The Recline of Party: Armchair Democracy and the Reform Party of Canada

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If one were asked to go spelunking around the dim caverns of neology to come up with a satisfactory label for the type of political energy currently driving modern liberal democracies, one could do worse than to settle for “centrifugalism.” Instead of imploding due to the objective contradictions of their economic systems, these states have had to contend with an explosion of subjectivity—a fecund ecology of highly politicized identity-bearers has developed, and they appear bent on asserting their diversity in the face of outmoded centripetal institutions designed to falsely homogenize or assimilate their experiences, needs, and priorities. For the most part, the owners of these newly invigorated consciousnesses see the political infrastructure of liberal democracy as a barrier to their fulfillment that is every bit as formidable as the economic relations of liberal capitalism. This impression has manifested itself in escalating challenges to the legitimacy of traditional practices of representative democracy which, depending on the ideological concerns of the observer, are either decried as symptomatic of society’s “ungovernability,” or celebrated as a blossoming of healthy pluralism.

Canada has not been immune to these developments. The explicit recognition in the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms of aboriginal, multicultural, female, and disabled citizens helped to congeal these as distinct and legitimate political identities in Canada. Additionally, recent years have witnessed the increasing activism of various religious, environmental, and gay rights groups who, together with the aforementioned “Charter Canadians,” have grown increasingly frustrated with the limitations of a political discourse constructed exclusively upon the brokerage of regional and linguistic interests. This debate crystallized around the popular rejection of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990, and was evident in subsequent critical public commentary on the deficiencies of Canadian representative and parliamentary democracy. It quickly became evident that the traditional party system was an insufficient collector or conduit for the burgeoning democratic aspirations of a heterogeneous citizenry not content to see their diverse interests brokered away to the margins of political consideration.

This recent flurry of identity-based group politics, with its implicit rejection of traditional representative institutions, would appear to vin-
dicate the observation made by John Meisel over a decade ago that an increase in the role of organized groups in the processes of interest articulation was leading to a decline in the aggregative capacity of traditional brokerage parties in Canada. Indeed, the idea that organized interest groups are a democratic threat of one sort or another has since appeared as a common focus of two otherwise divergent offspring of the malaise afflicting the Canadian party system: the recent Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (RCERPF) and the Reform Party of Canada. While the RCERPF's concern appears to be that democracy in Canada suffers as organized interest groups assume, but ultimately fail to fulfill, the role and functions of traditional political parties, Reform's approach to the "problem" of "special interests" is quite different. In this paper, I will use the example of its recent forays into the world of electronic plebiscitarianism to argue that the Reform party's brand of populism is designed specifically to combat the threat organized interests pose to the unfeathered free market distribution of political and economic values, rather than as a democratic corrective to the rise of pluralism and the decline of parties. By contrasting it with the RCERPF in the context of the decline of party thesis, I intend to show that Reform's use of these techniques represents neither a serious desire to alleviate public alienation from the representative system, nor a sincere response to citizens demanding increased opportunities for meaningful democratic participation. Instead, I will argue that Reform's adoption of teledemocracy is an essentially cynical attempt to capitalize on the present climate of democratic unease, as a means of legitimizing the party's real goal of contracting the public sphere of political decisionmaking in Canada.

The Decline of Party

In his provocative 1979 essay, John Meisel argued that while Canadian political parties still performed the classic structural roles of providing a framework for voting and recruiting political leaders, their ability to function as centers of governmental organization and policy formation was on the wane. In particular, Canadian parties were declining in terms of their capacity to act as effective vehicles for the integration, mobilization and aggregation of political interests. As a result, Meisel observed, "...an increasing number of Canadians have sought to participate in politics and public life outside the framework of parties." Among the reasons listed by Meisel for this decline were the development of sophisticated electronic media and polling techniques, the
burgeoning complexity of the modern state, and the dominance of the national political agenda by executive federalism and major economic actors. But well before the explosion of group identities that would follow the adoption of the Charter in 1982, Meisel identified “pluralism and the rise of interest group politics” as a major factor contributing to the growing ineffectiveness of brokerage parties. At this time, Meisel referred vaguely to unidentified “vested interests” and “lobby groups,” but in a 1991 addendum to his original essay, citizens of the post-Charter “new Canada”—women, ethnic Canadians, aboriginal peoples—and the “non-party organizations” that represent them were explicitly referred to as the authors of a serious challenge to the efficacy of the country’s traditional democratic party structure.\(^5\)

Reforming Canada’s Parties

Over ten years after the appearance of his original essay, Meisel’s predictions regarding public disenchantment with political parties in Canada have seemingly been borne out. According to the RCERPF: “Canadian political parties are held in low public esteem, and… their standing has declined steadily over the past decade.” The RCERPF reported that between 1979 and 1989, the percentage of Canadians who expressed “a great deal” of confidence in political parties fell from 30 to 18, while the number of those expressing “very little” confidence in these institutions grew from 22 to 33 percent. Massive numbers of citizens agreed that political parties in Canada engage in excessive “squabbling” (81 percent), confuse issues rather than illuminate them (87 percent), and inappropriately constrain the activity of individual M.P.’s (78 percent). Most seriously, 79 percent of those surveyed felt that once elected to Parliament, party politicians generally “lose touch” with the people they represent—an increase of 14 percent from a decade earlier.\(^6\)

The corollary of the declining fortunes of parties has been a surge in support for alternative, nonelite-driven democratic practices. The research studies accompanying the RCERPF showed that the vast majority of those surveyed trust “ordinary people” more than “experts and intellectuals” (65 percent), and consider a devolution of decisionmaking power to “people at the grassroots” to be a plausible and constructive alternative to party democracy (74 percent). In what can only be regarded as a stunning distillation of this sentiment, the RCERPF found that a full 26 percent of Canadians actually believe that “true democracy” could better
be achieved in the absence of political parties. At a minimum, the report of the commission warns that “Canadians would like greater control over their representatives and over public policies, especially between elections.”

