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IDEAS THAT LEAD



The Enduring Appeal of Red Toryism

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C2C Journal's name is a deliberate double-play on our central aspirations – to be read from coast to coast and to nurture important conversations between Canada's conservatives. While we may not always get along perfectly, having just lost an entirely winnable federal election in which the Conservative Party topped the popular vote, now is a critical time to have a wide-ranging and civil debate about the future of conservatism in our beloved country. Ben Woodfinden kicks off *C2C's* new special series on this important topic with a thoughtful essay about a Canadian political tradition that enjoyed plenty of success in our past, and deserves to be revived today.

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Few Canadians have any connection to our depleted military, fewer still enlist, and the number who consider joining a special branch of a foreign country's forces that began as a way to soak up society's dregs must be vanishingly small. Yet that was the path chosen by Joel Struthers, and his five years spent in the French Foreign Legion don't seem to have done him any lasting harm. Peter Shawn Taylor shows that the historical aura of the kepi-clad brawlers still exerts a romantic tug on certain modern-day hearts in this fond portrayal of one Canadian's life in the Legion and his remarkable work since getting out intact.



Canada's "Climate Crisis" Is Entirely Political PAGE 13

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Maurice Strong died of old age before seeing his predictions of climate apocalypse come true. But don't worry: there are plenty of putative replacements for the late organizer of the original "Earth Summit". They're younger, more credulous, far shriller and even less scientifically literate. If the planet won't heat up and destroy industrial civilization as predicted, they're here to help make sure that the latter, at least, occurs one way or another. Gwyn Morgan peruses selected lowlights from the current "climate crisis" spectacle and laments our Liberal government's credulous genuflection before the prophets of doom when Canada's industry actually has the means to help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

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The Enduring Appeal Of Red Toryism

By Ben Woodfinden



Since the disappointing federal election result in October, Canada's conservatives have been engaged in a slow-burning civil war about what went wrong, who should lead the Conservative Party of Canada and what the overall future of Canadian conservatism should be. Out of this is emerging an apparent consensus – at least judging by the weight of public commentary – that Canadian conservatism will become irrelevant unless it embraces social progressivism.

One [column](#) in *The Globe and Mail* by two political consultants suggested that the Conservatives “should consider breaking from the past” to “resonate more broadly across the country,” while another [column](#) in the *Toronto Star* by a political strategist called for leader Andrew Scheer “to overcome his pride about Pride,” i.e., to demonstrate his acquiescence to social progressivism. Another in *Maclean's* suggested that Conservatives have a “branding problem” and called for the party “to think like

marketing-execs.”

Missing from these articles – and much other commentary on social and mainstream media besides – are substantive attempts to outline what conservatism ought ultimately to be



The resignation of Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer offers an opportunity to rethink the relationship between Canadian conservatism and social purpose.

about. Most discussions have not extended beyond superficial observations about branding and electoral positioning that, if implemented, would make conservatism nearly synonymous with

liberalism, albeit with a decades-long lag. Granted, much of the post-election commentary has also been in the nature of “friendly advice” from external sources who normally sneer at, if not loathe, conservatism and would never consider voting Conservative under any circumstances. So why care?

One key reason for concern is that social-progressivism represents a strong current within the Conservative Party. The party's ostensibly retrograde electoral platform and messaging has been offered as an explanation for its electoral loss and a reason for Scheer to be toppled. (He announced his resignation in mid-December.) Peter Mackay, a former senior minister in the Harper government and current favourite among many moderate eastern Conservatives, was eager to plunge the knife in Scheer's back and advance this narrative, saying that social conservatism “hung around Andrew Scheer's neck like a stinking

albatross.” This approach appears to be supported by a considerable [proportion](#) of rank-and-file Conservatives. It’s entirely possible that it could be reflected in the

[volume](#) of essays), with “the priority of the individual and his rights over society.” It thus rests on a particular view of human nature, one that “affirms the self

characteristic that has come to make liberalism a never-ending project, for a philosophy that regards creating a society of free and equal persons as the highest

Many present-day conservatives seem eager to embrace Thatcher’s individualism as the essence of conservatism, as they regard politics as a binary battle against the statism and collectivism of the left. Rather than being genuine opposites, however, radical individualism and collectivism are two sides of the same coin.

party’s choice of its next leader. If so, the consequences would be incalculable.

For this reason alone it’s critical to put forward and debate options that rest not on prevailing social fashion or momentary marketing-driven impulses, but on age-old principles and coherent political models that have demonstrably worked. Some Conservatives are sure to advance a vision centred on lower taxes, less regulation, more economic freedom and continued globalization. Others are likely to draw inspiration from the recent success of conservative populism in a number of other countries. But if Canadian conservatives look back on their own history, they’ll find a largely forgotten tradition that offers a distinctly Canadian contribution for the future of conservatism: Red Toryism, properly understood.

The small “I” liberal briar patch

Human beings are not atoms. We are not born into the world as self-sufficient rational decision-makers. We are formed by society and by others. Our nature as socially and historically situated beings is undeniable, and yet much political philosophy is built on a denial of this. While liberalism is often presented as metaphysically and anthropologically agnostic, in reality it is built on a specific conception of the person. Liberalism begins, according to Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor in his [essay](#) *Atomism* (from a collected

sufficiency of man alone.”

Many liberals would reject Taylor’s characterization of liberalism as “atomism,” but at the core of most variants of liberalism is an emphasis on the primacy of free and equal individuals. The liberal idea of man thus elevates



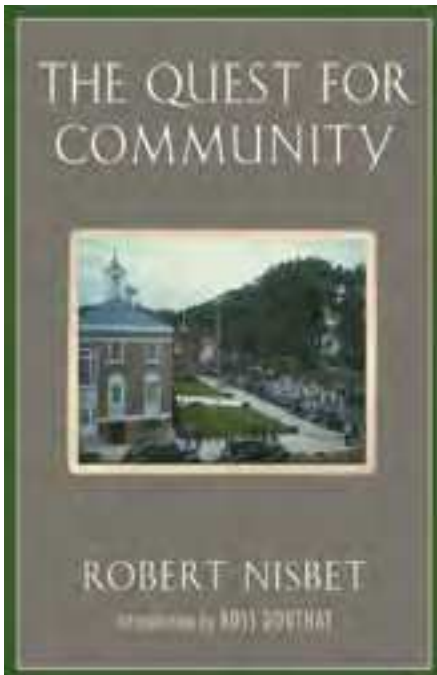
Liberalism ushered in the Age of Enlightenment, but over time it has become a destabilizing – and often chaotic – force.

autonomy, and its pursuit thereof, to the status of the highest political good. It leads to a relentless quest for emancipation and along with this the erosion and removal of all constraints on personal action. This is a defining

good will be constantly on the lookout for new barriers to freedom and equality that must be overcome.

