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Hunting and Weaving

Empiricism and Political Philosophy

Edited by Thomas Heilke and John von Heyking



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Strauss-Voegelin correspondence: *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993).

27 The phrase, which Cooper never uttered, but under which sentiment he conducted the seminar, is a piece of advice from Leo Strauss concerning the attitude one should take toward the craft of teaching political theory (Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 9). Voegelin makes a similar statement regarding the reading of great texts, which in this case are those of Shakespeare: "The interpretation of a literary work by a first-rate artist or philosopher must proceed on the assumption that the man 'knew' what he was doing.... No adequate interpretation of a major work is possible, unless the interpreter assumes the role of the disciple who has everything to learn from the master" (Voegelin letter to Robert Heilman, July 24, 1956, in *Robert B. Heilman and Eric Voegelin: A Friendship in Letters, 1944-1984*, Charles R. Embry, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 150).

28 Students could thus share vicariously the primal experience of hunting, of having the prey or insight appear, "suddenly there!" (*Suddenly There!*, 3). Cooper credits his friend and colleague, F. L. (Ted) Morton for articulating this symbol.

Chapter One

Legends of the Calgary School:

Their Guns, Their Dogs, and the Women Who Love Them

Tom Flanagan

Barry Cooper is a formidable scholar, well known for his work in political philosophy, especially the study of Eric Voegelin, as well as for several influential books on Canadian politics. But Barry is not just an academic researcher; he has also been a significant participant in Canadian politics. Both as a scholar and a political player, he is often mentioned in the context of the so-called "Calgary School," a group of University of Calgary political scientists including, in addition to Barry, Rainer Knopff, F.L. "Ted" Morton, and me, and in a looser sense, the historian David Bercuson. Others have written about the Calgary School from the outside;¹ let me give an insider's view.

Building the Calgary School

The story begins in Durham, North Carolina, in September 1965, when Barry and I entered the political science graduate program at Duke University. Initially, Barry was chiefly interested in Canadian politics, which at Duke was categorized as part of comparative politics, while I wanted to become a political theorist. We got acquainted quickly, because we were assigned to share a carrel in the library. Because I was married, I was there only during the day, while Barry seemed virtually to live there.

Over time, we became personal friends and also developed some common academic interests. John Hallowell's courses in political philosophy caused Barry to join me as a theorist with Hallowell as supervisor, while I adopted Barry's interest in political parties and elections. We both took two courses in statistics taught by the mathematics department as well as Allan Kornberg's course in parties and elections, where we did our first voting-behaviour papers using computerized analysis—a big deal in 1966. We had to punch our SPSS commands onto IBM cards and leave them, together with the data cards, at a loading station, where they were picked up and

taken by truck to the tri-university computing lab serving Duke, the University of North Carolina, and North Carolina State. If you were lucky, you got your printout back about a week later. But if you had made even one error in syntax, say substituting a comma for a period, your run would be aborted, and you would have to start over. It was a miracle that anything got done, but somehow, with Al Kornberg's help, we both produced publishable papers.²

In the fall of 1967, Barry and I both went to Europe. He went to Paris to research his doctoral dissertation on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, while I went to Berlin, where I had an exchange fellowship to study for a year at the Free University of Berlin. In the spring of 1968, I received a letter offering me a tenure-track job teaching political science at the University of Calgary. Having grown up in the eastern United States and never having travelled west of the Mississippi, I had never heard of Calgary. So I went to the reference room at the university, took an atlas off the shelf, opened it to Canada, and eventually found Calgary on the map. Intrigued by the city's location close to the Rocky Mountains, I accepted the offer. The only other offer I had at the time was from the University of Texas in Austin. It's a great university, but I don't like hot weather, and I figured Calgary would be a lot cooler. If I'd only known how much colder! My acceptance of a job in Calgary was the first step toward formation of the Calgary School.

The second step occurred in 1978 with the arrival of Rainer Knopff. Rainer had done his PhD at the University of Toronto under Peter Russell, specializing in Canadian political thought but also studying judicial process with Russell and political philosophy under the prominent Straussians Allan Bloom and Walter Berns. Rainer was recruited by our then Head of Political Science, Anthony Parel, a former Jesuit priest and political theorist with interests as diverse as Aquinas, Machiavelli, and Gandhi. Our department was losing its only constitutional law specialist, and Tony liked Rainer's combination of judicial process and political philosophy and thought that he could fill the void in constitutional law. I had little to do with this except that, as a member of the Staff Affairs Committee, I supported bringing Rainer to Calgary; I had previously met him at a conference and been favourably impressed.

