



What I Would Change About Politics in Canada

by Elizabeth May

Democracy is, as Winston Churchill once quipped, the worst system of government, except all the others that have been tried.

He also, less famously said, “The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter.” I don’t think the average voter is our problem in Canada, but I do think we’ve got a problem.

The symptoms of the problem are easy to spot—low voter turnout, with worryingly low levels among young people with no sign they will start voting once they are over 30, a less than vital Fourth Estate, undermined by an alarming level of concentration of media ownership in very few hands, public apathy, indifference bordering on antipathy toward the whole process, excessive power in the hands of the few (or the one, since I refer to the PMO [Prime Minister’s Office]), a loss of respect for the fundamental principle of the supremacy of Parliament, misuse of the talents of Members of Parliament of the large parties as MPs are expected to toe the party line on every issue, big and small, and its flip-side, excessive control by the un-elected top party brass in all three main parties.

Add to this, that the average voter in Canada—if anyone can be called “average”—is incensed by the goings on related to the excessive claims of certain Senators and the outrageous accommodation for Senator Duffy by the Prime Minister’s Chief of Staff cutting him a cheque for \$90,000 so he could make it seem he had personally paid back what he took through inappropriate means. The fact of a \$90,000 cheque from the Prime Minister’s top ranking staff member and closest confidante remains just simply stunning. It was, on its face, illegal. It makes no sense and no sensible explanation has been offered.

So, what could we change to restore the kind of healthy democracy that would re-engage voters, stop the growth in public cynicism and give Canadians a system—and individual politicians—they could believe in?

Here’s a short prescription for how to restore our democracy:

1. Get rid of “first past the post” and elect MPs, as is done in most modern democracies, by some form of proportional representation [see article by Wheatley, page 9]. Make sure every vote counts so voters feel the impact of their vote. Thanks to “first past the post,” in 2011, a minority of voters elected a majority government. Such “false majorities,” as University of Toronto Prof. Emeritus Peter Russell has dubbed them, have occurred for Liberals as well as Progressive Conservative and now Conservative governments. Such results are only possible due to “first past the post.”

2. Reduce the powers of the Prime Minister’s Office—regardless of who is the occupant. It is an invention, not mentioned in our Constitution. Its powers and budget are unchecked and unaccountable. Its budget is now at \$10 million/year. Cut it in half to \$5 million...or cut it more. Its total power in times of majority Parliament is anti-democratic, especially in a situation of a “false majority.” Cut the power of the PMO. Restore a healthier Cabinet system of government.



Elizabeth May, M.P.

Inside this Issue:

- CUSJ Annual General Meeting
- ClimateFast Action
- Book Review—Whose Streets?
- Adaptation to Climate Realities
- Iceland purges Financial Parasites
- ...and more.

3. Restore a respected, professional civil service. Return to evidence-based decision making. Rebuild the wall between the PMO and the PCO (Privy Council Office). Only under PM Harper have the political operatives in the PMO run roughshod over the civil service, contaminating government information with partisan spin. This must be stopped.
4. Pass legislation that deals with concentration of media ownership to encourage the rebirth of local journalism and reduce the powers of a handful of owners (our current legislation dealing with competition in the news media fails to deal with this issue and only addresses issues of the price of media products).
5. Restore respect for the supremacy of Parliament. Ensure that the control of the public purse is restored to Parliament, where it belongs.
6. Remove the power of leaders of federal parties to sign the nomination forms for their party's candidates. Allow the caucus members of parties the right to trigger leadership reviews.
7. Senate reform—open conversations and negotiations with provinces. Is abolition possible? Could a council of the federation with more effective representation from municipalities, provinces and territories bring something useful to Parliament?
8. And perhaps most important of all—re-assert the constitutional requirement that MPs are elected to represent their constituents, not to be mere ciphers of the back-room hyper-partisan spin doctors who call the shots.

Bring back Westminster parliamentary democracy. All our rules say we have one; only our political habits tell us we are moving toward an elected dictatorship. This prescription to restore and heal democracy can only be filled when the citizens of Canada demand it.

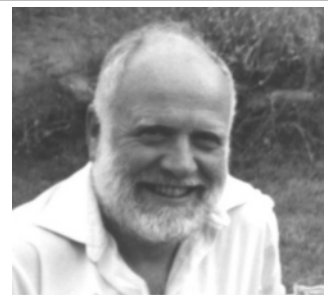
Originally published in the Huffington Post Tuesday, June 25th, 2013. Elizabeth May is an environmentalist, writer, activist, lawyer, leader of the Green Party of Canada and Member of Parliament.

