Dion addresses Western alienation

I am very aware that you are greatly attached to and very proud of your Western identity,” Stéphane Dion, the federal minister of intergovernmental affairs, told a recent audience in Regina. Dion was in Regina to gauge the mood of Western Canadians. “It is not your country that is the subject of your discontent,” but rather “powers that have marked your history, powers you did not have, powers often found in what you call ‘Central Canada’.” While acknowledging the growing discontent and calls for radical reform in the West, Dion refuted the notion that alienation is a serious concern, saying that “the vast majority of Western Canadians have no desire to define themselves as alienated.”

At the start of the Liberals’ third mandate, the West again finds itself isolated from the power apparatus in Ottawa with little representation in the government. Westerners feel the same "apprehension" as they have in the past and fear a government that is unresponsive to their needs. Insisting that the government is “going to work harder than ever to ensure that our actions are adapted to your everyday realities,” Dion notes that eight of the fourteen Liberal members from Western Canada have been asked to sit in Cabinet. Regardless, some argue that major reform is needed.

Dion discussed three paradigms that have been proposed by reformists: a conservative shift, a decentralist shift, and a populist shift. Dion doubts that any of these will work, quoting Canada West Foundation President Roger Gibbins: “There is no single policy issue that separates the West from the rest of the country.” Recent polls indicate Western Canadians are no different than other Canadians when it comes to issues of fiscal conservatism. As for decentralization, Westerners do not want to see “massive transfers of powers” from federal to provincial levels. What ordinary citizens want is for their “governments to work better” and the Liberals, said Dion, have been quick to build a relationship with the new Saskatchewan Premier, Lorne Calvert.

Finally, some of the discontented voices are calling for a populist shift in government. Dion pointed out that procedures are already in place allowing for more responsive government.

(Continued on page 7)

Former Deputy to Romanow Reflects on the Tradition of Saskatchewan’s Civil Service

Greg Marchildon, senior government fellow at SIPP, was invited to give a public lecture at the University of Regina to reflect on his experience as Saskatchewan’s highest-ranking civil servant for six years. Prior to joining SIPP in September 2000, Marchildon served as deputy minister under Premier Romanow.

The catalyst for his talk came from preparing a preface for the book “Biography of a Government” by Al Johnson. Johnson served as a senior civil servant in the Douglas government, and eventually led what Marchildon characterized as a “tremendously influential group of Saskatchewan civil servants who found themselves transplanted in Ottawa.” They became known as the “Saskatchewan Mafia.” Marchildon believes the group made a profound impact on public administration and policy decisions and directions.

Marchildon identifies the following elements that make up the Saskatchewan tradition of the civil service. The elements created a standard that was “unquestionably set (even if not always met) during the Douglas administration,” he said.

- A sense of excitement—created by a strongly reform-oriented government that

(Continued on page 7)
On April 13th, 2001, SIPP’s founding director, Duane Adams, passed away from ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. The following is an excerpt of a tribute written and presented by Louise Simard at Duane’s memorial service.

I think that I have told you before that I consider public service the most noble career choice one can make. It is fraught with difficulties, disappointments and frustrations, but also with the long-term rewards that others cannot have. On more than one occasion, I have had self-doubts about my view of public service. But with all these misgivings, today I believe that society needs dedicated, competent, professional public officials more than ever before… no matter how we are publicly abused and privately mistreated. My only concern is how do we continue? And I have concluded it is with people with values like you hold.

Those are words spoken to people from the Department of Health and others, by Duane Adams on Oct. 21, 1997, on his retirement from the Department of Health. These are words of a highly competent, dedicated and determined civil servant.

He went on to say, “But it is clear that how we do our work has got to be modernized. I think that how the Health Department has been doing its work throughout the health reform is one pretty good model of how the general public service ought to work in the future. We were organized professionally and systematically unorganized bureaucratically. That phenomenon is not easily understood by very many people, but it allowed us to achieve the goals of our government during the past six years.”

