

up to the referendum — the monarchy debate need leave few permanent scars in Australia. On its own, it simply is not that important an issue. On the other hand, if it becomes ensnared in debates about native title, immigration, and racism, there is the chance of bitterness that will endure well into the next century.

Over the last 50 years, polls have show that Canadians are divided over the monarchy, but not deeply or passionately so, compared to their divisions over the status of Quebec, other constitutional issues, health care, tax reduction, or even the dollar. Though Canadians probably can learn from Australia's experience, its debate on the monarchy has reflected local concerns and rivalries, as well as the absence of nation-threatening issues such as separatism or American dominance, and so the lessons Canadians draw from it must be carefully considered. I offer a few final observations in light of these circumstances.

The foremost lesson we can learn from the Australian debate involves the scope of the changes envisaged. If the only change concerns a non-hereditary head of state (who has no power anyway), why submit to the divisiveness of another political controversy? — especially since the strongest opposition to the monarchy is found in Quebec, so that any debate about it will inevitably be conflated with others involving Quebec and the Rest of Canada (ROC).

If, on the other hand, switching from a monarchy to a republic *would* necessitate a debate about more fundamental issues than the head of state, does Canada really need another nation-threatening issue? For example, a desire to make “the people” sovereign by entrenching referendums as the sole avenue of constitutional amendment faces the discouraging precedent that the Charlottetown Accord failed disastrously. It also raises the question of whether Canadians can ever become a single sovereign people or will remain two peoples.

Equally troubling would be a protracted debate about whether abolishing the monarchy should lead to our abandoning the British form of parliamentary government. Would anyone in Canada welcome a debate about switching to an American form of presidential-congressional government, or a presidential system along the lines of France, Italy or Israel?

Rather than manufacture an issue that might or might not involve these larger questions, if we do wish to address constitutional change we should focus on change that would solve real, not symbolic problems. For example, if one wants to debate new approaches to national unity or the dominance of Ontario MPs in the Liberal caucus, let us seriously consider some form of proportional representation to replace the sin-

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gle-member, first-past-the-post electoral system which allows a party with 40 per cent of the popular vote to garner 60 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons, a frequent occurrence in our history.

Another lesson from Australia, but one Australians might not appreciate, concerns timing. The approach of their centenary makes sense as a period of reflection about where they have come from and where they want to go as a country. No such landmark date looms over Canada. Canadians have questioned their identity and the country's viability for so long that few of us wish to intensify the process. But as 2067 approaches, assuming we have survived the threats and stresses of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a fundamental reconsideration may be more attractive.

A third lesson might be that only a prime minister who makes abolition of the monarchy a high priority could get it on the agenda. But why would a Canadian prime minister want to spend political capital to generate concern about an issue which has split the population into almost exactly equal halves ever since scientifically respectable public opinion polling began? Canadian prime ministers have made many errors over the years, but needless dalliance with divisive issues has not been a common one.

Besides all this, Canada and Australia share a growing sense of cynicism and disrespect for political elites which goes beyond mere partisanship. Increasingly, people in both countries seem suspicious of political motives, the more so where political elites offer solutions to problems that aren't problems. The monarchy causes no obvious pain or suffering, in the way that a low dollar or lack of hospital beds or child pornography does. Canada needs more solutions, not more problems.

If public views on the monarchy evolve to a stage where people do perceive real harm, then let the debate begin. Indeed, if that happens, the debate will begin whether politicians lead or follow opinion. Until then, Canada has enough problems without borrowing one from Australia.

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# DON'T MESS WITH SUCCESS — AND GOOD LUCK TRYING

*It is simply silly to think that that doing away with the monarchy and replacing it with — what, exactly? — would get over the constitutional hurdle of unanimity among Ottawa, provinces, and, post-Charlottetown, the Canadian people. And a good thing, too. Constitutional monarchy is the most brilliant form of government yet invented and Her Majesty is just the kind of Sovereign a country would like to have in a political pinch, should one ever arise.*

*Il est tout simplement ridicule de croire que l'abolition de la monarchie et son remplacement par on ne sait trop quoi pourrait passer le test de l'unanimité et obtenir l'appui des provinces, d'Ottawa et — depuis Charlottetown — du peuple canadien. Et c'est heureux. La monarchie constitutionnelle est la forme de gouvernement la plus achevée qui soit et sa Majesté est exactement le genre de souverain qu'un pays aimerait avoir advenant une situation politique difficile.*

## Michael Valpy

I always enjoy the republicans' Utopia scenario. An amendment to Section 41 (a) of the Constitution Act, 1982, is popularly approved by resolutions of Parliament and the legislatures of the 10 provinces. Five hundred years of monarchy is dust, replaced with remarkable ease by an outstanding and universally beloved head of state elected, uh [this part lacks consensus from the anti-monarchists], every 10 years by, uh [ditto, but it will all be worked out], the companions of the Order of Canada and ratified, uh [ditto, again] by the First Ministers. The Crown vanishes smooth as a cat's wrist from judicial and statutory language. In the swellings of national pride and national identity which follow upon the unveiling of the last truss of maîtres chez nous [to borrow a phrase], Quebec pure laine nation-



alism and, elsewhere, regional and ethnic rumpism melt like snow in a sunny springtime and Canada is freshly minted, muscled, trumpeted by all its peoples, united, for the new millennium.

