The Dynamics of Agenda-Setting:

The Case of Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba

by

Kelly Saunders

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

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Abstract

The field of public policy analysis has long been a point of interest in the social sciences. Yet while we may know a fair bit about how policies are implemented or evaluated in terms of their impact on society, we know less about how they came to be issues on the government's agenda in the first place. While there may be any number of issues swirling around a government at any point in time, only some of these issues get acted upon in the form of a policy outcome. Moreover, on any given issue there may be a number of policy options from which to choose. Why do decision-makers decide to select one alternative over another? Together, these pre-decisional processes of agenda setting and alternative specification represent relatively unchartered territory within policy analysis.

The focus of my research project is the formulation of post-secondary education policy in Manitoba from 1988 to 1996; the period extending from the election of the Progressive Conservative government of Gary Filmon to its decision to establish the Council on Post-Secondary Education. Utilizing the multiple streams model of agenda-setting developed by Kingdon (1995), I explore those factors that motivated the Filmon government to decide in the first place to take action on post-secondary education, and secondly, to do so in the manner of the creation of the Council on Post-Secondary Education. In particular, I analyze Kingdon's three process streams of politics, problems and policies, the actors that comprised the policy subsystem at the time, and the wider context within which these processes occurred.

This qualitative study utilizes a case study approach, and is based on a triangulated research design that includes:

- elite interviews with some of the key actors comprising the post-secondary education policy subsystem in Manitoba during the period from 1988 to 1996;
- archival research of government documents, Hansard, briefs submitted to the University Education Review Commission, media reports, and other relevant primary sources;
- an extensive literature review of the relevant scholarly research in the areas of post-secondary education; agenda setting and policy analysis; social constructivism; New Public Management; educational politics; policy borrowing; ideology; globalization; and multiple streams theory.

It is anticipated that the research findings will help inform not only issues related to the wider processes of agenda-setting and alternative specification within governments, but the formulation of post-secondary education policy in particular.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would never have happened without the support and guidance of my wonderful Committee, comprised of Dr. Ben Levin, Dr. Paul Thomas and Dr. David Morphy.

In particular, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dr. Levin, the chair of my Committee, who never wavered in his belief in me and in this project. I will be forever grateful to you for your constant encouragement and friendship throughout these past several years. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my son, Hunter Goodon, who continues to inspire me everyday with his courage, tenacity and love of life. You are my hero, buddy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Public policies - those measures and decisions (and in some cases, non-decisions) that governments undertake in response to a problem - affect all of our lives in one form or another. Whether it be in the form of a program designed to increase the number of Aboriginal students attending university or a surcharge placed on gasoline purchases, few of us can escape from the actions of governments. Policies help define what is relevant to society and represent the public expression of the values and beliefs we hold as a community. Given their impact, it is not surprising that the examination of public policy has long fascinated political scientists.

Yet, while the field of policy analysis has grown and developed over the years, a key question remains: where do public policies come from? At any given time there are dozens of issues and problems swirling around a government, yet only some of these issues get responded to in the form of a policy output. How do decision makers decide which of those problems in society merit attention and which ones don't? In the words of Kingdon (1995), how do we know when an idea's time has come?

For many of us, policies are seen as "things that just happen"; the inevitable conclusion in a series of events that make sense within the larger context (Anderson, 1975; Levin, 2001). Hence, a plane crash sparks a review of aviation

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safety policies or the election of a new government brings about a review of spending policies in the health care field. This sense of inevitability seems especially pertinent in contemporary times, where such macro-level variables as globalization, the ideology of the New Right, citizen demands for more accountability and the dominance of managerialist-inspired ideas within the public administration field suggest a certain convergence in policymaking across post-industrialized states. We are not surprised then when governments implement policies designed to reform the public sector, or tighten the line on program spending. In light of these global trends, these kinds of measures seem to be just good common sense; a logical reaction to the circumstances of the time.

Yet, while these economic and social variables may help inform our understandings of government action in some areas, they do not tell the whole story. "Sometimes, conditions accepted as inevitable or unproblematic may come to be seen as problems while damaging conditions may not be defined as political issues at all" (Edelman, 1988, p. 12). While at times the political process may be as logical and straightforward as these variables suggest, the rationale for why governments choose to do some things and not others, and the manner in which they choose to do so, is often fuzzy and unpredictable. As Ball (1998; 1990) argues, public policymaking is inevitably a process of bricolage, of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from here and there in an attempt to find anything that looks like it might work. "Most policies are ramshackle,

compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are re-worked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through a complex process of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice" (Ball, 1998, p. 126; 1990).

In order to get a better understanding of why some problems get acted on and why others fail to capture the attention of decision-makers, a number of political scientists have attempted to break down the policymaking process into a series of discrete stages or cycles (Lasswell, 1951; Brewer, 1974; Jones, 1984; Anderson, 1975; Howlett and Ramesh, 1995). Typically, this process is seen as comprising the following phases: identifying a problem; considering the various policy alternatives from which a choice is to be made; making an authoritative choice amongst those specified alternatives by passing laws or regulations; implementing the policy; and evaluating its outcomes (Brooks and Miljan, 2003; Kingdon 1995). The value of this kind of middle-range theoretical approach over grand theory models is that it allows each stage of the process to be investigated in greater depth on its own. While the linearity suggested by the cycles model is in many ways an artificial construct (in reality, public policymaking is often ad hoc and idiosyncratic), it facilitates our understanding of where public policies come from by breaking down the complexity of the process into a limited number of manageable steps.

In addressing the broader question of how governments decide that an idea's time has come, we need to draw our attention to the first two stages of the policy

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process, the identification of problems that the government views as important, and the specification of the various policy solutions. This first stage is commonly referred to as "agenda-setting". The government agenda is the list of subjects or problems on which decision-makers have decided to take action. Once an issue is placed on the government's agenda we enter into the second stage or cycle of policymaking, policy specification, whereby various proposals for action are defined, considered, accepted or rejected, based on what is possible or feasible within the given context. This stage involves the "elimination of policy options, until one or only a few are left from amongst which the policymakers make their final selection" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 123); although in a sense this selection is almost never final. Together, these first two stages comprise what Kingdon refers to as "pre-decision" processes; the steps before an actual policy solution is decided upon.

As Kingdon (1995) points out, despite the flurry of activity around public policy analysis these pre-decision processes remain relatively uncharted territory within political science. "We know more about how issues are disposed of than we know about how they came to be issues on the governmental agenda in the first place, how the alternatives from which decision-makers chose were generated, and why some potential issues and some likely alternatives never came to be the focus of serious attention" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 1). Yet these questions are germane for not only a more complete understanding of the richness and complexity of the policymaking process, but also for a deeper insight into the

ways in which the decisions of government impact a community. The visible outcomes of the policymaking process – the implementation of a new program or the passage of a law - only reveal part of the picture. The patterns of public policy in any given society are also shaped by what doesn't happen; the fact that some issues and proposals emerge in the first place while others are never seriously considered.

The focus of this research project is the formulation of post-secondary education policy in Manitoba from 1988 to 1996; the period extending from the election of the Progressive Conservative government of Gary Filmon to its decision to establish the Council on Post-Secondary Education. This example presents a useful case study of agenda-setting in the policymaking process because it represented a substantive policy shift for the province in the area of post-secondary education policy. While ostensibly the province's post-secondary education system was always an area of interest to Manitoba's political leaders, by the early 1990s its perceived role in the economic future of the province rendered universities and colleges amongst the most important institutions to policymakers. Throughout this period the Premier's speeches on Manitoba's prospects were constantly littered with references to the knowledge economy and the necessities of having a strong post-secondary education system to best position Manitoba to compete in the global market. Motivated as the government was by economic concerns, in particular the need to boost the province's economic productivity, reduce government spending and achieve balanced

budgets, post-secondary institutions became, for the Filmon administration, one of the principal vehicles through which its economic goals could be furthered.

These goals were to be achieved not only by holding the line (or reducing) post-secondary expenditures, but in redesigning the kinds of programs universities and colleges offered in order to make them more relevant and responsive to the economic needs of the province. Indeed, the principal government document guiding policymakers during this time, *Framework for Economic Growth: Policy Directions for Manitoba* (1993), heavily emphasized the link between post-secondary education policy and the province's economic, social and cultural well-being.

In keeping with this energized focus on post-secondary education as a major policy consideration for political leaders, how the system was to be governed and directed also fundamentally shifted in 1996. For the first time in Manitoba, and indeed the first time in Canada, all post-secondary education policy was now to fall under the direction and guidance of an arms-length, intermediary agency, the Council on Post-Secondary Education. As outlined in its *Act,* the Council was to be comprised of ten individuals from the community and a Chair of deputy-minister status, all of whom were to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Amongst its various responsibilities the Council was to be responsible for setting broad education policy for the universities and colleges system, approving (or not approving) program changes, implementing a new

accountability framework focusing on the activities of teaching, research and community service, and fostering greater coherence and cooperation across the post-secondary system.

In addition to its decision-making powers in the area of policy, the Council was also given substantive fiscal powers. While the government continued to set the overall budget for post-secondary education, the Council was charged with the responsibility of determining appropriate resource levels for each of the province's seven universities and community colleges, and for allocating these funds. While the idea of a separate agency responsible for the allocation of funding to universities was not in itself new (prior to the creation of the Council this was the function of the province's Universities Grants Commission), the power to set overall direction in policy and funding matters for the entire system did represent a new direction for the province.

The two basic questions that will guide my study are: why did the Filmon government decide in 1988 to act on post-secondary education? And secondly, why did it choose to create the Council on Post-Secondary Education, instead of pursuing other policy alternatives that were available at the time? As previously noted, the Council represented the first of its kind in Canada. While provinces across the country had flirted with intermediary agencies for their higher education systems, by the early 1990s most of these agencies had been abandoned with responsibility for universities and colleges rolled into government

ministries. For those provinces that retained some kind of external agency, for example Ontario's Council on University Affairs, (OCUA), these tended to be advisory rather than authoritative bodies with little real power to affect the system.

There are a number of different models and units of analysis that can be applied to the study of public policymaking. Agenda setting, for example, can be examined from the point of view of the policy communities and policy networks involved, which give shape to the kinds of ideas and discourses that become prominent in the decision-making process. Or alternately an institutionalist perspective can be adopted, that looks at role that such structures as legislatures and bureaucracies, and the values and traditions contained therein, play in policy development.

The conceptual framework which guides this research study consists of three broad elements: the *processes* through which agenda-setting occurs; the *actors* involved in these processes, and the *larger context* within which it all happens. While no single model can possibly capture the complexity and ambiguity of any policy process in its entirety, these three elements combined shed light on what I perceive to be the most salient features of my case study.

With regard to the first of these elements, processes, I will draw on the model of public policymaking known as multiple streams theory. Unlike more rationalist or

incrementalist approaches, the strength of multiple streams theory is that it considers the ambiguous, contextual and anarchic nature that describes much of the political process. Particularly useful is Kingdon's (1995) multiple streams model of agenda setting. In Kingdon's schema, agenda setting occurs through three distinct processes, or streams: the problems stream, the politics stream, and the policy stream. While these three streams flow relatively independently of each other, Kingdon maintains that they can couple at critical junctures. It is at these moments of coupling that windows of opportunity open up for agenda setting to occur. By considering the key variables in each stream and how they can come together at key points in time, we can more closely discern how some issues end up making it onto the government's agenda while others continue to languish.

It is not enough for a window of opportunity to open up for agenda setting to occur; instead, people have to make it happen. Hence in addition to Kingdon's multiple streams model I will also consider the policy actors that were involved in post-secondary agenda setting in Manitoba. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) suggest that the most relevant policy actors in industrialized democracies tend to be members of the executive (the prime minister, premier and members of the cabinet); senior political aides; key bureaucrats and certain organized interests in society (notably the business community). Depending on the issue, research organizations, think tanks and the media can also play a role, as can public opinion. The particular actors involved in the Manitoba case will be explored to

see which individuals were in fact the most salient in getting the issue of post-secondary education onto the government's agenda.

And lastly, I will examine the larger context within which agenda-setting in the Manitoba case study occurred. Policy actors do not operate within a vacuum, contained in their own little world, but rather within a larger environment. What is occurring in this larger environment; the broad trends, issues and the kinds of discourses that are prevalent have an impact on policymakers, both in terms of the kinds of policies that are adopted as well as the manner in which policymaking occurs. While there may be any number of themes within this larger context that can influence public policy, for my purposes I will focus on two factors: globalization and the climate of ideas. As I shall argue, policymaking in the Filmon government became subsumed under the rubric of macro-economic change and the massive economic restructuring that occurred in the world beginning in the late 1970s and into the 1980s. In this midst of this change reform of the post-secondary education system was seen as critical to advancing the province's social and economic goals, and maintaining Manitoba's competitive edge in the face of globalization.

The impact of globalization can be discerned not only in terms of the kinds of policies that governments were implementing during this time, but in their general approaches to policymaking and governance as well. While we tend to think of globalization in purely economic or political terms, a third form – managerial

globalization – also had important ramifications for the process of policymaking in Manitoba and elsewhere. Managerial globalization refers to both the ways in which states borrow policies from each other, as well as borrow management tools and techniques from the private sector. Hence, related to globalization are the ideas of policy borrowing and New Public Management.

In addition to globalization, the second key feature of the larger context that was critical to the case study of post-secondary agenda setting in Manitoba was the climate of ideas. At any given time certain ideas take hold that give shape to what values and beliefs we hold as a community, and set the broad parameters of what we consider to be acceptable actions on the part of government. The climate of ideas can be influenced by a number of forces, including ideology, the prevailing policy paradigms, the scholarly discourses surrounding a particular issue, and the public mood.

As I shall demonstrate, actors do not enter the political process devoid of ideas and values; rather, they come to the table with certain ideological assumptions that help form the language through which they articulate their interests and decide upon courses of action. Ideology thus helps shape political decisions, serving as it does as a useful reference point in an ambiguous and rapidly changing world. At the same time, while actors are influenced by their own ideological preferences they are also impacted by the discourse of ideas that develop around policy questions; what Ball (1990) has referred to as the policy

paradigm. These paradigms help to broadly define the goals behind government policy, the related problems or puzzles that policymakers have to solve to get there and the kinds of instruments that can be used to attain these goals. And lastly, the climate of ideas can be influenced by the scholarly literature and discourses surrounding a particular policy issue.

While for many the climate of ideas seems to be "things that just make sense", in fact it is not spontaneously generated. Social problems do not have an objective life of their own; simply waiting to be discovered and acted upon by an attentive government. Political actors will construct and frame social problems in certain ways in order to achieve certain goals, and to build legitimacy and support for their actions. To do this they will also engage in "crisis talk"; portraying certain policy areas as a crisis and thus warranting immediate attention; whether or not an actual crisis exists.

And lastly in my discussion of the larger context I shall argue that the public mood at the time regarding government in general and post-secondary education in particular helped create for the Filmon government a conducive climate for change. Efforts to hold the line on public spending and to render post-secondary institutions more accountable and relevant to the needs of the larger community found a great deal of resonance amongst Manitobans, and provided legitimacy for the cause of reform in Manitoba. At the same time, trends in other jurisdictions served as an impetus for the prioritization of post-secondary

education in Manitoba. By 1990 Alberta, Nova Scotia and Ontario, as well as numerous states in the United States, Great Britain and other western countries had begun to implement far-reaching reforms of their higher education systems. These developments not only served to further motivate the Filmon government to prioritize post-secondary education on its agenda but also provided a certain degree of legitimacy for their actions.

Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 outlines the research design that I employed in addressing my two research questions. Utilizing a single case study (the formulation of post-secondary education policy in Manitoba), I collected data through a triangulated approach. I began the project with a fairly extensive literature review, covering such areas as policy analysis and agenda setting, educational policymaking, higher education, social constructivism, New Public Management, and the role of actors in the policy process. As the events that constitute my case study occurred over ten years ago, the second substantive thrust of my data collection involved archival research. I consulted a variety of primary documents including government reports and documents from not only Manitoba but a number of other jurisdictions (Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, as well as federal government reports); Hansard; and media reports. I also reviewed a number of submissions made to the University Education Review Commission (the Roblin Commission) from a variety of stakeholder groups, including universities and colleges in Manitoba, student associations, and the business community.

The third key piece of my data collection involved a total of six interviews with some of the key actors involved in the post-secondary education policy subsystem in Manitoba. Included in these interviews were discussions with past Ministers of Education and Training in the Filmon administration; the former Deputy Premier; a Senior Political Advisor to Premier Filmon; the former Executive Director of the Universities Grants Commission in Manitoba; and a prominent Manitoba business person with close ties to the Filmon government. These interviews were invaluable because they afforded me an opportunity to get an inside look into the kinds of issues, ideas and events that went into the decisions that were made at the time.

As I point out in Chapter 2, a unique aspect of this study is my own direct involvement in the events that comprise the case study. In 1990 I was appointed as a political aide to a senior cabinet minister in the Filmon government; a position I held until 1993. And in the fall of 1995 I was hired by the Manitoba Department of Education and Training to advise the government on a new governance structure for the province's universities and colleges system. This later experience in particular provided me with a unique insight and knowledge into the events under review, and allowed me access to certain elites that were involved at the time.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 discuss in broader detail the conceptual framework that guides this research study. Chapter 3 discusses multiple streams theory and

Kingdon's model of agenda setting, as well as the role of actors in the policy process. Chapter 4 focuses on the larger context within which the Filmon government engaged in policymaking, notably the impact of globalization, policy borrowing, and New Public Management. Chapter 5 examines the second aspect of the larger context – the climate of ideas. In this chapter such concepts as the public mood; ideology; policy paradigms; and the social construction of problems will be examined. A brief overview of some of the main ideas and arguments contained in the scholarly literature on higher education in Canada will also be discussed, as they contributed to the climate of ideas surrounding the issue of post-secondary education in the new millennium.

With these conceptual issues in mind, the focus of the study then turns to trends in post-secondary education policy in other jurisdictions in Canada and throughout the world. Chapter 6 considers the kinds of changes that were occurring at the time in higher education systems in the United States, Great Britain, as well as parts of Western Europe. In Chapter 7, the changing public policy landscape in Canada throughout the 1980s and early 1990s will be examined. As we shall see, national recession, the election of Brian Mulroney, and the growing involvement of business in educational issues began to alter the discursive framework in which public policy, notably post-secondary education policy, was considered in Canada. Evidence of this change at the national level, as well as in provinces such as Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia, will be presented.

Chapters 6 and 7 help set the stage for understanding what subsequently occurred in Manitoba; to shed light on why the Filmon government chose in 1988 to place the issue of higher education on its agenda for action, and secondly, why it chose the policy option of the Council on Post-Secondary Education. In Chapter 8 I "tell the story", so to speak, of post-secondary education agenda setting in Manitoba from 1988 to 1996. In this chapter I present a rather detailed examination of the events that transpired during this period, the main ideas that informed these events, and the major policy actors involved in the decision-making process. Interwoven throughout the chapter are excerpts from the interviews as well as references to Hansard, government documents and media reports.

Chapter 9 sums up some of the major findings of the research project, and assesses the degree to which the conceptual framework of processes, actors and the larger context adequately reflects the evidence. It also outlines some of the limitations of the case study method and proposes areas of further study.

I anticipate that this research project will make a contribution to the scholarly literature in a number of ways. Firstly, while much has been written about various aspects of the policymaking process in governments, how issues first become seen as problems warranting attention by decision-makers represents comparatively new ground within political science. Also, why some policy options are chosen over others; the kinds of criteria that actors engage in the

policymaking process in their consideration of the various possibilities, has also not received a great deal of attention. Equally significantly, while there has developed a rather substantive body of work regarding the formulation of educational policy on the schools side, given the unique position of higher education in contemporary society (the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, the organizational structure and processes of universities and colleges), the formulation of post-secondary education policy also remains an understudied area of policy research. By combining these two aspects – agenda setting and post-secondary education – into a single research project, I hope that my work will help inform not only our understandings of public policy but the field of higher education as well.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This research project grew out of my own involvement in the events leading to the creation of the Manitoba Council on Post-Secondary Education. In 1994 I was hired by the then Minister of Education and Training, Linda McIntosh, to advise the Filmon government on a new governance model for the province's universities and community colleges. As a policy analyst in the Universities Grants Commission I was responsible for researching and preparing various papers and proposals for the consideration of the Minister, cabinet, and members of the Interim Transition Committee (a body struck by the Minister in 1995 to draft the legislation for the Council on Post-Secondary Education) on what this new governance structure should look like. This position gave me unique access to not only the main issues and events of the time, but also the key players involved in the latter stages of decision-making in the post-secondary area. From 1990 to 1993 I had also served as a political assistant to a senior cabinet minister in the Filmon government, Jim McCrae, who at the time was the Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Manitoba.

During my employment in what were the dying days of the Universities Grants Commission I became intrigued about why the Filmon government decided to focus on post-secondary education in the first place. At the time it just seemed to make sense to prioritize higher education, despite the fact that there were dozens of other issues that could have equally become a focus of government

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attention. At the same time, I was curious about why the government decided to create the Council on Post-Secondary Education instead of choosing other policy options. While other provinces in Canada were also in the midst of examining their post-secondary education systems, none had decided to create the kind of intermediary body envisioned for Manitoba. This curiosity, combined with my interest in higher education and public policy analysis, combined to create what I deemed to be an ideal avenue of research to explore.

Given that the focus of my interest was the process through which the Progressive Conservative government of Gary Filmon decided to place the issue of post-secondary education on its formal agenda and to later create the Council on Post-Secondary Education, I chose case study analysis as my principal methodology for the research project. Rather than portray a broad cross-section of individuals or some other unit of analysis, case studies focus on a bounded system of action (Padgett, 1998). A case study differs from other research studies in that the focus of attention is the individual case, not the whole population of cases. As Stake (1988) notes, in most other studies researchers search for an understanding that ignores the uniqueness of individual cases and generalizes beyond particular instances. The case study, on the other hand, "focuses on a bounded system, whether a single actor, a single classroom, a single institution, or a single enterprise … so as to understand it in its own habitat" (Stake in Jaeger, 1988, p. 256).

Yin (1993) adds that the case study is also the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context; when the researcher wishes to explore both a particular phenomenon (in my case, the processes and actors involved in the setting the post-secondary education agenda in Manitoba and the selection of the Council on Post-Secondary Education as the preferred policy option) and the larger context within which the phenomenon has occurred (for example, the impact of globalization and the climate of ideas on these processes). Hence, rather than generalizing to a universe or population, case study research "should be used to expand our understanding of theoretical propositions and hypotheses in those situations where (a) the context is important and (b) events cannot be manipulated (as in an experiment)" (Yin, 1993, p. 39).

My examination of agenda setting in Manitoba involved the use of several qualitative research methods. In the broadest sense, qualitative analysis refers to research that produces descriptive data; an individual's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. A key benefit of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to explore the layered and complex world of his or her subjects, by examining how things look from different vantage points (Babbie, 1992; Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1991). In this way, qualitative research is more than a set of data-gathering techniques; it is a particular way of approaching and staying close to the empirical world. "By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk about what is on their minds, and looking at the documents

they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains firsthand knowledge of social life unfiltered through operational definitions or rating scales" (Taylor and Bodgan, 1998, p. 9).

One of the principal techniques I used to gather my data is participant interviews. An interview can be defined as a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion and belief from another person or persons. In this way, an interview refers to "a specialized pattern of verbal interaction – initiated for a specific purpose, and focused on some specific context area" (Mischler, 1991, p. 9). Interviewing allows the researcher to enter the participant's world; to gain access to the context of people's behavior and hence provide a way of understanding the meaning of that behavior (Seidman, 1991; Scott and Usher, 1996). My choice of interviewing was based on the fact that in my research project, I was fundamentally interested in unraveling the various factors that were part of the agenda-setting process; in "hearing the story" of those individuals most intimately involved at the time. By giving participants the opportunity to share in their own voice their experiences, ideas and opinions, I was able to access past events in a way unattainable through any other method of data collection.

I utilized a specialized interviewing process referred to in the methodological literature as "elite interviewing". Dexter (1970) defines elites as those individuals who, because of their position and prominence, possess a specialized

knowledge of an event or situation. Unlike in standardized interviewing where the researcher defines the question and the problem, in elite interviewing "the investigator is willing and often eager to let the interviewee teach him what the problem, the question, the situation, is – to the limits, of course, of the interviewer's ability to perceive relationships to his basic problems, whatever these may be" (Dexter, 1970, p. 6). The approach taken in elite interviews, therefore, is somewhat less controlled by the researcher in the sense that the interviewee is encouraged to define and structure his or her own account of the situation. Participants are also encouraged to introduce to a considerable extent their own ideas of what they regard as relevant, as opposed to strictly relying on the researcher's ideas of relevance (Dexter, 1970; Feldman, Bell and Berger, 2003).

Anchored in real-life situations, the strength of the case study method is that it provides us with a rich and holistic account of a particular event (Merriam, 1988). However, as with any methodological tool it is not without its limitations. Key amongst these are the issues of generalizability and reliability. As Babbie (1992) notes, "compared with surveys and experiments, field research measurements generally have more validity but less reliability, and field research results cannot be generalized as safely as those based on vigorous sampling and standardized questionnaires" (Babbie, 1992, p. 309; Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1991). Case studies in particular can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the researcher to presume that his or her findings are accounts of the whole rather

than just the part (Yin, 1993). At the same time, given the highly contextual, multifaceted and fluctuating nature of much of case study research, "achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible" (Merriam, 1988, p. 171).

Triangulation offers a means by which some of these shortcomings can be overcome. Triangulation involves the use of several different data sources to test the same finding (Babbie, 1992; Schostak, 2002). It reduces the risk that the conclusions drawn will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and allows the researcher to gain a better assessment of the validity and generalizability of the explanations that are developed (Yin, 1993; Padgett, 1998). With triangulation, "by drawing on other types and sources of data, observers also gain a deeper and clearer understanding of the setting and people being studied" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 80).

Hence, in addition to a number of elite interviews I also used other means of data collection; namely, a review of the scholarly literature and archival research. Included in my archival research was an examination of such things as Hansard; government documents, press releases, briefing notes and proposals; submissions to the University Education Review Commission (the body struck by the Filmon government in 1991 to review the university system in Manitoba); written materials developed by business and other key interest groups, research

organizations and think tanks; press reports; opinion surveys; and university and college position papers.

My direct participation in some of the events that transpired during this time also meant that I was able to bring to the research project some of my own personal recollections and insights. This proved to be more of a benefit than I had originally anticipated. Not only did I already have a knowledge base of what occurred during this time and who some of the key actors were in the policy subsystem, but my involvement also allowed me greater access to them. In at least a few instances I know that the participants would not have agreed to be interviewed, and been as candid as they were, had they not known me personally.