(Duane Adams) was an intelligent, professional person who respected creativity and logical thinking. He believed in democracy, not just in government, but in the workplace and in his relationship with others.

This became obvious in the development of the health reform of the ‘90s. He respected others, he respected intelligent ideas and he loved to build teams to get the job done. It is no wonder the health reform of the ‘90s became one of the greatest exercises in community development that this province has ever seen.

Duane truly believed he could make his greatest contribution through public service and his whole life reflected that.

After obtaining bachelor degrees in history and commerce from the University of Saskatchewan, Duane pursued graduate degrees at the University of California in Berkeley and obtained a masters of business administration. He began his early career as the Director of Research and Planning in the provincial Department of Health. He later served as Deputy Minister of Social Services from 1980 to 1982. From 1983 to 1991, Duane was Health Canada’s Regional Director for medical services and during that role he worked closely with the aboriginal community. Even in the last few months of his life, he continued to work for First Nations. He was very sympathetic to their interest and had a great deal of respect for their traditions.

From 1991-97, he served as Deputy Minister of Health during the health system reform and renewal.

For his enduring contribution to the people of Saskatchewan, he received the 1995 Lieutenant Governor’s Medal for Outstanding Public Service.

Duane founded the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy. In his role as founding director, he made significant contributions to provincial, national and international research in his field of expertise.

Although Duane retired in June 2000, and notwithstanding his illness, he continued to work in both an academic and government setting until his death.

To Duane, I say, “Dearest Friend — with your love of boundless laughter, and your love of attaining unreachable heights, you have profoundly impacted our hearts and our souls, our very lives. There are no graves here, no farewells. In the memories of time, we shall meet again and we shall laugh again with you.”

As Minister of Health from 1991-95, Louise Simard worked closely with Duane as Saskatchewan embarked on a major reform of the health system.

Duane’s warmth and humour will be greatly missed by SIPP members, past and present. We are grateful for his strong work ethic, which along with his commitment to good public policy, contributed to the foundation of the Institute.

Duane fought the battles needed to be fought to establish SIPP. We are indebted to his perseverance.

May SIPP be a tribute to his commitment to better public policy for the people of Saskatchewan.
PUBLIC LECTURES SET TO LAUNCH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

SIPP is proud to be a part of engaging citizens and building leaders. As part of its mandate, SIPP seeks to educate and engage young citizens in community activities, and in the public policy process. As such, The President’s Leadership Program was formed at the University of Regina. “I am very excited about the program’s possibilities,” says Director Raymond Blake.

Indeed, we had planned to start small. But the program will be introduced in a big way by two very prominent leaders: Naomi Klein and LuAn Mitchell. Both public lectures are open to the public. However, students involved in the program will have an exclusive opportunity to speak with Naomi and LuAn as part of a closed discussion on what it means to be a leader.

“A large part of the vision of this program is to relay the message that nation building is achieved through community building,” says Kathryn Curran, communications and project co-ordinator. Students will have the opportunity as a group to be of service to their community.

Students will also take part in a public-policy workshop led by SIPP scholars and analysts. They will be introduced to pressing public policy issues, the nature of the policy development process, and potential solutions to policy problems.

“It is in our best interest that our future leaders are prepared for the responsibilities and challenges yet to come. This program is a great opportunity for the students at the University of Regina. And it’s a great opportunity for nation building,” says Raymond Blake.

President’s LEADERSHIP Program at the University of Regina

Naomi Klein, author, journalist, activist

"Probably the most influential person under the age of 35 in the world" — The Times of London

“T his C anadian author, journalist and activist is one of the brightest stars of a protest movement that has no name, and no leader, but represents the most dramatic development on the left since the Sixties.” — MacLean’s magazine

Friday, September 21, 2001
3:00 P.M. Classroom Building, Room 110
University of Regina

LuAn Mitchell, Chairperson, Mitchell’s Gourmet Foods

"LuAn Mitchell is that almost-unheard-of thing: a woman boss in the macho world of meat processing." — Self magazine, New York Post

One of the Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World — The Star Group

Canada’s Top Woman Entrepreneur — Profit and Chatelaine magazines

LuAn Mitchell is also author of several children’s books, inventor of “Save the Planet,” an environmental board game, community volunteer, member of the Conference Board of Canada, and co-founder and co-chair of the University of Saskatchewan’s Centre for Agricultural Medicine.

