



A GOOD MORNING CANADA!

by Barry Stuart

My gosh... as I drove home late last night from serving as a polling station scrutineer, the emotional, physical, spiritual and mental stress of the past several months drifted away, sending a wave of bliss through me ...I never want to forget how worried I was about my country; I never want to forget how easy it had been for me to take for granted the unique blessings we have as Canadians. The greatest threat our democracy faces is not foreign invasion but apathy, failing to carry out our responsibilities as citizens. I had been apathetic. Content to let others engage in politics, I turned to my interests. This election woke me up. Jolted me awake.

Driven by a combination of fear over this election returning Conservatives to power, and my personal shame for abandoning any significant political engagement, I threw myself into this election. I engaged in every way possible, investing heart and soul into supporting candidates in different ridings representing all parties but Conservatives.

My primary opposition focused not on Conservatives, but on Prime Minister Harper. I recognize and respect the many contributions conservatives have made to Canada. The conservative voice is an essential part of a healthy, inclusive dialogue in Canada. In the past, I voted for the best candidate in my riding every time. Over the years, that included voting Conservative for the likes of the amazing John Fraser. This time, I was able to vote for the best candidate in my riding, and support Greens, NDP and Liberal candidates in other ridings. My support for candidates in other ridings was driven by two factors; they were great candidates and they had a good chance to beat incumbent Conservatives.

My obsession to defeat Prime Minister Harper did not sit easy on my mind. I knew better than to place all the blame at these feet ... but I wanted my country back. He dominated Conservative parliamentarians and Parliament in ways that distressed me. Perhaps unfortunately and even undeservedly in many respects, he became the symbol of what had to change. My fight was not so much against Conservatives but for change.

I respect anyone who devotes their life to our political process and for that I respected Prime Minister Harper, but I have never been able to understand why he so aggressively undermined our essential democratic principles and stripped away the practices that made me fervently proud to be Canadian.

In this election, from knocking on doors to counting ballots as a scrutineer and everything in between, I became acutely aware of the indispensable contributions and sacrifices so many have made in wars, in their daily participation in communities, and in serving as public servants in multiple capacities to make our country unique. Now each of us is called on to honour and respect our legacy, and make sacrifices to pass our legacy on to

future generations.

As important: our legacy generates hope around the world that a political process respecting all voices, fiercely protecting freedom and creating peaceful



Retired judge Barry Stuart

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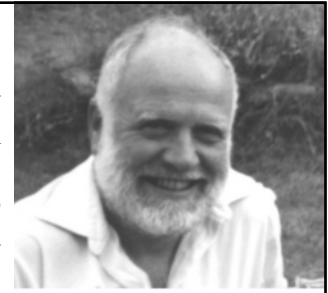
From the Editor

My apologies to readers who may be weary of my harping on about democracy in JUSTnews, but if we didn't know before, we should know after the past ten years that democracy is basic to all other social justice issues. Without democracy, there is no free speech, there is no effective action on climate change, there is no justice for the poor, there's a loss of civil rights, an increase in racial prejudice and hatred....

Recently, an interviewee on CBC radio remarked that Canada has just experienced a nuanced version of the U.S.'s Donald Trump. The interviewee cited the flap over wearing a niqab at Canadian citizenship ceremonies as an example of the common racial bigotry.

A friend of mine went further. He thought the Harper Government was planning a coup to turn Canada into a dictatorship. My friend turned out, fortunately, to be a little paranoid. However, he did start me thinking about what a government would do if that *had* been its plan. And guess what? A government planning to stage a coup and turn Canada into a dictatorship would take all the steps that the Harper government took (plus just three more—see boxed addendum, bottom p. 11).

We must work to ensure this never happens again. The first priority is to reform our electoral system. So once again JUSTnews concentrates on that topic.



ways to work through our differences is a viable option for their country.

Last night was a powerful example of our legacy, of our blessings.

May we now restore respect for different voices, turn back to the values of democracy and work together to meet the dire challenges we face locally, nationally and internationally.

So neighbours, where can we find common ground, where can we work together to honour our legacy? We have much to do. We need to do this work together. Let us work to inspire and attract the very best from all Canadians in rolling up their sleeves as good neighbours to sustain our legacy.

This election demonstrated the need to shift from a first past the post to a proportional representation process. Above all other promises, this change has the potential to motivate every voter

to recognize their vote counts, and to carefully consider how each party reflects their views. I have faith our new government will retain this crucial promise of proportional representation, even though now armed with a majority by First Past the Post.

In the very least, I need to thank Prime Minister Harper for the sacrifices he and his family made, for his gracious departure from office to becoming my neighbour, and certainly for waking me up.