The biggest benefit derived from my role as active participant versus passive observer, however, was the fact that it allowed me to cut through much of the "political speak" and spin that came up in some of the interviews, notably with past and present politicians. Naturally, these individuals wanted to present their views and actions in the best light possible. There was a tendency therefore with some of those interviewed to gloss over much of the randomness, ambiguity, and political positioning that typically accompanies policymaking. My background, I feel, allowed me to better sift through their words in order to more closely approximate what really occurred.

Research Design

My research design consisted of three elements: a review of the scholarly literature; archival research; and personal interviews.

Scholarly Literature Review

What began as a relatively straight-forward research project soon turned into a more substantive undertaking. As I began my research it quickly became clear to me that policymaking is, as Levin (2001) argues, a complex phenomenon; a blending of ideas, politics, institutional structures, history and culture. "Many of the portrayals of reform treat it too simply, often as a straightforward matter of powerful people putting their well-developed ideas into practice" (Levin, 2001, p. 190). In order to unravel the various layers and tangents that go into any policymaking process I felt it important to ground my research in a solid conceptual frame.

To this end I undertook a substantive review of the scholarly literature that encompassed not only some of the key works in the field of higher education, but also agenda setting, social constructivism, New Public Management, and policy analysis. While I began with the higher education literature and the pre-eminent works on agenda-setting (namely, Kingdon), this eventually led me in a number of directions that required further exploration. Hence as I proceeded with the project I found myself immersed in such diverse fields as educational politics,

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policy borrowing, ideology, globalization, and multiple streams theory to name but a few.

This literature review did not necessarily follow a predictable pattern. As I uncovered what I felt to be one "truth" other questions soon presented themselves. This continued throughout the entire research project, as I would come across yet another reference to an article or book that seemed to shed more light on my research questions. As it was, despite the extensiveness of this review there are still areas that I would have liked to maybe explore further (for example, the role of institutions in agenda setting), which I discuss more fully in chapter nine.

In addition to the literature review I also examined education reform in selected countries and provinces; namely the United States, Great Britain, Ontario, Alberta and Nova Scotia. My reason for selecting these particular cases was a simple one. As a policy analyst one of my principal functions was to present to the decision-makers at the time research papers on a number of issues. As these individuals wanted to know how other countries were dealing with the challenges of post-secondary education, several of these papers were about educational change in other jurisdictions.

The selection of jurisdictions was made in a number of ways. Some jurisdictions naturally presented themselves; for example, Alberta because of the close

connections that the Filmon government had with the Klein administration (I remember one of the premier's advisors commenting to me that "if Alberta's doing it then it has to be a good idea") and Ontario as the largest province in the country. In considering other jurisdictions to study I looked for regimes that seemed to be a natural "fit" with Manitoba in terms of similar political culture, ideology and historical connection. Hence I recall undertaking research on several republican states in the U.S. as well as Great Britain under the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Nova Scotia proved to be an interesting reference point. Not only was it a province of similar size and stature to Manitoba, but the administration there was also embarking on some of the kinds of changes that political leaders in Manitoba appeared intent on doing; namely a substantive rationalization and re-organization of their universities system.

Archival Research

As the case study involved decisions that occurred over ten years ago, I also needed to engage in archival research. While I did not have difficulty gaining access to the materials I needed (other than cabinet documents, which I was prevented from viewing under the Freedom of Information Act), the challenge with archival research is that the investigator is not always sure of what he or she is looking for. As Andrew (1985) notes, in some senses archival research questions some of the fundamental assumptions of methodology. Typically researchers are exhorted to begin with the problem; the hypothesis or area of

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interest they wish to explore and then select the method best suited to do so. With archival research, however, the selection of method can drive the problem, rather than the other way around: "obviously historical problems or questions require historical research but the availability or otherwise of documentary evidence will itself exert a crucial influence on the research and even the choice of research problem" (Andrew in Burgess, 1985, p. 156). As it is difficult to pre-determine what materials might be available and accessible in an archive, this kind of research is also necessarily an iterative process. As new data is uncovered through the process of archival research older data must be repeatedly reconsidered (Hill, 1993).

I spent a considerable amount of time analyzing Hansard from the 1984 to 1997 period to get a sense of what the Filmon administration and opposition critics were saying at the time with regard to post-secondary education and the related issues of the economy and government spending. Particularly useful were the government's throne speeches, introduced at the start of each new legislative session. These speeches set the tone for the government, and put on the public record what its priorities and plans were for the following year. In addition to Hansard I also researched a number of other sources, including: Universities Grants Commission briefing notes; Department of Education and Training Annual Reports; key government documents such as *Framework for Economic Growth: Policy Directions for Manitoba* (1993); and minutes, papers and stakeholder submissions to the University Education Review Commission.

I also analyzed media reports from this period, scanning the three biggest newspapers in Manitoba (the Winnipeg Free Press, the Winnipeg Sun and the Brandon Sun) for not only what politicians were saying about post-secondary education but also what other stakeholders such as the academic and business community were saying as well. This research, along with data from opinion polls conducted by such bodies as the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, provided me with a sense of the "public mood" surrounding post-secondary issues. While I found archival research to be very time consuming, as I wasn't entirely sure of what I was looking for before I began the process, I did not have much difficulty in accessing these materials (most were contained at the Legislative Library at the Manitoba Legislature as well as the Provincial Archives). As previously mentioned, the only documents I could not retrieve were cabinet briefings.

Elite Interviews

I conducted one-on-one interviews with some of the key policy actors in Manitoba who comprised the post-secondary education policy subsystem in the period under review, from 1988 to 1996. Because particular individuals were involved in this process, the selection of participants was based on purposeful sampling rather than random selection. Each of the participants was intentionally chosen on the basis of his involvement in the development of post-secondary policy. In total I completed six interviews, with two individuals declining my request. Interview participants included the following individuals:

- Len Derkach, former Minister of Education and Training under the Filmon administration (1988 – 1993);

- Clayton Manness, also a former Minister of Education and Training (1993 – 1995) as well as Minister of Finance and member of Treasury Board;

- Jim Downey, Deputy Premier from 1990 to 1999 and member of Treasury Board;

- Leo LeTourneau, Executive Director of the Universities Grants Commission (1988 to 1996); Research Director of the University Education Review Commission (1991 to 1993), and former Executive Director of the Council on Post-Secondary Education (1996 to 2002);

- Jeff Johnson, Chair of the Interim Transition Committee (1995 - 1996) and a prominent member of Manitoba's business community; and

- A Senior Political Advisor to the Premier and cabinet from 1990 to 1995, who wished to remain anonymous.

My role as active participant as opposed to objective observer, which is the typical position of the researcher in scholarly research, was beneficial in the sense that I was able to gain access to most of the key players involved in agenda setting and alternative specification at the time. And, as I was well acquainted with all those interviewed, it allowed me to ask particular questions during the interview that I perhaps would not have been able to gather in other circumstances. In the beginning I was concerned that my position as "friend" and sympathizer with these individuals would prove to be problematic in the data

my first reaction would be to only present information that put them in a good light, so to speak, rather than allow the data to speak for itself.

In actuality, however, I discovered that I was able to be much more objective in my analysis of the interview data than I had initially thought. My sense is that this has to do with the fact that in the intervening decade since I worked with these individuals I have become more of a scholar and less of a partisan political advisor. If I had undertaken this research project immediately after my tenure in government, I wonder if I would have been able to separate my role as objective investigator from political friend to the extent that I am confident I was able to do now.

In preparation for the interviews the participants I selected for the study were first sent a letter by me that outlined the research project and their role in it. These letters were followed up by personal phone calls and e-mails, in which I explained the project in less formal terms. While two individuals on my list did decline my request for an interview, the remaining six agreed to participate. Interviews were scheduled with each of the participants at a time and in a setting of their choosing. Four out of the six interviews were done face-to-face, with two interviews conducted over the phone. The in-person interviews were conducted at the participant's place of business; in the case of Mr. LeTourneau, the interview was conducted at my office at Brandon University.

Prior to each interview I asked the participant if he or she wished to be named in the study or to remain anonymous. As noted earlier, only one participant requested that I not refer to them by name. I also reminded participants that they were free to withdraw from the interview at any time, and that, despite our personal acquaintance, they should not feel obligated to answer any questions that they did not feel comfortable with. I also offered to make available to them a summary of the interview transcript prior to its use in data analysis, if they so desired. Only two of the six participants requested a transcript summary. One of these individuals did not make any changes whatsoever, while the other made only minor changes.

Each interview was tape-recorded, and I also took written notes. Each interview lasted approximately 1-1/2 hours. During the course of the interviews I followed an interview guide, written by myself, which outlined some of the major themes and questions with which I prompted the participants. Following Taylor and Bodgan (1998) and Patton (1988), this interview guide was not a structured schedule or protocol. Rather, it was "a list of general areas to be covered with each informant" (Taylor and Bodgan, 1998, p. 105). All of the questions were open-ended, to allow for free-flowing discussion and to accommodate the particular views and experiences of each elite participant. I found that I did not have to substantially revise the interview guide as the interviews progressed; I did however make slight adjustments in each case to reflect the particular individual being interviewed and his position within the policy subsystem.

The recorded interviews were transcribed by me; these, along with my written notes, were then analyzed for recurring themes and patterns. I then compared the data with the concepts contained in the theoretical framework that I outline in chapters three, four and five, to see the extent to which the data fit with my hypotheses. I was relieved to discover that there were no major surprises or alterations required to the basic assumptions with which I began the study. The evidence did, however, suggest a stronger linkage with some concepts than I had originally assumed; for example, the role of "crisis talk" in getting an issue onto the agenda and in building support for a particular policy option. I also discovered that the evidence pointed to avenues that I only briefly considered in my conceptual framework; namely the role of institutions and historical context in agenda setting. These points are explored in Chapter 9.

All of the study participants were more than helpful and accommodating during our interviews. They were willing to answer all of my questions and to take the time to expand on their answers when I asked for clarification. I did, however, encounter two problems during the interviews which I did not entirely expect. I did not anticipate (although this was in fact pointed out to me by the chair of my PhD committee) the degree to which participants would have a difficult time recollecting past events. While I myself have been living with this research study for the past number of years, I failed to fully appreciate the fact that in the intervening decade people would forget much of the details surrounding the creation of the Council on Post-Secondary Education. And although I did prepare

background chronologies for them prior to our meeting, I found that I did have to prompt participants frequently, and recall for them names, dates and in some cases relevant events.

A second problem that I did not fully anticipate was, as mentioned previously, the degree of "spin" that I would encounter during the interviews. In fact, one former politician that I interviewed asked me at one point, "do you want the political answer or the truth?" (I of course chose the truth). Although only one of the individuals I interviewed is still active in politics, I found that they all had a tendency to answer some questions as if it were Question Period in the Manitoba Legislature. The fact that I was able to compare what they were saying to me with my own personal recollections assisted me in cutting through much of the rhetoric. Triangulation offered a further way of overcoming this; by comparing several sources of data (interviews, Hansard, other government documents and media reports) I was able to better deconstruct the factors that motivated these actors to make the kinds of decisions that they did (regardless if they might have said otherwise to me).

An issue that I thought would be more of a problem than proved to be the case was that of anonymity. Within the scholarly literature the standard assumption is that participants in in-depth interview studies will remain anonymous (Seidman, 1991; Feldman, Bell and Berger, 2003). However, given that my research consisted of examining the actions of high-profile individuals who occupied

particular positions in the provincial government, anonymity could not be guaranteed. I hoped that the problem would be mitigated by the fact that few of the individuals that I approached to participate in the study were still in public life. Moreover, the fact that the issues that I wanted to explore happened over a decade ago and are relatively uncontroversial would, I hoped, ameliorate the concerns of those being interviewed. In designing the research project I planned to compensate for the lack of anonymity by offering to provide participants with a summary of the interview transcript prior to its inclusion in the study. This way, they would have final say over their comments before they were used for the purposes of data analysis. I also offered to not use their actual names in the study, if they so desired.

In fact, anonymity did not prove to be as much of an issue as I had feared. While the question of anonymity might have had a bearing on the decision of two individuals not to participate in the study, their refusal could have been based on any number of reasons (one individual refused on the grounds that he would be out of the country for much of the year, while the other did not provide any reason whatsoever). Of the remaining six individuals who did agree to participate, only one requested that his name not be used (which I attribute to factors beyond the nature of this particular study). As well, only two of the individuals that I interviewed took me up on my offer to provide them with a summarized transcript of our discussion. I know that the fact that I had a personal acquaintance with each of the participants prior to their participation in the

research study provided a level of assurance than otherwise might have been the

case. In fact, this was mentioned to me by several of the interviewees.

Chapter 3: Processes and Actors

The two basic questions behind my study are: why did the Progressive Conservative government decide to take action on post-secondary education, and secondly, why did it choose the policy option of the Council on Post-Secondary Education? These questions focus on two major "pre-decision" processes in policymaking: agenda setting and alternative specification. These "pre-political, or at least pre-decisional processes often play the most critical role in determining what issues and alternatives are to be considered by the polity and the probable choices that will be made" (Cobb and Elder, 1972, p. 12). However, while it is relatively straightforward to demonstrate the importance of agenda setting in understanding public policy, defining what an agenda is, and how an issue gets placed on the agenda, are more conceptually difficult tasks.

The purpose of this chapter is to lay down two key elements of the conceptual groundwork upon which this study rests: the role of processes and actors in agenda setting. To better understand how the issue of post-secondary education got placed on the Filmon government's agenda, I will use what is referred to as the multiple streams model of agenda setting. This model, initially developed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) and later expanded upon by Kingdon (1995), sees political agendas as the outcome of the intersection of three processes – political events, problem recognition, and policy proposals. According to multiple streams theory, an issue assumes an important place on the political agenda only when these three streams come together such that there is a political

recognition of something as a problem, a political opportunity to take action, and an acceptable proposal as to what action will be taken (Levin, 2001).

Linked to multiple streams theory is the role of actors in the agenda setting process. There is a vibrant, but ultimately inconclusive debate within the literature on the causal significance of individuals and groups in the public policy process (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003). Nonetheless, no study of agenda setting would be complete without some attention to the people contained within the policy subsystem and the interests, ideas and values they bring to the bargaining table. Kingdon (1995) distinguishes between actors inside of government (i.e. members of the governing administration, civil servants, and the legislature) and those external to it (interest groups, academics, media, and public opinion). This distinction, although somewhat artificial, helps us to identify the "players in the game", so to speak, and to determine those that are the most critical in agenda setting.

Processes

In one of the earliest works in the field of agenda setting, Cobb and Elder (1972) distinguish between two kinds of government agendas. They define the informal, public agenda, or what they refer to as the systemic agenda, as "all issues that are commonly perceived by members of the political community as meriting public attention and as involving matters within the legitimate jurisdiction of existing government authority"; while in contrast, the institutional or formal

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agenda is defined as "that set of items explicitly up for the active and serious consideration of authoritative decision-makers" (Cobb and Elder, 1972, p. 85-86). Agreement that an issue merits serious consideration, however, does not imply that the outcome will correspond to the goals of the issue's proponents, or even that the outcome will be action in any form (Cobb, Ross and Ross, 1976). There is a process that occurs between the time when an issue is recognized as important, and when it actually gets placed on the formal agenda. Cobb and Elder suggest different ways that this could happen. Problems could reach the formal agenda through a triggering device; for example, a crisis or other significant change in conditions. Placement on the formal agenda could also occur as a result of the promotion of a particular issue by groups or individuals either seeking to gain from government action or because they are, as the authors phrased them, "do-gooders" (Cobb and Elder, 1972)

This distinction between the informal and formal agendas is relevant because it reminds us of the fact that while there may be any number of issues swirling around a government at any given point in time that may be of concern to society at large, only some issues actually get acted upon by political leaders. What determines which issues make the cut? At the same time, there may be any number of possible solutions to a given problem, yet only one is ultimately chosen and formulated into a policy outcome. This leads to the related question of why, once an issue is placed on the formal agenda, does a particular policy option get selected and not another?

In earlier, pluralist approaches to policymaking it was assumed that interest groups in society put forward their demands to government, whose task it then was to translate these demands into policy outputs. In this way, politics was seen as the process by which various competing interests and groups were reconciled; with public policies the result of competition and collaboration among groups working to further their members' collective interests (Simeon, 1976; Self, 1985; Howlett and Ramesh, 2003).

In an alternate conceptual model, Downs (1972) suggested that public attention to problems follows an "issue attention cycle". This model highlights the potentially leading role of the media and public opinion in agenda setting. By publicizing a particular issue in the media, Downs argues that the public becomes suddenly aware of a problem but then gradually loses interest as the media moves onto other issues. In deciding whether or not to take action on the issue decision makers will weigh the extent of public attention and the electoral advantage to be gained, and make a calculated decision based on this assessment.

Regardless of whether the causal agent was a specific interest group or more broadly the general public, in these earlier models once a problem was accepted as warranting government attention little notice was paid to how it specifically moved from the systemic to the institutional agendas. Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976) advanced our understanding of this crucial process by breaking it down

into four phases. They argued that within the systemic agenda issues are "first initiated, their solutions are specified, support for the issue is expanded, and if successful, the issue enters the formal agenda" (Cobb, Ross and Ross, 1976, p. 127).

Cobb, Ross and Ross further categorized three different patterns that this process of initiation-specification-expansion and entrance can take. These patterns are predicated on the nature of the regime, the kinds of institutions it possesses, and the kinds of actors involved in the process. Hence, the outside initiation model, whereby issues are articulated by groups external to government decision makers, will be the model most typically followed in pluralist democratic societies, while the mobilization model, involving the raising of agenda issues by government decision makers themselves, tends to occur in more totalitarian societies. The third model or pattern identified by Cobb, Ross and Ross involves issues initiated by certain influential groups with special access to political leaders; a pattern one would expect to find in corporatist regimes (Cobb, Ross and Ross, 1976).

The efforts of Cobb and Elder (1972) and Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976) challenged the previously held notion that agenda setting involved little more than the automatic, one-way transfer of issues from the informal to the formal agendas, and advanced the idea that agenda setting was not a random occurrence. The idea that patterns could be discerned in how issues came to be

articulated by government leaders, and the uniqueness of agenda setting in public organizations, was further elaborated upon by Cohen, March and Olsen in 1972. In what was to become known as multiple streams theory, Cohen, March and Olsen took aim at the underlying assumptions of rationalism and incrementalism. These more traditional approaches to policy analysis emphasize the role of rationality and certainty; whereby individuals in the policymaking process are presumed to have a clear conception of what they want, to have access to sufficient information to consider alternative courses of action, and to carefully and fully evaluate the consequences of these alternatives before rendering a final decision (Anderson, 1975; Birkland, 2001; Pal, 2001).

Within this framework "it is assumed that the actor associates each alternative action with specific outcomes and then selects the action that produces the outcomes he or she prefers" (Landry in Dobuzinskis, Howlett and Laycock, 1996, p. 171). Hence, individuals are assumed to enter into policymaking to maximize utilities, either their own or those for whom they function as agents. Politics then is conceptualized as a calculated process, the purpose of which is to produce the greatest array of benefits for the participants involved.

Despite its theoretical appeal, however, the rational actor model tends to overlook much of the messiness, unpredictability and multifaceted complexity that characterizes the political process. In particular, rational approaches fail to consider the interplay of power, conflict and ideology that shapes much

policymaking, and the economic, social and political forces at work as manifested in and through institutions and processes (Pal, 2001; Simeon, 1976; Howlett and Ramesh, 2003). For Peters (1992), political actors appear much too complex and subtle in their decision-making to be captured by any simple model of rational choice. "The predictions of behaviour and policy choice coming from these models are often extremely poor except in the most trivial circumstances" (Peters, 2002, p. 173).

As Simeon (1976) adds, policymaking is not, by and large, simply a matter of problem-solving, of taking some common goal and seeking the best or most cost effective "solution". It is rather a matter of choice in which resources are limited and in which goals and objectives differ and cannot easily be weighed against each other. At the same time, he reminds us that policymakers do not operate in a vacuum. "Their agenda and behaviour reflect the pressures of the environment, the play of political influences surrounding policy disputes, the norms, assumptions, and values found in the culture and the ideology, and the opportunities and constraints imposed by the institutions" (Simeon, 1976, p. 576).

In contrast to the rational model, incrementalism portrays public policy decision-making as a political process, characterized by bargaining and compromise among self-interested decision makers. The decisions that are eventually made are seen therefore to represent what is politically feasible rather than desirable (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003). According to this model actors develop policies in

small steps; through a process of "continually building out from the current situation, step by step and by small degrees" (Lindblom, 1959, p. 81). Decision-makers do not attempt to consider all the alternatives or to ask the grand questions; they take the existing situation as given and seek to make only marginal improvements (Simeon, 1976). While the model does consider the possibility of major policy shifts, these are not viewed as emanating from the activities of policymakers or alternative value assumptions, but rather stemming from changes in the larger environment such as revolutions or wars. As such, much of the criticism of this model has been directed at its inherently conservative nature.

While incrementalist theory may explain much of the more mundane, day-to-day policy generation that goes on within government organizations, in which small legislative and bureaucratic alterations are made over a long period of time, it fails to adequately capture more dramatic agenda change. Yet, as Doern and Aucoin (1971) have pointed out, in Canada and most Western political systems there are examples of major policy changes that have occurred in the absence of war or revolution; "changes which either reversed previous policies or inaugurated new ones where there were none" (Doern and Aucoin, 1971, p. 16). They also provide examples, such as the area of tax reform, where policymakers in Canada seriously considered major value alternatives, even if they were not subsequently chosen.

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The multiple streams model developed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) presents an alternative view to rationalism and incrementalism, and sheds some fascinating light on how governments come to respond to problems. They argue that decision-making within public organizations, which they refer to as "organized anarchies", rarely approaches the level of intentionality, rationality and certainty suggested by the rationalist and incrementalist models. For them, policymaking is a highly ambiguous and unpredictable process only distantly related to a logical search for means of achieving goals. They maintain that public organizations are unique from other organizational settings in that decisions are made within a context of ambiguity. As used in this instance, ambiguity refers to a state of vagueness, confusion and stress; of having many ways of thinking about the same circumstances that may not be reconcilable (Zahariadis, 2003).

Ambiguity differs from uncertainty, which relates more to the inability to accurately predict an event because of ignorance or imprecision. Hence, while more information may reduce uncertainty, it does not reduce ambiguity. "The problem under conditions of ambiguity is that we don't know what the problem is; its definition is vague and shifting" (Sabatier, 1999, p. 75). Choice thus becomes less an exercise in solving problems and more an attempt to make sense of a partially comprehensible world. Contradictions and paradoxes appear: government agencies are instructed to strengthen their oversight functions while at the same time their budgets are slashed in half (Feldman and March, 1981).

By way of example Zahariadis (1999; 2003) refers to the AIDS crisis. "More information can tell us how AIDS is spread, but it still will not tell us whether AIDS is a health, educational, political or moral issue" (Zahariadis, 2003, p. 3). Different policy options will be generated with multiple possible outcomes depending on how the issue is framed. At the same time, different policy actors may also be involved at various points in the process, bringing to the table their own ideas, interests and understandings of the issue. By highlighting these various possibilities and hence the highly contingent nature of much of the policymaking process, multiple streams theory provides us with a lens through which policymaking under conditions of ambiguity can be more fully examined.

In expanding upon this idea of ambiguity and what this means for our understanding of policymaking, Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) argue that public organizations are characterized by three general properties: problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation. While in some situations policymaking may proceed in a comprehensive and logical manner, often actors engaged in the process do not have a clearly defined set of objectives that they wish to achieve. "People characteristically do not define their preferences very precisely, much as political actors often fail to (or refuse) to define their goals" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 84). Unlike a business firm, in which the ultimate goal is clear – making a profit – organized anarchies operate on the basis of multiple and diverse objectives. Even if politicians do have a clear goal in mind in one

particular issue area, this may conflict with other objectives they might have in other areas.

In addition to multiple and sometimes conflicting goals, in the process of formulating policy public officials are often faced with short timelines and limited resources at their disposal. Decisions are often made "on the fly", in response to emerging circumstances and the demands of the moment. Hence, time and resource constraints often force individuals in government to make decisions without having formulated a precise idea of what they want to achieve, and how they plan on achieving it, beforehand. Because so much of what occurs is time dependent and context-specific, the availability and popularity of particular solutions at any given time play a major role in shaping the final outcome (Zahariadis and Allen, 1995).

As a result, goals in organized anarchies are more akin to 'problematic preferences' than they are clearly stated intentions. Like the AIDS example, few of the problems that exist in society are straightforward, with a clear and simple policy solution waiting to be uncovered. Moreover, while information gathering and data collection might shed greater light on the nature of a particular issue there may be any number of ways in which to respond to it. We may sincerely want to stop the ravages of AIDS, but short of a medical miracle how do we decide which of the myriad of policy options presents the best means of fixing the problem? Hence, as a result of problematic preferences, governments are left

with the task of trying to address issues they do not understand well, with instruments that they often neither know how to use nor know their effectiveness (Zahariadas, 2003; 1999).

Similarly, Cohen, March and Olsen argue that the organized anarchy's technology – its structures and processes – is unclear. Individuals within this kind of setting do not understand the organization very well. While they may know their own jobs and get along well with their co-workers, they have only fragmentary and rudimentary understandings of why they are doing what they are doing and how their jobs fit into a more general picture of the organization. They operate a lot by trial and error, by learning from experience, and by pragmatic intervention in crises. Jurisdictional boundaries are blurred, and turf battles between different departments are common (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2003). Participation in the anarchical organization is also fluid, with a high turnover of staff. Participants drift in and out, from one decision to the next. Individuals get shuffled to another job or leave altogether. In this way the organization "can be described better as a collection of ideas than as a coherent structure; it discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences" (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972, p. 1).

To understand how decisions are made within these kinds of organizations, Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) maintain that running through the organized anarchy are four separate streams: problems, solutions, participants and choice

opportunities. Each of these streams operates relatively independent of the other; hence, individuals generate and debate solutions not necessarily in response to a problem but because they have some self-interest in doing so (Kingdon, 1995). In this way, the organization is a "collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer, and decision-makers looking for work" (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972, p. 2). When a choice opportunity arises (for example, the selection of a new department manager) various participants, problems and solutions become involved. In this way, a choice opportunity is akin to a garbage can, whereby the problems and solutions streams are dumped in by participants as they are generated. "The mix of garbage in a single can depends on the mix of cans available, on the labels attached to the alternative cans, on what garbage is currently being produced, and on the speed with which garbage is collected and removed from the scene" (Cohen, March, and Olsen, 1972, p. 2). Outcomes are therefore a function of the specific mix of the garbage (problems, solutions, participants and their resources) in the can and how it is processed. The actors, solutions and problems that come to the fore may also change at any given point, depending on time and circumstance.

The picture painted in this schema markedly differs from that offered by other approaches to policymaking. In the garbage can model actors do not set about to solve problems; more often, solutions search for problems (which may in turn

create new problems). Nor do they necessarily follow a prescribed, logical routine of defining the problem, assessing the various alternatives and selecting the best option. "Rather, solutions and problems have equal status as separate streams in the system, and the popularity of a given solution at a given point in time often affects the problems that come up for consideration" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 86).