Accepting this characterization of liberalism does not require rejecting freedom and equality, and many of the achievements we associate with liberalism are laudatory. A recognition of the inherent equality and dignity of all people, regardless of race or gender, and the emancipation of slaves, serfs, women and other minority groups were both morally worthy and necessary. Universal human dignity and equality are not innately “liberal” ideas, but it is undeniable that liberals, and liberalism, have helped actualize them. But unrestrained and left entirely to its own devices, the internal logic of liberalism and the pursuit of absolute freedom and equality in every sphere of human life corrodes every barrier and constraint that inhibits this.

For this reason, liberalism often ends up being a destabilizing force. This point has been made by liberals and non-liberals alike. Early 19th century French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, in the [second volume](#) of his magisterial *Democracy in America*, feared the kind of atomism much later described by Taylor – seeing it as going hand-in-hand with a tyrannical form of democratic collectivism. Present-day Harvard law professor Adrian Vermeule has aptly described the relentless and destabilizing



The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order & Freedom published by Robert Nisbet in 1953 remains a key text in understanding the social crises of Western Civilization.

nature of liberalism as a [sacramental](#) liturgy that must be constantly [performed](#) anew.

If your personal understanding of the history of conservatism begins in the 1980s, this characterization of liberalism surely strikes you as odd, because modern conservatism seems to have fully embraced the language of liberalism. Margaret Thatcher once said



Eighteenth-century British politician and political philosopher Edmund Burke's notion of "little platoons" is still relevant today.

in an interview that "there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families." This suggests that at her core the UK's "Iron Lady" was ultimately a (small-l) liberal, though this was perhaps masked by her deep patriotism, her love for all things English and her tough foreign policy, all of which set her at odds with liberals.

Many conservatives today indeed insist they are the heirs to a purer, better form of liberalism. This is often termed "classical" liberalism and is usually described as a liberalism of small government, light regulation, untrammelled public discourse and economic freedom. This kind of liberalism is generally associated with the historically Lockean stream of Anglo-American conservatism, one of two branches of Anglo-American conservatism, the other being Burkean.

Many present-day conservatives seem eager to embrace Thatcher's individualism as the essence of conservatism, for they regard politics as a binary battle against the statism and collectivism of the left. Rather than being genuine opposites, however, radical individualism and collectivism are two sides of the same coin. A society of radically autonomous individuals is not likely to be a society of self-governing individuals. Instead it is likely to be one in which the institutions and traditions that governed social life and relations have been weakened, dissolved and denounced as oppressive constraints that interfere with the individual's pursuit of personal authenticity. A society in which the age-old, traditional constraints on individual excess are cast onto the altar of autonomy faces chaos unless an ever-more powerful central

authority steps forward to regulate and govern every aspect of our lives.

This relationship between radical individualism and collectivism is not accidental. In his under-rated classic [The Quest for Community](#), the late American sociologist Robert Nisbet warned that the drive towards totalitarian collectivism in the 20th century was rooted in the natural human yearning for belonging and community. The totalitarian temptation and the rise of mass movements were products of what he called "enlightenment individualism" progressively destroying the structures and institutions that had previously satiated our need for community.



Traditional social institutions have historically functioned as the bedrock of society, but lately have suffered under the relentless progressivity of modern liberalism.

Social institutions from families to churches to voluntary associations of almost innumerable form are often rooted in pre-modern customs, traditions and forms of kinship. Enlightenment individualism regarded these older institutions as sources of oppression, irrationality and superstition that, thereby, undermined and delegitimized their historical claims over individual behaviour. The progressive emancipation of individuals from these typically personal and local forms of relationships and solidarity produced a sense of alienation that naturally drew many people to mass movements. Thus, the end-state of radical individualism was not liberation, but a much more radical form of mass conformism.

Freedom is more than radical autonomy, and conservatism must be more than liberalism

If conservatism is to be anything more than just liberalism behind, it must be built upon a recognition of our historical and



Giving Red Toryism a bad name: (l-r) former Quebec premier Jean Charest and former Alberta premier Alison Redford.



Former British Prime Minister David Cameron's "Big Society" agenda sought an update to Burkean ideals.

social situatedness. A focus on the social ought not be a mere supplementary or optional component: it must be part of the core. Fortunately for conservatives, there is already a rich wellspring to draw upon. Edmund Burke's famous "little platoons" provide a good starting point. The 18th century British politician and political philosopher considered groupings within family, churches, and civic associations as the basis of social life.

"To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle of public affections," Burke wrote in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790. "It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind." These platoons form us and cultivate the virtues that enable both freedom and flourishing.

To reject atomistic individualism is not therefore to reject freedom. But it requires recognizing that freedom and autonomy are not synonymous, and that autonomy is not synonymous with the good. Individuals loosened and liberated from all constraints are not likely to be

truly self-governing and free; they're more likely to be slaves to, not masters of, their own desires.

Individualism versus collectivism is a false binary. True freedom needs to be nourished and cultivated. Social and other intermediary non-government institutions enable, preserve and extend our freedom. These institutions help to create boundaries and roles that provide intelligibility, stability and order to the social world. A world without these institutions isn't one that's emancipated; it's one in which we need bureaucrats and therapists to regulate every aspect of our lives. A political philosophy largely centred on protecting, preserving, and promoting these institutions moves beyond the false binary to provide a unique, conservative "third option".