In attempting to isolate the source of these symptoms, the RCERPF points to institutional inertia within the party system itself, insofar as it has been unable to manufacture significant opportunities for meaningful participation by individuals whose representational needs extend beyond the capacity of traditionally oriented parties. When it comes to issues other than leadership and election campaigns, Canadian brokerage parties are failing both as convincing vehicles of interest aggregation and mobilization, and as effective managers of collective political action. Interestingly, this disaffection with parties has not necessarily translated into a flight from political involvement altogether: the RCERPF reports that while the number of people joining political parties is indeed dwindling, overall levels of “political voluntarism and activism” remain high. How is this activism manifesting itself, if not in partisan attachments? In the absence of opportunities for effective democratic participation under the auspices of brokerage parties, “ordinary citizens” are seeking to satisfy their political aspirations through what the RCERPF has called “specialized interest groups.” These groups, which encompass those concerned with “environmental causes, [or] the rights of women and minority groups,” are characterized by the commission as “single-issue organizations with the sole purpose of promoting a specific cause.”

Despite their apparent vitality, the RCERPF was not convinced that the proliferation of organized interest groups in the political arena is necessarily an indicator of a healthy Canadian democracy. While it conceded that such groups excel in articulating interests and mobilizing political energy, the commission felt that they lack some of the more complex skills required to fulfill the aggregative role traditionally played by mass or brokerage parties. In focusing on single issues, “specialized” interest groups are charged with representing “at best a limited spectrum of public opinion.” Furthermore, the RCERPF contends that such organizations neglect the need to “accommodate their goals with competing interests,” and goes so far as to suggest that they are even “largely unconcerned with balancing competing objectives within the organization” (emphasis added). Thus, in the estimation of the RCERPF, the decline of brokerage parties as aggregative institutions has led to a flight towards circumscribed political organizations that are structurally disinclined to assimilate the “big picture” into their ideological agendas.
The RCERPF prescribed a number of measures intended to cure the ailments plaguing Canadian democracy, the details of which fall outside the focus of this discussion. However, it is useful to note that the aim which directed the commission’s recommendations was the “strengthening [of] political parties as primary political organizations.” Most of the proposed reforms regarding parties center around enhancing their recruitment, education, and policy development functions, as well as encouraging them to nurture broader and more extensive partisan networks. The hope of the commission is that traditional parties can be democratized to the extent that politically invigorated citizens will choose them over the more narrow organizations that have fragmented the Canadian polity. In the rhetoric of the authors of the commission’s final report: “the continued health of Canadian democracy requires that people in Canada become more involved in political life through political parties.”

Canada’s Reform Party and Teledemocracy

The Reform party of Canada appears to have arisen in response to many of the same concerns that motivated the investigations of the RCERPF. Like the commissioners, Reformers recognize that a growing number of “ordinary Canadians” are choosing to opt out of participation in the representative system, and point to organized interests and failing brokerage parties as the cause of this disaffection. In Reform’s view, the Canadian polity is currently suffering under the yoke of a “tyranny of the minorities” wherein “special interest groups... get everything they want to the detriment of the people paying the bills.” These so-called special interest groups are aided in their capture of the public purse by “old-line politicians” who “don’t care what their voters think”—members of brokerage parties beholden to opinion experts, lobbyists, and party whips—and so misrepresent their constituents. In response to this situation, Reform proposes to usher in “a type of government that more accurately reflects the will of the people,” through the use of “more efficient and less expensive” electronic voting and communications technology. In short, Reform’s response to the challenge organized interests pose for brokerage parties has not been to recommend a restructuring of the latter to accommodate people attracted by the former, as suggested by the RCERPF. Instead, the Reform party portrays these actors as irretrievably undemocratic, and offers to eliminate both of them from the political calculus by using technology to make direct appeals to “ordinary Canadians.”
This response begs a number of questions. One set of questions asks whether interest group activity is actually the danger to democracy that it is portrayed as, whether increased direct participation by unaffiliated citizens is the appropriate tactic to offset this danger, and whether electronic technology can be used to enhance the democratic character of this process. However, in order to engage the Reform position on these important issues, it is necessary first to determine if the party's concern for democracy is sincere. Does the Reform party's rhetorical commitment to an increase in the quantity of participation include a desire to increase the quality of democratic life in Canada? Is the championing of greater participation by private citizens pursuant to the establishment of a reinvigorated democratic civic and political culture in Canada, or is it oriented towards the achievement of another set of ideological goals? A brief look at Reform's brand of teledemocracy in practice should help to answer these questions.

Referendum '94 and Canada Speaks

In mid-June of 1994, North Vancouver Reform party M.P. Ted White, in cooperation with Maritime Telephone and Telecommunications Technologies of Nova Scotia (MT&T), sponsored "Referendum '94," a telephone referendum on proposed changes to Canada's Young Offenders Act (YOA). The impetus for this exercise was twofold. First, Mr. White was seeking to gauge his constituents' opinions on the current state of trial and sentencing practices for youth criminals, with the intent of drafting and tabling a Private Member's Bill in the House of Commons, proposing amendments to the YOA which would reflect these opinions. Second, the telephone poll in North Vancouver was intended to represent the Reform party's first attempt to "show all of Canada how the occasional use of electronic referenda can ensure that M.P.'s are much more responsive to the wishes of the people they represent." Calling this the "first ever electronic referendum," and an opportunity for his constituents to "show the world how democracy can be improved using the very latest technology," Mr. White presented "Referendum '94" as an example of "government with due regard to the views of the majority. In other words, true democracy.""12

This claim is based on the contention that "Referendum '94" was an exercise carried out in observance of the principle of "universal suffrage," rather than merely a poll of randomly selected opinions.13 Each
registered voter in Mr. White’s North Vancouver riding was mailed a confidential, randomly generated Personal Identification Number (PIN) which granted a single access to MT&T’s computerized vote counting system. Constituents intending to vote were asked to call a 1-900 number, enter their PIN, and answer “Yes” or “No” to a series of questions pertaining to proposed changes to the YOA, all via the keypad of their touchtone telephone. Arrangements were also made for students in the riding, federal M.P.’s, and citizens across the country to participate and have their votes tabulated separately. The average duration of the voting process was approximately two minutes, and participants were responsible for the two dollar cost of this telephone time.¹⁴

Public response to the telephone poll was less than overwhelming in terms of numbers participating, and predictable in terms of results (see Appendix A). Of the 70,000 registered voters in North Vancouver, approximately 4600—roughly 6 percent—took part in the referendum.¹⁵ A strong majority of voters (67 percent) expressed agreement with the proposal in Question 1 to reduce the minimum age for charges under the YOA to ten years of age. It should be noted that a significant number of callers to the Referendum Help Line indicated that they voted no to this question because they felt the minimum age should either be lower than ten or eliminated altogether. Support among registered voters for the amendments proposed in Questions 2 and 3—automatic transfer to adult court for serious crimes and increased sentences for repeat violent offenders—was a staggering 97 percent and 99 percent respectively. Results for the other three categories of respondents generally mimicked those of registered North Vancouver voters, both in terms of low participation rates and preferences. Mr. White attributed the low rate of participation to a number of factors, including a lack of media attention due to competition with the Stanley Cup riots in Vancouver and Father’s Day. According to Mr. White: “The most commonly given reason for not voting was that the Government had already announced amendments and that those amendments would be rammed through Parliament so there was no point in voting.” Nevertheless, Mr. White praised those who did participate for being “pioneers,” and indicated that he was confident he had received a clear enough indication of his constituents’ feelings on this issue to act as directed.¹⁶

