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**Straight From The Source's Mouth? The 1997 Alternative Federal Budget And The  
Neo-Liberal Discourse Of Economy In  
Mainstream News Media Reportage**

**Douglas Chow**

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in  
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of  
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## ABSTRACT

### **Straight From The Source's Mouth? The 1997 Alternative Federal Budget And The Neo-Liberal Discourse Of Economy In Mainstream News Media Reportage**

Douglas Chow

What little research that is available on dissent in the mainstream news media, for the most part, has suggested that not much room exists for alternatives; the “media barons” do their jobs in a consistent and unfaltering manner. This hypothesis places an exaggerated emphasis on individual or institutional “bias” while overlooking the systemic treatment of social movements. What is more, a blindspot becomes apparent when spaces do open up for oppositional voices. Such is the case for the **Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives** and the **1997 Alternative Federal Budget**. The question of how the ‘economy’ is socially constructed remains inadequately addressed. This thesis attempts to expand on the theory of news as discourse, which looks at how the representational codes of news work are situated within the neo-liberal cultural map of the social world.

Participant-observation research and informal interviews have been used to examine the Budget’s media relations campaign. It is argued that one key ideological function of the news discourse is the public accreditation of some knowers over others. That it is to say, under this taxonomy of perspectives, the AFB coalition, in spite of its promotional activities, is deployed as news actor rather than news source. As such, the Alternative

Federal Budget is deemed newsworthy but not important and is ultimately not allowed to “speak” for itself. Metaphorical analysis will demonstrate that, due to an incommensurability between the journalists’ neo-liberal interpretive framework and the AFB’s constructivist worldview, coverage of the Budget was framed from the outset. Without a much broader AFB communications strategy, news workers will continue to *accurately* reflect the prevailing discourse of the economy.

The thesis ends by pointing out that ideology is never monolithic and all-encompassing. Through contradictions within news organizations, the media themselves generate openings of change. Social movements cannot simply be more accessible to the news net; they must instead organize the media like any other constituency, making it a site of struggle.

*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*

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## **CHAPTER ONE: A Blindspot In The Study Of Canadian News And Dissent**

Our civilization is unable to do what individuals cannot say.

And individuals are unable to say what they cannot think.

John Ralston Saul, **The Doubter's Companion**

Public policy issues represent a key terrain on which consensus is challenged and negotiated within the mass media. One such site of struggle between competing social interests is the 'economy.' Various participants including the government, business, public interest groups, and other lobbies all work to gain access to the mainstream news media, in order to influence media content on economic issues such as the deficit and debt reduction. Since Canadian television news plays an important role in imparting credibility to contending discourses, public contestation is either facilitated or constrained by the way the 'economy' is framed and taken up through news reportage. Although news reporting may frequently permit the expression of some dissenting opinion, it simultaneously impedes social debate -- and thus perpetuates the status quo -- because it is a representation of authorized ways of "understanding."

This thesis examines this relationship between the representation of news which falls outside the consensus, and the ideological function of the news media in publicly accrediting some kinds of knowers and knowledge over others.<sup>1</sup> However, before we continue any further, the research questions will be specified. The broad "so what" question for this thesis is this: without consciously advocating one position or another, do

the ways in which the news media routinely structure public discourse privilege some understandings of the world over others? The point of departure for this discussion is that dissent can be a test of how the news media process the discourse of the economy:

The role of the press as an agent of political communication is very much a contested question. It hinges in large part on the press's [sic] legal, economic, organizational, and ideological relationships with the State and other institutions. *We can learn much about these relationships by examining how the press treats dissent against State policies.*<sup>2</sup>

Few State policies are more fundamental, coalescing around notions of “national interest,” and generate more media coverage than the federal budget.

Through research on the organization, constraints and routine activities of the 1997 **Alternative Federal Budget (AFB)** media relations campaign, as directed by the **Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives (CCPA)**, it is argued that for social movements<sup>3</sup> striving to become news “sources,” the mechanical application of public relations tactics is simply not enough. Instead, “an issue or event must be sociologically or psychologically pertinent to a reporter’s grasp of the world.”<sup>4</sup> This begs the second question: what cultural values or ideological assumptions underlie news patterns? It is proposed that news reportage in the Canadian broadcast media has been implicitly influenced by the neo-liberal discourse of the economy, which does not need to mobilize public opinion since it is just plain “common sense.” As a result, the AFB coalition has

been framed from the outset as only a timely news “actor” rather than a regular news “source.” The Budget is newsworthy but certainly not credible. What may have originally been an effort to change public *understanding*, may only succeed in raising public *awareness*. Several other works have offered that the convergence between the news media and the news maker may explain this source-actor bifurcation

Since “news stories, news sources, and reporters are hierarchically arranged,”<sup>5</sup> elite sources are frequently allowed to define the frames within which issues are discussed and interpreted. However, there is a paucity of research that approaches the news-source relationship from the perspective of the social movement. More often than not, the discussion surrounding news as a representation of authority focuses on the promotional strategies of the authorized knower. Of the two studies that address in an in-depth fashion the public interest groups’ organizational demands, and expectations in making news,<sup>6</sup> only one discusses the Canadian situation and both centre on the media coverage of peace-related movements and issues. Consequently, we have very little real knowledge of the influence authoritative sources may have, or may not have, on defining the frame within which we come to understand the meaning of Canada’s budgetary decision-making.

To address the question whether Canadian news reportage and commentary have demonstrated an unwillingness to give credibility to oppositional discourses of the economy, this thesis will undertake a novel approach: a metaphorical analysis to study the treatment of alternative groups by the mainstream media. It should be noted that the

prevailing neo-liberal ideology is embedded in everyday language that effortlessly gives way to a taken-for-granted metaphorical transfer (along with all of its attendant “ways of knowing”) in news reportage. However, this metaphorical transfer is not a form of propaganda nor media bias, but instead, *accurately* reflects the dominant mode of operation. Such a course of study sets this work apart from the several news source studies located within the news bias paradigm.<sup>7</sup>

It will be demonstrated that in light of the Alternative Federal Budget’s decision to principally centre its communications strategy around the recasting of its spokespersons and the coalition itself as authorized knowers, any effort to promote the AFB’s worldview of the economy in the news media is akin to inserting a square peg in a circle. As yet, no other study of public interest groups has explored in detail the notion that *how* it is said is just as important as *who* is saying it. The research findings presented herein emphasize the importance of this hole in the study of Canadian news on the ‘economy.’

Much of the previous research in this area contends that news values, routines and constraints regarding source selection narrow the representation of social reality, but this is hardly surprising since news institutions operate within the contemporary knowledge society. The working ideologies of the news media -- journalists as interpreters of reality, objectivity, balance and fairness; and journalists as investigators -- draw the news worker to the “unimpeachable source.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to having a bearing on news practices, “the working ideologies form part of an *occupational* ideology, a basis for justifying the news

product publicly in order to achieve and sustain legitimacy.”<sup>9</sup>

Gaye Tuchman suggests that reporters operate within a “news net,” a logical and hierarchical system which draws upon news sources as effectively as possible. News workers are placed at bureaucratic institutions and beats, guaranteeing a steady flow of reliable news. The news net “imposes order on the social world because it enables events to occur at some locations but not at others.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, reporters cannot write about occurrences hidden from view by their social location. According to Tuchman, news organizations spin a “web of facticity” that creates an illusion of credibility, but which ultimately reinforces the legitimacy of the status quo.

Similarly, Mark Fishman’s **Manufacturing The News** outlines how the methodologies of reporters serve as means not to know. Fishman points out how public authorities are often allowed to define the news situation because journalists are circumscribed by aspects of their own working assumptions: “that events are self-evident; exist independently of their knowers; are not created, altered, or otherwise affected by the process of discovery; and occur logically and temporally before the event is detected.”<sup>11</sup> The author argues that the methods of news production and its dependence on verifiable sources lead to a uniform ideological picture of the world — an ideology largely defined in terms of the constraints of news making.

Michael Schudson also sees the news story, not as a literary exercise, but as a social form

tightly constrained by the routines of news gathering. Schudson notes that many scholars have argued that the tradition of objectivity in journalism favours official views, “making journalists mere stenographers for the official transcript of social reality.”<sup>12</sup> The emphasis is not on bias but on how the process of news gathering itself constructs an image of reality which reinforces official viewpoints.

In “Repairing The News: A Case Study Of The News Paradigm,” W. Lance Bennett *et al.* posit that journalists participate in making news an exercise in normalization. Following a “news logic,” such as the use of official sources, news workers perpetuate a vision of reality based on power -- under the pretence of objectivity. According to this system of logic, certain parts of the world are depicted as newsworthy while others are not. This confusion of authority and legitimacy with objectivity “has substituted the popular myth that the pronouncements of government officials and institutional elites somehow represent the reality in which the majority of people live.”<sup>13</sup>

These works are helpful because they provide insight into the mutually beneficial working relationship between the news media and the elite sources of news. Given that this thesis focuses on the processes of accreditation for a particular public interest group, an understanding of the media’s hierarchy of access in terms of the social and cultural arrangements of the news organization is necessary. However, since this thesis also examines the relationships between the mainstream news media and economic public policy dissent in Canada, a survey of the few studies that deal directly with the role (or

lack thereof) of the social movement<sup>14</sup> in the shaping of news would be appropriate.

According to Richard Ericson's *et al. Negotiating Control: A Study Of News Sources*, the question of "who controls?" is not a straightforward matter. Instead, it is a process that depends on the context, the type of sources involved, the type of news organizations involved, and what is at issue. They maintain that the reality of news is embedded in the prevailing knowledge structure. The news media, as significant agents in the knowledge society, serve as a barometer of who are the authorized knowers and what are the authoritative versions of reality. At the same time, news reportage and commentary suggests "by relegation to a minor role and by omission, who is excluded from having a say in important matters."<sup>15</sup>

In citing authoritative sources, news outlets not only reinforce their credibility, they also reproduce their own authority. In this sense, the unauthorized knower lacks regular contact with reporters and is at a disadvantage compared to government officials or corporate spokespersons. The reporter is thus able to portray the unauthorized knower negatively without risking an ongoing relationship based on trust or reciprocity. Indeed, "the reporter can often enhance her relationship with powerful and official sources through negative portraits of marginal organizations and individuals."<sup>16</sup>

The authorized knower has *access* to the mass media. Access consists of the news space, time and context to reasonably represent the authority of his/her office. Most often,

sources with access are cited as an authority in stories pertaining to their sphere of organizational life. On the other hand, access is distinguished from *coverage*, which may entail some news space and time but not the context for respectable representations.<sup>17</sup> Such is the case for unauthorized knowers who are “portrayed as troublesome, and their talk is depicted as self-interested.”<sup>18</sup>

For Charlotte Ryan, the news media are becoming an increasingly important strategical arena of political contestation. As such, social movements must add the mass media to their list of institutional powers to be confronted. The author lists four institutional barriers to their becoming a regular source: 1) lack of institutional backing; 2) resource shortages; 3) social distance; and 4) ideological legitimacy.<sup>19</sup> Ryan also touches upon the knowledge society when she notes that the media separate news into “important” and “interesting.” Important news stories feature institutions and the decision-makers. On the other hand, interesting news (which does not profile the powerful) is newsworthy on a single-case basis; emphasizes interest over content; and is divorced from its broader social context — even though the issue may be *important* to others.<sup>20</sup>

Stuart Hall, Ian Connell and Lidia Curti’s study of current affairs television during the UK General Election of 1959 is instrumental here. In the same vein as Charlotte Ryan’s preceding assertions, the authors describe how news workers, “never dealt with any subject matter simply because it was “interesting,” but only because it “mattered;” the programme never handles issues in a “trivial way,” but always in an authoritative way with



people who carried authority.”<sup>21</sup>

Robert Hackett’s **News And Dissent: The Press And The Politics Of Peace In Canada** contends that the hierarchy of access in news reports can be evaluated not only by the relative frequency of various groups, but also by the differentiation between “sources” and “actors.” News sources “appear in the news by virtue of their provision of information or viewpoints which are considered to be credible, authoritative, legitimate, and/or relevant.”<sup>22</sup> By contrast, news actors “are deployed in the journalistic narrative because their actions are newsworthy -- [...] [often] they engage in public disruption -- rather than through their ability to make authoritative pronouncements.”<sup>23</sup> As such, news actors are considered as self-interested advocates rather than experts. Stemming from the journalist’s caution, actors are to be spoken about more than they are allowed to speak for themselves. The author concludes that, “this distinction provides important clues to the ‘cultural map’ underlying the construction of news accounts.”<sup>24</sup>

The following work tries to address some of the many implications previous research has raised for understanding the nature of information we *don’t* receive concerning the Canadian government’s budgetary policies. However, as already mentioned, because no work is available on this specific area, we have sought to provide an account of its basic features. We begin by mapping out how the Alternative Federal Budget media relations team seeks to contribute to the public discourse of economic issues and events, and how these efforts are received and made use of by the Canadian mainstream television news

media *vis-à-vis* their own concerns and priorities. The paper will then shift to a more theoretical discussion in an effort to answer the following questions: “How successful was the Alternative Federal Budget coalition in obtaining coverage in and through the news discourse?”; “Could any difficulties be ascribed to AFB communications strategy shortcomings?”; and “Could the news media’s framing of the Alternative Federal Budget be explicated by a metaphorical dissonance between the coalition and the neo-liberal discourse of economy?” Secondary questions include: “What effect do challenger-made (the AFB) hurdles, such as the over-extension of resources, have on a social movement’s communications activities?”; and “Are there any internal organizational costs from seeking mainstream media coverage?”

This study may be viewed in a number of different ways: as a prescriptive study of a public interest group vying for media coverage, a topic that has received limited attention from scholars; as a series of insights into common occurrences and practices that one tends to take for granted (including that economics is rhetoric replete with competing paradigms); and as a perspective on journalists who cover economic news for major Canadian news outlets. However, readers will probably be most interested in the description and evaluation of the AFB’s media relations campaign. I am primarily concerned with determining whether or not social movements may fully contribute to the functioning of a *bona fide* democratic polity — by expanding the political imagination in the search for alternatives to neo-liberal economic policy making.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Within the discussion on how the news media play a crucial role in the provision of social knowledge about issues and events, interpretations of “what forces shape the news?” are varied and contradictory. For instance, some critiques of the narrow band of dissenting opinions in the mass media place emphasis on news as a product of the biases or manipulations of dominant interest groups. The groups that are most commonly supposed to exercise this influence include media owners, advertisers, and journalists. However, studies that focus on the alleged biases of reporters contain some or all of the following questionable assumptions.<sup>25</sup>

The first assumption is that news can and ought to be objective or balanced. Although William Hoynes and David Croteau’s examination of news sources on ABC’s “Nightline” eschews the objectivist position, the authors nevertheless replace “conservative” [their terminology] bias with the “progressive” bias based on “systematically over- or under-representing certain perspectives in news coverage.”<sup>26</sup> However, balance erroneously suggests that the “truth” lies somewhere in between.<sup>27</sup> Rather, one must still ask, what then justifies the truth-claims of the news organizations themselves? In addition, news balance is hardly neutral as it generally leads the media “to reproduce the definitions of social reality which have achieved dominance in the electoral political arena.”<sup>28</sup> Balance between sources absolves the news media of responsibility while “at one and the same time [...] creating and controlling controversy.”<sup>29</sup>

Another assumption of the bias paradigm is that the most important form of bias is partisanship. Lawrence Soley's **The News Shapers** looks at various institutions, including think tanks, and individuals whom the news media have chosen to shape their news. The author notes that "the expertise of news shapers is not necessarily self-evident, nor is the direction of their *partisanship*. [author's emphasis] Despite the news media's anointing of individuals with the title of "expert" or "analyst," there are reasons to doubt many news shapers' expertise."<sup>30</sup> But as Robert Hackett observes, "should we conclude from the apparently general absence of partisan bias, that the news media are *ideologically* [author's emphasis] inert?"

Research within the bias paradigm asserts that the political attitudes of journalists or editorial decision-makers are a major determinant of the news. James Winter, on the authorized knower, also rejects the objectivist position by contending that objectivity legitimates knowledge and authority.<sup>31</sup> However, the author then ascribes the deployment of authorized knowers by news outlets to the conscious decision by journalists to support their own particular angle of the story.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the crux of Winter's premise is that the media are far from independent; the media are owned by big business and by virtue of the news media's funding and "who they are," the media represent corporate interests.<sup>33</sup>

This preceding variant of the critical approach is what Robert Hackett labels "radical instrumentalism," "the view that the media in North America are the instruments of political conservative media elites,"<sup>34</sup> or where "the broadcaster is conceived as nothing

more than the ideological agent of his political masters.”<sup>35</sup> Radical instrumentalists argue that the content of the mass media, as screened by the news managers, is biased in favour of policies which maintain the existing arrangements of power, *e.g.* deficit reduction or privatization. But as Hackett contends, “because [radical instrumentalists] focus on the conscious manipulation or control of the media by owners, [they] often fail to distinguish between *bias* and *ideology*.”<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, the “skewed” access system in the media towards the authoritative knower *accurately* reflects and represents the prevailing structure of power. As Stuart Hall *et al.* put forward, “it is in politics and the State, not in the media, that power is skewed.”<sup>37</sup> Due to the absence of ideology, radical instrumentalism does not account for the prominent news stories which “scold” the government or corporate interests. It ignores the fact that news organizations and the State “operate, broadly speaking, within the same ideological framework, though they frequently take different positions within it.”<sup>38</sup>

The radical instrumentalists’ political prescriptions for the public interest group may possess several negative effects. Grounded in economic determinism, the radical instrumentalist perspective “makes structural domination appear insurmountable and thus opposition action appear futile.”<sup>39</sup> By underestimating the potential expression of socially responsible budgetary alternatives, or other forms of dissent, radical instrumentalism overlooks the individual episodes of struggle (however marginal), though it is precisely here that openings for opposition appear. In the end, “social movements should abandon

efforts to conduct a politics of signification through the media.”<sup>40</sup> This defeatist perspective may actually lower the expectations and demands of social movements seeking media access, and oblige them to live with (negative) media coverage.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, radical instrumentalism is too optimistic if it expects a fundamental ideological shift to occur if social movements gain access to the news media.

### **News As Ideological Discourse**

As this thesis has already discussed, the shortcomings of the news media as perceived by members of social movements are not simply attributable to the biases or “media tricks” of journalists. As Gaye Tuchman writes:

Craft-related habits of mind are more than professional practices in the service of organizational needs. Indeed, sometimes they conflict with organizational preferences and mandates. But even when professionals conflict with their organizations and news organizations crusade against local and national governments, news practice is an ideology in action.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, ideological consequences should not be equated with the deliberate violation of journalistic professional standards, but instead, ideology is embedded in those very criteria, otherwise known as the news discourse. But what exactly is the news discourse?