Thursday, September 27, 2001
7:00 P.M. University Theatre in the Dr. William Riddell Centre
University of Regina
**Polling and the Policy Process**

Cristine deClercy, assistant professor of political science at the University of Saskatchewan, led an armchair discussion in January on governments’ increasing use of public opinion polls. Like market research undertaken by the business community, political actors and agencies are also motivated to conduct opinion polling. deClercy is concerned with the pollster’s motivation: whether it is to understand the shape of public opinion, or whether it is to shape public opinion. Often, government walks the fine line.

Public opinion research takes several forms, including: random opinion polls, polling specific target groups, and focus group analysis. The resulting information, deClercy noted, “may be used to help government identify key issues and concerns before they appear on the political agenda.” In addition, by gathering the views of the electorate, politicians chart their future course of action. Polls can also be used to measure the public’s preference with regards to public-policy solutions.

However, there are potential problems with public opinion gathering. A survey is no more than a snapshot in time and it takes considerable skill to interpret shifting public opinion. One must be conscientious to “make informed judgments about the validity of survey results.” As one of many examples, deClercy discussed the 1999 Saskatchewan provincial election in which polls predicted an easy NDP majority. On voting day, the NDP narrowly won its minority, suggesting that one or two polls may be “too crude to catch large changes in public opinion.”

Public opinion research is also used as a tool of manipulation. Public consultations are often just a way for governments to “rubber stamp decisions that have already been made.” Governments came to see the power of public consultation in legitimizing government action in the early 1980s. deClercy credited Ralph Klein’s roundtable discussions as “truly artful efforts” in legitimizing his fiscal-policy initiatives. Currently, deClercy observed, “any new policy direction necessitates much public consultation before any actions may be announced.” The Fyke commission on healthcare in Saskatchewan is the latest example.

Public opinion polling is here to stay, said deClercy. Despite all the shortcomings, public opinions polls can be efficient, allowing governments to “devote scarce resources to where they are needed the most.” They are also democratic, in that it “keeps governments in touch with their publics.” However, governments need to guard against excessively using public opinion consultations to shape the public mind. Perhaps the public sees the true motivation behind these consultations and has grown skeptical of the political process. This may explain voter apathy in recent years.

deClercy suggested skepticism of opinion polls, pointing out that the word “pollster” was coined from the word “huckster” — to reflect not only someone with questionable intentions, but also to convey the image of a con man, a trickster, a manipulator.

deClercy’s speaking notes are available on the SIPP web site at www.uregina.ca/sipp/PastConference/past_conferences.htm.

---

**Rethinking Productivity**

As part of its strategic initiative on “Rethinking Productivity”, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) has awarded SIPP and the Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at the U of R funding for a three-year research initiative. The research, to be undertaken by fourteen University of Regina scholars working with six partner organizations, is to focus on redefining productivity to enhance social development and well-being.

It is recognised that the definition of the term productivity is market-oriented. However, the researchers assert that social development and well-being are of primary importance to rethinking productivity. They intend to ask what is being produced and why, and what are the human and environmental benefits and costs.

The research will contribute to the intellectual development of a broader conceptualization of productivity by: (1) developing an historically sensitive account of how current notions of productivity emerged and how they remain economically and culturally dominant; (2) developing an alternative conceptualization of formal and informal economic activities that encompasses a fuller understanding of social development and socio-economic well-being; and (3) applying this reconceptualization to concrete case study of work and training that reveal the links between formal and informal aspects of productive activities and the skills involved in these activities.

The research will involve (re)valuing and highlighting the social importance of work and skills generally excluded from analyses of productivity. It will contribute to a more sensitive socio-economic approach to public good geared to enhancing social development and well-being.