The third step—a double step, in fact—occurred in 1981, when Barry Cooper and Ted Morton came to Calgary. Barry's first teaching job had been at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, after which he had moved to York University in Toronto. But, having grown up in Vancouver

and spent many youthful summers in Alberta, Barry dreamed of coming back to the West. Tony learned about Barry's availability and determined to bring him to Calgary, with tenure, to build up our political theory sub-field. Ted Morton had been a classmate of Rainer Knopff in the Ph.D. program at the University of Toronto, with the same type of intellectual formation under Peter Russell, Allan Bloom, and Walter Berns. He was now teaching at Assumption College, a small liberal-arts institution in Worcester, Massachusetts. Ted was interested in joining a bigger university where there would be more opportunities for research and working with graduate students; and, originally from Wyoming, he also liked the idea of returning to the West. Tony Parel wanted Ted to teach American politics and also help Rainer develop our public-law offerings. We were one of only a few Canadian political science departments doing much in judicial process at that time, and Tony thought it could become one of our comparative advantages, particularly when taught philosophically, as both Rainer and Ted approached it.

Barry, Rainer, Ted, and I quickly became good friends (of course, Barry and I had been friends since graduate school, as had Rainer and Ted). We found we had a great deal in common, even apart from academic life. We all liked hiking, skiing, fishing, and hunting (count me out on the hunting), so we spent a lot of time together in the outdoors, where we would "pass the time pleasantly, speaking of laws," as Plato wrote in *The Laws*.³ Although we were all more or less conservative, we had arrived at that position by somewhat different routes. Rainer and Ted had had some Straussian influence, but their interest in the judicial process and constitutional law kept them outside of the Straussian academic coterie. Barry and I had been schooled in the thought of Eric Voegelin, though I moved on to become a Hayekian in 1977, after I read *The Constitution of Liberty* (I now label my unique synthesis of Voegelin and Hayek "neo-Austrian").

Neither Barry nor I have ever been Straussians. Barry has a deeper interest in Strauss than I do and has edited the correspondence between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, but that does not make him a Straussian.⁴ I tried to read several of Strauss's books when I was a graduate student, but I could never finish them. The only one that made much sense to me was his early work on Spinoza, where he argued, as have other historians, that Spinoza had to engage in "Aesopian" writing because he lived in danger of persecution.⁵ I made use of Strauss's insight on Aesopian writing when I wrote my own MA thesis on Spinoza, but I have never agreed with turning it into a general interpretive principle of political philosophy.

This is of some significance, because one of the most durable legends about the Calgary School is that we indoctrinated our prize student, Stephen Harper, in Straussianism, and that he is now following a secret Straussian path (the "Hidden Agenda") toward regime change in Canada.⁶ But in fact Harper, who majored in economics, not political science, at the University of Calgary, took no courses from members of the Calgary School; and even if he had, he would not have encountered any Straussian influences there.

Das Bercuson Problem

The position of David Bercuson in this tableau requires additional explanation. David, who came to the University of Calgary in 1970, had studied labour history at the University of Toronto under Ken McNaught and Ramsay Cook. Thus, his intellectual background was liberal and social democratic, but not Marxist. Although he continued to pursue labour history for another decade and a half after coming here, he became increasingly disenchanted with the Marxist political correctness prevailing in Canadian labour history and decided to switch his scholarship to the fields of foreign policy and military history. Living in Calgary also gradually made him more economically conservative, to the point where he became a Progressive Conservative around the time Joe Clark became leader of the party.

David started a long collaboration with Barry Cooper in early 1990, proposing the book that became *Deconfederation*.⁷ David didn't know Barry well at that point but thought that their views on Quebec would be similar. After the success of that book, the two did a great deal of work together in the 1990s, including another book, *Derailed*,⁸ reports presenting historical and social science evidence in several lawsuits; and jointly written columns in the *Calgary Sun*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Calgary Herald*. Their collaboration led Barry to become interested in military issues, so that he is now teaching courses and supervising graduate students in the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies that Bercuson directs, and also publishing in the field of security studies as well as political philosophy.⁹

Although David has had a long and successful collaboration with Barry, he isn't part of the Calgary School in quite the same sense as the rest of us. He is a historian, not a political scientist, and he teaches in a different department. His cooperative academic projects have been only with Cooper, not with other members of the Calgary School. Barry, David, and I go on an annual summer fishing trip together, but in other respects David

mainly socializes with a different group of people. Most importantly, his political views are not identical with the rest of the Calgary School. Although a strong economic and foreign policy conservative, he sees himself as a social liberal—e.g., pro-choice on abortion, and in favour of legalizing gay marriage. Thus, his political trajectory has often been different from that of the rest of us. Though he later became a supporter of Stephen Harper, he was still working to defeat Harper in Calgary West in 1993 because of his friendship with the incumbent MP, Progressive Conservative Jim Hawkes. When the rest of us were supporting Ralph Klein, David was working for Liberal Leader Laurence Decore (actually, Decore was more conservative on many issues than Klein, but the rest of us could never bring ourselves to support the Liberal brand, even provincially).