Discourse alone has been alternately defined as the social process of making and reproducing meaning,<sup>43</sup> and as a particular kind of use to which language is put.<sup>44</sup> Robert

Hackett, in *News And Dissent*, elaborates on both of these concepts:

A discourse generally includes categories and concepts for making sense of the world, categories which are not merely descriptive, but which imply evaluations. Moreover, the discourse includes authorized “knowers” and means of knowing. As well, inscribed with the discourse is a notion of its intended audience -- the “we group” that it addresses -- as well as the Other, the “out group” that the discourse excludes or denigrates.<sup>45</sup>

Hackett goes on to say that the practices and traditions of the news discourse cannot be ascribed to some external force -- for it is not the plaything of the capitalist elite -- but has a weight of its own. As well, while the news discourse “has its own logic, codes, or underlying deep structure, its users -- journalists and audiences alike -- may not be consciously aware of them.”<sup>46</sup>

Still, what does it mean to suggest that news is an *ideological* discourse? Often the term ideology has the implication that it is an identifiable doctrine that exists in contrast to common sense. Along these lines, this thesis draws on Dorothy Smith’s model of the relationship between ideology and knowledge. Smith’s model focuses on how *what is not said* limits what one can know about the world. She argues that “methods of knowing obscure truth instead of revealing it,” and defines ideology as “the interested (based in class position) procedures which people use as means not to know.” The implication is that by selectively bringing into light some aspects of social life and not others, ideology “prevents knowledge by limiting inquiry -- by closing off possibilities of an analytic examination of social life.”<sup>47</sup> News as ideological discourse can now be explicated in

terms of news values and objectivity.

As previously discussed in the review of literature, news work can be understood as a process of selection and construction.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Gaye Tuchman comments that in order to efficiently allocate limited resources and to control news work, much is achieved through prediction.<sup>49</sup> It is news values, which sift through the “glut of occurrences” and help guide the reporter in choosing a frame, deciding upon sources, and writing, editing, and slotting a story. Passed on by the “vocabulary of precedents,”<sup>50</sup> dominant news values in Western journalism -- including timeliness, drama and conflict, personality, and relevance and proximity -- can be summarized into three general categories: publicness or public recognition, importance and interest.<sup>51</sup>

One now feels compelled to ask what are the background assumptions that assist these news values to discern between “events” and “news stories?” According to journalism’s cultural map of the social world, society is: 1) fragmented into distinct spheres (politics, economics, sports, family *etc.*); 2) composed of individuals who are authors of social and political action; 3) hierarchical (some people, events and spheres are more important); and 4) diverse and pluralistic, yet there is a fundamental agreement on certain basic values and institutions.<sup>52</sup> Hence, news values are part of an ideological code since they are situated within the underlying consensus. As the news discourse makes sense of the world, it focuses on those who hold socially sanctioned power and knowledge, while excluding or discrediting any contradictions.



As mentioned earlier, Ericson *et al.* note that the professional standards and practices of objectivity are themselves one of the most ideological aspects of the news discourse.<sup>53</sup> By adhering to standardized forms of presentation that are recognized as objective, news workers can achieve and sustain legitimacy, and insulate themselves from charges of error or bias made by sources and the general public. Objectivity implies an impartial, disinterested approach to news rather than one based on interpretation or ideology. Of particular interest to this thesis' metaphorical analysis is that, objectivity promotes the positivist assumption that there is a possibility of a direct correspondence between language and the reality that it purports to describe. Subsequently, it ignores the influence of language, cognitive categories, and organized "ways of seeing" on what we take to be true.<sup>54</sup>

Both news values and objectivity have critical ideological consequences as well, presenting serious implications for social movements attempting to place their concerns within the news discourse. For instance, the news value of political significance and relevance discloses the journalists' cultural map of the social world of where power and democracy are equated with Parliament and elections. Consequently, corporations are conspicuously absent from a discussion of politics, including the federal budget, since they are not visible during electoral campaigns. In addition, there is the implication that nonelectoral forms of politics, such as those undertaken by a public interest group like the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives, are theatrical or irrelevant. In regards to objectivity, when selecting individuals to provide information and comment for a story, the journalist must seek

appropriate sources, “those who have accredited knowledge, who are recognized representatives of the relevant institutions, and/or who are personally directly involved in the story.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the ideology of objectivity unwittingly and paradoxically participates in the social construction of knowledge.

News values and objectivity have indeed been naturalized in journalistic culture, and this may quite possibly intensify perceptions among social movements that they have been shut out completely. But this is not the purpose of this thesis. We will try to demonstrate that, without abandoning a critical perspective of the news media, openings do exist for the expression of alternative viewpoints.

## METHODOLOGY

Much of the sociological research on news work has been based primarily in news organizations and grounded in the perspective of journalists.<sup>56</sup> In addition, a major portion of existing scholarship from the perspective of the news source is centred around authorized knowers possessing currency within the news discourse.<sup>57</sup> However, the primary focus of this thesis is on the ways in which the news actor -- here the social movement or public interest group -- organizes to communicate through the news media. Methodologically, the analysis has two primary components. Through material based on participant-observation and informal interviews, this thesis examines the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives/Alternative Federal Budget's internal organizational arrangements for producing news discourse, and for limiting the terms of that discourse. Particular attention is given to the strategies and tactics the Centre deploys to control how their organization and activities are visualized in the news. This approach, of course, also entails considerations of how journalists are able to negotiate alternative visualizations.

The second phase of this study consists of a metaphorical analysis of the news corpus with respect to the treatment of the AFB's discourse of economy within the news narrative. This research is not concerned with the bias between support for and opposition to the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget, but rather the limits to and the treatment of dissent in the news reportage. Since various dissenting discourses, such as that of the AFB, are very well able to position their message on the mainstream news

agenda, it is felt that conventional reading methods, like content analysis, are not able to examine how certain discourses may be discursively organized within a hierarchy of perceived legitimacy.

### **Participant-Observation Studies**

Ethnographic research provides a means of observing independently what people do, as opposed to what they say they do in interviews or organizational documents. While interviews removed from the environment “can reveal structures of thinking and suggest what to look for,” and organizational documents may “reveal the criteria of rational acceptability by which the organization accounts for its work,”<sup>58</sup> they are otherwise limited for research purposes since they do not take place in the natural setting of the activity being observed. But, like all qualitative techniques, the focus is put on description and explanation.

Employing an observational methodology means a heavy reliance on the researcher’s personal perceptions and judgments, as well as on preconceived notions about the material under study. In addition, participation-observation may cause “reactivity,” where the very process of being observed may influence the behaviour under study.<sup>59</sup> Although the data presented may provide some insight, any conclusions reached remain tentative. Another issue is the relatively short amount of time spent observing the Budget’s media relations campaign, as I have not yet had the opportunity to compare it to successive years

of activity. Thus, all that can be offered at this stage is a “descriptive conceptual framework” for the understanding the organization, constraints, and routine activities of the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget, rather than a “predictive theoretical one.”<sup>60</sup>

My field research consists of a two-week tenure at the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives secretariat, prior to the release of the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget; taking part in the two-day AFB National Conference; and attending the AFB Final Steering Committee Meeting. Holding normal working hours (9 AM to 5 PM), I paid particular attention to the routine activities, flow of communications, interactions with members of external organizations of interest, and internal relationships. Basically, when I was not observing and listening, I was working on everything from photocopying, contacting Alternative Federal Budget endorsers, stapling budgets (these being closer to observational research), to participating in the press conference, taking part in meetings to evaluate media coverage and planning media relations. I would also frequently ask impromptu clarification questions, in order to compare my interpretations of events with the interpretations of others present. Whenever possible, interactions and observations were logged into my field notes as soon as possible.

When I began this stage of my research, I wondered whether the work of media relations for such a crucial exercise in public accreditation, namely the Alternative Federal Budget, would prove to be too sensitive to be studied effectively in this fashion. Moreover, since I was introduced (along with my thesis topic) beforehand to my future “colleagues,” I was

worried about whether established AFB communications personnel would perceive me, the overt researcher, as either disruptive or threatening to their status or credibility within the organization. As I expected, during the first few days, I was restricted to the “front regions”<sup>61</sup> of public disclosure as staff members sometimes neglected to include me in some media activities or were “guarded” in my presence.

However, as my research continued, I found that personnel seemed to go about their business and to speak more freely. This would be normally attributed to the normal process of subjects becoming accustomed to the researcher’s presence. In fact, towards the latter part of my “stay,” staff members came to me for professional advice and in some cases, confided in me with “off-the-record” information.

### **Informal Interviews**

One of the objectives of my participant-observation work was that it would foster enough mutual trust to convince selected AFB coordinators to agree to informal interviews. A series of informal interviews were conducted during the following week after the release of the Alternative Federal Budget (February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997), allowing interviewees to spend more time with me and also have the benefit of hindsight. The one-on-one interviews (ranging from one-half hour to two hours) were also pre-scheduled to ensure that the interviews would be not interrupted by daily routines. The list of interviewees is as follows:

**Bruce Campbell**, Executive Director for the Canadian Centre For Policy  
Alternatives and AFB Spokesperson

**Marcella Munro**, Media Relations Officer for the Alternative Federal Budget

**Jim Stanford, Ph.D.**, AFB Spokesperson and Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)  
Economist

**Tom O'Brien**, National Representative, Communications Department, at the  
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)/Media Relations Advisor for the AFB

**Duncan Cameron**, Spokesperson for the AFB/CCPA Researcher

**Andrea Thiel**, producer of the CBC National Magazine segment on the AFB

A flexible question “script,”<sup>62</sup> of broad questions tailored for each interviewee, was designed to probe further into the strategies and tactics used by the AFB communications specialists, and how these might be defined in terms of the social and cultural criteria of their particular organization. The interviews were tape recorded only upon permission, although all interviewees agreed and signed a permission sheet attesting to that fact. The informal interviews progressed like any casual conversation, (*i.e.* according to the tone and interests of the two parties) and seemed to elicit more open communication. Moreover, they were useful in discovering what people thought (sometimes off-the-record), and by asking similar questions, I could see how one person's perceptions compared with another's. Using open-ended questions permitted the candidates to generate their own answers, which sometimes prompted a whole series of further avenues of analysis adding greatly to my conclusions.

In general, questions focused on the interviewee's evaluation of the AFB campaign, self-

evaluation of their role, assessment of organizational values and institutional mandates, notions of newsworthiness, and definitions of respectful media treatment. In the case of Andrea Thiel, the conversation centred around her evaluation of the Centre as a credible news source, the selection of sources, criteria of newsworthiness, and conceptions of objectivity and balance. Fortunately, all the respondents were quite interested in my work and cooperated fully. Material from these informal interviews is incorporated into the body of the thesis. Direct quotations are taken from the transcriptions of the tape-recorded interviews. Some remarks may, however, appear without attribution because they were conveyed to me with the promise of remaining off-the-record.

### **Metaphorical Analysis**

In an effort to operationalize respectful media treatment in the study of the news media's taxonomy of perspectives, this thesis undertakes a metaphorical analysis to examine the extent to which the journalists' decoding framework is embedded in the language of the news narrative without attribution to a source. Indeed in Greg Garton, Martin Montgomery and Andrew Tolson's "Ideology, Scripts and Metaphors in the Public Sphere of a General Election," the authors note that metaphorical transfer occurs on a regular basis in the discourse of television news. The metaphors which develop in the political sphere become incorporated into the discourse of news stories themselves. It is essential to note that these metaphors are not simply confined to quotations but filter through into the narrative of the newscaster.<sup>63</sup>



From George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's **Metaphors That We Live By**, we learn that our conceptual system, or how we perceive our everyday realities, is metaphorical in nature and a taken-for-granted construct. We talk about something in a particular way because we conceive of them that way, and we act accordingly to the way we conceive of things. However, metaphorical concepts are only partial definitions -- or they would actually be the other -- concealing alternative signs.<sup>64</sup> Incidentally, if as Robert Hackett contends that, framing is one ideological consequence of the news media,<sup>65</sup> it should be noted that news frames (very much like the metaphor) are not consciously constructed, but operate as underlying mind sets that prompt one to notice elements that are familiar and ignore those that are different.<sup>66</sup>

For this methodological stage, I consult a one-month grouping<sup>67</sup> of CBC National News and CTV Nightly News segments touching the elements of the 'economy,' including both the Alternative Federal Budget and the federal government's budget (therefore, beginning with the February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997 announcement of the imminent release of the federal budget). I analyze the metaphors employed in the news narrative to "talk" about various elements of the discourse of economy. Mainstream television news outlets were chosen for my sample size since this genre of news text reaches more uncommitted voters, and is more persuasive of voters than the print media. Furthermore, TV's audience penetration has been rising with the increasing reliance on television for news and information.<sup>68</sup> It is hypothesized that the neo-liberal discourse of economy -- with its market-driven language of inevitability serving as "a means not to know --" will figure prominently in the framing

of the AFB and its constructivist agenda as only a news actor within the news narrative.

### **Secondary Sources**

Various Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and AFB publications and press documentation (press releases, media advisories *etc.*) help me with the fundamentals of the CCPA mandate and the content of the Alternative Federal Budget, of which both will be elaborated in further detail over the course of the next chapter.

### **Organization Of The Paper**

The remaining part of the thesis is organized as follows: Chapter Two provides a brief history of the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives, and an overview of the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget. The chapter will conclude with a section entitled “10 Deficit Myths,” which will clarify the coalition’s socially responsible and constructivist policy-making. Chapter Three maps out and examines the organization, routine activities and constraints on the media relations campaign for the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget. Based on my primary research, thorough descriptions of the physical, philosophical, and personnel organization of this social movement are also provided. The thesis will then assess the formal promotional tactics of the media relations team and its outreach to the news media. In addition, this paper will include some insights on the campaign from the producer of the CBC National Magazine’s AFB segment. Finally, in Chapter Four,

metaphorical analysis will analyze the narrative treatment accorded by mainstream television news to the AFB's discourse of economy.

The conclusion reiterates the results of the test of the hypothesis that, without overtly advocating one position over another, the news media structure public discourse of the Canadian economy by discursively privileging "certain ways of seeing" over others. More specifically, in the final analysis, I discuss whether or not it is possible that despite media *coverage*: 1) the neo-liberal discourse of economy ensures that the Alternative Federal Budget remains in the periphery; 2) the news as ideological discourse acknowledges the AFB coalition only as news actor; and thus 3) both are mutually reinforcing as a "means not to know." In addition, without a broader media relations strategy that takes into account the above assertions, the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget media relations team does not obtain media *access*, and is only permitted to explain its actions and not its understandings. But ideology is never monolithic.

The conclusion thus draws the research together to return to the issues brought up in the review of literature, as well as indicating the contributions this thesis' findings make to the questions that have been raised. In addition, several prescriptions will be proposed to overcome ideological barriers, in light of this thesis' observations, for the next AFB media relations campaign. For example, social movements must become aware that there are certain traditional cultural resonances that they can "hang" their message on that help obtain *access* to the media.

1. Robert A. Hackett, **News And Dissent: The Press And The Politics Of Peace In Canada**, Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1991, p. 113
2. *Ibid.*, p. 3
3. A social movement may be simply and adequately defined as “purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals and societal institutions and structures,” *Ibid.*, p. 162
4. Gaye Tuchman, **Making News: A Study In The Construction Of Reality**, New York: The Free Press, 1978, p. 138
5. *Ibid.*, p. 69
6. See Hackett, *Op. cit.* and Charlotte Ryan, **Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies For Grassroots Organizing**, Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1991
7. This explanation of the news will be further elaborated in the section entitled, **Conceptual Framework**.
8. Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan, **Visualizing Deviance: A Study Of News Organizations**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987, p. 119
9. *Ibid.*, p. 120
10. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 23
11. Mark Fishman, **Manufacturing The News**, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1980, pp. 32-34
12. Michael Schudson, **Discovering The News: A Social History Of American Newspapers**, New York: Basic Books, 1978, p. 185
13. W. Lance Bennett, Lynne Gressett and William Haltom, “Repairing The News: A Case Study of the News Paradigm,” in **Journal Of Communication**, 35, 1985, p. 52
14. It should be noted that the author has chosen to employ the term **social movement or public interest group** to denote the “marginalized source,” “unconventional source,” “unauthorized knower,” or “noninstitutional source.” It is felt that these terms within the Review of Literature, albeit germane to the study of dissent, may be too narrow or disempowering for this case study. Moreover, as discussed, the unconventional source is not truly a “source” but only a news “actor.” (*cf.* Hackett, *Op. cit.*, p. 205)
15. Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan, **Negotiating Control: A Study Of News Sources**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989, p. 4

16. *Ibid.*, p. 296
17. *Ibid.*, p. 5
18. *Ibid.*, p. 295
19. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 197
20. *Ibid.*, p. 44
21. Stuart Hall, Ian Connell and Lidia Curti, "The 'Unity' Of Current Affairs Television," in **Cultural Studies**, No. 8, University of Birmingham, 1979, p. 60
22. Hackett, *Op. cit.*, p. 205
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. Robert Hackett, "Decline Of A Paradigm? Bias And Objectivity In News Media Studies," in **Critical Studies in Mass Communication**, Vol. 1, No. 3 (September 1984), pp. 229-259
26. David Croteau and William Hoynes, **By Invitation Only: How The Media Limit Political Debate**, Monroe, Maine: Common Courage, 1994, p. 33
27. Edward Jay Epstein, **News From Nowhere**, New York: Vintage Books, 1974, p. 67
28. Hackett (1984), *Op. cit.* pp. 229-259
29. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 91
30. Lawrence Soley, **The News Shapers**, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992, p. 18
31. James Winter, (ed.), **The Silent Revolution: Media, Democracy And The Free Trade Debate**, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990, p. 129
32. James Winter, **Common Cents: Media Portrayal Of The Gulf War And Other Events**, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992, p. xvi
33. Winter (1990), *Op. cit.*, p. 121 and Winter (1992), *Ibid.*, p. xv
34. Hackett (1991), *Op. cit.*, p. 61
35. Hall *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, p. 51

36. Hackett (1991), *Op. cit.*, p. 63
37. Hall *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, p. 93
38. *Ibid.*, p. 57
39. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 15
40. Hackett (1991), *Op. cit.*, p. 63
41. *cf.* Ericson (1989), *Op. cit.*
42. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 155
43. Tim O'Sullivan *et al.*, **Key Concepts In Communication**, New York: Methuen, 1983, p. 73
44. John Hartley, **Understanding News**, New York: Methuen, 1982, p. 6
45. Hackett (1991), *Op. cit.*, p. 74
46. *Ibid.*, p. 75
47. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 179
48. Hartley, *Op. cit.*, pp. 75-86
49. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 53
50. Ericson *et al.* (1987), *Op. cit.*, p. 133
51. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 31
52. Hackett (1991), *Op. cit.*, p. 77
53. Ericson *et al.* (1987), *Op. cit.*, p. 120
54. Hackett (1991), *Op. cit.*, p. 81
55. *Ibid.*, p. 82
56. See David Altheide, **Creating Reality: How TV News Distort Events**, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1976; Debra Clarke, "Second Hand News: Production And Reproduction At A Major Ontario Television Station," a paper presented at the founding conference of the **Canadian Communication Association**, Montreal, June 1980; Ericson *et al.* (1987), *Op. cit.*; Fishman, *Op. cit.*; Herbert Strentz, **News Reporters And News**

Sources, Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1989; and Tuchman, *Op. cit.*

57. See Ericson *et al.* (1989), *Op. cit.*; Soley, *Op. cit.*; and Dan Nimmo and James Combs, **The Political Pundits**, New York: Praeger, 1992

58. Ericson *et al.* (1989), *Op. cit.*, p. 27

59. Roger Wimmer and Joseph Dominick, **Mass Media Research: An Introduction**, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1991, p. 142

60. James N. Rosneau, **Public Opinion And Foreign Policy**, New York: Random House, 1965, p. 10

61. Ericson *et al.* (1989), *Op. cit.*, p. 9

62. Please refer to the Appendices.

63. Greg Garton, Martin Montgomery and Andrew Tolson, "Ideology, Scripts And Metaphors In The Public Sphere Of A General Election," in **Broadcast Talk**, Paddy Scannell, ed., London: Sage Publications, 1993, p. 113

64. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, **Metaphors We Live By**, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 13

65. Hackett (1984), *Op. cit.*, pp. 229-259

66. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 54

67. The sample size includes all late evening CBC and CTV news broadcasts (from Sunday to Saturday) whenever possible -- except when preempted by "Hockey Night in Canada."