Unfortunately, conservatives too often fall prey to nostalgia for an idealized past that cannot be resurrected. Canada has not proved immune to the trends observed in books like *"Bowling Alone"*; social atomization and hyper-individualism are hallmarks of contemporary life. The conservative answer cannot simply be a

purser form of liberalism, one that hyper-extends liberalism's radical individualism and conception of freedom divorced from any notion of human flourishing situated in and nourished by the "little platoons." It has to be one that emphasizes there is more to conservatism than liberalism. Far too often, however, conservatives run away from this challenge and hide behind the language of liberalism.

Debased Red Toryism is not the answer – it's just more liberalism

Among the worst offenders who dress their liberalism up as "conservatism" are Canada's so called Red Tories. Journalist and author Steve Paikin recently [defined](#) this political species as "conservatives who are socially liberal but [are] sticklers for fiscal prudence and respect for democratic principles." What this translates to in practice is a conservatism that represents little more than liberalism wearing blue stripes. Paikin was also being generous in his linkage of Red Tories to "fiscal prudence", for in practice they've proved themselves nearly as big spenders as Liberals, often running massive deficits. Their habits largely account for current-generation "fiscal conservatives" defining themselves separately from Red Tories.

From political figures like former Quebec premier Jean Charest to former Alberta premier Alison Redford, this form of conservatism largely consists of attempting to "out-liberal" the Liberals, and claiming that to be principled conservatism. Charest, whose unruly mop of curly hair marked him early



Scholars (l-r), Gad Horowitz, George Grant, and Ron Dart: the search for an older and more successful form of the Canadian Red Tory movement.

on as a different kind of PC among his strait-laced colleagues during the Mulroney era, embodies this political type to an almost comical degree. He moved seamlessly from five years spent as the most left-leaning federal PC leader in history in 1993-1998 (when he led the House of Commons' *fifth-ranked* party) to leader of the Quebec Liberal Party in 1998 (becoming premier in 2003). Meanwhile, Redford's incompetent rule and bloated budgeting in Alberta all-but handed the reliably-conservative province to the NDP in 2015.

Whether due to their ardour for the latest trends and fashions of social progressivism, or their instinctive adoption of centrist/ elitist liberal hysteria about issues such as Brexit, this grouping of Red Tories has been widely loathed by other conservatives. They are a continued source of strife, pulling conservatives into a vortex of internecine conflict that, at its worst, has split apart parties and kept them out of power for extended periods. The "lost '90s" federally and the NDP's rule in Alberta in 2015-2019 are two examples of the damage done. It is critical that Conservatives today avoid reverting to an approach that could deliver a "lost '20s" as well.

An older and better form of Red Tory

The contemporary Canadian usage of "Red Tory," has little to do with an older

Toryism on either side of the Atlantic that more closely resemble the Canadian variant. At a minimum, Canadian conservatives should pay close attention to these developments.



A National Dream: Sir John A. Macdonald's version of Red Toryism built a nation.

The current British [variant](#) of Red Toryism is associated most closely with the English philosopher and theologian Phillip Blond, a confidant of former British Prime Minister David Cameron. It is a full-throated rejection of both the bureaucratic-managerial state and global

on getting rid of the state and expecting civil society to spontaneously fill the void, as many small-government types on the right often imagine. Instead, Cameron and Blond wanted to use the state to "remake society" – in the sense of rebuilding or restoring it. The Big Society's vision was to use the state to encourage social enterprise, based on the principle of subsidiarity. It empowered groups and individuals to solve problems at the local level, rather than relying on a distant but overweening bureaucratic state to do so. The hope was that this process would spur the revival of critical social institutions.

While the historical Canadian variant is very similar to its British cousin, it has different origins and a slightly different conception of the state. The label "Red Tory" was [coined](#) in 1966 by political scientist Gad Horowitz, a specialist in labour theory at the University of Toronto. He used it to describe a tradition in Canadian conservative thought that blended conservatism and elements of socialism in a distinctly anti-liberal synthesis that rejected radical individualism.

The University of the Fraser Valley political scientist Ron Dart [traces](#) Red Toryism back to an older tradition of (British) North American conservatism that he refers to as "High Toryism." It has its roots in the culture of the United Empire Loyalists who fled northward after the American Revolution, and centred on loyalty to the British

Instead of using the state simply to help individuals subsist, Conservatives should use it to help individuals flourish and become self-governing. This means supporting the related enabling social institutions.

tradition of Canadian conservatism that was also once referred to as Red Toryism. While largely a forgotten political tradition in Canada, recent developments in the United States and U.K. suggest its central ideas remain relevant today. There are two related but recent variants of Red

capitalism which, as we've seen, have each been enabled by a hyper-liberal focus on individual rights. This view became central in Cameron's attempt to detoxify and revitalize the British Tory party with his "Big Society" agenda.

This project was focused not simply

Crown and the Anglican Church. They stressed values like tradition and the common good, and their version of Toryism became associated in Upper Canada (today Ontario) with the Family Compact. Some of its most ardent defenders included the first Anglican

Bishop of Toronto, John Strachan. The Family Compact order in Upper Canada was one that embodied the traditional Tory values of loyalty to the Crown, church, and country. But it also reflected an older aristocratic sense of noblesse oblige in [which](#) the “men of talent” of the governing elite understood and acted on



British prime minister Boris Johnson's recent convincing victory reveals the powerful and enduring appeal of the Red Tory tradition.

their obligations to society and the people they governed.

This older tradition has little to do with contemporary Red Toryism. It is best embodied in the thoughts of philosopher George Grant. While now mostly remembered for his writing on Canadian nationalism, including his famous *Lament for a Nation*, Grant's broader political philosophy, while often vague, defends a “traditional conservatism, which asserts the right of the community to restrain freedom in the name of the common good.” Whatever you think of it, this Red Toryism is definitively not just a variant of liberalism.

After Confederation and into the early 20th century, Canadian Red Toryism retained the “Tory touch” of the old High Tory tradition, but its outlook was shaped to the size and youth of the Canadian nation. In practice this meant that a protection of Canadians' shared history, values and sense of nationhood often required nation-building projects that involved using the powers of the state, including its financial power. This eventually became seen as the “socialist” part of Red Toryism, although it was a mild and limited form.