The research will be completed over three years and is led by Dr. Dave Broad of SPRU.

SIPP is seeking a Post-Doctoral Research Associate who

(Continued on page 5)
PRIVATE GREED VS. PUBLIC GOOD

“Twenty years after the first patent for an organism, the public sector should pause and reconsider its rush to develop and use new life-science advances in the agri-food world.” That’s the message Peter Phillips, an agricultural economist from the University of Saskatchewan, delivered to a recent armchair discussion at SIPP. New technology will lead to “limitless” possibilities, “but problems also exist,” said Phillips. The government has a large role to play in developing and commercializing these new technologies.

The extension of private intellectual property rights to plant innovations, and changes in public-sponsored research, have resulted in the explosion of private investment into agricultural research and a “rapid expansion in the patenting of new innovations and products.” In the 1990s, biotechnology patent applications increased by 12.2% each year, compared with a 2.9% yearly increase across all sectors. While this seems like good news, research has been “radically altered.” In essence, the “effort to develop public goods in the research and commercial world” has fallen short and the “benefits of innovation” have been shifted into private hands.

Basic knowledge—the “foundation for most of the innovation in the agri-food sector”—is now being generated at a slower pace, claimed Phillips. Publications from key Canadian universities and organizations have become less frequent and poorer in quality as “public research has shifted towards patentable research or into collaborations with private companies.” In order to optimize the benefits of research, the government must “re-examine its priorities and incentive structures to see if it can renew research into basic, know-why knowledge development.” Specifically, separating public compensation from patents and increasing public research funds would bring back the “spirit of curiosity” needed in agri-food research.

Much of the problem in the development stage results from a patenting process that doesn’t work and is over-stressed. Phillips points to the enormous numbers of patent applications in the US and the small number of examiners: on average “each examiner has only about 30 hours to review and decide on each patent.” This is not nearly enough time to research these voluminous claims. Secondly, this practice leads to many unwarrranted patents, overlapping rights, and a significant rise in patent searching and litigation, resulting in a rise in “the cost of acquiring the freedom to operate.” Philips argued that governments around the world need to reform and consolidate the patent process. Moreover, countries could make better use of existing mechanisms to reduce monopolistic exploitation of patents by private companies.

The public sector tends to confuse the system by acting very “proprietarily” about their innovations. By compensating scientists on the basis of the financial success of innovations, incentives to cross-license technologies with other public institutions are removed. Public institutions need to work more effectively on exploiting their own innovations and also focus on their reasons for undertaking research. “Groups of complimentary researchers should consider pooling their properties,” said Phillips.

But, perhaps the biggest obstacle to realizing any public good from new innovations is “limited adoption and commercialization.” Consumers are slow to embrace biotechnology due to the lack of “independent, verifiable research on the health, safety, and economic impacts of these new technologies.” Hence, the rise in interest for “credible labeling” and “the slowing rate of adoption” of genetically modified foods. There are also signs of declining private investment into agricultural biotechnology. Phillips believes governments need to commit themselves to funding “public-interest type research” that has may not have any immediate private commercial value and to “ask the questions that no one else will ask.”

In his conclusion, Phillips noted that “numerous studies exist indicating large welfare gains from agricultural research.” He suggests further study to determine if existing patent policies and government regulations truly constrain public researchers. Dr. Peter W.B. Phillips is NSERC/SSHRC Chair in Managing Knowledge-based Agri-food Development, department of agricultural economics at the University of Saskatchewan.

Download “Public good and private greed: strategies for realizing public benefits from a privatized global agri-food research effort” by Peter W. B. Phillips and Dan Dierker at www.uregina.ca/sipp/PastConference/past_conferences.htm.

Rethinking Productivity (Continued from page 4)

will serve as a member of the research team.

The SIPP research team will undertake primary and secondary research on the historical and contemporary understandings of productivity in an industrial and post-industrial context. The research will help lay the groundwork for a broader understanding of productivity that is linked to notions of social development or socio-economic well-being.