What is wrong with this picture? Or to put the question more simply: What is right about it? Answer: Nothing. There are two narratives to the issue of the Canadian monarchy: What happens when we move to get rid of it, and what positive value there is to holding onto it. Never do the anti-monarchists dwell on the first narrative. So let's do that; let's, to begin with, deconstruct the Utopia scenario, and then address why constitutional monarchy is good.

We have the worst habit in constitutional debate, we Canadians, of thinking that everything, like Topsy, just grewed. And has no history. Section 41 (a) — the office of the Queen, the

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Governor-General and the Lieutenant Governor of a province — was placed into the unanimity, or consensus, amending formula of the Constitution for a reason: to make it very hard to change. When Pierre Trudeau in 1978 proposed that Parliament alone could alter the status of the head of state (by vesting executive authority in the governor-general acting in the name of the Queen rather than in the Queen herself), every provincial government — including that of Quebec — strenuously objected. No province wanted the symbolism of the head-of-state placed either in the hands of the federal government or beyond the reach of provincial veto. No province, to be more precise, was unmindful of the “watertight compartments” doctrine of Confederation, judicially first expressed in 1892, in which supreme constitutional authority — the “Crown” — was deemed to be parallel and co-equal in concurrent jurisdictions: provincial Crown and federal Crown, provincial lieutenant-governors and federal governor-general, none subordinate to the other and each acting independently as the Sovereign’s representative. Thus it came to be four years after Mr. Trudeau’s initiative that the “office of the Queen” — the hydra-headed, divisible queen of the federal state and its constitutional composite parts — could be altered only by resolutions of Parliament and all 10 provincial legislatures.

To suppose that resolutions to abolish the monarchy would effortlessly pass — now, next year, next decade or in the foreseeable and unforeseeable future — through Parliament and the provinces is silly. It is, of course, safe to predict that the debate in so-called anglocentric Atlantic Canada would be wrenching and probably as politically welcome as a recession. But why would any government of Quebec even consider putting such a resolution to its National Assembly? The gesture would be outrageous to Quebec nationalists; the symbolism of it would be toxic. And while the appealing, devolutionist bureaucrats and ruling politicians of Ottawa might gladly scatter opting-out

arrangements to Quebec on immigration and manpower training and pretend that Quebec is taking part in all the federal-provincial machinery of the country, which it is not, there is no way we could change our head of state with Quebec’s silence. Or against the wishes of aboriginal leaders brandishing that document known as the First Nations’ Bill of Rights — the Sovereign’s personal pledge of protection in the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*. Give up the opportunity to present grievances to the Sovereign before the world’s TV cameras? It is to laugh.

Next, what reason is there to suppose that ordinary Canadians throughout TROC would permit their legislatures to decide alone — without binding referendums — on the monarchy and, what is very important, its successor? The referendum on the Charlottetown Accord gave birth to a new mould; the Constitution now rightly belongs to the people and not just to their governments. Forced into open debate, as it were, the monarchy would be defended intelligently, forcefully and passionately rather than continue to be eviscerated by stealth, which has been the practice of the past half-century. The superficial anti-monarchist case — that the Sovereign is a foreign head of state; that monarchy is a colonial holdover — would be rigorously and handily challenged, and, I believe, shredded. As for the business of agreeing on what and who replaces the Sovereign and by what manner we put that person in place. Easy? Are we smoking something funny here? This is Canada, whose citizens and politicians have been unable to agree on reform of the Senate for more than a century; Canada, where constitutional disputes of the recent past have paralyzed the country for years at a time. The debate would be debilitatingly and unnecessarily divisive, the proof of Ed Schreyer’s comment (I think it was his) that, on a list of 100 things that needed fixing, the monarchy ranked 101st.

Nevertheless, let’s say we insist upon battering our way through all this and bidding the Windsors goodbye.