Change is also not necessarily incremental, as the particular ways in which the streams are mixed within the garbage can produce abrupt policy changes as well as minor adjustments to existing policies. The participants involved at any point in time; the problems that are on their minds and the solutions ready for airing all have a substantial impact on the outcome. "When a given solution is proposed, it may be regarded by the participants as irrelevant to the problem and is thus discarded. Or even more likely, the participants have fixed on a course of action and cast about for a problem to which it is the solution, discarding problems that don't seem to fit" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 86). Hence, given the contextual nature of the process, the solutions and problems that come to the fore might change from one meeting to the next, as participants attend or fail to attend.

Expanding on these ideas, Kingdon argues that governments can aptly be described as organized anarchies. Within the public sector decision-makers are faced with a myriad of competing goals, and legislators often do not have a clear idea of what they want to accomplish. Or if they do, a goal in one area may conflict with a goal in another. Indeed, this idea of often multiple, conflicting goals

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is typically highlighted in the public administration literature as one of the hallmarks of government, and which differentiates bureaucracies from private organizations (Savoie, 1995). Peters (1992) points out that a great deal of political activity is symbolic and ritualistic (a point to be expanded upon later), rather than goal-oriented; hence, policy making may be a secondary benefit of the process rather than its purpose. As Thomas (1996) notes, "the goals of public organizations and their programs tend to be multiple, vague, shifting and at times conflicting; as a consequence, there is not a clear and unambiguous measure of success" (Thomas, 1996, p. 13).

Even if they do have a particular goal in mind, policy actors do not necessarily have the knowledge or the appropriate resources to achieve it. This is because in spite of its hierarchical nature and structured processes, governments also suffer from unclear technology. The production function of government (the translation of inputs into desired outcomes) is often nebulous, with individuals in one department not knowing what is going on in other areas and organizational boundaries sometimes not clearly delineated. Many bureaucrats do not interact with their own departmental colleagues, let alone with civil servants in other areas of government. A "silo mentality" sets in, whereby government officials, focused on their own departmental responsibilities, aren't able to see the big picture. As a result, experience often guides individual actions, making trial and-error procedures indispensable learning tools (Sabatier, 1999).

This is compounded by a high turnover within government as ministers get shuffled, legislators get voted out of office, and high level civil servants traverse from the public sector into the private. Nongovernmental actors, such as business groups, trade unions and other interests can also exercise a significant influence over the form certain decisions will take. "Involvement in any one decision varies considerably, and so does the time and effort that participants devote to it" (Zahariadas, 1999). The complexity and indeterminacy of the policymaking process in most contemporary political systems, Peters (1992) argues, means that "there are too many decision points, and too many possible points of intervention, between the bright idea for a new policy and its successful implementation for an analyst to assume that he or she couple possibly map the entire course of implementation in advance and predict the consequences of that course" (Peters, 1992, p. 173).

In building on the multiple streams model Kingdon seeks to understand why decision makers act upon some issues and not others. He is less concerned about the origins of ideas, but rather with what makes a particular idea take hold and grow. He suggests that in order to understand agenda setting in the public sector, we must examine not only the participants involved in the system, but also the processes through which they affect agendas and the policy alternatives that are considered. In this way Kingdon takes issue with Cobb and Elder's assumptions regarding the one-way transfer of issues from the systemic to the formal agenda (Harrison and Hoberg, 1991). While agenda setting may involve

the simple transfer of items from a non-governmental, systemic agenda to a governmental, formal agenda, he claims that agenda change can also occur through the diffusion of ideas in professional circles and among policy elites or "from a change in party control or in intraparty ideological balances brought about by elections" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 16).

Drawing on the foundation built by Cohen, March and Olsen, Kingdon advances a more interactive model of agenda setting and agenda change. He argues that flowing through any given political system are three fairly distinct streams; what he refers to as the streams of problems, policies and politics. He views these streams as largely independent of one another, with each developing according to its own dynamics and rules. But at critical junctures these three streams interact, resulting in a policy outcome. Governments therefore decide to take action on a particular issue only when these three streams couple in such a way that there is a political recognition by decision-makers that something is a problem; a political opportunity to take action; and an acceptable proposal as to what action will be taken (Levin, 2001). In this way, the characteristics of issues combine with the characteristics of political institutions and circumstances, and the development of policy solutions, in a fashion that can lead to the opening and closing of windows of opportunity for agenda entrance.

Such opportunities can be seized upon, or not as the case may be, by "policy entrepreneurs" who are able to recognize and act on them. The streams do not

spontaneously come together in such a way as to produce an outcome. Rather, Kingdon acknowledges the critical role of individuals in coupling the streams such that agenda setting occurs. By bringing processes and actors together, Kingdon considers "the question of state and non-state influences on agenda-setting by focusing on the role played by actors both inside and outside of government in taking advantage of agenda-setting opportunities - policy windows - to move items onto formal governmental agendas" (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003, p. 135).

In his discussion of the first of these streams, problems, Kingdon argues that at any given time there are a number of issues clamoring for a government's attention. Not all of these issues will automatically be viewed as a problem by decision-makers, necessitating some kind of government action. Here Kingdon differentiates between problems and conditions. As he notes, we put up with all manner of conditions everyday, from poverty to inadequate roads. Conditions only become defined as problems "when we come to believe that we should do something about them" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 109).

While some issues warranting attention may be obvious due to a dramatic event (for example, the tragic deaths of twelve children awaiting cardiac surgery at Winnipeg's Health Sciences Centre in the early 1990s), at other times why a problem captures the attention of political leaders may be less straightforward. Kingdon highlights such mechanisms as indicators (data collected from various

policy activities and events; for example, the number of highway deaths over a given period or budgetary spending levels in a particular program); focusing events (such as the baby deaths in Manitoba, which focused our attention on the pediatric cardiac program at the Health Sciences Centre); and feedback about existing policies from bureaucrats, interest groups and the general public to help explain why some problems are placed on the agenda and others are not.

The existence of a perceived problem, however, is often insufficient in and of itself to make something a priority on the political agenda. As previously stated, we put up with all kinds of problems in society without taking specific action on them. Parallel to the problem stream is the politics stream, which is composed of such things as the public mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, and the prevailing ideologies of legislators and other key actors in the policy process. Often times, what a government chooses to do depends on what is going on politically at the time.

While a government typically comes into office with a certain idea of what it wishes to accomplish, whether it chooses to act on one issue or another can depend on any number of political factors that don't necessarily correspond with a rational actor approach to policymaking. For example, what are the societal groups opposing or supporting a particular issue, and what are their relative strengths? Is the government in a minority or majority position in the legislature? How much attention has a particular issue garnered in the media, or does the

public simply not care about it? In other words, what is the political environment, or context, within which policymakers are operating? As Kingdon argues, "potential agenda items that are congruent with the national mood, that enjoy interest group support or lack organized opposition, that fit the prevailing orientations of the legislative coalitions or current administration are more likely to rise to agenda prominence than items that do not meet such conditions" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 20).

The third stream in Kingdon's theoretical model consists of policy proposals; ideas about what should be done about a particular problem. Rarely does a problem have only one straightforward policy solution; more typically, there may be any number of ways of addressing a particular issue. Proposals for action are generated by actors within a given policy area, also known as the policy community. The policy community can include the minister responsible for a certain policy area, his or her political advisors, departmental bureaucrats, relevant interest groups, the minister's caucus colleagues and political party, the opposition, and think tanks. Within the policy community ideas are brought forward and float around in what Kingdon refers to as "the policy primeval soup". Some ideas may be automatically rejected by the policy community because they are too cost prohibitive, or too far removed from the ideological position of the government in office.

Kingdon argues that proposals that have the best chance of rising to the top of the policy primeval soup must meet several criteria. Included here are such factors as value acceptability within the policy community, public acceptability, technical feasibility, tolerable cost, and a reasonable chance for receptivity among elected decision-makers. The policy stream is important in not only the agenda setting process, but more so in the selection of policy options. Even before an issue can attain a solid position on a decision agenda, a viable policy option must be first available for decision makers to consider. "It is not enough that there is a problem, even quite a pressing problem ... (T)here also is generally a solution ready to go, already softened up, already worked out" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 142).

In understanding how a choice is ultimately made between different policy alternatives, Light (1991) suggests that each issue necessarily comes with a set of "natural boundaries" that may be political, economic or technical in nature. These boundaries will narrow the range of acceptable alternatives that will be considered by actors, because the costs of doing one thing over another may outweigh the potential benefits. Light concurs with Kingdon's assessment that some policy options will automatically be rejected either because they don't reflect the ideology or the direction set by the government, or won't win public support. At the same time, some alternatives will be disregarded because they are too costly; this became an increasingly important restriction in the 1980s as big budgets became less politically acceptable.

In terms of technical costs, Light adds that political leaders don't have the time or expertise to truly consider new alternatives; hence, they tend to focus on a narrow range of alternatives that may have had some success in the past and have already won the support of the bureaucracy. Drawing on the idea of organizational learning, Light maintains that "not only do actors and organizations learn which policy areas offer the greatest political promise, they learn which alternatives worked in the past" (Light, 1991, p. 197). This kind of learning can lead to the development of a particular policymaking style; if something seems to work in one area, then political leaders will tend to use the same general approach or model in a number of different policy areas.

While Kingdon's three streams of politics, problems and proposals flow independently of one another, at certain points a window can open up in one of the streams that allows them to come together. He argues that it is at this critical juncture - when a problem is recognized, a solution is developed and available in the policy community, and a political change makes it feasible to take action on a particular issue - that agenda setting occurs. At this point, "solutions become joined to problems, and both of them are joined to favorable political forces" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 20). Sometimes a window opens up quite predictably; for example a changeover of government or a scheduled review of a program, or it can be brought about by unforeseen events such as a national disaster (Walker, 1977). At such times a space is created whereby issues can be propelled from the informal agenda (the lengthier list of subjects that government may be paying

attention to) to the formal agenda (the smaller set of items that is being decided upon).

While transportation safety, for example, may languish on the informal agenda for years, the sudden crash of a passenger airline can suddenly transform the issue into a top priority for action. Similarly, shifts in public opinion can also lead to the opening up of window; as issues seem to catch on fire and capture the public's interest (the elevation of wait list times for health services is a recent example of this). And, of course, the number of seats a governing party is able to win in an election can also present opportunities for issues to rise to the top of the agenda pile. It is logical that the stronger a government's position is in the legislature, and the stronger its chances for re-election, the more willing it will be to pursue certain agenda items.

The mere opening up of a window, however, does not determine how an issue will ultimately be disposed of. Hence, while it may appear obvious that "something needs to be done" about improving health care wait lists, for example, exactly what this "something" should be may still be up for grabs. In the multiple streams model problems do not always predate solutions. Instead, any number of solutions float around in and near government, searching for problems to become attached to or waiting for political events to occur that will increase their likelihood of adoption. Advocates of particular solutions will seize the

opportunity to hook their proposals onto the problem of the moment, or push them at a time that seems politically propitious.

Hence, how the streams come together, or couple, will depend on the actions of participants involved in the agenda setting process. Kingdon argues that windows of opportunity can be taken advantage of by what he refers to as "policy entrepreneurs" or other key individuals, who are able to frame the problem a certain way in order to push forward their favored policy solutions. Advocates of particular alternatives thus "lie in wait in and around government with their solutions at hand, waiting for problems to float by to which they can attach their solutions, waiting for a development in the political stream they can use to their advantage" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 165).

Problems or politics by themselves can structure the informal agenda. But the probability of an issue rising on the formal agenda is dramatically increased if all three streams − problems, politics, and policies − are joined. Hence, if no plausible solutions are available to fix a particular problem, the issue may languish on the larger agenda for years (child poverty being one such example). Similarly, if there is insufficient public support for a particular solution (the political stream), then the window of opportunity may close and the issue fade from the attention of policymakers. As Kingdon stresses, windows of opportunity do not last forever. If one of the three elements is missing − if a solution is not available, a problem cannot be found or is not sufficiently compelling, or support is not

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forthcoming from the political stream – then the issue's place on the decision agenda may be fleeting. "The window may be open for a short time, but if the coupling is not made quickly, the window closes" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 178).

Actors

As Kingdon's discussion regarding the role of policy entrepreneurs in the coupling of the three streams illustrates, agendas do not simply fall out of the sky; rather, they are purveyed by political actors engaged in the policymaking process. The introduction of new ideas or issues into the policy discourse depends on the particular mix of actors involved in the decision-making process as well as the environment within which these demands emerge and are articulated in the prevailing policy discourses (Jones, 1994; Howlett, 2002; Spector and Kitsuse, 1977).

An extensive body of literature exists in the policy sciences field that considers the role of individual actors and groups in the formulation of policy outcomes, and their causal significance relative to the institutional structures within which they operate. Whether referred to as policy networks, issue networks, policy communities, advocacy coalitions, iron triangles or some other moniker, it is clear that no examination of agenda setting can exclude the role of actors. As Campbell, Pal and Howlett (2004) put it, "we think that to take process and policy outcomes seriously means taking a unique sequence of events and understanding it from the perspective of the actors. Why did they do what they

did, what structural constraints did they face, and how did these combine to produce (or not produce) policy?" (Campbell, Pal and Howlett, 2004, p. 13).

A useful way of organizing the discussion of the various players that may be involved in agenda setting is to differentiate between actors within government and those external to it (Kingdon, 1995). Internal actors comprise what some commonly refer to as "the administration": the head of government (premier, prime minister, or president), his or her executive (cabinet ministers), and members of the governing party's caucus. It can also include powerful political appointees, both in the chief executive's office as well as relevant departments or agencies such as Treasury Board, who are directly responsible to the executive. External actors that may be involved in generating policies on certain issues typically include interest groups (notably business and labour), research organizations, and the media.

Together these internal and external actors comprise what Howlett and Ramesh (2003) refer to as the "policy subsystem". The policy subsystem is the arena or space where "relevant actors discuss policy issues and persuade and bargain in pursuit of their interests" (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003, p. 53). Comprised of both actors who are intimately involved in the policy process as well as others that may be less directly engaged, the policy subsystem provides the "glue" that links actors, ideas and interests together in models of policy processes and choices (Howlett, 2002).

In terms of agenda setting, most studies point to the head of government as the most important actor within the policy subsystem (Kingdon, 1995; Howlett and Ramesh, 2003; Wood and Peake, 1998; Savoie, 2003; Pal, 2001). As Kingdon concludes in his examination of agenda setting in the American presidential system, "no other single actor in the political system has quite the capability of the president to set agendas in given policy areas for all who deal with those policies" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 23). Key members of the executive, such as cabinet ministers responsible for the issue area or ministers of finance, are also at the top of the list, for "nothing becomes a political issue unless important politicians accept it as such" (Levin, 2001, p. 167). This influence has increased with the rise of New Public Management, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The president's staff, along with political appointees in departments and agencies, also can play an influential role in the agenda setting process. "The president and his top advisors ... generally establish a tone, which means setting the administration's agenda and deciding a few of the fundamental issues" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 27).

Howlett and Ramesh (2003) maintain that the centrality of the executive in agenda setting, notably in parliamentary democracies, derives from its constitutional authority to govern the country and by such traditions as ministerial responsibility and cabinet solidarity. Hence, while other actors are also involved in the process, the authority to make and implement policies rests ultimately with the premier, prime minister, and members of cabinet. The executive also has a

number of other resources at its disposal which strengthens its position as the penultimate force in agenda setting. It has control over the fiscal resources of the state and a bureaucracy whose job it is to implement the wishes of the administration. In addition, the executive has unparalleled access to the mass media and unmatched power over information "that it withholds, releases and manipulates in a manner to bolster its preferences and weaken the cases of those opposed to it" (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003, p. 65).

At the same time, however, while a president or premier may be able to dominate what issues get placed on the agenda, this does not necessarily mean that he or she is able to control the final outcome, or indeed even what policy alternatives are that are up for serious consideration. The influence of various actors contained within the policy subsystem can vary throughout the policy process, from the earliest stages of agenda setting through to implementation and evaluation. As Mazzoni (1991; 1993) states in his examination of educational policymaking in Minnesota over the past three decades, "governors cannot simply command policy into being any more than can other system actors; they too must persuade, bargain, or pressure to put together a winning coalition" (Mazzoni, 1993, p. 368). In his research he found that while the civil service was prominent in the formulation of policy alternatives, "agenda setting, interest aggregation, and decision enactment were processes much more heavily influenced by Minnesota governors and legislators" (Mazzoni, 1993, p. 375).

Light (1991) points to a number of internal and external constraints on the ability of presidents in the United States to control what the end policy product will be. These include the internal constraints of time, information, expertise and energy; while externally a president may be hampered from getting his or her own way because of insufficient legislative support; a low level of public approval, or a too close electoral margin to guarantee success. Light maintains that once the general tone of the administration has been established, a government leader simply doesn't have the time, energy or information necessary to exhaustively control the policymaking process on every single issue. He or she must then largely rely on others to generate alternatives, evaluate the options, and formulate specific policy responses. At the same time, Light argues that the amount of cachet, or capital, that a president has both in terms of public approval and electoral margin will determine the degree to which he or she is able to push through their agenda priorities. "Capital sets the basic parameters of the agenda, determines the size of the agenda, and guides the criteria for choices" (Light, 1991, p. 34).

Bennett and McPhail's (1992) work on the influence of various actors on public policymaking in Canada also found that those individuals most important during the agenda setting stage tend to include only a relatively small group of people, typically the minister and deputy minister, one or two key civil servants, and the minister's closest political advisors. However, once the central policy themes have been set and as the process moves through implementation and beyond

other, non-state actors appear to have an increased impact. As they argue, "actors within the state (are) always important throughout the policy process but the relative importance of actors outside the state increase as one moved through the phases of that process" (Bennett and McPhail, 1992, p. 315). The civil service in particular appears to play a stronger role in both the generation of policy alternatives and in the formulation of policy once a choice has been made by political leaders; not surprising given that the bureaucracy is supposed to be the repository of information, knowledge and expertise on public policy matters (Kingdon, 1995).

On occasion, as Levin (2001) reminds us, individual civil servants can be important in advancing specific ideas, notably when a window of opportunity opens up in one of the streams that they are able to take advantage of. In an interesting take on the somewhat complex and intricate relationship between civil servants and their political masters, Canadian scholars Atkinson and Coleman (1985) advance what they call the "political administration model" to illustrate the relationship between senior bureaucrats and political leaders in liberal democracies. On the basis of interviews with a number of federal public officials they argue that together these key individuals "create a policy-making community in which they can function sometimes in conflict, often in agreement, but always in touch and operating within a shared framework" (Atkinson and Coleman, 1985, p. 60).

Certain players in the policy subsystem are what many refer to in the literature as "policy entrepreneurs". Policy entrepreneurs are individuals in and around government who seek to advance new ideas and changes in policy solutions to problems, by taking advantage of windows of opportunity (Harrison and Hoberg, 1991; Mintron, 2000; Kingdon, 1995; Mazzoni, 1991; 1993; Levin, 2001). Innovative proposals are often aggressively pushed by committed, persistent actors who are willing to invest personal and organizational resources in the anticipation of some policy gain. These individuals bring their own perspectives and ideas to the table, and interact, bargain and negotiate with each other on what issues should be placed on the agenda and the range of possible solutions. As Mazzoni (1991) describes them, "these advocates function to raise issue consciousness, mobilize public concerns, "soften up" the policy community, provide innovative ideas (and supportive rationales) to political leaders, and ... hook solutions to problems, proposals to political momentum, political events to policy problems" (Mazzoni, 1991, p. 118).

Political leaders and civil servants can also be influenced by individuals and groups operating outside of government. On any given issue, a host of participants without formal government positions can be involved in promoting certain issues onto the government agenda; including interest groups, researchers, academics, consultants, the general public, and the media. Interest groups can play a role in agenda setting by putting pressure on government officials to pay attention to a particular issue; however, as Kingdon (1995)

suggests, "the actual creation of policy agenda items by interest groups may be a less frequent activity than blocking agenda items or proposing amendments to or substitutions for proposals already on the agenda" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 51).

While any number of interest groups might form in response to certain issues or problems, "among interest groups, business is generally the most powerful, with an unmatched capacity to affect public policy" (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003). Bennett and McPhail concur with this assessment, adding "private businesses are consistently the most important nonstate actors" (Bennett and McPhail, 1992, p. 315). Lindblom (1980) was one of the first scholars to illustrate the enormous influence of business in the policy process. He attributes this status to the corporate sector's role as a main generator of wealth, and hence political, economic, and social stability, in industrial societies. As a result, policymakers pay particular attention to the needs and wants of the business community. As he argues,

> Governments award to business managers a privileged position in the play of power in policymaking. The privileged position goes so far as to require that government officials must often give business needs precedence over demands from citizens through electoral, party, and interest-group channels. Although neglect of business brings stagnation or unemployment, at great peril to officials in power, citizen and interest group demands can often be evaded or deflected, given the looseness of popular control over officials (Lindblom, 1980, p. 74).

As we shall see more fully in subsequent chapters, the influence of the corporate sector has increased over the years, as economic issues became the central

preoccupation of governments in the wake of the economic dislocations of the 1980s.

As we shall also see, business has taken a heightened interest in educational policy, as education has become more and more connected to an economic agenda (Levin, 2001; Taylor, 2001). Mazzoni describes the emergence of big business interest in education in the United States as "the most dramatic political change associated with the 1980s reform movement" (Mazzoni in Scribner and Layton, 1994, p. 62); while Slaughter (1990) argues that

> Over time the relationships of the central actors in the national higher education policy formation process have shifted. Rather than the federal government, together with the scientific community and foundations, having the dominant voice, the corporate community, in partnership with leaders of research universities, has become more vocal and taken a more active position (Slaughter, 1990, p. 3).

As evidence of this Slaughter references the myriad of business organizations in the United States that have become involved in higher education policy at the national, regional and local level; including the Business-Higher Education Forum, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, and the President's Commission on Industrial Competitiveness, to name but a few.

Parallel organizations have also emerged in Canada in the wake of concerns over skills shortages and the nation's position in the emerging global economy. Although business leaders in Canada tended to be distant from schools in the 1960s and 1970s, by the 1980s groups such as the Conference Board of

While the influence of the corporate sector in policymaking, notably educational policymaking, is unquestionable, the role of the media in agenda setting remains less clear. Whether the media actually creates the issues that eventually find their way onto a government's agenda or instead sheds light on what's already out there remains a point of contention amongst scholars (Cook, Tyler, Goetz, Gordon, Protess, Leff and Molotch, 1983). Kingdon, for one, does not consider the media to be a particularly strong, independent agent in agenda setting. He points to the press's tendency to cover a story for a short period of time and then to shift its attention to another story, thus diluting its impact.

The media can, however, function as a communicator of information about issues or events for policymakers, thus helping to shape to some extent the way in which issues are defined and understood in the public. In this way the media can influence public opinion, by giving attention to some kinds of ideas and ignoring or undermining others (Levin, 2001). As Kingdon describes it, the media can "pick up an idea that originated in the bureaucracy or in Congress, or a movement that began in some segment of the society, and then accelerate its development and magnify its impact" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 60).

The media can also be strategically used by policy entrepreneurs in their efforts to build support for certain solutions, as Harrison and Hoberg (1991) discovered in their investigation of agenda setting in the environmental field in Canada and

the United States. They found that while investigative reports by the media on problems can lead to high-profile stories, in the absence of effective entrepreneurs to carry the issue through these stories have little lasting impact in the end. As they conclude, "the media may be more important as channels for entrepreneurs than as an independent force" (Harrison and Hoberg, 1991, p. 25).

Conclusion

This chapter explored the core ideas of multiple streams theory, and in particular Kingdon's three process streams of politics, problems and policies. While relatively independent of one another, these streams are able to come together, or couple, at certain opportune times. It is at these moments of coupling that agenda setting occurs. At the same time, multiple streams theory recognizes that agenda setting and alternative specification are not things that "just happen" in the production of policy outcomes. Instead, they constitute distinct stages in the policymaking process, subject to certain discernable patterns and influences that can be examined in isolation from other stages.

Multiple streams theory as initially developed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) and later refined by Kingdon (1995) remains the pre-eminent approach to understanding how agenda setting occurs in governments. The beauty of multiple streams theory is that it avoids the determinism of other models. It is a porous model, allowing plenty of room for chance, human creativity and choice to influence outcomes. "The model views agenda changes as contingent rather

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than automatic outcomes, and specifies probabilistic rather than necessary and sufficient conditions" (Mucciaroni, 1992, p. 461).

While process is important, we cannot lose sight of the fact that is actors who make policies and decide what issues get acted upon by governments. The most important actors involved in agenda setting are members of the executive: the premier or prime minister, the minister responsible for the issue area, and their closest political advisors. It is clear, however, that the actors involved in the policy subsystem at any given time may also change as the policy development process evolves. Hence, while powerful members of the executive may be predominant throughout, in the development of alternative proposals the civil service may perform a stronger role than in the initial stages of agenda setting. In terms of actors external to government, business organizations have also become increasingly involved in the process. This has been particularly evident in the educational field in both the United States and Canada, as we shall see in later chapters.

Chapter 4: The Larger Context – Globalization

The purpose of this and the chapter which follows is to outline the third element of the conceptual framework – the larger context. The stages model of policy analysis – in which the various processes of the policymaking process is broken down into discrete steps, or stages – is a useful heuristic device because it allows us to concentrate our focus on a particular aspect of policymaking. At the same time, it can also mislead us into presuming that policymaking occurs in a vacuum, free from external influence. While a particular aspect of the policy process may be the focus of our attention, these processes occur within a larger environment which is in itself embedded within a broader context. The characteristics of this context – its social, economic, and political features, the prevailing ideas that exist in society, the institutions it contains and the values, history and traditions that permeate them – impact the way in which policies are shaped and the alternatives that are considered by actors within the policy subsystem.

As this environment changes so too does the ways in which policymaking occurs, and the ways in which problems are framed and alternatives generated. Over the past two decades, fundamental changes have occurred in the world that have affected both the nature of policy problems and their responses. Numerous studies (Doern, Pal and Tomlin, 1996; Radin, 2000; Brooks and Miljan, 2003; Peters and Savoie, 1998; Campbell, Pal and Howlett, 2004; Ball 1990) point to the ways in which macroeconomic factors – notably globalization – have altered

how states across the world engage in policymaking and the kinds of policy outcomes that result. As Pal (2001) notes, while the traditional categories of problem definition, design, implementation and evaluation within the policymaking process continue to apply, the content of these categories has shifted in important ways in order to respond to the impact of globalization, culture shifts, and management theory (Pal, 2001).

Globalization has reframed not only the content of policymaking for states around the world, but the ways in which policy is defined and developed. While we tend to think of globalization in purely economic or political terms, a third form – managerial globalization – also has important ramifications for the process of policymaking. Managerial globalization refers to both the ways in which states borrow policies from each other, as well as borrow management tools and techniques from the private sector. Each of these developments, policy borrowing and the rise of New Public Management, will be examined here.