Barry Stuart, a retired judge and life-long advocate for a better way in the justice system, is chair of the Smart Justice Network of Canada. The Smart Justice Network of Canada is a non-partisan network of volunteers from different sectors, walks of life and communities across Canada who are working together to promote responsible, fair, humane, efficient and financially smart ways of responding to criminal and social justice challenges. Posted Oct. 20th, 2015.

Body coverings

Text from Island Tides Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2015.

A hijab, worn by many Muslim women, is basically a headscarf that covers the hair but leaves the full face uncovered.



The niqab adds to the hijab a face covering that leaves only the eyes uncovered.

The burqa is a flowing garment that covers the entire body, from the top of the head to the ground. A mesh portion permits the wearer to see out, but the eyes are not visible to an observer.



Photo, Steve Evans

CUSJ NEWS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Early Winter Greetings CUSJers All!

Canadians voted for 'real change' on October 19th and with a freshly minted Liberal Cabinet, truly reflecting society's gender ratio, a climate of hope has prevailed over the politics of divisive fear, fostered by 'Harperman' and his Conservative wrecking crew.

The Liberal party ran on a campaign of "hope and hard work" and we, the electorate, must hold the newly elected government and ourselves to the same standards. Our democracy took a big hit under the former regime and NOW is the time for progressive religious, indigenous and civil society organizations, as well as the civil service, to assume our rightful place at the federal table and help shape the laws and policies that govern our country. We are encouraged by the restoration of the long-form census, the 'unmuzzling' of Canadian scientists, and the original plan to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by year's end. We are further emboldened by the promise of a national inquiry on missing and murdered aboriginal women but, before we act, we need to restore broken relationships.

The link between social justice, the environment and the economy has been acknowledged by Prime Minister Trudeau and his new Cabinet. As constituents, we need to meet with our newly elected Members of Parliament and forge working relationships with all party members at the local and national level.

On Sunday, November 29th, CUSJers took part in the Global Climate March in Ottawa and cities across Canada and the world. This march was critical given that the stakes for a just and sustainable future are higher now than ever, and that the climate march at the UN Climate Summit in Paris had been cancelled. So we marched for those who could not. In the words of Cam Fenton of 350.org following the recent four-day 'Climate Welcome' action in Ottawa: **"It needs to be about showing up, not because we're afraid of what will happen if we don't, but because we have a profound hope for what can happen if we do."**

Standing on the Side of Love & Justice!

Your appreciative President,

Margaret Rao



Motion for a Boycott of the Occupied Territories

The following motion was passed by the CUSJ Board on December 1st, 2015.

CUSJ's mission is to defend and promote Unitarian principles, such as the inherent worth and dignity of every person, justice and equity in human relations, democracy, peace, and liberty for all. These principles call upon us to work towards an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state coexisting peacefully with Israel and its other neighbours.

Given that:

- Continued destruction of Palestinian homes and villages and the expansion of Israeli settlements since June 1967 into the Occupied Territories—Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem—contravene international law;
- Many multinational and Israeli companies are violating international law by investing in or profiting from the Israeli occupation of Palestine;
- Over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations have asked for a boycott to pressure Israel to stop violating international law and disregarding Palestinians' human rights;
- The European Union has banned state lending to Israeli entities operating in the Occupied Territories;
- On November 11th, 2015 the European Union issued new guidelines, requiring products from illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to carry the word "settlement" on the label;
- Boycotts are a legitimate, peaceful and democratic means of effecting change in the international community when one nation is abusing its own citizens or otherwise contravening international laws;

Continued on p. 4

- The purpose of a boycott is to bring about change by peaceful means—

Be it resolved that:

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, advocating Unitarian Principles, adopts a formal stance in favour of:

- 1) a boycott of products from companies, regardless of origin, that participate in Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories;
- 2) a cultural boycott in which performing artists refuse to perform in Israel until it ends the occupation; and
- 3) a ban on federal and provincial state-funded lending to for-profit companies operating in the Occupied Territories, and to any organization materially supporting the destruction of Palestinian homes or expansion of illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories.

Letter: Why be a Unitarian-Universalist?

from Dale Perkins

I had occasion to visit First Unitarian Church of Victoria recently, and came away with some tracts published by the congregation. I found myself asking, what is the point or advantage of belonging to a group or organization separate and distinct from others, with a unique history, legacy or policies? Does belonging to a particular group really matter given what the common challenges are that we're facing in our world?

