

“Telling it like it is”: Jim Pankiw and Politics of Racism

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Through the analysis of three political pamphlets, this paper examines the paradoxical nature of commonplaces. Commonplaces themselves can be understood in two related ways: first as sources of arguments and patterns of thinking, and secondly, as proverbs, epithets, and “familiar observations” (Lanham 169). This paper will examine commonplaces in the sense of patterns of thinking as well as “familiar observations,” in particular, about Canadian identity.¹ Commonplaces of Canadian identity speak persuasively because audience and rhetor share an implicit and complex cultural understanding. Because this understanding is unstated and rooted in intricate ideological systems, commonplaces can be used to foster adherence to values that, in fact, contradict the audience’s understanding of these commonplaces. Ideological systems are expressed in what Michael McGee calls the “ideograph”: “an ordinary language term found in political discourse [that] is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal” (15). McGee defines “ideographs” as “the basic ... building blocks of ideology” that “signify and ‘contain’ a unique ideological commitment” (7).² McGee argues that ideology “in practice is a political language ... with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behaviour” (5). Commonplaces reflect ideological systems and, for Kenneth Burke, are both “a survey of the things that people generally consider persuasive,” and assumptions that could be “treated under the head of

¹ Jennifer MacLennan has done extensive work on what she terms “the rhetoric of Canadian identity”; her work has provided a springboard for many of the ideas in this paper, particularly the papers “A Culture of Identity: Canadian-American Difference in the Non-fiction Writing of Margaret Atwood” and “Signposts of Cultural Identity: George Grant’s *Lament for a Nation* and Mel Hurtig’s *The Vanishing Country*,” which appears in this issue of *Rhetor*.

² McGee distinguishes his concept of the ideograph as distinct from “ultimate” or “God” terms because they “call attention to rational or ethical functions of a particular vocabulary” while the ideograph calls attention to the social function (7).

‘attitudes’ or ‘values’” (Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* 56).

The political pamphlets under discussion exploit the commonplaces of Canadian identity that are familiar to their audience, and through that familiarity, these commonplaces have obtained the status of common-sense assumptions. Common-sense assumptions are embodiments of ideologies that are, in turn, embedded in the common-sense assumptions. These assumptions are “implicit, backgrounded, taken for granted ... rarely explicitly formulated, examined, or questioned” (Fairclough 64). The pamphlets use phrases and key terms—ideographs—whose meanings seem self-evident, but this very self-evidence allows the rhetor to use the commonplaces to advance his agenda without challenge. In this sense, the commonplaces in these pamphlets have a mechanical function that disguises the ideology behind them. Thus, when an audience accepts the commonplaces, it is also, unknowingly, buying into the ideological assumptions.

The cluster of social values that are woven into patterns of Canadian identity discourse include a respect for diversity, multiculturalism, inclusiveness, collectivism, justice, peace, and order.³ However, because these values, as they are used in the pamphlets this paper discusses, are not propositions, but rather “ideographs” that take on the force of “a logical commitment ... [and of] an accurate empirical description” (McGee 7), they can have an ugly underside. In a series of pamphlets mailed out by Jim Pankiw, who served as an independent Member of Parliament for the Saskatoon-Humboldt riding until the June 28, 2004, election, commonplaces of Canadian

³ Jennifer MacLennan’s work cites a variety of scholars and cultural commentators who have addressed Canadian attempts to distinguish Canadian thought and values from American ones. See, for instance, Richard Collins, *Culture, Communication, and National Identity: The Case of Canadian Television*; R. Bruce Elder, *Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture*; Eli Mandel, David Taras, and Beverly Rasporich, *A Passion for Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies*; Pierre Berton, *Why We Act Like Canadians: A Personal Exploration of Our National Character*; June Callwood, *Portrait of Canada*; George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*; W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity*; Joseph Barber, *Good Fences Make Good Neighbours: Why the United States Provokes Canadians*; Malcolm Ross, ed., *Our Identity: A Book of Canadian Essays*; and Bruce Hutchison, *The Unknown Country: Canada and Her People*.

identity are invoked and perverted to advocate policies and ideas that many people consider to be racist.⁴ The pamphlets select and foreground issues such as social harmony and tolerance, justice, economic health, and freedom of speech, all values that Canadians embrace. At the same time, however, the pamphlets imply that Saskatchewan's treaties stall efforts in these directions. Pankiw, in effect, uses commonplaces of Canadian identity as propaganda⁵ devices to assail notions of Canadian identity. The paradox exists in that Pankiw uses the values embedded in these commonplaces to *reject* social harmony, collectivism, tolerance, justice, and economic health.