Globalization

"Globalization" remains perhaps one of the most abused concepts within modern parlance; used to explain virtually anything and everything that has occurred within the world over the past three decades (Ball, 1998). Despite its annoying overuse by the media and political pundits, however, it is clear that globalization is not just some passing trend or neutral development occurring somewhere "out there". Rather, the sense of the world as existing beyond national borders has

fundamentally altered both the policy agenda and the source of policy problems in Canada and throughout the industrialized world. "Policymaking systems have essentially shifted away from a preponderant concern about problems generated domestically within national borders to problems generated internationally" (Pal, 2001, p. 114). With globalization, public policy has been internationalized; defined by Doern, Pal and Tomlin (1996) as the process by which various aspects of policy or policymaking are influenced by factors outside national territorial boundaries. It is "a continuum that runs across several dimensions, namely, the source of policy ideas, policy design, implementation, and relevant policy actors" (Doern, Pal, and Tomlin, 1996, p. 4).

As Bottery (1999) illustrates, globalization can take a number of forms. In economic terms, it is marked by major increases in international trade and investment, the evolution of global production by transnational corporations, and unregulated flows of capital. This trend toward both greater economic integration and competition has forced nations to focus more on economic growth and the ways in which this can be promoted, rather than on more purely domestic or nationalist projects. In a political sense, globalization theorists point to the erosion of nation-states as the key unit in which political decisions are made; the leakage of sovereignty to both supranational organizations on the one hand and to subnational units on the other (McBride, 2001; Rockman in Peters and Savoie, 1998).

For some, globalization is viewed as the end of the nation-state as an autonomous actor. In his analysis of the impact of globalization and New Public Management on the public service in Britain, Rhodes (1994), for example, maintains that the British state is being "hollowed out"; a trend he also sees occurring elsewhere in the western world. In particular, he argues that the increased fragmentation of the system and dispersion of accountability brought about by privatization, alternative service delivery mechanisms, the rise of supranational organizations and the discretionary constraints on civil servants, will only serve to "erode the centre's capacity to steer the system – its capacity for governance" (Rhodes, 1994, p. 149).

While the paradigm of global economic competitiveness that dominates much of contemporary policymaking is not an entirely new phenomenon,[1] the degree to which it now shapes the policymaking agenda, and in particular educational policy, is unprecedented. As Carnoy and Rhoten (2002) argue, before the 1950s comparative education focused mainly on the philosophical and cultural origins of national educational systems. Beginning in the 1970s, however, the trend in educational policy analysis shifted toward how economic imperatives on a global scale are shaping education worldwide. Today, with knowledge and information as the main resources of the reorganized world economy, globalization has had a

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[1] O'Sullivan (1999) points out that these kinds of concerns were also being voiced a hundred years ago. In 1907, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association declared, "the competition of the world has become so strong that we cannot afford to fall behind in the race for efficiency ... we must educate our people towards efficiency". The fear of not being able to sufficiently compete in the global economy continued to prevail in the post-war period, whereby educational reforms were justified by governments as essential to maintaining Canada's position as a key player in the defense of the free world. They were also promoted as a way to meet the complex educational requirements of a highly industrialized society. See O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 312 ff.

tremendous impact on how education policy is framed across the post-industrialized world. Over the past two decades education debates have become increasingly infused with the imagery of globalization. "The combination of economic restructuring in the world economy and the powerful ideological conceptions of how educational delivery needs to be changed, spread by international institutions as a consequence of the globalization process, is having a significant impact on educational systems worldwide" (Carnoy and Rhoten, 2002, p. 2).

Carter and O'Neill (1995) point to several ways in which the demands of the global market, or what they refer to as "the new orthodoxy", have transformed education. Perhaps most significantly is the fact that over the past two decades educational reform efforts have largely been decoupled from funding (Levin, 1998). Since the economic dislocations of the 1980s governments have been under pressure to reduce the growth of public spending on welfare policy areas, including education, and to find alternative sources of funding for their educational systems. Increased economic competition, notably from Asian countries, together with a declining tax base in the developed world due to an ageing population and heightened demand on many public services, has led to the realization that "any political party in power, whatever the political hue, will have less scope to pursue welfare policies than it had in the past" (Bottery, 1999, p. 304).

At the same time that governments are spending less on education, however, they are also seeking ways to attract foreign capital and provide a ready supply of skilled labor to foster economic growth. This translates into pressure to increase the average levels of education of their workforces, notably at the post-secondary level. With knowledge replacing the old factors of production (land, labor and capital) as the key resource of the modern era, industrialized nations find themselves having to compete for "increasingly mobile investment capital by stressing the skill of their labor force, the innovative capacity of their scientific and technical workers, and the efficiency of their enterprises" (Davies and Guppy, 1997, p. 439).

Moreover, as relative incomes for higher-educated labor rise, the demand for university education and for more innovative methods of delivery systems in terms of part-time, distance, and lifelong learning opportunities increases. In light of the kinds of new knowledge required by the globalized economy, schools are also admonished to change their curricula and become more "relevant" to the needs of the marketplace. And lastly, globalization brings with it a heightened emphasis on standards, accountability and testing, with the quality of national educational systems increasingly being compared internationally (Carter and O'Neill, 1995; Carnoy and Rhoten, 2002).

The restructuring that has occurred in the wake of globalization has not only reframed the content of education policy around the world, but also how policies

are developed as well. In what Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) call "managed decentralization", educational policymaking is now marked by the simultaneous drift toward both centralization and devolution of authority, which squeezes power from the middle levels of educational administration and redistributes it upward to more central states and downward to individual schools and parents (Davies and Guppy, 1997; Bottery, 1999; Ball, 1990; 1998). While policymakers argue that globalization makes education a national concern, we also see the movement toward greater market choice in education for learners, a stronger voice for parents, and more local decision-making within schools (Levin, 1998; Bottery, 1996).

This devolution of authority, however, is not completely unfettered but instead occurs within a centralized framework designed by political actors. "As power is being wrested from education professionals, teacher unions, and ministry officials, it is being redistributed upward to more senior state officials and downward to local groups" (Davies and Guppy, 1997, p. 459). In order to attempt to control or direct the influence of global markets upon their own territories, "policy will be defined at the centre, and the work of educational managers will be one of implementation, not as a contribution to, or as a critique of the policy" (Bottery, 1999, p. 310).

Hence, as schools become tools of state economic development efforts governments focus their attention on steering centralized policies, with schools

relegated to implementers of these policies. This "steering by remote control" (Thomas, 2002) replaces direct government intervention and prescription with benchmarks, performance measures, and inter-institutional comparisons. Two complexly-related policy agendas can be discerned across the spectrum of educational reform. The first aims to "tie education more closely to national economic interests, while the second involves a decoupling of education from direct state control" (Ball, 1998, p. 125). As governments seek to better direct their educational systems in order to achieve state goals, high-level political actors are now more active in setting education policy. Power is drifting to the top, away from educational professionals up to senior political actors, and at the same time down to the bottom of students, parents, and local groups.

Under this managed devolution schools therefore operate, or self-manage, within a framework set by political leaders (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry, 1997). As nation-states abandon their previously more passive role in education in order to avoid economic stagnation and become more competitive in the global market, "the refrain, 'education is increasingly too important to be left to the educators' is debated in countries across the English-speaking democracies" (Davies and Guppy, 1997, p. 446).

While the impacts of globalization on policymaking and educational policy in particular appear ubiquitous, some commentators stress that governments are not completely powerless in its wake (McBride, 2001; Rockman in Peters and

Savoie, 1998; Peters in Peters and Savoie, 2000; Pal, 2001; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry, 1997). They argue that while globalization may be a prevailing variable shaping educational policy, it does not necessarily homogenize everything in its path. The outcomes of globalization as they relate to education are mediated and constructed by the various structural contexts that filter the process, and the local and national conditions that intercede global pressures for reform. "Educational changes in response to globalization share certain defining parameters but still vary greatly across regions, nations, and localities" (Carnoy and Rhoten, 2002, p. 6; Halpin and Troyna, 1995). Hence, global forces interact with local and national politics to shape different end products from the same initial prototype. As Daun (2002) adds, within the parameters set by globalization, "how they (higher education systems) respond depends on their real financial situation, their interpretation of that situation and their ideological position regarding the role of the public sector in education" (Daun, 2002, p. xvii).

In this way, Levin (1998) likens policy change in education to an epidemic. New agents of disease tend to spread rapidly as they find the hosts that are least resistant. "So it is with policy change in education - new ideas move around quite quickly, but their adoption may depend on the need any given government sees itself having" (Levin, 1998, p. 138). Global forces may therefore be less a determining factor and more a rationale for governments intent on pursuing certain courses of action. In other words, globalization may act as excuse for

political leaders to implement particular policies; arguing that "they had no choice" but to do such things as cut funding to schools or close down certain faculties in the name of improving economic productivity. "In any given situation, concerns about globalization, whether valid or not, may be a real motivation for policy, or they may act as an excuse for policies that are desired on other grounds, such as ideological conviction" (Levin, 2001, p. 82). Regardless of the intent, however, it is clear that the globalization discourse has fundamentally altered educational policymaking across the globe.

New Public Management (NPM)

While we tend to think of globalization in purely economic or political terms, it is in fact a multidimensional, multilevel process that is unequivocally but not exclusively based in economics or politics. To that end Bottery (1999) also identifies a third form of globalization that is relevant to education policymaking: managerial globalization. In his assessment, while economic imperatives have had important effects upon education, so too has the manner in which educational institutions increasingly borrow practices and ideas from different cultural contexts. He points to two dimensions of managerial globalization: the encouragement of public sector managers to adapt ideas from the private sector, and the tendency to look beyond one's own borders to see what is happening in other countries.

In the first instance, the import of private sector practices into the public arena has been driven in large part by "the requirement that governments respond to the fiscal stresses brought about by changes in the international economic system on the one hand and by the unrelenting demands for government services" on the other (Aucoin, 1990, p. 115). This practice has largely come to be known by the term "New Public Management" (NPM). For the purposes of this study I will use the terms "New Public Management", "managerialism" and "reinventing government" interchangeably. It is important to note that while we tend to speak of a philosophy of New Public Management, as if it were an internally coherent and consistent body of thought, in actuality NPM draws on several different intellectual traditions and has numerous interpretations and permutations. Many different activities fall under its umbrella, and there has yet to emerge within the scholarly community a consensus on the meaning of the construct. Moreover, as Wise (2002) points out, despite continued usage of the term there is little that is "new" any longer in New Public Management (Wise, 2002; Barzelay, 2001; and Pollitt in Peters and Savoie, 1998).

NPM represents the attempt by governments to better control their environments in the wake of global economic change through the use of tools and techniques adapted from the business world. Inspired by the changes brought about by Britain's Margaret Thatcher in 1979, NPM constitutes one of the most striking trends in public administration over the past two decades (Hood, 1991; Aucoin, 1995). The basic assumption underlying NPM is the idea that previous theories

of public administration, and the processes and structures which flow from them, are built upon old ideas and technologies which no longer hold in today's world (Emmert, Crow and Shangraw, 1994). In this new context, driven by such forces as technological change, rising interdependencies, heightened public demands and economic dislocations, attention is being turned to new models of organizational design and practice in the administration of public affairs.

Within this paradigm it is bureaucracy, with all of its negative connotations and stereotypes, which is to blame for many of the woes facing modern governments: spiraling debt costs, public cynicism and mistrust, inefficient services, and unaccountable politicians and civil servants (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Osborne and Plastrik, 1997). For the strongest advocates of NPM, the public service is viewed as a "sea of waste, a swamp of incompetence, a mountain of unchecked power, an endless plain of mediocrity" (Goodsell, 1994, p. 3). In this vein, public organizations, and the public servants who work in them, have thus become the scapegoats for the problems of modern governance (Thomas, 1996; Savoie, 1995).

The appeal of NPM lies in the unquestioned belief that private sector management is somehow innately superior to public sector management (Aucoin, 1990; 1995; Savoie, 1995; Peters and Savoie, 1995; 1998; 2000). Contained within the body of thought loosely referred to as NPM are four key assumptions: that existing public sector organizations are outmoded and in need

of reform; that private sector management ideas and techniques can serve as a guide to reforming the public sector; that greater efficiencies will necessarily flow from the application of these techniques; and that citizens should be better thought of as customers and consumers (Pollitt, 1995; Pollitt in Peters and Savoie, 1998; deLeon and Denhardt, 2000; Bottery, 1996). Largely based on the philosophical constructs of public choice theory, NPM asserts that government should be run like a business, not only in terms of its procedures and structural arrangements, but also in terms of its organizational culture and the values it espouses. According to this argument, market-oriented organizations possess many advantages over more traditional approaches to public administration. They are decentralized, competitive and responsive to changing conditions; they empower customers to make choices; they link resources directly to results; and they allow government to leverage its power and achieve substantive change by applying incentives strategically.

Political leaders throughout the world began to embrace managerialism in the 1980s as a means of improving the efficiency and accountability of public institutions and departments and demonstrating to a mistrustful public that they are actually doing something to "fix" the problems of modern governance. And it is not only politicians of the New Right but governments of all political stripes that have sought ways to reinvent how they do business. As Thomas (1996) notes, over the past two decades we have witnessed not only the globalization of economies, but also the globalization of the market metaphor in public

administration theory and practice. "Almost everywhere you look on today's globe, you can discover governments experimenting with ideas and approaches promoted by the new public management movement" (Thomas, 1996, p. 9).

Thomas (1996) also points to the importance of rhetoric within the lexicon of NPM; it is replete with dramatic, positive, action-oriented ideas and phrases (for example, the re-invention and re-engineering of government; entrepreneurship; total quality management; efficiency, effectiveness and accountability; outcomes-based; customer empowerment) that are enticing to a public tired of high taxes and inefficient public services. As he notes, "beleaguered governments and their public servants have been searching for an effective response to the growing public discontent, and the seemingly bold ideas represented by new public management have a seductive appeal worldwide" (Thomas, 1996, p. 9). With its emphasis on action (as opposed to just thinking or planning, which is apparently what public administrators used to only do), new-style politicians can be seen to be doing something about modern day problems, whether this is actually the case or not (Savoie, 1995). Today, the idea that government should be run more like a business is so entrenched in our psyche that the assumptions and precepts of managerialism are rarely, if ever, challenged by political leaders, the public, and the media (Patterson, 1998; Savoie, 1995).

The dominance of New Public Management in public administration has not only altered many of our assumptions about governance, however, it has also had

fundamental implications for the way in which public policy is both designed and implemented (Pal, 2001; Kettl, 1997; Pollitt, 1993; Peters and Savoie, 1995; 1998; Aucoin, 1995). One of the key aspects of the reinventing government movement has been the greater politicization of governance and policymaking and the reassertion of the "primacy of the elected politician over the bureaucrat with respect to both budgets and policy" (Aucoin, 1990, p. 117; 1995). Hence we have "steering by remote control": developing policy and setting overall strategic direction at the centre (i.e. at the political level) while devolving implementation and general management of policy to the bureaucracy (Thomas, 1996; 2002; undated; deLeon and Denhardt, 2000). Within the managerialist school there is the assumption that, in the governance of society, political leaders have lost too much power to the bureaucracies which are meant to serve them. As a former senior adviser to Brian Mulroney once complained, "bureaucrats should get back to their real job – to implement decisions and see to it that government operations run smoothly and leave policy to us" (quoted in Savoie, 2003, p. 124).

Savoie (2003) points to the rise of NPM in the 1980s as the period in which the comfortable system of governing that had hitherto existed began to unravel. Activist Anglo-American political leaders, notably those from the New Right, began to express concerns that career officials had gained too much influence on the policy agenda and in shaping policy outcomes. These politicians "came to the conclusion that the civil service lacked the ability or the willingness to provide sound and unbiased policy advice, that it had its own agenda, and that they could

never secure the kind of advice that they wanted to ensure that the public sector could or would actually change course" (Savoie, 2003, p. 103).

This argument is also supported by Peters (2000). In what he calls the "burning of the village", Peters asserts that many politicians coming into office during this time expressed a profound dislike for their bureaucrats and began taking steps to reform the system in a way that would reduce the influence of the civil service. This produced a much-reduced policy role for senior civil servants, with the job of advising on policy matters now largely the domain of political appointees and ministers themselves. Hence, "the role of the civil servant began to be changed more and more into that of the public manager rather than that of the policy adviser" (Peters in Lindquist, 2000, p. 30).

Whereas the "cozy village system of the past" was supported by a faith in the capacity of government to solve many social and economic problems, the "burning of the village" represented a declining faith in government. Government became conceptualized as a major part of the problem facing the economy and society, rather than as part of the solution. "The dominant assumption was that government – especially the public bureaucracy – was incapable of acting swiftly, effectively and efficiently to solve public problems" (Peters in Lindquist, 2000, p. 30).

Governance in the 1980s was also altered by the increased impact of ideology on policy and administration. While the role of ideology in shaping the climate of ideas around education, and in particular the influence of such New Right politicians as Thatcher, Reagan and Mulroney will be more fully explored in later chapters, suffice it to say here that policymaking before this time had largely been a matter of consensus and cooperation. However, after the loss of readily available financial resources that consensus broke down, and more genuine conflicts over policy began to arise. "Potential disputes that previously could be managed by money became 'zero-sum' conflicts that would become embroiled in larger political and ideological conflicts" (Peters in Linquist, 2000, p. 31).

This trend continued throughout the decade, as the skepticism expressed by such New Right political leaders as Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney towards the bureaucracy turned into downright hostility; a hostility shared by many segments of contemporary society. It is no surprise then that all three leaders were strong supporters of NPM. "Managerialism bears the clear imprint of Thatcher, Reagan, and Mulroney, and one of its main objectives was to get at 'mismanagement and waste' in government" (Savoie, 1994, p. 187).

Hence, a greater emphasis on centralization, coordination and control has emerged as central features of administrative reform efforts in Canada, the United States and elsewhere. For leaders such as Thatcher, Reagan and Mulroney, reform of the machinery of government was motivated by the

overarching aim of refocusing the role of the civil service on management rather than policymaking[2]. Emboldened by NPM, executive authorities (prime ministers, premiers, and senior cabinet ministers) have sought to effect more of a "hands-on" style of political leadership, seen as crucial to the effective domination by politicians of the strategic decision-making process. They have also sought to "impose new policy directions on bureaucracies which are either skeptical of or opposed to changes in the policy agenda and priorities of the post-war period during which the modern administrative state flourished" (Aucoin, 1990, p. 120).

As examples of this centralization of executive authority Aucoin (1995) points to such trends as inner-cabinets, executive committees within cabinets, ministers as chief executive officers of their departments, the expansion of central support staff (or "superbureaucrats"), and the promotion of career public servants who have demonstrated either partisan attachments to the governing political elite or sympathy to their policies. A greater reliance on political appointees, both in executive offices as well as in government departments and agencies, is a further example of this trend.

It appears that even within the executive, power is becoming centralized at the top echelons, notably the premier (or prime minister), minister of finance, and the

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[2] This is only one of the many inherent contradictions contained within the reinventing government movement. While advocates call on public sector managers to become empowered and more entrepreneurial, creative and flexible in carrying out their responsibilities, at the same time there is an underlying assumption that they cannot be trusted because they are the ones that created the mess in the first place. Hence the need for a stronger hand by elected politicians and their appointees.

heads of such key central agencies as Treasury Board. Savoie (1999; 2003) argues that the idea of cabinet as a collective, confederal-type decision-making body, in which the prime minister was only first among ministers, no longer applies. "Only the prime minister, and to a lesser degree the minister of finance, through the budget, can decide when and how to land on a policy issue or even on a new spending commitment" (Savoie, 1999, p. 273).

At the same time that policymaking has become more centralized within the executive, however, it has also become more diffuse and porous than ever before. Technology has meant that think tanks, lobbyists, consultants, interest groups and pollsters are able to obtain information quickly about policy issues and government activities. As trust in politicians and civil servants has declined and bureaucracy bashing has taken its toll, many citizens have become better educated, more informed and more interested in policymaking. As a result, policies are no longer struck in isolation inside government. "The ability to arrive at a stable consensus over which problems to address, to secure an understanding with the relevant sectors of the public over actions to take, and to bring a 'horizontal perspective' to all issues of public policy (has become) as important as the substance of the policy itself" (Savoie, 2003, p. 104).

Hence the hunt by politicians for new forms of citizen participation, such as public hearings, task forces and commissions, largely comprised of external "experts" and stakeholder groups. Now, "politics enters the policy process much earlier

than in the past, and career officials now share the policy-making space with a variety of actors" (Savoie, 2003, p. 116). Indeed, the compliance, if not the direct participation, of stakeholders is now required even at the data-gathering stage of policy development. In the modern era, it is no longer possible inside government to review policy issues without ensuring the consent of the governed. The top-down command and control methods of days past are no longer sustainable.

Policy Borrowing

As worldwide economic dislocations led to a confluence of common problems across western nations, policymakers began to look at what other countries were doing as an easier and less costly alternative to the development of new policies from scratch. Especially in times of grave economic uncertainty, governments will search for more serious changes in policies when past remedies are no longer seen as successful or viable (Bradford, 1998), and appropriate identifiable aspects of another country's apparent policy "solutions". In so doing they will look to provinces or countries that are seen as natural leaders (for example, the United Kingdom, the United States, Alberta and Ontario) or with whom they share similar cultural backgrounds, political systems or geographic proximity. As a result, the trend of "policy borrowing" emerged in the late 1980s as countries began to borrow policies from other jurisdictions and apply them to their particular environment (McFarland and Richardson, 1993; Halpin and Troyna, 1995).

Not surprising then, is the similarity of educational reforms found in Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. However, as Whitty (2002) points out, while countries that have much in common are more likely to adopt comparable reforms, similar educational policies can also be found in countries with different histories from the English-speaking democracies, such as Chile, Sweden, and South Africa. The same holds true in the area of post-secondary education. Long perceived as a unique characteristic of the American system of higher education, "experiments with market competition in academic labor markets, institutional finance, student support, and the allocation of research funds are now evident in the higher education policy of many different nations" (Dill, 1997, p. 167).

Levin (1998; 2001) elucidates the common themes that have emerged in the education reform policies which industrialized countries have borrowed from each other. Key amongst these is the reformulation of education as a commercial or market commodity. In the past, educational reforms were mostly seen in the context of social mobility or individual welfare. Today, in the face of globalization "the need for change in education is largely cast in economic terms and particularly in relation to the preparation of a workforce and competition with other countries" (Levin, 1998, p. 133). In an examination of educational reform in five different settings (New Zealand, England, Minnesota, Alberta and Manitoba), Levin (2001) discovered a distinct managerialist focus; "a belief that the central problems of education can be remedied through changing the organization and

management of the system in accord with a set of theoretical principles that can be applied regardless of context" (Levin, 2001, p. 17-18).

Levin (2001) also draws our attention to a number of other commonalities, including the dominance of economic rationales for change, the overall climate of criticism of schools, the absence of additional funding to support change, and the sense of schools as little more than "production enterprises". A pervasive mistrust of educators, he adds, provided policymakers with the justification to externally drive the reform process. "The changes examined are driven primarily by the political apparatus of government rather than by educators or bureaucrats and justified on the basis of the need for a very substantial break from current practice" (Levin, 2001, p. 19).

At the same time, while there are clear international connections on education reform, there are also compelling distinctions across the jurisdictions. In England, Levin finds that the changes were more extensive and far-reaching, while in New Zealand they were largely contained to governance issues. In Alberta and Minnesota issues of spending reductions, increased parental involvement, and greater provincial control were central. As he argues, unique aspects in each context, including the nature of political debate, the size of the political elite, historical traditions, and demographic and geographic aspects all played a role in shaping education policy. These differences, Levin maintains, "draw attention to

the ways in which context mediates the flow of ideas across and within national boundaries" (Levin, 2001, p. 113).

Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) add that while education policy was once based on broad visions and ideals, it is now based more on what governments believe to be possible, expedient and what interest groups can persuade governments to do. Hence, social democratic values have become secondary to the state economic agenda, with calls for reform thick with imagery from economic globalization. At the same time, educational change is occurring in the context of large-scale criticism of schools. "Government policy documents typically take the view that school systems have failed to deliver what is required and that the failure is especially lamentable in view of the high level of spending on education" (Levin, 2001, p. 13).

Blame for the economic crises plaguing countries throughout the 1980s was leveled at excessive spending by previous governments, the failures of the welfare state and the particular failings of the school system (Dale, 1989; Whitty and Edwards, 1998). What is so intriguing is how this faith in choice and competition as the answer to educational challenges goes largely unquestioned amongst political leaders, the media, and large segments of the public.

Interestingly, as Davies and Guppy (1997) note in their examination of the impact of globalization on education in the English-speaking democracies, the popularity

of market-style reforms also traverses ideological boundaries. The common assumption is that it is the corporate sector and those governments which embody the political movement of economic globalization, the New Right, that are the central agents of these reforms. As I shall later argue, there is evidence to support this idea, at least the extent to which the general thrust of Thatcher's changes in the United Kingdom influenced the programmes later pursued by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Brian Mulroney in Canada (and ultimately, the Filmon government in Manitoba). However, it also appears that the market metaphor has become so dominant in our thinking that to merely link it to ideology is misleading. While policy borrowing is more likely when there is some commonality between the characteristics of the different education systems involved and the dominant political ideologies promoting reform within them, beyond the example of the United Kingdom, "school reform often has little connection to the ideological stance of the ruling party" (Davies and Guppy, 1997, p. 450).

Instead, what we find more than the detailed borrowing of specific policies and practices is policymakers working within similar ideological frames of references producing parallel policy initiatives. Hence, the process of policy borrowing is "perhaps less a matter of direct policy exchange than of mutually reinforcing versions of reality which reflect shared reference groups and assumptive worlds" (Whitty and Edwards, 1998, p. 223). Evidence of this is the similar reform programmes that have been implemented by governments of quite different

political stripes in Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Levin, 1998; Elliott and MacLennan, 1994). Some themes contained in the educational reform movement, such as increased choice for parents and students, are not only supported by the New Right but find resonance in the Liberal Left as well (Halpin and Troyna, 1995; Whitty and Edwards, 1998). Thus, as Fitz and Halpin (1991) conclude, "interpreting policy via a reading of a correspondence between ideological preferences and concrete proposals is a hazardous procedure, and one which may overlook the complexities, contingencies and competing interests which we believe are so much a part of the policy-making process" (Fitz and Halpin, 1991, p. 135).

At the same time, policy borrowing seems to have far less to do with "the success, however defined, of the institutional realization of particular policies in their countries of origin (as it does with) legitimating other related policies" (Halpin and Troyna, 1995, p. 304; Levin, 1998). In this way, policy borrowing carries with it important political symbolism by legitimizing the actions of a government. Robertson and Waltman (1992) emphasize that politicians' decisions to borrow are frequently influenced by short-term appearances and the pressures they are under to solve urgent problems for which there is no recognizable solution (Robertson and Waltman in Finegold, 1992). Anxious to demonstrate to a skeptical public that they are "taking action" in the face of burgeoning deficits and global change, the particularities of education policy are

often of less significance to political leaders than their role in political discourse (Edelman, 1964; Stone, 1988; 1989).