Reading JUSTnews I realized that much of what is written there would fit neatly inside other religious and secular organizations that I participate in. I wondered then what would be the advantage of me signing up with the Unitarian Universalist church/organization? There are seemingly modest differences, but the overarching expectations and assumptions contained inside JUSTnews unite and declare the common considerations I can find in most of the United Church congregations I have followed over the course of the past few decades.

So why dedicate my time/energy/money to a Unitarian Universalist enterprise? Of course fees are set for belonging and joining—however, nothing extraordinary there when compared to other faith communities. Does it all come down to simple choices, like selecting communities with amenable and attractive staff personnel, or having a cadre of participants attending whom one can like, or a meeting place in attractive facilities, or realizing they host a set number of activities, or use rituals and liturgies

that are familiar and understandable? Borrowing from the vocabulary used by United Church congregations—is it a “friendly place” (perhaps right at the top of the church's ‘hit parade’ and most important in determining a congregation's character)?

If the answers to the above list are positive or affirming then we decide to establish our affiliation with that church community and denomination. What obviously recedes in importance are things like doctrine, dogma, use of a special book, the governance model used, or modest variations practiced by certain congregations that jar with what you like or prefer (unless those differences are too drastic). These are tolerated because they really don't detract from the core values and practices of the congregation, close-at-hand. And on the basis of those decisions a person may decide to join and become a fully-fledged member.

There really doesn't seem to be much that differentiates the UU faith community from many other religious groupings. In particular, I would like to hear about other faith communities that are progressive within their own tradition. Or are there significant differences within the UU world I haven't picked up? And are there compelling reasons why I should consider seriously selecting one over another?

I would like to hear back from UU folks who have answers to my questions. Are there significant features about the UU faith community that warrant serious consideration in contrast to other faith or secular groups?

Dale Perkins is a retired ordained minister of the United Church of Canada in Victoria, B.C., and social activist. This letter was submitted on August 16, 2015. JUSTnews would be pleased to publish short responses to Dale Perkins's questions.

CUSJ Members are reminded that if they would like to request an action, there is a place on the CUSJ website where this can be done.

ELECTORAL PROCESSES AND GOVERNMENT

Fair Vote Canada Analyses the Election

From Island Tides newspaper¹

After an election in which 9,093,630 (51.8%) votes went nowhere, Justin Trudeau has a golden opportunity to bring a more democratic voting system to Canada.

Liberals won a majority with 39.5% of the popular vote. More than half of all voters were unable to cast an effective ballot [i.e., couldn't elect a member of the party of their choice—see below]. They now will wait another four years to have the opportunity to elect a representative aligned with their values—or not.

Fair Vote Canada's Executive Director declares, "Given the distortion of the popular vote, Trudeau must ensure Canadians will have equal and effective votes in future elections. Never again should we face a one-party, one-man government elected by a minority of voters. We urge you to work with all parties and enact voting rules for a true and modern representative democracy in time for the next election."

Canadians voted for change. This election was a *de facto* referendum on the last false-majority government, says Fair Vote Canada.

"We urge you (Trudeau) as a top priority for the new government to establish right away a multi-partisan task force bringing together pro-reform citizens and experts. We are calling on you to design a voting system for Canada in which every ballot delivers equal representation, and trust that this process will not seize on a quick fix that favours only centrist parties," says Jennifer Ross, FVC Caucus Chair for Liberals for Fair Voting.

In total, 51.8% of Canadian voters cast votes for losing candidates—with the riding of Pierre-Boucher-Les Patriotes-Verchères casting the most ineffective votes: 73% (<http://myvoteshouldcount.ca/>). A system of proportional representation could reduce that number to as low as 5%.

All parties are hurt by the outcome of winner-take-all elections, says Fair Vote. Across the country:

- 93.88% of Green Party voters couldn't elect a representative;
- 76.78% of Bloc voters couldn't elect a representative;
- 74.5% of NDP voters couldn't elect a representative;
- 50.98% of Conservative voters couldn't elect a representative, and
- 33.49% of Liberal voters couldn't elect a representative.

Results Using a Proportional Representation Election

Under a proportional system the seat count would have been: Liberals 135, Conservative 109, NDP 68, Bloc 15, Green 11. [These numbers are distorted by the strategic voting that took place. Ed.]

Last month, over 500 Canadian academics, including several Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada, 29 Canada Research Chairs and two professors with the Order of Canada, called on all political parties to work together to bring in a proportional electoral system.

Fair Vote Canada and its supporters are asking Justin Trudeau to put the country and its citizens ahead of party considerations and build a representative democracy where all Canadians have the opportunity to equally participate in the governance and policy-making of Canada.