From the Editor

You may have noticed recently receiving two JUSTnews Discussion Papers in a row (Nos. 26 and 27) whereas normally Discussion Papers alternate with regular issues, of which this is one. The reason is that in December, 2013, I had a minor accident, tearing the extensor tendon that runs over the knee cap on my right leg off its moorings on the shin bone. This necessitated surgery and six weeks recuperation during which preparing a regular issue of JUSTnews was not possible. Fortunately, I had a Discussion Paper lined up ready to go, so that's what you got. To get us back on track, you will now receive two regular issues of JUSTnews in a row, the next in June, reporting on this year's Annual General Meeting, among other things.

The accident reminds me that we should have an under-study editor—someone who from time to time produces a Discussion Paper (a relatively easy process), who could then take over production of JUSTnews should the regular editor again be incapacitated. Any volunteers?

In this issue of JUSTnews on government and human rights, many constructive ideas and much good work are reported. The indefatigable Elizabeth May, MP, presents constructive suggestions on how to reform our badly corrupted politics in Canada in the lead article. Also more articles than usual have been contributed by Unitarian Universalists. CUSJ President Frances Deverell has learned about residential schools from First Nations Peoples. Past President Bob Stevenson reports on the work of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, and reviews a book on police brutality. Fred Lautenschlaeger expresses some concerns on climate change, and Marlene Koehler is researching what congregations need to know to avoid endangering their charitable status—with more to come in the next issue. Articles by UUs are given priority for publication in JUSTnews, and articles that are 500 words or less are easier to find space for than longer ones. Pictures are always welcome!



President's Column: Building Right Relations with First Nations

I am so pleased that our movement here in Canada, through the good work of Vyda Ng and Gary Groot of the Canadian Unitarian Council and of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada led by Rev. Meg Roberts, has decided to make a submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on our behalf. It details our acknowledgement of the wrongs we have committed in this dear country of Canada and the commitments we make to move forward as Unitarians and Universalists.

For the past two years I have been attending educational events on our shared Canadian history, on the impact of the residential schools on several generations of First Nations people, and on the nature of trauma and the nature of healing. I have been attending pow wows, events organized by indigenous people, and hosting events in our religious home where we can hear the stories and learn to see from another point of view. I know many of you across the country have been doing the same. It is the essential first step to deeper understanding and a change of heart—to get to know First Nations people first hand and hear their stories.

It is a difficult journey. As a person whose spirituality is grounded in right action, it is a challenge for me to sit with the mess we have made and contemplate it, knowing that the work of healing and justice-making will not be quick and it will not be easy. You can't just pick up the pieces and start again after multi-generational trauma such as we have inflicted on our first peoples.

Learning from our First Nations Peoples

As I make friends here in Ottawa, I am excited to see dynamic, well-educated, clear spoken First Nations people who are well-grounded in their own traditions, and who are working hard every day to reclaim their languages and culture. They are dedicated to the land, and committed to their rights, outlined in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; rights to **free, informed, prior consent** to any use of the land in their traditional territories. Many are also working hard to establish themselves in the mainstream culture. I am told that they face negative stereotyping and degrading racism multiple times every



day from Canadian society. As I hear this, I am filled with respect for their courage and determination, their resilience, and for their wisdom and compassion. We have so much to learn from them.

There are many justice issues before us. The new First Nations Education Act has not been approved or consented to by First Nations people. It has not gone far enough to establish full equality of funding for education compared to that of children living in Canadian cities. It does not commit to supporting and nurturing native languages. At the provincial level we need curricula for all children that tell the truth about our history with First Nations. On the individual level, we must make sure that the residential school survivors and their wounded families have the resources they need for housing, for health, for clean water, and for living a life of dignity and worth, whether they live on reserve or in the city. An apology and a \$35,000 settlement does not relieve us of this responsibility.

CUSJ is delighted to have as its keynote speaker at its AGM Chief Gilbert Whiteduck from the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation. He will give us his vision of the work ahead of us to Build Right Relations.

We are delighted to welcome you to attend our meeting either in person in Montreal, or online. We encourage you to organize a group event in your city and enjoy the meeting online with other members. Please register in advance to let us know how you will be attending.

Let us continue walking this journey toward justice and reconciliation together. Let us stand with our indigenous brothers and sisters as they fight to protect the land. We created the problems with many generations of abuse. It will likely take several generations to heal them. Let us stay present, with patience, a dedication to truth, and a spirit of compassion. May we learn, through this journey, to change our own relationship with Mother Earth, and to work with First Nations to build a sustainable future for all of us.