Education restructuring policy may therefore have less to do with truly making an educational system better and more with providing an appealing rationale for a government's economic agenda, within an ideological framework (in this case, the metaphor of the market) that resonates with the public. It is easier to sell the idea of reforming the educational system to provide more choice to students, to make schools more accountable, and to improve learning outcomes than it is to sell funding cuts to schools. It is to these considerations of the role of ideology, metaphors and political discourse in shaping the climate of ideas that we now turn.

Conclusion

The impact of globalization on not only the content of public policy but how policies are developed cannot be overestimated. Despite its overuse by political leaders and the media alike, there is clear evidence of how economic restructuring has influenced governments of every political stripe. Powerful too is the way in which public administration is now approached by politicians anxious to appease a frustrated and cynical electorate. With the rise of New Public Management, political leaders are playing a more central role in the policy process than ever before. Policymaking has become increasingly politicized, with

premiers, ministers of finance, and central agencies such as treasury board assuming the level of influence once held by senior civil servants.

The policy process has also become more diffuse and porous, as interest groups, the media and other stakeholders demand more input into governmental affairs. Hence we see governments turning towards such instruments as commissions, public hearings and other mechanisms designed to better involve the public and to democratize how public policies are designed and implemented.

At the same time, nations are looking to what other countries are doing in response to challenging public policy questions, and borrowing their approaches. Hence we see a certain confluence in educational restructuring policies, regardless of a government's political stripe. It appears, however, that the appeal of policy borrowing may have less to do with the success of any particular policy and more with the fact that it can provide an important rationale for change.

Chapter 5: The Larger Context - The Climate of Ideas

In addition to globalization, the second key aspect of the larger context that is relevant to my case study is what Levin (2001) has referred to as the "climate of ideas". At any given time certain ideas take hold that give shape to what values and beliefs we hold as a community, and set the broad parameters of what we consider to be acceptable actions on the part of government. While there is some disagreement amongst scholars over what precisely shapes this climate of ideas and causes it to shift over time, such factors as globalization and the rise of New Public Management have clearly had an impact on agenda setting and the way in which we think about public policy.

In addition to globalization and the reinventing government movement, ideology can also play a role in influencing the climate of ideas. As I argued in the previous chapter, New Public Management was born out of a particular intellectual perspective that for many has become one of the central drivers of policymaking in the 21st century. While it is easy to exaggerate the impact of neo-conservatism on determining policy outcomes, during the 1980s and early 1990s it was a relevant factor in understanding why some issues were more likely to get placed on a government's formal agenda than others. This has been especially the case in terms of educational policy, as we shall explore more fully in subsequent chapters.

At the same time, it is also helpful to consider the prevailing academic discourses around a particular issue. How scholars and researchers define a certain problem; the importance placed on it and the kinds of solutions that are offered can have a bearing on the climate of ideas. Not only can these discourses help steer debate in a general sense, but entrepreneurs within the policy subsystem can use the academic literature to legitimize their efforts to get certain issues onto the government agenda and to promote certain policy solutions.

While for many the climate of ideas seems to be "things that just make sense", it is not spontaneously generated. As I shall argue, social problems do not have an objective life of their own; simply waiting to be discovered and acted upon by an attentive government. Rather, how we define problems in society and the kinds of solutions that are proposed for their resolution are socially and ideologically constructed, with the advocates of competing proposals engaging in a verbal tug of war to enlist support for their particular views. A compelling body of literature has developed, encompassing not only political science but also sociology, linguistics, behavioral science and education, which draws our attention to how policy actors use manipulation, argumentation and ambiguity to gain the upper hand in policy debates. How we choose to define problems, the causal determinants that we attribute to them and who we accord blame for their existence, has much to do with the kinds of solutions that are ultimately proposed and accepted for their resolution. This chapter will discuss each of these ideas in turn.

The Climate of Ideas

Kingdon (1995) suggests that at any given time there is a general feeling of what is acceptable and plausible within society. As we saw in Chapter 3, in his multiple streams model Kingdon attributes a good deal of the success of policy entrepreneurs in getting their issues on the agenda to their skill and luck in taking advantage of open windows of opportunity. Nonetheless, their ability to push certain ideas has to be placed within the wider context; against the backdrop of what Schon (1971) has called "ideas in good currency". According to Schon, underlying every policy debate "there is a barely visible process through which issues come to awareness and ideas about them become powerful" (Schon, 1971, p. 123). Every community carries with it assumptions that just "sound right" to most people; certain ideas about what they hold to be true and important. These ideas exist in all areas of social life, from child-rearing and healthcare to crime, tax rates and foreign policy (Levin, 2001).

Others refer to these ideas in good currency as the public or national mood. As Kingdon describes it,

> People in and around government sense a national mood. They are comfortable discussing its content, and believe that they know when the mood shifts. The idea goes by different names – the national mood, the climate of the country, changes in public opinion, or broad social movements. But common to all of these labels is the notion that a rather large number of people out in the country are thinking along certain common lines, that this national mood changes from one time to another in discernible ways, and that these changes in mood or climate have important impacts on policy agendas and policy outcomes (Kingdon, 1995, p. 146).

As Kingdon explains, this mood, or climate of ideas, plays a critical role in agenda setting because it provides a point of reference in policy debates by facilitating some choices and limiting others. A certain kind of discourse, or conventional wisdom, tends to develop around policy issues which motivates government actors to respond to problems in definable ways. The climate of ideas surrounding a particular issue can therefore place constraints on what is possible or acceptable in society. It would be foolhardy for a political actor to promote an idea that runs so counter to the conventional wisdom as to not be able to garner sufficient public or legislative support. Hence, the policy subsystem's actors' sense of the national mood serves as a kind of gatekeeper. While the national mood can create the fertile ground necessary for certain ideas to take hold and germinate in the public consciousness, if there is a general climate of hostility around an issue then the likelihood of it getting onto the formal agenda is significantly reduced.

Although we tend to think of ideas in good currency and the public mood as the same thing, Pal (2001) cautions that this is not necessarily the case. Ideas in good currency, he maintains, may not necessarily reflect (at least in the first instance) a groundswell of public opinion. Indeed, "the public mood might be influenced by a sense of changes in important structuring ideas, ideas that many people might at first find unfamiliar or even disagreeable, but that over time they will come to accept as a standard of importance and plausibility" (Pal, 2001, p. 121). Sometimes there may be a lag between the ideas being proposed by policy

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actors and entrepreneurs and popular sentiment. Or alternately, decision-makers have to catch up to shifts in the public mood (the accountability in government issue comes to mind here). If advocates of a particular idea or solution find themselves out of step with the public mood they have little choice but to "adapt to their unfortunate situation, present their ideas for consideration as much as is possible under the circumstances, and wait for the mood to shift once again in their direction" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 149).

By way of example, Pal points to how ideas in good currency have changed in Canada over the past few decades. In the 1950s and 1960s the national mood consisted of such values as equity, cooperation, a strong national government, social justice, and "made in Canada" policy solutions. In the 1980s however these themes shifted, with the influence of the Thatcher and Reagan revolutions and their echoes in the Mulroney regime in Canada. While new ideas do not completely displace old ones in public discourse, Pal cautions "from the vantage point of the new millennium, the flavour and tone of what counts as 'common sense' in public policy has changed dramatically" (Pal, 2001, p. 121).

As we saw in the previous chapter, with the rise of globalization, New Public Management and the entrenchment of the market metaphor in the public psyche, by the mid-1980s expansionist public policies were no longer seen as good common sense to most people. As governments sought ways to manage declining economic productivity, burgeoning deficits and an increasingly skeptical

public, they could no longer afford the kinds of Keynesian policies pursued in the past. The fact that these developments were packaged in a particular neo-conservative ideological discourse helped create the fertile ground for a significant shift in the climate of ideas.

Ideology

An important factor in considering the forces that shape the climate of ideas in any society is the prevailing intellectual perspectives of key political actors. While numerous definitions of the term abound, a useful way of viewing ideology is as "frameworks of thought which are used to explain, figure out, make sense of or give meaning to the social and political world" (Donald and Hall, 1986, p. ix-x). In this way, ideology provides a lens through which we view the world, allowing us to see or understand certain things, and conversely, preventing us from seeing other things (Levin, 2001).

Numerous scholars have pointed to the ways in which ideology helps shape political decisions, serving as it does as a useful heuristic for political actors in an ambiguous and rapidly changing world (Ball, 1990; Dale, 1989; Edelman, 1988; Kingdon, 1995). Ideology acts as a good "first-cut" guide during agenda setting and in the consideration of policy options, because it limits the range of possible solutions actively under consideration by governments (Regan, 1993). As Manzer (1985; 1994; 2003) has argued with regard to the historical development of educational policy in Canada, political ideas form the language through which

people understand their place in the political world, and hence articulate their interests, conceive modes of association with others in their political community, and devise courses of political action. "In judging public policies there are no criteria without ideological contexts" (Manzer, 1994, p. 9). It is through these kinds of ideational prisms that individuals think about social problems that inspire their demands for government action and through which they construct various proposed solutions to these problems. Ideologies thus serve as "roadmaps for action, by affecting the strategic interactions that take place between policy actors, and, once institutionalized, by constraining the nature of policy options" (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003, p. 127).

Manzer's (1985; 1994; 2003) deconstruction of the historical evolution of public education in Canada illustrates the way that political ideas can help shape public policy. He says that there has been three broad trends in the development of education policy in Canada; trends that were shaped by the prevailing ideas and priorities of successive national governments. His research affirms the assertion that public policies are made within frameworks of ideas and ideologies, which structure individual and collective thinking about what constitutes a public problem, what means are properly and practically available to deal with it, what collective action offers an apparently optimal resolution of the problem, and what evaluations are ultimately made regarding outcomes. Policy theories thereby symbiotically interact with the prevailing philosophies of political leaders and the community at large: "changes in public philosophy with respect to what are

political goods obviously can influence basic assumptions and accepted goals in policy analysis, but innovations in policy theory can also lead to changes in public philosophy, especially with respect to what is the proper scope or role of governmental instruments in achieving shared values" (Manzer, 1994, p. 10).

Pal (2001) and others argue that shifts over the past two decades in what are considered to be ideas in good currency represent a particular neo-conservative (or what others refer to as neo-liberal) ideological perspective. In examining the changing climate of ideas in Canada and throughout the developed world, he asserts that "at the level of ideas in good currency, the single most important change has been in the perceptions surrounding the fiscal capacities of government" (Pal, 2001, p. 121). He argues that globalization has had important effects on public policy not only because economic imperatives dominate how we think about the world and the language we use, but also because nation-states have had to increasingly react to these pressures and constantly battle to improve their comparative advantage in the global marketplace.

For Davis and Sumara (2000) ours appears to be a civilization in the embrace of a dominant ideology: corporatism. "And, as with any successful ideology, the corporatist mind-set spreads a transparent web of metaphors and assertions that support particular manners of perceiving 'reality' and of acting toward it" (Davis and Sumara in Gabbard, 2000, p. 173). The establishment of the market metaphor as the new master narrative provides the discursive framework within

which solutions to modern-day problems are thought (Ball, 1990; 1998). As a result, "notions of the public good shift in order to accommodate reduced expectations about accountability, regulation and taxation, which in turn lead to not only reduced but transformed expectations about what public services and infrastructure consist of" (Jones, 1998, p. 146).

The power of the economic paradigm on policymaking in the contemporary era is what Boyd (1992) calls "truly remarkable". He notes that since 1980, we have experienced a "sea change in how people think about educational policy and the management of schools" (Boyd, 1992, p. 504). This change and the reforms that have resulted are related to momentous changes in the world economy as well as in the way we think about the role of government and of the public services. Boyd argues that it is not only education, political science and sociology that have been affected by economic paradigms. Instead, as a result of what he refers to as the "march of ideas" all areas of scholarly discourse and public policy have been redirected by economic thinking.

The idea of the market as the metaphor that has come to define our times is germane to understanding agenda setting and the kinds of ideas and solutions that are considered acceptable. As Patterson (1998) explains, metaphors are important in our everyday lives because they help organize our thoughts and actions. They also promote a specific way of interpreting the world around us and organizing those values and goals we hold as positive. Hence, metaphors take

on a life of their own, creating reality rather than merely describing it. "Through the vehicle of metaphor, public administrators and those who would advise them make comparisons, draw parallels between policy problems, and by implication, promote particular solutions" (Patterson, 1998, p. 221). In this way, metaphors have the power to cause "life to imitate art" (Boyd, 1992).

Metaphors and the discursive frameworks they provide have a particular attraction when set within conditions of uncertainty or rapid change. As McBride (2001) argues, the economic dislocations that Canada suffered in the 1970s and 1980s led to the end of the public's commitment to Keynesian economics and big government. With two international oil crises, rising inflation and unemployment levels and growing deficits, "it was the social welfare state that came to be seen as the creator of economic distortions" (McBride, 2001, p. 81).

While the impact that these crises had on policy development in Canada will be more fully explored in Chapter 7, suffice it to say here that they led to an important shift in Canada's national policy. Bradford (1998) describes "national policy" as the overarching federal strategy for achieving economic growth and social cohesion within the Canadian political community. Shifts in national policy, he maintains, emerge from crises set in motion by economic breakdown and policy failure; as the solutions of the past are no longer seen as capable of fixing contemporary problems. "Once embedded, a national policy model acts as a relatively fixed template for decision-making and a durable reference point for a

range of political interests. It orders institutional relations and confines policy debate, thereby constraining future possibilities for action" (Bradford, 1998, p. 14).

The shift in national policy in the mid-1980s resulted in public policy issues being consistently framed in a neo-conservative paradigm of reduced budgets, less government, and adjustment strategies in the face of global market forces (Pal, 2001). It further led to the enhanced power of the business community in Canada and the formation of an influential coalition of business and political elites in the country that spoke directly to the ideological instincts of the Mulroney government (Bradford, 1998). Concerns amongst the general public over the economy and government spending and an overall frustration with political leaders and institutions provided the fertile ground necessary for this ideological paradigm to take hold (Thomas in Peters and Savoie, 1998; Hart and Livingstone, 1998; Guppy and Davies, 1999; Zussman, 1992).

Education policy in particular appears to have been influenced by the dominant neo-conservative perspective that has markedly shaped the climate of ideas (Levin, 2001). As Apple (2000) affirms, "ideological shifts in common-sense are having a profound impact on how a large portion of the public thinks about the role of education in society" (Apple, 2000, p. 16). He maintains that the breakdown of the largely liberal consensus that guided much educational and social policy since World War II, coupled with economic decline and the growth of

the New Right and other conservative movements over the past two decades, has moved the ideological terrain decidedly to the right. By capitalizing on the public's general unease with modern society and linking this unease to traditional themes in their nation's political culture (i.e. nation, family, duty, authority, standards, hard work), Apple argues that leaders such as Thatcher and Reagan managed to garner wide support for their conservative policies and fundamentally alter the climate of ideas in the industrialized world. Their success rested with their ability to connect with "the perceived needs, fears and hopes of groups of people who felt threatened by the range of problems associated with the crises in authority relations in culture, in the economy, and in politics" (Apple, 2000, p. 22).

Apple adds that through the successful translation of an economic doctrine into the language of experience, moral imperative and common sense, the free-market ethic has combined with a populist politics. Since so many parents and students are justifiably concerned about their future in the global economy, rightist discourse connects with the viewpoints and experiences of not only the corporate sector but the working class and lower-middle classes as well. In this way the neo-conservative agenda is not merely contained to the ideological viewpoints of political elites, but also finds resonance within the broader public.

Lawton (1992) affirms that a similar process also occurred in Britain. He maintains that as Ronald Reagan represented the backlash against the

permissiveness and decline of authority in 1960s America, so too did Margaret Thatcher in Britain. Thatcher, he argues, did not create 'Thatcherism' out of the blue. "She gave expression to feelings which were already colouring public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. Ordinary people longed for a return to order, to the family values which used to provide a moral framework for individual behaviour" (Lawton, 1992, p. 8). Combined with this backlash against the permissive society was a widespread desire to reduce the role of the government in economic and social affairs. "There was a longing to make people more self-reliant, and less dependent on the state... (and) as confidence in the government diminished, faith in the magic of the market-place increased" (Lawton, 1992, p. 9).

Educational policy has become subsumed within this broader narrative, whereby the economic future of the state is tied to the success of its education system. As the climate of ideas began to shift education became a touchstone for the wider concerns surrounding economic productivity; as the solution to the bigger problem of economic restructuring in the face of globalization. As Levin (2001) points out, "education is intended to serve other social purposes, so ideas about education will change as ideas about those other purposes change. Education is also an important part of the public sector or state apparatus, so ideas about education will also be shaped by changing views of the role of the state" (Levin, 2001, p. 7).

It is no surprise, then, that the language surrounding education reform, particularly at the post-secondary level, is rife with economic and managerialist symbolism. Virtually every reform effort announced by political leaders contains references to improving university accountability and outcomes; of achieving excellence in our institutions and making education more relevant to the needs of the economy and society. The use of such symbols in advancing reform efforts is not by accident but rather purposely designed to garner acceptance by the electorate. With the saturation of the educational policy vocabulary by market ideologies, the market has become the "magic pill" through which educational problems can be solved.

The emphasis in educational reform policies on consumer choice, accountability, standardized assessment, skills training and closer ties between the corporate world and schools are all indicative of this approach. "Advocacy of the market or commercial form for educational reform as the 'solution' to educational problems is a form of 'policy magic'; a form of reassurance as well as a rational response to economic problems" (Ball, 1998, p. 124; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry, 1997).

Taylor's (1996; 2001) examination of the role of ideas and ideological discourse in the educational reforms introduced in Alberta between 1993 and 1995 by the Ralph Klein government provides evidence of this argument. Part of a broader agenda for change in the province, these reforms "embraced a new philosophy of

market-driven delivery of services, and an emphasis on the private sector to ensure economic growth" (Taylor, 2001, p. 285). Drawing on Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Taylor focuses on the ways in which key political leaders and business elites were able to shape the educational reform agenda and in turn sell it to the population at large. She also considers the social, political and economic context both within Alberta and in Canada that informed these changes, and the particular discourses that were promoted by the business community that linked education and economic prosperity. She concludes that "rather than promoting consensus through a democratic process, governments manufactured consent through selective consultations with economic and political elites" (2001, p. 70).

While ideology is important, it is also easy to overstate its causal role in shaping agendas and determining policy outcomes. It is clear that ideologies help people organize their ideas about the world in particular ways. However, as Levin (2001) cautions, while ideologies can be relatively coherent sets of ideas that drive thought and action, they can also be full of contradictions and inconsistencies. This is born out by the fact that although assumed to be ideologically homogenous, political parties typically contain a wide spectrum of differing opinions. Levin further notes that the same policies may also be supported by people from different political persuasions; which as we shall see later was the case with post-secondary education policy. Hence, while ideology can be an important factor in understanding agenda setting, by ascribing it too great of an importance we run the risk of underestimating the immediate political

practicalities that dominates much policy making. As Fitz and Halpin (1991) conclude, "interpreting policy via a reading of a correspondence between ideological preferences and concrete proposals is a hazardous procedure, and one which may overlook the complexities, contingencies and competing interests which we believe are so much a part of the policy-making process" (Fitz and Halpin, 1991, p. 135).

The Scholarly Literature

The climate of ideas can also be influenced by the scholarly literature surrounding a particular issue in society. How academics, researchers and think tanks view certain problems and events can be an important source of information, knowledge and expertise for policymakers as they consider the relevance of various issues and the range of actions that can be taken to address them. This is not to suggest, however, that actors contained within a particular policy subsystem automatically take their direction from what the research community has to say. Like ideology and the national mood the academic literature feeds into the larger context within which agenda setting occurs. Hence, rather than directly affecting public policy-making in specific sectors, the prevailing academic discourses around a certain issue "make up one element of the background conditions or environment in which the policy process unfolds" (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003, p. 77).

Over the past twenty years there has developed a substantive literature on the depth and breadth of the issues and challenges facing universities today, and the kinds of changes universities must be prepared to undertake in order to successfully meet them. For many within the scholarly community these challenges have resulted in nothing less than a "crisis" in contemporary higher education (Cameron, 2002; Emberley, 1996; Bercuson, Bothwell and Granatstein, 1984 and 1997; Bloom, 1987; Readings, 1997; Anderson, 1992; Turk, 2000; Pocklington and Tupper, 2002; Wilson, 1999).

Indeed, if the spate of books regarding the Canadian university in the dawn of the 21st century with such alarming titles as "Zero Tolerance: Hot Button Politics in Canadian Universities"; "The Petrified Campus: The Crisis in Canada's Universities"; "The Great Brain Robbery: Canada's Universities on the Road to Ruin"; "No Place to Learn: Why Universities Aren't Working"; "The Corporate Campus: Commercialization and the Dangers to Canada's Colleges and Universities"; "The University in Ruins"; and "No Ivory Tower: The University Under Siege" is any judge, one would presume that the veritable sky is falling on our nation's universities. While this idea of crisis might verge on hyperbole, there is no question amongst scholars that the university, in Canada as in the United States, is (and has been, in fact, for the past two decades) at an important crossroads in its history.

Many within the university community argue that at no other point in their collective history have higher education institutions faced the kinds of challenges and expectations currently before them, and with so little unanimity as to how to proceed. There is a growing recognition from both those within and outside of the academy that the status quo cannot continue; that if the university is to not only survive but thrive in the new millennium that change must occur. Little consensus exists, however, on the precise form that this change should take. As the editors of a research monograph on the Canadian university in the twenty-first century concluded, "there is little doubt that change is coming to Canadian universities; the real issue is whether universities are going to react to externally imposed assessment schemes or take proactive measures to direct themselves toward greater accountability" (Clifton, Gregor and Roberts, 1996, p. 6).

While there appears to be little disagreement that the modern university is facing unprecedented challenges, how it should respond to these challenges is far from clear. At the same time, there is wide disagreement on the role that governments should play in repositioning the university to better reflect the changing world around it. It should also be noted that the post-secondary education literature tends to be dominated by university issues, notably with regard to such matters as institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Less has been written about Canada's community colleges. This is not surprising, given that community colleges were born out of a distinct government agenda and hence have always been viewed as somehow less problematic than universities. Nonetheless, while

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the focus will be on the Canadian university, this section will also explore some of the challenges facing the country's community colleges as they too seek to carve out a new space for themselves within the educational landscape.

The University in Transition

For many observers the roots of the crisis currently befalling the modern university rests with the changing global environment and the concomitant impact of this environment on universities and governments in Canada and throughout the world. The rapid growth in higher education systems throughout Western Europe and North America over the past several decades, combined with an increasingly heterogeneous student (and faculty) population and a greater expansion in part-time, continuing education and distance learners, has led to what Mahony (1994) calls the "externalization of universities". No longer contained to an isolated, male-dominated segment of society, the massification and democratization of higher education systems that began at the end of the nineteenth century means that in the modern era, the university's "dynamic reference points lie not only with government but with its students and staff, the private and public sectors, the intelligentsia ... the media, and the general community" (Mahony, 1994, p. 136).

With the rise of the knowledge economy, post-secondary institutions now serve as the primary link through which individuals can connect with and prepare for the global economy. Increasing numbers of individuals, viewing a university

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degree as the gateway to economic mobility, are turning (and in many cases, returning) to post-secondary institutions. Indeed, in the knowledge economy access to higher education is no longer considered to be the sole domain of a privileged elite but to many a right of citizenship (Hirsch and Weber, 1999; Shapiro and Shapiro in Clifton, Gregor and Roberts, 1996).

At the same time that universities have "come out", so to speak, and have undergone a massive expansion in the numbers and kinds of students they serve, they have also had to struggle with years of reductions in their state operating grants. The economic dislocations that shook welfare states around the world in the 1970s and 1980s had a traumatic effect on university funding levels in Canada throughout the 1990s (Cutt and Dobell, 1992; Neilson and Gaffield, 1986; Cameron, 2002). Rising costs, coupled with little new public funding, led to what many feel to be the further deterioration of our nation's universities. Even in the face of gradual economic recovery, it is unlikely that higher education will see significant improvements in future funding (Altbach, Berdahl and Gumport, 1999). As Jim Turk, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) bluntly put it, "the situation (in Canadian universities) is simply not sustainable" (CAUT, 2002).

As governments struggled in the 1980s and 1990s to gain better control of their environment within the face of global change, these pressures were in turn filtered down to the higher education sector (Sibley, 1993). Beginning in the

1980s, higher education institutions were expected to engage in economic reconstruction and make a greater contribution to their respective economies than ever before, by better responding to the needs of industry and by providing wider access to their services so that a greater proportion of the population were able to reap the benefits of a university education. The combination of these factors has resulted in a situation where today, "governments increasingly view higher education as a stakes game too important to leave to the universities themselves or to traditional peer faculty and governance processes that have dominated higher education for generations" (Alexander, 2000, p. 415).

In order to get more bang from their university buck political leaders also began in the 1980s to adopt managerialist approaches in the formulation of their post-secondary education policies. References to measuring results; fostering innovation and entrepreneurialism; improving efficiencies and accountability for performance; all point to what Young describes as "the marketization of Canadian higher education" (Young, 2002). As Skolnik (1997) adds, over the past two decades every province in the country has also undertaken at least one substantial review or commission (in most cases several) of their higher education systems with the aim of forging closer links between the activities of their universities and provincial goals and priorities (Skolnik in Jones, 1997).

Governments point to these measures as a means of addressing public demands for post-secondary education reform. In addition to the challenges of under-

funding, more diverse student populations, a changing economy and heightened expectations, over the past two decades universities have also had to struggle with mounting public criticism. However, the evidence from studies conducted by Hart and Livingstone (1998) and Guppy and Davies (1999) tends to support Mcguinness's (1999) argument that it is not a feeling that higher education lacks value to the individual and society that is driving negative public views. To the contrary, the public appears to value education greatly. "But they see it (the university) being directed by a largely internal agenda disconnected from major societal priorities and mismanaged in ways that will make it increasingly inaccessible, especially in terms of cost" (Mcguinness in Altbach, Berdahl and Gumport, 1999, p. 184).

While some point to government under-funding as the primary culprit of the crisis, for others within academia the source of the university's woes is less about money than it is the academy's abandonment of its "true" purpose (however this might be variously defined)[1]. As their importance in economic and social development expanded, universities have tried to become all things to all people, creating a "metaphorical supermarket" of courses, programs and services (Barzun, 1993, p. xiii). Whether it be the fault of corporate hegemony, political correctness, academic elitism, faculty unionization, not enough research or too much research or the wrong kind of research, it appears to many observers in Canada and abroad that the university has somehow lost its way.