The emblematic project of this tradition was, of course, construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, undertaken by Sir John A. Macdonald to help realize

his [“National Dream.”](#) Another example was the establishment of a national broadcaster, the CBC, by prime minister R.B. Bennett. At the provincial level, the building of powerful institutions such as Ontario Hydro or the university system also illustrate this philosophy. And the success of Ontario Premier Bill Davis'

Big Blue Machine (Davis was premier from 1971 to 1985) is often held as proof of its political appeal. Regardless of what we might think of their contemporary versions, these initiatives proved vital in forging national or quasi-national institutions around which a national identity and shared loyalties could be nurtured. Macdonald himself was especially [concerned](#) with making

the Conservative Party he led the party of nation-building – with Macdonald as lead nation-builder.

At its best, this form of conservatism sought to use the state not primarily to regulate people's lives, but to build up a nation that could create the loyalties and bonds that enable a polity's enduring freedom. History thus demonstrates that conservatism in Canada has not been solely about free markets; it was built

In the United States, Republican Senator Marco Rubio has begun to lay out what he refers to as “Common Good capitalism.” The Floridian's philosophy draws on Catholic social teaching and Papal encyclicals to stress that, “Dignified work, strong families, and strong communities are key to civic – and economic – well-being.”

upon a robust patriotism and loyalty to a new nation that required recurring use of the state to help nourish this patriotism and to protect, preserve, and strengthen social institutions. It is a unique and distinctly non-Liberal Canadian conservative tradition.

Today, however, it is often treated as a “leftist” form of conservatism because the modern right-liberal rewriting of conservative history – built on the binary

between the individual and the collective – sees any use of the state as collectivist. This is also one reason the term “Red Tory” gradually drifted towards its current reference centring on the conservative movement's social left.

Red Toryism need not equal collectivism – lessons from abroad

However, using the state to build and protect social and civic institutions is not innately a form of collectivism. It doesn't require collectivist policies, nor are its goals collectivist. Latter-day Red Tories have often adopted such policies, but these were choices rather than requirements, which helps explain the difference between the two forms of Red Toryism. Traditional Red Toryism employs a more nuanced understanding of limited government, one that acts according to a clear vision of the state's limited role, while using this role to promote and protect a free and flourishing society.

This older tradition of Canadian conservatism has been largely forgotten, but developments elsewhere may be breathing new life into Red Toryism. Boris Johnson's breathtaking victory in Britain's recent general election was not a victory for Thatcherism and the champions of unregulated capitalism. Key to his victory was bringing former-Labour voters into the Conservative fold with a

manifesto that not only promised to “get Brexit done,” but included promises and commitments to use the state to rebuild British society and industry under the [“One Nation” banner.](#)

Blond sees Johnson's victory as a [vindication](#) of Red Toryism, potentially reviving a tradition embodied in prime ministers including Benjamin Disraeli and Harold Macmillan. Blond has [written](#) that Johnson's electoral victory and the

long-term realignment it could represent “ensures that [Conservative] policies and promises must flow from a future where liberalism can no longer serve or guide us.”

Meanwhile, underneath the seemingly chaotic state of American conservatism, a renaissance of thinking is taking place. Among the most interesting contributions is that of Republican Senator Josh Hawley, who is pushing the boundaries of conservative orthodoxy. Since entering the Senate in 2018, the Missourian has been trying to add some intellectual weight and permanence to the “populist moment” that elected President Trump.

In a 2010 [essay](#), Hawley proposed a republican conception of freedom that emphasizes self-determination and participation in public life. “Self-determination turns liberty outward, away from the self and its passions, and toward society and civic life,” Hawley wrote. “It teaches that liberty requires a certain sort of citizen, and it insists on a connection between personal freedom and democratic participation.” Hawley links his thinking back to the views of American founders such as

it also conceives of emancipation (a secularized notion of salvation) built on creating one’s own self, unrestrained by historical or social baggage. Hawley sees this view best-typified in retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy’s oft-quoted statement in the



Echoes of James Madison and John Adams: Missouri Republican Senator Josh Hawley, seen here campaigning in 2018, is stretching the intellectual boundaries of conservative orthodoxy.

case known as *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*: “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

Hawley’s heterodox conservatism is more than mere theorizing. It has profoundly influenced his views on key issues and how to address them. It has helped, for example, to turn him into

Papal encyclicals like [Rerum Novarum](#) to stress that, “Dignified work, strong families, and strong communities are key to civic – and economic – well-being.” The successful pursuit of this requires not simply getting out of the way of what Rubio refers to as the “financialized

economy”; it also means using the state where necessary to restore “a system of free enterprise wherein workers fulfill their obligation to work and enjoy the resultant benefits, and businesses enjoy their right to make a profit and reinvest enough to create high-productivity jobs.”

Towards a restored Canadian Red Toryism

Canadian conservatives would do well to take note of these developments.

Modern Canadian conservatism champions “small government”, seemingly without having any theory of what the state is actually for. Absent such a framework, it is difficult to identify governing priorities let alone to develop a philosophically coherent blueprint for action. When Conservatives get elected, they often have no idea of how to achieve the “fiscal responsibility” they preach.

At its best, historical Red Toryism sought to use the state not primarily to regulate people’s lives, but to build up a nation that could produce the kinds of loyalties and bonds that enable a polity’s enduring freedom. History thus demonstrates that conservatism in Canada has not been solely about free markets.

James Madison and John Adams.

In a recent commencement [address](#) at the King’s College in New York City, Hawley challenged what he called the “Pelagian” notion of liberty that dominates current American life. Pelagianism is a Christian heresy built on the claim that people are born untainted by original sin, and thus that salvation can be accomplished through the human will alone, without God’s grace. According to Hawley, Pelagian freedom resembles modern progressive freedom because

the American right’s leading critic of big tech, and his antitrust-based agenda to break up these monopolies could provide lessons for Canadian conservatives regarding economic and industrial policies.