CUSJ Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2014

Salon Strathcona, Sheraton Montreal Airport Hotel, Montreal QC,
Monday, May 19th 2014 from 9am to 12 noon
Pre-registration on-line at www.cusj.org

BUILDING RIGHT RELATIONS WITH FIRST NATIONS



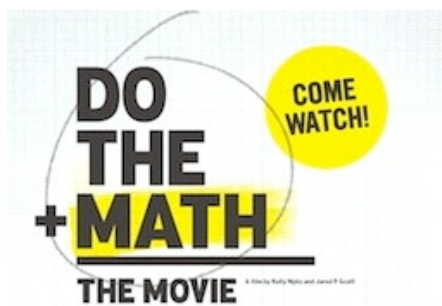
Sisters in Spirit in vigil on Parliament Hill for lost and missing women.

Make your travel plans to include the CUSJ AGM on Monday morning! Quebec social activists warmly invited.

CUSJ AGM – Live Streamed on the Web

For the third time CUSJ offers the opportunity for all our members across Canada to attend our meeting, hear our speakers and participate through the on-line chat. We want to honour those who don't travel because of greenhouse gases or cost and yet want to be part of our meeting. Host a local meeting in your own chapter or congregation. Let's join whole communities on line for a cross-country check-up and discussion. Our apologies to BC for the very early start but we hope you'll come too.

CUSJ Dinner Saturday, May 17th, 6:30 pm chez Christina Duvander. You will receive the address when your pre-registration is acknowledged. Rides arranged from the hotel at 6 pm. Catered banquet; \$35. Cash Bar. Pay by cash or cheque. Not VISA.



CUSJ Movie Night Saturday, following the dinner

This short, 45 minute film sponsored by 350.org makes a compelling case for why we have to move away from fossil fuels to a renewable energy paradigm as quickly as possible. It invites us to get involved in the fossil fuel divestment movement.

CUSJ AGM Monday, May 19

- 8:30 am – Registration, Coffee, Meet & Greet
- 9:00 am – Chapter Conversations:

First Unitarian Ottawa hosted First Nations Consultation with Bruce Knotts. Claudette Commanda speaking.

- o What are your local priorities? What are you working on?
- o What are we doing at the national level that you value? (newsletter, website, direct lobbying, networking with partners, letter-writing, ClimateFast, providing resources)
- o Your level of involvement with climate issues; First Nations issues; democracy issues; poverty issues.



- 10:00 am – AGM
- 11:00 am – Keynote Speaker: ***Building Right Relations with First Nations: Chief Gilbert WhiteDuck of the Kitigan Zibi Community***, Maniwaki QC, home of the Algonquin nation. Chief WhiteDuck places a high value on education and is proud of the school system he put in place for preserving the language and culture of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg people. The school has high standards and its graduates do well. He will speak to us on the path they are on to preserve their languages, culture, and the land itself, and share his vision of an on-going relationship of mutual respect, sharing and collaboration with non-aboriginal Canadians.
- 12:15 pm – Lunch at the hotel for those who wish to stay.

LETTER

Re CUC investments

Nov. 13, 2013

Dear Presidents of Boards of Canadian UU Congregations:

On Dec. 12th, 2013, the Board of the Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice passed a motion to recommend to congregations and to individual Unitarians to add investments in fossil fuels to their screening criteria for socially responsible investing. I am writing to request that you make our recommendation known to your congregation and to your Board, as an invitation to review your investment portfolios and consider divestment from fossil fuel companies.

CUSJ views management of portfolios that include investments in large oil and gas companies as problematic. In a world struggling against advanced climate change induced by burning fossil fuels, a number of universities, congregations and cities, both inside and outside the U.S. have already divested or are in the process of doing so.

Why is this important?

Unless most of the known fossil fuel reserves are left in the ground, humanity faces certain catastrophe due to climate change. Consequently, there is risk of a "carbon bubble" (the over-valuation of fossil fuel corporate stocks on reserves that cannot be exploited if we are to limit climate change (and ocean acidification)). Despite the risk to all of us of climate change, the objective of fossil fuel companies continues to be extracting all those reserves while looking for more to exploit. This behaviour is deeply immoral.