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[1] For some American versions of this argument, see Bloom, 1987; Anderson, 1992; Barzun, 1993; and Aronowitz, 2000.

For one such critic, the university has become mired in a battle between two extreme forces: the corporate right and the cultural left, so much so that the university is under siege. "As various impassioned sectarians contend to control the future of Canada's universities, the institution itself is on the verge of financial, spiritual and political collapse" (Emberley, 1996, p. 1). Emberley rejects both the corporate right's attempts to apply the language of the market to higher education and at the same time the extreme political correctness of the cultural left, which he believes has hijacked the mission of the university (Carson, 1999). For him, the answer rests with detaching the university from the social and economic mandates that are being imposed upon it by both the right and the left and returning to the historic, Socratic ideals of scholarly contemplation and dialogue.

Similarly, Canadian scholars Bercuson, Bothwell and Granatstein (1984; 1997) argue that the erosion of quality in our nation's higher education institutions is the result of the transition of universities from institutions of learning into instruments of public policy; a general opinion also shared by Readings (1996) and Bruneau and Savage (2002). Proclaiming themselves to be "confirmed intellectual elitists", Bercuson and his colleagues call for the elimination of tenure in our nation's universities, higher entrance standards, increased tuition fees and expanded bursary programs, as well as less political correctness, less "published nonsense", less democracy, less faculty unionism, and less student participation in decision-making (Bercuson, Bothwell and Granatstein, 1984; 1997).

For Wilson (1999), however, the problem is precisely the opposite: with its embrace of the neoconservative agenda the university has been transformed from a key public policy institution to an instrument for the pursuit of private interests. He adds that the marketization of the university has brought with it the withdrawal of the federal government's responsibility to higher education and its "retreat from responsible governance" (Wilson, 1999, p. 156).

In a less vitriolic vein, Pocklington and Tupper (2002) point to the neglect of undergraduate education, "an obsession with research", the "dangerously close" links between universities, governments and large corporations, and the multiversity's never-ending proliferation of roles as the sources of woe for Canadian universities. As the university continues to become exceedingly complex and ponderous, they argue, it "grows remote from the broader society, unwieldy in its organization and policy making and difficult to hold accountable" (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002, p. 5). For them, these problems are rooted in the very nature and structures of the institution itself; they are "systemic, widespread and inescapable in the university as it presently conceived" (2002, p. 80). In response, the authors advocate that universities seriously reconsider their priorities and processes and commit to a return to undergraduate teaching as the first priority of higher education; emphasize teaching in graduate education programs; undertake more exacting assessments of the quality and scope of university research; and thoroughly examine how their partnerships with corporations shape their research and institutional priorities.

Turk (2000) offers an equally dire prognosis for higher education in Canada, but for him, the culprit is the growing commercialization of universities and colleges across North America. He points to such disturbing trends as the rise of virtual learning technologies in the delivery of education, the importation of corporate techniques into the university, and the replacement of public funding with user (tuition) fees as placing the basic role of universities in democratic societies at risk. By "turning educational institutions into marketing sites for brand name products", he argues, "Canada's universities and colleges are losing sight of the public interest" (Turk, 2000, p. 4)[2].

For others within the academic community, the problem is not quite so facile. Cameron (2002) argues that the challenges today in Canadian higher education are more than just about programs or money; they reflect a much deeper crisis of confidence in our universities. "What makes this a crisis, as opposed to just another problem, is the importance of the issues involved, combined with the very real possibility that we lack the collective capacity to effect the necessary changes" (Cameron, 2002, p. 147). As he notes, previous transformations within the university, such as those that occurred in the postwar period, happened with the expectation - and the subsequent delivery - of more money and broad public support for the post-secondary enterprise. During its years as a growth industry, universities were able to adapt to their new environments and absorb the tumult of change with few ill effects. In the current climate, however, it is not just the

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[2] Lewis, Massey and Smith (2001) offer a more thoughtful and less polemical discussion of the growing use of telelearning technologies in Canadian universities. As they conclude, there are no simple answers to the complex issue of technology in higher education.

kinds of programs that universities are offering or how monies are allocated that are being questioned (although these remain salient issues as well), but indeed the very structures and purposes of the institution itself that are being challenged and opened to debate.

Cameron adds that there is a growing recognition that the kinds of demands being placed on universities today have overloaded their capabilities, and thus require new approaches and new solutions than those of the past. In this way, the university has failed to come to terms with the fact that it is now a mature industry, and therefore subject to less autonomy and greater regulation, control and accountability requirements by governments than ever before (Altbach, Gumport and Johnstone, 2001). As one former university president summed up, "(H)ere is the reality plain and simple ...People are questioning our mission and questioning who we are. They claim we cost too much, spend carelessly, teach poorly, plan myopically, and when we are questioned, we act defensively" (quoted in Munitz, 1995, p. 11).

This crisis of confidence noted by Cameron is embedded in what he and others see as the disconnect between the external realities of the post-industrial world and the internal milieu of the academy (Sibley, 1993; Zemsky and Massy, 1995; Kennedy, 1995; 1997; Guskin, 1996; Kearns, 1998; Keller in Altbach, Gumport and Johnstone, 2001; Ruben 2004). The traditions, norms and values contained within the culture of the university, combined with its inner management

structures and decision-making processes, have severely restricted the capacity of universities to effectively respond to new realities. What Keller (2001) refers to as the "structural fault" in academic organizational life means that within the university, faculty members are not only employees in the traditional sense but also have managerial power as well. As bottom heavy organizations, professors exert a great deal of influence within the university and are constrained by few formal rules and obligations. Academia is one of the few, perhaps the only, professions where through the processes of academic freedom and peer review, the producers themselves define, deliver and evaluate the educational product (Munitz, 1995; Kennedy, 1995; 1997).

For Zemsky and Massy (1995), two contrary sensibilities seem to govern higher education. On the one hand universities embrace and celebrate change, through their research and development activities and their roles as social critics. On the other there is "a belief that the academy at its core is fundamentally immutable – its costs largely fixed, its purposes well established, its educational and intellectual values well honed" (Zemsky and Massy, 1995, p. 1). Hence, while on the cutting edge of change, universities are at the same time conservative, change-adverse organizations[3]. The challenge, therefore, has become not just a matter of "telling our story" more effectively. There is a sense amongst some that the traditional system of checks and balances, multi-level reviews, and the decentralized governance model which served universities so well in times of

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[3] As Clark Kerr once noted, universities are one of the few remaining institutions of western society, along with the Catholic and Lutheran churches, that have remained virtually the same over the past 500 years. See Kerr, 2001.

growing enrollments, plentiful resources, and high public confidence needs to be reconsidered, in favour of more flexible processes that permit action, promote change, and encourage reform (Cutt and Dobell, 1992; Bonser, 1992). "The collegial nature of most colleges and universities, emphasizing consultation and shared decision-making, seems poorly suited to the sorts of wrenching changes that lie ahead" (Munitz, 1995, p. 12).

Clark (1998) concurs that at the heart of the current university crisis are the onslaught of demands that have enormously overloaded our systems of higher education. "As demands on universities outrun their capacity to respond ... universities have entered an age of turmoil for which there is no end in sight" (Clark, 1998, p. 129). Caught as they are in this cross-fire of expectations, universities in their present form are hobbled by imbedded systemic constraints characterized by chronic under-funding, an over-dependence on government, rigid internal structures "that were constructed in the simpler days of elite higher education", and elaborate collegial authority, which leads to "sluggish decision making and evermore complex and specialized academic units" (Clark, 2001, p. 11; 1998, p. 131). Within this conventional organizational model, universities simply lurch from one state of crisis to another in the face of complexity and uncertainty.

In contrast, Clark advocates in favour of the "entrepreneurial university"; one that, on its own, actively seeks out innovative solutions and changes in its

organizational culture so as to better position itself to meet future demands. He identifies five characteristics of the entrepreneurial university, which he describes as "pathways to transformation". These include a strengthened steering core, or leadership group compiled of central managers and academic departments empowered to steer the institution; an expanded development periphery involving partnerships with the private sector that embarks on new lines of inquiry and research; a diversified funding base, namely from private sources and university-generated income; a stimulated academic heartland, composed of old and new academic units; and finally, an integrated entrepreneurial culture, which he defines as a new culture of innovation and change that cultivates institutional identity and transforms the whole institution (Clark, 1998; see also Bok, 1986; Kennedy, 1995; and Ruben, 2004 for similar arguments).

While Clark did not coin the idea of the entrepreneurial university until the mid-1990s, these ideas had already begun to circulate amongst the academic community in Canada a decade before. In *Academic Futures: Prospects for Post-Secondary Education*, Gallagher (1987) advanced the argument that Canada does not have the population or resource base to develop more than a few truly first-rate, advanced research universities. Those institutions that remain, he added, should be encouraged by government leaders to accept different aspirations and mandates. All universities and colleges in the country should therefore undergo a serious reassessment of their activities and abilities, become more entrepreneurial and innovative in how they approach teaching and learning,

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and focus only on what they can do best. "Instead of being a community of like institutions of different sizes, the university sector should become a cooperative network of quite distinct institutions which collaboratively produce the research, teaching, professional training, and public service required by a country that can no longer afford the luxury of numerous, superficially autonomous, similar institutions, most of them unable to claim much distinction on an international scale" (Gallagher in Shere and Duhamel, 1987, p. 34).

To this end, Gallagher also called for greater networks and cooperation amongst universities and colleges and for greater private sector involvement in post-secondary education. Until now, universities have been largely able to do what they want and to persuade the public and governments to support them. "But dissatisfaction in recent years with public education at all levels has been rooted in the growing conviction that educational institutions have not been sufficiently responsive to individual and community expectations" (Gallagher in Shere and Duhamel, 1987, p. 36).

In the same text, Fulton (1987) states that "it seems to me that the academy is now desperately hampered with false myths and illusions about itself which bear little resemblance to the reality of its institutions and less to the reality of the larger society served by the university" (Fulton in Shere and Duhamel, 1987, p. 22). For Fulton, like Gallagher and a number of other scholars (Clark, 1998; Ruben, 2004; George and McAllister, 1995; Kennedy, 1995; 1997; Bok, 1986;

Altbach, Berdahl and Gumport, 1999), the choice for universities is clear: change, or have change forced upon them externally by others. In so doing, they call for the forging of a new relationship between universities and the public.

Cameron (2002) refers to this new relationship as the restoration of the social contract between institutions and the publics they were designed to serve. The unwillingness of universities to embrace organizational change, to seriously seek out more meaningful ways of accountability and to reign in their faculty unions has, according to Cameron, resulted in their subjugation of the public interest to the self-interest of faculty. And with that, the university "has weakened, if it has not yet entirely destroyed, the moral authority upon which public trust, and ultimately public support, depends" (Cameron, 2002, p. 169). Kennedy (1997) adds that by failing to change along with the rest of society, universities have failed to live up to the flipside of institutional autonomy and academic freedom: academic duty. Public trust has been weakened by "our internal failure to come to grips with responsibility in the university ... having been given a generous dose of academic freedom, we haven't taken care of the other side of the bargain" (Kennedy, 1997, p. 22).

Community Colleges in Canada

Canada's community colleges have also faced a number of challenges over the past two decades, although not to the same heart-wrenching degree as that faced by the universities sector. The country's network of community colleges

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was expressly developed in the 1960s to achieve specific public policy goals and objectives. Reflecting the massive expansion of higher education that was occurring during this period, colleges were established by provincial governments as a means of broadening access to post-secondary education and increasing the range of educational choices available to learners. "It was expected that community colleges would concurrently address the needs of young people fresh out of secondary school, of adults wishing to return to full-time study to acquire new employment skills, and a broad range of mature Canadians interested in expanding their intellectual horizons or in upgrading their work, citizenship or technical skills" (Gallagher in Dennison, 1995, p. 257).

To address these multiple educational and training needs colleges developed a comprehensive range of programs that differed from those offered at universities. These included apprenticeship training, technical and vocational courses, developmental studies to prepare individuals for university, and in some provinces, the first two years of a university degree program. Colleges also became renowned for their flexibility and innovation in meeting student needs, including creative instructional formats and a broad range of student support services and community outreach programs (Dennison and Levin, 1989).

As Gallagher (1995) states, two other characteristics set community colleges apart from universities: they were expected to serve as models of high-quality teaching, and they were expected to serve as instruments for the implementation

of provincial or territorial economic and social policy (Gallagher in Dennison, 1995). The legislation and accompanying public debate that led to the establishment of colleges in each of the provinces made it clear that they were not to have the same degree of autonomy as the universities but were instead to fall under the direction and control of government (Campbell, 1971; Gregor, 1995).

Perhaps the clearest expression of the bureaucratic subservience of colleges to provincial governments was the long absence of autonomous institutional governing boards. Prior to 1993's *Colleges and Consequential Amendments Act*, community colleges in Manitoba were not governed by their own board. Instead, college presidents were directly responsible to the Assistant Deputy Minister in charge of the Postsecondary, Adult, and Continuing Education and Training Division (PACET) of the Department of Education and Training, who retained final authority over decisions regarding budgetary matters, staffing, and curriculum. With this arrangement of close central control over colleges and the reluctance to accord them the kind of autonomy normally granted to post-secondary institutions, "it is possible to see the community colleges ... as having been as much a part of the province's economic and social policy as they were of its educational policy" (Gregor in Jones, 1997, p. 125).

Despite the successes of Canada's colleges system and the exhortations of many a political leader for the universities to "be more like the colleges", today's

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community colleges have entered a new and quite uncertain period of development. Like other public institutions, colleges must grapple with the perennial issue of squeezed provincial budgets while at the same time face the prospect of trying to educate an ever-broadening array of students. With the rapid pace of economic and technological change, colleges are also struggling to maintain their reputation as being on the cutting edge of responsiveness to workplace needs. At the same time, the fostering of effective institutional leadership and employee development in an institution long under the thumb of government control remains a daunting task (Levin in Dennison, 1995).

A more fundamental concern, however, is how to translate such disparate institutions as universities and community colleges, each with unique mandates, histories and organizational cultures, into a true system of post-secondary education. While the encouragement of diversity in post-secondary institutions was a major driving force of provincial education policies through the 1960s and 1970s, by the late 1980s governments began to see this diversity as more of a curse than a blessing. As many learners headed back to school for retraining and further education, questions regarding prior learning assessment, credit transferability, and the ease of mobility of students from one sector of the educational system to another came to the fore.

From the colleges' standpoint this has necessitated not only greater collaboration and planning with a wider array of other educational providers including

technical-vocational schools, private training institutes, religious colleges, other community colleges and universities, but with the private sector, professional associations, regulatory boards, and other groups in society. How to bring such traditionally incongruent institutions into a seamless system of higher education remains a central preoccupation of administrators and governments alike. As Dennison so accurately sums up,

> All of this points to the need for fundamental change in the organization and management of higher education. Whether the operative word be restructuring, coordination, articulation, or cooperative planning, the ultimate challenge is for institutions to find ways to respond, while still ensuring the preservation of their integrity and quality. Given the current character of provincial systems, the magnitude of the task seems to be immense (Dennison, 1995, p. 138).

The Social Construction of Problems

Like ideology, the views of the academic community on any given issue are not necessarily homogenous, but in fact represent a myriad of arguments, views and interpretations. Clearly, then, the mere existence of an idea or ideology is not a sufficient factor to account for agenda setting, and to explain why governments respond to issues in certain ways. Taylor's (1996; 2001) examination of the efforts of Alberta's business and political elite in gathering support for their particular vision of educational reform draws our attention to the fact that the climate of ideas surrounding a particular issue does not have an objective life of its own. Rather, political actors work to shape it in ways that conform to their own goals or interests. How we define problems in society; the attributes we ascribe to it and the reasons offered for how it became a problem in the first place, all

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have an impact on how we ultimately choose to respond to it (or not, as the case may be).

Numerous scholars have advanced the argument that meaning in the political process is socially constructed (see, for example, Blumer, 1971; Edelman, 1971; 1988; Spector and Kitsuse, 1977; Davies, 1999; Baumgartner and Jones, 1991; Majone, 1989; Stone, 1988; 1989). At the most simplest level, social constructivism refers to how we interpret and construct our world, how we can know reality "only by categorizing it, naming it, and giving it meaning" (Stone, 1988, p. 307). Hence, problems do not exist "out there"; they are not objective entities in their own right simply waiting to be discovered and ameliorated through rational analysis (Rochefort and Cobb, 1993). Social problems are not the result of an intrinsic malfunctioning of a society, but are the result of a process of definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem. "A social problem does not exist for a society unless it is recognized by the society to exist" (Blumer, 1971, p. 301-302).

Social problems thus defined lie in and are produced by a process of what Blumer (1971) refers to as collective definition and Spector and Kitsuse (1977) as "claims making activity". As Blumer argues, "the process of collective definition is responsible for the emergence of social problems, for the way in which they are seen, for the way in which they are approached and considered, for the kind of remedial plan that is laid out, and for the transformation of the remedial plan in its

application" (Blumer, 1971, p. 301). Thus, if a problem is to be recognized and acted upon it must acquire social legitimacy through this process of collective definition, or otherwise it will wither away. Problem definition is therefore one way of organizing information and understanding phenomena in a complex world. And, as Rochefort and Cobb maintain, the advancement of a particular interpretation of social reality is ultimately a political expression (Rochefort and Cobb, 1993).

Theorists have advanced several ways in which problem definition has affected on our understandings of agenda setting and the policymaking process in general. Like the idea of metaphor discussed earlier, Hall (1990) suggests that policymaking in any particular field is structured by and occurs within an overarching framework of ideas that he refers to as a policy paradigm. The policy paradigm defines the broad goals behind government policy, the related problems or puzzles that policymakers have to solve to get there and the kinds of instruments that can be used to attain these goals. "Like a gestalt, this framework is all the more powerful because it is largely taken for granted and rarely subject to scrutiny as a whole" (Hall, 1990, p. 59). As they become entrenched in the discourses surrounding a policy issue, paradigms become institutionalized and thus change very slowly. The ideas and assumptions contained within a particular paradigm also gain greater legitimacy and shelf life by becoming tied to the "education and socialization of professionals or experts and perhaps of the larger public as well" (Doern and Phidd, 1983, p. 57).

Stone (1988; 1989) focuses on the ability of political actors to portray issues in ways that suit their interests and argues that politics constantly involves strategic efforts to manipulate the understanding of reality. Problem definition for her is thus a process of image making, whereby the images attribute cause, blame and responsibility for problems. Political actors portray these problems in deliberate ways through the use of constructed images in order to gain support for their side. Agenda setting therefore involves constructing a story of what caused the policy problem in question. As she argues,

> Causal theories, if they are successful, do more than convincingly demonstrate the possibility of human control over bad conditions. First, they can either challenge or protect an existing social order. Second, by identifying causal agents, they can assign responsibility to particular political actors so that someone will have to stop an activity, do it differently, compensate its victims, or possibly face punishment. Third, they can legitimate and empower particular actors as "fixers" of the problem. And fourth, they can create new political alliances among people who are shown to stand in the same victim relationship to the causal agent (Stone, 1989, p. 295).

Political images, metaphors and symbols can also be used by dominant political elites to reinforce their advantageous positions, as Edelman (1971; 1988) has so clearly articulated. He maintains that politics is as much about symbolism; the use of certain cultural reference points in order to illicit a desired response, as it is about practical action. Every society holds dear to certain normative concepts that it values and that can evoke strong sentiments; whether it be cultural symbols such as a national flag or such ideas as liberty and national unity. When words and other symbolic activities are designed and used by political leaders to

achieve emotional and figurative purposes, "accounts of political issues, problems, crises, and threats become devices for creating disparate assumptions and beliefs about the social and political world rather than factual statements" (Edelman, 1988, p. 10).

Other theorists view the use of symbols as a way of getting attention by drawing on our emotions and framing situations in specific ways (Etzioni, 1992). Through the use of symbols, politicians are able to steer the public in a certain direction. "Symbols are used to attract attention, define issues in specific ways, and mobilize opposition or support against some policy options and in favor of others" (Zahariadas, 2003, p. 98). Edelman (1971) maintains that political leaders use symbolic responses as a means of avoiding real issues expressed by the public, and to sway popular opinion in their favour. In this way, politicians "create their (the public's) beliefs about what is proper; their perceptions of what is fact; and their expectations of what is to come" (Edelman, 1971, p. 7). In symbolic politics, events are used to create legitimations for political actions: "a crisis, like all news developments, is a creation of the language used to depict it; the appearance of a crisis is a political act, not a recognition of a fact or of a rare situation" (Edelman, 1988, p. 31).

The use of crisis talk has become a popular aspect of symbolic politics for politicians as well as the media. We repeatedly hear references to the crisis in our public schools; the crisis in healthcare; or our economy in crisis. Whether or

not there is actually evidence or fact to support such claims is often beside the point. By framing a policy issue in a certain way, in this case as a crisis meriting urgent attention, politicians can garner public support for a particular position that otherwise might be harder to justify. Crisis talk can thus be powerfully effective in eliciting and producing emotions that compel people to act in certain ways. To say that something is a crisis creates a kind of panic logic that "seeks immediate and drastic responses to the situation at hand" (Barnhardt in Gabbard, 2000, p. 23).

As Birnbaum and Shushok (2001) explain, different constituencies construct stories, or narratives, around the core questions in society – for example, on the issue of higher education, these questions might consist of who should attend university; what should be taught; the social obligation of institutions; and how decisions should be made. Within any issue area there can be a myriad of such narratives at any point in time, each competing with the other for dominance. Crisis talk is one way that groups can gain the upper hand in getting their particular story across. Once they take root, however, narratives cannot be displaced simply through the presentation of arguments or data. "This can only be done by providing a different narrative that tells a better and more compelling story" (Birnbaum and Shushok in Altbach, Gumport and Johnstone, 2001, p. 73).

Birnbaum and Shushok add that one way of making a narrative story more compelling is to exaggerate it, to connect it to important social values and

symbols, and to propose solutions that either appear to be in the public interest, "natural", or morally correct. Hence, problems that may lead to crises are "not given, out there waiting in the world for smart analysts to come along and define them correctly. They are created in the minds of citizens by other citizens, leaders, organizations and government agencies, as an essential part of political maneuvering" (Stone, 1988, p. 122).

Hood and Jackson (1991) claim that the capacity of political leaders to manufacture social disasters and crises has greatly increased with the rise of New Public Management. Features of NPM, such as corporatization and privatization; deregulation and the accommodation of business; cost-cutting and simple goal management; bureaucratic staffing by political loyalists and policy making by opinion polling all increase the potential for politicians to distort and conceal information. By circumscribing bureaucratic expertise, creating barriers to communication and circumventing regulations and other means of checks and balances, governments are better able to manipulate circumstances in such a way as to better achieve their political goals. As they conclude, "NPM does appear to contain several of the organizational ingredients which have been associated with socially-created disasters" (Hood and Jackson, 1991, p. 24).

Related to the idea of symbolic politics and crisis talk is framing; how issues are presented or framed to appeal to a larger audience. In the battle over competing narratives, if groups are unable to expand interest in their grievances to more

people or to certain key groups, access to the political agenda is unlikely. "Political problems are not just associated with objective conditions; rather, issue definition is associated with cultural dynamics related to the proponents' ability to connect a problem to cultural assumptions about threats, risk, and humans' ability to control their physical and social environments" (Cobb and Ross, 1997, p. 5). In this way the process is akin to a game of strategy, as each player tries to utilize whatever resources are at hand in order to mobilize support for his or her position and weaken that of his or her opponent.

As Davies (1999) concludes in his examination of religious interest groups and education policy in Ontario, we should not underestimate the variety of ideologies, symbols, and strategies that are used by various forces both internal and external to the policymaking process. "Although powerful actors may set agendas for educational change by sponsoring continent-wide reforms like multicultural education and choice, frame analysis can show how relatively weak but creative local actors seize opportunities and shape such reforms for their own purposes" (Davies, 1999, p. 18).

Building on these ideas of policy paradigms and framing Baumgartner and Jones (1991; 2005) refer to the 'policy image'; how policy problems are discussed and understood by political actors, the media and the public. Policy images are significant in agenda setting, they argue, because they ultimately influence what actors will be involved in the decision making process, and the venues or

institutions in which this process occurs. Hence, when certain issues are portrayed as technical problems rather than as social questions, experts can dominate the decision-making process. However, when the ethical, social or political implications of such policies become dominant, a much broader range of participants can suddenly become involved (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991). Political actors will seek to control how issues are imaged in order to control access to the process. Therefore, while on the one hand political actors "try to control the prevailing image of the policy problem through the use of rhetoric, symbols and policy analysis, (on the other hand), they try to alter the roster of participants who are involved in the issue by seeking out the most favourable venue for the consideration of their issues" (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991, p. 1045).

The key element in the process of agenda setting, then, involves the creation of "policy monopolies" in which specific subsystems gain the ability to construct hegemonic interpretations of a policy problem and thus control the way in which it is conceived and discussed. "Subsystem members seek to alter policy images through a number of tactics related to altering the venue of policy debate, or to other aspects of the prevailing policy discourse, and thereby undermine the complacency or stability of an existing policy subsystem" (True, Jones and Baumgartner in Sabatier, 1999, p. 99).

Causal stories need to be fought for, defended, and sustained; there is always someone to tell a competing story. Those who seek changes in the problem area clash with those who endeavour to protect vested interests, or to present the problem in another way. In this way, problem definition can also be viewed as "a great tug of war between political actors asserting competing causal theories" (Stone, 1989, p. 293). Hence, problem definition is conceived less as a process of optimal rationalization by policy actors than a process of argument, debate and manipulation between competing groups, each crafting a reasonable argument in ways that aim to persuade the other side (or sides). As Majone (1989) claims, the evidence put forth in the presentation of these arguments is not synonymous with data or information. Rather, it is information selected from the available stock and introduced at a specific point in the argument in order to persuade a particular audience of the truth or falsity of a statement. "Argumentation", he concludes, "is the key process through which citizens and policymakers arrive at moral judgments and policy choices" (Majone, 1989, p. 2).

In this conceptualization, then, the key is to accept that all policy analysis is argumentation and to explore how crafting these arguments may increase the persuasive capabilities of one actor over another. The process of agenda setting is therefore not marked by the automatic acceptance of objective givens but instead by such factors as debate, compromise, concessions, tradeoffs, deference to influence, responses to power and judgments of what may be workable. This is a defining and redefining process in a concentrated form – the

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forming, the re-working and the recasting of a collective picture of the social problem, so that what emerges may be a far cry from how the problem was initially viewed. Hence, the fate of the social problem depends greatly on what happens in this process of debate, dialogue and argument. "How the problem comes to be defined, how it is bent in response to awakened sentiment, how it is depicted to protect vested interests, and how it reflects the play of strategic position and power" (Blumer, 1971, p. 304) are all significant in the mobilization of action on a problem.

