

CANADA'S LEADING MAGAZINE ON POLITICS AND THE ARTS

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THE CANADIAN FORUM

**B.C. PREMIER GLEN CLARK ON LOSING
POLITICAL POWER TO TRANSNATIONAL
CORPORATIONS**

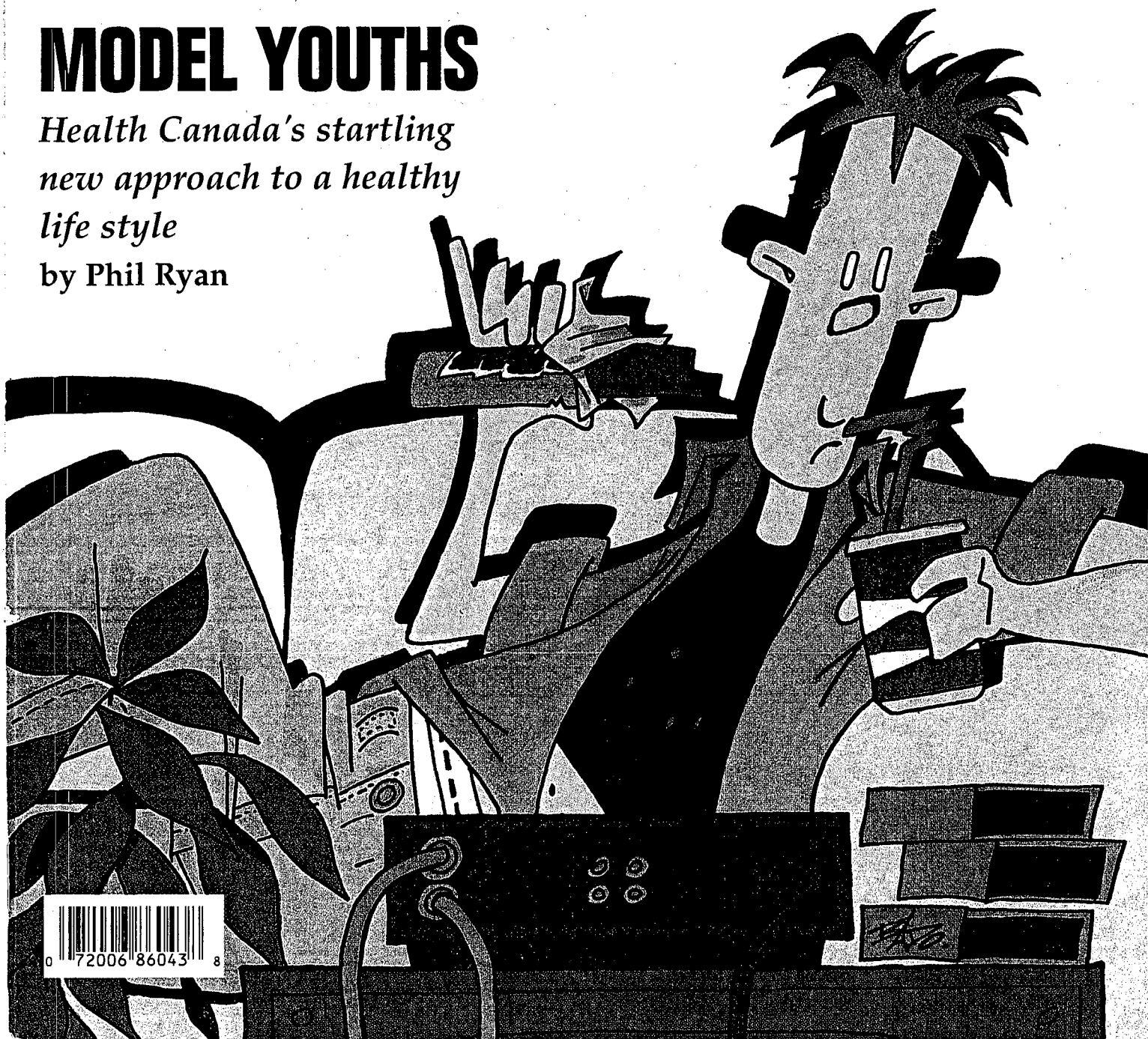
DUNCAN CAMERON ON THE FORUM

**BOOKS: MEL WATKINS ON LEACOCK'S
HUMOROUS ECONOMICS / ANDREW
NIKIFORUK ON THE CRISIS IN CANADA'S
FORESTS / AND MORE**

MODEL YOUTHS

*Health Canada's startling
new approach to a healthy
life style*

by Phil Ryan



SUBVERTING GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Bureaucratic momentum and muddled mission statements have led some governments' entrepreneurial initiatives to bizarre and compromising partnerships with the private sector

by PHIL RYAN

Exhibit One: *The Clubhouse Kids*, published by Ontario's Ministry of Health in 1990. It has what one would expect in any effort to promote healthy habits among children: basic safety pointers, mention of the four food groups, encouragement of brushing and flossing, and cautions against watching too much TV or playing music too loud. It's sappy stuff, but my pre-school son loves it.