In 2013, the UUA passed a resolution on divestment:

<http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/288863.shtml>

Also in 2013, the CUC passed a resolution calling on all congregations to take action to mitigate climate change: <http://cuc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/CUC-Resolution-Approved-2013-Climate-Change-Mitigation.pdf>

We urge you, your Board and your congregation to discuss fossil fuel divestment in the near future, with a view to excluding fossil fuel companies from your investment portfolio within five years.

Sincerely,



Rev. Frances Deverell, President
Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

A Report on ICLMG Session, Tuesday November 12, 2013

by Bob Stevenson

In 2007, CUSJ joined the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group located here in Ottawa. ICLMG is a Canadian NGO [non-governmental organization] concerned with the impact of government surveillance on Canadian society. It is a coalition of 39 organizations including religious, labour and several NGOs. Don McDiarmid, Bob Staveley and I attended during the first few years. Matthew Behrens from Perth was present as a representative of the Security Certificates watch group. Matthew was our keynote speaker at our CUSJ meeting in Hamilton in 2005.



Don McDiarmid and Bob Staveley (at CUSJ AGM 2012)

Our agenda for the full day meeting covered a variety of issues including Security Certificate cases, an update on the Omar Khadr case, the extradition of Hassan Diab, and an update on the spying actions of CSEC/NSA. Other topics included the use of drones and the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to Freedom of Assembly and of Association.

More detail on these items is available at the ICLMG web site. They also post a weekly digest about these issues.

On a separate item: I noticed the article by Charles Eddis in the Canadian Unitarian fall 2013 issue concerning the whistle-blower, Daniel Elsborg, and the role of our Beacon Press. It is at democracynow.org (click on topics and past programs July 24, 2013). It is certainly worth the hour. Watch and be proud.



Bob Stevenson is a member of
Ottawa Congregation

Past (and Current) CUSJ Presidents

1996-1999 (3 years) Doug Rutherford, Toronto
1999-2001 (2 years) Bob van Alastyne, Victoria
2001-2002 (1 year) Vacant, Victoria
2002-2006 (4 years) Philip Symons, Victoria
2006-2008 (2 years) Bob Stevenson, Ottawa
2008-2009 (1 year) Vacant, Ottawa
2009-2010 (1 year) Kathryn Im-Jenkins, Ottawa
2010-2014 (5 years) Rev. Frances Deverell, Ottawa

CLIMATEFAST ACTION ON THE FIRST OF THE MONTH (2014-2015)

In this third year of ClimateFast in Canada, we will fast on the first day of each month as part of a world-wide initiative to draw attention to the misery we are unleashing on our children and on this living planet, and to call for urgent action. Yeb Saño, the Filipino delegate at the COP19 UN Summit in Warsaw, began to fast in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan during the Climate Summit. In solidarity, individuals and organizations have come together to continue a monthly day of fasting and action until the international climate conference, COP21, in Paris in 2015 or until such time as a comprehensive international climate plan is put in place.

In Canada we continue our appeal to Canada's policy makers to take immediate steps to:

- **end fossil fuel subsidies**
- **put a price on carbon**
- **support the development of a renewable energy plan for Canada**

Put Climate First on the First of the Month

Send a message to governments that people from all walks of life, rich and poor, want to work together with government to take climate action now. Already, millions of people have lost their homes and their livelihoods as a result of climate change. We want to ensure a sustainable planet for future generations. Yet governments around the world, and especially Canada, fail to act to stop carbon pollution. We believe a renewable energy revolution is not only possible, but will produce many economic and health benefits for people all over the world. JOIN OUR FAST!

We want Action on Climate - Fast!

Make the First of the month a letter-writing day

- to your political representatives, reminding them that they must put into action the urgent measures needed to assure a safe climate;
- **to the editor** of your local newspapers with the same demands.

It is a day to **hold a community event**, such as a screening of a documentary like 'Do the Math' or 'Chasing Ice' or to host a letter writing night. We have provided links to resources and would be pleased to work with you on setting up an event in your community.

It is a day to **tell your friends, colleagues and neighbours** that you are fasting and why.



Vigil in Ottawa

Register at FAST FOR THE CLIMATE. Let us know you registered. If you live in Canada, and registered with the International Fast, and if you wish to engage in other ways to express your will for a safe climate contact us at www.climatefast.ca/Contact. ClimateFast will keep you informed as to what fellow Canadians are doing to speak up on climate, what events they are holding, and more.