In October of 1994, the Reform party embarked on an even more ambitious experiment, sponsoring an exercise billed as “Canada’s first, live, nationally-televised, interactive Electronic Town Hall meeting.” Similar
to the North Vancouver referendum, “Canada Speaks” served two purposes for the Reform party. On one level, this combined television program and telephone poll provided the Reform party with an opportunity to both publicize and elicit feedback on its plans to “reconstruct our federal system and rebuild the principles by which we govern ourselves.” On a second level, this was yet another occasion for the Reform party to enlist the aid of sophisticated communications technologies in fulfilling its rhetorical commitment to increased citizen participation in major policy decisions. Accordingly, “Canada Speaks” was portrayed as a “citizen participation project” designed to facilitate “consultation between elections,” affording “a unique and historic opportunity for you to participate in this electronic town hall meeting from the comfort of your own living room.”

The “Canada Speaks” exercise was organized as a week-long national telephone poll, culminating in a panel discussion held in Fort Calgary on October 3, 1994, televised live by approximately two-thirds of Canada’s cable networks. In the week prior to the telecast, for an average cost of two dollars, anyone with access to a touchtone phone could call Reform’s 1-900 line and offer their opinion on three questions regarding the future shape of Canada’s federal system. First, callers were asked to respond with a yes or no to the question of whether “Canada [has] reached a point in its history when the issue of national unity must be resolved once and for all.” Next, callers were asked to choose which of the following four courses of action they thought “best for Canada”: “complete separation of Quebec from Canada”; “a special association between Canada and an independent Quebec”; “changing the federal system for the entire country”; or “continuing the present federal system.” Finally, respondents were presented with two options as to “who should set the framework for Canada’s future?”—“the Canadian people through a bottom-up process” or “governments and political leaders.”

The telecast, dubbed an “electronic town hall meeting” by its organizers, gave viewers the opportunity to call in their response to these questions one at a time, after the issues had been discussed by participants in the televised forum. Panelists leading discussion included Reform party leader Preston Manning—hailed as “the uncontested parliamentary pacesetter in the race to the brave new world,” a handful of political scientists and economists, a constitutional adviser, an opinion researcher, and a former adviser to the Bloc Québécois. In addition to these experts, viewers at home and the 140 audience members in the studio were treated to recorded testimonials from a number of prominent members of the
country's political and media elite. The telephone lines remained open for a short time after the forum, for those who wished to register their opinions in a single call after having seen the entire telecast.

Following the exercise, Reform party leader Preston Manning indicated that he was “encouraged by the response.” Mr. Manning’s satisfaction was understandable, given that the overwhelming majority of callers registered opinions which confirmed policy positions already held by the Reform party. Of the 9,406 “total registered responses,” 92 percent favored resolving the national unity issue “once and for all,” and 58 percent echoed the Reform party’s preference to do so via a comprehensive overhaul of the entire federal system. The “complete separation” of Quebec was advocated by 29 percent of callers, 10 percent were inclined to accept the status quo and, most gratifying for the Reform party, only 3 percent were prepared to accept special status for Quebec. Similarly, in a reflection of Reform’s populist rhetoric, 92 percent of the responses to Question 3 indicated that this overhaul should be directed by “the Canadian people through a bottom-up process,” rather than by “Governments and political leaders” (see Appendix B).

Aside from their predictability, by far the most interesting aspect of the results of the “Canada Speaks” televote was the manner in which they were portrayed to and by the mass media. Numerous print and broadcast media took for granted that 9406 “total registered responses” meant that “about 10,000 Canadians reached out and touched Preston Manning’s national unity telethon.” Actually, a closer look at the numbers would indicate that this is far from the case. First, PINs limiting participants to a single vote were not distributed before the poll, and this means that interested parties could potentially have voted several times in an attempt to pervert the results. But even more compromising is the fact that each answer to any of the three questions was counted as a distinct “caller.” During the forum telecast, viewers were asked to respond to the questions in three separate telephone calls, and it is conceivable (though unlikely) that each response during this period was registered by a different person. However, in the week before the television broadcast, and in the hours following it, when the bulk of responses were registered (70 percent), callers likely addressed all three questions in a single call. Nevertheless, each answer to every question during this time was also counted by the Reform party and the mass media as coming from a distinct respondent. Furthermore, a randomly selected control group was solicited in advance to participate in the exercise as a measure of the statistical validity of the
telepoll's self-selected sample population. This control group was also included in the total number of participants, again with each response to every question being tallied as a distinct caller (which is probably even less likely in the case of the control group than in the general sample). The result of these unorthodox calculations was a vastly inflated perception of the level of public participation in "Canada Speaks." As it stands, it is statistically impossible to make an accurate determination of how many people actually participated in this exercise.\(^\text{23}\)

The Real World of Reform's Teledemocracy

The Reform party is not unique in attempting to harness the formidable potential of communications technology to political participation in one form or another.\(^\text{24}\) However, most of the experiments with teledemocracy conducted to date have been suspect in terms of the quality of democracy involved, and similar questions can be raised about the Reform party's performance thus far.\(^\text{25}\) Elsewhere, I have detailed the ways in which Reform's attempts at pushbutton populism have fallen well short of the technical requirements of a legitimate exercise in democratic decisionmaking.\(^\text{26}\) On the most basic level, it would be difficult to sustain an argument that labelled as "democratic" an exercise requiring citizens to pay a fee to participate, in which people could vote as often as they liked, and which took the opinions of a self-selected sample as representative of some greater constituency. On a deeper level, none of the Reform televotes to date has involved serious attempts to encourage citizens to set their own democratic agendas or to consider the full range of options and implications pertaining to any particular policy issue. Instead, the subjects of the party's televotes and electronic town halls have reflected Reform's own preoccupations, and have featured questions skilfully crafted to produce results complimentary to existing party policy on the issues under consideration. Most serious from a technical standpoint, the Reform party has failed to either engage in concerted campaigns to inform voters thoroughly prior to soliciting their opinion, or to institute sustainable mechanisms for ongoing participation, both of which are integral elements of legitimate democratic decisionmaking.

