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## POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

### On Canadian Politics

Greg Kaza's article on Canadian Red Tory and former prime minister Brian Mulroney ("Bush's Red Tory," *Vital Signs*, August) was well informed and insightful almost throughout. But near the end, Mr. Kaza erroneously stated that Reform Party leader Preston Manning "has no intention of abandoning his conservative base." In fact, he already has. Except for one issue—government spending and the related areas of taxation, deficit, and debt—the Manning party is barely distinguishable from Canada's others.

Former supporters differ on when the Reform Party went off the rails. For some, it was during the 1997 federal election campaign, when Reform joined the *status quo* parties in refusing to discuss immigration. Since then, Manning has made it his priority to merge Reform with the Red Tories of the Progressive Conservatives to create a new group called United Alternative, which he desperately hopes will be acceptable to corporate donors and the Toronto media. Typical of this supposed populist's leadership style, Manning threatens to expel Reform MPs who oppose the plan. Consequently, the party is on the verge of splitting.

This project has so preoccupied Manning that he has had little to say about anything else, except to proclaim his wholehearted support for Canada's participation in bombing the Serbs.

Some Canadians say this is a disappointing end to a party that once held great promise. Others say the party's direction was apparent soon after its founding in 1987. But it would take an extreme optimist—or a liberal—to say that Manning has done Canadian politics any good.

—Greg Klein  
*Calgary, Alberta*

and just how to get them all. I won't re-subscribe; it depresses me.

My remembrance of the "old" Corps is one of fondness because of the lack of "benefits." I cannot remember even one "benefit." I think the primary reason we joined up in those days (World War II) was because of patriotism. We sure were not in it because of whatever "benefits" we could receive.

Mr. Check's report that the Navy thinks it can make its 22,000 vacancies more attractive by installing shipboard TV sets and e-mail facilities says a lot about today's potential "fighting men." I can remember when the ladies first "came aboard." The only order of the day was: "No fraternizing on base." If any of those women Marines ever got pregnant or complained of "sexual harassment," I sure don't remember it.

The revelation that today's Corps spends more money on child-development centers and family housing than it does on ammunition is no surprise to me: It's all in the *Marine Corps Times*. The last line of the Kipling poem that Mr. Check quoted hit it right on the button: "If you want to win your battles take an' work your bloomin' guns." It's hard to imagine today's GIs "workin' their bloomin' guns."

—Ralph Willis  
*Hemet, CA*

Regarding Christopher Check's article on the lack of recruits in the U.S. military: Ayn Rand may have said some things that *Chronicles* readers would find hard to swallow, but I remember one observation she made to the effect that freedom would never lack for people to fight for it. Maybe this is the core of the U.S. military's problem.

—Wilma J. Moore  
*Santa Rosa, CA*

### On Military Readiness

I'd like to commend Christopher Check on his great piece "Not Ready, Aim, Misfire" (August). It was superb and right on the mark.

I subscribe to the *Marine Corps Times*, which is mainly aimed at active-duty Marines. Mostly, the *Times* is concerned with this benefit and that benefit,

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**THE FBI/BATF RAID** on the David Koresh home (not compound) has been the subject of controversy since the first day the BATF zealots tried to storm the house. All along, the FBI and the Justice Department have fabricated stories and information with an effrontery that would astonish even the Clintons: Koresh was stockpiling illegal arms, they said (he was a legal dealer accused of a minor licensing infraction); he was abusing the children, said Reno (no, claimed the FBI, they never made such a charge); the Branch Davidians committed suicide rather than submit to arrest (there is good evidence not only that the FBI used incendiary devices but also that their tanks fired into the house in the final firestorm).

Now Miss Reno wants us to trust a career Republican politician whom she selected to lead the investigation. Anyone who has watched the tapes of the congressional hearings (captured well in the documentary, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*) knows that the Republicans let the Democrats get away (perhaps literally) with murder. Tom Lantos and Chuck Schumer—the two most sinister figures ever to sit in Congress—bullied and abused decent and patriotic witnesses, ignored the evidence, and misrepresented facts that were on the record, while the Republican members were contented with whining or making, from time to time, fine-sounding patriotic statements. They never stood up to the lying and hate-mongering of their opposition. The Republicans had their chance.