Overall, then, David is not a member of the Calgary School *comme les autres*. His cooperation with Cooper has been extremely important, but in other respects he moves in his own orbit.

The 1980s: Building Academic Reputations

Broadly speaking, the 1980s were years of academic research for the Calgary School. Our writings did not initially attract much media attention, but we were working on politically charged topics that would eventually have an impact on public opinion. Rainer and Ted's research on how the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was being interpreted in the courts led to many articles as well as their influential books *Charter Politics* (1992) and *The Charter Revolution and the Court Party* (2000).⁹ Rainer and Ted became perhaps the best-known critics of judicial activism in Canada and engaged in many debates with their opponents, both in academic forums and in the media. I also worked in the 1980s with Rainer on a study of human rights commissions in Canada. We published a book and several academic articles, but our work had no public impact.¹⁰ The time wasn't right, and we weren't ready to cut through the hagiography surrounding human rights in Canada. Fortunately, one of our students, Ezra Levant, was able to accomplish what we could not. His best-selling book *Shakedown!* (2009) threw a scare into the human-rights establishment and promoted a round of legislative change that is still unfolding in both provincial and federal jurisdictions.¹¹ In the 1980s, Rainer and I had arrived at most of the same criticisms that Ezra has made of human rights commissions—their overly broad mandate, unfair procedures, and outrageously one-sided funding of complaints—but we didn't yet know how to

drive an issue onto the public agenda, whereas Ezra is a promotional genius.

Apart from my collaboration with Rainer, most of my work in the 1980s was focused on Louis Riel and the Métis. I finished my biography of Riel, worked on the collected edition of his writings, and published a book debunking his role as hero of the North-West Rebellion.¹² My work on Riel led the Department of Justice to hire me as a historical consultant in the Manitoba Métis Federation land claims case. The case did not actually come to trial until 2006, but my book *Métis Lands in Manitoba* contained the evidence that, when I presented it in court as an expert witness, caused the Métis claims to be rejected.¹³ I also served as Head of the Political Science Department in the years 1982-87, which kept my energies focused on university life.

Barry Cooper, during the 1980s, published mainly on topics in political philosophy, including the thought of Michel Foucault, Eric Voegelin, and George Grant. He wrote relatively little on contemporary Canadian politics, but did publish a biography of Alexander Kennedy Isbister, a half-breed son of the Rupert's Land fur trade who returned to England to become a Victorian gentleman, noted educator, and critic of the Hudson's Bay Company.¹⁴ Though not as well-known as it deserves to be, Cooper's biography of Isbister illustrates the tremendous breadth of the Métis experience and the difficulty of pigeon-holing the Métis in social categories.

Two Decades of Political Activism

The Calgary School started to make a more visible impact on Canadian politics in the 1990s. They did this mainly as individuals rather than as a group, although they were all motivated by what Preston Manning used to call the "triple crisis" that Canada went through in the late 1980s and early 1990s:

- * The constitutional crisis—high stakes negotiations over the constitution (the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords) accompanied by threats of separation by Quebec;
- * The economic crisis—the accumulation of public debt due to uncontrolled federal deficit spending, accompanied by persistently high unemployment;
- * The political crisis—loss of confidence in elected politicians, the disintegration of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, and the

rise of new federal political parties (Reform Party of Canada, Bloc Québécois).

In spite of common concerns, the members of the Calgary School became active in politics in individual and sometimes contradictory ways, thus refuting the persistent myth that they possess a coordinated group strategy for taking over Canadian politics.

Bercuson and Cooper made the biggest initial splash in 1991 when they published *Deconfederation*, arguing that Canada would be better off without Quebec. By speaking the previously unspeakable in this widely discussed book, they helped to firm up public opinion against the Charlottetown Accord, whose proponents were trying to sell it with apocalyptic arguments about the disintegration of Canada. Such arguments would hardly work with voters who believed that Canada would be better off without never-ending and ever-more-expensive demands from Quebec.

Bercuson and Cooper continued to write about politics for a broad public audience. In 1994 they published *Derailed*, a timely plea for Canada to return to its historic tradition of fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets. Around the same time, they started writing op-eds together, first for the *Calgary Sun*, later for the *Globe and Mail*, and finally for the *Calgary Herald*. Bercuson pulled out of the op-ed collaboration after a business dispute with the *Herald*, but he still writes occasional columns for the *Globe and Mail*, while Cooper continues to write for the *Herald*.

Both also became players in the world of think tanks. Cooper originally thought of founding his own organization in Calgary, tentatively entitled the Chinook Institute, but settled for becoming the director of the Fraser Institute's office in Calgary. While continuing to teach at the university, he also worked for the Fraser Institute for six years until an unfortunate dispute with Fraser Institute President Mike Walker led to his departure in 2005.¹⁵ While working for Fraser, Barry took a special interest in climate change, inviting the Danish climate skeptic Bjorn Lomborg to speak in Calgary and later working with the Friends of Science to counter climate-change hysteria.