It should be noted that the Reform party is not unique in neglecting the objective requirements for healthy democratic referenda in the interest of producing outcomes salutary to their own agenda. Democratic shortcomings in the recent use of referenda by Ross Perot in the United
States and the Parti Québécois in Quebec would seem to support speculation that the potential for manipulation via these instruments is extremely difficult to resist, regardless of one’s particular political goals. However, as noted previously, the Reform party has made these instruments and technologies central to their claims regarding their readiness to lead a democratic renaissance in Canada. In their public advocacy of these practices, Reform insists that their brand of direct democracy is less distorting and more reflective of the public will than is traditional representative government. Thus, while it would be naive to be surprised at the manipulative orientation of Reform’s direct democracy initiatives, it is nevertheless necessary to measure their performance in this area against the standards they themselves claim to be adhering or aspiring to.

The Reform party’s low regard for the qualitative requirements of sound democratic practice is evident in the cavalier manner in which it manipulates the actual results of its telepopulist schemes. The evidence suggests that the Reform party is relatively unconcerned with either the inadequacy of these exercises as reliable and accurate opinion gathering devices, or even the veracious portrayal of the responses they do receive. This was made clear in the case of Referendum ’94. Prior to the televote M.P. Ted White insisted that at least 50 percent of the 70,000 registered voters in his North Vancouver riding would have to participate before he could be confident of having received a decisive direction from his constituents. Despite this seemingly firm threshold, when less than 10 percent of voters actually registered opinions, Mr. White had, somehow, “come to feel comfortable with the results,” and decided to act upon them anyway. Once again, a commitment to adhere only to a thorough expression of citizen preferences was clearly not a priority of this exercise. Similarly, a studied disinterest in communicating an accurate portrayal of public opinion may also account for the Reform party’s spectacular inflation of the actual rate of participation in the “Canada Speaks” televote. Apparently, creating the illusion that 10,000 people were involved in this exercise was more important to the Reform party than either a truthful account of the real numbers, or an accurate estimation of Canadian opinions about national unity and federalism.

Why might this be the case? Why would a party supposedly committed to the unmediated representation of majority opinion solicit and depict it so carelessly? The answer is that accurate representations of public opinion as expressed in meaningful democratic processes are not the goal motivating the Reform party’s use of teledemocratic technologies. Instead,
it is the desire to construct a democratic discourse conducive to the realization of the rest of Reform’s ideological agenda that directs these applications. Before making a case for how the technological exercises discussed here were configured to achieve this, a brief review of the main elements of Reform’s ideological program is necessary.

In his recent attempt to unravel the populist rhetoric of the Reform Party of Canada, David Laycock offers the following insightful distillation: “...the major thrust of the Reform party project is to redefine Canadian public life by substantially contracting political—and often democratic—modes of decisionmaking in policy spheres that deal with distributional issues.” Richard Sigurdson agrees: “For Manning, the crucial goal is to dismantle the federal bureaucracy and privatize as much government activity as possible....”30 At Reform’s ideological core is a standard neoclassical commitment to the protection of the “natural” market distribution of economic, political, and social values. Any attempt by the state to use redistributive policy instruments in order to redress substantive inequalities is considered an illegitimate intrusion into the market, the costs of which are disproportionately borne by individual propertyholders through the imposition of confiscatory taxation regimes. The primary beneficiaries of this unnatural desire to give substance to liberalism’s promise of formal-legal equality are the “special interests” and the “new class” of bureaucrats who are their patrons. In the eyes of Reformers, “a special interest is seen as any group that requests publicly provided benefits that require governments to skew market distributions of resources.” These special interests are distinguished from those “ordinary Canadians” who pay taxes to a government that pays no attention to them. The Reform party envisions itself as the “representative of the unrepresented,” the champion of the silent majority in the face of a tyranny of the minorities.31

However, not all organized political groups are included in this designation, and a brief consideration of the party’s relationship with organized interests whose ideological goals are complementary to their own might clarify Reform’s intentions in singling out “special interests.” Preston Manning has been careful to affirm that “grants, tax concessions, and subsidies” to “business lobby groups” are as unacceptable to him as they are to the taxpayers he serves.32 This would appear to indicate that Reform’s disdain for the undue power of organized interests extends to all groups equally. However, recent studies of the rise of the Reform party suggest that this may not be the case. From its inception, the party has
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benefited from the support of the petroleum industry in Alberta, and has actively sought similar assistance from the central Canadian business and financial elite. In 1991 Cliff Fryers, then Chair of the party’s Executive Council and its Chief Operating Officer, went so far as to say that “Corporations are part of our constituency.” The party has also profited from long-standing associations, and overlapping memberships, with a number of well-organized, neoconservative political and business interest groups including the Northern Foundation, the Fraser Institute, the Business Council on National Issues, the Association for the Preservation of English in Canada, and REAL Women. Furthermore, Reform’s stated opposition to business subsidies has not deterred the party from nurturing a long and fruitful relationship with the National Citizen’s Coalition, “an organization with strong links to Canada’s business community.” In fact, Coalition members have been so influential in the shaping of Reform policy that, in 1992, the organization’s president conceded that: “The Reform party has cribbed probably two-thirds of our policy book.” It is this sort of intimacy that has led one commentator to characterize the Reform party as “the political point guard” for the aforementioned interest groups.

At first glance, these facts would seem to imply a terrible inconsistency between Reform’s populist rhetoric and the realities of its relationship to its partisan constituency. However, if there is indeed a contradiction here, it is a fruitful one in that it illuminates the nuances of Reform’s ideological position. For instance, the fact that Reform can simultaneously decry government handouts to the business lobby while courting its support is indicative less of a paradox than of a sophisticated accommodation, and an attention to strategic detail. Preston Manning knows he cannot reasonably expect to “sell” social spending cuts to everyday voters without a parallel promise to eliminate direct corporate patronage in kind. But this does not necessarily entail a rejection of the business community’s interests in securing a free market capitalist economy protected from the interventions of a redistributive state—a vision to which the Reform party is unambiguously committed. Put simply, in a deregulated economy freed from the taxation burdens of the welfare state, there will be no need for direct subsidies, grants, and concessions to the corporate sector, and it is at this point that the harmony between the strategic requirements of Reform’s populism, and their deeper sympathies with the needs of the business community, is restored.