While Pankiw has distributed many such pamphlets, this paper will focus on three typical examples. They are *It's Clear Who the Racists Are*, *Stop Indian Crime*, and *Shouldn't All Children Be Equal?*⁶ Central to the claims in Pankiw's pamphlets is the questioning of the judgments that motivated giving First Nations people "unique constitutional status" (Canadian Human Rights Commission). The manner in which the pamphlets raise these questions is tasteless at the least, and possibly discriminatory. While the questioning of Canadian acts and charters is political, Pankiw poses the questions in such a way that people have levelled accusations of racism at him. However, the questions raised by the pamphlets are not inherently racist, even if Pankiw may be motivated by racism.

⁴ Before becoming an independent MP, Pankiw was a Reform Party candidate, so he has a commitment to the political "right." According to John Warnock in *Saskatchewan: The Roots of Protest and Discontent*, "political forces on the right in Canada have been carrying out a campaign against treaty rights for Aboriginal people and have gained support well beyond their political allies. The Reform party and the subsequent Canadian Alliance have called for the Assimilation of Aboriginal people into white society" (154). However, Pankiw's calls for assimilation are particularly controversial.

⁵ By propaganda, I mean "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett and O'Donnell 6). These authors argue that "systematic" is an important part of their definition because it means "precise and methodical, carrying out something with organized regularity." Pankiw's pamphlets may be characterized as "systematic" because each pamphlet mailed out attacked some aspect of Canadian social policy.

⁶ Since I did not live in Pankiw's riding, I have had to rely on people who did to collect the pamphlets for me. Consequently, I do not have the exact dates for each pamphlet. However, these pamphlets are a sampling from a variety that were circulated between 2001 and 2003.

I propose to show that the overt discrimination evident in the documents actually overlies another agenda, one that intends to weave Canada's social fabric into an American-style pattern. Further, because the pamphlets foreground race, discussions of racism actually act to help disguise the covert agenda. Pankiw uses the pamphlets to attack, indirectly, initiatives of the federal Liberal government dating back thirty years or more, from multicultural policies to the 1982 Constitution Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which affirms and recognizes treaty rights; further, Pankiw implicitly rejects the information provided by the 1996 Royal Commission report that "identifies the legal, political, social, economic and cultural issues that need to be addressed to ensure the future survival of Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people" (Canadian Heritage). The political situation is entangled with racial issues, and thus Pankiw often stands accused of being racist; but racism is not the only issue behind his efforts. He implicitly advocates an American-style "melting pot" social construct wherein the social policies that make Canadian identity distinctive are abandoned.⁷ Pankiw's pamphlets represent his political desire to "redeem" Canada from Liberal policies, but that redemption is earned through the sacrifice of Aboriginal people's rights, and the ideas that many Canadians hold dear. He scapegoats First Nations people, and as he does so, he undermines Canada's understanding of itself as having unity through its diversity.

Rather than understanding the pamphlets as advocating American-style values,⁸ however,

⁷ That Canada's social policy plays a fundamental role in Canadian identity and that those social policies make Canada distinct from the US is discussed by Mel Hurtig. In fact, according to a 2000 Ekos poll quoted in Hurtig's 2002 book *The Vanishing Country*, "Beyond all, Canada differs [from the US] in the role the state and social policy have served as one of the foundation stones of national identity" (219).

⁸ Jennifer MacLennan's "I Can't See the Difference. Can you See the Difference? Canadians, Americans, and the Discourse of Resistance" cites Pierre Berton, along with "other scholars and commentators" who identify historical, political, and sociological factors that demonstrate differences between Canadian and American values. American history is revolutionary, their political system is a constitutional republic, and theirs is a culture of individualism. Another of the key differences is that Canadian identity rhetoric is permeated by expressions of self doubt, but, as Jamie Portman observes in "And Not by Bread Alone," the US has "precious few anxieties concerning its culture" (344-45).

many Saskatonians see only racism; indeed, some have argued that the pamphlets constitute hate literature. While the pamphlets appeal to particular values that Canadians take pride in, they also undermine the very concepts of equality and justice that Pankiw seems to advocate. Despite the widespread criticism of Pankiw as racist, he nevertheless has had significant political support in Saskatoon. For example, in 2003, he ran in Saskatoon's mayoralty race and garnered significant support; in fact, he won 22.66% of the vote.⁹ In addition, even though he suffered defeat in the June 2004 federal election, he still managed to earn 20.2% of the vote in his riding.¹⁰ Amazingly, his support came even after a series of complaints about the pamphlets made to the Canadian Human Rights Commission in April 2004.¹¹ Regardless of the outcome of the tribunal, what urgently needs to be addressed is how Pankiw's rhetorical appeals garnered such response from a significant number of the electorate.