68. Winter (1990), *Op. cit.*, p. 41

## **CHAPTER TWO: A Brief History Of The Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives And An Overview Of The 1997 Alternative Federal Budget**

To better understand the news coverage of the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and the Alternative Federal Budget, it is helpful to briefly examine elements of the two.

### **Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives**

The Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives is an independent, non-profit research institute funded primarily through organizations, such as the Canadian Labour Congress, and through individual membership. Like most policy institutes working to cultivate influence, the Centre is based in Ottawa close to the nexus of political power,<sup>1</sup> as well as with an office in Vancouver. The Centre was founded in 1980 to promote research on a variety of public policy issues, including education, health care, privatization, free trade, employment and labour, taxation, and the debt and deficit from a progressive point of view. With a small staff comprised of academics, policy “wonks,” former journalists, and activists, the CCPA’s mandate is to show that there are workable alternatives to the neo-conservative and neo-liberal market-driven policies promoted by business-supported research agencies and many government departments. The Centre’s *Statement of Purpose* declares that:

Members of the CCPA share a common perspective: social and



economic issues have to do with what is right and wrong in this world; they are not something to be left to the marketplace or for the governments acting alone to decide. Among those policies supported by the Centre are full employment, defined as the right to a full-time job at a full wage for all seeking paid work, and including equal pay for work of equal value and promotion of the right to associate in order to protect and advance conditions of employment; environmental protection and renewal; and a sovereign Canada playing an independent role for common security in the world. The perspective of the CCPA leads it to call on governments to demonstrate active concern for the poor and marginalized in all their activities.<sup>2</sup>

Leslie Pal observes that publication is the central activity of most research institutes, and is the chief avenue to effective influence in the policy-making process.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, to achieve its objectives, the Centre publishes a monthly magazine, **The CCPA Monitor**, as well as numerous studies, books, and sponsors lectures and conferences on the issues of the day from a non-partisan perspective. According to the Centre, the rationale behind its public education efforts is that Canadian policy debate normally takes place within a partisan forum, where the concerns of Canadians are rarely extensively addressed since they invariably compete with electoral priorities. One such annual public policy news story, subject to much partisan debate, is the federal budget.

### **The 1997 Alternative Federal Budget**

For the last three years, the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and CHO!CES, a Winnipeg-based social justice coalition, have coordinated the Alternative Federal Budget

initiative. The project brings together concerned citizens, activists, academics, national and community representatives from labour, women's, church, students', anti-poverty, Aboriginal, and other social action groups. The AFB is the result of an open and inclusive six-month consulting process across the country by way of budget schools in communities, Internet conferences, and economists' roundtables. Twenty policy working groups have drafted this "consensus document [which is] the product of give-and-take in pursuit of common goals."<sup>4</sup> The policy working groups reside in the areas of, for example, health, aboriginal issues, taxation, foreign policy and defence, and Women's issues.

The AFB has two main components. The **Framework Document** sets out the main social concerns and parameters, which provide the basis upon which spending, revenue, and other policy decisions in the budget are made. The **Budget** then establishes the coordinators' policy agenda within a credible fiscal framework, complete with figures. The Budget's viability is then subjected to independent assessment by a Canadian economic forecaster, Informetrica Ltd., and by 164 economists and political economists.

The Alternative Federal Budget proposes that choices do exist, and that moreover, budgets are political documents that reflect the priorities and values of those who table them. The AFB also acknowledges that Canada's problems of unemployment and the erosion of the social infrastructure cannot be reversed overnight. However, the working groups reject the message implicit in the most recent federal Liberal budgets that

governments are powerless in the world of mobile capital and heavy debt, “except to cut, deregulate, privatize, offload, and get out of the way of market forces.”<sup>5</sup>

The AFB contends that, although the Liberal Red Book promised growth and jobs as the way to reduce the deficit, most of it has been implemented through cutbacks in social programs. In fact, many of the planned cuts by the Liberal government for 1997 were already laid out in the 1996 federal budget. In 1997, government spending was reduced by \$3.2 billion, with \$2.5 billion of this reduction coming out of social programs. As a consequence, one of the legacies of this policy is high unemployment. This can be directly attributed to the massive cuts in unemployment insurance benefits for workers, and social transfer payments for those for whom there are no jobs. In addition, in the name of deficit reduction, the government has opted to cut funding for health, education and other services which Canadians regard as important, as well as cut government programs and jobs which Canadians value and are prepared to pay for. Nonetheless, as the Alternative Federal Budget points out, the Liberal government refuses “to balance the country’s books by raising taxes on those most able to pay -- the wealthy and those corporations paying little to no tax.”<sup>6</sup>

The AFB notes that recent drops in interest rates give the government some unexpected flexibility, even in the very narrow fiscal framework within which it has chosen to operate. The Budget forecasts that this will give the government a windfall of some \$4.4 billion extra on next year’s budget. Taking into account its contingency funds, the federal

government will have as much as \$7.4 billion more that it needs to meet its own fiscal targets. The bulk of this surplus will likely go into deficit reduction, with small amounts being made available for new social programs. The 1997 Alternative Federal Budget would use all of these funds to tackle Canada's pressing social problems, especially unemployment and poverty, reversing those federal government policies which have actually worsened these problems.

The organizers of the AFB contend that the Liberal government's approach to budgeting - slashing, spending, cutting back the public sector, and maintaining an unfair tax system -- is ill-advised and does great harm to millions of Canadians. The Alternative Federal Budget outlines a different approach, one in which it believes is more in line with "both the needs and preferences of the people of Canada, and one which takes a positive, constructive and more humane approach to dealing with the serious economic and social problems facing the country."<sup>7</sup> This effort is rooted in basic principles agreed upon in advance by the many organizations contributing to the Alternative Federal Budget:

- full employment,
- a more equitable distribution of income,
- the eradication of poverty,
- economic equality between men and women,
- the protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights,
- improvement in the environment,
- the strengthening of social programs and public services, and
- the creation of a more just, sustainable and peaceful world order<sup>8</sup>

In line with these principles, the Alternative Federal Budget has five major components,

that are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

First of all, the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget seeks to address the most important problem facing Canadians, namely, that of unemployment. Job creation is, therefore, the cornerstone of this budget. The AFB, if put into practice, would aim to create 930,000 more jobs over five years than the number projected by the current Liberal strategy, reducing the unemployment rate to less than six per cent.<sup>9</sup> This would be achieved by pursuing a combination of five strategies for job creation: 1) an expansionary macroeconomic policy; 2) creating the **Emergency Employment Investment Program**; 3) new structures for renewed economies; 4) maintaining and strengthening employment in the public sector; and 5) reducing working time.

The Alternative Federal Budget further announces a “frontal assault on poverty,”<sup>10</sup> reducing its level to 12% or less by the year 2000.<sup>11</sup> The AFB places highest priority on maintaining and improving expenditures on social programs, which it considers to be social investments that are important for the future well-being of all Canadians. With the creation of the **National Social Investment Funds**, proposals for new initiatives in income support, child care, health care, housing, retirement income and post-secondary education will all make a contribution to poverty reduction.

Thirdly, the Alternative Federal Budget seeks to preserve and strengthen social and other important programs financed by the federal government. It unequivocally rejects the need

for cutting back spending on these programs, and reinforces the central role of federal spending in setting national standards. A new **Equity Participation Foundation** would be established to provide funding for organizations that “work to give marginalized Canadians a voice; to provide needed services to disadvantage groups; and to provide a voice for progressive public policies.”<sup>12</sup> With an initial funding of \$100 million, and operating at arms length from the government, this new program would fund, for example, advocacy and service organizations for women, the disabled, Aboriginal People, visible minorities, and gays and lesbians.

The Budget proposes to finance this plan, not by putting the emphasis on cuts, but by increasing revenues. More than 70% of this added revenue would come from increased jobs and growth – 930,000 more people paying taxes and not having to rely on government support will provide a huge boost to revenues. In addition, the Alternative Federal Budget’s \$7.5-billion tax package targets those best able to pay, does not increase the burden on middle-income groups, and gives tax relief to low-income earners. Tax measures, such as the tax on wealth transfers or **Green Taxation** as an atmospheric user charge, concentrate on collecting outstanding taxes, closing off corporate loopholes, and introducing taxes only on the wealthy.

Finally, the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget would achieve all of this, while at the same time, recognizing the need to reduce the burden of government debt in Canada. The AFB’s deficit for 1997-1998, at \$16.6 billion, is likely higher than that planned by the

government, which estimates it to be a low of \$11 billion. However, the amount of money spent servicing the national debt in the Budget forecast falls every year, and this is in the main area of expenditure cuts in the Budget. As a result, the share of debt charges in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) declines steadily over time, from 5.5% in 1996-1997 to 3.3% by the year 2001. The Alternative Federal Budget demonstrates it is possible to gradually reduce the burden of the national debt, without sacrificing the goals of employment creation, poverty alleviation, and enhancing social programs.

## **10 Deficit Myths**

On the eve of the federal government declaring a balanced budget, a November 1997 COMPAS poll revealed that 89% of respondents disagree with the Liberal government's plans to spend on the programs. Instead, an overwhelming majority of Canadians want the biggest portion of the budget surplus be devoted to reducing the \$590-billion federal debt.<sup>13</sup> In another December 1997 COMPAS surveying the under-30 crowd, 33% of respondents voiced their support for the Reform and Conservative Parties' policy of spending cuts and the aggressive reduction of the federal debt.<sup>14</sup> It is proposed here that the public discourse surrounding deficit and debt reduction resembles that of the free trade debate, where despite all the media attention, the main complaint of viewers was that they did not understand the issue.<sup>15</sup> The question then is why is there overwhelming support for this public policy?

To reiterate, it is argued that journalists' background assumptions lie within the neo-liberal discourse of the economy, which is accompanied by an ideology of inevitability: the "free market" reigns and there is no alternative.<sup>16</sup> To the contrary, the Centre views the 'economy' in much more of a constructivist way, that is to say, as contingent on the involvement of social actors rather than as something following an abstract blueprint. In order to further illustrate this point, the following are excerpts from the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives' **10 Deficit Myths**:<sup>17</sup>

**Myth No. 1: The overriding objective of government policy must be to eliminate the deficit.**

"Questions of public finance cannot be reduced to the simple formula of eliminating the deficit. Seen in the light of the need to create jobs and promote income growth, deficits can have positive and constructive effects. They can reduce unemployment and provide needed income for many Canadians. It is normal for rich and poor to think differently about the deficit and the economy in general."

**Myth No. 2: Governments waste money and go into debt funding programs that are either unnecessary or should be privatized.**

"As long as each sector sticks to what it does best, waste and inefficiency can be minimized. Even when a government is forced to borrow and go into debt to maintain essential services, this should be considered as much a wise investment as the borrowing by a company to modernize its plant and equipment. It should be kept in mind, too, that debts cannot be properly calculated without looking at assets; according to the National Accounts, every dollar of government debt is offset by 95 cents of government assets, such as the value of public buildings, Crown Corporations, land and other resources."

**Myth No. 3: The federal government shouldn't run high deficits any more than the average Canadian should keep running up his or her credit card spending.**

"Like individuals, governments spend and have sources of income. But there are some important differences between government finance and personal finance. Most



governments income comes from taxes. Taxes can be set to produce more income or less, but few individuals can raise their incomes at will.”

**Myth No. 4: As a result of massive government over-spending in the past, we can no longer afford such generous social programs.**

“Our social programs, far from being overly generous, are inferior to those elsewhere in the developed world, as shown in the annual OECD surveys. Our unemployment insurance system, for example, ranks 15<sup>th</sup> in benefits among OECD countries.”

**Myth No. 5: Without drastic cuts in government spending to reduce the deficit, we risk hitting the debt wall, like New Zealand did, and then we'll have even worse cutbacks inflicted on us.**

“Canada is no more in danger today of ‘hitting the debt wall’ than New Zealand was. We do have a serious public debt problem, but it is no more a crisis than was New Zealand’s situation back in 1984. Our debt is manageable and can be controlled by lowering interest rates and unemployment. To manufacture a spurious ‘crisis’ and use it as an excuse for the same harsh right-wing measures inflicted on the people of New Zealand can only have the same devastating effects in Canada.”

**Myth No. 6: The deficit causes recessions, high interest rates, and high unemployment.**

“Blaming our worst economic ills on the deficit is standing truth on its head. The truth is the exact opposite: the deficit is caused by recessions, high unemployment and high interest rates. When the economy is strong, interest rates low, and nearly everyone working, it is a lot easier for government to stay out of debt.”

**Myth No. 7: The deficit can't be reduced by lowering interest rates.**

“Government spending on programs and services is falling. With the federal government showing a primary surplus (tax revenue exceeding spending on programs and services) in nearly every year since 1987, the only possible explanation for the deficit and the growing national debt is interest payments on the existing debt.”

**Myth No. 8: The deficit can't be reduced by raising taxes because the tax burden in Canada is already too high.**

"Wealthy individuals and profitable companies are not paying their fair share of taxes. If they were, the federal government's deficit could be completely wiped out. As it is, Canada's tax level is among the lowest of the OECD countries -- 36% below the OECD average. Consider these facts: Over 98,000 Canadians with annual incomes over \$100,000 take advantage of tax loopholes so that they don't have to pay one cent in income tax; [...] Canada's top five banks were given \$2.8 billion in tax breaks during the 1980s, a period in which they laid off 12,000 employees."

**Myth No. 9: Canada's foreign debt limits our options and puts us at the mercy of foreign money-lenders.**

"It is as if the world has been flocking to Canada's door to buy our currency. It would be nice to see this as strictly a vote of confidence by the rest of the world in our currency and our economy, but there is more to it than that. The principal reason for so much foreign purchases of Canadian debt has been high Canadian interest rates. In fact, in the early 1990s, foreigners made windfall profits from buying short-term Canadian debt, mainly government Treasury bills."

**Myth No. 10: The deficit can only be reduced by cutting government spending, not by creating more jobs and bringing down unemployment.**

"The Canadian government, having chosen to undertax those who own or control most of the country's wealth, must rely on wage-earners to supply nearly all their operating revenue. One would think, then, that our government would do its utmost to ensure all Canadians willing and able to work had jobs for which they were fairly paid, since this would maximize tax revenue and minimize social assistance spending. Instead, the government tolerates an official unemployment rate of more than 9%. The real jobless toll, when part-time work and the number of work-force dropouts are factored in, is much higher, perhaps as high as 16%."

As one can see, these "myths" are in keeping with the Alternative Federal Budget's overall goals and strategies. In essence, the Budget outlines a different approach from that of the federal government -- one that rejects the predominant "fiscal straitjacket" rationale and

instead “takes a positive, constructive and more humane approach to dealing with the serious economic and social problems facing the country.”<sup>18</sup>

1. Leslie Pal, **Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction**, Toronto: Methuen, 1987, p. 113
2. Excerpt from the *Statement Of Purpose* for the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives
3. Pal, *Op. cit.*
4. Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and CHO!CES, **Alternative Federal Budget Papers 1997**, Ottawa: Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives, 1997, p. 1
5. *Idid.*, p. 2
6. *Ibid.*, p. 3
7. *Ibid.*, p. 4
8. *Ibid.*
9. Bruce Campbell and John Loxley, "The Alternative Federal Budget," in **The Ottawa Citizen**, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1997, A9
10. CCPA (1997), *Op. cit.*, p. 17
11. Campbell and Loxley, *Op. cit.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 30
13. Ghiles Gerson, "Paying debt a priority, poll says," in **The Ottawa Citizen**, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1997, A1
14. April Lindgren, "Youth drawn to right-wing policies," in **The Ottawa Citizen**, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1997, A3
15. James Winter, ed. **The Silent Revolution: Media, Democracy And The Free Trade Debate**, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990, p. 20
16. Maude Barlow and Bruce Campbell, **Straight Through The Heart: How The Liberals Abandoned The Just Society And What Canadians Can Do About It**, Toronto: HarperCollins, 1996, p. 276
17. Duncan Cameron and Ed Finn, **10 Deficit Myths**, Ottawa: CCPA, 1996
18. Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and CHO!CES, **The 1997 Alternative Federal Budget**, 1997, p. 2

### **CHAPTER THREE: The Organization, Constraints And Routine Activities Of The 1997 Alternative Federal Budget Media Relations Campaign**

It was unanimous: 1997 was considered by the Alternative Federal Budget coalition to be a breakthrough year in terms of mainstream broadcast news media coverage.

Notwithstanding, over the remainder of this thesis, it will be shown that gaining news media *access* for the AFB to the mass mediated contestation of public policy issues was an entirely different story. As previously discussed, the barriers to becoming a news source with media access can be ascribed to the “structured orientations”<sup>1</sup> of the news discourse. Nonetheless -- as with this specific case scenario -- “with the deck stacked against them,” social movements more often than not add hurdles of their own. Author Charlotte Ryan lists several challenger-made obstacles, of which two are of particular interest to this work: 1) the over-extension of resources; and 2) maintaining an arms-length relation with mainstream media.<sup>2</sup>

Lack of resources, whether time, money or people, are a significant problem for public interest groups. In the absence of institutionalized access routes, social movements must expend more resources than elite sources to gain access, yet paradoxically, these public advocacy groups tend to have fewer resources to begin with.<sup>3</sup> For example, some authorized knowers can make the news without sponsoring an event. On the other hand, the public interest groups will receive little coverage without staged events, and these can be major undertakings with huge costs and the mobilization of already overworked

members. Moreover, many social movements maintain a social distance from mainstream media due to various reasons, such as, a misunderstanding of media work; dissatisfaction with past coverage; and internal organizational tensions regarding priorities.<sup>4</sup> Keeping one's distance will either shut one out from news organizations, or only guarantee the oppositional group little more than the role of news actor. This section will hence examine how these obstacles have had an influence on the media relations campaign for the AFB.

The Alternative Federal Budget relies heavily on volunteers from trade unions and social movements across the country. As well, most of the financial support for the AFB project is provided by the Canadian Labour Congress and its affiliates. In addition, the Alternative Federal Budget is coordinated by both the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and CHOICES. However, the focus of this thesis centres on the communications activities which emanate from the CCPA secretariat, located just a few blocks from the locus of policy-making, the Parliament Buildings. The Centre shares its eighth-story space with the Action Canada Network, a social justice group, and the progressive publication, **Canadian Forum**. It should be noted that the ACN's Communications Coordinator, Marcella Munro, also volunteers her time as the only full-time Media Relations Officer for the Alternative Federal Budget. Within these close quarters is the hub of activity -- a centrally located, open room with a large work table surrounded by seven offices (including the ACN), one supply room, a CCPA publication display shelf, a secretarial desk, a fax machine, two network printers, and two photocopy

machines. The two individuals at **Canadian Forum**, much like their offices, are set aside to the right of the CCPA area and rarely interact with others on the floor. By contrast, the Action Canada Network, who would otherwise exist independently of the Centre in their corner room, now devotes its staff of three towards the AFB effort.<sup>5</sup>

Presently, the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives maintains a combination of a full-time and part-time staff of eight people, all of whom are currently preoccupied with the AFB despite other research responsibilities. The CCPA staff includes: an Executive Director responsible for the overall operation of the Centre; four Researchers who specialize in various policy spheres, a Web Master, an Officer Manager, and a Receptionist/Secretary. Although, there is a division of labour, it is an informal organizational structure at the Centre, as can be seen with the casual attire, flexible working hours, and a distinct absence of a rigid hierarchy. In addition, there is an “open-door” policy, which my observations suggest encourages interpersonal interaction.