Hawley’s is no longer an isolated voice. In a [series of essays](#) and speeches, fellow Republican Senator Marco Rubio has begun to lay out what he refers to as “Common Good capitalism.” The Floridian’s philosophy draws on Catholic social teaching and

A series of *ad hoc* actions and policies follow, and the predictable result is failure to roll back the state in any significant or lasting way.

If they wish to succeed, conservatives need to take advantage of their time out of political office to step back and think seriously about what the state ought to be used for. Once elected, they could then work systematically to reorient government towards these ends. Instead of using the state simply to help individuals subsist, conservatives

should use it to help individuals flourish and become self-governing. This means supporting the related enabling social institutions. A Red Tory theory of the state would empower and support civil society, not replace it.

In doing this, conservatives would not only be able to tap into current international conservative revivals, they could re-appropriate and reapply Canada's homegrown Red Tory tradition. The specific policy proposals would vary depending on the level of government



"We are all social beings": A Canadian Red Toryism revival should encourage citizens to engage themselves in all aspects of society.

and location, but they should emphasize policies that help families. These could include, for example, expanded and strengthened parental leave. One of the Harper government's signal [successes](#) was increasing the Universal Child Care Benefit. This was a quintessentially conservative policy of using the state to help institutions conservatives consider critical.

More broadly, there should be a renewed emphasis on subsidiarity, one that is not simply about the division of political powers, but aims to support the social institutions closest to problems and people and, therefore, best placed to

develop solutions. It should also expand educational options for parents who want to instill not just skills but values in their children. Environmental policy would focus not on utopian schemes to "fight" climate change, but practical and humane measures that conserve and sustain public spaces and help build livable and cohesive communities and environments.

A revived Red Toryism would be about more than just policy, however. Policy would be integrated with a different language and way of thinking about

political questions. Conservatives today are often unable to think outside the language of liberal rights, which often means framing conservative solutions as "market-based," or stressing a right-liberal interpretation of rights. A revived Red Toryism drawing on the proven historical model could help challenge this hegemonic liberal framing of every issue by moving away from the language of individual rights to the language of dignity, flourishing and the common good. Language matters, and by engaging in political thinking on a different linguistic landscape, new possibilities could be opened up.

More broadly, the language of Red Toryism, stressing key concepts like dignity and flourishing instead of rights and markets, could be built around an integrated vision of not just a Big Society, but a sustainable one. The language of sustainability should have not only electoral appeal among voters and communities traditionally inaccessible to Conservatives, but ought to have an intuitive appeal to the conservative mind as well.

[Jane Jacobs](#)-style urbanists might not seem like natural conservatives, but the growing concern for livable and sustainable localism seems like fertile ground for a new, holistic and humane

conservatism. An integrated conservative vision of the "sustainable society" would emphasize not just ecological sustainability but social sustainability as well, plus fiscal sustainability enabled by a government that eschews collectivism and focuses instead on building a society of self-governing rather than individually autonomous people.

As conservatism is being revived elsewhere by heterodox thinking drawing on older and neglected conservative traditions, Canadian conservatives have an opportunity to do the same. Conservatism is about more than just "freedom" – especially if freedom is defined mainly in terms of social licence and individual re-invention. Conservatism is about a recognition that we are more than mere consumers and taxpayers, we are social and relational beings. With a recent federal election lost, a leadership race soon to begin and the nation's future uncertain, the time is right for a Red Tory revival. *Carpe diem.*

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March or Die, Canadian-Style

By Peter Shawn Taylor



Tell someone you served in the French Foreign Legion and you'll get one of two responses, says Joel Struthers. "Generally the reaction is either: 'Does the Foreign Legion even exist anymore?' or 'I've seen the movies, only killers and rapists join the Legion.'" For the 48-year-old Struthers, this sort of predictable cocktail party chatter "got so frustrating that I just came to avoid the whole topic." And yet, having served in la Légion étrangère in France and Africa for six years in the 1990s, he is particularly well-positioned to confirm that yes – it still exists – and, no – it's not full of killers and rapists.

Eventually Struthers, who now lives in Abbotsford, B.C. and pilots commercial helicopters for a living, decided he could no longer hold his tongue. "I gave up waiting for someone else to tell the truth about the modern Legion," he says. "So I figured maybe it was on me." The result is his fascinating book, [*Appel: A Canadian in the French Foreign Legion*](#), published earlier this year, which answers the question of how a hockey-playing Canadian army-brat came to join this legendary fighting force. In doing so, Struthers also sets the record straight about the men who wear the distinctive white kepi hat and demolishes a few of those old movie myths. The French

Foreign Legion has an unusual origin story. It began as a way for Paris to rid itself of its most dangerous inhabitants. During the turbulent 1820s and 1830s revolutionaries, refugees, criminals and



Appel: A Canadian in the French Foreign Legion published in 2019 by Joel Adam Struthers

other undesirables were drawn in large numbers to the City of Lights, creating considerable risk of political unrest. Rather than imprison or expel them all,

the French government chose to push them into a special military unit created exclusively for foreigners, and then shipped them off to fight France's colonial wars in Algeria and beyond. If they survived five years in arms, they could return as French citizens. If not, it was still a problem solved.

The mongrel nature of the recruits and the discipline required to keep them in line caused the Legion to earn a reputation for brutality in punishment and recklessness in battle. "The Legion quickly became known as a corps that could be sacrificed," notes historian Douglas Porch, author of *The French Foreign Legion: A Complete History of the Legendary Fighting Force*. "You might not want to send French conscripts into a dangerous situation, but you could always send the Legion. It was disposable." The notion that the Legion was once an unhinged collection of "killers and rapists" is therefore not entirely off the mark.

It also proved formidable. Over its nearly two centuries, many of its greatest moments have come when hopelessly outnumbered and surrounded. At the celebrated battle of Camerone, Mexico in 1863, for example, 65 legionnaires and three officers fought off 2,000 Mexican soldiers in a burning farmhouse until their ammunition ran out. Then the five



When a hockey career didn't pan out, Canadian Joel Struthers decided to join the French Foreign Legion and become a paratrooper instead.

remaining soldiers fixed bayonets and charged over the wall; only two survived. "These are not men, they are demons," remarked the Mexican colonel who accepted their reluctant surrender. The Legion similarly distinguished itself at Dien Bien Phu, France's epic defeat in Vietnam in 1954.