The common assumption of many people is that Pankiw's support comes from a racist electorate. In part, this judgment about the audience is formed by a judgment made about the nature of the pamphlets. Those who advocate this view of the audience suggest that this level of racism in Saskatoon reflects a Saskatchewan-wide problem. The common assumption about Saskatchewan seems to be that the province's history and political economy is predicated on racism.¹² This assumption, combined with Pankiw's appeals, makes the racism theory one that seems to be common sense. In fact, Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca assert, "The particular culture of a given audience shows so strongly through the speeches addressed to it that

⁹ Atchison took 30.33% of the vote; Zakreski, 25.52%; Pankiw, 22.66%; the incumbent, Maddin, 18.99%; Carroll, 1.97%; and Syet, 0.54% (Saskatoon City Clerk's Office).

¹⁰ The NDP party candidate took 25.5%, the Liberal party 25.4%, and Conservative 26.7%. The remainder of the vote went to the Green Party (1.9%) and to a candidate with no affiliation (0.3%) ("Candidate").

¹¹ These complaints resulted in a CHRC investigator recommending a human rights tribunal; if the tribunal finds the complaints to be substantiated, Pankiw might be required to pay as "much as \$20,000 in compensation for pain and suffering caused by the discrimination" (Adams A1).

¹² For a discussion of this topic, see "The Political Economy of Racism" in John Warnock's *Saskatchewan: The Roots of Discontent and Protest*.

we feel we can rely on them to a considerable extent for our knowledge of [the culture]” (20). However, while there are most certainly racial tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan and have been since settler days, other audience assumptions, more insidious ones, may be driving people’s acceptance of Pankiw’s rhetorical appeals.

These pamphlets urge Saskatchewan residents to believe that social policies, multiculturalism, and treaty rights are endangering the survival of the province. The anxiety about survival has been a common theme in Canadian writing, and out of this generative main theme comes a variety of patterns. For example, anxiety about survival encourages expression of national self-doubt. This self-doubt has been expressed as fear for the country’s survival, and Jim Pankiw exploits this self-doubt by engendering fear for the survival of the province. Much Canadian writing about identity expresses themes of loss, such as George Grant’s *Lament for A Nation* or even as seen in the title of Mel Hurtig’s book *The Vanishing Country: Is It Too Late to Save Canada?* Pankiw’s pamphlets suggest that non-Aboriginal people are facing the loss of things they value because of social policies and treaties. Pankiw invokes themes of loss, suggesting that non-Aboriginal people are denied benefits that are given to Aboriginal people, resulting in Aboriginal people having an unfair advantage over non-Aboriginals. This theme is not a new one in Canadian Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations.¹³

In addition to expressions of loss, Canadian writers also express resistance and repudiation, frequently of American culture.¹⁴ However, Pankiw instead urges his audience to resist the government’s recommendations to accept diversity and exhorts them to repudiate

¹³Daniel Francis writes that, historically, “Native people were kept distinct and separate on their reserves, their behaviour closely controlled by a host of special laws and regulations. They received special privileges which aroused White resentment while they were refused the most fundamental rights available to other Canadians.... [A situation which resulted in] non-Natives [beginning] to think that Natives were getting something for nothing, an opinion which persists to the present day” (216-17).

¹⁴ See Jennifer MacLennan, “Dancing with the Neighbour: Canadians and the Discourse of ‘Anti-Americanism.’”