Despite this decidedly un-bureaucratic organizational culture, it is quite apparent that the Alternative Federal Budget is the most crucial project of the year for this office.

The work environment is very noisy and hectic as many of the personnel are working on last-minute arrangements. For instance, changes to the economic figures in the AFB document have to be made even after the initial advance mailing. Many staff members complain that there is “not enough time” and that they are glad to “have me come

aboard.”<sup>6</sup> It is obvious that space and equipment are at a premium, as the Education Researcher and the Web Master share the same office, filing cabinet, desk, computer and telephone. On one occasion, I must go to and fro between one Researcher’s telephone and the Executive Director’s computer just to retrieve the phone numbers of AFB endorsees and thereafter proceed to call them.

It should be noted that there is no permanent CCPA media relations specialist. As stated before, for the purposes of the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget, Marcella Munro of the Action Canada Network offered her services *gratis* as the only established Media Relations Officer. Although the CLC’s Tom O’Brien acts an *ad hoc* communications advisor, it is Ms. Munro who is primarily responsible for developing and administering the AFB communications strategy. Marcella Munro, co-chairs a committee that meets around December 8<sup>th</sup> to discuss media relations strategy.<sup>7</sup> This media relations team is completed by three official spokespersons: Bruce Campbell, Executive Director of the Centre, Lynne Toupin of the National Anti-Poverty Organization, and John Loxley from CHO!CES. Two other spokespersons include the Canadian Auto Workers’ Jim Stanford (who may not be an official spokesperson, but for reasons that will be discussed hereafter receives the most media exposure), and the CCPA’s Duncan Cameron who is assigned to French-language news programming. While the Media Relations Officer has no mass media background, she is considered a mass media specialist because she has acquired requisite knowledge of news organizations and reporters, as well as the needs of the AFB coalition. In addition, while none of the spokespersons have undergone formal media training, they



have had prior experience in appearing on the news media, and moreover, as senior AFB co-chairs they may speak for the coalition as a whole.

### **Media Relations Mandate**

Although there is no explicit Alternative Federal Budget communications mandate, the media relations team has been given the responsibility to provide full and accurate information on the Budget to two main target groups: Canadian policy makers and the general public.<sup>8</sup> This thesis will focus on the avenues of communication between the AFB and the mass media, specifically press releases, staged events, answering media inquiries, and direct contact established with the media through special meetings with the senior editors/producers, in order to reach the target groups. In addition to preparing information for the mass media, organizing staged events, and developing relationships with leading reporters, the Media Relations Officer is also responsible for supplying information to the other members of the media relations team.

## **THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS:**

### **Monitoring The Media**

The over-extension of resources leads Ms. Munro to qualify the communications campaign for the Alternative Federal Budget as “not very sophisticated.”<sup>9</sup> Monitoring the media -- although vital to both understanding the organizational world within which news workers function, and to survey for potential journalists to mobilize<sup>10</sup> -- is here, arguably one of the least systematically implemented communications strategies. Although the Media Relations Officer is expected to scan as many publications and broadcasts as possible for items that give any indication of public and government attitudes regarding the Budget, time constraints place a certain arbitrariness on this AFB internal communications process. Moreover, it is not financially feasible to outsource this responsibility to an external media monitoring firm. Instead, various workers occasionally bring news stories to a member of the media relations team, then eventually (but not always) these pieces are duplicated and circulated to all media relations participants. A case in point concerns the CBC’s Neil Macdonald’s segment which was criticized by many people working with the AFB as being “disrespectful.” The Executive Director of the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives, despite having earlier received an off-the-record recommendation by a CBC insider to write a letter of complaint, had not yet viewed the videotape of this news story as of one week after the initial broadcast.<sup>11</sup>

## **THE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS:**

### **Press Releases**

Complex media organizations, with staff on many levels and in many locations, produce consistent news coverage by routinizing daily procedures of news gathering and news production. Each journalist's work day is structured by multiple routine practices without which the news worker would be overwhelmed. News routines, including deadlines, pre-scheduled events, news beats, regular sources *etc.*, are part of the logic of the news discourse which operates, to the detriment of the social movement, within the social hierarchy of knowledge. However, by meeting news routines and making the journalists' job easier, it may be viewed as "an outreach to the media as an organizing task" to build a base of support.<sup>12</sup>

A major activity of the Media Relations Officer with the AFB is to prepare information for dissemination to the Canadian mass media, of which the press release (Appendix B) represents the chief avenue of communication. From the "glut of occurrences," the news media may choose to discard a press release or contextualize it negatively. As Jan Pons Vermeer writes:

Initial decisions [on whether or not to use the information in the press release] may be based on factors such as subject matter, length, the number of releases available [...] and the newsworthiness of the release [...] but how a press release is used depends on very practical criterion [sic]: whether the information appears 'balanced'; stylishly written; and well formatted.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the AFB Media Relations Officer pays a significant amount of attention to the content and appearance of the AFB press release, in order that information on the Alternative Federal Budget is covered with a minimum of editorializing. Ms. Munro saw news workers as generally not investigative reporters,<sup>14</sup> thus the content of the press release was usually the type of information that journalists can easily discover on their own with minimal research. This particular Alternative Federal Budget press release announces the forthcoming press conference, packaging the information by emphasizing key messages, such as job creation; including figures and statistics; highlighting key quotes from official spokespersons; using a succinct format; “speaking” in plain English instead of esoteric financial jargon; and designating a contact person (Marcella Munro) who is easily accessible with a cellular phone number. The press release, which is printed on AFB letterhead, is then faxed, on site, to news organizations across Canada, courtesy of a CCPA media list which indexes journalists that report on economic and political affairs. In addition, there is an “advance list” of media who will receive, by mail, the press release along with the Budget before its launch at the press conference. Although there is some debate regarding whether or not to include the Budget document, since the Media Relations Officer feels that some reporters might prematurely decide that there is no story at all.

Marcella Munro was also aware that the press release can be a useful tool for establishing trust between the coordinators of the AFB and the media.<sup>15</sup> Often the press release acts as a litmus test for news workers who seek “institutional credentials, productivity,

accuracy, honesty, articulateness, consistency, familiarity with news norms, and easy accessibility in regular sources.”<sup>16</sup> The objective is that by accommodating press demands, a journalist will appreciate the Budget as a source of information, and in doing so, the Media Relations Officer may, for next year, nurture certain reporters to view this social movement as a news maker in its own right. However, as will be seen, a press release without direct contact may become lost in the multitude of institutional news stories -- such as the Somalia Inquiry which both **Canada AM** and **CBC Radio Morningside** give as reasons for cancelling interviews scheduled for February 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **Staged Events**

The staging of media events is another of the responsibilities of the Media Relations Officer attached to the Alternative Federal Budget. This year, this aspect of communications activities consists of the AFB National Forum and the press conference. Before any staged event takes place, news organizations are alerted through press releases and phone calls. Arrangements are made to handle the special logistical needs of various electronic media. Presenters are carefully selected and the format of presentation decided. In most cases, speeches are checked over for the speakers through arrangements made by the media relations team. Moreover, participants have a chance to rehearse beforehand. Like the press release, the main objective of the staged event -- beyond obtaining visibility -- is to nurture the news media as a way of further establishing the media's trust in the Alternative Federal Budget and its coordinators.

The **Alternative Federal Budget National Conference** is a two-day forum held on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 1997 in Ottawa. The Conference features a series of keynote speakers (including the three official spokespersons for the Budget), workshops and street theatre. The intent of AFB National Conference is to present the some 245 participants -- representing a cross-section of Canadian social and labour groups -- with the Framework Document for the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget; elicit feedback on this document; and provide the necessary skills to promote the Budget in their own community and mobilize for the next federal election. In particular, working with the media is regarded as a key element in sensitizing the community to the Budget.

One of the workshops conducted by the AFB's Marcella Munro instructs community activists on how to work with local media. In addition, a lengthy section included in the Conference Workbook provides a how-to guide for activists frustrated in the past with their dealings with the news media. There are pieces on how to make contact, how to find alternative media vehicles, as well as tips for better news releases. This focus on media relations is very timely since the Conference is also a staged event designed to attract media attention.

With keynote speakers such as the fervent Bob White, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, and NDP leader Alexa McDonough; the presentation of "Cornering The Dragon" by the Giant Puppet Street Theatre; the official release of the AFB Framework Document; and the spirited mood at the Ottawa Congress Centre, the AFB National

Conference hoped to draw some media coverage. However, when I asked one of the Conference's facilitators, Denise Doherty-Delorme of the Canadian Federation of Students, if there are any media present, she replies that only one television news outlet has come to the event. Ms. Doherty-Delorme indicates that media coverage is less than it was the previous year, and that this may be attributed to a lack of media relations, as well as to well-known author Linda McQuaig's absence at this year's conference.<sup>17</sup>

The only form of paid advertising for the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget media relations campaign, a radio promo advertisement, is also launched at the National Conference. Focusing on the fact that there are choices available, and that the Alternative Federal Budget is a sound alternative, the promo spot is well-received by the attendees. However, the AFB Media Relations Officer later informs me that there is no money for a national media buy. Instead, it will be distributed to organizations to air on their community radio stations.

The press conference, scheduled for February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997, is the platform for the official media launch of the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget. Held at the nearby Ottawa Public Library Auditorium (seating approximately 200), this staged event is the apex of the entire media relations campaign. The press conference begins at 9:30 AM with a one-hour pre-launch Question & Answer session, which leads up to the official launch at 10:30 AM (in time to make the evening news telecast). For the launch, the three official AFB spokespersons, Bruce Campbell, John Loxley and Lynne Toupin, will each give a brief

presentation of no more than 10 minutes each. Thereafter, journalists are allowed to ask questions to the speakers, or if they wish, they may later schedule interviews with the presenters or other spokespersons (Jim Stanford and Duncan Cameron) following the official launch.

Advance preparations for the press conference include, in light of the embargo, sending a press kit containing the press release, the Framework Document, the Alternative Federal Budget, a list of endorsements from 164 economists and political economists, the AFB job creation strategy paper, and copies of the overheads to be used during the press conference, to 250 members of the media on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1997. Moreover, the Media Relations Officer discloses to me that this is first time that the AFB media relations team has rented out a proper auditorium for the press conference. Previously, this staged event was held on the premises of the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and proved to be not entirely accommodating for the news media. More surprisingly, Ms. Munro tells me that this is the first time that the AFB speakers will be able to have a run-through in advance of the actual press conference.

The run-through is held at 3:00 PM at the Ottawa Public Library Auditorium the day before the official launch. In attendance is the AFB Media Relations Officer, the three slated speakers, and the Canadian Labour Congress' Tom O'Brien, National Representative for the Communications Department, who coaches the spokespersons on their presentation skills. The third press conference also marks the introduction of visuals



with overheads of economic graphs and figures. Likewise, an enlargement of the Alternative Federal Budget cover page is affixed to the front of the speakers' podium. In order to give the reader some idea of to what extent last-minute activities are characteristic of the social movement, I am enlisted to handle the overheads for the official launch only during the run-through, in spite of my lack of familiarity with the contents of the Budget.

As the speakers practise their presentations, Tom O'Brien repeatedly emphasizes the need for the "clip," and that if journalists ask for more details, the speakers should indicate to the reporters that they will be available afterwards. Furthermore, Mr. O'Brien instructs the speakers to "hang out those credentials," but also avoid using jargon like the "AFB." Meanwhile, Marcella Munro is seated at the back of the Auditorium to see if the presenters can be heard clearly enough, and also to check out the lighting of the Auditorium with respect to the requirements of TV cameras.

On the day of the press conference it is learned that one of the more recognizable faces, Lynn Toupin of the National Anti-Poverty Organization, has laryngitis and will be replaced by someone else from NAPO to make her presentation. However, this proves to be the only hitch over the course of this staged event. As journalists arrive at the OPL Auditorium, the Media Relations Officer invites them to take part in the coffee served outside in the lobby where a table has been set up with both English and French media kits. As the reporters make their way into the Auditorium, Ms. Munro escorts the media

to ensure that they sit in the first three rows.

The empty seats in the Auditorium outnumber those present. Nonetheless, news organizations present at the official launch include, most noticeably, a camera crew from **Canadian Parliamentary Access Channel (CPAC)**, **CBC Television News'** political correspondent, Neil Macdonald, the **Globe & Mail** and the **Toronto Star**. During the post-Q&A session, there are eight media questions from the floor which mostly centre on contrasting the Alternative Federal Budget's policies and economic projections with those of the federal government. Most notably, Neil Macdonald, who is perhaps the most high-profile journalist at the press conference, prefaces his question with "this may be subjective judgement on my behalf," before inquiring why Finance Ministers, being "smart people," have not consulted these alternatives? Upon return to the CCPA, several of the AFB staff made a point to refer to Macdonald's reputation as a sceptic of "non-institutional" viewpoints. Neil Macdonald's segment on the Budget will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

The Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives' web page is also promoted during the launch presentation. The CCPA site is a relatively inexpensive, easily updatable, and omnipresent medium for the public interest group. There are advance notices of AFB events, as well as following the embargo, HTML and Adobe PDF versions of the Budget, the AFB Overview (laypersons document), the Framework Document (policy paper), and the Technical Paper (fiscal framework). The Web Master later informs me that 130

people “hit” the web site during the 24-hour period following the official launch.<sup>18</sup>

### **Answering Media Inquiries**

Another routine responsibility of the AFB Media Relations Officer is to respond to journalists’ requests for information or interviews. Before a journalist can talk to a spokesperson for the Alternative Federal Budget, he or she must deal with Marcella Munro, who acts as the “gate-keeper.” In this capacity, the AFB coordinators are prevented from being caught off-guard by reporters’ questions. In addition, in spite of the coalition’s grassroots nature, formal spokespersons representing their respective AFB policy working group are designated so as to maintain control over the organizational environment, while concomitantly achieving favourable publicity.<sup>19</sup>

The Media Relations Officer takes down the news workers’ name, organizational affiliation and general area of inquiry, and informs the journalist that a spokesperson will return their telephone call as soon as possible. This gives the spokesperson time to adequately prepare a response. In regards to requests for interviews, the Media Relations Officer accompanies the spokesperson to the interview, in order to see that everything goes smoothly, and also to be able to give feedback on their presentation.<sup>20</sup> For the on-site post-press conference interviews, where this is little or no time for advance preparation, the media relations team anticipated *a priori* questions with pre-made official replies. In all cases, the information provided to journalists is factual and concise. The purpose of this public relations manoeuvre is to cultivate the AFB coalition as an

accessible and trustworthy source in the eyes of the media.

### **Developing Relations With The News Media: Direct Contact**

For the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget campaign, the Media Relations Officer, in conjunction with the AFB coordinators, make an unprecedented decision to proactively cultivate relations with both mainstream print and broadcast news organizations. Of noteworthiness, are the media relations team's meetings with the Senior Producer of the **CBC National Magazine**, Mr. Ian Cameron, and the senior editors of the **Ottawa Citizen** -- both of which are successful in creating unequalled news coverage.

Conversely, the conspicuous absence of any planned meetings with the editorial board of the **Globe & Mail**, despite the Media Relations Officer telling me that "if you're not in the **Globe & Mail**, then national TV coverage is harder to obtain"<sup>21</sup> is also very telling. We now take a look at these outreach meetings.

Ms. Andrea Thiel, the CBC Magazine Producer of the "budget-treatment" segment on the Alternative Federal Budget, states that "what made the difference this year is that [the AFB coordinators] were proactive this year."<sup>22</sup> The AFB media relations team meets with the CBC's Ian Cameron on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1997 -- with an advance copy of the Alternative Federal Budget Framework Document in hand -- to discuss the possibility of CBC National Magazine coverage. The Budget's coordinators also propose to the CBC that they film the **Final Steering Committee Meeting**, when the AFB coalition finalize their Budget numbers, as a sort of fact-finding mission. Obviously, the Steering Committee

Meeting also doubles as a staged event which attempts to establish trustworthiness, and mark the AFB group as a source “suitable” for news organizations.

This staged event, where the co-chairs try to fit the AFB’s priorities into a realistic and credible fiscal framework, is ideal for establishing “facticity” for the news outlet. Indeed, Ms. Thiel describes one characteristic of the reliable news source as one with “credible numbers.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the CCPA’s Bruce Campbell follows up the meeting with the CBC Magazine’s Senior Producer by sending him a list of national organizations which have representatives participating at the Steering Committee table, as well as the list of endorsements for the first two Alternative Federal Budgets from economists, and letters of independent verification from Informetrica Ltd.

During the Final Steering Committee Meeting, held in Ottawa at the Public Service Alliance Commission (PSAC) Building, on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997, one committee member raises the concern about whether the “footage is going to be used for stock.” Andrea Thiel stands up and tries to allay fears by saying that this information is going to be used for a specific program, and that the crew are going to record “almost everything.” What is to be recorded seems to depend on the speaker’s status and subject matter. The producer motions the cameramen to focus on Jim Stanford, whom she later cites as a good panellist since he speaks efficiently under the restrictions of air time,<sup>24</sup> or to start filming when populist topics such as job creation strategies are placed on the table.

Ms. Thiel relates to me later that it is not normal procedure for CBC Current Affairs to commit resources to a fact-finding mission (*i.e.* not knowing what to expect from the Steering Meeting), but the Senior Producer and herself knew beforehand that it would form the basis of a pre-budget show.<sup>25</sup> So, as result of this proactive development of relations with the news media, the CBC elects to devote the February 17<sup>th</sup> broadcast of the CBC National Magazine to a debate-style program on the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget, to which Jim Stanford enthuses, “a real achievement” since the AFB set the agenda for the show.<sup>26</sup> The meeting with the **Ottawa Citizen** senior editors also produces similar results.

As with the CBC, it is the Media Relations Officer who initiates contact with the news organization with a telephone call. Since the **Ottawa Citizen** is owned by Southam and Conrad Black,<sup>27</sup> Marcella Munro admits to me that she is a bit reticent about approaching the editorial board.<sup>28</sup> However, from the meeting with the **Citizen**’s senior editors, two of the AFB co-chairs, Bruce Campbell and John Loxley, are given the opportunity to write a half-page op-ed column on the Alternative Federal Budget replete with graphs and tables. (Appendix C) The **Ottawa Citizen** piece represents unprecedented and unedited coverage in the “prestige press.”

Through Marcella Munro’s media relations, Bruce Campbell also conducts interviews, ensuing the official launch, with television news programs with considerable viewership, such as the **Réseau de l’information (RDI)**, **BCTV** and **CBC Newsworld**. In addition,

consistent coverage by CPAC who have covered Budget events from the beginning, including the Economists' Roundtable, coupled with Jim Stanford's appearance on CBC Newsworld's **Face-Off** program, leads Campbell to say that "[the AFB] couldn't ask for anything more," in comparison to the lack of coverage in previous years.

