

Shaping Northern Insights together



**NORTHERN
INSIGHTS**

by Larry Sanders



Shaping Canada's future

You've all seen the television ads. A solemn male voice, with words in white letters on a black screen, tells you that the government of Canada has tabled proposals for "Shaping Canada's Future, Together". A 1-800 number appears, with a hint that it's your patriotic duty as a Canadian to call the number, and "get involved".

Well, dear readers, I'm no shirker. I called that number. When I called the first time, it was a Sunday evening. I reached a recording telling me, "Our offices are now closed. Please call back during regular office hours." When I tried again Monday morning, a friendly female voice (live this time) asked for my address and postal code, and whether I wanted the documents in English only or French only. I asked for English, somewhat surprised that the documents wouldn't automatically be in both languages. Two and a half weeks later, two documents arrived; the *Proposals* themselves, and a companion document on *Economic Union*.

Are they worth reading, you ask? The answer is "yes", if you like to follow the intricate details of public policy debates, or want to make a submission to the Special Joint Committee of the House of Commons and Senate. The answer is "no" if you are satisfied with the following the debate in the media.

Highlights

For me, the highlights are:

- (1) The proposals are just that - proposals. Mulroney has dropped his "take it as it is" approach that was so disastrous in the Meech Lake process.
- (2) Aboriginal self-government is recognized, but constitutional entrenchment of a clear definition is put off for up to ten years. Instead, Ottawa says it will entrench local and regional self-government agreements, once these are negotiated.
- (3) Quebec's already existing "distinctiveness", which was put into law by the Quebec Act of 1774, will be entrenched in the constitution. This "distinct society", according to the proposals, can be defined (and thus limited) to Quebec's power to "protect the quality of French as an expression of its culture and as an expression of the primary language of work, instruction, communication, commerce and business in Quebec."
- (4) The appointed Senate would be replaced with an elected one. Ottawa has deferred the thorny questions of the exact number of Senators per province, or how many Aboriginal seats, to the Special Joint Committee. This elected Senate would not have the right to set the government's budgetary or foreign policies, but can hold up legislation with a "suspensive veto" for six months, at which time the House of Commons can pass the legislation again, and make it law. The Senate would be elected at the same time as the House of Commons. Major national appointments, such as the head of the Bank of Canada or the CBC, would have to be approved by the Senate.
- (5) Federal provincial conferences would achieve constitutional recognition through the creation of something called the *Council of the Federation*. Federal and provincial ministers on this *Council* would vote on important subjects, such as "the harmonization of fiscal policies" and the details of power-sharing arrangements. Decisions of the *Council of the Federation* would have to be ratified by the federal cabinet and "at least seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population".
- (6) "Property Rights" which are not clearly defined anywhere in the *Proposals*, would be added to the Charter of Rights.

Not in proposals

For me, there are important aspects to this discussion that are NOT in the *Proposals*. Presumably, if we can believe Mulroney's conversion to openness, these *Proposals for Shaping Canada's Future Together* can be amended or added to before next February's deadline, through public discussion.

As my contribution, I have decided to explore a number of issues, many of which are not in the *Proposals*. In columns over the next three weeks, I will discuss I will discuss aboriginal self-government, making northern Ontario a separate province, and making municipalities constitutional.

But I also don't want to be inflexible. If Mulroney can do it, so can NORTHERN INSIGHTS. If you have some aspect of the constitutional discussion you think I should talk about, write to me. My address is 72 Jean Street, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7A 5E9.



TAKE TIME TO REMEMBER

Much has happened since the last Remembrance Day

Since we last observed Remembrance Day, the world has moved forward at an astonishing pace. The Gulf War ended with Kuwait freed once more, and our Canadian Forces returned home to the victorious welcome given our returning troops some 45 years ago. Dramatic changes began sweeping the Soviet Union where the people insisted on the kind of democracy we defended half a century ago. The two Germanies were reunited and the independence of the Baltic states was generally recognized. These changes have come to us almost instantly on our television screens.

I wonder, as we prepare for Remembrance Day, how it might have been. Had reporters carried today's sophisticated equipment with them to Hong Kong, Kapyong, Dieppe, Ortona or Vimy Ridge. Would we better appreciate the terrible cost of freedom, had Canadians seen those battles taking place? Would we have a better understanding of the value of our own country and the awful sacrifices which have been made in its name? And would we, then, not be entirely resolute in our determination to keep our wonderful country together?

On November 11, let us take a moment to remember those who fought and those who died for our freedom, and to pledge that their valiant efforts will not have been in vain. They fought, and often died, for a proud, united and prosperous Canada.

Réginald Bélair, M.P.
Cochrane / Superior

Remember me?

I lay in Flanders Field
Over the graves of death
Where a little girl kneels
Her name is Anna-Beth

She lost her grandfather
He was very brave and stern
So that's why her mother
Told her to learn
... about Remembrance Day

So do you know who I am
Of course you do
I am a poppy
Who lay in Flanders Field

Kaitlyn Notwell, '91.

Editor's note: Kaitlyn Notwell is a grade four student — and poet — in Terrace Bay.



Remembrance Day 1991



The Ladies Auxiliary of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #223, held their Poppy Day Tea and Bazaar last Saturday afternoon. There was a penny auction, as well as a bake table, knitting and a door prize.