Canada's acceptance of its legal relationship with First Nations people. In using commonplaces of Canadian writing, Pankiw inflames fears about cultural survival, not in the face of Americanism, but in the face of multiculturalism. His pamphlets reproduce patterns of national self-doubt, but they encourage the audience to doubt the very things that other authors have posited as foundations of Canadian identity. Pankiw latches onto and encourages a Canadian habit of resistance, which is usually patterned as defiance against assimilation into mass American culture; Pankiw, however, encourages resistance to and repudiation of Canadian tolerance and respect for diversity as he insists on assimilation of First Nations people. While he embraces the commonplaces of Canadian identity, he uses them to advocate a rejection of that very identity; he also repudiates other commonplaces such as Canadians' innate trust of the government to make decisions. George Grant asserts that this trust arises from Canada's British and French roots, which allowed the state "much wider rights to control the individual than was recognized in the libertarian ideas of the American constitution" (69). In repudiating trust in governmental decisions, Pankiw's discourse has a revolutionary tone to it, echoing the revolutionary nature of American history. Pankiw's pamphlets wield commonplaces of Canadian identity as propaganda devices and use these devices to question Canadian social identity, but also to advocate implicitly for an identity more closely allied with American values such as assimilation.

As a corollary of the commonplace theme of survival in Canadian writing, Canadians are preoccupied with what threatens their survival, which in Canada includes a harsh geography and a culture almost overwhelmed by its proximity to the United States. In *Survival*, Margaret Atwood argues that Canadians' preoccupation with survival "is necessarily also a pre-occupation with the obstacles to that survival" (33). Pankiw's pamphlets show a preoccupation with what

they present as obstacles to survival. They raise the spectre of Saskatchewan's economic and social demise. However, the threat arises not from American cultural values, but from within a culturally divided Saskatchewan itself. In the pamphlet *Shouldn't All Children Be Equal?* Pankiw offers a point form list of "special race-based privileges" an Aboriginal person receives: tax exempt status, preferential hiring and training, free university tuition and admission concessions, Criminal Code leniency, and "free universal health care." These claims, combined with frequent reminders from Saskatchewan media that the province has a rapidly growing Aboriginal population, ratchet up economic anxiety. In fact, this anxiety, exacerbated by racial problems, is another commonplace of the Canadian imagination. According to Daniel Francis, the "imaginary Indian" has always been scapegoated as an "impediment to national progress and civilized values" (82). By making economic claims, Pankiw encourages fears that too many people not paying taxes will mean that non-Aboriginal residents will be overburdened, leading to the province's demise. He turns Canadian preoccupations with identity to his advantage, encouraging an emotional response rather than a rational one.

Of course, Pankiw only tells part of the story with his list. For example, Aboriginal people do pay taxes, only not on purchases made on reserves. First Nations people pay income tax too, although Status people employed on reserves are exempted. In addition to fanning fears about taxes, Pankiw stimulates job fears that unqualified Aboriginal people will be preferred over qualified non-Aboriginal people. He sidesteps the distinctions of the Employment Equity Act, such as the specification that employers may give preferential treatment to qualified Aboriginal people in "hiring, promotion or other aspects of employment, when the primary purpose of the employer is to serve the needs of Aboriginal people" (Canadian Human Rights Commission). Pankiw attempts to make non-Aboriginal people resent Aboriginal people by

advising his electorate that Aboriginals receive a free education. While it is true that some First Nations people may have their tuition paid by their band, not all band members are able to take advantage of this benefit for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that bands have only finite funds.¹⁵ However, the accuracy of Pankiw's list of "race-based privileges" is irrelevant because "facts" are subordinate to purpose, and Pankiw's purpose is to emphasize that Saskatchewan's economic survival is at stake. He uses these claims to fuel economic fears and inflame feelings of suspicion and resentment. Saskatchewan is a have-not province, so when Pankiw's pamphlet claims "a litany of government largesse and racist schemes, extorted from hard-working taxpayers by Indian lobbyists," he implies that the treaties are the basis of Canada's economic challenges and, by extension, Saskatchewan's economic problems. That Canadians are familiar with the themes of survival and preoccupation with obstacles to that survival, means that Pankiw's assertions are packaged in a familiar form, which makes them easier to accept uncritically.