The most likely explanation for the impending investigation is simple: There is too much information out there in books and films and on the Internet. Independent-minded people on the left and right do not hesitate to accuse Reno and company of murder. What to do? Why not leak some damaging hints, set up a mock investigation that ends up in the disgrace of one or two agents who only followed orders, and proclaim to the world that “the system works”? It is a technique that got Bill Clinton off the hook, and it will certainly work for his attorney general.

We may never know what really happened at Waco. One thing is certain: No representative of either party can be trusted to head the investigation. Why not set up a blue-ribbon commission with Gerry Spence, Ross Perot, Alex Cockburn,

Jesse Ventura, Noam Chomsky, and Pat Buchanan? They are all mavericks with a taste for plain talk. They agree on very few things and might just have the courage to find out the truth and tell it to the American people. Which is why none of them will ever be trusted by the attorney general of the United States.

—Thomas Fleming

**JANET RENO** fears that her credibility has been damaged. Imagine that! Just because the federal government used “pyrotechnic devices” against the Branch Davidian compound?

That might do it, given the Reno Justice Department’s insistence over so many years that no such devices were used: Except, well, it now seems that maybe that wasn’t quite 100-percent accurate. Yes, the government *did* use pyrotechnics, the *Dallas Morning News* revealed in late August, and great has been Reno’s discombobulation since then.

Investigations, internal and congressional, were pending just before Labor Day. Re-investigations, you might call them. We’ve been down this trail before. Subsequent to the Branch Davidian calamity, in which more than 80 Koreshians died (not to mention four government agents), Reno commissioned an internal investigation.

It was not what everybody and his dog would call a penetrating inquiry. Former Watergate prosecutor Henry Ruth, Jr., who helped with the Treasury Department’s review of the disaster, said of the report that Justice eventually produced: “People at the time thought the Justice Department evaluation was a whitewash in the sense that it didn’t tell the full facts about what was known. It clearly was written to vindicate the attorney general . . .” Ruth says the investigators “didn’t use the proper types of investigatory techniques necessary to explore the facts.” Hence various facts did not get explored.

And that was just the start—a grisly, but in retrospect hardly surprising, preview of the Clinton administration’s favorite indoor sport, fact management.

Reno is distressed to see her credibility in tatters? Who knew the dear lady had any credibility left after seven years of helping Bill Clinton keep the lid on his private embarrassments, like the case of the FBI files that wound up in the White

House?

The truth is, of course, that no one in the administration, at this point, is longer in the credibility department than is she. Maybe that thought will cheer her up.

The tone of an administration comes from the top—the White House. No administration, it should go without saying, will be more honest than the chief executive directs it to be.

Even before Monica, Clinton made it abundantly plain that the only facts he wanted laid out in the sunshine for impartial inspection were those that embarrassed Republicans, spiffed up his own image, or, preferably, both. A federal judge in Arkansas—an ex-student of the President’s—recently fined her former professor \$90,000 for lying under oath. That modest figure was not enough, probably, but it made official what everyone has known for a long time: Bill Clinton is a liar.

What torments his disregard for truth may have caused Janet Reno, no one will ever know. What is clear is that, with this administration, nothing is ever clear. Everything is murky. The sun never penetrates to dark corners of deed and motive; the moral cobwebs block it out.

With the attorney general’s “credibility” at stake, and her critics pressing hard, we may find out in due course what really went on at the Davidian compound: what the pyrotechnics were for, why the Army’s Delta Force was on hand, what the hell the federal government thought it was doing anyway, employing military-style measures against nutty but not noticeably violent people.

It seems obvious that, considering how the siege worked out, those who laid it, approved it, executed it would give anything to be able to take back everything. What were they thinking, though, in the first place? That all they had to do was demonstrate the power of the U.S. government? Count on the Koreshians’ patriotic instincts? What?

The whole misconceived, misbegotten enterprise speaks strong words about the arrogance of unchecked power. This same arrogance blocks the channels of conscience, feeds the arrogant assumption that as for the voters, those boobs, *we’ll* tell ’em what they need to know, when and if they need to know it.

Did Janet Reno sense what she was getting in for when she signed on for the