"Take to the streets, together, with the understanding that the feeling that you aren't being heard or seen or represented isn't psychosis; it's government policy." *Russell Brand, English comedian.*

Book Review: *Whose Streets?*

by Bob Stevenson

My pulpit editorial in January 2013 here in Ottawa provided me with some needed word therapy. My title was "Sources of Inspiration" and our sorry political state makes this more necessary than ever. I said, "Canada is fast becoming a neo-fascist state run by corporate interests and their puppet-politicians." Time only allowed me one example of such corporatism and it was the Christmas present given by the Prime Minister to the Ford Motor Company: \$250 millions of our tax dollars! It brought to mind that fine poem, "Hymn to the Glory of Free Enterprise" by JD Ketchum (1944) included in the classic of satiric poems, "The Blasted Pine" (1957).

Canada becoming a police state

However, other evidence of our developing police-state is documented in the book, *Whose Streets?* (2011, eds. T. Malleson and D. Wachmuth, Between the Lines publishing, Toronto). "When the G20 summit came to Toronto in June 2010, the optimism and determination of thousands of protesters was greeted with ferocious state repression on a scale never before seen in Canada. Through a combination of testimonies from the front lines and analyses of the broader context, "*Whose Streets?*" shares the lessons learned by activists who helped organize the mobilizations, demonstrators and bystanders who were arbitrarily arrested and detained, including scholars committed to the theory and practice of confronting neo-liberal capitalism."

Many of us had difficulty understanding the extent of the police response particularly the arrest of over 1100 persons, the largest mass arrest in Canadian history. Naomi Klein in the foreword describes the arrest as a "complete farce" because the majority were released in a few hours with no charges and most were released within 72 hours. Naomi Klein shows the extreme measures taken by the police by recounting the testimony of John Pruyn. "He said he was arrested and cuffed, and, while he was cuffed, police pulled off his artificial leg. Then they ordered him to put it back on, which he obviously could not do with his hands tied. Then they laughed, dragged him off, and hit him, telling him he should never have come."

Police Actions foster hate

"So the question must be asked: why?" Particularly when such treatment will mean that many of

1100 demonstrators and thousands of viewers of the video reports, will hate the police and refuse to cooperate with them for the rest of their lives. Ms. Klein continues, "Why these draconian lengths to paint community organizers as terrorist masterminds? Why, in Toronto, is calling for civil disobedience suddenly criminal conspiracy with the power to ruin young lives? Part of what is going on is that the police went so over the top that they appear to need these convictions as a form of self-justification. In other words, spending on summit security was so exorbitant, and the systems of entrapment leading up to these arrests were so elaborate, that at the end of the day they needed something to show for their billion dollar budget (including 19,000 police on duty) and their rampant civil liberties violations."

"Could it be that the government seized the opportunity presented by the G20 to try to wipe out or at least weaken some of the country's most effective and militant anti-poverty, indigenous solidarity and migrant rights groups? Because, if you look at the bail conditions and the massive legal costs ahead, that is exactly what these charges are designed to do."

She then explains that the real crime was what the leaders decided to do at the "Austerity Summit" while they were being so enthusiastically protected. She points out the irony of bailing out the banks and reducing corporate taxes which has meant cuts to our public services in health and education here in Ontario.

Resistance growing

Naomi Klein speaks truth to power and this is only the foreword to this impressive book. Any Canadian with a concern for our civil liberties should have this volume on their book-shelf.

The last words in the book are also inspiring and they come from Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians. She states, "Since 9/11 and the start of the so-called war on terror, protecting the space for non-violent direct action and civil disobedience has become more important than ever. By telling the stories of dedicated activists who took our demands for local and global justice and democracy to the streets of Toronto, *Whose Streets?* offers proof that, in the face of state repression and police violence, our collective resistance to neo-liberal capitalism only grows stronger."

Submitted March 23 2013. Bob Stevenson is a member of Ottawa First Unitarian Congregation.



Police putting down anti-brutality demonstration, Montreal, March 15, 2013.

Adaptation to Climate Realities

by Fred Lautenschlaeger

Adaptation to global warming, whether caused by solar cycles or human actions, reduces vulnerability of people, eco-systems, buildings and infrastructure to its effects. Adaptation means developing draught-resistant crops, construction of seawalls, early warning systems and other protective devices. Since socially and economically underdeveloped nations have low adaptive capacity,



Seawall, Ventnor, Isle of Wight.

the World Bank would need to invest \$75-100 billion/year between 2010 and 2050. But countries are holding back their pledges to the international Green Climate Fund.

Adaptation will become increasingly necessary unless the use of carbon-based energy sources and livestock are drastically reduced. To limit the global temperature increase to 2° C, a suggestion is to leave about 2/3 of the oil in the ground. But there is no political will to achieve that because of the economic consequences and a lack of global agreements by the industry which competes for profit.