One aspect of Canadian survival themes, according to Margaret Atwood in *Survival*, is to portray "nature-as-monster." She claims that "the values ascribed to the Indian will depend on what the white writer feels about Nature," asserting, "America has always had mixed feelings about that" (91). She argues that unlike America's "good guy/bad guy" Native dichotomy, Canada's "dual literary tradition for Indians" puts Aboriginal people in either a victor or a victim role. She claims that American writers "go for moral definitions based on intrinsic qualities the Indians are thought to possess.... The Canadians ... zero in on the relative places of Indians and whites on the aggression-suffering scale" (92). Thus, according to Atwood, in some

¹⁵ In addition to financial obstacles that university students who are Aboriginal face, there are also enrolment and retention problems. Aboriginal youth, for a variety of reasons, simply are not moving from high school to university. According to the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, "48% of young Aboriginals off reserve drop out of high school compared with about one-third of non-natives" ("Native Health").

representations, Aboriginal people constitute a threat and are portrayed as victors and tormentors. Likewise, Francis's *Imaginary Indian* illustrates how Aboriginal people seem to be portrayed either as "the noble savage" or as "ignoble savages," who at their worst are "wicked blood-thirsty red skins" and "enemies of promise" posing a "threat to survival" (221-22).

This pattern of imagery that portrays Aboriginal people as threats—as victors and tormentors of non-Aboriginal people—pervades Pankiw's pamphlets, but plays out differently in each one. In the pamphlet entitled *Shouldn't All Children Be Equal?* there are images of three girls: one Caucasian, one Asian, and one Black. The fourth child is a boy who appears to be Aboriginal. In the group picture on the front of the pamphlet, he stands smiling amidst the other children. The inside of the pamphlet tells another story however; here, the three girls are shown standing together under a headline that says "Special race-based privileges: none." The boy, now isolated from the group, stands by himself under a headline that lists seven "special race-based privileges." In this picture, he stands in a belligerent posture, shoulders angled aggressively toward the viewer, and glowers into the audience's eyes. Although this pamphlet appeals to economic fears, it also fans anxieties about social harmony in Saskatchewan where racial issues are often at the forefront of people's minds. By singling the boy out and segregating him from the rest of the group, the pamphlet appeals to a pattern of imagery that Atwood argues is prevalent in Canadian writing by non-Aboriginal peoples. As she says, in Canadian discourse, "Indians ... have rarely been considered in and for themselves; they are usually made into projections of something in the white Canadian psyche, a fear or a wish" (91). The boy in the pamphlet is a projection of a fear. The text above his picture supports and emphasizes economic concerns, but the image suggests the boy's belligerence. This belligerence carries the threat of violence. The threat that this boy suggests rests on an enthymematic understanding of racial fear

and on stereotypes of Aboriginal men, which conjure up notions of criminality and violence: tormentors of the non-Aboriginal. Pankiw exploits racist patterns and images that intensify fears. His panacea to social ills is assimilation because, for Pankiw, multiculturalism is an obstacle to survival rather than an element that strengthens Canadian society, and he seems to prefer the “melting pot” metaphor to the “mosaic” metaphor.

Aboriginality as a threat to provincial and national order, or as a threat to “civilization,” plays out more fully in the pamphlet *Stop Indian Crime*. This pamphlet was mailed out after September 11, 2001; thus, the imagery gains intensity from its historical context. In this pamphlet, the imagery of the Aboriginal person as victor/tormentor is clear. So-called “Indian crime” in Saskatchewan is conflated with terrorism. The first page has a big red stop sign on it and the headline “STOP INDIAN CRIME.” The back page has a picture of a Canadian soldier nose to nose with a person wearing camouflage gear. The caption under this picture says “Indian Terrorist confronts Canadian Soldier at OKA 1990.” Because the image is juxtaposed with information about crime statistics in Saskatchewan, it makes an argument by association. The photo, taken in the previous decade and in a different province, is irrelevant to the argument, but a powerful visual arouses powerful emotions. In fact, this Oka photograph is an iconic image in Canadian culture and may be understood as a “visual commonplace.” The audience is supposed to conflate the “Indian terrorist” with the crime statistics. The Canadian soldier’s face is visible while the Aboriginal person’s face is masked and he is swaddled in camouflage. This juxtaposition of revealed face / hidden face speaks on a symbolic level, suggesting the Mohawk man can only be known as a part of an armed, masked mob, never as an individual. The Canadian soldier’s image evokes associations of patriotic pride, order, law, and civilization, while the word “terrorist” and the image of the masked, armed person evoke a whole host of

fears centred on terrorist activity as it is portrayed in the United States.