For further information on participating in the research project as a research associate, please view SIPP’s web site for further information at www.uregina.ca/sipp or call (306) 585-5777.
**SASK: MORE NEGLECTED THAN ALIENATED**

The *Royal Canadian Air Force* in a recent episode parodied *Canada: A People’s History* in half an hour. The driving of the last spike to complete the railroad across the country was portrayed as linking “separatists in the East” with “separatists in the West.” This makes good humour but of course it is not the reality for most westerners (as it is not for most easterners), at least it is not the reality I have experienced in the five years since moving here from Ontario. Feelings of alienation are widespread and ingrained, though, and need attention.

According to the *Gaige Canadian Dictionary*, alienation can mean a turning away in indifference or hostility, estrangement, or withdrawal or detachment from one’s society or environment. For most in Saskatchewan there is no desire to turn away from Canada, but there is a frustration with a detachment Saskatchewan people perceive elsewhere, a belief that many Canadians do not take into account the particular issues and aspirations here when making decisions that affect the entire country. Patrick Nagle’s comment in the overview article in this series (March 15, 2001) rings true: the real issue behind western alienation is a desire for more demonstrable influence in the central government.

Older residents point to perceived misunderstanding of the plight of the region during the depression as a cause of estrangement from the East (especially Ontario). Others — younger — speak with passion about a perceived cavalier disregard for the plight of westerners that Trudeau demonstrated as Prime Minister. Current debate focuses on the need for federal help to sustain the pattern of life known by many farmers, with the responses seen as neither appropriate nor sufficient.

There is frustration at being ignored or overpowered by the combination of the strength of the federal government and the dominant influence of the population and economies of larger provinces, especially Ontario and Quebec. Affluent Alberta is an economic competitor but at least it is a western one.

The large Aboriginal presence in this province — about 13% of the population and growing quickly, with an average age of about 17 years and a relatively high fertility rate — has a different significance than in other parts of the country. The continuing inability of governments to find ways to deal with issues faced by this community frustrates many in Saskatchewan.

The rural experience dominates this province. There are about 1,000,000 people in a large geographical area, with the two largest cities having roughly 200,000 people each and the remainder of the population spread in smaller communities or rural areas. The stresses in this environment as rural life inexorably changes are different from those in provinces where the proportion of the population living in cities is much higher and the sense of what constitutes a small community is much larger.

It is understandable for westerners to feel estrangement when much of the country does not experience the same problems, or appear to care about the significance of those problems. It is almost impossible to have a dialogue about possible futures, possible solutions, possible strategies, if the problems cannot be discussed in terms that make sense to participants in the discussion. Of course, it is easy to blame government or those in other parts of the country. Perhaps the complementary weakness offsetting the Canadian commitment to “good government,” is a tendency to expect the federal government to solve all problems.

“*It is understandable for westerners to feel estrangement when much of the country does not experience the same problems, or appear to care about the significance of those problems.*”

Some of the responsibility must lie in the west, though. Debate here on western problems sometimes unduly focuses on fixing decisions taken in the past. The implicit assumption is that those historical choices properly implemented, rather than a different set of choices that might be made now, will establish an appropriate future. There is sometimes an unwillingness to recognize that circumstances have changed for other Canadians too.

The discourse about western alienation in this province might mask an intergenerational “alienation.” There is a strong sense of place and of the importance of place among Saskatchewan people. Many residents of this province are attached to it, and want to remain here. At least, that is true of older residents. Yet the population here has remained constant for decades while other parts of the country have grown. Many young people leave this province, frequently to move one or two provinces to the west, with large numbers also going east. These young people have different values and aspirations — primarily regarding economic and career prospects — than their parents or grandparents, and believe these can be better realized elsewhere. Perhaps part of what lies behind western alienation in Saskatchewan is a frustration that the country as a whole is not helping the province build a future that will keep the next generation here.