Exhibit Two: *The Jr. Jays Magazine*, published in 1995 by Health Canada. This too contains some lifestyle advice for children. But it contains much more: ads for the Batman and Power Rangers movies, Hot Wheels, Nintendo, bubble gum and YTV, among others.

Exhibit One hails from the bad old days when governments went it alone. Exhibit Two is a child of the new age of partnership. The magazine is the product of the Junior Jays Digest and Kids Club, initiated by Health Canada in 1992 to "promote the concepts of a positive, healthy lifestyle" to seven- to 12-year-olds. After the Toronto Blue Jays had agreed to the project, Health Canada enlisted the program's major sponsors, each of whom paid \$50,000 to join. The Club's first magazine had a print run of over one million copies, delivered to schools by police officers. In the years since its debut, there have been 17 more issues of the magazine for a total circulation of seven million.

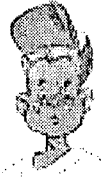
The *Jr. Jays Magazine's* cartoon-format stories revolve around the adven-

tures of "Dr. Jay" and a group of child characters. The stories and other material in the magazines offer some "positive lifestyle" messages, among them the importance of using seat-belts, the virtues of going to the dentist, the evils of cigarettes and liquor, and advice on how to deal with racist jokes.

But one often has to dig to detect these messages, as the publications are primarily commercial vehicles. The principal categories of advertising are snacks, fast foods and sugar products; Warner Brothers children's movies and other forms of electronic entertainment; Blue Jays merchandise; and toys. Apart from the explicit advertising, many of the articles and features are unacknowledged advertisements promoting children's movies, Super Nin-



LAMBERT



BEN



CATHY



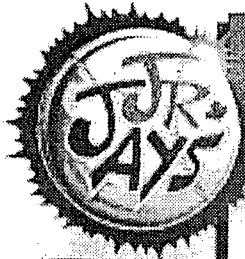
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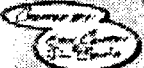
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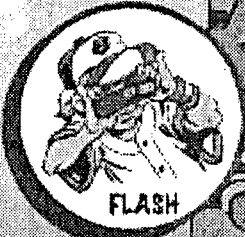
CRUNCHIE



Magazine



FEATURES:

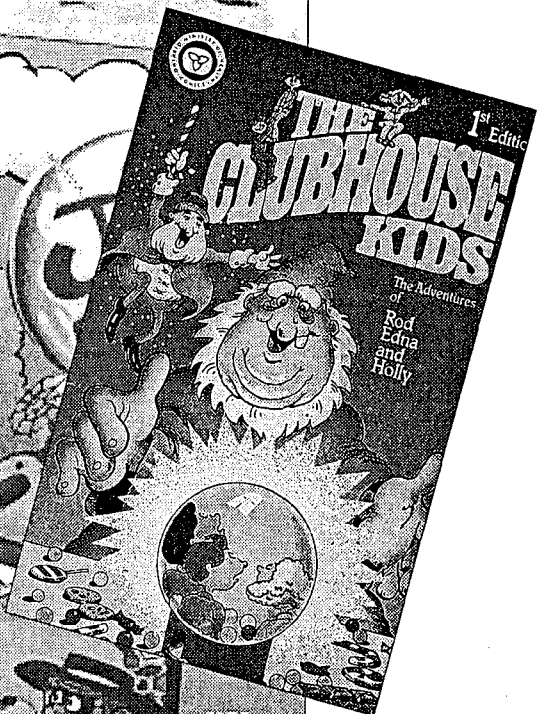
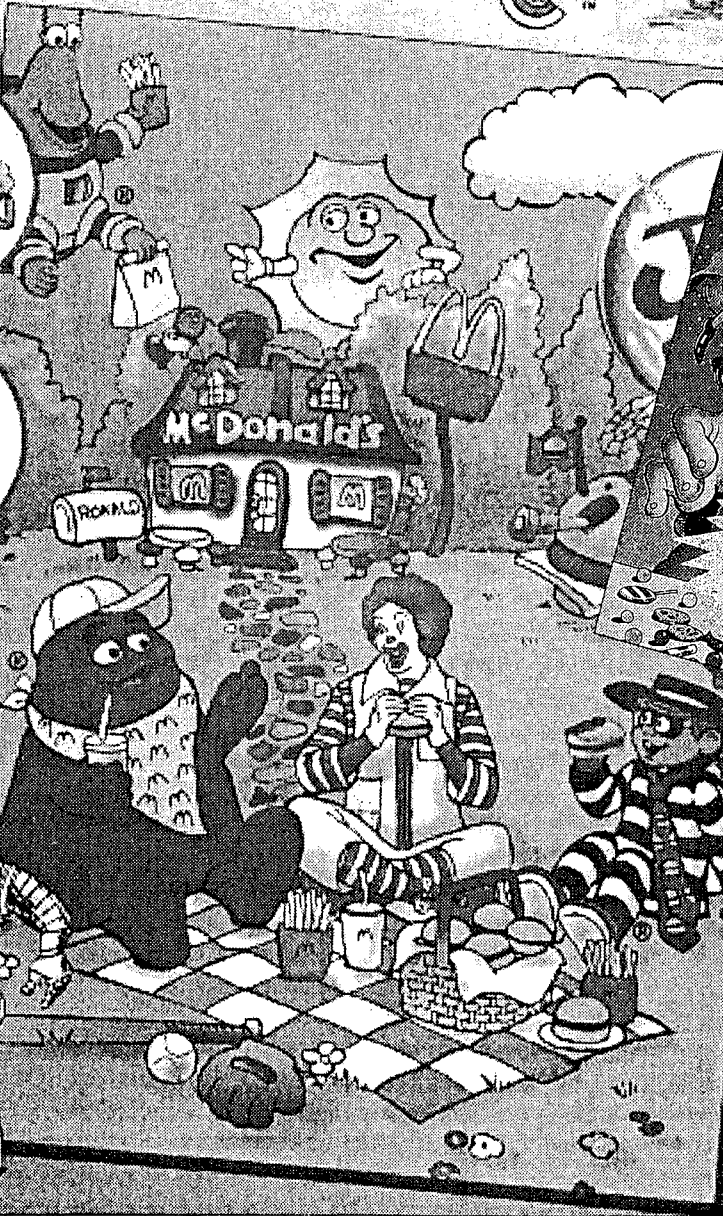