The text, “Indian Terrorist confronts Canadian Soldier,” heightens the contrast between Indian terrorist and Canadian soldier. Indian terrorist is the subject of the sentence; he is the one who does the confronting. The representative of Canada, the soldier, is confronted, the object of an aggressive action. This grammatical construction mirrors the “arguments” in the pamphlet, which suggest that First Nations people are lawless criminals who follow no rules of engagement, people whose “sprees” rampage over Canadian people and civic order. It suggests that Canada needs a government-sponsored army to protect non-Aboriginal Canadians from “Indian Terrorists.” Interestingly, Pankiw now relies on Canadians’ trust in the government to restore order! The text above and below the picture says, “If you can’t do the time ... then don’t do the crime.” The “you” in this sentence obviously does not include the implied audience of the pamphlets, but its usage asks the audience to consider who would do the crime. The “you” is “Indian criminals” and the phrase “can’t do the time” intends to foreground justice issues that Pankiw has raised elsewhere in the pamphlet, suggesting that “sentencing circles” are irrelevant without explaining what they are or how or why they are convened. The pronoun “you” works to further segregate the audience for the pamphlet from the “Indian terrorist” that the pamphlet portrays. The word “crime” is also vague, as is “terrorism,” which encompasses a vague set of violent actions.

In *It’s Clear Who the Racists Are*, Pankiw exploits another set of fears, although they are still closely aligned with anxiety about survival. These fears coalesce around racial tensions. This pamphlet features quotations from a series of inflammatory remarks made by David Ahenakew during “A December 13, 2002 address to an FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indians] conference on Health Canada policy.” Ahenakew is quoted as saying, “these goddamned

immigrants: East Indians, Pakistanis, Afghanistan, whites and so forth...” This quotation runs under a completely unrelated photo of Ahenakew and Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Tellingly, Pankiw did not quote comments that Ahenakew also made about Jewish people. These comments, anti-Semitic in nature, have resulted in criminal charges and in Ahenakew being stripped of his Order of Canada, but they are not as useful to Pankiw because these anti-Semitic remarks will not call forth the effect he hopes to achieve. By focusing on Ahenakew’s alleged dismissal of “white” people as “goddamned immigrants,” Pankiw can exacerbate racial tensions. The back page of this pamphlet features several other alleged quotations from a variety of First Nations leaders, spanning 1990 to 2002. They also serve to heighten fear and resentment: “We really should have killed you all for a hundred years” is attributed to Chief Bill Wilson. Melvin Laboucan, listed as the “former chief of Woodland Cree” is quoted as saying, “You’re going, you’re going ... You’re getting out of our country ... This is our country.” These quotations feed irrational fears of armed insurgence and genocide initiated by Aboriginal leaders, who are painted as bellicose and racist themselves. Pankiw also quotes Perry Bellegarde, Grand Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations,¹⁶ as saying “*the non-First Nations* people are indeed treaty beneficiaries in their continued use and enjoyment of the Treaty/Indian lands *now called Canada*” (Pankiw’s emphasis). Pankiw’s selective quotation of Bellegarde’s words reinforces the view that Aboriginals enjoy unfair privileges in Canadian society, thus encouraging feelings of resentment in non-Aboriginal readers.

Pankiw claims that a “majority of people have been intimidated by Indian lobbyists,” suggesting that laws and government policies have been passed only because of threats and intimidation, rather than through common assent or parliamentary process. He interprets the “offensive remarks ... [of] prominent Indian lobbyists” as acting to strip “the veneer away from

¹⁶ Perry Bellegarde served as Grand Chief of the FSIN from May 1998 to October 2003.

their hidden agenda.” This hidden agenda, insinuates Pankiw, is the reclamation of all land and the extermination or exile of all non-Aboriginal people. Even as Pankiw denies that Aboriginal treaties have any validity, he insinuates that Aboriginal people are thirsty for revenge, suggesting that he understands that Aboriginal people have been treated abhorrently, perhaps even criminally in Canada. Again, Pankiw’s tracts place First Nations people in the victor/tormentor pattern that Atwood identifies as recurrent in Canadian literature.