This leads to the second illuminating aspect of Reform’s seemingly antithetical association with certain interest groups. How is it that Re-
form can condemn the influence of “special interests” in the policy process, while simultaneously maintaining an ongoing relationship with a number of organized interest groups? The answer is that in Reform’s eyes there are two categories of interests: some interests are “special” and others are just “ordinary.” “Special” interests, as I have noted, are those interest groups who seek public benefits and, in so doing, encourage government to undertake unwanted interventions in the free market allocation of resources. Most distressingly, the groups into which “special interests” organize themselves are, more often than not, funded by government. Thus, “special” interests and the bureaucrats beholden to them are directly implicated in the escalation of social spending, public debt, and, consequently, taxation. “Ordinary” interests, on the other hand, are simply those private citizens who seek no benefits from the state, who simply wish to be left alone to go about their business, and who seek to reverse the unfortunate course of events initiated by entitlement-seeking “special” interests. Moreover, the groups into which “ordinary” interests organize themselves eschew government financial support, and instead receive funding from private sources. Included in this designation are business interests, whose goals of deregulation, free trade, privatization, and comprehensive tax reductions are seen as consonant with the aim of liberating society from unwanted government intervention in private affairs. In Reform’s view, it is not the fact of interest groups which is a threat to market-based democracy, but rather the perceived dominance of groups with a particular type of interest. Above all, Reform seeks to eliminate this dominance, and so its encouragement of groups expressing the interests of “ordinary” Canadians is entirely consistent with its offensive against those deemed unduly “special.”

It is in this context that the Reform party has embraced a strategy designed to contract the public sphere of democratic decisionmaking. Convinced that traditional, pluralist mechanisms of decision and policy making are dominated by organized interests intent on hobbling the free market allocation of social and economic goods, the Reform party sees no choice but to substantially shrink the political arena in which these interests operate. This endrun around the mediating/muddling influence of organized interest groups, public institutions, social agencies, and advocates is accomplished by simply eliminating them from the policy process, through direct appeals to “the people” for direction or decisions. Liberated from the distorting influence of entitlement-seeking, organized interests, and the bureaucrats beholden to them, “ordinary Canadians” can
express their true preferences as consumer-voters in a free market of political and economic options. In this scenario, concerns that were once public, collective, and political are properly converted into isolated, individual, private choices, and in the process an entire layer of relations between civil society and the state spontaneously vanishes. In this light, Reform’s appeals for direct democracy appear merely instrumental to their broader goal of marginalizing organized interests, state bodies, and representative structures in the policy process. Reform’s promotion of direct democracy, then, entails reducing citizens in communities to individual consumers in markets, and emerges as an important element in their attempt to depoliticize and privatize public life.

This explains Reform’s attraction to these technologies: teledemocracy as practiced by the Reform party is perfectly suited to accomplish exactly the contraction of the public sphere they so covet. Generally speaking, teledemocratic endeavors organized on the plebiscitarian model have had as their explicit purpose the redress of perceived deficiencies in the representative system, and the exclusion of special interest groups from the decisionmaking process. Likewise, one of the key selling features of MT&T’s teledemocracy services package is that “it has the capability of removing special interest groups.” There is little doubt that this coincidence of the technology’s strengths and one of the key points in Reform’s ideological agenda accounts for the party’s unqualified embrace of teledemocracy. The party goes so far as to publicly affirm this goal prior to every televote it conducts, and when asked about his choice of this technological configuration, M.P. Ted White was quick to confirm that its primary appeal was that “It is going to break down special interests.” It does so by removing the practical need for any type of group or institutional mediation in the formation and articulation of individual preferences.

Clearly, the Reform party could not have asked for a sharper tool with which to lobotomize the democratic process. By providing a medium for individual voters to express established private choices directly from the isolation of their living room armchairs, the execution of teledemocracy according to plebiscitarian priorities effectively eliminates the social processes and political institutions which moderate particular interests in light of the needs of the community as a whole. This apparent shortcoming is a strength in Reform’s view, because these institutions and processes are fertile breeding grounds for exactly those special interest group claims that direct the state beyond its proper role as a protector of property and minimalist enforcer of market freedom. Once we begin to
recognize that Reform's primary aim in these exercises is the elimination of mediating institutions and groups that involve the state in distributional decisions, we can see why they are indifferent to democratic values such as, for instance, educating and enriching citizens by encouraging ongoing participatory processes. Reform's lack of serious effort in engaging voters prior to the televotes has already been mentioned, and when asked what ideas he had for continued citizen involvement in finding a solution to the problem of youth crime after "Referendum '94," Ted White responded by saying: "I think they've done their piece on this ... I think this process is pretty much over."41 The Reform party simply cannot recognize the educative value of ongoing participation; that would involve a tacit endorsement of precisely the role that mediating groups and institutions play in a vigorous democratic political culture.

The reduction of democratic participation to a series of isolated transactions in a competitive market that uses votes as currency also explains how the Reform party is able to equate "pay-per-vote" with universal suffrage. For Reform, democratic equality extends only to an equal right to accumulate and dispose of one's property in the marketplace as one sees fit—not to equal access to political participation regardless of means. Given this market orientation, it should not be surprising that Reform is so enthusiastic about the possibility of "reducing the unit costs of democracy" by enfranchising only those willing to pay to participate. When asked if he was at all troubled by the deterrent effects of the user fee on participation, M.P. Ted White responded by suggesting that, "If someone is not willing to pay $1.95 to have their M.P. carry out their will in Parliament, then why do I owe them any representation."42 Those who feel strongly enough about their opinion on a particular issue will be willing to pay to have that opinion heard—special interest groups and state agencies are little more than a costly means of artificially amplifying the interests of people who do not value their opinion sufficiently to finance its expression on their own. In Reform's view, pay-per-vote teledemocracy simply allows the invisible hand of the market to naturally muffle the voices of those who have become too dependent on the pilfering hand of the state.

