

# Canada: More Troubles Ahead

by Mark Wegierski

Canada (which was visited by George W. Bush in late 2004) is a society which today appears to be an economic success, but which is building up numerous, deep-seated social, cultural, and economic tensions that may have a highly deleterious impact on its future. On a number of fronts, Canada is among the most “progressive” societies on the planet today. For example, it was the third country in the world (after the Netherlands and Belgium) to legitimate “same-sex marriage.” At the same time, it is a country which probably leads the world in its fervent embrace of multiculturalism; mass, dissimilar immigration; affirmative-action (which is called “employment equity” in Canada); and programmatic “diversity.” It is also developing a legal regime where virtually any pointed criticisms of those policies can be treated as “hate-speech.” This is especially ominous for the future of the country, as both media commentators and ordinary people are terrified of defying a system of “political correctness” that is far more entrenched and severe than that found in most of the United States.

Canada is clearly a society where what could be called “the broader Right” has a comparatively marginal existence. One irony is that “neoconservatives” are virtually considered a “far Right” faction in Canada. Indeed, the Right in Canada lacks anything approaching the comparatively large, broadly conservative infrastructure in the United States (typified by such institutions as the Intercollegiate Studies Institute – ISI). The two main centers of the Canadian Right are the almost entirely economically-focused Fraser Institute and the National Citizens’ Coalition (NCC). The Centre for Cultural Renewal in Ottawa – a focus for religious-minded conservatives – is small and does not offer

scholarships or grants. The main conservative publications in Canada are the Western-Canadian-based *Western Standard* (which arose in the wake of the ominous collapse of the *Report* publications of the Byfield family), *The Interim: Canada’s Life and Family Newspaper*, and *Catholic Insight* (Toronto). Despite various attempts of left-liberals to classify such major newspapers as *The National Post*, *The Toronto Sun*, or *The Calgary Herald* as “right-wing” about the most that can be said about them is that there is some minimal presence of very broadly conservative opinions in them. Indeed, those broadly right-wing elements, present to some extent in those papers, most often take the form of neoconservatism.

Part of the broadly conservative infrastructure in the United States are possibly hundreds of more conservative-oriented, private colleges. Yet in Canada, there is only one prominent private college, Trinity Western University in British Columbia. Nearly all Canadian universities – with the possible, partial exception of the University of Calgary – are dominated to a greater extent than universities in the United States by left-liberals and the far Left. So, without an effective intellectual base, there is very little possibility of strengthening the social base of conservatism in Canada.

The Reform Party, formed in 1987 as a Western-Canada-based, regional protest party became a national party in 1991, the third-largest party in the federal Parliament after the 1993 election, and the second-largest party (the Official Opposition), in the 1997 election. In 1998-2000, the Reform Party attempted to broaden itself into the Canadian Alliance, but failed to win the 2000 federal election, although it remained the second-largest party. Finally, in December 2003, the merger between the Canadian Alliance and the “ultra-moderate” Progressive Conservatives resulted in a reconstituted Conservative Party of Canada, with Stephen Harper (the former leader of the Canadian Alliance) winning its leadership in March 2004.

In the June 28, 2004, federal election in Canada, the

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*Mark Wegierski is a Toronto-based writer and historian. He is a frequent contributor to The Social Contract.*

Conservative Party failed to unseat the Liberals, although during much of the campaign, it had been predicted – especially in light of some especially egregious government financial scandals – that the Conservatives would win the largest number of seats in the federal Parliament. In fact, the Liberals, under Paul Martin, Jr., retained a minority government with 135 seats (with 37 percent of the popular vote) in the 308-seat federal Parliament. The Conservatives won 99 seats (with 30 percent of the popular vote). The New Democratic Party (NDP) – Canada’s social democrats – under their dynamic new leader, Jack Layton (selected in January 2003), may hold the balance of power, with 19 seats (16 percent of the popular vote). Although the NDP held only fourteen seats in the federal Parliament before its dissolution, it has exercised a huge intellectual influence on Canada, especially on the Liberal Party. The Quebec nationalist/separatist Bloc Québécois, under Gilles Duceppe, won 54 of 75 seats in Quebec (with 13 percent of the Canada-wide popular vote). The Green Party won over 4 percent of the popular vote, but not a single seat. There was also one independent candidate elected (from Surrey, British Columbia). Canada has a first-past-the-post system.

Historically, few minority governments in Canadian federal politics have lasted more than a year. Such a situation is inherently unstable, and Paul Martin will be looking for an opportune moment to call an election, or have his government fall over a “winning” issue – thereby precipitating a victorious election campaign.

It may be noted that Canada’s high-immigration and multiculturalism policies are continuing without interruption, and virtually without any debate. Two recent scandals concerning the Citizenship and Immigration Minister, Judy Sgro, involved issues that were comparatively trivial when looked at in terms of the overall immigration picture. These concerned the matter of failed refugee-claimants being offered “sanctuary” by Canada’s very generous and liberal churches, and the so-called “Stripper-gate” in which the Minister fast-tracked the immigration process for a woman stripper who had worked for her election campaign. This brought further attention to Canada’s far more extensive, official “stripper visa program.”

Immigration into Canada continues at a rapid clip of about a quarter million persons per year – about 80 percent of it consisting of “visible minorities” (a term of

official usage in Canada). It is more than twice per capita the official immigration rate into the United States. Virtually all of the immigrants end up in the large metropolitan centers of Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal. Given the overwhelmingly urban focus of current-day Canadian society and culture – as well as the official policy of multiculturalism – the social and cultural weight of this new immigration is far in excess of its actual numbers. Ironically, before the 1960s, Toronto was seen

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as being so British and conservative that it was nicknamed “Tory Toronto.” Indeed, Toronto is at the epicenter of the vast transformations that are overtaking Canada today. In the municipal elections of November 2003, it was generally acknowledged that the Left had triumphed, electing about three-fourths of the councilors as well as the mayor.

In late 2004, Tommy Douglas, the exemplar of the “Old Left” (and mostly socially-conservative) Canadian party – and known as “the father of medicare” – was named “the Greatest Canadian Ever” in a television contest. It is not often remembered that his policies were designed and conceived in a society that was young, productive, and with large and stable families. Today, with an aging society, with half of the economy accounted for by government, and with the decline of the family, the earlier-constructed welfare state and its medicare are clearly going to be stretched to a breaking point – problems which mass, dissimilar immigration is not likely to cure. •