After serving a term as Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Calgary, Bercuson became director of the university's Centre for Strategic and Military Studies, a node in the network of institutes funded by the Department of National Defence. He was also the prime mover in creating the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute in 2002, an organization that specializes in commissioning research and publicizing it in the

media through interviews and op-eds.¹⁶ For two decades, David and Barry have worked tirelessly to push public opinion in the direction of fiscal responsibility, a strong national defence, close cooperation with our allies, resistance to Quebec separatism, and fair treatment for Western Canada.

Meanwhile, I took a more circuitous path, going to work in early 1991 as a senior member of Preston Manning's Reform Party staff. I stayed there until I resigned my paid responsibilities at the end of 1992 and was fired from my remaining advisory role in the middle of 1993. The experience, described at length in my book *Waiting for the Wave*, was not entirely happy, because I became convinced that Manning-style populism was working at cross-purposes with the more conventional conservatism that I espoused.¹⁷ That's what I thought then; looking back on it twenty years later, I still think I was partly right, but I also see that I was politically naïve and not ready for the compromises of practical politics.¹⁸

David and Barry's *Deconfederation*, plus Rainer and Ted's critique of judicial activism, plus my work with Reform, led to our group being characterized as the Calgary School by the American political scientist David Rovinsky.¹⁹ Even earlier recognition in the media had come in 1992, when Jeffrey Simpson published a column in the *Globe and Mail* calling us the "Calgary mafia" and pointing to our influence, either direct or indirect, on the Reform Party.²⁰ Even though Simpson was careful to focus on the five of us and not to characterize the entire Department of Political Science, our colleagues in the department chose to read it that way and wrote a letter to the *Globe* emphasizing their lack of connection with the Reform Party. Over the years, they have had to develop thicker skins as we kept on writing and talking and attracting more publicity. However, their reaction does illustrate an important point. The Calgary School has never been more than a small part of the department of political science at the University of Calgary; the rarity of conservatives in academic institutions garners extra media attention when a small group of conservatives does get together. It's a man-bites-dog story.

In a longer-term perspective, perhaps the most important aspect of my time with the Reform Party was getting acquainted with Stephen Harper, who was then Chief Policy Officer. Contrary to what has often been written, Stephen had never been my student, nor indeed studied with any members of the Calgary School. We first met him in late 1990, when he would accompany Preston Manning to campus for "egghead lunches" with faculty members and graduate students who were sympathetic with, or at least interested in, the Reform Party. Stephen and I grew closer in fall 1992,

when we were both concerned with the particular manner in which Preston was opposing the Charlottetown Accord. We kept in touch afterwards, as I went back to the University of Calgary and Stephen went on to become the Reform MP for Calgary-West and then President of the National Citizens Coalition. We collaborated on several writing projects, particularly on a plan for reuniting the shattered remains of the Mulroney coalition, which served as a virtual roadmap for Harper to merge the Canadian Alliance with the Progressive Conservatives in 2003 and defeat the Liberals in the 2006 election.²¹

As described in my book *Harper's Team*, I devoted about four years to helping Stephen get re-launched in federal politics.²² I managed his leadership campaign against Stockwell Day to get control of the Canadian Alliance, then served for a year as his chief of staff while he was Leader of the Opposition in Parliament. I also managed his campaign against Belinda Stronach and Tony Clement for leadership of the merged Conservative Party of Canada, as well as the 2004 Conservative election campaign, in which we did not win but set the stage for a subsequent victory by bringing Paul Martin's Liberals down to a minority. After laying the groundwork for the next campaign, I went back to the university in 2005, but returned to the war room as senior communications adviser in the successful 2005-06 campaign, which finally brought the Conservatives to power.

My role working for Harper was different than what one might expect for a career academic. I had almost nothing to do with policy, strategy, and communications; Stephen effectively functioned as his own chief of staff in those areas. My remit was organization and management. I raised money, recruited people, and negotiated contracts with suppliers; I made sure all our trains ran on time. Stephen, for example, would decide what went in the campaign platform; I would make sure it got printed on time in an attractive format and in understandable English. Stephen would decide what to say during the campaign leader's tour; I made sure we had a jet; busses, campaign venues, and staff to organize all the events.

My legacy to the Conservative Party has nothing to do with policy. Rather, I take great pride in having helped build what Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff has called "the toughest and most ruthless machine in Canadian politics."²³ You won't implement many policies unless you can form the government, and in a democracy that means defeating your opponents at election time. Indeed, the Conservatives, like the Liberals, are sometimes tough and even nasty in their attacks on opponents; but the

secret of Conservative success is effective grassroots fundraising based on massive Voter ID and GOTV efforts. That's what raises the money to pay for negative ads, when they are needed.