Despite these breakthroughs, the Media Relations Officer opts not to meet with the senior editors of the **Globe & Mail**. Ms. Munro tells me that from past experiences, she "hates" pitching to the **Globe & Mail**, where she finds the atmosphere to be "demeaning" and journalists like Jeffrey Simpson, the National Affairs columnist, are "condescending" towards her.<sup>29</sup> Faced with the fact of being shut out of the two most important dailies in Canada, the **Globe & Mail** and the **Toronto Star**, Bruce Campbell indicates that there is some discussion whether or not it was a mistake to have not met with the **Globe's** editorial board.<sup>30</sup> Jim Stanford even goes as far to say that "it was a big mistake" to have not approached the **Globe & Mail**. Stanford adds, "The Alternative Federal Budget received hardly any print coverage, and print is the most influential in the policy making world."<sup>31</sup> However, lobbying the media requires a considerable amount of time, planning and money (e.g. travelling costs), and therefore the AFB coalition's resource constraints may also be prohibitive in terms of this external communications activity.

Since social and work contacts often become the reporters' main sources, it is no small problem that the average journalists' friends and colleagues normally are from the same social strata.<sup>32</sup> Again, this is an argument for approaching media work as an organizing

activity. During my interviews, the AFB's Duncan Cameron narrated the anecdote of sitting at a restaurant in downtown Ottawa one night, and eyeing the CBC's David Halton having dinner with then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, with their wives, on the eve of the CBC televised leadership debate. Interestingly enough, it is Mr. Halton who will ask the first question to Mulroney the following night. Cameron believes that the AFB coordinators have not fostered social relations -- and should do so -- with the leading figures in the media through personal contacts.<sup>33</sup>

As Charlotte Ryan contends in relation to this issue: "The answer is contact, contact, and more contact."<sup>34</sup> Since the CCPA has no formal year-round media relations specialist, and Marcella Munro volunteers her time for the AFB, it appears that lobbying the media for the Budget is an annual, short-term mad dash. Ryan observes that it is difficult for social movements to make first cold contact. However, successful groups speak with the reporter *once a week*.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, what the media relations team needs to expand on is the success of their meetings with the **Ottawa Citizen** and the CBC National Magazine. This entails adding another target group for the Alternative Federal Budget campaign: the news media themselves. Perhaps unknowingly, the AFB coordinators in their lobbying efforts, organized news organizations like any other constituency -- making the media a site of struggle in its own right. Here, the task of the Media Relations Officer is not to join the world of the news worker, "but to bring the reporter to understand of the world of the challenger."<sup>36</sup>



Robert Hackett writes that the news media do not set out to deliberately denigrate political dissent and obstruct social change. The author specifies the independent streak in journalistic culture as an illustration where the media themselves generate openings for dissent and change. These openings “do not simply ‘exist,’ nor are they offered as a gift by a benevolent establishment;” these opportunities made possible by contradictions and leaks within the system must be creatively and actively used by the public interest group.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Ryan notes that direct contact with a journalist, despite real limitations, provide the best access point for stories of dissent.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly enough, two examples of these openings, which the AFB media relations team is unable to take advantage of, exist within the **Globe & Mail** and the **Toronto Star**.

The Canadian Labour Congress’ Tom O’Brien briefly spoke with both the **Globe & Mail’s** Parliamentary Bureau reporter, Barrie McKenna, and the **Toronto Star’s** Derrick Fergusson, Senior Reporter, Parliamentary Bureau, regarding the lack of coverage of the Alternative Federal Budget. Fergusson described the AFB press conference and document as “credible, professionally done, excellent.” The problem, said Fergusson, is “the level of news interest in the story” as judged by “the editors” in Toronto. Fergusson added, “They saw my story and said that no way Martin’s going to raise taxes by \$10 billion. It’s pie in the sky.” Derrick Fergusson was clearly frustrated because he spent hours reading the AFB, going to the press conference, and writing 12 column inches, only to have it not run. The reporter considered the Budget’s spokespersons as reliable sources, and uses Jim Stanford all the time for background. Fergusson finally remarked

that “the only way you’re going to get coverage is if you have a Buddhist monk set himself on fire while holding a copy of your budget in front of Parliament.”<sup>39</sup>

The **Globe’s** Barrie McKenna also covered the AFB press conference. McKenna said quite enthusiastically that “[he] pitched the story.” The journalists went on to add that “But on the other hand, I don’t think that we were way off base -- there wasn’t any mention in the [Toronto] **Star** or the **Financial Post**.” McKenna concluded that the problem for the Alternative Federal Budget is that “it’s an interesting way to present a point of view, but not representative of a large segment of society. It’s labour sponsored and its the point of view of just one of a multitude of interest groups.” Barrie McKenna believed that the Budget would be a “tough sell” since it is not on the government’s agenda.<sup>40</sup>

## **Two Sides Of The Same Coin: The CBC Television Coverage Of The 1997**

### **Alternative Federal Budget**

The Media Relations Officer also acknowledged that there are contradictions within news organizations, with “openings” specifically at the level of the journalist. Ms. Munro perceived the CBC National Magazine’s treatment of the AFB as “professional,” while Neil Macdonald’s segment was “dismissive.”<sup>41</sup> Although this contradiction may be partially attributed to differences between the news and current affairs formats, I hypothesize that it may be better explained by the fact that the AFB lobbied the

Magazine's Senior Producer.

Several critics have taken the CBC to task for “what seems like a slavish devotion to covering the leaders [or Cabinet Ministers], even if nothing new is said on a particular day.”<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Neil Macdonald's piece on the Alternative Federal Budget actually begins with the Minister of Human Resources' (the Honourable Minister Pierre Pettigrew) re-announcement of a measure from the previous year's federal budget, the Youth Employment Strategy. Without any notice or introduction, the segment on the AFB begins quite suddenly with an establishing shot of the press conference and a voice-over from Macdonald, “Meanwhile nearby, Pettigrew's political opponents on the Left weighed in with their cure for unemployment.” In essence, this coverage of the Budget is adjunctive and is defined against an institutional news event.

This is in accordance with the treatment of the news actor, who is interesting and newsworthy, but not important enough to be a legitimate news maker able to speak for him or herself. The Alternative Federal Budget is then framed as a “tax and spend” initiative (but as Duncan Cameron points out, all budgets tax and spend<sup>43</sup>). Furthermore, the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives is portrayed as the sole author of the AFB, with no mention of the coalition bringing together a cross-section of Canadian labour and social justice groups – even as John Loxley of CHO!CES is the only speaker to ever appear on camera.

A visual then appears on-screen highlighting four proposals of the Alternative Federal Budget within the “tax and spend” frame: “billions in new taxes;” “\$4 billion from banks for job creation;” “increase spending and public service;” and “limit overtime for workers.” There is no mention of the many proposals comprising the National Social Investment Funds, such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund or the Post-Secondary Education Fund.

The only AFB voice allowed to speak during the entire story, is that of John Loxley, who all but says “We will have zero deficit by the year 2001.” The segment concludes with Neil Macdonald editorializing on the credibility of the Budget, “Taxing and spending your way to prosperity is not an idea that enjoys a lot of currency with Canadian nowadays, least of all with the Finance Minister who brings down his budget next week.” And finally on Paul Martin’s imminent budget cuts, “Opening up the taps, if it ever happens, is a long way down the road.”<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, the Alternative Federal Budget coordinators were very pleased with the CBC National Magazine’s treatment of the Budget. Jim Stanford credits this unprecedented coverage as a “testimony to the CBC,”<sup>45</sup> especially in light of the total absence of coverage on CBC Television’s commercial counterpart, CTV Nightly News.<sup>46</sup> As Stanford iterates before, the National Magazine segment represents the first mainstream opportunity for the AFB to make news themselves, in lieu of the routine voice on the left appearing on panels for media balance. Indeed, as the National Magazine’s

feature piece entitled, “The Other Budget,” it is up front and centre in the National News lineup. The 30-minute program, airing the night before the February 18<sup>th</sup> release of Paul Martin’s budget, is made up of two parts.

In contrast to the Macdonald piece, the National Magazine pinpoints job creation “as the cornerstone of the Alternative Federal Budget.” The Magazine also stresses the coalition as a whole, by preceding each topic with a pertinent sound bite from participants at the Final Steering Committee Meeting: Jim Stanford, job creation; the CLC’s Cindy Wiggins, poverty; and Hugh MacKenzie from the United Steelworkers of America on taxation.

This is followed by CBC reporter, Carol Off, providing the “number crunching,” and ends with the AFB’s John Loxley providing commentary on each policy initiative. Each topic is then followed by a debate-style segment, hosted by Hana Gartner.

The debate panel consists of Jim Stanford; Leigh Anderson (Professor of Economics at Carleton University); and Lloyd Atkinson (an economist from Perigree Investments).

Producer Andrea Thiel indicates that the panellists are selected by one of the producers in Toronto, and is partially determined by the need to maintain ideological and gender balance.<sup>47</sup> Where the panellist “sits on the political spectrum” is clearly indicated by the seating: stage left, centre and right. However, one criticism of the media relations team was that the “panel was stacked,” Anderson may have been portrayed as the centrist perspective and “played her role” to some degree, but she still made several arguments against the fundamentals of the Alternative Federal Budget.<sup>48</sup> The debate-style program,

as part of the news discourse, is thus structured to be conflictual, which presents some difficulties for in-depth analysis.

The majority of the repartee transpires between Jim Stanford and Lloyd Atkinson, providing some sense of drama. At one point it seems that the Magazine's host attempts to goad Atkinson by concluding, "so you don't see anything of benefit in the Alternative Federal Budget." Jim Stanford claims that debate-style shows are not always the best way to get the message across, since "you often get bogged down in scoring points." But the Magazine is still an excellent occasion to present the AFB and "we must take advantage of it."<sup>49</sup>

Thiel sees Jim Stanford as an effective spokesperson, able to convey his ideas effectively within program time restrictions.<sup>50</sup> Stanford is also easily one of the AFB coalition's most recognizable faces. Jim Stanford believes that he ends up speaking as much as the official spokespersons, because he is the co-chair of the one of most important subcommittees, the Fiscal and Monetary Policy Working Group, which sets out the overall budget guidelines.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, Stanford is extremely media-friendly with his telegenic demeanour and ability to speak plainly -- unlike his co-panellists. The Media Relations Officer informs me that she would like to put Jim Stanford more into the spotlight, as Bruce Campbell is still not comfortable in interview situations.<sup>52</sup> Charlotte Ryan writes that spokespersons in the media limelight may cause conflicts over who defines and controls the organization's direction and image.<sup>53</sup> However, from what this researcher

could ascertain, the clear emphasis on coalition within the AFB will prevent this from arising. However, within a coalition, one that is resource-starved, there will inevitably be internal organizational conflicts over resource priorities.

### **Internal Costs**

The dependence on one or two public relations specialists can produce tensions about the purpose of media work.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Marcella Munro says that she “battles” with the activists, who are more cynical about the media and want to instead focus on activism in the communities and talking to people one-on-one.<sup>55</sup> For instance, at the Final Steering Committee Meeting, Chris Clark, from the Canadian Council On Social Development, criticizes the Alternative Federal Budget for its rhetorical language and believes that this may contribute to the lack of mainstream media attention. Another participant retorts by arguing that the AFB is an ideological document like “Harris’ budget” and that they “must reveal who is doing what and why.”

Some AFB coordinators like Bruce Campbell commit a significant amount of money and time to ensure that the fiscal framework of the Alternative Federal Budget is sound. As one of my responsibilities is to contact previous endorsers who have not yet notified the CCPA of their support for the 1997 exercise, I observed that Campbell is clearly concerned about the smaller total of endorsements. In addition, Bruce Campbell argues that facts are important and that the “Informetrica [verification] gives the AFB some weight,” lending credibility to the document for the news media.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand,

Tom O'Brien contends that (echoing Charlotte Ryan) that social movements can maximize their chances by having some recognized social and political clout.<sup>57</sup> O'Brien surmises, as does this thesis, that there is an over-extension of resources in making sure that the facts are right, that "a lot of money got sunk into writing this document" with "virtually nothing" spent on communications.<sup>58</sup> Tom O'Brien adds that change does not happen based on the facts but on power. The facts only become central to the debate when the people trying to make the change are powerful enough to make those at the centre of power consider the facts. Furthermore, the Budget endorsements came from people who have mastered the facts. O'Brien would like to see the AFB media relations target specific key ridings of Cabinet ministers, instead of spreading resources thin by campaigning across Canada. He also believes that the AFB cannot win the "advertising war," but that its communications strategy must be centred on its strength: people.<sup>59</sup>

Another potential source of internal disagreement is to what degree should media relations shape the AFB's message, in light of the priorities of the media, without denigrating the substance. All of this researcher's interviewees were confident that the AFB media relations team never watered down the ideological element of the project. Tom O'Brien puts forward that while it is important to package the AFB's key messages (*e.g.* focus on job creation) into sound bites, this can be still be done creatively without sacrificing anything.<sup>60</sup> Jim Stanford, on message design, asserts that it depends on whether the public interest group tailors its central idea for media attention or popular support. Stanford posits that the latter is a mistake for the AFB coalition. Media relations need to put more



planning next year into unified themes and sound bites making “it easy for people to get their minds around [the AFB], rather than getting bogged down in 20 pages of numbers.” Stanford adds, however, that some committee members may not even want to make this compromise, since they deem that there are other objectives than courting media attention.<sup>61</sup> This may become a source of tension if members come to feel that “the pursuit of media is disproportionately shaping the organizations work, becoming the dominant measure of organizational achievement.”<sup>62</sup>

**“Damned if you do, damned if you don’t”**

In my interview with Bruce Campbell (the Executive Director of the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives) he proved to be prescient about whether the Alternative Federal Budget will be able to match the great strides made with the news media. Campbell said that the exposure obtained in 1997 will certainly not happen next year, since there would no longer be the aspect of novelty.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, at the time of the writing of this work, the CBC National Magazine chose not to do another pre-budget segment on the AFB for 1998, as well, the Budget did not receive the same recognition, as it did in 1997, on the part of the **Ottawa Citizen**. The journalists’ cultural map, underlying the construction of news accounts, dictates that the news actor may be interesting (perhaps for one time), but not important. This is one difference between obtaining news “coverage” versus “access.”

It is certainly not the intent of this thesis to denigrate the media relations work for the Alternative Federal Budget. But one must ask what is the effect of only achieving media coverage? Prior to 1996 only 14% of adults sampled claimed they had *heard* of the Budget. From a March 1996 Vector National Poll commissioned by the AFB coalition, that number had jumped to 22% in 1996.<sup>64</sup> However, how many of the respondents *understand* the AFB’s discourse of economy or incorporate it into their background assumptions? Of course, the mass media will play a role towards achieving this end.

In retrospect, the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget media relations campaign, which was

based primarily on cultivating mainstream authorized knower status, in some way contributed to the coalition's lack of access to the mainstream media -- getting their political message across effectively. Although it is hardly surprising that in order to obtain news access, the AFB communications team chose to go the route of mechanically applying proven, conventional public relations techniques, several which have been outlined earlier in this chapter. As previously indicated, the AFB's decision to designate media spokespersons and to initiate proactive meetings with the news media were regarded as highly successful ventures. Both served to solicit increased and unprecedented exposure. But therein lies the conundrum.

To restate, the Alternative Federal Budget -- both the organization and document -- is part of a grassroots social movement. As such, one undeniable feature of this campaign is political advocacy. As introduced in the section entitled Internal Costs, there was some concern that for the sake of news media coverage the activist component of the AFB would be blunted. In fact, it may be argued that the Budget's message was not fully conveyed because it was not all there.

The main promotional tactic to position the AFB as a reliable source was to "play the numbers game." Any reasonable PR practitioner will furnish a panoply of facts and figures in order to build source credibility, and to develop the working relationship with the news worker. Accordingly, it was quite clear that the endorsement of Informetrica was perceived to be central to the Budget's status as authorized knower. Bruce Campbell,

himself an economist, was also continually “churning out figures” -- much to the chagrin of other participants who felt that more emphasis should be placed on political action. As we shall see in the next chapter, ideological legitimacy is one of the hardest hurdles to handle directly for the social movement. In this light, “playing the numbers game” will invariably falter.

As John Ralston Saul writes, facts are the “tools of authority.”<sup>65</sup> What more, a fixation on establishing facticity will miss the mark entirely without a mobilizing frame and larger contextualization. Regardless, within public policy debate today, econometric thought and the reification of the ‘economy’ prevail where even some political economists find they must adapt to the “conventions of numerology” just to be heard -- despite concurrently acknowledging that society cannot be reduced to the “elements of accountancy.”<sup>66</sup> Indeed, it is as if economic truth is deemed to singularly determine the success or failure of a society.

The decision to have Jim Stanford and John Loxley (both economists) as the only two key spokespersons to appear in the three decisive CBC Television and Newsworld segments, instead of one of the more advocacy-oriented committee members (*i.e.* Lynn Toupin of the National Anti-Poverty Organization), may have also been a strategical shortcoming. On all the programs, number crunching was the main focus where Stanford had to defend criticisms from all sides that the Alternative Federal Budget was “[erroneously] based on the assumption that current nominal interest rates would continue.”<sup>67</sup> This “reality check”

type of approach -- although expected for an oppositional voice -- detracts from the presentation of a substantive policy-making debate in laypersons' terms, and may have been avoided by designating more spokespersons from disciplines other than economics.

In Chapter Four, through metaphorical analysis, we shall see how the news media tend to focus on the AFB framework as a simply irrational and ideological point of view, lacking in this "objectivity" that one supposedly finds in neo-liberal economics. As discussed previously in Chapter One, the taxonomy of perspectives is not an elementary case of media manipulation. Rather, the journalists' decoding framework is embedded in the language of the news narrative. The "dialect" of neo-liberal economics is one such terministic screen, albeit unconsciously constructed, but which still prods one to notice the familiar and ignore that which is dissimilar.

1. Robert Hackett, "Decline Of A Paradigm? Bias And Objectivity In News Media Studies," in **Critical Studies in Mass Communication**, Vol. 1, No. 3 (September 1984), pp. 229-259
2. Charlotte Ryan, **Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies For Grassroots Organizing**, Boston: South End Press, 1991, p. 200
3. *Ibid.*, p. 160
4. *Ibid.*, p. 200
5. For a floor plan of the organizational environment, please refer to Appendix A.
6. A comment made by Mr. Bruce Campbell, Executive Director for the **Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives**, during the course of field research.
7. A comment made by Ms. Marcella Munro, Media Relations Officer for the **1997 Alternative Federal Budget**, in an interview with the researcher, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1997.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 187
11. A comment made by Mr. Bruce Campbell, Executive Director for the **Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives**, in an interview with the researcher, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1997.
12. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 160
13. Jan Pons Vermeer, **For Immediate Release**, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982, p. 51
14. Munro, *Op. cit.*
15. Munro, *Op. cit.*
16. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 192
17. A comment made Ms. Doherty-Delorme during the course of my field research.
18. A comment made by Ms. Kerri-Anne Finn, Web Master for the **Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives**, during the course of field research.
19. Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan, **Negotiating Control: A Study Of News Sources**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989, p. 8

20. Munro, *Op. cit.*

21. Munro, *Op. cit.*

22. A comment made by Ms. Andrea Thiel, Producer for the **CBC National Magazine**, in an interview with the researcher, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. A comment made by Dr. Jim Stanford, **Alternative Federal Budget Spokesperson** and Co-Chair of the Fiscal And Monetary Policy Working Group, in an interview with the researcher, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

27. Over the course of my field research and informal interviews, Conrad Black seems to be one of the Centre's perennial whipping boys.