Appel is the latest entry in a long line of English-language memoirs by former legionnaires promising to reveal the truth about life in this mysterious force. The genre began with Erwin Rosen's *In the Foreign Legion*, published in 1910 – what might be considered the wellspring of every stereotype. Rosen, a German immigrant who worked as a journalist in America before joining and then deserting from the Legion, tells a tale of horrific punishments, wild bouts of drinking and brawling, brutal living conditions and comrades who could charitably be described as the scum of the Earth. "The Foreign Legion is a sin against the very first principles of humanity," he wrote. Following Rosen's lead, popular novels such as 1924's *Beau Geste* by P.C. Wren added a doomed sense of romance to these manly adventures of legionnaires battling Arabs and each other on a sea of sand.

Then Hollywood took over. Everyone from Gary Cooper and John Wayne to Abbott & Costello and Porky Pig saw "action" in the desert. The notion that men with dark and dangerous pasts could join the Legion under an assumed name and redeem themselves through selfless bravery and hardship took a firm hold on the public consciousness. At

one point, French Foreign Legion movies were second only to Westerns as Hollywood's most-popular action dynamic. Among the last gasps of this genre was the 1977 desert epic *March or Die*, which offered up a star-studded cast including Gene Hackman, Max Von Sydow and Catherine Deneuve, and brazenly compared itself to

Lawrence of Arabia.

After this postwar golden age of movie depictions, the next significant memoir was that of Englishman Simon Murray, who went on to become a prominent financier. *Legionnaire*, published in 1978, offers Murray's experiences during the Franco-Algerian War of the early 1960s and contains more than a few similarities with Rosen's tale. There are brutal punishments – like "tombeau," in which miscreant legionnaires are forced to dig a coffin-sized ditch and lie in it with only a canvas cover for protection from the blazing sun – as well as macho brawling, boozing, sexual interludes with women in the nearby towns and plenty of battles with Algerian guerrillas.

Most significantly, Murray was in Algeria during the Legion's attempted overthrow of the de Gaulle government in 1961, following the French president's offer of independence to its colony. The coup found little support and quickly fizzled, and the regiment at its centre was promptly disbanded, but this event had a profound and lasting effect on the entire Legion. What remained was subsequently drawn much more tightly under regular French army command. Since then, the Legion's place in the public consciousness has plunged. The last substantial movie was Jean-Claude Van Damme's *Legionnaire* from 1998.

As Struthers' book reminds us, however, while the Legion has changed dramatically since its founding in 1831, it is still the tip of the French military's spear and tasked with its most difficult and dangerous missions. In recent

years the Legion has seen service in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as numerous wars and insurgencies across Africa; Struthers himself saw combat in Bangui, Central African Republic, and Brazzaville, Congo. And while most recent books – 1998's *Mouthful of Rocks* by Christopher Jennings, for example – have tried to keep that old mythology alive with shocking tales of brutality, racism and chronic alcoholism, Struthers comes to praise the Legion, not bury it.

Appel is the first English-language memoir to be published with the Legion's full cooperation. Struthers' former commanding officer, Col. Benoît Desmeulles, even contributes a foreword. And rather than relying on old stereotypes, it strives to offer an updated account of what the life of a modern legionnaire is really like. It's not always pleasant or romantic – Desmeulles praises Struthers for emphasizing "the



"A corps that could be sacrificed": A legionnaire stands guard in Morocco, circa 1920 (top) and legionnaires under fire during the Battle of Bir Hakeim in Libya in 1942 (bottom).



Hollywood played a pivotal role in creating the mythology of the Legion: *March or Die*, released in 1977.

quasi-monastic life” in the Legion – but it’s no longer an exercise in brutality or recklessness.

Struthers’ tale begins, as all Legion memoirs apparently must, with his decision to enlist. Growing up on military bases in Ontario, Alberta and B.C., he had some early success playing hockey. But he wasn’t disciplined enough to make a career of it, and started hanging around with the wrong crowd after high school. “I got myself into a bit of trouble as a young man,” he admits in an interview. “And realized I needed a change in direction.” Coming from a family with a long military tradition, Struthers sought to channel his need for excitement by becoming a paratrooper and in 1993 joined the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves in hopes of working his way into the fabled Canadian Airborne Regiment. But when that unit became embroiled in scandal in Somalia (and was disbanded in 1995), he realized he’d have to look elsewhere to soldier and jump. The Legion was his only option.

From there his story shares many elements with the rest of the genre. Struthers explains, for example, the Legion’s curious twin fixations with singing and Christmas decorating, something well-documented in other books. He also details the force’s incredible diversity, with

citizens of 147 countries currently serving in the Legion. And, as might be expected, there’s no shortage of difficult training, stiff punishments and, on leave, sex and fist-fights. As [one book reviewer](#) has noted, Struthers’ exhausting descriptions of the various physical tests and competitions required of himself and other recruits almost always end with the phrase “...and then we ran 8 kilometres” (often wearing a 10 kg backpack). As for discipline, he once served a week in jail for failing to wear his seatbelt.

The book’s title, *Appel*, refers to the peculiar Legion roll-call that requires every legionnaire to smack his thigh at precisely the same time. Any deviation brings a kick, slap or a punch to the offender’s gut from an unforgiving corporal. The Legion is also one of the last bastions of the concept of a man’s army. The only female legionnaire on record is [British nurse Susan Travers](#), who was seconded to the Legion during the Second World War as a chauffeur to Free French Gen. Marie-Pierre Koenig, seeing combat during the Battle of Bir Hakeim, and was later enrolled as a full member of the force. While no one gets buried in the sand these days, it’s still tougher than your average army.

According to Struthers, the Legion’s continued emphasis on strict discipline is a feature rather than a flaw. “I never had any issues with the punishment,” he says. “If you can’t take a bit of grief and physical abuse – getting punched in the

stomach during appel – then maybe you aren’t cut out for a soldier’s life.” Since the dawn of warfare, such discipline has been used to transform an untrained rabble into a disciplined force that can fight and win – and to prepare each individual for the horrors of war.