FLASH



RONNIE

IZMARD FROM GALAXIA



ALL STORIES ARTICLES LETTERS

READ ABOUT:
JUAN GUZMAN
DILLANE WARD
DEYON WHITE

Inset: Exhibit One hails from the bad old days when governments went it alone.

Left: Exhibit Two is a child of the new age of partnership as initiated by Health Canada in 1992.

tendo or YTV. In one contest, Dr. Jay says, "Hey Kids! I want to hear about your greatest Hot Wheels Adventure!" A story that purportedly teaches children how to deal with conflict uses the example of two students who both want to write school essays about Nintendo.

Like many modern movies, the comic-format stories come heavily laden with "product placement" advertising. One *Jr. Jay* character exchanges gifts with a Native child: pemmican for

the magazines studied is for a Warner Brothers movie and each one gives the movie "10 out of 10."

The program has also tried its hand at chauvinistic propaganda: the *Jr. Jays Magazine* for Summer 1995 tells the story of an evil "Captain Cortez" who is planning to build "invisible fish nets then he plans to steal all of Canada's fish and escape!" Fortunately, "Out of the sky descends the latest in Canadian Aerospace Technology...The Airhawk!" All ends well, of course: "We did it, Doc!

The promotion of physical health is also undermined by the heavy concentration of explicit and hidden advertising for products that promote physical passivity, such as movies, TV shows, pop music and Nintendo. Unlike Ontario's *Clubhouse Kids*, the *Jr. Jays* program does not view the lifestyle of the "couch potato" as unhealthy.

The *Jr. Jays* program may also have problematic effects in areas other than physical health. Advertising to children relies on their capacity to nag, and

THE PERVASIVE COMMERCIALISM OF THE *JR. JAYS* PUBLICATIONS CONSTRUCTS A "McPRAVDA" WORLD IN WHICH NOTHING IS QUITE WHAT IT SEEMS

a "Crunchie Bar." A character exclaims "Let's go for lunch at McDonald's, Krystal. It must be neat to have a Mom who works for McDonald's." At the end of one story, a character suggests, "Let's go play Ken Griffey Jr. Major League Baseball on Super Nintendo, Ashley!" Dr. Jay joins children playing with Nintendo Game Boys and effuses, "Wow! This is Great!" One of the Health Canada-created characters is even named after a chocolate bar, and children are given instructions on "How to Draw Crunchie." At least 17 products and companies enjoy surreptitious advertisements in the *Jr. Jays'* comic stories.

The pervasive commercialism of the *Jr. Jays* publications constructs a "McPravda" world in which nothing is quite what it seems. The magazines carry movie reviews ostensibly written by real children, but every review in

We stopped those aliens from taking Canada's fish!"

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES?

