

Yes Virginia, there is a Canada Clause?

Once again, the government of Canada is treating its electorate like fools. We're being force-fed a "unanimous constitutional agreement," unilaterally passed by the cream of Canadians on hand-picked committees, supposedly encompassing all political affiliations. All three major parliamentary parties are agreed: the Liberals, NDP, and Conservatives are all pushing for a "Yes" vote.

Doesn't this strike anybody as strange? The reason we have a multi-party system is to represent different bodies of thought. How can the NDP and the Conservatives think long and hard, starting from two completely different points of view, and still manage to come to the same conclusion on such diverse issues as aboriginal rights and senate reform? There is some serious deal being made here. Either Mulroney has made an offer no one can

refuse, or the centralization of Canadian political parties is finally complete, and we can send two-thirds of parliament home and run the country through the New Liberatives.

Does anyone have a chance to come up with a simple yes or no? Well, this Consensus Report covers senate reform. Is this an issue to be solved by referendum? Especially a referendum in which Quebec's vote is counted separately from the rest of Canada? No, this should go through the

House of Commons and be voted on by our elected representatives.

The government has set up a blanket policy on at least four distinctive issues (senate reform, national unity, first people's right to self-government, and the economy). How can we address in bulk issues that have always been worth considering separately? How likely is it that everyone will agree to the "solutions" for every issue? And yet, our only option is yes or no to the entire deal. Referendum is a completely invalid way of dealing with these issues.

The idea the all-new, coalesced government is giving us is: "A yes vote is a vote for Canada. A no vote means you're rotten, racist, elitist, no-good separationists." People are thinking of spoiling their ballots, people are threatening to vote yes just to end the whole thing.

There is no guarantee that a yes vote will tidily wrap up the whole mess. It will be just the beginning. Use your vote to protest individually against the personal insult the government is dealing you. Streamlining and steamrolling aren't tactics for a united Canada, but for a crushed one.

Jennifer Beck

the centralization of Canadian politics is finally complete

Just how liberated are we?

This month Halifax lost its innocence. The recent revelation that young women are being abducted or lured off the streets into the hell of the prostitution world has seeped into our consciousness like a toxic leak of moral pollution. It is a medieval nightmare in which vulnerable young women, child-women really (some of them are only fourteen or fifteen years old), are seduced by promises of jewels and riches into the underworld of sex and violence. How, in this age of liberated attitudes, can this be happening today?

The fact that it is happening and has been happening since those medieval days to which it seems to belong deserves some consideration. Prostitution doesn't go away; as the old adage goes, it is the world's oldest profession. In earlier times prostitution was accepted and entwined in the culture in the form of harems. In China it was perfectly acceptable for a wealthy man to have a number of concubines. Without condoning the role these practices placed women into, the lesson here is that prostitution in some form appears to be inherent to most cultures. Either it is tolerated and legitimized or it is suppressed and forced into the underworld.

Despite vast improvements in the scope of sexual liberation, our culture seems caught between Victorian notions of prudity and modern outbursts like Madonna. Sex is everywhere in our culture. It is in songs, movies, magazines, and even available to young children through TV. Sex education is taught in elementary schools while Dr. Ruth and the sex therapy circuit are flourishing as never before. But when it comes to prostitution, we can only blush and legislate it underground.

Why are we so ashamed of prostitution? Is it because we cling to the notion that sex is okay if it is associated with romance but not if it is exchanged for money? While that is a concept

worth holding onto, especially in these days of AIDS, it is not a realistic approach to the problem. Sex has been recognized as a physical drive, and as we have seen through time immemorial, people will pay to get it.

The recent exposure of prostitution rings in Halifax has provoked a renewed effort to beat prostitution once and for all. Pimps are being hunted down, as they should be, for the violence they inflicted on a number of young women. But when the media fuss dies down, as it has already begun to do, girls will still be forced into prostitution in Halifax and every other Canadian city. It has not and will not go away by cracking down on pimps. It will just go deeper underground.

In the United States the Reagan government pledged billions of dollars

Why are we so ashamed of prostitution?

to fight drug lords in Columbia. Nearly a decade later the nation is that much poorer and the drug problem is worse than ever. While the argument is not being made that narcotic addiction and sex drive are comparable, the drug and prostitution issues are similar in that they both seem to survive in our culture despite intense efforts to suppress them.

The legalization of prostitution does not imply that society or the government condones it. Alcohol is legal, not because the government feels everyone should drink, but because it is recognized that the sale of a potentially dangerous substance needs to be regulated and controlled. We are all aware that sex is a potentially deadly experience. Why then is the sex trade not

recognized and regulated? The argument that prostitution is a voluntary encounter between two consenting adults simply doesn't hold up in the light of the recent exposure of the Halifax prostitution rings. Confused fifteen year old girls who are beaten with coat hangers and shot with stun guns are not consenting adults. They are children who are being abducted and raped.

If we absorb the lesson from history and accept that prostitution is here to stay we can turn it into a legitimate aspect of our cities instead of a shameful industry that we must conceal in the red light district. Let us take a moment and envision prostitution as a legal profession. Rather than young women shivering on street corners and going off in cars with strange men, there could be official brothels which customers visited. If a prostitute (and we shouldn't rule out male prostitutes; they need protection too) felt threatened by a client, whether through physical force or the refusal to wear a condom, security would be at hand. Prices could be competitive so as to put pimps out of business and the whole ordeal would be safer for prostitutes and their customers. In addition, neighbourhoods would be cleaned up, and young women wouldn't be accosted on the street by 'Johns' who mistake them for hookers.

Prostitution is only a dirty word because it has been cast into the shadow of society. What could be a legitimate profession has become an unspeakable evil because we can't come to terms with our social attitudes towards sexuality. The hypocrisy of this culture which cloaks advertisements to children in sexual innuendoes yet allows teenagers to be abducted for sexual exploitation must be dealt with. The story is too close to home.

Chantal Saxe

LETTERS

The *Dalhousie Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Friday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Double-check

To the editor:

I hope you can accommodate this reply to the "Language check" letter in your last issue. I think it is truly unfortunate that far too often we indulge in arguments that are ahistorical. If Mr. Chris Doyle had done his homework, he might have realized that the linguistic description of people of African descent as Black or Dark has its roots firmly planted in racist ideology. The fact that we were referred to as a colour by white slave traders speaks to the objectification of the Black race.

To illustrate my point, I sought out the Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, which I can safely assume was written by those who continue to mould the English language. Under the word "dark" in its eleventh meaning was "Africa—the Dark Continent" which read, "applied to places that are remote and uncivilized". In the same dictionary, I checked out the word "black" which in its ninth meaning read, "foul, iniquitous, atrocious and horribly wicked", in contrast to the word "white" which in its seventh meaning reads, "morally or spiritually stainless, spotless, unstained, innocent".

To pretend that such figurative meaning has little to do with racist

ideology is an outright lie. Those who mould the English language have and continue to do so in a deliberate way to reflect the society that they live in. Though many people vehemently deny the power of language to affect thinking and behavior, those of us who live in a Black skin are the constant recipients of the effects of implied language. Simply because this may be a more subtle form of racism does not in any way exempt it as a destructive force.

Ivy Kusinga

letters continued on page 18

Errata: In the October 1, 1992 "Blacks on Black" column, the line, "...we've taught our ABC's..." should have read, "...we've been taught our ABC's...". Also, the author's name was omitted: Jerome Smith. *The Gazette* regrets the errors.

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phobic or libelous nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and announcements is noon on Friday before publication (Thursday of each week). Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o The *Gazette*. Commentary should not exceed 500 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be

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