Fair Vote Canada is a multi-partisan, citizens' campaign representing 62,000 Canadians advocating for voting system reform. FVC promotes the introduction of an element of proportional representation in elections at all levels of government and in civil society.

¹ Island Tides 27 (21), Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2015.

Electoral Systems for Canada

Canada needs an electoral system that better reflects people's choices of representatives in parliament than does our current "First Past the Post" (FPP) system. Proportional representation (PR) was described in JUSTnews Discussion Paper No. 30, Autumn 2015, but there are several methods of achieving it. At least two methods are suitable for Canada: Mixed Member Proportional representation (MMP) and Single Transferable Vote (STV). Another system, the List system, is used in many more countries, but is not suited to Canada's large and varied geography.

MMP or STV has been recommended by studies in four Canadian provinces (see article p. 7, this issue). Unfortunately the provincial governments of the time failed to act on those recommendations. Most of the following descriptions were excerpted from Wikipedia, then simplified and modified.

Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)

MMP has several names and comes in several varieties. In most models the voter casts two votes: one for a constituency representative and one for a party. Voters can vote for the local person they prefer for their Member of Parliament (MP) regardless of

his/her party, because the partisan make-up of the legislature is determined by the second, party vote.

Ballot for MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL (MMP) voting system			
You have 2 votes			
This vote is for the person who will represent your riding in the House of Commons		This vote decides the share of seats that each of the parties listed below will have in the House of Commons	
	Bill Smith (<i>Purple</i>)		Blue Party
X	Nancy Jordan (<i>Blue</i>)		Pink Party
	Marg Newhope (<i>Pink</i>)	X	Yellow Party
	Phil Potts (<i>Yellow</i>)		Purple Party

In each constituency, the representative is chosen using a single winner method, typically First-Past the Post (that is, the candidate with the most votes—the plurality, but not necessarily the majority—wins).

Most MMP systems use closed party lists to elect the non-constituency MPs (also called list MPs). In some countries, candidates may stand for both a constituency and be on a party list (referred to in New Zealand as *dual candidacy*); in other countries they may be restricted to run either for a constituency or for a party list, but not both. There are several other variations.

Advantages of MMP

It is conceptually fairly simple, and bears a closer resemblance to the familiar First Past the Post system than does STV.

Disadvantages of MMP

- 1) Because of MMP's numerous forms, majority or collaborative governments can change MMP to give the parties more power. For example, the proportion of MPs who do not represent a constituency can be changed to give parties more choice as to who ends up in parliament, or the list from which non-constituency MPs are drawn can be either open to the voters to choose from or closed so that the parties can be sure certain candidates gain a seat (perhaps as a reward for some service to the party).
- 2) Some MPs do not represent a constituency. Therefore, either the size of electoral districts must be enlarged to maintain the same number of MPs, or the numbers of MPs must be increased by the number of MPs who do not represent a constituency.

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

STV is a voting system designed to achieve proportional representation through ranked voting in multi-seat (combined) constituencies (electoral districts or ridings).

The STV ballot obtains much more information from voters than do ballots of other systems. Voters

rank their choices in order of preference, i.e., 1, 2, 3, etc, and elect 3 or 4 or more members in districts that are larger than we are familiar with now. It is this larger district size that eliminates the disproportions evident in single member districts. Each voter gets just one vote, but the value of that vote may be distributed by fractions to second or third choices according to the voter's preferences, so that no part of the value of the vote is wasted. The aim of this system is to make all votes count. (*This paragraph by Timothy Jones, member of Fair Vote Canada.*)

Advantages of STV

- 1) The voter has more choices than with MMP. E.g., in an electoral district where three former ridings have been combined, the voters can choose among as many as three candidates from their favourite party (although not all parties may run a full slate). For example, if a candidate needs only 50 votes to win, but receives 100 votes, then half a vote is transferred to the second choice on each ballot. Everybody's vote will have some influence on the election outcome (unless, in some cases, the voter decided not to express a second or third, etc. preference).

Ballot for SINGLE TRANSFERRABLE VOTE (STP) voting system		
Number as many choices as you wish in the order of preference, 1 = first choice		
5	Bill Smith	Blue Party
1	Nancy Jordan	Pink Party
4	Lorna Harrison	Blue Party
	Phil Potts	Purple Party
6	Marg Newhope	Pink Party
3	Ed Bourbon	Blue Party
7	Sean MacDonald	Purple Party
2	Ellen Trollop	Pink Party

- 2) Political parties can do little or nothing to modify the rules of STV to favour their party or their candidates.
- 3) The voters get to choose among all the candidates that parties put forward; parties have no say over which of their candidates will have a seat, i.e., it gives more power to the people than does MMP.
- 4) Although electoral districts are larger than currently under FPP, the number of electoral district representatives (MPs) remains unchanged.