28. Munro, *Op. cit.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Campbell (interview), *Op. cit.*

31. Stanford, *Op. cit.*

32. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 170

33. A comment made by Mr. Duncan Cameron, **Alternative Federal Budget Spokesperson**, in an interview with the researcher, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

34. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 201

35. *Ibid.*, p. 188

36. *Ibid.*, p. 203

37. Hackett, *Op. cit.*, p. 280

38. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 187

39. Excerpts from Tom O'Brien's (**Canadian Labour Congress**) transcripts of a February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1997 interview with the **Toronto Star's** Derrick Fergusson, Senior Reporter, Parliamentary Bureau.

40. Excerpts from Tom O'Brien's (**Canadian Labour Congress**) transcripts of a February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1997 interview with the **Globe & Mail's** Barrie McKenna, reporter, Parliamentary Bureau.
41. Munro, *Op. cit.*
42. William Gilsdorf, "CBC Television And The 1988 Canadian Federal Election: Journalistic Practice In A North American Context," in Roger de la Garde, William Gilsdorf and Ilja Wechseltmann, (eds.), **Small Nations, Big Neighbour: Denmark and Quebec/Canada Compare Notes On American Popular Culture**, London: John Libbey, 1993, p. 179
43. Cameron, *Op. cit.*
44. From a Neil Macdonald segment broadcast on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997 on CBC National News.
45. Stanford, *Op. cit.*
46. This assertion is corroborated by this researcher's metaphorical analysis sample.
47. Thiel, *Op. cit.*
48. Stanford, *Op. cit.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. Thiel, *Op. cit.*
51. Stanford, *Op. cit.*
52. Munro, *Op. cit.*
53. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 209
54. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 208
55. Munro, *Op. cit.*
56. Campbell (interview), *Op. cit.*
57. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 204
58. A comment made by Mr. Tom O'Brien, **Alternative Federal Budget** Communications Advisor, in an interview with the researcher, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1997.



59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*

61. Stanford, *Op. cit.*

62. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 209

63. Campbell (interview), *Op. cit.*

64. Excerpt from the **1997 Alternative Federal Budget National Conference Workbook**.

65. John Ralston Saul, **The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary Of Aggressive Common Sense**, Toronto: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 127

66. Saul, *Op. cit.*, p. 114

67. Excerpt from the February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997 telecast of **CBC Newsworld's** program **Face-Off**

#### CHAPTER FOUR: Metaphor And The Social Construction Of The 'Economy'

In this chapter, metaphorical analysis will be employed to operationalize the media treatment of the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget. It is argued that social actors talk about something in a certain way because they conceive of it in that way. Drawing from this thesis' research data, it will be demonstrated that due to an incommensurability between the journalists' neo-liberal conceptualization of the 'economy' and the AFB's constructivist worldview, the Budget was perceived *ab initio* by the news media as either "ideological" or an exercise in "partisan politics." We now turn to a brief look at the metaphor.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that the metaphor is not just a poetical way of speaking that we can simply ignore. Lakoff and Johnson add "on the contrary, the metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action."<sup>1</sup> The idea that, metaphor is just a matter of rhetorical flourish, stems from the problematic objectivist position<sup>2</sup> that what is real is independent of how humans conceptualize the world.<sup>3</sup> Here, truth is seen to be based on understanding and the metaphor is the principal vehicle of this process.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, our conceptual system is largely metaphorical (*i.e.* concepts from a typically concrete realm of thought are used to comprehend another completely different domain), and "the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor."<sup>5</sup> In addition, because our conceptual

system is not something that we are normally aware of -- we think and act automatically every day along certain lines -- language may reveal from within what this system may be actually like.<sup>6</sup>

The authors offer the metaphor **Argument Is War** to illustrate how a concept may be metaphorical, and in turn structure an everyday activity:

*e.g. Your claims are indefensible.*  
*I've never won an argument with him.*  
*His criticisms were right on target.*<sup>7</sup>

Lakoff and Johnson point out that we not only talk about arguments in terms of war, but many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. For example, we can actually win or lose arguments, or see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. However, we are structuring our understanding by using just one of many possible metaphors, instead of choosing to use a different one. Metaphorical structuring is partial, not total. If the latter was the case, one concept would actually *be* the other, and not merely understood in terms of it.<sup>8</sup> The authors introduce the notion that arguments may not only be viewed in terms of war, where there is a sense of attacking or defending, but rather, an argument may be a dance where the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In this arrangement, “people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently.”<sup>9</sup>

Political and economic ideologies are also framed in metaphorical terms. Like all other metaphors, political and economic metaphors hide certain aspects of reality. As Lakoff and Johnson are quick to point out, “But in the area of politics and economics, metaphors matter more, because they constrain our lives.”<sup>10</sup> What is at issue is not the truth or falsity of these metaphors, but the inferences that follow from it and the policy-making decisions that are sanctioned by it. It is argued that one can see what these metaphors obscure by looking at what they focus on. The remainder of this chapter will present examples of metaphors, culled from my sample universe, intrinsic to the Alternative Federal Budget and the neo-liberal discourse of economy.

From Chapter 2, it can be surmised that the Alternative Federal Budget articulates a constructivist discourse of economy. This particular worldview of the ‘economy’ is contingent on the involvement of social actors rather than based on the “ebb and flow” of the free market. Similar to neo-Keynesianism, the AFB rejects the notion that the government is at the mercy of the forces of globalization, and instead must play a vital and active role in order “to be responsive to both the needs and preferences of the people of Canada.”<sup>11</sup> In line with the constructivist discourse of economy, empowering metaphors are employed by AFB spokespersons or appear in the document itself, connoting a proactive and positive approach to policy-making. It should be noted that most of the samples tabulated are variations of the following three central metaphor types.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Anthropomorphization of Social Programs**

*e.g.* “[...] *preserve* and *strengthen* social and other important programs financed by the federal government.” [author’s emphasis]<sup>13</sup>

Here social programs are perceived to be biological organisms that require nurturing and care in order to subsist. Consequently, in order to ensure that these “entities” remain “healthy and productive,” they should not be neglected (read cut back).

### **The Personification of the Bank of Canada**

*e.g.* “[We] are going to *instruct* the *Bank of Canada* to keep their interest rates at their current nominal levels.” [author’s emphasis]<sup>14</sup>

In this metaphor type, the Bank of Canada is an individual that follows the dictates of its population and not the whims of international currency traders who desire high interest rates in order to maximize profits. The Alternative Federal Budget’s Jim Stanford asks “who gets the costs and who gets the benefits?”<sup>15</sup> Analogous to the

**Anthropomorphization Of Social Programs**, the personification of the Bank of Canada is the most obvious form of the **ontological metaphor**. Lakoff and Johnson write, “Understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind.”<sup>16</sup>

## Poverty Reduction Is War

e.g. “[...] our Budget announces a *frontal assault* on poverty [...]” [author’s emphasis]<sup>17</sup>

A “call to arms:” the Alternative Federal Budget refuses to balance the books by claiming that social programs have become too costly. Repudiating the belief that the government is handcuffed by market forces, the AFB places a priority on creating a number of employment, income support and public services to allow all Canadians a basic quality of life.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter: language and metaphor structure thought and action. With this in mind, from this thesis’ observations, linguistic considerations played no part in the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget communications activities. The possibility that the mainstream media’s tendency to frame challenger groups, in terms of “actors” rather than “sources,” is linked to a metaphorical dissonance between “common sense” discourse and the one offered by the coalition was never broached. This juncture will be further developed later in this chapter. However, we now turn to a brief discussion on neo-liberal economic thinking.

Neo-liberalism as an ideology contains meanings, ideas, and values based on the tenets of classical liberalism: the free market, individualism, and the rational pursuit of self-interest. From Adam Smith’s **Wealth Of Nations**, neo-liberals have mythologized the market,

which is said to arise spontaneously from the innate human propensity for competition. Once in place, the market operates like an “invisible hand,” promoting -- though quite unintentionally -- the wealth of nations for the greater social good.<sup>18</sup> Also known as, “Reaganomics,” “Thatcherism,” “supply-side economics,” “monetarism,” and “neo-classical economics,” neo-liberalism reveres the market and subordinates all other economic actors to its demands, including government and individuals. Today, in the wake of the crisis of Keynesianism and the modern welfare state, neo-liberal economics seeks to remove all protection from market forces, deploying its strategies for privatization, deregulation, reduced social expenditures, and free trade.

### **Economics 101 Revisited**

Linda McQuaig, in her latest offering **The Cult Of Impotence: Selling The Myth Of Powerlessness In The Global Economy**, wonders who is control of the country: the people or the free market? McQuaig traces the origins of this “cult” to American economist Milton Friedman, the free market and laissez-faire enthusiast who coined the term “natural rate of unemployment,” a concept that would serve the more “essential” goal of controlling inflation. The author argues that Friedman, who has come to dominate economic thinking today, contributed to the dismantling of government intervention into the economy for the purpose of reducing unemployment. What is more, McQuaig contends that by cleverly selling government helplessness as an excuse for government

inaction, Canadians have come to tolerate high unemployment (currently at 8.6%)<sup>19</sup> as an inevitable offshoot of technology, globalization and hyper-mobile capital.<sup>20</sup>

Milton Friedman, firmly rooted in 19<sup>th</sup>-century neo-liberalism, claimed that governments are unable to use the key levers of fiscal (taxation) and monetary (interest rates) policy to deal with unemployment. Friedman claimed that full employment is impossible and that policy makers should focus instead on fighting inflation. Linda McQuaig points out that low inflation actually requires a “natural rate of unemployment” or a “reserve army” of unemployed to discipline labour, since individuals with jobs consider themselves lucky and are unlikely to make any unnecessary wage demands. Furthermore, there is no political will to comprehensively alleviate this form of human suffering because there are apparently “no alternatives.”

Thus, the main thrust of McQuaig’s work is that the obstacles preventing the Canadian government from taking control over its economy have little to do with market forces; the real barrier is political. Subsequently, Linda McQuaig, as well as the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget, refer to the Nobel Prize-winning economist, Professor James Tobin, who postulated that governments are not powerless and can very well impose controls on the movement of capital. For example, international currency traders continually shop around for the best terms. In fact, a staggering \$1.2 trillion per day in money changes from one currency to another. McQuaig points out that governments thus feel compelled to serve up policies that appeal to these international financial investors. As mentioned above, one



such policy is keeping inflation down. Low inflation is achieved by slowing down the economy with high interest rates (which benefit capital holders), but which in turn are a cause of high unemployment (since people cannot borrow or hire new employees).

Accordingly, the author asserts that the government has retreated from providing well-funded social programs -- not because it lacks the means -- but because nothing must happen to anger the "financial constituency."<sup>21</sup>

From the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget, the **Tobin Tax**, named after its originator, would place a levy on international currency transactions at a rate of approximately 0.25%. The primary purpose of such a tax would be to act as a disincentive to international currency speculation and encourage longer-term investment. It would also give more leeway for countries to adopt autonomous monetary policies by opening up a gap between domestic and international interest rates.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the revenue collected from this tax could be used to improve health care or create employment. Interestingly enough, in 1995, when Canada hosted the G-7 meeting in Halifax, Paul Martin wanted to put the Tobin Tax on the agenda. However, pushed by the Finance Ministry, Rodney Schmidt, a junior economist, wrote a negative report on the Tobin Tax to change Martin's mind. When Schmidt later felt pangs of guilt, he wrote a second report in support of the Tax, but this was summarily buried by the Department and the proposal never got off the ground.<sup>23</sup> So what of the "inherited assumptions" of the almighty free market?

Similarly, Professor Michel Chossudovsky contemplates on how so many individuals,

expert and layperson alike, embrace neo-liberal economic thinking which makes suffering and sacrifice -- from unemployment to social program cuts -- seem unavoidable, if not justifiable and acceptable. Chossudovsky on the paradoxical discourse of austerity/prosperity (in reality, prosperity for some and austerity for others) says:

I have difficulty in understanding why the dismantling or closing down of productive assets -- hospitals and schools -- could constitute the key to prosperity. But that is what is actually being conveyed. The official mainstream economic agenda is that you have to close down, downsize, lay off, and that is the key to prosperity.<sup>24</sup>

This thesis suggests that through a certain set of linguistic choices used to talk about the 'economy,' whether in general public commentary or on the mass media, there are specific evaluative categories which are invoked, implying authorized knowers, and more importantly, authorized means of knowing -- the social construction of the 'economy.'

As John Ralston Saul writes, economic forces have come to be the expression of a natural truth; to interfere with them is to create an unnatural situation.<sup>25</sup> This appears to be the crux of the seductiveness of the neo-liberal discourse of economy. However, as with any cognitive structure, it selectively brings into light some aspects of social life and not others. One such interpretive framework is language, which "depends on the use of mutually agreed-upon terms -- not because they represent reality, but because they provide a medium for communication."<sup>26</sup> Moreover, many researchers do not conceive of

ideology as an isolated element in the social system, but rather, it is deeply embedded in language and all other social and cultural processes.<sup>27</sup> Thus, social actors unconsciously reproduce neo-liberal “ways of making sense” through the use of apparently “common sense” economic nomenclature. What then, are the implications for the news media?

As Stuart Hall *et al.* explain, the broadcaster and the state operate within the same ideological framework, though they frequently take different positions within it.<sup>28</sup> For example, public affairs segments critical of high banking fees demonstrate a willingness to oppose. However, there is a lack of fundamental contradiction due to a general agreement on certain basic values and institutions – *i.e.* the primacy of the free market. In order to examine the role of this structural “unity” on the treatment of dissent in the news narrative, this work will discuss the relationship between language, specifically the metaphor, and two central ideological consequences of the neo-liberal discourse of economy, these are: 1) the reification of the ‘economy’ and the creation of a culture of inevitability, suggesting that there is no alternative to austerity/prosperity measures in this ‘New Reality;’<sup>29</sup> concomitant with 2) ‘the obfuscation of social reality’<sup>30</sup> and the concealment of the benefactors and interests-at-stake in a free market system.

### **The ‘Economy’ Is A Force In Motion**

*e.g.* “The Dow Jones Industrial Average *smashed through another barrier*, it broke 7000

for the first time.” [author’s emphasis]<sup>31</sup>

“Paul Martin will probably *stay the course* on the deficit.” [author’s emphasis]<sup>32</sup>

Gaye Tuchman concludes that journalists’ methods of identifying and interacting with sources objectify and reify social events. Objectification refers to the presentation of social occurrences, such as economic activities, as events that are outside of human control, and as naturally occurring processes. In this sense, reification is the extreme case of objectification, where the objectified world simply becomes a non-human phenomenon of inert facticity.<sup>33</sup> Tuchman argues that reification presents socially produced events as processes that are “akin to fluctuations in the weather.”<sup>34</sup> But as Klaus Bruhn Jensen asks, “What agents are missing from news stories?”

Jensen’s discourse analysis of news programs on U.S. television networks shows that “politics and economics appear to function as logical entities in isolation from each other.”<sup>35</sup> What may be reported as news depends on the working assumptions of news workers, how the social universe should or does operate, which present a small set of explanations to account for economic developments. Jensen refers to this set of explanations as the “news ideology.” One recurrent feature is that “the motives that guide political intervention into the economy are seldom made explicit.”<sup>36</sup> Economic actors, such as multinational corporations, are curiously absent.

As a result, viewers perceive the ‘economy’ as a self-contained entity beyond their reach,

and that the 'economy' is a closed, self-adjusting system. When there are disruptions to the system, such as the deficit, these are generally regarded negatively. Still, such questions as who will benefit most from economic stability are not addressed outright in the news. It is simply implied that deficit reduction is in "the common interest."<sup>37</sup> In essence, the separation of the political and economic in news stories assumes "that [the government] should literally mind its own business [...] and let private enterprises go about their business of directing the flow of investments."<sup>38</sup>

**The 'Economy' Is A Force In Motion** is a structural metaphor, much like **Argument Is War**, where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another.<sup>39</sup> Today, the "hands-off" approach of 19<sup>th</sup>-century laissez-faire economics has been enlarged to the culture of inevitability and the immutable forces of the free market. Today, globalization defines the government as inherently inefficient and unproductive, acting as an "obstruction" to marketplace solutions. These "market forces," we are told, are beyond our control. Governments are powerless and must resign to promote free trade, deregulation, and competitiveness or face a "flight of capital;" individuals have no option but to "ride the wave" and adjust to the new global economy.<sup>40</sup> In this sense, neo-liberal economists would probably be well-served by reading Sir Isaac Newton's **Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica** (1687), which states in its First Law Of Motion that: "Objects maintain a constant velocity unless acted upon by an external force."

Tuchman observes that there is also a mutual constitution of facts and sources associated

with the reification of economic activity.<sup>41</sup> This reification affirms that the individual is helpless when confronted by the “natural” forces of the ‘economy,’ and that the authorities and economic advisors are doing everything they can. Accordingly, in order to present the facts -- and preserve their own credibility on economic issues -- the news media must accost the “centralized sources responsible for handling the problems created by reified forces.”<sup>42</sup> Neil Macdonald, on the federal budget, declares that “Rhetoric aside, the numbers are there for everyone to see.”<sup>43</sup> Tuchman thus claims that dissent, which does not speak the neo-liberal “dialect,”<sup>44</sup> is framed by past experiences and is dismissed by the limits inherent in the news frame. Lacking the appropriate questions and answers, reporters may not be able to get a handle on “innovation.”<sup>45</sup>

### **The Anthropomorphization Of The ‘Economy’**

*e.g.* “A *strong* economy [...]” [author’s emphasis]<sup>46</sup>

“The debt is still *growing*.” [author’s emphasis]<sup>47</sup>

Similar to the ‘**Economy**’ **Is A Force In Motion** metaphor, the anthropomorphization of the ‘economy,’ is, as Mike Emmison designates, an active conception where the ‘economy’ now has the capacity to act for itself (“The economy can employ more people”) and has needs of its own.<sup>48</sup> This active conception is also represented by the myriad of biological and mechanical metaphors applied to the economic discourse: *e.g.*

“The disease of inflation” and “The economy is off the rails.” In this manner, seeing an abstract concept as an entity, such as the deficit, allows individuals to refer to it, “see it as a cause, act with respect to it, and perhaps even believe that [they] understand it.”<sup>49</sup>

The author argues, similar to Klaus Bruhn Jensen, that the ideological consequences of the personification of the ‘economy’ is that there is no apparent ideological side, and that “all that is important is the economy’s growth and successful management.”<sup>50</sup> Emmison adds that the ‘economy’ in this discourse now appears to be more powerful than political and class demands -- it’s on no one’s side.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, unpopular political decisions and public policies can be made and justified whilst avoiding charges of partisan or self-interest. Moreover, this discourse of the economy is now common sense, as both Left and Right (although in different contexts and with unlike solutions) see the “health” of the nation’s economy to be more important than its citizens.<sup>52</sup> This can be best illustrated with the notion of “natural levels of unemployment”<sup>53</sup> bandied about by all sides of the political spectrum (where the only difference of opinion is on the raw figure itself).

The anthropomorphization of the Budget is a special case of the personification metaphor. We often perceive broad public policies and abstract political ideas as though they were individuals who either contribute to, or harm society. Related to Jensen’s hypothesis of limited state intervention, the Budget is at times taken to be *the* source of economic problems: *e.g.* “The Budget caused high inflation.” Again, although the central issues of the political agenda concern economic priorities, the references to economic actors are

either absent or vague, *e.g.* “Bay Street” or “the markets.” Indeed, a reductive term like “a poor economy” does not refer to the unemployed affected by the ‘economy,’ nor the agents who close the plants.<sup>54</sup> It would also seem that if these economic actors fail, they may hide behind the fact that they must contend with “natural” forces; if they succeed, they emerge to accept credit for this good fortune and to legitimize their own activities.<sup>55</sup>

### **“Ottawa” As Metonymic Concept**

*e.g.* “Ottawa’s progress on the economy was recognized by the G-7.”<sup>56</sup>

The **metonymy** is a subset of the ontological metaphor, but should not be confused with personification metaphors, since “Ottawa” is not understood by imputing human qualities to it. Instead, a metonymic concept uses one entity to refer to another that is related to it. Thus like metaphors, the metonymy structures not just language, but also “our thoughts, attitudes and actions.”<sup>57</sup> The ideological consequence of metonymy is that it overlooks class differences. The use of such collective words does not indicate who has “progressed,” more notably, it does not address who exactly benefits from this economic progress -- it is assumed that “Ottawa” has the national interest or the “wealth of nation” in mind.