I'm no longer involved in practical politics at the federal level, because Stephen Harper regarded publication of *Harper's Team* as a violation of confidentiality. It was not that the book was critical of him (it wasn't); he would have regarded any book as anathema. As a consequence, I've been shut out of playing any role in the Conservative government that I worked so hard to bring to power. But I shouldn't complain; I knew Stephen was obsessive about secrecy and that he wouldn't like the idea of my publishing a book about the campaigns I managed for him.

I also developed a presence in the media with interviews and op-eds, starting shortly after I left the employment of the Reform Party. Although I have never tried to keep count, I would estimate that I have been reported somewhere in the media about two hundred times a year since the mid-1990s (except for the four years when I went dark as Stephen Harper's campaign manager). At the time of writing, I publish a monthly column in the *Globe and Mail* and appear twice a week with Evan Solomon on CBC Newsnet's "Power and Politics" show. Now that I am exiled from federal politics, my presence in the media gives me a platform for contributing to public discussion, even if I can't affect public policy directly.

Also, my research has had some impact on public discussion of aboriginal issues in Canada. *First Nations? Second Thoughts* (2000) was a polemical book, challenging what I called the "aboriginal orthodoxy" deriving from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs.²⁴ It gored sacred cows right and left, including aboriginal self-government, land claims, and treaty rights. It won two prizes²⁵ and was on the *National Post* non-fiction Canadian best-seller list for eleven weeks in summer 2000. It was also vociferously denounced by almost every native leader from Phil Fontaine on down. With that level of controversy, it garnered an avalanche of media.

The book helped stiffen the resistance against aboriginal demands for more sympathy, more land, more jurisdictions, and more money without accountability. Certain arguments in the book, e.g., that band councils have an inherent trend to "family factionalism," abetted by representation without taxation, had rarely been made in public before but have now become conventional wisdom among conservatives, especially in the *National Post*, which devotes a lot of editorial attention to aboriginal affairs. At first, media accounts referenced my book, but gradually my arguments have

become familiar enough that the author no longer needs to be identified—a sign that the ideas are making some headway in public opinion.

My most recent book, *Beyond the Indian Act*, is a positive attempt to bring about legislative change in the form of a proposed *First Nations Property Ownership Act*, which would allow First Nations to take over ownership of their lands from the federal Crown and to create individual titles in fee simple on as much or as little of their land as they wished.²⁶ Both stages of reform would be completely voluntary. The idea of private property for First Nations is a theoretically radical departure from the status quo, made incremental in practice by a voluntary opt-in approach.

Writing by myself, I could never hope to achieve legislative change; but *Beyond the Indian Act* is a collaborative effort, especially with Manny Jules, former chief of the Kamloops band and head of the First Nations Tax Commission, who contributed the "Foreword" to the book and also designed the cover. Jules virtually created the concept of voluntary, First-Nations-led legislation, beginning with the "Kamloops Amendment" of 1988, which for the first time authorized Indian bands to levy property taxes on reserve leaseholds.²⁷ *Beyond the Indian Act* wraps an academic gown around ideas that Jules has been developing for years. The book addresses public opinion, while Jules will work at finding First Nations to request the legislation, so that the government will be willing to introduce it into Parliament. Initial indications are positive, but we won't know for several years whether we will succeed in getting the legislation passed.

Of our group, Ted Morton has had by far the most visible political career, perhaps because both his father and his maternal grandfather were elected politicians in the United States. Ted's first venture into Canadian elective politics came in the 1988 Alberta advisory senatorial election, when he ran as a Reform candidate and finished second behind another Reformer, Bert Brown. Tiring of the wait for a Senate appointment by a Liberal government that did not recognize the legitimacy of the Alberta advisory process, Ted got elected as a Progressive Conservative candidate for the Alberta legislature in 2004. He then ran in the 2006 Alberta Progressive Conservative leadership race, finishing second to Jim Dinning on the first ballot and third behind Ed Stelmach and Dinning on the second ballot. He appealed particularly to the party's right wing, especially to members who were on the cusp between the PCs and the further-right Wildrose Alliance.

Premier Stelmach appointed Ted to the cabinet as Minister of Sustainable Resources. His showing in the leadership race might have justified a more important portfolio, but Ted was happy in Sustainable Resources because it included jurisdiction over hunting and fishing. We used to jokingly call him the “Minister of Ducks and Deer.” Then the Wildrose Alliance, which won no seats in the 2008 election, surged in popular opinion as the recession took hold in Alberta and Wildrose selected an attractive new leader, Danielle Smith. In January 2010, Stelmach appointed Ted Minister of Finance in an obvious attempt to fend off the Wildrose challenge. That arrangement, however, only worked for about a year. Ted resigned as Minister of Finance when Stelmach started to back out of their agreement to put forth a balanced budget. Ted’s resignation made Stelmach’s own position untenable, so he too resigned, thereby opening up the prospect of a new leadership race in 2011.

