

examination of the nature of meaning. What was the meaning of those memories? Those August nights on which we talked about art, music, drama, and poetry were, perhaps, our own declaration of independence. Our ideas were independent, we seem to have been saying, our feelings couldn't be dictated, and ideas and feelings would outlast any bureaucracy, because serious art survives.

I believe that, just as I believe that it is an artist's responsibility to do everything possible to safeguard his or her own independence from all who would encroach upon it. So long as an artist has any choice at all, the artist must, as it were, choose independence.

In Latvian folklore, the Castle of Light is a symbol of Latvia's independence. When the Black Knight stole the key to the castle from the Bear-Slayer, the castle sank into the Daugava, darkened and drowned. The Castle of Light has been returned to its foundation, but the United States was not among the first to cheer its early (or late, but better late than never) light. In this instance at least, countries around the world revealed themselves as caring more for the principles of democracy than the United States. We let Gorbachev make the choice for us, privileging an old-boy network above principle.

Did we simply not have the courage of our convictions? Did we simply not have any convictions?

*Kelly Cherry writes from Madison, Wisconsin.*

## Letter From Canada

by *Kenneth McDonald*

### A Guide to Political Reform



In May 1987 a meeting of about two hundred delegates from the four Western provinces met in Vancouver to discuss a common concern: alienation of Western Canada that resulted from the concentration of political power in an Ottawa largely controlled by Ontario and Quebec. Most of the delegates were small "c" conservatives who be-

lieved in individual freedom, free enterprise, and traditional values. Five months later at a founding convention in Winnipeg, the Reform Party of Canada committed itself to developing policies within three main themes: more effective representation of the West; more accountability by members of Parliament; and a small "c" conservative economic agenda.

The intervening years have seen the fledgling party grow from three thousand members to more than ninety thousand, and from a Western regional base to a federal party active in all provinces except Quebec. (Although many of its policies might appeal to Quebecers' innate conservatism, the party sees little point in pursuing this while the province persists in its flirtation with sovereignty. By the same token it notes the contradiction facing a prime minister from Quebec, who like any prime minister is dependent upon Quebec votes for electoral victory, in presuming to negotiate for Canada.)

Reform's elected leader is 49-year-old Preston Manning, a successful management consultant who took no active part in politics from 1967, when his father Ernest retired after 25 years as premier of Alberta, until 1987. During that period, however, he developed his vision of a New Canada, which he described in an October 29, 1990, interview with *Maclean's* as "a place where citizens insist that governments live within their means, where real jobs with real incomes are provided not by government but by internationally competitive, environmentally sustainable businesses and industries. The New Canada is a place where Parliament works because it has been reformed, where the national government is dedicated to the proposition that all Canadians should be treated equally without regard to race, language and culture."

The party published a blue book of principles and policies that has now been revised to incorporate changes adopted by resolutions of the party's Assembly in Saskatoon in April of 1991. In his foreword, Manning contrasts the Old with the New Canada his party is dedicated to defining and building. The Old Canada's leaders "have focused their attention, not on building a federation of equal provinces, but on building a federation of

founding peoples (the English and French) distinguished by official languages policy and government-supported culture." That Old Canada, he maintains, is one of top-down governments living beyond their means and sheltering behind an undemocratic Parliament emasculated by strict party discipline—and it is ill-prepared to compete in the world's emerging free-market, free-trade environment. A New Canada "must be a *federation of provinces*, not a federation of founding races or ethnic groups."

If there is one constant thread that weaves its way through the 39-page book it is a profound belief in the common sense of the common people. Let the people participate directly in making and amending their constitution. Institute binding referenda, voters' initiatives, and recall. Make elected representatives accountable not to the party hierarchy but to the people who elected them and whose views they are expected to express. Consult the people before major policy decisions are made. Change the appointed Senate (which allots 24 seats each to Ontario and Quebec, but only six each to the other provinces) to one that is elected, has equal representation from each province, and an effective veto over House of Commons legislation.

Trusting the people is reflected in economic policy (free enterprise, private property, freedom of contract, and free markets), in trade and agriculture (scrap inter-provincial trade barriers, reduce and eventually eliminate government subsidies), in energy (private sector development, no government subsidies, grants, loan guarantees, or special tax treatment), monetary policy (slow, steady growth in money supply, regional inputs to fiscal policy), a more competitive banking system, and constructive relations between unions and employers.

Governments should look upon tax revenues as "funds held in trust." Governments and the civil servants, politicians and political parties of which they are composed exist to serve the people. Reform's proposals for returning Canada's governments to fiscal responsibility include eliminating or reducing expenditure on a variety of activities: thick layers of middle management in the civil service; official bilingualism, multiculturalism, and government ad-

vertising; special interest advocacy groups; foreign aid; subsidies and tax concessions to business; Crown corporations (to be sold); and universal social programs such as daycare.