The ultimate payoff is that these technologies enable the Reform party to accomplish this diminution of democratic public life while claiming to expand it. Teledemocracy as practiced by Reform amounts to little more than an elaborate public relations performance: here we have a high-profile vehicle for the raising of issues pursuant to the Reform party's
overall project, under the guise of soliciting public input and encouraging citizen empowerment, with no danger of eliciting responses that do anything other than vindicate Reform’s previously established positions on these issues. This explains why Reform shows little concern for encouraging genuine grassroots participation in the formulation of agendas for their teledemocratic exercises, and why they see nothing inherently biased in the way they pose their questions to voters. Reform’s selection of issues and questions is designed for “the construction of problems to justify solutions” to which they are already ideologically committed. This technology makes it possible for Reform to raise issues and manufacture opinions which support their overall goal of shrinking the public sphere, using a process that itself embodies this goal, while appearing to do exactly the opposite. Ultimately, Reform party televotes and electronic town hall meetings emerge as cynical, carefully managed spectacles which have little to do with enhancing the democratic capacities of everyday Canadian citizens.

Perhaps a good test for this interpretation is the Reform party’s advocacy of another instrument of direct democracy, the citizen’s initiative. Citizen-initiated votes on legislation proposed by citizens are supposed to be less vulnerable to the kind of manipulation characteristic of elite-driven referenda such as those referred to above. Furthermore, a common observation made by experts on direct democracy is that the citizen’s initiative is particularly useful to single-issue interest groups. These observations would seem to cast doubt on the arguments just presented. If, as I have argued, the Reform party’s primary goals in employing the tools of direct democracy are to contract the sphere of democratic, public decisionmaking and to marginalize “special” interests, then why would it endorse the use of an instrument which appears, at first glance, to evade its control and accomplish the exact opposite of its aims? Does Reform’s advocacy of the citizen’s initiative invalidate this interpretation of Reform’s teledemocratic endeavors?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of the actual use of the citizen’s initiative, and because this instrument is presently unavailable in Canada, observations of its recent employment in the United States may prove instructive. One thing that most observers of this process agree on is that the initiative is primarily seen and used as a means to circumvent the regular legislative process. In many cases, initiatives seek to permanently prevent elected officials from legislating in certain areas. Interestingly, the use of initiative towards
this end appears to correspond with a perception of the capture of representative government by identity-defined entitlement-seekers. As one observer put it: “those who perceive elected officials to be unduly influenced by competing ‘special interest’ groups are susceptible to using this method of legislation and constitutional amendment.”47 In light of this experience, it is not surprising that Reform sees the initiative as a potentially useful weapon in its battle against bureaucratic governments hypnotized by “special interests.”

Another interesting aspect of recent American experience with the initiative is the type of issues most often promoted using this instrument. In his comprehensive study of direct democracy in the United States, Thomas Cronin has determined that when it comes to issues advanced via initiative, “Tax matters, regulatory policy, government reform, environmental concerns, and public morality issues lead the list.” These issues also rank high on the Reform party’s agenda.48 Further, if taxation issues are any example, it is clear that many initiatives proposed in these areas are oriented in ways that Reform would endorse: tax initiatives primarily seek the rolling back of government spending and corresponding tax relief. At a certain point, this tendency dovetails with the aforementioned suspicion of legislatures: “The national movement to cut taxes and limit government spending taught conservatives an important lesson. They could set the political agenda even if they did not control the state legislature.”49 Given that Reform’s current regional orientation makes it unlikely that it will assume power at the federal level in the near future, it is understandable that the party would recognize the value of being able to set the political agenda, or even govern, through the alternative means of citizen’s initiatives.

Reform’s affinity for the initiative, and the consistency of this affinity with the rest of Reform’s goals, also becomes clearer in view of the increasingly popular practice in the United States of using the initiative as means of singling out groups accused of seeking “special rights” over and above those enjoyed by “ordinary” citizens. This tactic has been evident in the proliferation of initiatives which seek to strike down constitutional provisions forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation,50 initiatives seeking to deprive illegal aliens of public services, and initiatives seeking to establish English as the official language in certain parts of the United States.51 Proponents of these initiatives routinely adopt the strategy of attempting to portray equal protection under the law (that is, protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, language,
or origin) as a “special right” not enjoyed by everyday citizens. In this context, the citizen’s initiative is used as a platform upon which basic civil rights are magically transformed into illusory special privileges, and thus it becomes the vehicle for “a whole rhetoric to condemn... and disenfranchise.” Not all the groups being singled out via initiatives as recipients of “special rights” in the United States would be considered by Reform to be “special interests” in pursuit of government largesse, although the party and its “moral” supporters might find other reasons for joining the condemnation of these groups and their lifestyles. What is important is that the citizen’s initiative, like the electronic referendum, has proved itself to be well suited to populist campaigns which exploit perceptions of special status, and which seek to remove a specific set of interests from political consideration.

Finally, contrary to the hypothesis that the citizen’s initiative could just as easily be used by “special interests” to promote objectives contrary to Reform’s, experience in the United States suggests that this is highly unlikely. In the complex world of media-saturated electoral politics, the cost of mounting a successful initiative campaign would be prohibitive for many of the “special interests” most vulnerable to attacks which employ this instrument. In the United States, an entire “initiative industry” has developed and includes the expensive services of professional signature gatherers, pollsters, media experts, and public relations consultants. These services have become so essential to a successful initiative campaign that an inability to employ them effectively renders any attempt futile. This has created a situation wherein “Money is, other things being equal, the single most important factor determining direct legislation outcomes.” Predictably, the result of this reality is that many “grassroots” citizens groups and progressive advocacy organizations—those which would be labelled “special interests” by Reform—are simply unable to engage a citizen’s initiative with any reasonable expectation of success. In a climate of diminishing public funding, these groups simply either lack the resources, or are unable to justify diverting them from the more immediate needs of the constituency they serve. Far more likely to succeed are those groups which are privately funded—groups which, by definition, are not considered “special interests.” In promoting the initiative, the Reform party has failed to advocate any measures designed to correct this imbalance; things like spending limits, financial disclosure, and the regulation of “umbrella” organizations on both sides of an issue are anathema to Reform’s free market view of political competition. In fact, Reform ap-
pears committed to policies that would reinforce this tendency, such as
the cessation of public funding for interest groups, and the elimination
of controls on third party advertising in political campaigns.6

If the American experience with citizen's initiatives is any sign of
what may be expected were this instrument adopted in a Reform-governed
Canada, there is little to indicate that its use would be anything other than
consistent with the account of Reform's teledemocratic practices I have
offered here. Rather than being the exception which proves Reform's
commitment to grassroots democracy, the party's support for the initiative
is more likely explicable in the context of its overall desire to shrink the
public sphere of democratic decisionmaking via the stealth and disingenuous
employment of the mechanisms of direct citizen participation.