Ted entered that race but finished fourth on the first ballot, so he did not get to carry on to the second ballot, which was ultimately won by Alison Redford. Ted then ran for re-election in the general election of spring 2012. The PC party was successful in winning a majority of seats, but Ted himself was defeated by the Wildrose candidate in his riding (full disclosure: I managed the Wildrose provincial campaign). Ted is now back at the university, and the Calgary School is no longer rent by internal political divisions—a reasonably happy ending, though Ted never got to live out his dream of becoming premier and steering Alberta in a more conservative direction.

Of all the Calgary School, Rainer Knopff has had the least involvement in politics. For much of the last two decades, he was Associate Dean of Research for Social Sciences and then Associate Vice-President of Research for the University of Calgary, which left him little time for politics. However, he has done a couple of quiet things behind the scenes. In 1993-95, he was on the committee to redraw federal constituency boundaries for Alberta; and in 2010 he was on the advisory committee that recommended names from among which the Prime Minister selected David Johnston as the next Governor-General.

Rainer was also one of the signatories of the notorious “Alberta Agenda” or “Firewall” letter published in the *National Post* early 2001. The other signatories were Stephen Harper, President of the National Citizens Coalition; Andy Crooks, a Calgary lawyer and President of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation; Ken Boessenkool, a consulting economist in Calgary; and three members of the Calgary School—Rainer Knopff, Ted

Morton, and me. The whole thing was Harper’s idea; it was part of a long-term strategy he was developing to force the federal government back into a more narrowly circumscribed sphere of constitutional jurisdiction. He asked me to coordinate the writing, so I held the pen while I asked the others for ideas. The letter is printed here because it represents the mind of the Calgary School when speaking freely outside the constraints of political organizations—market-oriented, pro-Alberta, suspicious of Eastern domination, and open to political reform.

Dear Premier Klein:

During and since the recent federal election, we have been among a large number of Albertans discussing the future of our province. We are not dismayed by the outcome of the election so much as by the strategy employed by the current federal government to secure its re-election. In our view, the Chretien government undertook a series of attacks not merely designed to defeat its partisan opponents, but to marginalize Alberta and Albertans within Canada’s political system.

One well-documented incident was the attack against Alberta’s health care system. To your credit, you vehemently protested the unprecedented attack ads that the federal government launched against Alberta’s policies—policies the Prime Minister had previously found no fault with.

However, while your protest was necessary and appreciated by Albertans, we believe that it is not enough to respond only with protests. If the government in Ottawa concludes that Alberta is a soft target, we will be subjected to much worse than dishonest television ads. The Prime Minister has already signaled as much by announcing his so-called “tough love” campaign for the West.

We believe the time has come for Albertans to take greater charge of our own future. This means resuming control of the powers that we possess under the constitution of Canada but that we have allowed the federal government to exercise. Intelligent use of these powers will help Alberta build a prosperous future in spite of a misguided and increasingly hostile government in Ottawa.

Under the heading of the “Alberta Agenda,” we propose that our province move forward on the following fronts:

- * Withdraw from the Canada Pension Plan to create an Alberta Pension Plan offering the same benefits at lower cost while giving Alberta

control over the investment fund. Pensions are a provincial responsibility under section 94A of the Constitution Act, 1867; and the legislation setting up the Canada Pension Plan permits a province to run its own plan, as Quebec has done from the beginning. If Quebec can do it, why not Alberta?

* Collect our own revenue from personal income tax, as we already do for corporate income tax. Now that your government has made the historic innovation of the single-rate personal income tax, there is no reason to have Ottawa collect our revenue. Any incremental cost of collecting our own personal income tax would be far outweighed by the policy flexibility that Alberta would gain, as Quebec's experience has shown.

* Start preparing now to let the contract with the RCMP run out in 2012 and create an Alberta Provincial Police Force. Alberta is a major province. Like the other major provinces of Ontario and Quebec, we should have our own provincial police force. We have no doubt that Alberta can run a more efficient and effective police force than Ottawa can — one that will not be misused as a laboratory for experiments in social engineering.

* Resume provincial responsibility for health-care policy. If Ottawa objects to provincial policy, fight in the courts. If we lose, we can afford the financial penalties that Ottawa may try to impose under the Canada Health Act. Albertans deserve better than the long waiting periods and technological backwardness that are rapidly coming to characterize Canadian medicine. Alberta should also argue that each province should raise its own revenue for health care — i.e., replace Canada Health and Social Transfer cash with tax points as Quebec has argued for many years. Poorer provinces would continue to rely on Equalization to ensure they have adequate revenues.