Disadvantages of STV

- 1) The system is conceptually more complex than MMP.
- 2) Analysis of votes is more complicated, although now that computers can do the analysis, this isn't a problem.

Proportional Representation: the “Magic” of a Randomly Selected Citizens’ Assembly

Though not perfect, a randomly selected citizens’ assembly is probably the best method for choosing a proportional representation electoral system for Canada. Here’s why.

Randomly selected citizens more representative than elected politicians

You cannot get a better representation of Canadians than by randomly selecting a sample from the Canadian population. Such a sample is far more representative of Canadians than are our elected political “representatives.”

When selecting members for a citizens’ assembly, we may wish to ensure the sample(s) don’t randomly miss some parts of the population. For instance, the citizens’ assembly on proportional representation in B.C. specified that the sample must contain a man and a woman from every electoral district, ensuring gender and geographical inclusiveness. Also, there had to be one man and one woman from the First Nations peoples.

Because people selected for an assembly can decline the invitation, and social activists are more willing to accept the invitation than others, there is a bias towards activists. So even random selection of people does not provide perfect representation. However, it’s about as perfect as one can get when dealing with humans.

Members of citizens’ assemblies have little personal gain

Randomly selected citizens have little to gain from being in a citizens’ assembly. They are not there as payment for some political favour. They will gain no personal power, nor are they trying to get elected or appointed to some cushy job.

Assembly recommendations are repeatable

If several randomly selected citizens’ assemblies each with 30 members or more are asked the same question, they should, assuming they are given the same information and follow the same processes, almost always come up with the same solution or answer.

This means that when a randomly selected citizens’ assembly finds a solution to a problem, there is less need to hold a referendum because the whole population would come up with the same solution if it were given the same information, the same process and the same time to study it. That’s the “magic” of a randomly selected sample.

Nonetheless, a referendum is advisable after the people have experienced the assemblies’ solution, and gained some of the information the assemblies had. This satisfies people’s need to give the stamp of approval to the assemblies’ answers, which is what such referendums usually do.

Conditions for a successful Assembly

A number of conditions must be met if assemblies are to reach the same conclusions that the entire population would. The important conditions are that

- 1) the assemblies are given the same mandate, 2) the same information, and 3) the same amount of time to study and understand the information they have been given.

Why did Provincial Assemblies on Electoral Reform provide Different Solutions?

Five provinces have undertaken studies on electoral reform (the months of study are approximate): British Columbia, (2003-2004, 11+ months), New Brunswick (2003-2005, ca. 8 months), Ontario (2006-2007, 8 months), Prince Edward Island (2005, ca. 8 months), and Quebec (2005-2006, 6 months). Only British Columbia and Ontario had randomly selected citizens’ assemblies. The other three provinces appointed commissions of one to eight people.

Nonetheless, all the studies except that done by the B.C. Citizens’ Assembly recommended adoption of the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. Assemblies gave several reasons for recommending MMP, among them being it posed the least change for voters.

British Columbia’s Assembly recommended the Single Transferable Vote (STV). Its assembly worked for the longest period of any single body (some provinces had more than one commission), and interestingly, after about the period of time that other studies ended (6-8 months), the B.C. Citizens’ Assembly was also ready to recommend MMP. However, the B.C. Assembly continued its study for a total of 10 months, ending by recommending STV because it gave more power to the people, and less to politicians.

The curse of referendums

The recommendations of both assemblies and all the commissions (except Quebec) were put to referendums, and all “failed.” The vote in the B.C. referendum “failed” because the provincial government did not want the vote to pass, and set the bar at an artificially high 60%. The referendum did obtain 57+% approval.

Ruling governments have not wanted to abandon the First Past the Post system that so often gave them



B.C. Citizen’s Assembly

majority governments with a minority of the votes. Also, referendums can be rigged in a number of other ways—the “yes” side can be under-funded, misleading information and sometimes even false statements are spread. No wonder voters opt for the status quo.

While randomly selected citizens’ assemblies may be the best means of assessing different voting systems, small commissions, if unbiased, apparently come to similar conclusions. Where the people’s will becomes subverted is in the referendums that are held to ratify the recommendations. Therefore, conclusions of assemblies or commissions should be binding through at least one or two elections to allow voters to experience the new system. After such experience in New Zealand, voters turned down any attempt by the government to return to the First Past the Post system.
P.E.K.S.