Conclusion

The evidence gathered by the Royal Commission on Electoral Re-
form and Party Financing would seem to corroborate John Meisel's view
that the current level of interest group activity presents a formidable chal-
lenge to the traditional representative role and practices of brokerage
parties, and that this situation constitutes a democratic deficit, particu-
larly for unaffiliated Canadian citizens. At the core of this argument seems
to be the perception of a binary opposition between the interests of "or-
dinary" Canadians and those of people attached to one or another orga-
nized social, political, or cultural group. It is the explosive tension inherent
in this binary that the Reform party has taken to an extreme conclusion
in its high tech attack on "special interests" and the "old-line" parties
supposedly held hostage by them.

The possibility that this binary may be a false one—that perhaps the
recent flurry of interest group activity is the sign of a newly invigorated
democratic discourse rather than an impoverished one—seems to have
escaped the consideration of those who have taken it upon themselves
to reform and resuscitate Canadian democracy. The RCERPF was guided
by the assumption that organized groups necessarily pursue the narrow
interests of their circumscribed constituencies to the exclusion of com-
peting or general interests, and are consequently unable to facilitate the
degree of compromise necessary in a complex and advanced polity. De-
spite an obviously genuine concern with improving democracy, the
RCERPF failed to recognize that contemporary social movements are
keenly aware of the importance of inclusivity, accommodation, commu-
nication, and education, and carry out these processes to a degree that far exceeds the accomplishments of brokerage parties in this regard.\textsuperscript{57} Whereas brokerage parties seem tied to an aggregative paradigm oriented towards conflict mediation via the bartering of mutually acceptable individual preferences, social movements appear more inclined to invoke integrative strategies aimed at the formation of collective consensus through deliberation. These strategies necessarily involve the kind of continuous education and ongoing participation that both traditional parties and Reform teledemocracy either lack, or studiously avoid.\textsuperscript{58} In their recommendation to renovate existing political parties so they might be more attractive to those citizens who are now choosing to participate through alternative organizations, the RCERPF implicitly devalues the contribution made to Canadian democracy by these groups. Unfortunately, by overlooking the fact that social movements are currently one of the most democratic elements of Canadian political life, the RCERPF missed an opportunity to investigate and develop sites of democratic renaissance that are already thriving.\textsuperscript{59}

The Reform party, on the other hand, is not unaware of the potential of social movements to contribute to a substantial democratization of Canadian political life, which is why they have expended so much sophisticated effort to discredit and marginalize them. Reform’s rhetorical commitment to populism is a veneer which covers their fervent ideological distaste for those who believe that democracy is more than merely the sum of capitalism and the periodic opportunity to vote. In their view, the free market distribution of private political and economic values must be protected against those who would seek to alleviate the inequities of such a system through concerted and organized public activity. For Reform, the correlates of the binary opposition between “special interests” and “ordinary Canadians” are an opposition between “the public” and “the people” and, ultimately, between democracy and the market. Thus, in contrast to the RCERPF, the concern of the Reform party is not that social movements suffer from too little democracy, but rather that they portend too much of it. It only follows that, again differing from the RCERPF, Reform feels that the solution to the problem of “special interests” is less, rather than more, qualitative democracy.

In 1979, John Meisel felt confident that, “no one is trying to eliminate Canadian parties, or even to reduce their importance.”\textsuperscript{60} By this he meant that the decline of brokerage parties was an incidental consequence of, among other factors, the rise of interest groups, rather than a matter
of design. Times have certainly changed, but it is not Canadian interest groups who are engaged in an explicit effort to undermine traditional political parties. Nor is it the RCERPF, which went to great lengths to assert its belief that parties are an indispensable component of representative democracy in Canada. It is the Reform party, which sees the retraction not only of interest groups, but also of other organized mediating institutions—including political parties—as part of its overall goal of eliminating those arenas and institutions in which private choices are moderated by the democratic consideration of public needs and priorities. Since the arrival of Reform, Canadian political parties are no longer simply on the decline—they are, like organized social movements and other public “spaces,” under concerted attack.

As I have argued in this essay, one of the chief tactics employed by Reform in its war on the public sphere has been the use of highly sophisticated communications technology to engage in mock exercises of direct democracy that are little more than spectacles designed to raise the party’s profile as champion of participatory populism. It is interesting to note that electronic media were identified by Meisel as another primary contributor to the decline of party, and the RCERPF firmly rejected direct democratic mechanisms such as referenda and recall as solutions to Canada’s democratic woes. The question to be addressed is whether Reform’s special way of employing electronic media to encourage participation is the only possible use for these instruments. Neither social movements nor communications technology are going to disappear in the foreseeable future. Developing a more progressive, democratic configuration of the relationship between these two phenomena certainly seems a worthwhile endeavor. It remains to be seen whether such an arrangement is possible, and who will undertake its construction.

NOTES

I would like to thank Edward Andrew, Frederika Scarth, and my anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay. I would also like to thank David Laycock for his assistance throughout this project. A previous version of this essay was presented at the Annual Meeting of the British Columbia Political Science Association, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, May 6, 1995.

1. See Alan Cairns, “The Charter, Interest Groups, Executive Federalism, and Constitutional Reform,” in David E. Smith, et. al., eds., After Meech Lake (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1991); Alan Cairns, “Political Science, Ethnicity and the Canadian Constitution,”


5. Ibid., 181, 198-99.


8. Ibid., 208, 292, 228, 297, 222.

9. Ibid., 228, 222, 11, 290-92.


14. Constituents who did not have access to a touchtone phone were encouraged to contact a 24-hour help line to make alternate arrangements. No PINs were required for participation in the Canada Opinion Poll segment of the exercise, meaning that people
with a particular interest in the outcome of the poll could, conceivably, vote as often as they pleased.

A charge of ninety-five cents was levied for each additional minute a voter spent on the line. The amount of the user fee was calculated as follows: the telephone company charged thirty-five cents per minute for use of a 1-900 line, as well as 10 percent of the total billing amount as a collection fee; the remainder of the fee was calculated on the basis of the costs involved in administering the referendum. In this case, MT&T assumed a substantial portion of these costs as a promotional expense, thus artificially deflating the cost borne by the voter.

15. This figure is approximate because the actual number of respondents varied from one question to another: 4606 responded to Question 1; 4599 to Question 2; and 4592 to Question 3.