What we need to do—but won't

Consumers, for purely environmental reasons would have to:

- sell a car in exchange for a more efficient one, or not own one;
- move to smaller accommodations;
- take salary cuts or pay higher taxes to support green activities;
- sell a second home (cottage);
- reduce travelling;
- promote 'Green Churches' which would then reach a more diversified population.

These things will not happen. Currently consumption is encouraged. Finance ministers tell us the economy depends on consumption, even if debts are at historically high levels. News media promote cars, real estate, luxury travel, luxury condominiums. The Style section of one national newspaper blatantly promotes decadence. Most investors prefer growth over restraint. One teachers' investment fund had an asset



Media promote decadence

growth of 127% since 1992, with 47% in apartments, diversified consumer goods and life style apparel; 23% in shopping centres and transportation facilities. A poll suggested that the energy sector is the key to the Canadian economy. Volkswagen is investing \$100-million in new car production for four years. The Globe and Mail reports that the 12 most promising energy stocks are oil industries and their suppliers (Nov. 22, 2013).

Is government to blame?

Blaming the government is unproductive. We are all part of the government. Political parties that propose increasing the gasoline tax or imposing a carbon tax are unpopular. The population responded poorly to the government's Kyoto appeal and the '1-Ton-challenge' to reduce Green House Gases (GHGs). 'Green' parties are not attractive to the voters even when they do not propose drastic change. Al Gore called for mass demonstrations, such as the storming of the Berlin Wall. Although that event led to more political and economic freedom, it also opened the gate to higher consumerism, supported by carbon-based and nuclear energy in the West.

We need to become more aware that wars consume huge amounts of energy. International peace would be a major adaptation to climate change. It would free resources. Nations would have to:

- eliminate territorial aggression based on ethnic or religious differences;
- give unhesitating support to the United Nations, even when they believe it does not serve their national interests;
- support a joint effort by religious groups towards solving the urgent problems of the world, both by those who believe that god's creation must be protected and others who support the liberal concept of an 'interconnected web of all existence';
- reduce the weapons trade (recognizing loss of employment and income in weapon-producing countries);
- focus on communities and reconsider the emphasis on unrestricted individual freedom,
- ask religious groups to examine their conflicting and aggressive concepts attributed to conflicting gods and prophets;
- insist that senior religious leaders accept personal responsibility for interfaith violence resulting from their teachings.

Petro-companies must be made responsible for the consequences of using their

products. It is not uncommon in other industries that the whole chain, from producer to the end user, shares responsibility for damages. It is true that Canada's oil explorations contribute only a miniscule proportion to global GHGs, but they eventually contribute to fossil fuel consumption. Users who contribute to GHGs should be required to financially support climate refugees and adaptation processes. This requires global administration.

Implementation of adaptation strategies requires international agreements. The time for demonstrating against governments has passed. If we accept that we live unsustainably, what would we agree to do? Or will we simply rely on continued evolution of mankind to shape the future through accelerated human intervention?

Fred Lautenschlaeger is a member of First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Toronto.

CUSJ Members Discuss Policies Affecting Charitable Status

by Marlene Koehler

March was a busy month on the CUSJ e-list for discussion of Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) policies that may have an impact on Canadian Unitarian-Universalist congregations. The primary concern was the CRA policies related to the carrying out and annual reporting of political activities by organizations with charitable numbers, including religious organizations. The next issue of JUSTnews will contain an article on this subject.

Other CRA policies affecting charities that are likely to be of particular interest to Unitarian-Universalist activists involve the following:

- o what are charitable objectives;
- o conditions under which funds may be transferred from an organization with charitable status to one without (including foreign organizations)—funds may not be transferred without meeting these conditions and the conditions are very strict; and
- o how the CRA compliance (audit) program operates.

These, too, may be discussed in subsequent articles.

Marlene Koehler is a member of First Unitarian Ottawa, has attachments to the Unitarian Fellowship of London where she attends once a month, and to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa.

Electoral Reform, an Evolutionary Approach.

by Michael Wheatley

Editor's note: This is a response to a discussion among Fair Vote Canada members as to whether or not FVC should promote the Alternative Vote in municipal elections.

To overcome resistance to change in Canada, we could have a logical progression in electoral reform from a non-proportional system (First Past the Post) to a fully proportional one.