Educational Resources for Teachers and Schools

- **Electoral Systems** – Fair Vote Calgary has a PowerPoint Presentation that illustrates the differences between our current First Past the Post (FPP) and other electoral systems that use proportional representation. This slide-show contrasts FPP with Mixed-Member Proportional Representation. The **Teachers Guide** assists teachers in using this show in the classroom.
- Another PowerPoint slide-show, **Pizza Vote**, demonstrates how the Single Transferable Vote system could work. There is also an accompanying **Teacher’s Guide**.

Available from

These materials are new as of 23 Feb., 2015 and are available from <http://fairvotecalgary.ca/links-and-resources/>. Clicking on the blue links will download the PowerPoint or PDF document to your computer. Comments and positive feedback, especially suggestions for improvement, would be appreciated; please email edmonton@fairvote.ca. Fair Vote Calgary is pleased to co-operate with the Edmonton Chapter of Fair Vote Canada in presenting these materials.

Update

These materials were warmly welcomed by Grade 9 and 10 Social Studies teachers at the Greater Edmonton Teachers Convention, 26-27 Feb., 2015. Requests were made for materials suitable for Grade 6 and even younger. Younger students may find the CGP Grey videos (listed at the website below) useful.

Mark Hambridge, Leader, Fair Vote Calgary - a Fair Vote Canada Action Team.

<http://fairvotecalgary.ca/links-and-resources/>

Senate Reform

by Caspar Davis

The problem with the Senate is that it is merely an extension of the partisan political landscape.

With some simple changes, the Senate could become a real voice for the Canadian people, and a valid check on excesses of Parliament, where a “majority” party is routinely elected by little more than 1/3 of voters, usually after a campaign that is often dominated by a few, often ephemeral issues. On this flimsy basis, the plurality (very seldom majority) party claims a mandate to do whatever they want for four years. Moreover, the Prime Minister’s Office has sequestered so much power in the last 40 years or so that the Prime Minister, who is supposed to be merely first among equals, has become a *de facto* serial time-limited dictator.



The Canadian Senate in session.

The Senate could provide genuinely sober second thought if it were composed of *randomly selected* Canadians, with finite, perhaps overlapping 6-year terms. A randomly selected senate was endorsed by the next to last convention of the Progressive Conservative Party. Random selection has been tried and proven in many situations, notably in the BC Citizens’ Assembly on electoral reform.

Randomly chosen bodies tend to take their responsibilities very seriously, and they have the huge advantage of not being beholden to and needing to appease any particular groups. They are able to speak and act from their hearts, and could provide a very important moderating influence on what is a very flawed House of Commons.

Caspar Davis is a retired lawyer, living in Victoria, B.C. This was a letter he emailed to the CBC on June 16, 2015.

ETHICS AND RACIAL TENSIONS

We Are All France! Though We Are Never All Lebanon or Syria or Iraq!

by David Swanson

We are all France. Apparently. Though we are never all Lebanon or Syria or Iraq, for some reason. Or a long, long list of additional places.

We are led to believe that U.S. wars are not tolerated and cheered because of the colour or culture of the people being bombed and occupied. But let a relatively tiny number of people be murdered in a white, Christian, Western-European land, with a pro-war government, and suddenly sympathy is the order of the day.

"This is not just an attack on the French people, it is an attack on human decency and all things that we hold dear," says U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham. I'm not sure I hold ALL the same things dear as the senator, but for the most part I think he's exactly right and that sympathy damn well ought to be the order of the day following a horrific mass killing in France.

I just think the same should apply to everywhere else on earth as well. The majority of deaths in all recent wars are civilian. The majority of civilians are not hard to sympathize with once superficial barriers are overcome. Yet, the U.S. media never seems to declare deaths in Yemen or Pakistan or Palestine to be attacks on our common humanity.

I included "pro-war government" as a qualification above, because I can recall a time, way back in 2003, when I was the one shouting "We are all France," and pro-war advocates in the United States were demonizing France for its refusal to support a looming and guaranteed-to-be-catastrophic counter-productive U.S. war. France sympathized with U.S. deaths on 9/11, but counseled sanity, decency, and honesty in response. The U.S. told France to go to hell and renamed french fries in Congressional office buildings.

Now, 14 years into a global war on terror that reliably produces more terror, France is an enthusiastic invader, plunderer, bomber, and propagator of hateful bigotry. France also sells billions of dollars of weaponry to lovely little bastions of equality and liberty like Saudi Arabia, carefully ignoring Saudis' funding of anti-Western terrorist groups.