## Deficit Reduction Is War

*e.g.* “Martin is so far ahead of his *target* deficit.” [author’s emphasis]<sup>58</sup>

When we live by such structural metaphors as **Deficit Reduction Is War**, as we do in Canada, we tend not to see them as metaphors at all – since they are grounded in our cultural experiences within Western society.<sup>59</sup> This popular metaphor, also takes the form of **Deficit Reduction Is Sport**, and in both cases the overriding emphasis is placed on victory -- whatever the costs. Indeed, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, on the deficit projections from the just-released 1998 federal budget, cautioned the audience not to “declare victory, until victory is won.”<sup>60</sup> Warfare, as does deficit reduction, usually involves an enemy (the deficit); a battle plan (decrease government spending); generals (Paul Martin); rationing for the war effort (cuts to post-secondary education); draft dodgers (welfare recipients); and civilian casualties (the unemployed).

## Society As Body

*e.g.* “The Liberals are loosening the purse strings, *investing* in a *stronger* society.” [author’s emphasis]<sup>61</sup>

The structural metaphor **Society As Body** highlights the ways in which society acts as a

unit, and hides the internal class structure of the society. The above illustration characterizes economic “health” as “national interest,” for if society is healthy and strong, so too will the individual. Moreover, grounded in our personal experiences, this metaphor is unreflexively incorporated into our conceptual system, for as human beings we are eternally grateful for having good health. However, what is in the “national interest” may or may not be in the interest of many ordinary persons, who may become poorer while corporations continue to profit from a rising GNP. George Lakoff on the analogous **State-As -Person** metaphor adds, “the “national interest” is a metaphorical concept and it is defined by politicians and policy makers,” who are more apt to be influenced by “the rich than by the poor.”<sup>62</sup> The use of this metaphor hides exactly whose interests would be served and whose would not.

Within the preceding example of the **Society As Body** metaphor, lies another metaphorical concept: **Well-Being Is Wealth**. Here, the general well-being of the society is understood in economic terms: its economic health (as opposed to social health). A threat to economic health, such as unemployment, can thus be seen as a disease infecting the “body.”<sup>63</sup> The CBC’s Neil Macdonald’s line that “Pettigrew’s opponents on the Left weighed in with their *cure* for unemployment,” [author’s emphasis]<sup>64</sup> conceptualizes **Unemployment As Disease** -- one that is “understood as inflicted, not just endured.”<sup>65</sup> In this fashion, unemployment is thought of as a justified punishment for indolence, and Unemployment Insurance is regarded as an unnecessary supplement for individuals. In addition, as with most “maladies,” there is the Manichean establishment of

the “we-group” and the “out-group”<sup>66</sup> where taxpayers wonder out loud why “we” must continue to subsidize “them.” This brings us to the most intriguing metaphor, **Society Is A Family**, where certain elements of the social, including the ‘economy’ (whose etymological derivation, *oeconomia*, is Latin for household management),<sup>67</sup> are envisaged to possess moral rectitude.

### **Society Is A Family**

John Ralston Saul writes that the non-payment of debts carries no moral weight. The author writes that, “The only moral standards recognized in Western society as being relevant to lending are those which identify profit made from loans as sins.” Loans are nothing more than contracts and thus cannot carry any moral value.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the metaphorical concept of **Society Is A Family** is reflected by such idioms as “fiscal *discipline*” [author’s emphasis]<sup>69</sup> and “putting the economic house in order,” which according to George Lakoff, argues that society should be conceived as a family based on the **Strict Father Model**.<sup>70</sup> This metaphorical transfer may also be seen in the expression “the books will be balanced,”<sup>71</sup> which equates national public policy-making (the federal budget) with its original meaning – the daily accounting of the home.

Originating from the metaphor of **Moral Strength**, where morality is not innate but must be “built” through self-denial, the traditional family serves as a model for society. The conventional nuclear family consists of a father who is responsible for the well-being of the

household; the mother looks after the day-to-day care of the house, as well as raising the children. The mother must also be supportive of the “head of the house,” and help realize the father’s views on what should be done. In addition to support and protection, a father’s duty is to tell his children what is right and wrong; punish them when it is called for; and to bring them up to be self-reliant and respectful of authority. Once the children have grown up, they are on their own, where they must succeed or fail by themselves.<sup>72</sup>

Lakoff points to the commonplace metaphor **Nation-As-Family**, “in which the nation is seen as the family, the government as a parent and its citizens as children,”<sup>73</sup> as the link between conservative family-based morality and neo-liberal public policy. Under a **Strict Father Model** conceptualization, society must compel its citizens to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on the government, for if not, these individuals will continue to take from the state without giving anything back. This is not desirable, since faced with a seemingly insurmountable debt load, “the government is [already] pushed to its limits.”<sup>74</sup>

### **Labour Is A Resource**

Again, it must be said that these metaphors are not merely a “device of poetic imagination”<sup>75</sup> or represent a fanciful way of analyzing the news media. As Lakoff and Johnson assert, when a society lives by structural metaphors such as **Labour Is A Resource**, *i.e.* “Human Resources Minister,”<sup>76</sup> it tends not to see them as metaphors at all – “since they are grounded in our cultural experiences within a Western industrial

society.”<sup>77</sup> This metaphorical concept highlights certain aspects of labour that are important in our culture (*e.g.* productivity and quantification), but at the same time, de-emphasizes other facets of work, including the nature of labour.<sup>78</sup> There is no distinction made between meaningful labour and dehumanizing labour. What should be noted is that this metaphor is not merely a way of viewing reality, but constitutes “a license for policy change and political and economic action.”<sup>79</sup> As the authors contend, “when we accept the **Labour Is A Resource** metaphor and assume that the cost of resources defined in this way should be kept down, then cheap labour becomes a good thing.”<sup>80</sup> They further conclude that, “The blind acceptance of the metaphor can hide degrading realities.”

### **Metaphorically speaking ...**

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that the assumptions of the neo-liberal discourse of economy are very much part of the reporters' ideological framework. The CCPA/CHOICES Alternative Budget proposes "unconventional" ways of confronting the economic challenges facing Canada: by reducing high interest rates, implementing progressive taxation where wealthy individuals and profitable corporations must pay their share, and creating more jobs. But the AFB is given meagre attention by the news media, and virtually excluded from the debate over Paul Martin's last budget because it is operating with a different set of metaphors. Essentially, it is difficult for any individual -- let alone a journalist -- to immediately accept the oppositional initiatives of the AFB since it is incongruent to the way we believe the 'economy' works. **We speak about the 'economy' in a certain way because we conceive of it that way.** What effect then, did the neo-liberal discourse of economy have on the media coverage of the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget?

As was previously discussed in Chapter Three, the senior editors at the **Globe & Mail** and the **Toronto Star** begin by framing the Budget as a labour-sponsored partisan exercise, and hence, deemed not newsworthy. However, with neo-liberal economic policies (such as the federal budget), interests-at-stake are rarely an issue because the market system is reified as a natural phenomenon working for the social good. Secondly, in addition to the aforementioned news outlets, the CBC's Neil Macdonald characterizes the AFB as a "tax

and spend” folly, whose deficit projections are not entirely reliable or credible. Likewise, the Toronto Star editorial board calls the Budget “pie in the sky,” since Paul Martin would never think to raise \$10 billion in new taxes.<sup>81</sup> In the neo-liberal universe, faith is placed on pure competition, efficiency and the marketplace, and should therefore not be interfered with. Unfortunately, neo-classicists erroneously assume perfect conditions (*e.g.* “perfect competition”) under which selfish behaviour evokes “perfect markets.”<sup>82</sup>

1. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, **Metaphors We Live By**, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 3
2. Please refer to the previous section entitled **Conceptual Framework**.
3. Lakoff and Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 145
4. *Ibid.*, p. 159
5. *Ibid.*, p. 3
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 4
8. *Ibid.*, p. 13
9. *Ibid.*, p. 4
10. *Ibid.*, p 236
11. Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and CHO!CES, **The 1997 Alternative Federal Budget**, 1997, p. 2
12. Limited news media coverage of the Alternative Federal Budget has meant that my sample universe is comprised mainly of metaphors falling within the neo-liberal discourse of economy.
13. Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and CHO!CES, *Op. cit.*, p. 2
14. Comment made by the AFB's Jim Stanford on the February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1997 broadcast of CBC Television's National Magazine
15. *Ibid.*
16. Lakoff and Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 25
17. Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives and CHO!CES, *Op. cit.*, p. 2
18. Robert Babe, **Communication And The Transformation of Economics: Essays In Information, Public Policy, And Political Economy**, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995, p. 25
19. The Canadian unemployment rate as of March 1998.



20. Excerpts from the CBC Newsworld's **Hot Type** interview with Linda McQuaig, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1998.
21. *Ibid.*
22. From the 1997 **Alternative Federal Budget Framework Document**.
23. McQuaig, *Op. cit.*
24. Juliet O'Neill, "Battling mainstream economics," in **The Ottawa Citizen**, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1998, A10
25. John Ralston Saul, **The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary Of Aggressive Common Sense**, Toronto: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 115
26. Saul, *Op. cit.*, p. 232
27. Stephen Littlejohn, **Theories Of Human Communication**, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1992, p. 247
28. Stuart Hall, Ian Connell and Lidia Curti, "The 'Unity' Of Current Affairs Television," in **Cultural Studies**, No. 8, University of Birmingham, 1979, p. 57
29. Maude Barlow and Bruce Campbell, **Straight Through The Heart: How The Liberals Abandoned The Just Society And What Canadians Can Do About It**, Toronto: HarperCollins, 1996, p. 276
30. Gaye Tuchman, **Making News: A Study In The Construction Of Reality**, New York: The Free Press, 1978, p. 210
31. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CBC National News** broadcast on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
32. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CTV Nightly News** broadcast on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
33. Lawrence Soley, **The News Shapers**, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992, p. 26
34. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 214
35. Klaus Bruhn Jensen, "News As Ideology: Economic Statistics And Political Ritual In Television Network News," in **Journal Of Communications**, Winter 1987, p. 8
36. *Ibid.*, p. 19
37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, p. 20
39. Lakoff and Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 14
40. Barlow and Campbell, *Op. cit.*, p. 142
41. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 214
42. *Ibid.*
43. Comment made by Neil Macdonald during the February 18<sup>th</sup> **CBC National Magazine** broadcast.
44. John Ralston Saul, *Op. cit.*, p. 103. The author defines “dialect” as variations in language “encouraged by specialists to prevent non-specialists access to their professional territory.”
45. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 214
46. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CBC National News** broadcast on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
47. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CTV Nightly News** broadcast on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
48. Mike Emmison, “The ‘Economy’: Its Emergence In Media Discourse,” in Howard Davis and Paul Walton, (eds.), **Language, Image and Media**, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, p. 150
49. Lakoff and Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 26
50. Emmison, *Op. cit.*, p. 151
51. *Ibid.*, p. 154
52. *Ibid.*
53. Comments made on the February 17<sup>th</sup> **CBC National Magazine** debate segment on the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget.
54. Jensen, *Op. cit.*, p. 20
55. Tuchman, *Op. cit.*, p. 214
56. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CTV Nightly News** broadcast on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

57. Lakoff and Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 39
58. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CBC National News** broadcast on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997.
59. Lakoff and Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 67
60. Quotation from Prime Minister Jean Chrétien during the February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1997 broadcast of **CTV Nightly News**.
61. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CBC National News** broadcast on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
62. George Lakoff, **Metaphor In Politics**, 1991, a paper published on the Internet at the **Centre For The Cognitive Science Of Metaphor Online**:  
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rohrer/metaphor.htm>
63. *Ibid.*
64. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CBC National News** broadcast on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
65. Susan Sontag, "AIDS And Its Metaphors," in **The New York Review**, October 27, 1988, p. 89
66. *Ibid.*, p. 93
67. From Webster's Hypertext Gateway at: [work.ucsd.edu:5141/cgi-bin/http\\_webster](http://work.ucsd.edu:5141/cgi-bin/http_webster)
68. Saul, *Op. cit.*, p. 89
69. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CTV Nightly News** broadcast on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
70. George Lakoff, **Metaphor, Morality And Politics**, 1995, a paper published on the Internet at the **Centre For The Cognitive Science Of Metaphor Online**:  
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rohrer/metaphor.htm>
71. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CBC National News** broadcast on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
72. Lakoff (1995), *Op. cit.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*

75. Lakoff and Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 3
76. Excerpt from the narrative of the newscaster, **CBC National News** broadcast on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997.
77. Lakoff and Johnson, *Op. cit.*, p. 67
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*, p. 156
80. *Ibid.*, p. 236
81. Excerpts from Tom O'Brien's (**Canadian Labour Congress**) transcripts of a February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1997 interview with the **Toronto Star's** Derrick Fergusson, Senior Reporter, Parliamentary Bureau.
82. Babe, *Op. cit.*, p. 26

## CONCLUSION: Openings For Dissent

The 'economy' represents a key terrain on which consensus is challenged and negotiated within the mass media. Since Canadian broadcast news plays an important role in imparting credibility to contending discourses, public contestation is either facilitated or constrained by the way the 'economy' is framed and taken up through news reportage. It has been contended that one of the principal ideological functions of the news media is that, without consciously advocating one position or another, news organizations routinely structure public policy debate by privileging some understandings of the world over others. In order to explore this hypothesis, I conducted research on the treatment of dissent as a test of how the news media process economic activity.

In an effort to operationalize respectful media treatment, this thesis undertook a metaphorical analysis to examine the extent to which the journalists' decoding framework is embedded in the language of the news narrative without attribution to a source. It was argued that the neo-liberal discourse of economy, which is grounded in the cultural experience of living in Western capitalist society, acts as a terministic screen and nudges one to notice the familiar and ignore that which is dissimilar. But still, why a metaphorical analysis?

Much of our conceptual system, or how we perceive our everyday realities, is metaphorical in nature and a taken-for-granted construct. We talk about something in a

particular way because we conceive of it that way, and we act accordingly to the way we conceive of things. However, metaphorical concepts are only partial definitions, concealing alternative signs. Therefore, it is was put forward that through a particular set of linguistic choices, the 'economy' is: 1) reified as a natural occurrence creating an ideology of inevitability; and therefore 2) the agents within the free market system are conspicuously absent in the news narrative, as well, any political interests are invariably couched in terms of the "national interest." Hence, in most cases, the metaphorical conceptualizations within the neo-liberal discourse of economy, such as the **Anthropomorphization Of The 'Economy' or Deficit Reduction Is War** framed the Alternative Federal Budget as either a partisan labour initiative, or its "interventionist" proposals as "pie in the sky."

Prior research on the marginalization or shutting out of oppositional voices in mainstream news reportage has been, for the most part, centred around notions of bias or propaganda. This work has instead attempted to re-introduce ideology in the study of the social hierarchy of knowledge. Ideology here is defined as, according to sociologist Dorothy Smith, the interested procedures which individuals use as means not to know. News is thus conceptualized as a discursive form with categories and concepts for making sense of the world, categories which are not merely descriptive, but also evaluative. Moreover, this news discourse is accompanied by the bestowal of authorized knowers and certain ways of making sense. The ideological consequences of the news discourse should not be equated with the deliberate violation of journalistic professional standards, but instead,

ideology is implicitly embedded in the “means to know.”

The background assumptions that assist the news discourse to discern between “events” and “news stories” are based on the reporters’ cultural map of the social world, where society is: 1) fragmented into distinct spheres; 2) composed of individuals who are authors of social and political action; 3) hierarchical; and 4) diverse and pluralistic, yet there is a fundamental agreement on certain basic values and institutions.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, as the news discourse makes sense of the world, it will tend to focus on those who are sanctioned by the taxonomy of perspectives.

Regarding the negotiation of control between source organizations and news outlets, the question “who controls?” is not a straightforward matter.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one blindspot of news bias studies is that it often overlooks the accountability of the public interest group in being relegated to the news actor role. Therefore, in order to properly study the symbiotic relationship between the news media and dissent, it was necessary to map out the organization, constraints and routine activities of the 1997 Alternative Federal Budget media relations campaign. It was argued that for a social movement working to become a news source, the mechanical application of promotional strategies is not sufficient. Instead, the AFB communications specialists must go beyond merely accommodating the news discourse, and integrate media outreach with their organization’s overall political strategy. By making the media a site a struggle, mobilizing it like any other constituency, the Budget coalition will increase the chances of making their issue sociologically or

psychologically pertinent to a reporter's grasp of the world. However, despite the breakthrough in media coverage for 1997, lobbying the media was not systematically implemented. Consequently, in 1998, the fourth Alternative Federal Budget was not able to follow-up the headway achieved with mainstream news organizations over the course of the previous campaign. In only obtaining news "coverage," the AFB media relations team may have increased the visibility of its public policy initiative -- something that deserves merit -- but did not succeed in changing public understanding of the 'economy.'

However, there is no quick solution to the media access issue. For the public advocacy group, even hard work may not be enough to overcome hurdles not known to insider sources: lack of institutional backing, resource shortages, social distance, and ideological legitimacy. Moreover, challenger-made hurdles, including defeatism, a misunderstanding of media work, internal organizational tensions regarding priorities, and over-extending already scarce resources made the AFB's media relations campaign even more frustrating.

This researcher is aware that any discussion surrounding "resource constraints" or the "neo-liberal discourse of economy" may prove to be disheartening for the public interest group. This was not my intention. As demonstrated by the AFB media relations' success at making inroads into the **CBC National Magazine** and the **Ottawa Citizen**, clearly, the Canadian news media do not simply suppress political dissent. And as we have seen at the **Globe & Mail** and the **Toronto Star**, there is indeed an independent streak in the journalistic culture of the prestige press, perhaps generating openings for social change.



While the codes of the news discourse, take for instance news values and objectivity, do work in many ways to distort the expression of dissent, “they do not do so monolithically.”<sup>3</sup> As Robert Hackett points out, the conventions of balance, the news value of human interest, the news celebration of consensus, and the journalistic competition for scoops may all provide openings for social movements under certain conditions.<sup>4</sup> But in order for a public interest group, like the Alternative Federal Budget coalition, to take advantage of these opportunities, they must improve their understanding of the demands of media work and news organizations themselves. For the AFB, this requires on-going and long-term contact with the news media. But most importantly, the media relations team must remember that, in spite of past experiences, little can be achieved by maintaining social distance.

Language is also a site of contestation. Word meanings, connotations, and applications are fluid and change in the course of struggle. One point of departure for organizing the news media may involve coopting the linguistic set of the neo-liberal discourse of economy. For example, the labour movement has long fought to have the word “strike” to mean a legitimate labour tactic and part of the collective bargaining process, whereas those in power have consistently associated the word with labour violence, inconvenience to the community, and harm to the economy. The Alternative Federal Budget has taken steps in this direction by using the financial-like term **National Social Investment Funds** to signify social programs. This is probably a wise move when words such as “entitlement” have taken on increasingly negative connotations.