The current trend away from tough physical punishment, at least in Western armies, may have opened the door to a more diverse and welcoming armed forces, but it may also create problems. “In some ways it’s unfair to the men and women who serve in our military that they don’t go through proper training anymore,” Struthers says in defence of the Legion’s ancient art of discipline. “They’re just not prepared for what they’re getting into, and the result is the high rates of PTSD we see these days.” The slaps, punches and verbal abuse in Legion life thus serve to cull those who are unsuited and toughen those who are, he observes. “This allows you to find the people who are going to survive and thrive in a hostile environment, and remove those who shouldn’t be there.”

As for the Legion’s reputation for brutality, particularly during the infamous Battle of Algiers in the 1950s, it is worth noting that its opponents were often far worse. Torturing prisoners was near-universal in Africa and Asia during colonial wars; Murray’s book offers many horrific descriptions of what happened to legionnaires captured by the Fellagha, or Algerian guerillas. To this day Afghans



No longer cannon fodder: The modern Legion is rigorously trained and highly effective, as Struthers’ experience demonstrates.

are wont to castrate their enemies, and in West Africa “armies” of drug-fuelled teenagers often casually lop off limbs.

While desertion is still a regular occurrence in Struthers’ time, the Legion no longer expends much effort tracking down or punishing the deserters. As only about one in every ten Legion applicants is accepted these days, it can afford to disregard those who later regret their decision. Even the legend that the Legion asks no questions of its recruits gets deflated by Struthers. “In fact, the Gestapo [slang for the Legion’s internal security bureau] asked plenty of questions and dug deep, clearing our names through Interpol,” he writes. No murderers or rapists need apply.

The skill and commitment of legionnaires today is likely the biggest difference between Struthers’ Legion and that of his predecessors. After the 1961 putsch attempt the Legion was transformed. Once numbering around 30,000 men, it is now a specialized, highly-trained, professional force of fewer than 9,000 men in eight regiments, a demi-brigade and some small detachments, with its main headquarters near Marseilles, and is integrated into the broader French military command.

“Open ground covered in tall elephant grass swaying in the wind, a makeshift barricade of burned-out cars, and a single-track dirt road are all that lie between us and the rebel checkpoint and stronghold 500 metres ahead of us..The Central African night is hot and humid. The sky is clear and starlit. I am sweating under the weight of my body armour and the personal webbing that holds eight full magazines, four fragmentation grenades, two additional AC 58 grenades and water bottles. With less than a year in the regiment, and only two years in the Legion, I suddenly find myself shouldering a massive responsibility..This is it.”

The modern Legion is as well-tuned and trained as any other army in the world. And it sees more combat than most.

Struthers’ competitiveness eventually earned him a place in an elite commando group within the 2e Régiment étranger de parachutistes, the same regiment Murray served in (and currently based on

the French island of Corsica). In addition to high-altitude and night parachuting, Struthers received specialized training in scuba diving, skiing, demolition, wilderness survival and a wide variety of other skills, similar to that of U.S. Navy SEALs and British SAS.

Struthers left the Legion as a corporal in 2000, aged 29, having achieved his goal of becoming a special forces paratrooper. But he was uninterested in French citizenship or spending the rest of his career in the Legion. His relationship was a contractual one. The Legion taught him to jump and control his need for adventure; in exchange he went where it sent him and did what he was told. Once he’d achieved all he desired, however, Struthers left on his own terms. The result is a positive but decidedly pragmatic and unglamorous view of his time spent serving under the motto *Legio Patria Nostra* (the Legion is my homeland). “I learned a lot and I owe France a big thank-you for getting me on the right track,” he says. “But it was never my family or my home.”

His military experience and the Legion’s reputation helped set him up for his subsequent adult career. To replace the excitement of high-altitude jumping,

Struthers learned to fly helicopters, specializing in high-risk or critical missions such as supporting the UN during the 2015 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. He also spent several stints on the ground as a private military contractor in Afghanistan, Iraq and Algeria.

More recently, Struthers returned

fulltime to Canada to work as a commercial helicopter pilot and look after his two children, a son aged 13 and a daughter 11. And with another Legion comrade he opened [Ravenhill Risk Control](#), a Victoria-based security firm that handles tricky assignments such as executive protection and gold transfers from a B.C. gold mine. Struthers is also passionate about helping veterans with PTSD and has launched a clothing line, from which 25 percent of sales go to support veterans’ groups in Canada, France and Ireland.

“I wrote the book to give an honest account of life in the Legion because there isn’t a lot of factual information out there,” Struthers says of his current mission as an author. “It’s a tough army sent to do tough jobs. And it is a testament to the French Foreign Legion that it is able to take people from such diverse backgrounds and shape them into one of the world’s finest military units.” Having cleared up the common misunderstandings about the Legion, perhaps there’s only one question left. “Would I advise my son to do it?” he asks rhetorically. “No! Not at all.”

The Legion may have outgrown most of its myths, but it can still put a fright in the heart of any loving parent.



“I owe France a big thank you for getting me on the right track”; Struthers left the Legion in 2000, having achieved his goal of becoming a member of an elite special forces commando unit.

Canada's "Climate Crisis" is Entirely Political

By Gwyn Morgan



It has been almost three decades since delegates from 172 countries met at the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and adopted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Data from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration show that since then, the Earth's atmospheric temperature has risen by an average of 0.03° Celsius per year. At that rate, the planet's climate will warm by 2.4° by 2100. That's a sizable amount over 80 years, but even if the planet warms exactly as forecast, it's certainly not the "climate emergency" needed to galvanize people into making life-altering sacrifices such as giving up cars or air travel, moving en masse into "tiny homes" or switching to "eco-friendly" food.