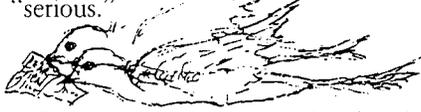
Tax reform would be undertaken with the principal objective of raising funds to pay for government programs the people approve. The party opposes the use of tax concessions in attempts to manipulate investment behavior and industrial structure. All consumption taxes should be visible, and a flat tax is desirable.

Social reform encompasses the welfare state, language and culture, and immigration. The Reform Party believes that although the truly indigent must be cared for, the legitimate role of government is to do for people "whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all—or do as well—for themselves individually or through non-governmental organizations." It supports a recognition of French in Quebec and English elsewhere as the languages of work and society, upholds the right of individuals or groups to preserve cultural heritages, but opposes government intervention in cultural matters and would abolish the federal department of multiculturalism. It would orient immigration policy toward Canada's economic needs, but here again would submit all proposed changes to referendum.

How do these proposals sit with the Canadian public? The 1988 federal election came too soon after the party's founding to judge. Nevertheless, it ran candidates in 72 of the 282 ridings, got 2.1 percent of the popular vote, and although it failed to win a seat it took votes away from the winning Progressive Conservatives in a dozen or more close-run ridings. Manning ran against former prime minister Joe Clark (PC) in Alberta and came an easy second to him with 11,152 votes against his 17,847. In another Alberta riding, however, the PC winner died five days later, and when the obligatory by-election was called in April 1989, Reform candidate Deborah Grey—who had come a close fourth in the general election—won handily with 11,154 votes, as many as the other three candidates combined. Six months later, the Alberta government held an unprecedented election for one of its Senate seats that had fallen

vacant, and Reform's Stanley Waters won it with almost twice as many votes as the runner-up.

In the January 6, 1992, issue of *Maclean's*, its Decima poll rated support for the party at 59 percent in Manning's native Alberta and an average of 46 percent in the nine English-speaking provinces. Richard Johnston, a University of British Columbia political scientist, was quoted as saying that this did not necessarily mean that 46 percent of English Canadians would vote for Reform in the next election, but that support for the party was "serious."



Perhaps the best gauge of Reform's success is the reaction to it. The three older parties attack it openly. The prevailing left-liberal print and electronic press, and the New Class it panders to, focus on the immigration, language, and multicultural policies that are their natural targets. But these, polls show, are prime irritants to a majority of Canadians—the ignored majority that Manning appeals to.

The fact is that Reform's proposals are not new; they have bubbled for years in the newsletters of voluntary groups—such as the 40,000 member National Citizens' Coalition—that advocate more freedom through less government. But so long as the ideas were rejected by the three old-line parties, there could be no representative voice in Parliament; the groups could offer no prospect of tangible results. Now, their supporters have somewhere to turn.

Thus does Preston Manning stand to reap where many others sowed. He had not only the political wit to see a suppressed majority yearning for reform, but the organizing ability and even more the personal guts and integrity to stake out ground on which he is now being attacked. In the next federal election (1992 or 1993), his party will win seats. Whether they are enough to give it a balance of power is less important than the fact that it will be voicing opinions in national debates that have not been heard for a generation.

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## Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

### Seeing the Wizard Off



A historical sense can be a wonderful thing to have. Not long ago, for instance, someone reminded me that when Christianity was as old as Islam is now, the Inquisition was going full tilt. When Islam gets to be two thousand years old, he suggested, maybe it'll be as guilt-ridden and effete as Christianity has become. I find that comforting, don't you?

Last November I called on history to console a friend who'd recently moved to Baton Rouge and found himself dismayed by the gubernatorial contest between Edwin Edwards and David Duke. Having to choose between a candidate known as the "Silver Zipper" and another billed as a "Nazi for the 90's" made him—well, uncomfortable. I pointed out that whoever won wouldn't be the worst governor Louisiana ever had; in fact, he probably wouldn't even be the worst governor in living memory. For some reason, that didn't cheer him up.

Boy, was I wrong when I complained a couple of years ago in this magazine that Southern politics have become boring. I was wrong that they've become boring, and I was wrong to complain. I will stay after class and write 500 times: "Boring is not necessarily bad."

What went awry in the land of dreamy dreams? Four or five years ago, James Moffett, head of the Louisiana Council for Fiscal Reform, was telling the *Wall Street Journal* that "a modern era of politics is fixing to evolve" in his state. Yet here was a Baton Rouge Junior Leaguer saying in the *Washington Post* that she was going to vote for Duke because, unlike Edwards, he wouldn't last more than four years in office and maybe somebody would shoot him sooner than that. She wasn't the only Louisianan talking wistfully about the ".38 calibre recall" that took out Huey Long. How did matters get that out of hand?

The problem, of course, went back to the primary, when roughly two-thirds of the voters voted against each of the three major candidates. In each