As described in Chapter Three, the AFB communications specialists must offer news workers some stability and consistency in media relations. This means more proactive lobbying of the news organizations *throughout* the year. Charlotte Ryan remarks that the news outlets' burden of promoting an unknown, unpopular frame will decrease as the issue attracts support, establishes its facts, and the expertise of its spokespersons gain public recognition.<sup>5</sup> Ryan also contends that a social movement's message will increase its chances for success when it "resonates with familiar cultural themes."<sup>6</sup>

Traditional cultural resonances include such themes as capitalist democracy and individualism, and like the metaphor, "they [unknowingly] affect not only our perception of issues but also the rules by which those issues are discussed."<sup>7</sup> Ryan adds that, although dominant frames have little difficulty in finding cultural themes that support the status quo, every society has cultural undercurrents on which opposition can build. By using cultural resonances to show reporters the validity of their cause, the public interest group may take the precarious position of invoking traditional values while striving to distance itself from it.

George Lakoff puts forward that the Left's politics is also centred on a family-based morality, but that they so poorly understand their own political universe that they still think of it "in terms of a coalition of interest groups."<sup>8</sup> Lakoff posits that we all make use of metaphors to discuss morality, the difference is in the priorities assigned to them. The family-based morality that structures left-of-centre thought is diametrically opposed to the

**Strict Father Model:** the **Nurturant Parent** model of the family.

The **Nurturant Parent** family is composed of either one or two parents. Stemming from the **Morality As Nurturance** metaphor, the rationale behind this model is “one of being cared about, having one’s desires for loving interactions met, living as happily as possible, and deriving meaning from one’s community and from caring for and about others.”<sup>9</sup> For example, public administration based on a **Nurturant Family** model would see the government responsible for providing for the basic needs of its citizens (social programs). Or, just as in a nurturant family it is the duty of older and stronger to help out those that are younger and weaker, so it is the duty of citizens who are better-off to contribute more than those who are worse-off (progressive taxation). Therefore, the Alternative Federal Budget media relations team may overcome the ideological barrier by framing its initiatives to its target groups -- the policy makers, the general public *and* the news media -- within this equally “common sensical” worldview.

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Many mainstream journalists were sympathetic to the AFB cause, but as with most organizational cultures, it is senior management who makes the final decisions; public interest groups must therefore creatively and actively lobby the senior producer or senior editor. As stated earlier, the social movement must not perceive the media simply as a conduit for its activism, but rather, as one of the key target groups to organize. For the

Alternative Federal Budget coalition, this may require a total rethinking of their communications planning.

Integrating media outreach with an organization's overall political strategy (otherwise known as mobilizing the media) can include lobbying; offering background materials; providing the media with regular, substantive criticism of their treatment of issues; supporting sympathetic journalists; and joining with other social movements to question overall media priorities.<sup>10</sup> Though resource constraints -- which all the AFB interviewees agree have a significant impact on communications activities -- will make organizing the media much easier said than done.

There is no simple solution. Often the main stumbling block to systematic media work is the lack of skilled labour. Bruce Campbell indicated to me that the coalition does not spend time actively soliciting other national organizations for volunteer assistance.<sup>11</sup> This grassroots activity should be introduced, along with an increased funding allocation towards communications. Together this might help the AFB media relations team to overcome the resources barrier.

In the recent political context of federal budgetary surplus, and with a lull in the "deficit hysteria," now is the time to approach the mainstream news manager. No longer should media relations work be thought of as an add-on to its political strategy, rather it should be seen as an integral part of the grassroots process. As Hackett comments, "The press is

not a level playing field, but sometimes it is possible, even playing uphill, to score points, to win a match, and perhaps occasionally even to redefine the rules of the game.”<sup>12</sup>

1. Robert Hackett, **News And Dissent: The Press And The Politics Of Peace In Canada**, Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1991, p. 77
2. Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan, **Negotiating Control: A Study Of News Sources**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989, p. 378
3. Hackett, *Op. cit.*, p. 279
4. *Ibid.*
5. Charlotte Ryan, **Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies For Grassroots Organizing**, Boston: South End Press, 1991, p. 203
6. *Ibid.*, p. 79
7. *Ibid.*, p. 80
8. George Lakoff, **Metaphor, Morality And Politics**, 1995, a paper published on the Internet at the **Centre For The Cognitive Science Of Metaphor Online**:  
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rohrer/metaphor.htm>
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 188
11. A comment made by Mr. Bruce Campbell, Executive Director for the **Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives**, in an interview with the researcher, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1997.
12. *Ibid.*

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## **INTERVIEWS**

**Ms. Andrea Thiel: Producer, CBC National Magazine**

February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1997, Duration: 60 minutes

**Ms. Marcella Munro: Media Relations Officer, Alternative Federal Budget/Communications Coordinator, Action Canada Network**

February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1997, Duration: 60 minutes

**Mr. Tom O'Brien: Alternative Federal Budget Communications Advisor/National Representative, Communications (Canadian Labour Congress)**

February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1997, Duration: 60 minutes

**Mr. Bruce Campbell: Executive Director, Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives/Alternative Federal Budget Coordinator**

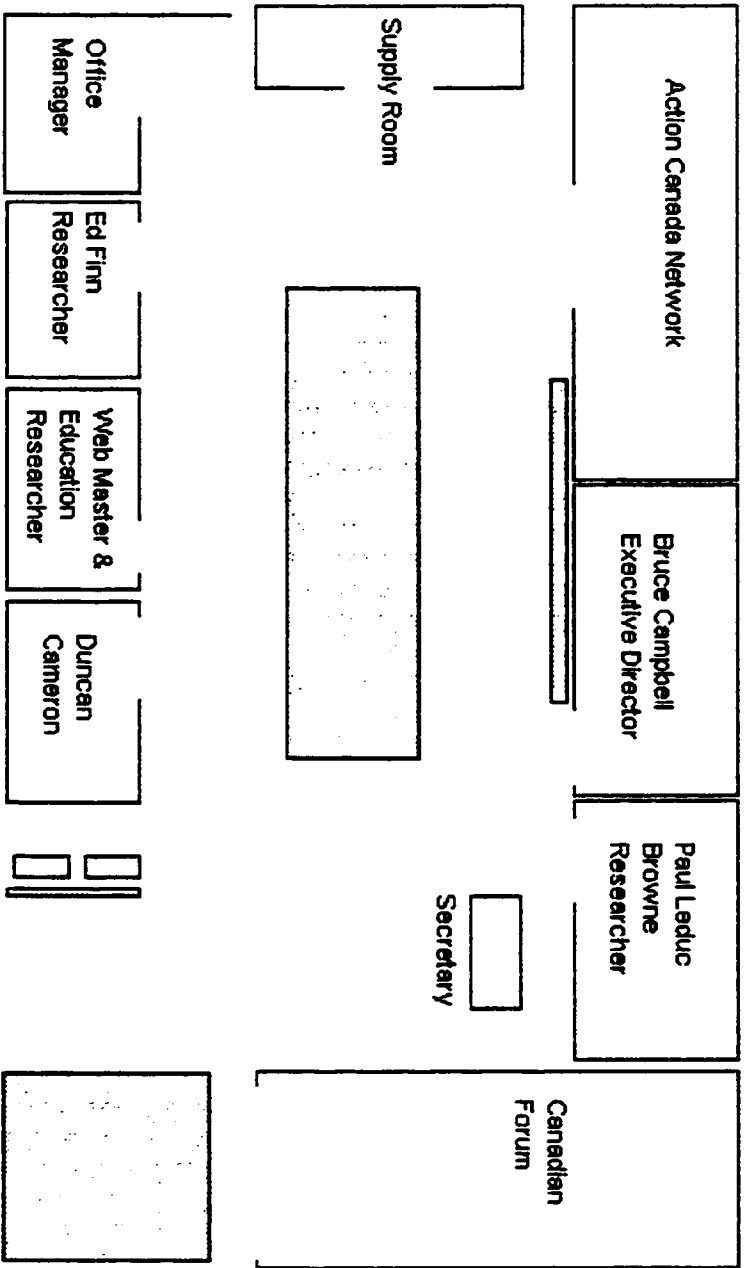
February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1997, Duration: 45 minutes

**Mr. Duncan Cameron: Alternative Federal Budget Spokesperson/Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives Researcher**

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1997, Duration: 90 minutes

**Dr. Jim Stanford: Alternative Federal Budget Spokesperson/Economist, Canadian Auto Workers**

April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1997, Duration: 30 minutes



**Appendix A**  
**Floorplan Of The Canadian Centre For Policy**  
**Alternatives Secretariat (January 1997)**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday February 12, 1997

*"A Budget for the Future" launched in thirty locations*

## **The budget Canadians are asking for**

(OTTAWA) – "This is the budget Canadians are asking for, and have been asking for since the last federal election," said Professor John Loxley, economist and Co-chair of the Alternative Federal Budget. He was one of three members of the project at the national launch of the Budget in Ottawa today.

Dubbed "A Budget for the Future", the third annual Alternative Federal Budget was released in thirty locations across the country today by some of the dozens of groups and hundreds of people who contributed to it.

In Ottawa, Professor Loxley introduced the Alternative Federal Budget to participants, supporters, and the Parliamentary Press Corps. Loxley, who was joined by project Co-Chair Bruce Campbell and Lynne Toupin, Executive Director of the National Anti-Poverty Organization, led people through the final budget document point by point.

"Recent polls have shown that the majority of Canadians want the federal government to invest in job creation, invest in the key areas of health care and education, and invest in fighting child and family poverty," said Loxley. "Our budget shows how the federal government could achieve these goals, and surpass their targets for debt reduction by the year 2000."

Their "Budget for the Future" would:

- Create 930,000 more jobs than the current federal plans over five years, mostly due to a five point job creation strategy (pages 9-12, Alternative Federal Budget 1997):

- 1) a different approach to monetary and fiscal policy;
- 2) an Emergency Employment Investment Program;
- 3) democratizing economic development through setting up new institutions such as National Capital Funds;
- 4) maintaining and strengthening commitment to public services and social programs; and,
- 5) proposals to share work time.

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- Reduce poverty to at most 12% by the year 2000, largely through job creation, but also due to a comprehensive, 13 measure "Frontal Assault on Poverty" assisting not only the unemployed and single parent families, but which would also provide relief to the growing ranks of the working poor (pages 13-14);

- Implement a plan to ensure national standards and better funding for key social programs by creating seven National Social Investment Funds, including (pages 14-22):

- 1) Health Care — including stabilized funding, the creation of a National Drug Plan (as called for by the National Forum on Health), and support for community health centres;
- 2) Income Support — including new national standards for social assistance, and an Enhanced Child Benefit;
- 3) Post-Secondary Education — including a Higher Education Act, and increased support for students through student loans and grants.

As well as four other funds for retirement income, unemployment insurance, child care, and housing.

- Enact corporate and individual tax changes to bring \$7.5 billion (net) more in revenues over two years (pages 27-30). These measures would mean no new income tax increases for anyone making less than \$60,000 a year, and significant tax cuts for low income people.

"An independent economic analysis has confirmed that, because our budget relies on putting people back to work — putting money back into people's pockets and into the economy — our budget reduces the debt burden faster than the federal government, to less than 60% of GDP by the year 2001," said Bruce Campbell.

NAPO's Lynne Toupin said the Alternative Federal Budget represents a significant step forward in the debate on poverty. "This budget recognizes the complexity of the poverty issue, and seeks to address the variety of factors that is leading to the increase in poor people in this country. It recognizes that poverty, child or otherwise, will not decrease until there is a strategy to create decent jobs. It's time the federal government took responsibility for what's going on."

"We show that the current wholesale attack on social programs by the Liberal government is unnecessary and unwise, as is their complete lack of action where job creation is concerned," concluded Loxley. "Canadians are looking for A Budget for the Future, a budget that will invest in community and individual needs and creativity. We challenge the Liberals and other political parties to follow our lead."

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To arrange an interview with Professor Loxley or any of the participants, for a copy of the Budget, or for more information contact Marcella Munro, Communications Coordinator, Tel. (613) 233-1764 or cellular (613) 850-1565.

# The Alternative Federal Budget

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By Bruce Campbell  
and John Loxley

**T**omorrow the Liberal government will bring down its fourth budget. Finance Minister Paul Martin will tell us that the harsh program of cuts in his previous budgets has been necessary, and that we are about to reap the rewards of this sacrifice in a new era of growth and prosperity. But what kind of country will we have at the end of it all? And can we really cut our way to prosperity?

The Liberal Red Book promised growth and jobs as the way to reduce the deficit, but growth has accounted for only a quarter of deficit reduction. The rest has come from cut-backs. The legacy of these policies is economic stagnation; persistent mass unemployment which has in fact grown when you add the million "hidden unemployed" who have dropped out of the labor force; disgraceful levels of poverty — with another 700,000 people driven into destitution since the last election; and widespread economic insecurity. It is the poor, the unemployed, and the millions of struggling families fearful for their future who have had to swallow the Liberal's "tough fiscal medicine."

We have just released our third Alternative Federal Budget, the result of six months of intense work. Its key message is that budget choices do exist and these choices reflect the values of those who make them. We have set out a budget strategy animated by values that challenge the prevailing orthodoxy of "slash and burn" and we have cast our priorities within a credible fiscal framework.

Job creation in a revitalized economy is the cornerstone of our budget. Our plan would create 930,000 more jobs over five years than the number projected under the current Liberal strategy, reducing the unemployment rate to less than six per cent.

How do we do this? Our strategy is multi-pronged. It involves entrenching a low interest rate policy (which requires a sea change in thinking at the Bank of Canada). It involves a major investment program to strengthen vital public services such as health care and education. It in-

**Finance Minister Paul Martin is listening to the influential voices of a small élite whose values and priorities around job creation, social programs, and the role of government have diverged markedly from those of the majority of Canadians.**

volves investment to improve not only our physical but our social, environmental, communications and research infrastructure. It involves changes in our approaches to investment in community development and a restructuring of working time.

Some economists who agree with us that the economy needs stimulus are calling for major tax cuts. But even from a narrow perspective which discounts the value of maintaining a strong public sector, tax cuts are a much less effective stimulative tool. For example, a billion dollars of corporate tax cuts creates 14,000 jobs, whereas a billion dollars of government spending on goods and services from the private sector creates 28,000 jobs, and on direct hiring creates 56,000 jobs.

Furthermore, we launch a frontal assault on poverty, reducing its level to 12 per cent or less by the year 2000. Our approach does not de-link child poverty from family poverty or the "deserving" from the "undeserving" poor. It starts with jobs and builds in adequate income supports, child care and housing, tax relief and training opportunities. We deplore a band-aid approach which offers up token child tax rebates after four years of poverty-inducing policies.

How do we finance our plan? Government can choose to reduce its deficit either by putting the emphasis on cuts, as the Liberals have done, or by increasing revenues, as we do. More than 70 per cent of this added revenue comes from increased jobs and growth — 930,000 more people paying taxes and not having to rely on government support is a huge

boost to the Treasury. So is the revenue from a revitalized domestic private sector with growing profits and falling bankruptcies. Our tax package (\$7.5 billion over two years) targets those best able to pay, does not increase the burden on middle-income groups and gives tax relief to low-income earners.

For example, a new inheritance tax on estates of more than \$1 million dollars (similar to that in the U.S.) will raise enough money in its first year to pay for our child tax benefit. Modest hikes in marginal tax rates for those earning more than \$100,000 and a minimum corporate tax will raise enough money to pay for our National Drug Plan.

But is our budget viable? Can we in fact reach our targets for revenue, job creation and debt reduction? An independent verification of our plan by Informetrica, a leading economic forecasting company, says it is viable. As well, 150 economists and political economists from across the country have endorsed our overall economic strategy.

We have no illusion that this will convince the guardians of economic orthodoxy to do anything other than dismiss our proposals as pie-in-the-sky; but we do think the majority of Canadians are in tune with our alternative.

Why won't the government adopt our approach? For the answer we need to go back to our starting point, which is that budgets are about choices which reflect values and priorities. Martin is listening to the influential voices of a small élite whose values and priorities around job creation, social programs, and the role of government have diverged markedly from those of the majority of Canadians.

The Liberals' choice, despite the hype of imminent prosperity, cannot deliver the goods. The chimera of prosperity only breeds frustration, resignation and despair. We offer a path of economic renewal and real hope. It requires only the political courage to act on it.

Bruce Campbell, the Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and John Loxley, of the Winnipeg-based CHOICES coalition and Chair of Economics, University of Manitoba, are coordinators of the Alternative Federal Budget project.

**Appendix D: Questions For AFB Media Relations Personnel**

1. How would you describe your job and its purpose?
2. Do you have regular contact with members of the media?
3. Are you considered to be a major news source?
4. If so, do you feel that the media regard you as a credible and reliable source? How do you know?
5. Do you think that the information you supply to the media generally receives adequate and fair coverage in the news?
6. What actions do you take when you think you have not been treated fairly by the media?
7. What do you consider as being newsworthy?
8. Which medium do you feel is most influential for policy-makers? The public? Why?
9. What methods do you use to supply information to the media? Which is most effective?
10. Does your organization have an established and professional media relations process? (ex. media training) If not, why? Do you feel that time or resource constraints hinder such activities?
11. What are some of your key media relations strategies in order to attract reporters to your activities and/or gain favourable media coverage? (ex. use of official spokespersons)
12. Are there any journalists and/or news organizations that you feel are more influential than others? Do these get any special considerations?
13. Have you in any way tailored your message in order to gain media access? If yes, how so, and do you feel that you have diluted the political objectives of your organization?
14. Will you do anything differently with the media relations for the 1998 Alternative Federal Budget? Why?

#### **Appendix D: Questions For The CBC National Magazine's Andrea Thiel**

1. How would you describe your job and its purpose?
2. Could you please tell me more about National Magazine? (ex. How many journalists are directly employed by your news organization? What kind of current affairs stories do you focus on?)
3. What is the basic process for story gathering? (i.e. what sort of tasks and activities are expected of you and your correspondents)
4. What is considered a *political* news story? A *national* news story?
5. What are your views on objectivity and balance in news reportage? The CBC's role of public trust?
6. When covering public policy, who decides what is important and what is not?
7. Do you feel that the government is a credible and reliable source for information on the Canadian economy? Why?
8. Do you feel that the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives/CHOICES coalition is a credible and reliable source? Why?
9. What do you consider as being "newsworthy?" What elements of "newsworthiness" were present in the Alternative Federal Budget?
10. Which medium do you feel is most influential in the reporting of public policy issues?
11. Do you feel that the demands of the medium have an impact on the reporting of political and economic issues?
12. The Alternative Federal Budget is an intricate document which addresses a wide-range of public policy issues. What elements did you decide to focus on? Why?
13. Why and how did you select the three particular panel members for the Alternative Federal Budget segment? What constitutes an expert for the news media?

#### **Appendix D: Additional Questions For AFB Spokespersons**

1. How did you arrive at being selected by the broadcast media for interviews? (ex. proactive media relations, credentials, past media experience)
2. Could you please talk about the interview process? (ex. media, interview format, host/moderator, theme)
3. Do you feel generally that the interview was conducted in a fair manner? If not, why?
4. After your experience with television interviews, do you feel that this forum can act as a useful tool for airing alternative views on mainstream television news? If not, do you feel that it is used to dismiss oppositional ideas?
5. Was there any internal dissension regarding the adopted media relations strategies? (Bruce Campbell)