17. Reform Party of Canada, Canada is Our Home (national direct advertising supplement), October 1994.

18. The event was broadcast in English, with simultaneous French translation available through some stations. Due to satellite specification problems, the French and English sound signals were temporarily reversed in a number of significant areas, including Vancouver, Ottawa and parts of Toronto. This may have caused some viewers to switch the program off prematurely.


20. Although organizers estimated that only 50 out of the 140 audience members present were Reform party members, assembled participants were characterized as “an overwhelmingly pro-Reform audience.” See “Technical Woes Plague Reform TV,” Edmonton Journal (4 October 1994).


22. Ibid. Similar characterizations were presented in the Edmonton Journal, above, and in Joe Woodard, “Cross-Country Feedback,” British Columbia Report (17 October 1994): 12. A Reform party leaflet promoting the National Tax Alert townhall referred to Canada Speaks and asserted that “Almost 10 000 Canadians took advantage of this opportunity to voice their opinions.”

23. Although it should be noted that a precise measurement in this regard was not technologically impossible. MT&T could have configured the system to isolate the exact number of callers, but the Reform party was apparently uninterested in this figure.

24. See variously Christa Daryl Slatin, Televote: Expanding Citizen Participation in a Quantum Age (New York: Praeger, 1992); Iain Maclean, Democracy and the New Tech-


27. Following the Canada Speaks televote, Preston Manning was quoted as saying: "These, of course, are responses calling in to a television program. They are not a scientific sample." As quoted in Susan Delacourt, "End Unity Debate, Reform TV Show Told," Globe and Mail (4 October 1994). Similar comments were made about Referendum '94 by Ted White, interview conducted 14 June 1994, and by the moderator of the National Tax Alert electronic town hall, 12 February 1995. Despite their recognition of the invalidity of the results of these exercises, Reform is content to act on them as if they were adequate representations of the public will.


31. Laycock, 217, 220. According to this definition, feminist women's groups, aboriginal organizations, organized labor, multicultural and linguistic groups, directorates of crown corporations, gays, lesbians, students, environmentalists, public sector workers, and even the province of Quebec are all deemed by Reform to be "special" interests.


34. David Somerville, as quoted in Sydney Sharpe and Don Baird, Storming Babylon: Preston Manning and the Rise of the Reform Party (Toronto: Key Porter, 1992) 65; see also 123. Sigurdson, 263.

36. Laycock, 211, 230, 244.

37. See Slaton, Televote, 184, 192; see also Richard S. Hollander, Video Democracy: The Vote From Home Revolution (Mt. Airy: Lomond, 1985), 40.


42. Ibid.


44. The Reform party has advocated adoption of the citizen’s initiative on numerous occasions. For example, the party’s Blue Book policy manifesto affirms the common people’s, “right to directly initiate legislation for which substantial public support is demonstrated.” This position has been reiterated in Manning’s, The New Canada, 324-25, in the party’s submission to the RCERPF, and in Reform’s constitutional proposal, “A New Confederation.”


48. Cronin, 205. Ever-populist, Reform was careful to include a commitment to the environment in its Statement of Principles. However, it should be noted that the party’s ecological strategy does not extend far beyond proposing “consumer purchasing power” and “marketplace mechanisms” as a substitute for government regulation of the environment. See Manning, The New Canada, 360, 217.

50. The most famous of these were the successful Amendment 2 in Colorado (1992), and the unsuccessful Ballot Measure 9 in Oregon (1992). By 1994, anti-lesbian/gay initiatives had been proposed in as many as 139 jurisdictions throughout the United States. See David A.J. Richards, “Sexual Preference as a Suspect (Religious) Classification: An Alternative Perspective on the Unconstitutionality of Anti-Lesbian/Gay Initiatives,” Ohio State Law Journal 55 (1994): 491-553.

51. California’s Proposition 187, rendering illegal aliens ineligible for basic services, was adopted in 1994. See Magleby, 29, 41.


55. Cronin, 215. Magleby, “Let the Voters Decide,” 36. In Canada, a possible exception to this rule might be the trade union movement. If they were so inclined, trade unions at least would have the potential to muster the resources necessary for a successful initiative campaign.

56. These measures, along with public financing and the enforcement of a fairness requirement for media coverage are among those often proposed as ways to mitigate the undue influence of well-financed private interests in initiative campaigns. See Cronin, 238. See the “Electoral Reform” section of Reform’s Blue Book; and Sharpe and Baird, Storming Babylon, 180.


59. Dobrowolsky and Jenson, 45-6, 68.

60. John Meisel, 192.


APPENDIX A: Referendum '94
June 15-20, 1994—North Vancouver, B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1: Should the age be reduced to 10 for charges to be laid under the Young Offenders Act?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Voters:</td>
<td>3067 (67%)</td>
<td>1539 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Voters:</td>
<td>29 (66%)</td>
<td>15 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs:</td>
<td>15 (94%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Opinion Poll:</td>
<td>1508 (69%)</td>
<td>678 (31%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2: Should there be automatic transfer to adult court for serious crimes such as murder?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Voters:</td>
<td>4474 (97%)</td>
<td>125 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Voters:</td>
<td>38 (86%)</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs:</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Opinion Poll:</td>
<td>2105 (97%)</td>
<td>73 (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3: Should there be a special category in the Young Offenders Act for repeat and dangerous offenders?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Voters:</td>
<td>4539 (99%)</td>
<td>53 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Voters:</td>
<td>40 (91%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs:</td>
<td>15 (94%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Opinion Poll:</td>
<td>2151 (99%)</td>
<td>20 (1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: “Canada Speaks”  
Sept. 26–Oct. 3, 1994—Fort Calgary, Alberta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1: Do you think the issue of national unity must be resolved once and for all?</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada Opinion Poll (COP):</td>
<td>2011 (95%)</td>
<td>102 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group (CG):</td>
<td>681 (84%)</td>
<td>131 (16%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2: Which is the best course of action for Canada?</th>
<th>COP</th>
<th>CG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) Complete separation of Quebec: 873 (32%)</td>
<td>146 (17%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) A special association with an independent Quebec: 72 (3%)</td>
<td>43 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) Changing the federal system for all of Canada: 1639 (60%)</td>
<td>446 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) Continuing the present federal system: 143 (5%)</td>
<td>221 (26%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3: Who should set the framework for Canada’s future?</th>
<th>COP</th>
<th>CG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) The Canadian people through a bottom-up process: 2022 (96%)</td>
<td>639 (81%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Governments and political leaders: 86 (4%)</td>
<td>151 (19%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>