Another commonplace of Canadian identity is the expression of a pattern of national self-doubt. Pankiw exploits the familiarity of a common theme by implicitly questioning whether or not Canada’s ongoing experiment in diversity and mosaic as a cultural construct is working. While other Canadian writers express patterns of national doubt, questioning whether Canada will survive as a nation or be assimilated into the United States, Pankiw’s questioning takes national doubt in a new direction. He implies that Canada’s racial tensions will tear it apart and leave Aboriginal people the winners in this cultural conflict. Pankiw not only neglects to acknowledge the inequities experienced by First Nations people, but he also challenges the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which affirms that treaty rights allow “Aboriginal peoples to protect their cultures, customs, traditions, and languages” (Canadian Heritage). Pankiw simplifies a complex situation and provides easy answers: Saskatchewan’s economic survival depends on equality, which for Pankiw means treating everyone the same regardless of circumstances. He casts doubt upon one of the tenets of Canadian identity: that diversity, plurality, and tolerance will strengthen the country.

The pamphlets do not express any recognition that Canada might lose something valuable if it forsakes multiculturalism and abandons its treaties, but they do foreground a loss of “equality.” The threat the pamphlets implicitly stress, then, is one to individualism, a

characteristic prized in American ideology. Pankiw's implied readers respond to his appeals because they are frightened of losing what status they have in the social hierarchy and are threatened by a change in the status quo, which might result in a grimmer economic fate than they already foresee for themselves. Pankiw repudiates collectivist traditions that are fundamentally Canadian, while implying that treaties and multiculturalism threaten Canadian traditions and Canadians themselves.

Twenty percent of the audience for these pamphlets demonstrated their support for Pankiw by voting to re-elect him as their independent MP in the federal election of 2003. Pankiw's inversions of the commonplaces of Canadian identity "spoke" to them on some level. Rhetorical theory presumes that all messages, in both content and design, are material aspects of the rhetor's expectations of the audience. Edwin Black argues that discourse implies a second persona, an auditor, for whom the discourse is designed: "in all rhetorical discourse, we can find enticements not simply to believe something, but to *be* something" ("Second Persona" 119). Correspondingly, Pankiw's pamphlets invite his audience to believe certain concepts, but what he invites it to *be* is more complex. Pankiw uses commonplaces of Canadian identity to lever the audience toward accepting American values. His tracts contain an overt invitation to racism but also a covert invitation to embrace American-style assimilation. While the invitation to racism is explicit, the invitation to Americanism is more implicit and subtle.

Mostly, people in Saskatoon assume that those who supported Pankiw are racists swayed by discourse that invites and encourages racist views. It might even be argued that if Pankiw's supporters were not already racists, the pamphlets encouraged them to adopt racist views. For example, the pamphlets encourage people to believe that the difference between First Nations people and non-Aboriginals arises out of "race-based" social policy rather than out of the

complex historical interplay between society, government, and First Nations.

By equating race and culture, Pankiw exploits another kind of racial anxiety. The pamphlets implicitly argue that race has become the medium of social identity. According to Edwin Black, inherent in an ideology that roots identity in race is the notion that those who are not of the race are excluded (*Rhetorical Questions* 21-51). Pankiw's intended audience cannot become part of the race that they believe is being privileged. They cannot benefit from treaty rights, tax exemptions, employment equity, or anything else that they perceive First Nations people get and they do not. Their concerns may be inherently about fair play and justice, and induced not by racism but by fear of loss, which provides a powerful motivation. Psychologist Robert Cialdini points out that "People seem to be more motivated by the thought of losing something than by the thought of gaining something of equal value" (238). Non-Aboriginal people may fear that they will not get the same social and economic benefits that they perceive First Nations people to be getting.

The pamphlets imply that First Nations people receive "special treatment" under the law and in society. While the pamphlets are inflammatory, asking ordinary people to "get mad" over this political discrimination that seems to prefer First Nations people to non-Aboriginal people, the pamphlets simply fan a spark of fear into a flame. In a province where unemployment looms for many, a public figure who suggests that employment equity rests solely on racial qualifications rather than merit fosters discontent. The pamphlets' emphasis that some social policies confer "special" benefits on the basis of race incites fear and resentment in those non-Aboriginal people who believe their poverty excludes them from full participation in society as much as racism excludes First Nations people from the same. The pamphlets invite and encourage the audience to see itself as a collective voice of reason resisting dangerous liberalism;

they position the audience as a resistant voice speaking out for a beleaguered populist movement.

In Saskatchewan, a microcosm of a larger Canadian scene, racial tensions are magnified partially because of an increasing Aboriginal population, which is frequently alluded to in the media. The context for Pankiw's pamphlets thus is a very particular scene. As Kenneth Burke explains, in *Language as Symbolic Action*, "critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose" (77). Pankiw's pamphlets may be better understood as responses to concerns about issues posed by the rhetorical situation that exists in Canada, but perhaps seems more immediate in Saskatchewan. The rhetorical situation includes one where concerns about racial harmony are paramount, as are Canadian-American relations due, in part, to national and international events since 9/11.