Preferential ballot

First you adopt a preferential ballot (candidates numbered 1, 2... in order of your preference). That gives you AV (Alternative Vote) for mayors, MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assemblies) and MPs (Members of Parliament) with no proportionality in single seat districts. The big bonus here is you have eliminated strategic voting (giving a higher preference to someone you don't like is just dumb and offers no strategic advantage) and the first preference results are a legitimate measure of voter support for the various candidates or parties.

Proportionality

Next you want proportionality so you amalgamate the single member districts for MPs and MLAs. Let's say you do it cautiously and simply pair the districts for a district magnitude of 2 and use STV (Single Transferable Vote) to get your results. You now have minimal proportional representation. As an example let's say B.C. would have 41 districts and 82 MLAs.

Improved proportionality

If you want greater proportionality you have two ways to go. You can merge districts and increase the district magnitude so you have STV as it was proposed in B.C., with district magnitudes from 2 to 7 and something substantially less than 41 districts. Alternatively, using the B.C. example, you could keep the 41 districts, reduce the magnitude from 2 to 1 and dole out the remaining 41 (more or less as necessary) seats based on a second party vote. You now have MMP (Mixed Member Proportionality).

Maximum proportionality

The most proportional system would be a single district STV where the whole province (or city or country) would be a single district and any candidate who can win a quota (in B.C. an 82nd) of the vote after transfers gets a seat. It's not as frightening as it sounds. This is what we already have in most municipalities. MMP could only approach this level of proportionality if it was adjusted to such a degree that it was indistinguishable from STV.

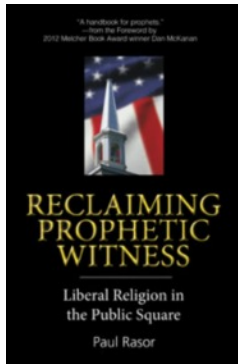
Michael Wheatley is a member of the Board of the Victoria Branch of Fair Vote Canada.

Book Review by Dan McKanan

Reclaiming Prophetic Witness *Liberal Religion in the Public Square*

By Paul Rasor (UU minister) © 2012

Skinner House Books, Boston.



This short 105-page book is a great read for anyone who writes blogs or briefs or presentations to public hearings, committees, or groups. Paul Rasor (Director of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom and a professor of religious studies at Virginia Wesleyan University) gives us tools and ammunition to better represent our prophetic voice from a religious perspective. He shows us that liberals are not a dead rump, but rather closer to a full quarter of the American population when you include Christian, Unitarian, Jewish, and Muslim liberals as well as those from other faith communities—the same percentage as conservative faiths. Liberals are very active promoting their values in the public arena. The difference is, they tend not to speak as religious people, but only in secular and political terms.

The book gives us useful definitions of religious liberalism, and a good outline of the liberal religious values that many faith communities hold in common. Rasor also gives us a good short list of theologians, philosophers, and academics who are writing about the role of religion in the public square and the religious roots of some of our democratic principles. Rasor emphasizes the deterioration of western democracy. He gives reasons why it should be fought for by those who have democracy, equality, respect for the interdependent web, for the inherent worth and dignity of every person and freedom of speech and assembly as central values. He points to the current intertwining of western governments and capitalists and shows us how this marriage tips the balance away from separation of powers and functioning democratic institutions towards empire and totalitarianism.

Rasor gives us an extensive discussion of the separation of church and state and the importance of this doctrine as outlined in the First Amendment of the American Constitution. “[T]he American founders simultaneously freed religion from state control and freed the state from religious control.”

Rasor believes our voices would be more powerful if we were to take the time to identify which of our arguments come from our passion for our faith, and present those arguments as a faith perspective—then back them up with political, economic, and social science arguments. If we don’t do this, we leave the religious perspective to the right wing. Our religious voices are so quiet that the general population thinks that there is only one kind of Christianity—fundamentalist Christianity. If you include the middle of the bell curve, the vast majority of Americans and Canadians want to hear a social gospel message that is compatible with science and modern world views. They need a vision of a just society that they can embrace and work towards.



Dan McKanan is Ralph Waldo Emerson Unitarian Universalist Association Senior Lecturer in Divinity currently on leave from Harvard Divinity School.

Who is “We the People?”

by Tom Atlee



The Problem

I want to highlight a common misuse of the term “We the People.”

When we assign the label “We the People” to any part of the whole public, we are claiming a legitimacy that may not, on examination, be justified. I suggest this misuse arises in our majoritarian elections. Although it is convenient and functional to let any majority decide on a candidate or referendum, there is a legitimacy problem when, for example, only half of the electorate votes: in this case 51% of those voting may constitute only 25% of the whole electorate. So we should be sceptical about claims that “the People” have spoken, and seriously consider how we might correct that potentially enormous flaw.