The *Jr. Jays* program raises serious concerns, which can be divided into questions regarding content and those regarding the medium itself. First, does the program promote physical health? The nutritional message is clearly problematic: a faithful reader of the *Jr. Jays Magazine* might be forgiven for thinking that the four food groups are salt, fat, sugar and hamburger. The program, like much modern marketing, may contribute to malnutrition. Apart from its directly noxious effects, commercially stimulated consumption of junk food crowds out consumption of healthier foods. Analogously, advertising messages can drown out healthier influences on child nutrition.

various studies have shown links between children's exposure to advertising, the frequency of purchase requests to parents and the level of parent-child conflict. Finally, while the *Jr. Jays* magazines contain subtle messages concerning conflict resolution, these are overwhelmed by explicit and hidden advertising for violent entertainment such as the Batman and Power Rangers movies. Health Canada promoted the latter movie *after* the Power Rangers TV show had been declared excessively violent by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council.

THE MEDIUM HIDES THE MESSAGE

Many of the foregoing observations provoke questions around advertising to children in general. But there are added concerns in the case of the *Jr.*

Jays program, which bypasses the oversight of parents who seek to limit their children's exposure to commercial manipulation. If we can assume that parents trust Health Canada to provide them with reliable information on health matters, then they will likely subject Health Canada material to less scrutiny than other communication aimed at their children, particularly when hand-delivered by police officers.

Jr. Jays advertising also seeks to bypass children's own perceptual de-

such has also been articulated in government regulations. In the late 1980s, the CRTC restricted "infomercials," declaring that "consumers should be protected from disguised advertising messages.")

SO WHAT?

Health Canada's *Jr. Jays* program promotes unhealthy practices to children and promotes them in an ethically questionable manner. But so what? Why worry about a low-visibility pro-

Sugar Bombs, and we now appear intent on closing down the oases to which parents and children could once flee from such commercial bombardment.

A second issue arising from the *Jr. Jays* story concerns the future of our government. I am sure that no Health Canada official ever consciously set out to give government support to the makers of junk food and junk entertainment. This odd outcome has arisen from a thick fog that has settled on

IN THE NAME OF "LEAN GOVERNMENT," WE ARE APPARENTLY WILLING TO SUBJECT FUTURE GENERATIONS TO AN EVER MORE INTENSIVE COMMERCIAL INCITEMENT OF DESIRE

fences. The rationale for hidden advertising is clear: advertisers are well aware that they can best enlist children in their cause when the latter are unaware this is happening. But what of the ethics of the practice? Hidden advertising is one of a class of practices that deceive by masking the true motivation of a communication, violating personal autonomy by preventing the target from mobilizing legitimate defences against interested persuasion. Anyone who considers this a dubious ethical criticism might simply consider the desirability of a society in which the governing party hides its advertising in the editorial columns of the local paper, or in which journalists produce purportedly "objective" articles while under hire by companies affected by those articles. (The principle that advertising should be recognizable as

gram costing a minuscule fraction of Health Canada's budget? As small as the program is, it raises two broad issues.

The first, which I will address but briefly, concerns the formation of our children. In the name of "lean government," we are apparently willing to subject future generations to an ever more intensive commercial incitement of desire. Some politicians promote the privatization of public television systems, which will end children's access to commercial-free programming. School boards raise a few dollars by turning classroom computer screens into junk food billboards and forcing students to sit through commercial-laden "news" programs. Our society has long been willing to hand over a significant portion of child socialization tasks to the makers of G.I. Joe, Barbie and Chocolate-Frosted

Ottawa, a fog called partnership mania. Advocates of public partnerships see the practice as part of a cure for the pathologies of bureaucracy and as a response to fiscal pressures. Both claims are problematic.

David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, authors of *Reinventing Government*, see partnerships as one of many tools for promoting an "entrepreneurial" alternative to bureaucracy. "Classical" bureaucracy, we are told, worked well in a stable environment, when tasks were simpler and change more glacial. But bureaucracy cannot cope with our age of "breathtaking" change, with its complex and interdependent social problems, because it operates through a detailed subdivision of tasks and the constant generation of new rules. As Robert Merton argues in his famous essay "Bureaucratic Structure and Per-

sonality," ends and means get inverted and the bureaucratic obsession with rules leads to the ignoring of results. This "goal displacement" is particularly pronounced in public bureaucracies, whose official ends are often vague and ambiguous. When this pathology is addressed through quantitative measures of organizational performance, these measures suffer the same inversion of means and ends, being turned into the very goal of activity and generating perverse outcomes, as when Toronto welfare officials steer people away

gated. Means and ends will still be inverted, and measures of performance will still be elevated to ends-in-themselves. The persistence of such pathologies must be kept in mind when one assesses the second claim for partnerships.

Nearly every advocate of public partnerships expresses the hope that they will allow public sector managers to "do more with less," to which the most obvious rejoinder is: *more what?* With goal displacement always a danger, the "more" may become "more of

Duty," *European Journal of Marketing*), when even "generosity" aims to "improve bottom line performance," the private party has clear and measurable objectives and is willing to walk away from the partnership, as some did in the case of the *Jr. Jays*. (When companies such as Apple abandoned the program, their logos were airbrushed out of the comics, much as Trotsky retroactively disappeared from pictures during the Stalin era.)