Zahariadas (2003) also points to the way that actors use the manipulation of ideas to win support for their particular position, which he defines as "the systematic distortion, misrepresentation, or selective presentation of information to exploit opportunities in a world of unclear goals, opaque technology, and fluid participation" (Zahariadas, 2003, p. 18). As he argues, manipulation is more than just persuasion. While persuasion involves generating facts to change people's minds, the multiple streams model assumes that people have not made up their mind, so there is little to be changed. Under ambiguous conditions where well-formed goals may be absent, more information is not necessarily the answer. Rather, the key is to understand how information is selectively presented in a certain way to persuade a target audience to buy in. Manipulation thus aims primarily to provide meaning, clarification and identity in the midst of problematic preferences.

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The manipulation of information and ideas plays a key role in forcing governmental attention to problems, and hence in the process of agenda setting (Jones, 1994). In describing this process Kingdon (1995) refers to how policy actors and advocates of particular proposals, in attempting to get their ideas accepted, attempt to "soften up" decision-makers and the larger public. "Then when a short-run opportunity to push their proposals comes, the way has been paved, the important people softened up" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 128).

Conclusion

As this chapter has stressed, agenda setting does not occur in a vacuum, but rather within a wider context of ideas and assumptions about the world we live in. This climate of ideas is an important aspect of policy analysis, because it provides a framework that political leaders must operate within. It sets the parameters of what is acceptable to society and what is not, and helps us to understand why some issues reach the government agenda while others continue to languish. It also helps explain alternative specification; why decision-makers renders choose one policy option over another.

While numerous factors can influence the climate of ideas at any given point, this chapter focused on the role of ideology and the scholarly literature on higher education in Canada. Under the impact of such leaders as Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney, the idea of what constitutes "common sense" decidedly shifted to the right in the 1980s and early 1990s. Fearful of the

changes being brought about by globalization and economic recession, the ideas of neo-conservatism and the New Right found resonance with broad segments of the public across the industrialized world. At the same time, academics and researchers in the higher education field were writing of the "crisis" facing the modern university, and the need for change (although few agreed on what this change should consist of). The discourses surrounding universities and colleges as exemplified in the scholarly literature at the time reflected the same sense of frustration expressed by political leaders and the media, and provided decision-makers a certain degree of legitimacy in their education reform efforts.

And lastly, this chapter also considered how actors within the policy subsystem use manipulation, symbolism and crisis talk to frame issues in certain ways. Problems do not automatically spring up in society, but are instead socially constructed. Depending on how problems are defined, the kinds of attributes ascribed to them and the solutions proposed for their resolution, actors are able to build support for their particular priorities, and gain the upper hand in getting their issues onto the agenda.

Chapter 6: General Trends in Educational Reform

Previous chapters have examined several trends within the wider context that have impacted the shape and process of public policy, and educational policy in particular, throughout the industrialized world. The purpose of this chapter and the next is to demonstrate how these themes of globalization and the climate of ideas not only influenced policymakers in Manitoba but also in those countries it most looked to for inspiration, including the United Kingdom, the United States, and other provinces across Canada such as Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia.

While it was these specific jurisdictions that the Manitoba government looked to for ideas when it was reconsidering its educational policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s, these ideas in fact represented a worldwide trend. As Ball (1993) so colorfully sums up, "the market, as a policy alternative to 'public monopoly education', is clearly education policy flavour of the decade across the Western world" (Ball, 1993, p. 3). Reflecting the expanse of New Public Management, a preoccupation with economic restructuring and the accession of neo-conservatism, over the past two decades governments throughout the world have been experimenting with management techniques and tools designed to bring better efficiency, effectiveness and accountability to their higher education systems. For Jones (2004), "the 1980s and early 1990s (was) a period of dramatic higher education reform, especially in such English-speaking nations as Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, but also in certain jurisdictions

of continental Europe and Southeast Asia" (Jones, 2004, p. 40). The introduction of such things as strengthened governing structures, performance measurement techniques, business planning, and policies aimed at improving the articulation and coordination of educational institutions all point to the desire of governments everywhere to "get more bang for the buck" from their universities and to bring higher education more in line with economic priorities.

The Dominance of the Market

While we tend to focus on the Anglo-American democracies when comparing public policy, the market metaphor has in fact become common parlance within governments, institutions and international organizations around the world. Looking at educational change across Europe, de Boer, Goedegebuure and Meek (1998) note how governments in Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Austria have introduced new legislation, or have amended existing legislation, regarding the governance and management of their higher education systems. "These changes all have a similar thrust, namely, a more corporate form of decision-making structures ... (and) would appear to follow earlier actions undertaken by governments in the United Kingdom and Australia" (de Boer, Goedegebuure and Meek, 1998, p. 105).

Countries such as Scotland, Germany and Sweden, for example, have adopted performance funding strategies resembling those in such U.S. states as Tennessee (Banta, Rudolph, Van Dyke and Fisher, 1996), while reforms in

Germany, Austria, Japan and Canada "show a convergence of structures, forms of governance, financing patterns, and mechanisms of accountability and control" (Schuetze and Bruneau, 2004, p. 8). Even beyond the West we see evidence of the entrenchment of market dynamics in educational systems. "Whether one interrogates educational reforms in the developing world, or in European, Asian and North American contexts, the supreme reign of the global marketplace is evident, and the enormity of the reforms cannot be overlooked" (Dei and Karumanchery, 1999, p. 56).

Macpherson (1996) describes how educational policymaking has changed over the past twenty years. He argues that in the late 1970s the education policy cycle in most western democratic countries tended to move sedately through a process that generated relatively high levels of consensus between stakeholders, permitted reasonable degrees of expert and professional participation, and had recognizable stages. By the late 1980s, however, governments tended to respond much more in haste to issues whenever they became politicized or whenever the minister chose to intervene on personal or ideological grounds. Task forces of outsiders, usually contracted personally by ministers, generated proposals often without the significant involvement of educators. Once their proposals were approved by cabinets and quickly launched as policy, schools were expected to implement the changes with predictable degrees of resistance and alienation amongst professionals. Little empirical evidence was offered to

support these policies, and "ideology could easily displace consequences and logic as the basis of policy justification" (Macpherson, 1996, p. 144).

McDaniel (1996) and Teichler's (1996) comparative studies of higher education systems also found a similar convergence of educational policies. In a review of the relationship between governments and higher education institutions in 75 different countries, states and provinces around the world, McDaniel notes that while each jurisdiction has created its own unique mix of influence of government on the one hand and universities on the other, "the differences between the higher education systems in Western Europe and those in the U.S. are relatively small" (McDaniel, 1996, p. 138). Teichler (1996) similarly concludes that over the past two decades higher education in Western European countries has been influenced by the same kinds of reform debates. He adds that with the current managerial thrust in most countries the borderlines between governmental authority and university autonomy have become increasingly blurred. "Over the years, the traditional power balance between academia, university administration, government and society (has) eroded in most countries" (Teichler, 1996, p. 91).

In his review of the Australian system of higher education, Mahony (1994) points out that while it is considerably different than the American system in terms of the diversity of institutions, funding and fiduciary responsibility, in both countries higher education has increasingly come to be viewed as a national economic

resource. There are also related concerns about value for the public dollar, educational quality and how this quality can be measured, and the relationship between university priorities and national priorities. In Australia the clear trend over the past two decades has been to increase federal responsibility and control over higher education (Mahony, 1994; Taylor, 2001). The 1988 release of *Higher Education: A Policy Statement* by the federal government set the stage for what Mahony refers to as the "new mutuality" in Australian higher education, in which government sets the strategic direction for the system, while the universities are free to choose how best to respond within the parameters set by government policy.

Even within government, post-secondary education policy appears to have become more centralized amongst certain key officials and ministries. This has led over the past fifteen years to four major shifts in effective power: "at the institutional level, from departments and faculties to central administrations and senior officers; from individual institutions to governments; within government, from state governments to the federal government; and at both levels of government from special coordinating agencies to Ministers, cabinet, and central departments" (Harman in Higher Education Group, 1987, p. 193).

This devolution of authority within a context created by key political actors is not unique to Australia, but has become generally common throughout Europe (Van Vught, 1988; 1989; de Boer, Goedegebuure, and Meek, 1998). Hence, the kinds

of procedural changes that were discussed previously as a result of the impact of New Public Management are also evident in higher education policy. As education becomes more important to a country's economic future, politicians are less willing to leave policymaking up to civil servants and the academic community. At the same time, however, governments remain mindful of the need to respect institutional autonomy and academic freedom. What has evolved therefore is a new government-university relationship that allows institutions a certain degree of freedom to act, but only within the prescribed parameters set by government policy. "How the 'new relationship' is locally expressed varies from country to country, although its motivation is international. It arises from an official position that making universities 'free' or 'autonomous' to respond to government objectives facilitates the achievements of official goals for higher education" (Mahony, 1994, p. 125). As Van Vught adds, "in the new strategy, the institutions have their own autonomy, but government has the power to influence their behavior. Higher education institutions are confronted with more freedom, but this freedom is only a freedom to act according to the wishes of government" (Van Vught, 1989, p. 350).

The United Kingdom

The inspiration for many of the public sector reforms, and educational policy reforms in particular, that were implemented in the Anglo-American democracies throughout the 1980s and 1990s had their roots in the Thatcher revolution. As Levin (2001) states, "Thatcher introduced fundamental changes in almost every

aspect of the public sector during her term as prime minister" (Levin, 2001, p. 36). While other jurisdictions came to emulate many of the same kinds of approaches as those adopted in the United Kingdom, "the path which the UK has hewn is far more radical in the undiluted application of ideologically driven policy" (Ball, 1993, p. 8). Thatcher's government was very strongly committed to neo-liberal ideas about privatization and the value of market forces, as well as to neo-conservative ideas regarding quality and exclusivity in education. She was also determined to move away from what she considered to be excessively collectivist ideas of government towards a much smaller state and a greater emphasis on the market provision of services (Levin, 2001). As Thatcher later declared in her memoirs, by the time the Conservatives came to office "optimism about the beneficent effects of government intervention had largely disappeared". Government therefore had to now "put its faith in freedom and free markets, limited government and strong defence; the creative capacity of enterprise" (quoted in Rhodes, 1994, p. 140).

That Britain was the first country to bring in extensive changes to their public sector is not that surprising, in light of the fact that it was also the first nation to jump on many of the ideas which were to eventually crystallize under the New Public Management banner. Not only did NPM encompass many of the concerns that were just beginning to emerge in light of the changes being brought about by globalization, but it also represented the practical application of the New Right ideology of the Thatcher government. As Savoie (1994) argues, however, it was

not just conservative politicians that were expressing frustration with their civil service. The world oil crisis, economic dislocation, inflation, the breakdown of industrial relations and political uncertainty that rocked Britain and the industrialized world throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s had led many on all points along the political spectrum to reassess the post-war consensus and the future of the welfare state (Lawton, 1992). The public service proved to be an easy target for many politicians struggling to cope with changes wreaked by globalization and the attendant public frustration with rising taxes, unemployment levels and declining public services. As the former prime minister of England Edward Heath declared in 1980, "the civil service today is an admirable administrative instrument, but it is not primarily designed for the formulation of policies to meet the problems of the modern world … it has an inherent quality of inertia which leads to a refusal to accept innovation" (quoted in Savoie, 1994, p. 108). Heath's views echoed those of prominent journalists and highly respected academics in England that were also less than enthusiastic about the civil service and its work, and reflected waning public confidence in public institutions and politicians in general.

The educational system in particular came under greater scrutiny for its perceived failings to offset economic and social crisis in the United Kingdom. In an infamous speech given at Ruskin College in Oxford in 1976, the Labour Prime Minister at the time, James Callaghan, linked the wider crisis in society, politics and the economy to a "perceived crisis in education" (quoted in Phillips and

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Furlong, 2001, p. 12). The great debate which followed the 1976 Ruskin speech illustrated the degree to which the public no longer believed in the ability of the educational system to foster a society which was both fairer and more prosperous (Lawton, 1992). And as confidence diminished, so controversy grew about how schools should be controlled and made more accountable for their performance. In a wider sense, economic difficulties were prompting most industrial countries to question the power of governments to remedy social ills, and consequently their right to spend heavily on trying to do so. "Both Callaghan's government and its conservative successor were therefore typical of their times in giving priority to raising economic productivity and in treating extravagant public expenditure as a root cause of economic weakness" (Edwards in Phillips and Furlong, 2001, p. 244).

The linkage established by Callaghan between the problems of modern governance and the failings of the education system proved to be critical, because it established a very different set of discursive boundaries within which all curriculum debate and policymaking were to be subsequently framed. Prior to this, a tradition of relative autonomy and consensus had built up between government, local authorities and teachers. Until the 1970s, educational policymaking in England had been "essentially reactive. and locked into an assumption of expansion of provision based upon an expectation of continuing economic growth" (Ball, 1990, p. 12). After this period, however, pluralism became defunct, and the fragile progressive consensus based on incremental

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change was replaced with conflict and contention. Now Callaghan suggested that two crucial partners had been excluded from the educational partnership, namely industry and parents. This speech was a turning point because it signaled for the first time the role of the central government in shaping curriculum policy and the need for greater control of education in general. Hence, partnership was replaced by accountability as the dominant metaphor in discussions about the distribution of power in the education system.

Callaghan's speech also marked for the first time the perception both within political circles and the minds of the public of the relationship between the economy and the education system. "By linking the perceived shortcomings of the education system with economic and industrial crisis, Callaghan placed the issue of school and work at the centre of the political agenda" (Phillips and Furlong, 2001, p. 15). Education policy was no longer separated off from other areas of social and economic policy but instead subsumed within the mainstream of the political ideology and policies of the Thatcher government. As Ball (1990) argues, "the educational policies of Thatcherism have involved a total reworking of the ideological terrain of educational politics and the orientation of policymaking is now towards the consumers of education – parents and industrialists; the producer lobbies are almost totally excluded" (Ball, 1990, p. 8).

With the re-election of the Thatcher government in 1987, over the next five years the Tories embarked upon the biggest programme of legislative change in the

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history of British education (Ball, 1990; Levin, 2001; Whitty and Edwards, 1998). The first such move, 1988's *Education Reform Act*, represented the culmination of a break with the consensus politics of education which had prevailed in the United Kingdom for the past four decades (Lawton, 1992). With 238 sections, the *Act* was "one of the biggest single pieces of legislation passed by the Tories in their time in office, and gave the Secretary of State for Education more powers than any of his/her cabinet colleagues" (Phillips and Furlong, 2001, p. 17).

The passage of the *Act* provoked much opposition, not least because it shifted power away from the Local Education Authorities to the central authority. "Aggressively ideological and political" (Lawton, 1992, p. 46), the *Act* was an ironic combination of competition and control: by establishing a national curriculum, stricter accountability requirements and standards testing it symbolized an unprecedented move by the central state to control education; at the same time, it also encouraged greater competition within the system.

Reflected in the *Act* was the idea that markets are somehow inherently more effective and more consistent with democratic norms than any form of top-down provision; an assumption which remained largely unquestioned in official circles during this time (Whitty and Edwards, 1998). As Phillips and Furlong (2001) conclude, the reforms of this period represented an attempt to change the political and social landscape in Britain, "and education, particularly because of its perceived importance to the national economy, was to be a central focus for

the new Right's reform of the post-war welfare state" (Phillips and Furlong, 2001, p. 19).

The restructuring of Britain's higher education sector was subsumed under the general thrust of educational reform, and was as equally profound. Under the 1988 *Education Reform Act* and the subsequent 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*, the purpose of higher education in the UK, its governance structures and how it was to be funded, were fundamentally altered. As Alexander (2000) maintains, in response to the increased drive for greater accountability and performance, Britain has witnessed unprecedented intervention by the central government into the affairs of higher education. "During the last decade, the relationship between Parliament and higher education has dramatically changed and no longer resembles the governance and funding structures that were in place until the mid-1980s" (Alexander, 2000, p. 422).

As Kogan (1987) adds, with the OPEC oil crisis and the subsequent election of Thatcher, the hitherto privileged status of higher education in the United Kingdom was no longer to be, as governments and the public began to demand changes from the "pampered darlings" of the university world. The cozy relationship that had existed between universities and education officials came to a crashing halt in 1979 with the Thatcher government's clear mandate to roll back the boundaries of the state, to enhance spending on defence and public order, and

to find the money to do so from such areas as higher education. Sparked by the 1987 White Paper, *Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge*, the government sought a balance between centralized control by government and increased marketization of the higher education system. At the same time, a massive push to expand higher education throughout the United Kingdom was begun, in an effort to bring about a long-term improvement in the competitiveness and growth of the British economy.

The *Education Reform Act* of 1988 eliminated the long-standing buffer agency the Universities Grants Committee (UGC), which had mediated relations between universities and government in Britain. Consisting largely of university professors, the UGC had historically given universities a very loose reign on how they spent government dollars. As Kogan (1987) points out, "only from 1967 did the UGC provide a General Memorandum to Guidance which (nonetheless) still reflected the UGC's unwillingness to encroach on university autonomy" (Kogan in Higher Education Group, 1987, p. 176). The UGC was eventually replaced under the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act* by a series of Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFCs), which contained a much larger number of lay members appointed from industry and commerce.

While the mission of the former University Grants Committee was to represent the views of the academic community to government, the focus of the HEFC is to promote the quality and quantity of learning in research in higher education

institutions, cost-effectively and with regard to national needs. As Alexander (2000) notes, within two months after their creation, the central government issued a series of guidelines for the HEFCs reaffirming the changing relationship between government and higher education. These guidelines demanded that Funding Councils develop sector-wide funding methods for the allocation of resources for teaching and research; as well as clear specifications of what institutions were expected to provide in these areas and how greater fiscal efficiencies would be achieved. Funding Councils were also instructed to increase accountability of research funding from sector institutions, and to link a greater proportion of funding to performance indicators (Alexander, 2000; Laughlin and Broadbent, 1994).

The creation of the HEFCs substantially changed the nature of the higher education environment by centralizing state authority over higher education (Alexander, 2000). For Salter and Tapper (1994), "after decades of prod and nudge politics, of wait and see, the state has acquired powers which mark a qualitative shift in its relationship with the institutions of higher education ... (I)t is now in a position to orchestrate change on a scale and in a manner which knows no precedent" (Salter and Tapper, 1994, p. 1). Various sectors within the post-secondary area were brought together under the HEFC umbrella, including both pre-existing and "new" universities (those polytechnics that were granted university status), as well as those polytechnics that remained.

How post-secondary education was to be funded and evaluated was also substantially altered, with the introduction of performance-based funding, new auditing, validation, accreditation and assessment mechanisms and other features borrowed from the New Public Management toolbox (Lawton, 1992). The balance of funding shifted from block grant payments to student fees, with the universities encouraged to secure a greater degree of their funding from the private sector. "In effect, conservative governments throughout the 1980s and 1990s treated higher education as an inefficient nationalized industry, whose 'productivity' could be significantly improved by cuts in public funding, and bringing it closer to the rigours of the private sector" (Rees and Stroud in Phillips and Furlong, 2001, p. 76). These changes were occurring at the same time that the Conservative government mandated that higher education double its enrollment by the turn of the century, without any additional publicly generated resources. In fact, government funding levels per student dropped by around a third during the 1990s alone (Alexander, 2000).

In sum, educational reform in Britain needs to be seen in the context of the overall Thatcherite project of reducing the role of the state and relying primarily on market forces for all forms of service provision. With the changes brought about in the 1980s, a fundamental and irrevocable link had been established both in the political and the pubic mind that education should exist primarily to serve the interests of the national economy. This period was dominated by three main issues, namely educational performance, markets, and the changing nature

of state provision of education. Behind each of these issues was an economic imperative, particularly the need to meet the demands of international competition. While the content of education policy shifted, so too did the process of policymaking. The Conservatives distrusted the civil service, especially in the education ministry. As a result, under Thatcher education policy "was very much made at the political level, with the bureaucracy's responsibility mainly limited to implementation issues" (Levin, 2001, p. 90). As Phillips and Furlong (2001) conclude, over the period from 1976 to 2001, "a dominant and recurring theme throughout most of the period under investigation is therefore the growth of central influence over educational politics, policy and practice" (Phillips and Furlong, 2001, p. 3).

The United States

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 also signaled the dawn of a new era in the United States. While not as hard hit as other countries, the United States did not completely escape the ill-effects brought about by worldwide economic decline. In addition to backbreaking recession, double digit inflation and unemployment levels, during the 1970s the U.S. economy lost 23% of its share of world markets, representing $125 billion in lost production and the loss of at least two million industrial jobs (Roberts and King, 1996, p. 29). The American psyche took a beating as well, as increased competition from other countries such as Japan, Korea and West Germany led many to question the causes and cures for the country's loss of economic strength, and the role of government in

American life in general. The election of Reagan in 1980 thus reflected an American public "concerned about the effectiveness, responsiveness, and cost of government, and less interested in an activist, progressive government bent on social reform" (Roberts and King, 1996, p. 30).

Levin, Landry and Shapiro (2001) state that before 1980, budgeting in the United States was seen only as a technical and dull side-issue of political leaders. However, economic turndown, coupled with the burgeoning costs of government, mounting public frustration and the New Right ideology of the Reagan administration, transformed the issue of budget deficits from just another policy matter into the "master issue", subsuming all the others. "Since the early 1980s, the budget has been the dominant issue of American national politics, overshadowing all other policy concerns ... (T)he policy debate has become 'fiscalized'" (Levin, Landy and Shapiro, 2001, p. 36). As result, there developed a new tendency for programs to be debated not according to their particular merits but according to their impact on the government's overall fiscal condition. This obsession with the budget deficit transformed the political debate in the United States, displacing pragmatic disagreements over operational details with broader, more abstract arguments about values and ideas and the appropriate role of government in modern society.

Like Thatcher before him, Reagan also brought with him an anti-public service bias and a clear preference for corporate-style management techniques.

Catching the mood of his electorate in calling for less government and more efficient management of the government operations that would remain, the new administration came into office looking to reduce the size, cost and influence of government. Reagan declared at his inauguration that he had come to Washington to "drain the swamp"; and that he would "limit government to its proper role and make it the servant, not the master of the people" (quoted in Savoie, 1994, p. 4; p. 92). Also like Thatcher, shortly after assuming office Reagan called for a major review of government operations, to be headed up by a commission of corporate heads from the private sector.

In bringing the values of neo-conservatism and New Public Management into his government Reagan was heavily influenced by what was occurring in Britain under Margaret Thatcher, and kept a close eye on developments there. As Boyd (1992) argues, "there has been conscious policy borrowing between Great Britain and the United States as policymakers have conversed and exchanged education policy ideas in such areas as school-business partnerships (and) parental choice of schools" (Boyd, 1992, p. 515). One American official at time observed that "there were lots of trans-Atlantic flights over to Britain to study developments there to see how they would apply back home ... there is no denying that Thatcher had an impact on Washington, perhaps not so much in the application of specified measures, but in setting the tone" (quoted in Savoie, 1994, p. 247).

Reagan's fixation with the economic competitiveness of the United States resonated in all aspects of policymaking, including that of education. As Rizvi (1992) argues, prior to 1980 there was a liberal consensus in the U.S. that had shaped education reform and expansion in America throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, which favored such values as equity and social justice. This liberal social agenda collapsed as economic stagnation, the election of Reagan in 1980 and the loss of faith by liberal policymakers in the ability of compensatory programs to solve social and educational problems gave way to the rise of a new conservative consensus. "The confidence that educators once had in liberal solutions to educational problems has evaporated under a sustained attack that the Right has been able to mount against the very foundation upon which it was based" (Rizvi in Marshall, 1992, p. 203).

As New Right ideas become engrained within the political fabric of the United States there was a growing sense that the "progressive" education reforms of the past had condoned a weakening of ties between education and the economy, as teachers were actively encouraging criticism of the free market and sympathy for "collectivist values". If our economy was in trouble part of the responsibility, conservative critics argued, lay in the anti-entrepreneurial attitudes of schools and the educational establishment in general.

Beginning in the 1980s, then, arguments began to surface regarding the connection between the unstable and sagging American economy and an

ineffective American education system. Compared to countries such as Germany France and Japan, American labor was said to be overpaid and undereducated. As concerns with equality and liberty in education gave way to a preoccupation with efficiency, "the 1980 election of President Ronald Reagan symbolized a turning point in American educational policy" (Guthrie in Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 135). Elliott and MacLennan (1994) add that while the New Right did not come to power in America armed with comprehensive plans for educational reform, it did come "with a critique which, together with the precise economic and political circumstances of its electoral success, largely determined the particular policies pursued" (Elliott and MacLennan, 1994, p. 171).

Actively encouraged by Ronald Reagan and his republican successor, George Bush, the 1980s also witnessed the growing involvement of business in educational reform. The Business Roundtable, which had been established in 1972 by CEO's from the top 200 companies in the Fortune 500 to lobby the president and executive for legislation and regulations more favorable to corporate interests, became increasingly interested in educational issues. In 1982 the Business Roundtable released a report, *American Education: An Economic Issue*, which warned of the superiority of the Japanese educational system and the threat this posed to the American economy. "The most dominant recurring theme emanating from the business and corporate communities was that US economic strength was tied to the education of workers ... if productivity and competitiveness were faltering in the private sector, then the public schools

were to blame because they failed to educate students to be productive workers" (Borman, Castenell and Gallagher in Marshall, 1992, p. 78). Corporate involvement in American education expanded when eight leading national business organizations, including the Business Roundtable, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, established the Business Coalition for Education Reform in 1989. The purpose of the Coalition was to lobby for "national achievement standards, improvements in the teaching profession, fairness in educational funding, and other reforms" (Borman, Castenell and Gallagher in Marshall, 1992, p. 78).

The shared characteristics of the U.S. and British economies and the ideological similarities between Reagan and Thatcher led to a degree of education policy convergence between America and Britain, not necessarily in terms of identical policies but in a common commitment to the ideals of the New Right (Boyd, 1992). Like Thatcher, Reagan believed in the role of education in fostering economic growth and maintaining a competitive edge in the face of globalization. Reforms under both leaders therefore articulated with and were seen by their architects as "a part solution to common economic weaknesses, most notably declining competitiveness in world markets and the need for a better educated and differently skilled workforce" (Halpin and Troyna, 1995, p. 304).

At the same time, they shared similar views regarding the perceived deficiencies of schools, colleges and universities, and the need to wrestle control away from

the academic establishment and back in the hands of elected officials and the consumers of education (namely, parents and students). Reform in both countries was also premised on similar critiques of the perceived weaknesses of local systems of school organization and the alleged waywardness of teachers and other educational professionals; the former who were characterized as over-bureaucratized and insufficiently accountable, and the latter as being dangerously out of touch with the real world (Whitty and Edwards, 1998).