Where is the concrete evidence Canada would be better off? Would our democratic and legal institutions be safer, shorn of the highly workable traditions and practices of 500 years? Would some treasure-chest of patriotism be unlocked, resulting in less income-tax evasion, better environmental-protection laws and the dematerialization of Quebec separatism? Would some ex-politician, corporate magnate, general, poet, accomplisher of noble achievements in whom supreme constitutional authority was suddenly vested succeed in rising above all taints of partisanship, class

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and ethnic affinity and any other form of sectarian membership? Could post-modern, devoluted, multi-cultural Canada produce someone with the aura, the mystique, the wit and charisma to symbolize all Canadians? Do we have another Vanier? For that matter, would Georges Vanier, today, give us what we want? The answer to all those questions being almost certainly No, what would we fix? And if what we’re talking about ain’t broke, why put the nation through the miserable aggro of trying to fix it?

The push to get rid of the Canadian monarchy comes from people like Citizenship Minister Lucienne Robillard who don’t understand it, from people in the Prime Minister’s Office desperate for something to merchandise as an idea, and from an arid assemblage of academic, bureaucratic and journalistic elites cemented into some curious antediluvian profession of anticolonialism and sort-of nationalism indecipherable in 1999 to all but themselves.

But let’s be positive.

Constitutional monarchy is the most brilliant form of government humanity has yet devised. The Dutch, Belgians, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Japanese, Spanish — especially the Spanish — all embrace it. The people vest the powers of their absolute sovereign authority over themselves in the person of the Sovereign. The Sovereign lends those powers to the elected politicians so long as they constitutionally behave. In the event they disobey the Constitution, the Sovereign holds the emergency constitutional fire extinguishers to douse their hooligan acts. This is not some legal abstraction. Canada is no more a heavenly realm than any other nation on Earth. Power corrupts; corrupted people seize and wield power illegally. The safeguard of constitutional monarchy works, why? Because the constitutional fire extinguishers are held by a brightly coloured personage who is strategi-

cally located — fire extinguishers should be brightly coloured and strategically located — apart from all government structures and above all partisan and sectarian frays.

Canadians do not, as Americans do, attach this emotional and symbolic plumage of the head of state to the partisan head of government. We are unlikely to be mired in political crisis by a Sovereign’s sexual adventures. Canadians do not, with constitutional monarchy, colour their constitutional fire extinguishers grey. The Queen is an international superstar as definitively in Canada as elsewhere. Give a thought to the hues of governors-general since, say, Jules Leger and see the republican future. How often do any of us see a governor-general or lieutenant-governor in person or on television, read about what she or he says or does? Would a Ray Hnatyshyn, defeated Conservative cabinet minister, or an Ed Schreyer, reputed to have

spent his days in Rideau Hall reading the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, have possessed the moral authority of the people to challenge a constitutionally offside government?

The language and symbolism of the Canadian Crown permeate national life. The armed forces swear allegiance to the Sovereign, personifying the people, and not to any government of the day or to the Constitution. Naval vessels are Her Majesty’s Canadian Ships. New Canadians swear an oath of allegiance to the Sovereign. The Sovereign’s image appears on coins and stamps. The Crown is on the coat of arms. Public lands are Crown lands. State enterprises are Crown corporations. Accused miscreants are prosecuted in the Sovereign’s name, judged by the Sovereign’s justices, acquitted or convicted and imprisoned in the Sovereign’s name. At the opening of Parliament and provincial legislatures, it is the Sovereign or the Sovereign’s representative, and not the politicians, who is ceremoniously saluted. In a dozen hundred ways each day, Canadians declare that the fundamental business of their state is done in the name of the Sovereign who is the personal symbol of them all, and not by transitory elected governors and their appointed functionaries.

The Canadian monarchy is Canadian. Not British. Not Australian. Not Jamaican or any other nation’s. It has evolved over 500 years to suit our needs, rooted



Do we have another Vanier?

itself deeply in our history, our traditions, in the fundamental formations of our national society. It was there in 1497 when Cabot claimed his new found land for Henry VII, it was there in New France, there when George III issued his *Royal Proclamation* to protect the lands of Canada's first peoples from European exploitation, there when the language and civil law of Quebec's people were protected, there when loyalists fled the dodgy revolutionaries of the new Republic. It has given substance to our bland, deferential but safe mythology of peace, order and good government. It has given us, this monarchical principle, our very identity, whereby in giving allegiance to a person — the monarch — as opposed to a constitution or an ideology, we allow ourselves far more diversity (as W.L. Morton wrote) than, say, the American ideology of the majority. Indeed, the genius of our 1982 Constitution is that it does just that: balances the individual rights of minorities against the rights of the majority. It has made us, in the words of Dr. Michael Jackson, the Saskatchewan government's chief of protocol, the people of the counter-revolution, a nation of evolution, restraint and moderation, not hostile to the role of government but rather seeing it as acting in the com-

munity's best interests.