When U.S. militarism failed to prevent 9/11, I actually thought that would mean reduced militarism. When a Russian plane was recently blown up, I think I imagined for a split second that Russia would learn its lesson and stop repeating U.S. mistakes. When people were just killed in France, I didn't have any

time to fantasize about France coming to its senses, because a "socialist" president was already doing his Dubya-on-the-rubble imitation:

"To all those who have seen these awful things," said François Hollande, "I want to say we are going to lead a war which will be pitiless..."

"It is the job of thinking people not to be on the side of the executioners," said Albert Camus.

Please go back to thinking, France.

We do love you and wish you well and are deeply sorry for U.S. influence against your better tendencies.

*David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, and radio host. He is director of WorldBeyondWar.org and campaign coordinator for RootsAction.org. Swanson's books include *War Is A Lie*. He blogs at DavidSwanson.org and WarIsACrime.org. He hosts Talk Nation Radio. He is a 2015 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee. Posted 14 November, 2015.*

Veiled Faces and Citizenship Oath

by Patrick Brown

Government policy, introduced in 2011, banned niqab wearers from taking the Canadian Oath of Citizenship with their faces veiled. The reasons given were that it was necessary to clearly identify the individual, and that they should be seen to be speaking the words. Recently, [then] Prime Minister Harper said in the House of Commons that the niqab ban was supported by the "overwhelming majority" of Canadians.

This policy was challenged by Zunera Ishaq, a Muslim immigrant from Pakistan, on religious grounds. She agreed to remove her niqab so that she could be identified by an official when she wrote (and passed) her citizenship test two years ago, but she objected to removing it to take the oath in public.



Zunera Ishaq wearing her niqab.

The Federal Court upheld her challenge, over the objections of the [Harper] government. The government appealed, and on September 15 [2015] lost the appeal in Federal Court. Justice Mary Gleason supported the lower court ruling, which quoted the Citizenship Act in that citizenship judges must allow the greatest possible religious freedom when administering the oath. A further motion by the government for a stay of the ruling, to allow more time for preparation of an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, was denied by the Federal Court of Appeal on October 5.

Continued page 10, "Veiled faces."

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMICS

Climate Change and Fee and Dividend

by Andy Blair

By now, everyone knows it: we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions drastically if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change on our environment, our health, and our economy.

But how can we do this in a way that doesn't make life less affordable for people or businesses? After all, the ways of pricing carbon currently debated in Canada (regulations, Cap & Trade, or a straight carbon tax) will all increase the cost of carbon-intensive products and services—such as fossil-fuel based transport or home heating—and they could make income inequality even worse.

One answer is really very simple: a new revenue-neutral system called “Fee & Dividend” could be the simplest, fairest, and most effective market-based solution to our climate conundrum.

Here's how it works: fossil fuel companies pay a pollution “Fee” based on the CO₂ emissions produced by the fuel they extract or import. The fee starts at, say, \$15/ton and increases by \$10 every year—dissuading people from using increasingly expensive fossil fuels—until climate goals are reached. Because it's applied “upstream” (at the wellhead or at the border where it enters the economy) the fee affects pricing and usage downstream in virtually all sectors of the economy. This is a good thing: the increased costs of these fossil fuels is the price signal that discourages their use.

Here's the best part: the heart of Fee & Dividend is the “Dividend,” and simplicity is its key. Every annual quarter, 100% of the Fee collected is divvied up and distributed to residents, just like GST cheques were. There's no need for a new complex bureaucracy, as the Canada Revenue Agency is already set up to do it. This maximizes transparency and minimizes administrative costs.

The Dividend goes up as the Fee rises, helping the average family completely offset rising carbon prices.

Veiled faces, continued from p. 9

Patrick Brown is a co-founder of and contributing writer to Island Tides. He notes, “I'm still as impatient with computers as ever. I think they get really useful about six months before they become obsolete. But then I'm probably obsolete.”

Island Tides Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2015.

Unlike any other carbon pricing system, poverty is actually reduced as households with lower income (who use less carbon than the average) get cheques much larger than their additional costs. They come out ahead. In fact, an estimated two-thirds of families would break even or gain financially, while the top one-third of income earners would face a choice: either reduce their carbon footprints, or pay more.

The Dividend gives people the buying power to switch to lower-emission alternatives. Individuals, inventors and investors all have a predictably growing financial incentive to shrink carbon footprints. With the Fee “stick” and the Dividend “carrot,” Fee & Dividend leverages the power of the entire marketplace, without the political volatility of regulation or subsidies.