Public sector managers who report increasing pressure to embrace "flavour of the month initiatives so it looks as if they're doing something," will often feel compelled to find partners one way or another. To walk away from problematic negotiations, or — horror of horrors — to abandon a partnership already in progress, will call into question a whole series of prior decisions, and the official may well be seen as someone not truly committed to the managerial realities of the '90s. Better to let the partnership forge onwards, even if it has, at best, a peripheral relation to the organization's mission. Goal displacement will then go to work on behalf of the official, who will be praised for "risk-taking" and "entrepreneurialism," whether or not the partnership has furthered the organization's mission, which no one was very clear about in any case. But when one party has clear objectives and is willing to walk away while the other has a personal incentive *not* to bargain hard on behalf of the organization's goals or abandon a partnership, it is easy to predict whose goals will prevail over time.

In the *Jr. Jays* case, Health Canada did the initial work developing the characters, and other preparatory work, for a total investment of some \$150,000, then sold the rights to the characters for \$1 to the Blue Jays, which licensed the characters to the "Community Programs Group," an organization of uncertain status whose sole *raison d'être* seems to be the *Jr. Jays* program itself. From this point on, abandoning the partnership would indicate that money had been wasted and the whole project had been misconceived, and Health Canada was bound to a pro-

PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGERS WHO REPORT INCREASING PRESSURE TO EMBRACE "FLAVOUR OF THE MONTH INITIATIVES SO IT LOOKS AS IF THEY'RE DOING SOMETHING," WILL OFTEN FEEL COMPELLED TO FIND [PRIVATE] PARTNERS ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

from gainful employment so that they can meet workfare placement targets.

While this type of analysis does identify some bureaucratic pathologies, its target is too narrow. Goal displacement is not a fact of bureaucracy, but a fact of life. How many people can say with confidence that their life has a clear central goal, and that their actions are always oriented towards that goal, rather than to some surrogate thereof? The Biblical tension between "letter" and "spirit," or between priest and prophet, shows that the confusion of ends and means is not a product of modern bureaucracy.

It is foolish to think that the advocates of a "reinvented" government will solve a problem that has never been solved and can at best be miti-

whatever we happen to be doing at this point," rather than "more of what we originally set out to do." Success will be proclaimed on the basis of partnerships entered or total funds "leveraged," rather than actual contributions to the organization's mission: "In the last five years," trumpets one policy document, "Health Canada has entered into more than 80 partnerships which added an estimated \$40,000,000 to the resources available to the department."

But who is "leveraging" whose resources in these partnerships? Often, those negotiating a private-public partnership do not enjoy a "level playing field." In this age of what Marylyn Collins terms "strategic" corporate philanthropy (*Global Corporate Philanthropy: Marketing Beyond the Call of*

ject fundamentally driven by commercial imperatives, as the initial agreement had stipulated that the program must operate at a profit.

But commercial imperatives have certain implications when children constitute the target audience: as *Children as Consumers* author James McNeal notes, "it is uncommon to see children-oriented ads for clothing, books, green beans, school supplies, or personal hygiene products." That is, it is primarily peddlers of junk food, sugar-laden cereals and electronic pastimes that view children as a lucrative market. As a Health Canada official commented in response to my query on the *Jr. Jays* program's choice of sponsors: "These are the companies that sell to kids." Given the corner into which Health Canada had painted itself, it is no surprise that the same official felt that "our control of the project is limited."

My point," said Foucault at one point, "is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous." Public-private partnerships may sometimes serve the public interest, but they must be subject to a more critical scrutiny than has hitherto been the case. Now advocates of partnership may reply that their writings on partnership have included caveats. Checklists are available, telling the organization what it should and should not do in partnerships. The question of why the organization will in fact do what it should, however, is neglected. But if organizations did what they should, there would have been no organizational pathologies in the first place. We do not need more lists of "do's and don't's," destined to be filed and forgotten, but we do need serious study of how partnerships unfold in practice, and how the public interest gets lost in the shuffle in cases such as the *Jr. Jays* program.

The critical scrutiny of partnerships must go well beyond a "value-for-money" approach that focuses on how many pamphlets were produced for what price and assumes that budget costs are the only cost to the public. This is the irrational rationality of

Flaubert's poor Hippolyte in *Madame Bovary*, who submits to Dr. Bovary's barbaric surgery because "ça ne lui coûterait rien" [it won't cost them anything]. Indeed, since the budget costs of partnerships may be quite low, such an approach can justify the refusal to do any evaluation at all. But if healthy lifestyles are "worth" something, then unhealthy lifestyles obviously "cost" something, however hidden and diffused those costs may be. Those costs will not be detected by evaluation procedures that refuse to look for them.

can eat our cake (and whatever else we desire) and have good health too.

