J.J.Rossy

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Charest's Tories down but not out

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change and restructure and rebuild our policy base and do our homework. That's what Canadians have asked us to do, and that's what we will do.

G: With the rise of the right wing in Canada, in particular the Reform Party, how do you see the PC Party responding? Will the ideology of the party shift farther towards the right?

C: I'm quite deliberately avoiding that type of discussion at this point in time because it is going to be a bottom-up exercise and I think it's important that the people of the Party have that opportunity - the opportunity of that discussion - that we collectively be able to move on from what's there. Though I should point when we talk of the rise of the "right wing" — it is the Liberals that are in power. They won the election, and they do not represent the right wing of this country.

What is going to be critically im- petitive as a nation in the areas of

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stone... is [that] we are a national party, and if anything has been declared since this House of Commons has opened, it is that the Bloc Quebecois have a limited agenda, and one that will come to an end at the end of Parliament. And the other thing is that the Reform Party have only solidified and confirmed their regional perspective. They have quite deliberately chosen to take the regional view. I am surprised that given the fact that they have said that they would do the contrary, they have not.

G: If you were Prime Minister, what would your priorities be, and how would they differ from those of the Liberals right now?

C: Well, I think the country's priority is what would be determining the Prime Minister's agenda. A country's priority revolves around jobs; it revolves around getting our financial house in order, being com-

portant for us as we rebuild a corner- trade and also managing our federal system in a way that is compatible with the needs of the future and the unity of the country. On jobs, I think it remains to be seen what the Liberals will actually do.

G: Do you think students should pay more of the cost of their education?

C: I take accessibility to the postsecondary system to be a great accomplishment [of our country]. Whether or not students should pay more or less should be determined by the individual universities.

Young people who do go to university are those in our society who are the ones who will have the most chance of succeeding. There is no doubt about that. Now, I'm not quarrelling with the fact [that] they're facing a very different world than the one which their parents or their grandparents [faced]. But that's something which is there for everyone, it's not a matter of choice, we are living in a very different world, and people should not be intimidated by that.

But I think we also need to recognize that those individuals who have access to post-secondary education, who represent somewhere between 13 to 16 per cent [of the population]... are the ones who are going to have the best jobs, the best-paying jobs... and so in that sense it would not be offensive if they were to pay the cost of that. Not at all.

Now how do we do that while maintaining accessibility ... is something I'm preoccupied with. I do not want to live in a country where a young person is denied access to post-

secondary education because the costs are too high. And we have to make sure that the regional support is there.

G: What do you feel is the future of Quebec within Canada?

C: My sense has always been that the challenge in Quebec is to have a forward-looking nationalism, which has not been represented by the Parti Quebecois or the Bloc Quebecois. They have ... an air of nationalism that is more turned toward the last century than the next century.

G: What do you feel is the future of the Constitution, and aboriginal self-government?

C: I would hope that the issues that are of concern to aboriginals in this country are going to be addressed without us having to wait [for a new Constitution]. We can address and should address the very fundamental issues relating to the native people, like self-government, but also, I would feel, (w. should] include the issues revolving around native youth.

G: What about the future of the Constitution itself?

C: Well, the agenda will be decided by the electorate, and that's the short-term agenda. I guess we'll all have to take it from there.

G: What does bilingualism mean to you and can official bilingualism survive in Canada?

C: I would hope it would. It's one of the characteristics of Canada. When I was a boy, I remember feeling that my country was different. It was something I felt very intensely when I was very young - that in Canada we had made a choice that was different from other countries. We had chosen to coexist.



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