There's more: the Dividend helps boost the local economy. An in-depth study of Fee & Dividend by the prestigious Regional Economic Modelling, Inc. in the United States predicts that it will be a strong net job creator, while reducing emissions significantly. Revenue-neutrality in particular is critical. By putting more money in the pockets of people likely to spend it—but not so much they won't spend it locally—Fee & Dividend would stimulate job creation and economic activity in their communities. Modelling shows that the expected job losses in the fossil fuel industry are more than offset by growth in manufacturing and construction (e.g., wind, solar, efficiency in buildings and transportation), as well as in retail and health services.

I hope Unitarians across the country who take the Seventh Principle to heart will look closely at Fee & Dividend as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and poverty at the same time. It may only be part of the solution, but it could be an important part. And Canada could go from climate laggard to climate leader on the world stage if it becomes the first country to implement Fee & Dividend.

By levying a NAFTA- and WTO-compliant import fee on products from countries without comparable carbon pricing, this Fee & Dividend concept discourages nations like China from producing cut-price CO₂-intensive goods at the expense of greener domestic production...and our climate. Border adjustments help level the global playing field, while inducing other countries to adopt comparable carbon pricing.

Andy Blair is a current member of the Board of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice.



After the Sands

by Gordon Laxer

Hailed by Ralph Nader as “a **myth-destroying blockbuster book**”, *After the Sands* outlines a vision and road map to transition Canada to a low-carbon society: a plan lacking within all of Canada’s major political parties.

Despite its oil abundance, Canada is woefully unprepared for the next global oil supply crisis. Canada imports 40 percent of its oil, yet—unlike twenty-six of the other twenty-eight international energy agency members—has no strategic petroleum reserves to meet temporary shortages. Canadians use 27 to 39 percent more oil per capita than other sparsely populated, northern countries like Norway, Finland and Sweden.

After the Sands sets out a bold strategy using deep conservation and a Canada-first perspective. The goal: to end oil and natural gas exports and ensure that all Canadians get sufficient energy at affordable prices in a carbon-constrained future.

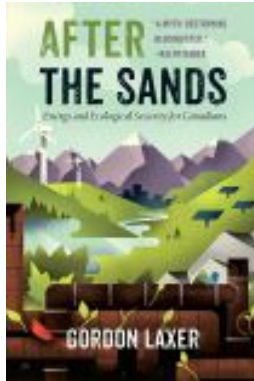
Canada has all the conventional, non-fracked oil and natural gas needed to transition to a low-carbon future. Remarkable hydro-power gives Canadians a large base of renewable energy, which can be expanded with wind, solar, geothermal and biomass. Few countries have these options in adequate quantities.

So what’s the problem? Why do we continue to harm the environment? How do we overcome the power of vested interests and untangle the corporate trade agreements that block Canadians from getting secure and fair access to the country’s own energy resources. Can Canada meet international emissions targets if it does not phase out Alberta Sands oil?

Impeccably researched, *After the Sands* is critical reading for anyone concerned about rising sea levels, pipeline and tanker spills, climate change chaos and Canada’s future in a carbon restricted world.

Gordon Laxer, PhD, is the founding director and former head of Parkland Institute at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. A political economist and professor emeritus at the University of Alberta, Laxer is a prominent public intellectual. He has been widely published in both newspapers and academic journals, and has authored several books, including Open for Business: The Roots of Foreign Ownership in Canada (Oxford University Press).

More info: octopusbooks.ca



Iceland Jails 26 Bankers

When Iceland's President, Olafur Ragnar Grímsson, was asked about his country's recovery from the 2008-2009 financial crisis, he famously said:

“We were wise enough not to follow the traditional prevailing orthodoxies of the Western financial world in the last 30 years. We introduced currency controls, we let the banks fail, we provided support for the poor, and we didn’t introduce austerity measures like you’re seeing in Europe.”

You can add one other item to that list: Iceland threw bankers into jail when they broke the law.



Olafur Grímsson,
President of Iceland



Unlike the Obama Administration Justice Department, the Icelandic Supreme Court and Reykjavik District Court have found the five top bankers from Landsbankinn and Kaupping—the two largest banks in the country—guilty of market manipulation, embezzlement, and breach of fiduciary duties (i.e. fraud).

Unfortunately, the maximum sentence for these crimes is six years, but Iceland’s Supreme Court is currently hearing arguments for expanding these sentences.



James Woods, Thur. Oct 22, 2015 at 01:36 PM PDT

Post script: October 23, 2015

In a move that would make many capitalists’ heads explode if it ever happened here, Iceland just sentenced their 26th banker to prison for his part in the 2008 financial collapse.

Addendum to the editorial

To become a dictatorship, a government, in addition to what the Harper government did, would need to:

- 1) cause violence (riots, bombings) in order to,
- 2) impose martial law, and then
- 3) suspend parliament.

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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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