At this level, Plato's image speaks to the power of our desire to have our cake and eat it too, our desire to avoid tough choices. This desire to hide from unpleasant trade-offs is a powerful force in modern-day political discourse: we find it in the Reaganites' notorious "Laffer curve," in the oft-repeated claim that we can cut taxes yet maintain government services by eliminating "waste, fraud and abuse," and in the contrary claim that we can

IT IS PRIMARILY PEDDLERS OF JUNK FOOD, SUGAR-LADEN CEREALS AND ELECTRONIC PASTIMES THAT VIEW CHILDREN AS A LUCRATIVE MARKET. A HEALTH CANADA OFFICIAL'S COMMENT ON THE JR. JAYS SPONSORS: "THESE ARE THE COMPANIES THAT SELL TO KIDS."

We might best end, then, with an image conjured by Plato: "If a cook and a physician had to dispute their claims before a group of boys, or before men as silly as boys, as to which of the two completely understood which foods are beneficial and which are harmful, the physician would starve to death." At its most literal level, the image is relevant to our story: it is astonishing that anyone should expect children to learn and act upon the basics of proper nutrition while being bombarded with commercial propaganda for junk food. But Plato's image is also pertinent at another level. How will the chef counter the physician's warnings? By declaring that the physician is a humbug bent on denying pleasure, that rich food and candy cannot hurt us, that we

maintain or even improve services by taxing someone else.

The claim that partnerships will allow us to "do more with less" indulges the same fantasy. It holds out the possibility that we need not pay a real price for deep cuts to government program spending. In the face of this fantasy, any responsible student of government must warn that partnerships may lead government to do, not "more with less," but something very *different* with less, something that no government has any business doing.

Phil Ryan is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Administration at Carleton University. References for this article can be found at: www.carleton.ca/spa/staff/lj.html

GENDER WAR

Tony Hall is likely, better than most of his companions in the normally nasty Fathers' Rights movement. But it is telling that he has only discovered the gender war since his recent separation from his wife and children. While once comfy and blinkered, left-wing men now discover the sex war; the right has been more effectively taking the lead in responding to women's justified (but often contradictory and over-demanding) disaffection with hegemonic masculinity.

Everywhere there is talk of the male bully in the schoolyard and macho gun culture in the United States. It's ironic that decent, thoughtful people sick of nasty macho fantasies or of uncritical, Disneyfied notions of childhood, children and suburban consumerism should find allies among the hypocritical, self-serving (bully) right.

Simply put, reproduction and sexuality have taken on overtones of crisis — especially in volatile North America.

Mr. Hall might look at *Sisters of the Yam* by bell hooks. African American women were rather brutishly forced to think about this crisis in the 1980s. Hooks has some valuable things to say to it that feminist suburbanites should also read.

Anne Hicks
Kitchener, ON

IS CHOICE DEBATABLE?

I read with great interest the letters to the editor by Sharon Dewey and M.J. McKenna (June 1998) asking Judy Rebick to reconsider her views on "Freedom of

Choice" as a victory for the women's movement.

Ms. Dewey asks that Ms. Rebick extend her analysis beyond "choice" and examine the abortion issue in all its complexity. Furthermore, she asks Ms. Rebick, for whom the continuing obstacles to access to abortion make the "victory" incomplete, not to see the matter as "black-and-white." In other words, Ms. Dewey wants some debate. Mr. McKenna asks Ms. Rebick to consider how the "victory" has affected the life of women in the workplace, arguing that the right to choose to abort becomes, under the pressures of the workplace, a duty or expectation and prevents women from asserting a claim for being treated differently based on their reproductive function. Again, this reader wants some discussion on the issue.

Unfortunately, for Ms. Dewey, Mr. McKenna and people like myself, the left has treated the abortion issue as one not open to debate in any of its aspects. This self-inflicted atrophy of the intellectual process leads Ms. Rebick to find it "ironic" that the right uses the "freedom of choice" argument to advance its own agenda in the fields of education and health, to name two.

Ms. Rebick is wrong to think this ironic. It is a logical application of the individualistic pro-choice rhetoric.

The irony is that the party of the left, the NDP, continues to champion absolutist positions on rights issues, including abortion, euthanasia and gay rights, without any thought as to how this libertarianism is to be reconciled with a collectivist and socialist ideology which may place the rights of the community above those of the individual or at least engage in a dialogue to balance rights.

The consequence of this absolutism is that the NDP comes out sounding like a super-charged liberal party and closes the door to dialogue and debate. So long as people like Ms. Rebick con-

tinue to pronounce the Morgentaler decision as a "victory," there will continue to be no space on the left for people like Ms. Dewey and Mr. McKenna to debate the issue.

Peter G. Kirby
Keewatin, ON

IN DEFENCE OF THE JR. JAYS

In the July/August edition of *The Canadian Forum*, Phil Ryan, an associate professor at Carleton University, wrote an article about the *Jr. Jays Magazine*, its sponsors and its relationship to Health Canada. Mr. Ryan was ill informed and never talked to the staff that put out the magazine. As a result, the entire premise of his article on government partnerships with the private sector is null and void. Because Ryan apparently did little or no research on an article that reads like fact, he has misled any readers who took the time to go through his assault on Health Canada and the *Jr. Jays Magazine*.