* Use section 88 of the Supreme Court's decision in the Quebec Secession Reference to force Senate reform back onto the national agenda. Our reading of that decision is that the federal government and other provinces must seriously consider a proposal for constitutional reform endorsed by "a clear majority on a clear question" in a provincial referendum. You acted decisively once before to hold a senatorial election. Now is the time to drive the issue further.

All of these steps can be taken using the constitutional powers that Alberta now possesses. In addition, we believe it is imperative for you to

take all possible political and legal measures to reduce the financial drain on Alberta caused by Canada's tax-and-transfer system. The most recent Alberta Treasury estimates are that Albertans transfer \$2,600 per capita annually to other Canadians, for a total outflow from our province approaching \$8 billion a year. The same federal politicians who accuse us of not sharing their "Canadian values" have no compunction about appropriating our Canadian dollars to buy votes elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Premier, we acknowledge the constructive reforms that your government made in the 1990s—balancing the budget, paying down the provincial debt, privatizing government services, getting Albertans off welfare and into jobs, introducing a single-rate tax, pulling government out of the business of subsidizing business, and many other beneficial changes. But no government can rest on its laurels. As economic slowdown, and perhaps even recession, threatens North America, the government in Ottawa will be tempted to take advantage of Alberta's prosperity, to redistribute income from Alberta to residents of other provinces in order to keep itself in power. It is imperative to take the initiative, to build firewalls around Alberta, to limit the extent to which an aggressive and hostile federal government can encroach upon legitimate provincial jurisdiction.

Once Alberta's position is secured, only our imagination will limit the prospects for extending the reform agenda that your government undertook eight years ago. To cite only a few examples, lower taxes will unleash the energies of the private sector, easing conditions for Charter Schools will help individual freedom and improve public education, and greater use of the referendum and initiative will bring Albertans into closer touch with their own government.

The precondition for the success of this Alberta Agenda is the exercise of all our legitimate provincial jurisdictions under the constitution of Canada. Starting to act now will secure the future for all Albertans.

Sincerely yours,

- Stephen HARPER, President, National Citizens' Coalition;
- Tom FLANAGAN, professor of political science and former Director of Research, Reform Party of Canada;
- Ted MORTON, professor of political science and Alberta Senator-elect;
- Rainer KNOPFF, professor of political science;
- Andrew CROOKS, chairman, Canadian Taxpayers Federation;
- Ken BOESSENKOOL, former policy adviser to Stockwell Day, Treasurer of Alberta.

* This letter represents the personal views of its authors and not those of any organizations with which they are or have been connected.²⁸

Comments

This little historical sketch shows something important about the Calgary School: we are a group of more or less like-minded academics, but not in any sense conspiratorial or even organized. We may have a common outlook, but not a common agenda. Two or more of us sometimes collaborate on particular projects, but basically we pursue our own careers, both academic and political, as individuals. As researchers and writers, we have contributed to the growth of a conservative movement in Canada, but we did not create and do not direct that movement.

The rationalism of the modern left leads leftist observers to overstate the significance of abstract ideas. Members of the Calgary School have become prominent in politics because, for other reasons, Calgary is the spiritual centre of the conservative movement in Canada. Preston Manning had to make his *hejira* from Edmonton to Calgary in order to build the Reform Party, because there were so many resources, both financial and human, to draw on in this city. For the same reason, the National Citizens Coalition had an office here while David Somerville and Stephen Harper were presidents; and the Fraser Institute and the Frontier Centre have both set up offices, because there is so much support for conservative causes. The two most recent presidents of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Andy Crooks and Michael Binnion, are also Calgarians, even though the CTF head office is in Regina. The Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute is also here, partly because of David Bercuson and partly because of the financial support he can raise in Calgary.

Karl Marx would have understood better than modern leftists that the Calgary School is an intellectual reflex of the conservative movement. The city of Calgary provides a privileged position for the members of the Calgary School to meet and work together with the conservative political and business leaders who also call Calgary home. While the Calgary School did not provide an agenda for any of the political movements that have radiated outwards from Calgary—Preston Manning's Reform Party, Ralph Klein's revolution within the Alberta Progressive Conservatives, Stockwell Day's Canadian Alliance, Stephen Harper's Conservative Party of Canada, and Danielle Smith's Wildrose Alliance—members of the Calgary School, as individuals, have associated themselves with these movements, sometimes studying and writing about them, sometimes

offering help as consultants, sometimes actually entering their employment.