Moreover, constitutional monarchy is the concreteness of our contemporary federalism, our collective headship of state — sovereignty vested in one particular individual, the reigning monarch, acting in Parliament for some purposes and in the provincial legislatures for others — which has been the key to the autonomy and identity of the Canadian provinces compared to other federations.

We throw all this out, this uniqueness — this eccentricity, if you will — that is us, our history, our political culture, this system that works? We throw it all out for some will-o'-the-wisp promise that the endemic ills and vagaries of our nation will be fixed by a "Canadian" head of state? So the Queen lives offshore. So what? In a tiny, borderless world, Canada declares that its head of state is the descendent of a 1,000-year-old institution, an international, cosmopolitan, supremely trained-for-the-task individual enveloped with the magic of being "royal."

How wonderfully, postmodernistically imaginative of us.

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### Long to reign over them

*Which distinctively British contribution to the last millennium will survive into the next one, and deserve to? Shakespeare? Newtonian physics? Darwinian biology? Cricket? All have survived. But all have become part of the common heritage of mankind.*

*There is, though, constitutional monarchy. That, too, is international. About a third of the European Union's member states are constitutional monarchies. But it is fair to say that when the world thinks of constitutional monarchy, it thinks of Britain's...*

*[It is] a form of government that has been flexible enough to adapt, that has provided firm government, safeguarded individual liberties and, for much of the time, secured the affections of the British people.*

*But what of its prospects in the next millennium? The year 2000 has afforded an occasion for nature's Jeremiahs to prophesy gloom — and not just for the monarchy. The prospects are bleak, they argue. We are, according to their wailings, tossed about by vast, unstoppable, destructive market forces, alienated by the decay of community and shared social verities, and distanced from the bureaucratic, creaking and increasingly undemocratic modern state.*

*You need not be a student of Doctor Pangloss to recognise this description of the next millennium as mostly incontinent rhetoric, but the pessimists are right to remind us of how individuals relate to the state.*

*Monarchy still offers a solution to this perennial problem. It is an institution with a human face. In an age of impersonal government and looser communities, it provides enough magic to bind us together, to root us in permanence, and to maintain our allegiance to something bigger than ourselves.*

*There is every reason to predict in these circumstances that the monarchy, if it retains its self-belief and uses its imagination, will not only endure but also be rejuvenated.*

The Spectator, 20 March 1999.

# WHAT DO THE CANADA-US PRODUCTIVITY NUMBERS MEAN?

*Is our productivity growth worse than the Americans' or better? It depends. In terms of output per worker, the US is growing more quickly. But we're doing better in both output per dollar of capital invested and total factor productivity. In manufacturing, the US is out-gunning us badly, but its advantage is concentrated in two industries, machinery and electronics, where output measurement is especially difficult. In the majority of other industries, our productivity has been growing faster than theirs, though it hasn't yet caught up.*

*La croissance de notre productivité se compare-t-elle avantageusement à celle de nos voisins du sud ou est-elle pire? Cela dépend. En termes de rendement par travailleur, les É.-U. connaissent une croissance plus rapide au plan de la productivité. Mais nous affichons de meilleurs états de service pour ce qui est du rendement par dollar de capital investi et des « facteurs globaux de productivité ». Dans le secteur manufacturier, par exemple, les É.-U. remportent la palme haut la main, mais leur avantage se cantonne dans deux principaux secteurs, à savoir les machines et l'électronique, où il est pour le moins difficile d'évaluer le rendement. Dans la plupart des autres secteurs industriels, la productivité canadienne a connu une croissance plus rapide que celle des États-Unis, même si nous devons toujours les rattraper.*

## Andrew Sharpe

In recent months, productivity has risen to the top of the federal government's economic policy agenda. For a while there was even talk of a productivity budget for spring 2000. And then in March the release of new Canada-US productivity comparisons caused apparent conflict within the government. The industry minister declared there was a productivity problem. The finance minister answered that there wasn't. Little wonder that Canadians seemed confused about their own productivity. Should they be worried or shouldn't they?

Those who said they should be pointed to dismal performance in the growth of output per worker in this decade. GDP per worker grew 1.1 per cent a year in the United States between 1989 and 1998, but only

0.8 per cent here (see Chart 1). On the other hand, when productivity is measured more appropriately, in terms of output per hour, Canada actually outperformed the United States, with average growth of 1.2 per cent per year vs. 1.1 per cent (see Chart 2). No wonder Canadians are confused.

The different results for output per worker and output per hour are largely due to the fact that average weekly hours worked per employed Canadian fell by 0.4 per cent, while there was essentially no change in hours worked per week in the US. If Canadian workers work fewer hours per week, per worker productivity can fall even as each worker's per hour productivity rises.

The numbers quoted so far are for labour produc-