The *Jr. Jays Magazine*, developed, produced and financed by Community Programs Group, has been used by Canadian police since 1993. In Canada, approximately 1,200 police officers are dedicated to reaching out to children in schools and communities. They provide information and material on subjects from bicycle safety and street proofing to the promotion of equality and nonviolent resolutions of differences.

Police organizations that participate range from a two-person RCMP detachment in God's Lake Narrows, Manitoba, to the divisions on the streets of Toronto where several hundred officers work in the schools and communities.

The one thing they have in common is the job. They work in uniform, with

teachers, camp leaders, church officials, and their main target is 7- to 12-year-olds. It is felt that individuals are the most impressionable at this age and they need to view the police as proactive members of their community, not just as enforcers.

There are about 2 million children in this age group, and in any year, about two thirds of them get to meet a police officer in an educational environment.

The thing the officers don't have in common is the training to do their tasks and budgets to make them effective. Some have budgets for materials, most don't. Another problem is that 40 per cent of the children police meet don't speak either English or French with any proficiency, can't read, or suffer from handicaps such as attention deficit disorder or other learning disabilities. There is often nothing available to reach these kids except the *Jr. Jays Magazine*.

The magazines are crafted to look like a commercially produced product such as the *Disney Adventures Magazine*. There is a mixture of stories, articles, games and comic features. They are Canadian, portraying the various cultures and lifestyles of the country in the story themes.

Because they are formatted as comics, with lots of pictures and illustrations, they are effective as a communication tool with kids who can read and those who can't.

The magazine content introduces a myriad of social information promoting positive, happy, healthy and safe lifestyles. The books are not meant to be used as part of a lesson. They are a treat, offered by the police officers to help bridge any gap that might be there and to reinforce the concepts being presented by the police in the schools. Constant research done with kids, parents and teachers guides the direction.

Each year, 1.8 million copies of the magazine are used in this manner.

In addition, the quarterly publication also has over 50,000 paid subscribers (\$12.00 for 3 years) and it is handed out on all Canadian Airlines flights as

part of their children's entertainment package.

Kids respond to the magazine. It generates more than 19,000 letters yearly where readers write to the characters from the magazine and get a letter back. More than 90,000 enter contests to win prizes by submitting essays, short stories or drawings. Everyone gets a reply at the end of the year. The magazine survives because it is successful with parents, teachers, the police and the kids.

The *Jr. Jays Magazine* and its French language edition *Les Jeunes Canadiens* comprise the largest circulation children's magazine in Canada, bar none. There are few programs with this coverage that work in both official languages.

The program has a yearly budget of over \$1 million raised from corporations, associations and two federal government ministries. Commercial content of the book is restricted to 20 per cent and most of our corporate supporters do not sell products to children. Those that do are blue-ribbon Canadian companies.

There is a strong content committee made up of representatives from Health Canada, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, The Toronto Blue Jays and 16 children from the target age group who have volunteered from across Canada.

The *Jr. Jays* program works well because it is truly an effective partnership of business, professional sports, the private sector, government ministries, police, schools and communities themselves. Without this cooperation, an important program that is so universally accepted could not exist. Maybe Phil Ryan could learn something positive from this to pass on to his students, instead of erroneous rhetoric spewed for no positive purpose.

Eric Conroy
Publisher, *Jr. Jays/*
Les Jeunes Canadiens
President, Community
Programs Group

Phil Ryan Responds:

One Christmas morning, our two-year-old opened three presents, then said, "That's enough." Like most children, he entered the world with a wondrous ability to delight in things that can't be bought or sold, to enjoy what he has rather than what he lacks. Our children's future happiness requires that we nurture this ability, not douse it.

That is the "positive purpose" behind my work on the *Jr. Jays*. I am concerned by the pervasiveness of marketing to children, those "most vulnerable to commercial manipulation," as our Supreme Court put it. I am particularly concerned by the hidden marketing that permeates the *Jr. Jays* program. Canadian adults demand that their newspapers not disguise advertising as editorial content. Why not extend the same protection to children?

Have I spewed "erroneous rhetoric"? Mr. Conroy does not mention any specific errors, but alleges that I have done "little or no research." Perhaps he understands the word differently from the way I do. The "Institute for International Research" identified Mr. Conroy as one of its "faculty" when it promoted a two-day conference where a mere \$1,706 would allow one to hear Mr. Conroy and other "movers and shakers of the consumer kids' industry" offer "the tools you need to market to this powerful consumer group." If this be "research," I plead guilty to Mr. Conroy's charge. Readers can judge the research I have done by examining the sources for my original article (www.carleton.ca/spa/staff/jj.html).