People in Saskatchewan feel alienated when other Canadians do not respond to the particular circumstances of this province. Saskatchewan is not populated with “separatists in the West” but with those who want to cooperate with citizens of other provinces to build a country sensitive to the needs of all its diverse and variously valuable regions — including the West.

Written by Dr. David T. Barnard, president and vice-chancellor of University of Regina and SIPP board member. The article first appeared in *Opinion Canada* 3,12 (March 29, 2001), Centre for Research and Information on Canada, Council on Canadian Unity/le Conseil pour l’unité canadienne.
both attracted and retained a remarkable corps of civil servants.

- A constructive partnership in policy formulation—between the most senior civil servants in the bureaucracy and the members of the Douglas cabinet.
- A solid public administration—one that was as creative in policy formation as it was practical and fiscally prudent in program implementation and management.
- A forward-looking approach to promotion within the civil service—one that put at least as much weight on an individual’s potential as on past experience and demonstrated knowledge.
- A learning-based human resource culture—one that facilitated a rich learning experience both inside and (through a progressive policy of educational leave) outside government.

Further to these elements, good government is achieved through one’s motivation to improve society’s quality of life, as demonstrated by every member of the Saskatchewan Mafia.

Marchildon claims that “the experience, expertise and education represented by a modern civil service is quite remarkable relative to other institutions, including the largest companies in our private sector. Even our universities.” Regardless of type or level of expertise, “Senior civil servants, particularly those dealing with policy, should be motivated by much more than the salary or the prestige of their positions,” says Marchildon. From his own experience, Marchildon found that “you are unlikely to interest the best talent into government on the basis of salary and performance bonuses. Such individuals will never find sufficient purpose in money and position. Their real currency of value is the opportunity to make a difference through the policy process.”

His arguments contradict the recent movement to separate management and policy development. They also cast doubt on the effectiveness of performance bonuses to civil servants recently offered elsewhere.

Admittedly, his argument, may be found “vulnerable” in face of the detrimental effects by cost-cuttings undertaken by governments throughout the 1980s and 90s. Severe cost-cutting had a “detrimental impact” on the policy capacities in various governments.

Marchildon recalls a time when a calling to the public service was a noble one. After a few decades of bashing politicians and government bureaucracies, we risk eroding the “expertise and motivational power that lies behind the excellence in public administration and innovative public policy. We will lose what has been integral to the Saskatchewan tradition.”

One cannot speak of Saskatchewan tradition, without the mention of Medicare, built on the commitment to innovative policy and competent public administration. Saskatchewan public service earned its legacy as “the highest qualified in the country” by inspiring national social programs. “Little wonder that the Pearson government so assiduously hired Saskatchewan public servants after it embarked upon its own program to modernize and extend the Canadian welfare state,” says Marchildon.

Marchildon concludes, “Good public governance and excellent public administration are essential to innovative and effective policy change. Innovative government requires the type of public servant who can design innovative public policy options with attention to the details of implementation and management. And this requires both leadership and integrative expertise. It also requires a high level of the right motivation.”

Dr. Greg Marchildon now serves as the executive director to the Royal Commission on Medicare, led by the former Premier of Saskatchewan Roy Romanow. Download his complete address “Public Administration and Provincial Policy Innovation in a Federal State: The Saskatchewan Tradition” at www.uregina.ca/sipp/Publications/.
The Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy is a research institute of University of Regina.

**Newsletter Staff**

**Kathryn Curran**, Communications Coordinator  
**John Allan**, Senior Policy Fellow  
**Jeff Marshall**, Research Associate

The newsletter is a publication of the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy at the University of Regina. Extracts from this publication may be reproduced provided the source is acknowledged. The views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily the views of SIPP.

SIPP is a non-profit institute devoted to stimulating public policy debate and providing multidisciplinary expertise, experience, research and analysis on social, economic, fiscal, environmental, educational and administrative issues related to public policy.

For more information please contact:

SIPP@uregina.ca

Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy  
University of Regina  
2nd Floor, Gallery Building  
College Avenue & Cornwall Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4S 0A2

Indecia Number  
173 6221