It is important to emphasize that the political creativity has come mainly from the political and business leaders who have organized and funded all these movements, and the Calgarians and Albertans who have joined them. As researchers and writers, the members of the Calgary School have supported these movements, written about them, and helped to explain them to the public. But as thinkers we were not the prime movers. As Goethe wrote, "*Am Anfang war die Tat*" ("In the beginning was the act"), thus correcting the Gospel of John ("In the beginning was the Word").²⁹

None of that, however, diminishes the importance of the intellectual sphere. Political movements cannot succeed in the long run without coherent ideas to guide their action. And the Calgary School has been in the forefront, through both academic and popular writings, in developing positions on some of the most controversial issues of the day. They have repeatedly challenged the orthodoxy and political correctness of the left in areas such as:

- * Judicial activism (Knopff and Morton)
- * Abortion (Morton)
- * Gay marriage (Morton)
- * Human rights (Knopff and Flanagan)
- * Climate change (Cooper)
- * Quebec (Cooper and Bercuson)
- * Aboriginal rights (Flanagan)
- * National defence (Bercuson)
- * Fiscal responsibility (all)

Conservative political organizations and movements have flourished in the intellectual climate that the Calgary School has helped to create.

The Future of the Calgary School

All members of the Calgary School are now in their 60s, and retirements from classroom teaching will come gradually over the next few years. Of course, even after retirement, an academic may remain connected to his university as a professor emeritus, engaged in some combination of research, supervision of graduate students, consulting, and appearances in the media. The Calgary School, therefore, may carry on for another decade

or so, but its institutional presence will gradually diminish. Its coalescence was largely an accident, and the University of Calgary will not, indeed should not, try to perpetuate it; for university hiring ought to be based on academic merit, not political convictions.

The real future of the Calgary School, therefore, lies in the careers of its students. The University of Calgary has never been a major centre of graduate education like, say, the University of Toronto; so the members of the Calgary School have not trained a large number of Ph.D.s who, while teaching at other universities, constitute a tight network like the followers of Eric Voegelin or Leo Strauss. But precisely because Calgary's Ph.D. program has been relatively small, the members of the Calgary School have had intense relationships with many of their BA and MA students. Some of these students, though they have gone on to study for the Ph.D. elsewhere, have kept up a close relationship with their Calgary School mentors and with other students they met when they studied here. Some have become professors at other universities; others have gone into politics, the media, law, and the civil service. There exists, therefore, a sort of loose network of Calgary School alumni, including several of the contributors to this volume, who are today making their own mark in Canadian public life. To mention only a few of the most prominent:

- * Chris Manfredi, Professor of Political Science and Dean of Arts at McGill, now a senior figure in the study of the Canadian judicial process;
- * Ian Brodie, former Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Stephen Harper;
- * Ray Novak, Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Harper;
- * Danielle Smith, Leader of the Wildrose Party of Alberta;
- * Ezra Levant, *Sun* newspapers columnist and author of the bestselling books *Shakedown!* and *Ethical Oil*;
- * Mark Milke, director of the Fraser Institute's Alberta Program and frequent columnist in the *Calgary Herald* and other newspapers;
- * Rob Roach, director of research at the Canada West Foundation.

These and all our other students are the true legacy of the Calgary School. Though they share some common background through having studied with us, they are not a cabal or a coterie or a movement; they are individuals following their own paths. And I am sure they are mindful of Nietzsche's words: "You badly repay your teacher if you always remain the student."³⁰

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Chapter Two

Of Homesteaders and Orangemen:

An Archeology of Western Canadian Political Identity

Richard Avramenko

When a book appears in one's mailbox, sent by the author himself, and that author is a prominent political theorist, one must pay attention to that book. Such was the appearance of *Suddenly There! Twenty Years of Killing Time Around Southern Alberta: 1985–2005* in my mailbox. The "book," if we can call it such, is a barely polished publication of Barry Cooper's hunting notes, with roughly drawn maps of sloughs and duck blinds on various homesteads around Alberta, ample pictures of dead fowl, dead deer, dead trucks, and quite living hunters. The title of the book, Cooper explains, comes of an insight from his hunting pal, Ted Morton, who, reflecting on the nature of the endeavor, said, "Suddenly There! That's what all hunting is about. Geese or deer, ducks or pheasant. There is nothing and then: suddenly there." That Cooper poached the expression is not surprising, because Morton's insight is an unselfconscious declaration of what lies at the heart of empirical political science. For Cooper, "empirical political science includes the analysis of consciousness by the consciousness of the analyst. This consciousness is always somebody's, and that somebody is engaged in a permanent effort at responsive openness to reality and reflective verification. It is hard to conceive of anything more empirical."¹ *Suddenly There!* is the story of the discovery of a particular consciousness. It is an anamnetic experiment that uncovers the symbols and experiences informing a new political consciousness. One could retitile the book—*Alberta: Suddenly There!*

Empirical political science, as Cooper points out, is not distinguished by the use of sophisticated quantitative models. Instead, "the meaning of *empirikos* is that of a skill in discerning things that arise from practice."² At the heart of the word one finds the Greek *peraz*, which means a limit, or boundary—the sort of boundary one discovers when, say, out walking around in farmers' fields with guns, shooting at things. It stands in contrast to *apeiros*, that which has not been experienced or cannot be experienced. The empirical political scientist, like the fisherman or hunter, learns about