Mr. Conroy is incensed that I did not talk to his staff. When I phoned them, no one was willing to answer my first question: "Are you a nonprofit organization or a commercial enterprise?" So I have followed some ancient advice, "By their fruits shall ye know them," and have carefully studied the fruits of the *Jr. Jays* program.

Did I get it all wrong? Is all the covert and overt advertising a mere façade to help the *Jr. Jays* magazines "look like a commercially produced product"? I'd

love to see Mr. Conroy's evidence that children more readily accept health messages when they come yoked to hidden plugs for Nintendo and Crunchie Bars. I did seek evidence of the beneficial effects of the Jr. Jays, asking Health Canada for "any evaluations" of the program. My Access to Information request yielded but one document: a study of Jr. Jays readers that asked questions like, "What are your 3 most favourite chocolate bars?" and, "Have you ever heard of Nestlé crunch?" I could find no attempt in the study to assess the program's success in promoting health and safety.

FIGHTING MAI

In view of the general expectation that the MAI will resurface in new and even more virulent forms, I was somewhat disappointed to note that the July/August issue of *The Canadian Forum* ("MAI Machinations Update") makes no mention of a highly significant legal challenge to the MAI by a Vancouver-based group, The Defense of Canadian Liberty Committee. Their detailed brief shows that all the secret federal negotiations to date violate the sections of the Canadian Constitution and further concludes that the federal government has no power and no right to sign agreements which undermine Canada's sovereignty.

Though the press conference held by the group in Ottawa on June 18 was aired on CPAC on June 24, it has received very little press coverage. It is surely a momentous event for the first ever court challenge of the MAI to have been launched by a citizen's group in Canada.

How are we ever going to achieve that 75 per cent No response to the takeover agendas of the business cult if such initiatives as that of Connie Fogal of the Canadian Liberty Committee do not receive maximum publicity and financial support?

Ruth Cohen
Toronto, ON

I look upon *The Canadian Forum* as a valuable source of information and thoughtful opinion on matters concerning Canadian politics, economics, social and cultural affairs. But the omission of any mention of what the federal NDP is doing in the House in the fight against the MAI is rather disturbing. It is a very difficult fight first of all because none of the other parties are interested in opposing it and second because the owners of the major media don't wish the general public to know about it. So while *The Forum* has done a marvellous job of alerting its readers to the undemocratic and destructive nature of the MAI, I feel they have left out an important player in the fight against it.

An example of the disparaging, dismissive and arrogant attitude of the Liberal government to the NDP's questions about the MAI is to be found in *Hansard* for April 22, 1998. Mr. Bill Blaikie (NDP — Winnipeg-Transcona) asked, "I wonder if the minister on Earth Day could tell the House whether he has had occasion to think twice about the wisdom of Canada's belonging to agreements like the NAFTA or seeking to enter into agreement like the MAI or the FTAA which enable corporations to sue governments for pursuing environmental legislation like this government has with MMT."

Hon. Sergio Marchi, minister for international trade, replied, "Mr. Speaker, it would be appropriate on Earth Day if the NDP renounced its membership in the flat earth society. Certainly that would be a contribution."

On April 29, Bill Blaikie replied, "We are not members of the flat earth society after all as the Trade Minister recently alleged. Instead, we are members of the society for global governance that is just, sustainable, and participatory and accountable." How can you have participation and accountability if the government treats opposition in such a fashion?

After the breakdown of negotiations in Paris in April, Mr. Blaikie paid tribute to all those groups and individuals who have been campaigning

against it, saying, "Let us bury the MAI once and for all and use the opportunity of its failure [the conference in Paris] to create a global economy that puts the rights of workers, of the environment, and of the democratically elected governments ahead of the rights of investors and the global corporate elite."

It must be remembered, too, that while all the groups fighting the MAI have and are doing a wonderful job in educating the public, only the NDP MPs can lodge official opposition in the House. They need and acknowledge the help of those groups, but to me, as a member of two of them, disregarding or dismissing what the federal NDP is doing shows a lack of understanding and respect for the democratic process. With only 21 NDP members in the House, it is clear that cooperation and complementary actions among all those opposed to the MAI are essential, however, to do that, each of us must know what others are doing. I hope *The Canadian Forum* will give a little space to the work of Bill Blaikie and other members of the NDP caucus who are speaking out whenever they can to let the government know that many people, not only they, are completely against MAI for Canada and the world.

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The Canadian Forum welcomes letters from readers. We reserve the right to edit for length or to avoid repetition. Please include your name, address and telephone number and send them to: Letters Column, The Canadian Forum, 35 Britain St., 3rd Floor, Toronto, ON M5A 1R7. Fax to (416) 362-3939; e-mail to canadian.forum@sympatico.ca

CORRECTION

The photograph on page 11 of the July-August issue of *The Canadian Forum* should have been credited to David Bieber/*The Democrat*. ■