn. Mr Brown is likely to have the final say on the matter later this year.

During the eight-day trial, the world’s leading climate scientist, Professor James Hansen of NASA, who had flown from America to give evidence, appealed to the Prime Minister personally to “take a leadership role” in cancelling the plan and scrapping the idea of a coal-fired future for Britain. Last December he wrote to Mr Brown with a similar appeal. At the trial, he called for a moratorium on all coal-fired power stations, and his hour-long testimony about the gravity of the climate danger, which painted a bleak picture, was listened to intently by the jury of nine women and three men.

Professor Hansen, who first alerted the world to the global warming threat in June 1988 with testimony to a US senate committee in Washington, and who last year said the earth was in “imminent peril” from the warming atmos-

phere, asserted that emissions of CO₂ from Kingsnorth would damage property through the effects of the climate change they would help to cause.

He was one of several leading public figures who gave evidence for the defence, including Zac Goldsmith, the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Richmond Park and director of the Ecologist magazine, who similarly told the jury that in his opinion, direct action could be justified in the minds of many people if it was intended to prevent larger crimes being committed.

The acquittal was the second time in a decade that the “lawful excuse” defence has been successfully used by Greenpeace activists. In 1999, 28 Greenpeace campaigners led by Lord Melchett, who was director at the time, were cleared of criminal damage after trashing an experimental field of GM [Genetically Modified] crops in Norfolk. In each case the damage was not disputed—the point at issue was the motive.

The defendants who scaled the 630 ft chimney at Kingsnorth, near Hoo, last year were Huw Williams, 41, from Nottingham; Ben Stewart, 34, from Lyminge, Kent; Kevin Drake, 44, from Westbury, Wiltshire; Will Rose, 29, from London; and Emily Hall, 34, from New Zealand. Tim Hewke, 48, from Ulcombe, Kent, helped organise the protest.

The court heard how, dressed in orange boiler suits and white hard hats bearing the Greenpeace logo, the six-strong group arrived at the site at 6.30am on 8 October. Armed with bags containing abseiling gear, five of them scaled the chimney while Mr Hewke waited below to liaise between the climbers and police.

The climbers had planned to paint “Gordon, bin it” in huge letters on the side of the chimney, but although they succeeded in temporarily shutting the station, they only got as far as painting the word “Gordon” on the chimney before they descended, having been threatened with a High Court injunction. Removing the graffiti cost E.ON £35,000, the court heard.

During the trial the defendants said they had acted lawfully, owing to an honestly held belief that their attempt to stop emissions from Kingsnorth would prevent further damage to properties worldwide caused by global warming. Their aim, they said, was to rein back CO₂ emissions and bring urgent pressure to bear on the Government and E.ON to change policies. They insisted their action had caused the minimum amount of damage necessary to close the plant down and constituted a “proportionate response” to the increasing environmental threat.

Speaking outside court after being cleared yesterday, Mr Stewart said: “This is a huge blow for ministers and their plans for new coal-fired power stations. It wasn’t only us in the dock, it was the coal-fired generation as well. After this verdict, the only people left in Britain who think new coal is a good idea are John Hutton and Malcolm Wicks. It’s time the Prime Minister stepped in,

showed some leadership and embraced the clean energy future for Britain.”

He added: “This verdict marks a tipping point for the climate change movement. When a jury of normal people say it is legitimate for a direct action group to shut down a coal-fired power station because of the harm it does to our planet, then where does that leave Government energy policy? We have the clean technologies at hand to power our economy. It’s time we turned to them instead of coal.”

Ms Hall said: “The jury heard from the most distinguished climate scientist in the world. How could they ignore his warnings and reject his leading scientific arguments?”

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Corporate Media undermining democratic election

By Jack Etkin

This story appeared before the Oct. 14th federal election, but is still relevant. Ed.

Question: Who will win the federal election?

Answer: Whoever the Corporate Media wants.

In a front page story on Friday September 12, the Globe and Mail informed Canadians that the Liberal Party’s environment plan will ‘wreak havoc’, ‘destroy jobs’ and ‘undermine national unity’. They also reported that trying to put carbon taxes in place will ‘plunge Canada into a catastrophic recession’.