The answer to every climate activist's prayer came in the form of Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg. Her transformation into the world's pre-eminent climate-change warrior began in 2018 at the age of 15, with Fridays spent demonstrating outside the Swedish Parliament while gaining the attention of financially capable fellow warriors. Her carefully choreographed journey last year to New York by "zero-carbon" sailboat (in fact a rakish and well-equipped ultra-modern racing yacht, built largely out of petroleum products,

with an expert crew who all had to be transported back home again) was timed to coincide with the UN Climate Action Summit, where she passionately delivered her apocalyptic "How dare you!" tirade heard around the world.

Here in Canada Thunberg's performance inspired radicalized groups including "Extinction Rebellion," which enraged drivers by blocking roads and bridges during busy rush hours, generating uncouneted tonnes of needless greenhouse gas emissions. A one-day climate strike shut down school classes across the country as pupils joined climate emergency rallies. In a scant few days, the angry scowling Swede evoked existential climate-change anxiety in teenagers everywhere.

Unfortunately, her words had an even greater effect on younger kids, striking terror into pre-teens. In one elementary class, a child yelled out, "I don't wanna die." Another went home and said, "Mommy, they say that we're going to die in eight years." Traumatizing young

children by telling them the world is about to end crosses the line from eco-activism to emotional eco-terrorism.

After New York, Thunberg journeyed to Alberta where she held an anti-oilsands rally. This was a puzzling choice given that Canada produces just 1.6 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, with the oilsands contributing just one-tenth of that. China or India's emissions make Canada's just a rounding error.



Gradually warming temperatures are unlikely to persuade the mass of people to radically alter their lifestyles. They'll need to be forced.

Indeed, in some years the *increase* in China's emissions approximately equals Canada's entire annual total. Why didn't Thunberg travel there? While she was in Edmonton, the ever-determined reporters at [Rebel Media](#) asked her that question. Her answer? She "hadn't been invited."



Don't try this in China: Thunberg denounces the oil and gas industry in front of the Alberta Legislature.

No doubt that's true. If she or Extinction Rebellion tried their stunts in the Communist-run police state, they would likely be "invited" to a forced-labour camp. Just ask the Hong Kong protesters, who are risking their lives merely to preserve their most basic legal rights.

Either way, Thunberg's disparaging visit to Canada's oilsands again illustrates activists' fixation on Western countries even though virtually all emissions growth is elsewhere. China, India, South Africa, South Korea, the Philippines and Japan, all signatories to the Paris climate accord, are in various stages of constructing a total of 1,800 coal-fired electric power plants. If Canada disappeared from the face of the Earth, those new plants would replace our emissions in a few short months.

There's little doubt Thunberg's visit also influenced Canada's federal election. Massive media coverage of her climate emergency claims increased support for prime minister Justin

global emissions than the Liberal carbon tax.

Scheer's mission shouldn't have been all that difficult to accomplish. Virtually all experts agree the carbon tax would have to be several times higher than planned to have any perceptible impact on Canada's emissions (and as we've seen, Canada's total emissions have

negligible impact on global emissions). By contrast, the cornerstone of the Conservative environmental platform was the recognition that exporting Canadian natural gas on a large scale would have a real impact globally. The evidence for this is compelling, for the large-scale switching from coal to natural gas in the United States has largely accounted for that country's dramatic decline in greenhouse gas emissions, despite the fact the U.S. has spurned various global climate accords.

Natural gas-fired electrical generating stations produce, on average, just half the greenhouse gas emissions as coal-fired plants per unit of power produced.

natural gas Canada exported, the more global greenhouse gas emissions would be avoided. So it's no surprise that Canada's energy industry, as well as the governments of energy-producing provinces, had urged the Trudeau government to push recognition of that reality at last month's Madrid climate conference. Once again, they were disappointed.

Instead, the Liberals and Canada's vast climate emergency movement remain preoccupied with national rather than global emissions, and this leads to myriad "local action" absurdities. The award for most ludicrous goes to Victoria's City Council for its plan to spend \$14 million on installing shore power at its harbour so that cruise ships can shut off their generators while moored at city docks. Council clearly doesn't understand that emissions caused by actually



Rounding error: Canada's emissions are dwarfed by those of China, India and other developing countries, but current Liberal policy ensures the pain will be felt here at home.

propelling the ships after they leave port are hundreds of times greater than their generators produce.

More tragic than ludicrous is the systematic destruction of one of the

In some years the *increase* in China's emissions approximately equals Canada's entire annual total. Why didn't Thunberg travel there? She "hadn't been invited." No doubt that's true. If she or Extinction Rebellion tried their stunts in the Communist-run police state, they would likely be "invited" to a forced-labour camp.

Trudeau's national carbon tax. Trudeau's task was made easier by Conservative leader Andrew Scheer's failure to explain clearly why his party's environmental policy would more effectively reduce

Every natural gas-fired plant fuelled with Canadian gas around the world would enable shutting down one old coal-fired plant, or would forestall the construction of one new one. The more clean-burning

world's most technically advanced and ethically responsible oil industries. While hundreds of thousands of trained workers have been rendered jobless and, in many cases, hopeless as capital investment

and corporate headquarters have fled to the U.S., the world's oil consumption continues to grow. It is now 6 million barrels per day higher than it was in 2010 and the International Energy Agency forecasts that demand will keep rising for at least two more decades. China recently gained the dubious distinction of world's largest oil-importing country.

Yet the Trudeau Liberals' progressive evisceration of our oil industry has handed that growing market to such environmental stewards and human rights champions as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Nigeria and Algeria. Adding insult to injury, Quebec, consistent with its "distinct society" status, favours its own political interests over those of the country at large and continues to import oil from those countries in preference to Alberta's "dirty oil." But it happily accepts the current year's equalization grant of \$13.1 billion, as it does every other year's, funded disproportionately by Alberta taxpayers.

No other country has so deliberately turned itself into a climate-change martyr. And yet for all the economic, social and national unity pain inflicted, our sacrifices will have no perceptible impact on global climate change. Entering the third decade of this troubled millennium, we can only hope our federal government somehow realizes the future of our Confederation requires leaving behind blind ideology and finding some basic common sense.



Exportable idea: Fuel-switching from coal to gas, as with this Alberta facility, dramatically cuts emissions. Shipping Canadian gas worldwide could help do so on a global scale.

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The Enduring Appeal of Red Toryism