The Saskatchewan situation has been described by some as inherently racist and arising out of a veritable tradition of racism and racist discourse. For example, Noel Dyck, a Saskatchewan sociologist, writes in "Negotiating the Indian Problem" that the "Indian 'question' or 'problem' [is] a significant element in interaction between Indians and non-Indians on the Canadian prairies." He goes on to claim, "ideas about public problems involve both cognitive and moral judgements" (132). Pankiw's pamphlets present these "problems" in language that, while not always racist, certainly allows for and even encourages that interpretation. He presents socio-economic problems as though they are solely about race.

While Pankiw repudiates the tenets of a multicultural society and scapegoats First Nations people, he is not the first Canadian to assert an identity by repudiating another culture. According to Burke, identification by antithesis is one of the most powerful modes of identification. It is "union by some opposition shared in common." Burke claims that "temporary alliances in wartime [and racism] are obvious examples," asserting that identification by

antithesis is the most “urgent form of congregation by segregation” (“Rhetorical Situation” 268). Unlike much discourse of Canadian identity that repudiates American cultural values and is often heard as anti-American, Pankiw’s discourse, which repudiates Canadian social policies and questions particular acts and charters, is heard as racist, but not as anti-Canadian or pro-American. Rather than dismissing Pankiw’s discourse as simply racist, we need to understand how its rhetorical appeals engaged so many people and earned their approval.

According to Mel Hurtig, Canadians believe that Canada is distinct from the US in its “health care, social programs, education, the justice system, ... cultural institutions, and multiculturalism”(180). These are the very issues that Pankiw foregrounds in the pamphlets and attacks. But the common sense assumptions that Pankiw’s critical audience brings to bear on the pamphlets make racism apparent, rather than his attack on the very beliefs he seems to advocate. For example, Pankiw seems to believe that diversity endangers social programs, such as health care, and endangers the Canadian justice system. He implicitly accuses Canada’s honouring of its First Nations treaties of harming the country economically and socially and not benefiting First Nations people. His discourse about inclusiveness contradicts Canadian understandings of inclusiveness. Finally, he interprets Canada’s commitment to honouring treaties, to the model of the mosaic, and to inclusiveness as racist and exclusionary. To Pankiw, inclusiveness means assimilation and equality means uniformity. Pankiw alleges disastrous financial and social ramifications in what most Canadians recognize as an inclusive society; thus he foregrounds and exploits his audience’s economic and racial anxieties and fears. By attacking social policy, Pankiw emphasizes what individuals may lose, rather than what the nation gains, thereby giving presence to American-style individualism rather than Canadian-style collectivism. Because Pankiw’s claims invoke commonplaces of Canadian identity, however, they seem credible and

invite people to accept his statements without examining them critically. At the heart of Pankiw's pamphlets lies not a strong, regional racism, but logomachy—a dispute over the meaning of words, and in particular over what multiculturalism and diversity mean to Canada and to Canadians.

Edwin Black asserts that “a determination of genre precedes judgment of value” (*Rhetorical Questions* 39). When we determine that Pankiw's pamphlets are first and foremost examples of racist discourse, we judge them only on that evaluation. Because of the abrasiveness of his pamphlets, Pankiw is often dismissed as a crank; but this dismissal is thoughtless, perhaps even dangerous. By dismissing everything in the pamphlets as part and parcel of the bigotry and discrimination that most see in them, Pankiw's critics are stifling debate and making it easier for everyone to accede to the erasure of what has been considered distinctly Canadian values. When we examine the ideological assumptions behind Pankiw's use of commonplaces, we see that his invitation to reject Canada's commitment to social policy has been accepted by many people. This acceptance suggests that the issues raised and the rhetorical appeals made in Pankiw's pamphlets need to be addressed directly and immediately, and perhaps not exclusively in Saskatchewan. Ultimately, Pankiw's pamphlets may be used to help us answer how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people will live in harmony. They may help us to understand whether social policies of the last thirty years have helped First Nations people and Canadians from diverse cultures take an equal part in the life of the nation. They may help us to reassert and defend why Canada's social construct of “mosaic” builds a stronger country.

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