Are the Corporate Media trying to get a Harper majority government elected?

The first paragraph of the Globe story states: “Conservative Leader Stephen Harper says the proposed Liberal carbon tax would plunge Canada into a catastrophic recession and reignite the battles over national unity.” Of course this is not just Stephen Harper talking, this is Corporate Canada and that’s why the story is on the front page and why the headline, “Dion’s green plan would ‘wreak havoc’”, goes right across the top of the front page of Canada’s ‘national newspaper’.

How much is that kind of advertising worth to Stephen Harper and his Corporate backers? What kind of impact does a headline like that have on our election?

I don’t support the Liberals but I have noticed that the Corporate Media has attacked Stephane Dion almost from the day he became leader. This vicious, personal, and never-ending assault by Corporate radio, television and newspapers has of course had the effect of weakening the Liberals and keeping a Harper government in power. The federal NDP gets far less media coverage than it should, given its support across the country, while the Greens are

almost completely ignored because corporate Canada does not like their message of reducing consumption on a finite planet... And of course our outdated voting system is very easy to manipulate, as we are seeing again in this election.

A lot of Harper’s support comes from well-meaning people who make the mistake of trusting the media and who think it is telling them the truth. The corporate media’s most important job is keeping Corporate Canada in power, and they are masterful at forming and manipulating public opinion, and controlling our elections.

The purpose of Friday’s Globe story about Dion is to elect a Corporate-friendly government. Corporate Canada and their media have done this to us many times in the past, and they no doubt intend to do it again. Why not?

I don’t know if we can trust any of the politicians to act democratically, but we should demand free and fair elections in this country; not elections controlled by a Corporate-owned media.

It is a dangerous situation in a country that wants to be a democracy when half a dozen major corporations own virtually all the daily newspapers, television stations, and radio stations. This is not a free press, it is a propaganda machine that is a vital part of corporate control of our country.

Personally I’m tired of the way the Corporate Media controls our elections and decides who will govern us.

The first step is recognizing the problem, the second step is fighting back. It’s up to us to go after the media and keep pointing out how corrupt and undemocratic they are. The need for a free press is paramount, and I say that with full recognition of all the great work that is being done by people across the country on the internet, and on community radio, TV, news-papers, magazines, and so on. All of these people deserve our thanks and support; we just need more.

I really believe that with more democracy and more independent media, we can begin to solve the problems that we face. But if we can’t get these two things, and the Corporations retain their control over us and our country, things will continue to go downhill. More homelessness, more poverty, more pollution, more privatization of Medicare and electricity and roads and schools, and everything they can get their hands on. Everything is at risk.

A new story from Canadian Press says: “Liberal leader Stephane Dion’s failure to connect with Canadians is emerging as a critical factor in the federal election and a key challenge for the Liberals ... a new poll suggests”. What a joke. After attacking him and insulting him for months, they say he is ‘failing to connect with Canadians’.

Corporate ownership of the media is a huge problem in our country. We have got to end their control of our democracy. It would be nice if the politicians—and journalists—would lead the way.

Jack Etkin lives in Victoria, B.C., and teaches English to people moving to Canada. He has been active for many years on a variety of social, economic and environmental issues.

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The CUSJ purposes are:

- to develop and maintain a vibrant network of Unitarian social action in Canada and elsewhere and to proactively represent Unitarian principles and values in matters of social justice and in particular
- to provide opportunities, including through publication of newsletters, for Unitarians and friends to apply their religious, humanistic and spiritual values to social action aimed at the relief of (1) poverty and economic injustice, (2) discrimination based on religious, racial or other grounds, (3) abuses of human rights whether of individuals or peoples, (4) abuses of democratic process, and
- to promote peace and security, environmental protection, education, and literacy in keeping with the spirit of Unitarian values.

These purposes are an integral part of the Constitution of CUSJ, adopted at the CUSJ Annual Meeting in Mississauga, ON, May 19, 1999, and amended at the 2003 AGM.

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