The Solution

I suggest that a **Citizens’ Jury** of a couple of dozen citizens chosen by stratified (demographic) random selection may constitute a more legitimate voice of the whole “people” than thousands of partisan voters who show up in a low-turnout election. This claim is further legitimised by campaign strategies to “get out the vote,” negative ads and electoral restrictions to “suppress the vote.” When such manipulations occur, how can we say that elections truly represent the choices of “the People?”

I strongly believe—and invite you to consider—that the only practical way to generate a legitimate voice of We the People is to convene conversations among randomly selected ordinary citizens who embody the diversity of the populace. There are many ways to do this, and many legitimate arguments about methodology and what role such citizens’ juries should play in our democracy. But we must be careful that the group (conversation or council) actually and demonstrably does embody the diversity of the whole as fully as possible. I suggest that the principle of a “microcosm of the whole” based on random and/or scientific selection is *at least* as vital as elections for establishing factual legitimacy when we wish to claim the mantle of “The People.”

Tom Atlee is co-director and research director of the Co-Intelligence Institute, a non-profit organization he founded in 1996.

Iceland Continues Economic Rejuvenation by Purging Financial Parasites

by Pete Papaherakles

Iceland is showing the world what real independence from the bankers means. The Nordic island has become the first country to criminally charge a world leader as a result of the 2008 economic crisis. Former Prime Minister Geir Haarde, 73, was found guilty of “failing to adequately inform other Icelandic officials of events that led up to the 2008 financial crisis” according to an April 23, 2012, *New York Times* article.

No Jail Sentence

As part of Haarde’s final verdict, two of the original six charges were dropped and the other three were cleared. These included “gross neglect of duty” and “failure to reduce the size of the banking system,” charges that were more serious and could have put him behind bars for years.

Haarde, who served as Iceland’s prime minister from June 2006 to February 2009, will not actually have to serve any jail time but the trial was indicative of Iceland’s re-establishment of its sovereignty after defaulting on the bankers. As many as 90 bankers and politicians are expected to be brought to trial this year for crimes related to the targeted debt crisis Iceland faced.

Citizens demand action

Iceland was the only European country that dared to default on the bankers. In February 2011 Iceland’s President Olafur R. Grimsson refused to sign a \$5-billion bailout bill and told the bankers he was going to put the bill to a referendum. Although 44 of the 63 members of Parliament had passed the bill, Grimsson said he was responding to a popular demand for a plebiscite after more than 42 thousand of Iceland’s 318 thousand inhabitants signed a petition asking him to block it.

Default not catastrophic

Icelanders absorbed some of the costs but forced foreign investors to take the biggest hit. Not deterred by horror stories about an “unthinkable economic demise” that have prevented countries like Greece and Portugal from defaulting, Iceland has proved that default was the best thing it could have done. As a result, not only has the economy not collapsed since last year, but its gross domestic product is expected to increase by 2.6% this year. Much of that growth is based on increased production, mainly in tourism and the fishing industry. In contrast, most other European economies are either stagnant or in decline. Even the *Times* article admitted that many economists say Iceland’s recovery was aided by the collapse of the banks.



Even the *Times* article admitted that many economists say Iceland’s recovery was aided by the collapse of the banks.

Iceland’s recovery is a shining example for countries like Greece, Ireland and Spain to follow. History has proven that countries experience

growth once they get out from under the parasitic burden of debt to the bankers. National Socialist Germany from 1933 – 39 is a perfect example.

Real wealth is measured in terms of growth in agriculture, manufacturing and services. Greece and Spain have more than half of their highly energetic youth unemployed, producing nothing. In the U.S. 55 thousand factories have shut down in the last decade.

Justice and dignity regained

Iceland has shown that with regained sovereignty comes justice and dignity. Corrupt politicians and bankers can be brought to trial.

Further asserting its independence, Iceland was the first country, last fall, to recognize Palestine as an independent nation, a move no country under the yoke of the international bankers has had the guts to do.

Peter Papaherakles, a U.S. citizen since 1986, was born in Greece. He is American Free Press’s (AFP) outreach director. This article was published on American Free Press’s website May 21, 2012.

“The Agricultural Revolution took thousands of years, the Industrial Revolution took hundreds of years, the Technological Revolution took tens, the Spiritual Revolution has come and we have only an instant to act.” *Russell Brand, English comedian.*

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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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