

THE “LIBERTARIAN HISTORY OF CANADA” BOOK PROJECT: A JOINT FUNDING PROSPECTUS

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Executive Summary

Canada’s scholarly culture has completely ignored the country’s contributions and innovations, intellectual and institutional, to free market libertarianism. This project uses an innovative trigger-pledge donation plan to finance a needed and much lacking Libertarian History of Canada. Telling this neglected story will provide balance in Canadian history and offset the rampant statism of the country’s popular and political cultures. Proceeds from the book will be used to create a fund to support free market education in Canadian public schools.

Background

Free market libertarians who are ethical and consistent do not have access to the popular short cut of simply seizing the reins of state power and imposing their values on others. Consequently, the struggle for free markets and sovereign private property is above all a struggle of ideas. In Canada, where the state’s control over schooling is amplified by a major role by so-called public broadcasting this challenge is especially acute. Indeed, in both academic and popular scholarship – from Donald Creighton to Pierre Berton – the idea of Canada as country and federal government being indistinguishable is pervasive. From the RCMP and the CBC; through the National Policy and the National Film Board; to the Canada Health Act, the idea of the Canadian state as nation builder has informed the country’s mythology.

Amidst all this, there has never been a free market libertarian history of Canada. The closest thing was the work of George Woodcock, but he was a “libertarian socialist” – a fact frequently revealed in his analyses. There’s no evidence that Woodcock was fluent in economics or understood dynamic markets. In the struggle for ideas – hearts and minds – this is a major blind spot in Canada’s scholarly culture. This project to write a Libertarian History of Canada is an effort to fill that woeful gap in Canada’s intellectual culture.

The Funding Plan

Given the generally statist and especially leftist orientation of Canada’s university departments of history, sociology and even economics (if we’re including Keynesianism), it is hardly surprising that

Canada's academia hasn't produced such a history. In the absence of university positions, the usual route for such projects is through state subsidy via various grant programs. Such a path is inappropriate for this project: the use of state money is inherently suspect from the start; those who referee competitions for such grants are not likely to be sympathetic – or even impartial; and even if such an effort did succeed, with ethical qualms sidelined, the inevitable red tape in such processes would hinder the project's timeliness and possibly its quality.

For these reasons, this project will sponsor the writing of the history through triggered funding pledges, which will be available for review online. The goal is to raise \$33,000 for each of two years, so that the author may make the libertarian History of Canada his main work-focus for those two years. The process will work in this way:

Pledges: May be for any amount of money. They will only be counted once funds are placed in a savings account exclusive to this purpose. A dedicated page on the author's website will show a breakdown of all pledges, with recognition of the pledgers – where permission is granted.

The pledges only become active donations when triggers are hit.

Triggers: There are two triggers, each set off at a total of \$33,000 of pledges. Once the first trigger is set-off the author will begin full time work on the book. Fund raising, using the same method, for the second trigger will continue, subject to the same rules and conditions.

If the trigger has not been reached a year after any pledge, the pledger will be offered back their pledge, with interest. They will have the option of withdrawing their pledge or re-pledging.

Proceeds

Any profits from the book will be used to create a fund to help facilitate free market education in Canadian public schools: e.g., sponsoring public school teachers to attend educational seminars, for instance, at FEE or the Mises Institute.

Meet the Author

Michael McConkey has a Masters in Canadian history from Concordia University and a Ph.D. from McGill. He has over ten years teaching experience and worked for three years as the staff researcher at the Institute of Public Administration of Canada. He has written and edited numerous popular and scholarly articles, studies and reports – several commissioned by the Federal Government of Canada. For more information on him, see his website: michaelmconkey.com

A recent convert, in the last three years, to free market libertarianism, he has exhibited a prolific output. He has pieces on both the Libertarian Standard and the Ludwig von Mises of Canada sites and two lengthier pieces under consideration at The Independent Review and Libertarian Papers. During that time he has also written two libertarian books in manuscript: the more academic Austrian economics of communication, *Acting Human; Communication Costs*, and the popular treatise, *Voluntary Governance: A Roadmap*. Both of these are in final editing stages.

Potential pledgers are welcome to review any of these publications or manuscripts for a sense of Dr. McConkey's intellectual acumen and prose style. Links to publications are available on his website; manuscripts can be requested from his email address cited on the letterhead, in the footer and at the end of this prospectus.

Regular Updates

Dr. McConkey will provide regular updates on the process of the book at his blog, Freedom and Complexity: link available on his website. Exclusively for donors/pledgers, there will be occasional sneak previews on some of his findings from the research on the book.

Some Tantalizing Teases

The complete dearth of scholarship on the history of free market libertarianism in Canada has meant that some wonderful stories have thus far gone untold in the kind of broad-appeal, easily accessible, history that this project will produce. For some examples:

- Emma Goldman, notorious for her taunt of Peter Kropotkin that if she couldn't dance, she didn't want to be in his revolution, is more famous for her younger years as an anarcho-communist and aspiring terrorist. Less well known, though, is that, following her "deportation" by the Wilson administration for her anti-war activities, her politics shifted away from collectivism to a natural law individualist and constitutionalist orientation. Those final two decades of her life were spent in exile living back and forth between Canada and various European countries. To some extent in the 20s, but especially in the 30s, Goldman had residences in Toronto and was a major participant in the local libertarian community. Indeed, she died in Toronto, in 1940, at 70 years old.
- Was Ayn Rand a Canadian? No, she wasn't, but it wouldn't be unfair to characterize what the world has come to think of as Randian thought as being Canadian in its making. It seems clear that Rand learned her core understanding of economics and history at the feet of Isabel

Paterson – born on Manitoulin Island in Ontario and raised on a cattle ranch in Alberta – who was in the 1930s among the most influential figures of political and literary criticism, from her perch as an editor at the *New York Herald Tribune*, while Rand was still a struggling writer with no success yet at all. Additionally, the institutionalization of Rand’s ideas (for which she never gave Paterson proper credit) was almost entirely executed by the Canadian Branden couple: Nathaniel born and raised in Brampton, Ontario, and Barbara from Winnipeg. Indeed, the entire Rand circle of the 1950s seems to have been stacked with Canadians.

- Sam Konkin, born in Saskatchewan and raised in Alberta, was the founder of Agorism: the theory of a voluntary, free market society. It also involved the idea of counter-economics: the argument that good business and ethical economics went hand in hand with efforts to evade state control and expropriation of private property. Konkin was also famous for coining a number of enduring neologisms: in addition to Agorism, he coined “minarchy” and “browne-outs” – terms referring to those who supported limited government and rejected electoral politics, respectively. Konkin was also an enthusiast of exploring libertarian ideas through science fiction. Not only was he converted to libertarian ideas by Robert Heilein, but Konkin’s Agorism inspired a number of other award winning science fiction writers, including J. Neil Schulman, Victor Koman and Brad Linaweaver.
- One of the great libertarian institution builders was Vince Miller of Toronto. He created political parties, publications and educational organizations, culminating in his oversight of the formation and nearly two decade tenure as president of the International Society for Individual Liberty, which has hosted conferences and distributed literature all over the world. It was particularly influential in bringing libertarian ideas to post-Soviet Eastern Europe in the 1990s.

Canadian history is not a relentless story of suffocating state worship and triumph, contrary to what our public schools, academics and the CBC might have us believe. In the shadows of this official Canadian religion of the state, individual Canadians have made important contributions to free market libertarianism, intellectually and institutionally.

This story needs to be told. Please help tell it.

To learn more, including how to pledge: Michaelmconkey.com/libertarian_history.html

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