These critiques also highlight the extent to which successive administrations in Britain and the United States appeared to share a similar interpretation of the state's role in improving education, which in both cases entailed a curious mix of deregulation and central prescription. As Boyd (1993) elucidates,

> The USA and Great Britain are simultaneously increasing both the degree of centralization and the degree of decentralization of school governance. Thus, on both sides of the Atlantic more decision-making authority is being shifted to the school level (school-based management and charter schools in the US; local management of schools and opting out in Britain) ... (A)t the same time there are new centralizing forces: the National Curriculum in Britain and the Goals 2000 Educate America Act in the US (Boyd, 1993, p. 120).

Elliott and MacLennan make a similar point with reference to the simultaneous and seemingly paradoxical combination of centralization of control over education that the "free market" has encouraged. "Centralization strengthens the hand of the state, allowing prescription and monitoring of teachers' actions: privatization gives greater power to educational 'consumers'" (Elliott and MacLennan, 1994, p. 172).

Ball (1990) and Boyd (1992) demonstrate how the conservative New Right in both Britain and the United States were able to mobilize the media to push their agenda and discredit alternative educational practices. Boyd maintains that Reagan and his Secretary of Education William Bennett were extraordinarily successful in gaining vast media exposure for their critiques of the educational system and in exerting enormous influence by "sermonizing" from their high offices in a "bully pulpit" style reminiscent of Teddy Roosevelt. "The effective "New Right" media campaigns in Great Britain were matched in the United States by very skillful White House leadership on behalf of excellence, competition, and choice in education" (Boyd, 1992, p. 516).

While the central government in London is responsible for all aspects of British education, in the United States higher education is technically a state responsibility. Education policy is carried out by the state legislator, the governor, and/or state coordinating councils that act as intermediary bodies for public universities and colleges. Federal involvement in postsecondary education in America has historically been limited to the provision of direct student aid, research funding, and specific categoricals. However, while the individual states maintain fiduciary control over their education systems, the federal government nonetheless plays a limited but important role in setting overall policy direction, in providing financial support for a wide variety of initiatives, and in promoting research[1].

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[1] Indeed, Bok (1986) maintains that even by 1975, the U.S. federal government was beginning to move on many fronts to regulate academic policies in ways that would bring universities into closer

While on the face of it American universities appear to have more autonomy than schools in Britain or Australia, as McDaniel (1996) reminds us, often disregarded is the fact that "the possible absence of government power does not automatically imply that institutions have full authority" (McDaniel, 1996, p. 125). Both federal and state officials continue to exert significant power over state higher education systems through such indirect mechanisms as research councils and other powerful funding agencies, as well as through regional and professional accreditation bodies.

Moreover, although the fifty states are relatively independent in matters of education policy, they do tend to watch each other fairly closely, with policy proposals often spreading quite rapidly from state to state (Levin, 2001). With the huge impact in the United States of such popular texts as *Reinventing Government* by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), such managerialist-inspired tools as business planning, benchmarking and performance-based budgeting became vogue at the federal, state and local levels of government. The governing agencies responsible for overseeing and coordinating higher education systems within each state followed suite, as they became increasingly concerned with issues of accountability, efficiency and productivity. As one commentator summed up, "America in the early 1990s has become consumed with the specter of lost productivity and the challenge of international competitiveness ... (I)t is in

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conformity with national needs. One such example is the declaration of higher education institutions as commercial enterprises, which subjects them to legislation regarding labour practices and anti-trust issues.

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this context that higher education's continuing cost escalation and its seeming obliviousness to economic realities and to the tough decisions and real sacrifices being made elsewhere in the economy have met with such hostility in the press and among public officials" (MacTaggart, 1996, p. 13).

The release of a number of reports both in the United States and internationally also set the stage for education reform, specifically in forging the linkage between education and economic competitiveness. In 1983 Reagan formed the National Commission on Educational Excellence whose report, *A Nation at Risk*, had significant ramifications for education in America. *A Nation at Risk* warned that U.S. education was threatened by a "rising tide of mediocrity" and that large-scale changes were needed to improve quality if the country was to be able to continue to compete economically (Roberts and King, 1996, p. 27). It further spoke of the need for more rigorous curricula, better trained and paid teachers, more homework, and higher standards in education. The report "set off a massive wave of education reforms across the country over the next several years as governors and legislatures tried to respond to the political demand for reform" (Levin, 2001, p. 61).

The work of the National Commission on Educational Excellence was also effective in gaining widespread attention from the American mass media, and was soon followed by a number of other national studies, such as 1986's *A Nation Prepared* by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. These

reports all tended to reach similar conclusions, and served to further underscore the importance of a highly educated workforce for success in the global economy (O'Sullivan, 1999). Armed with the legitimacy provided by these studies, the United States embarked on one of the most intense efforts at educational reform in its history, with the major motive the improvement of economic productivity.

Wirt and Harmann (1986) maintain that the rise of neo-conservatism in America paralleled changes in public attitudes towards education. While Americans had a long-standing concern over educational efficiency, it was not until the 1980s that there existed "widespread public concern that an uncertain American economic future needed to be buttressed by a more productive system of education" (Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 136). Aided by media reports that spoke of the crisis in American schools, it became evident to many Americans that not only did many of the nations economically competing with the United States possess more effective economies, but they also had more effective systems of education (Roberts and King, 1996). In fact, the focus on efficiency in education had already begun to turn in the 1970s; what Reagan did was "recognize the intense political salience of education for American voters and begin to capitalize upon it" (Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 136).

The 1980s and early 1990s also saw a flurry of reports by international organizations on the links between higher education, employment and globalization. In 1988 the OECD sponsored an international conference on the

role of education in economic and social change. The ensuing report, *Education and the Economy in a Changing Society*, created a "rhetoric of justification for a tighter connection between educational systems and the world economy" (Apple, 1992). In its wake came a number of other reports by such organizations as UNESCO (*Policy Paper for Change and Development in Higher Education,* 1995, which was followed up by the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 1997); the World Bank (*Higher Education: Lessons of Experience*, 1995); and the European Commission (*Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society*, 1996). The OECD also addressed the transition from higher education to employment in one of its largest projects undertaken to date; *From Higher Education to Employment*, a four volume compendium released in 1992 and 1993.

Gabbard (2000) maintains that while economic interests, particularly those of the nation's corporate elite, have always dominated the formation of American educational policy, with *A Nation at Risk* the marketization of education was elevated to "canonical status". "To challenge the belief that a people's economic development proceeds in direct proportion to their level of educational achievement poses a threat of heresy against one of the most fundamental principles in modern secular theology" (Gabbard, 2000, p. xiii). He adds that with the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, corporate elites and elected officials, assisted by an obedient media, managed to orchestrate a massive propaganda

campaign aimed at convincing the public that schools were, at once, the cause and the cure for their economic insecurity.

National and global concerns with improving institutional accountability and productivity began to resonate at the state level, so much so that by the mid-1980s "the United States (had) witnessed a substantial change in the relationship between state governments and higher education" (Alexander, 2000, p. 419). Rising public discontent with universities; financial constraints on government budgets; increasing and different student demands; the advent of new technologies and the view of higher education as a critical tool in managing global competitiveness all acted as drivers in forging this new relationship (Kennedy, 1995). The combined effect of attempting to balance these challenges has led individual states to search for new approaches to their higher education systems; typically resulting in measures designed to improve the accountability, efficiency and productivity of post-secondary institutions within a policy framework established by governments.

As concerns with institutional accountability and productivity mounted, most states began to focus their attention less on such issues as instructional quality and more on such actions as quality measurements, institutional comparisons, outcome assessments, faculty workload reviews, time-to-degree reductions, and reallocation strategies. At the same time, states also took a more directive role in reforming their higher education systems. Earlier assessment initiatives based on

voluntary participation gave way to mandated systems of institutional reporting, with new accountability policies most frequently originating with state legislatures or their higher education agency. In some states, the impetus for change came from legislative or gubernatorial efforts to reorganize and reform government in general. In Texas, Florida, and Oregon, for example, the introduction of new accountability policies for universities were linked to more encompassing statewide efforts to restructure government services (Ruppert in Gaither, 1995). In this way states borrowed heavily from each other; most of these reporting systems were "based on designs implemented by other state legislatures and coordinating boards rather than through consultation with institutional leaders" (Neal in Gaither, 1995, p. 6).

Key amongst these new managerial tools is performance reporting, which according to Burke, Minassians and Yang (2002) has become the preferred approach of state policy makers anxious to demonstrate to the electorate a greater degree of accountability for public higher education. These systems have tended to be either mandated by state legislation, or implemented by state coordinating agencies themselves in order to avoid a state mandate. "As a result, the indicators (that were) picked had to satisfy governors and legislators" (Burke, Minassians and Yang, 2002, p. 17). In 1979 Tennessee became the first state to base a portion of state funding for higher education not upon student head count, but on institutional performance (Bata, Rudolph, Van Dyke and Fisher, 1996). By

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the early 1990s, the majority of states followed Tennessee's lead, and now have some kind of performance measurement system in place for their public colleges.

These performance measurement systems typically share three avowed purposes: demonstrating accountability, improving performance, and meeting state needs. Within these systems performance on indicators tends to be tied to a certain portion of additional funding over base grants, which schools can access on the basis of their measured success. Hence, while each state measurement system is unique, "all focus on using the budget as an incentive for institutions to achieve better student performance and attain state goals" (SHEEO website, p. 3). Most states are also required to report on their higher education performance measures in the state budgetary process.

Reflecting the impact of New Right ideas, economic competitiveness in the face of globalization, and New Public Management, "performance reporting reflects the modern move of public policy from controlling by regulations to managing by results" (Burke, Minassians, and Yang, 2002, p. 16). Traditionally, states funded schools based on current costs, inflationary increases, and projected enrollments. "The new approach links tax support to institutional results on performance indicators that reflect state priorities" (Burke and Serban, 1997, p. 1). These moves reflect managerialist approaches to public management generally, whereby effective governments are encouraged to be tight on setting goals and assessing results and loose on the means to achieve these ends.

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Indicators have also shifted over time, from issues of academic quality and control towards such external concerns as productivity and accessibility. In this way, the focus of performance reporting appears to express the external concerns of state policy makers rather than the internal concerns of the traditional academic community. "The extraordinary interest in performance-based accountability in the United States has emanated from a taxpayer backlash against increases in public college spending and widespread public concern for improving institutional productivity" (Alexander, 2000. p. 421).

As an indicator of changing public attitudes toward universities, an article in the May 20, 1991 issue of Business Week noted, "the nation's top 100 research universities are in a mid-life crisis ... (and) are at best regarded with indifference, and at worst looked upon with disdain and contempt" (quoted in Bonser, 1992, p. 506). An editorial in the same issue advised that "its time for universities to reenter the real world. They can no longer assume that taxpayers will foot the bill for endless expansion, more empire building, or lavish perks. Its time for more accountability and a return to basics" (quoted in Bonser, 1992, p. 506).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how globalization and the climate of ideas have influenced educational change in a number of countries around the world. While the kinds of reforms introduced in different higher education systems reflect the peculiarities of their particular cultural, historical, and political context, they

nonetheless all share a marked degree of similarity in philosophical approach. What is indisputable is the degree to which education, and post-secondary education in particular, has become marketized around the world. Led by trends in the United Kingdom and the United States, education has become a prime instrument of national purpose, as countries struggle to compete in the world economy and meet the challenges posed by modern governance.

At the same time, how educational policy is developed has also fundamentally shifted. As education has become more important to economic success, key political actors, such as prime ministers, premiers, and ministers of education and finance have taken a stronger interest in what their post-secondary institutions are doing and how they are doing it. In respect of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, the preferred approach of governments has been one of managed decentralization, or a loose-tight approach, in which universities are free to determine how best to meet state goals within a policy framework set by political actors.

However, as we have seen, this policy has not always struck the intended balance, as the state continues to exert dirigiste pressures in a myriad of ways (for example, by implementing guidelines on how targeted funds can be spent, or through such mechanisms as tuition fee policies). In order to achieve their goals of a more efficient, productive and accountable post-secondary education system we see governments experimenting with a number of mechanisms inspired by

New Public Management. Such things as performance budgeting, benchmarking, business planning, and the use of performance indicators all point to the way in which higher education policy has generally changed over the past two decades. In this, as we shall see in the next chapter, Canada was no exception.

Chapter 7: The Politics of Education Policymaking in Canada

Like the previous three chapters, the purpose of Chapter 7 is also to set the stage, or context, for understanding educational change in Manitoba. In Chapter 4 we saw how such factors as globalization, New Public Management and the climate of ideas have altered the public policy landscape throughout the industrialized world, not only in terms of how policies are increasingly framed by political actors but also with regards to the processes through which they are developed as well. And significantly, we saw how key political actors such as prime ministers, premiers and ministers are assuming a more direct role in public policymaking, displacing to a certain degree the role more traditionally reserved for the civil service. In Chapter 5 we saw how these issues were reflected in the scholarly literature; while in Chapter 6, the impact of these factors on post-secondary education, specifically, the systems in Australia, Britain, and the United States, were explored. In particular, evidence was presented that demonstrated how the marketization of education, the ideology of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and the idea of education as a tool for economic recovery have altered the shape of post-secondary education not only in these jurisdictions but indeed around the world.

In Chapter 7 the changing public policy landscape in Canada will be examined. Throughout the 1980s we see confirmation of this change, as recession, the election of Brian Mulroney, and the growing involvement of business in

educational issues began to alter the discursive framework in which public policy, notably post-secondary education policy, was considered. This context is crucial to understanding the actions of the Filmon government in Manitoba, because policymaking does not occur in a vacuum but is instead embedded within a certain framework of ideas and values that that informs the ways in which problems in society are defined and interpreted by policy actors. These actors are also influenced by what is occurring in the world around them, and particularly in those jurisdictions with which they share some commonalities of culture, language or history.

In Canada as elsewhere in countries such as Britain and the United States, the early 1980s saw politicians on both the right and left express frustration with their civil services and engage in a deeper reassessment of the relationship between the state, market and society. And like Britain and the United States, the impetus for this reassessment was the troubled state of the Canadian economy. The early 1980s was the period of worst recession and economic downturn in Canadian history (Pal, 2001). Double digit inflation became a fact of life, reaching 12.5% in 1981/82. Interest rates reached almost 22% in 1982, driving unprecedented numbers of businesses into bankruptcy and exacerbating government debt loads. Unemployment increased by 55% in the period from 1980 to 1984. In the 15 to 24 age group unemployment rose from 13.2% in 1980 to 18.18% in 1982 (Pal, 2001; Brooks and Miljan, 2003). Throughout this time Canadian governments continued to borrow to cover their budget deficits, piling up the

public debt at the same time as they were raising taxes. During this period it became clear that Canada's productivity record could not compare with that of other technologically advanced countries such as Japan and Southeast Asia. "It should not be particularly surprising in this climate, which saw tremendous numbers of workers in the private sector unemployed, that those employed in the public sector started to be seen by both business and government interests as fair game for retrenchment initiatives" (Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 30).

Like Thatcher and Reagan, Brian Mulroney was also a politician of the New Right, and committed to the ideas of New Public Management and neo-conservatism. Not surprisingly, the Conservative campaign in 1984 centered on the theme of economic recovery, and the need to move the country in a new direction. This new direction consisted of rationalizing and reducing the role of government in the economy, balancing the budget, and promoting global competitiveness. It also involved reducing the size, cost and reach of public services and institutions. From the start, the ambivalence felt by the Mulroney government towards the public service, and public institutions in general, paralleled that of Thatcher and Reagan. In speeches during the 1984 election campaign, Mulroney stated that once in office he would hand out "pink slips and running shoes to bureaucrats" (quoted in Savoie, 1994, p. 4). In the government's first major statement on the economy, tabled a few weeks after coming to office, the Minister of Finance reported to the House of Commons that

"government has become too big. It intrudes too much into the marketplace and inhibits or distorts the entrepreneurial process" (quoted in Savoie, 2004, p. 93).

The day after assuming the prime ministership, Mulroney announced the establishment of the Ministerial Task Force. Overseen by an eleven member advisory committee of individuals drawn from Canada's corporate elite, the purpose of the Task Force was to review government programs with a view to eliminating those that no longer served a purpose, to consolidate others, and to point the way to better government. In 1989 the Mulroney government also announced the establishment of Public Service 2000, whose aim was to revitalize the public service. The goals of PS2000 were clearly influenced by New Public Management ideas; emphasizing the development of a results-oriented and client-centered civil service; encouraging greater devolution of authority and entrepreneurialism amongst front-line staff, and implementing more streamlined management systems (Swimmer, Hicks and Milne, 1996). It is also clear that Mulroney's approach drew inspiration from Thatcherism. According to one senior Canadian official, "without doubt the politician who had the most significant impact in shaping PS 2000 was Margaret Thatcher'" (quoted in Savoie, 1994, p. 247). And, as Savoie sums up, "Thatcher, Reagan and Mulroney all turned to the private sector to perform a 'management turnaround' operation on the government bureaucracies they were inheriting" (Savoie, 1994, p. 138). It is important to note that despite all of its "conservative saber-rattling" regarding economic productivity and public service reform, over its tenure the Mulroney

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government more than doubled the federal debt (Pal, 2001; Brooks and Miljan, 2003). Moreover, although Mulroney talked the talk of reform, and implemented a number of measures to restructure the civil service, in actual fact it did not change much from before he took office. Hence, while he adopted Thatcher's agenda, convinced it would get his party back in power after being frozen out for so long, once in office Mulroney "was much more at home cutting a deal than pressing for an ideology or a set agenda" (Savoie, 1994, p. 271).

Eden and Molot (1993) maintain that with the election of Brian Mulroney, Canada's national policy during the 1980s became narrowly focused on two main themes: the globalized market and fiscal restraint. Until this time, Canada's national policy had been predicated on the growth and expansion of the welfare state, and the continuing primacy of the federal government. Already by 1982, however, the succession of large budget deficits, increased competition from other world markets, and high unemployment and inflation levels had led the previous Liberal government under Pierre Trudeau to rethink Canada's foreign investment and trade policies. "The election of the Mulroney government cemented the transition to market liberalism by introducing more market-oriented policies to those already in place in Britain and the US" (Eden and Molot, 1993, p. 233). Like the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, the Mulroney Conservatives articulated an economic strategy based on liberalization, privatization and deregulation.

As Kroeger (1996) adds, Mulroney's mistrust of the public sector and his preoccupation with the economy reflected in his policymaking style. Unlike Trudeau, who placed great store in process and methodology, Mulroney preferred to operate free of the constraints that institutions and systems impose. As a result, under the Mulroney administration key ministers and central agencies (in addition to himself, this included the Minister of Finance, the Privy Council Office and Treasury Board) became prominent agents in decision-making. Mulroney "may not have had much time for abstract questions of government decision making, but his interest in various transactions, people and current events could be considerable" (Kroeger, 1996, p. 465).

As economic concerns became the meta-policy under which all other issues were subsumed, these themes began to resonate in the approach of the federal government towards social policy in Canada, and in particular the field of education. While careful of the province's fiduciary role in education, the federal government nonetheless took what they perceived to be a legitimate leadership role in shaping the discursive framework in which educational reform was to be viewed. Indeed, evidence of change in how the federal government began to view higher education came to the fore as early as 1982. In a speech given that year senior Liberal cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy averred that "the Canadian university had been doing a rather bad job for Canada's economic and social well-being"; and that it "had been producing overall surpluses with especially serious overproduction in the arts, education, and general science areas" (quoted

in Shere and Duhamel, 1987, p. 163). These comments were followed up a year later in the *Report of The Task Force on Labour Market Development*, prepared for the then Minister of Employment and Immigration. "Repeatedly (the Report) suggested that if government was not to intervene, Canadian universities must voluntarily change course and more directly, honour the manpower requirements of the national economy" (Shere and Duhamel, 1987, p. 163).

The early 1980s also saw the federal government assume a more assertive role in post-secondary education programs and research. A Parliamentary Task Force, established in 1983 to review federal-provincial fiscal arrangements, revealed the intent of the federal cabinet to be much more directive in the post-secondary education activities it supported, such as research, thereby exercising a continuing steering effect on what was constitutionally a provincial prerogative. The Task Force noted that the federal government had among its interests "specified roles and responsibilities, not for reflective scholarship, but for mission-oriented enquiry, not for curiosity-oriented research, but for applied research and development, not for general knowledge, but skills in demand in the economy" (Wirt and Harmann, 1986, quoted on p. 41).

Under the Mulroney administration, education increasingly became seen as a tool of national purpose. The rationale for viewing education in this light derived from Mulroney's economic agenda, and the perceived responsibility of educational institutions in aiding this agenda. In this way the Mulroney

government clearly reflected the tone of Thatcher and Reagan in the United Kingdom and the United States respectively. As Barbara McDougall, Minister of Employment and Immigration Canada declared in 1990, "(The) quality of education and training is critical to Canada's future ... (T)o remain a strong competitor in world markets, we must address the issues of drop-out and illiteracy rates, shortage of skilled workers, lack of training and so forth". She further declared that "our educational institutions must help Canada compete in the global marketplace, where a highly skilled, flexible workforce is critical to productivity and competitiveness" (quoted in Taylor, 1996, p. 94). In the forward to a text on the future of post-secondary education in Canada, the prime minister himself proclaimed that in light of the changing needs of society, "traditional approaches to education must be questioned in light of the new skills and understanding that are required ... indeed, only an honest examination of society's goals will provide us with insight into the shape of education of the future" (quoted in Shere and Duhamel, 1987, p. vii).

In articulating his approach to the public sector generally and education policy in particular, the Mulroney government was also attentive to the arguments of the business sector in Canada. Groups such as the Business Council on National Issues began to press for a less interventionist state and more secure access to the American market (Eden and Molot, 1993). At the same time were a number of calls from powerful corporate leaders and organizations on the need to bring Canada's higher education institutions more in line with the needs of the national

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economy. The following sampling of comments provides a glimpse into the ways in which the corporate sector in Canada was helping to shape the context of educational reform in Canada during the mid-1980s and early 1990s:

> Canada ... is facing a potential crippling shortage in almost every body of knowledge we will need in the next two decades. And the next two decades could decide whether Canada survives as a modern, viable, international industrial power in the Information Age.
> Walter Light, Chairman and CEO of Northern Telecom Canada, 1984. (Quoted in Shere and Duhamel, 1987, p. 32).

> Most advanced nations of the world are preparing to place themselves at the forefront of the information society. Many of the changes will take place whether we like it or not. The question that remains is whether Canada will be an active or passive participant ... If Canada's failure to act continues, Canadians face a bleak prospect and the country will be left even more vulnerable.
> Fraser Mustard, 1984. (Quoted in Shere and Duhamel, 1987, p. 32).

Speaking at a 1990 conference on education and the economy, Anita Ross, Vice-President of IBM Canada Ltd, stated,

> The stakes are high: at risk is the country's ability to compete in the global marketplace and the ability of young people to succeed in the world of work. Education is too important for business to remain a silent partner. (Quoted in Taylor, 1996, p. 94).

In a speech given at the 1991 Conference Board of Canada conference on education and the economy, Robert D. Kennedy, Chairman and CEO of Union Carbide Corporation, elaborated on the role of corporations in promoting structural change. He claimed,

> I think business can help shape the public debate. I think we have some expertise and weight in that area ...businesses need to join

forces and present a united front in order to participate more effectively in policy debate. (Quoted in Taylor, 1996, p. 98).

The need for closer linkages between post-secondary education and the economic needs of the state also began to resonate within the national body of provincial education ministers, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). The CMEC, which had formed in 1967, began to pay closer attention to the issue of higher education, first by holding a national conference in October 1982 on post-secondary education issues in the 1980s and then in 1983 by establishing a single committee responsible for interprovincial postsecondary and training activities. A 1985 report entitled *Changing Economic Circumstances: The Challenge for Postsecondary Education and Manpower Training*, is important because it reveals in no uncertain terms how the climate surrounding post-secondary education was beginning to shift amongst provincial ministers of education. It also reflects much of the thinking elsewhere regarding educational reform; namely, the idea of education as a tool for economic development; the need for closer linkages with business, and the incorporation of managerialist-style approaches to education.

The Report begins by identifying the key priority of education ministers over next few years as ensuring that the post-secondary education sector is able to continue as a key contributing force for economic and social development (CMEC, 1985, p. 15). "A prime concern of provincial and territorial ministers, and one which we feel is shared by many Canadians, is the urgent need to ensure

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that our country's postsecondary institutions are able to make the changes required to respond to new economic circumstances ... and make the transition to a new order" (CMEC, 1985, p. 1). The Report goes on to state that "while we continue to enjoy a relatively high standard of economic performance, Canadians cannot afford to ignore the signs of social and economic change that signal a need for adjustments in our approach to post-secondary education" (CMEC, 1985, p. 3). Referencing the high levels of unemployment, the growing need for retraining and upgrading amongst the employed, new technologies, restraints on government finances, and global economic forces, the Report argues how governments, the private sector and individual Canadians are turning to the nation's educational institutions to play a vital role in the transition to this new order, and at the same time provide the quality education and training programs necessary to ensure that Canadians have the skills to participate in a rapidly changing economy.

The 1985 CMEC Report also highlights the growing involvement of the corporate sector in education, and the need to encourage greater business-education partnerships. It references the "more formalized communication links" that are being forged between universities, provincial governments and industry "in order to ensure a better response to the changing needs of the labor force" (CMEC, 1985, p. 6); how the private sector is "being a more active partner in meeting the cost of providing high quality education and training programs" and how the "bond between educational institutions and private sector employers is being

further strengthened" in the identification and servicing of manpower training needs (CMEC, 1985, p. 10). Also discussed is the importance of research if Canada is to remain internationally competitive and the "special efforts" that are being made to facilitate the transfer of university-based research and innovation for application by business and industry (CMEC, 1985, p. 12). And lastly, the Report references the need for program rationalization and greater interprovincial cooperation with "special attention paid to the effectiveness and efficiency of programs, and evaluation results (that) will be freely shared with other interested parties". The Report concludes by noting how "the private sector is a prime source of feedback on the effectiveness of education systems ... (S)teps will be taken to increase its involvement in the various stages of program development and implementation" (CMEC, 1985, p. 15).

Debates surrounding reform of Canada's education system became even more of an issue with the establishment of the Mulroney government's Prosperity Secretariat. Headed up by Trade Minister Michael Wilson, the purpose of the Secretariat was to consider ways in which to advance Canada's competitiveness in the global economy. The Prosperity Secretariat produced three major documents; *Learning Well ... Living Well* (1991); *Inventing Our Future* (1992); and *The Prosperity Action Plan: A Progress Report* (1993). Like the 1985 CMEC report, these documents are also critical because they largely set the ideological framework within which educational reform policies were to be subsequently framed by the majority of political leaders, the media and the general public

across Canada. The predominant vision emerging from these reports is that of a competitive economy based on high-skills, high-wage jobs, and the role of education in achieving this. The reports also call for a market-style approach to educational reform; including such NPM ideas as a focus on results; strengthening the linkages between schools and the world of work; and developing new ways of learning through the adoption of information and communication technologies.

A third theme in these reports concerns a widespread critique of schools and the resultant impact on the national economy. Hence, "Canada's 'poor learning performance' is causally linked to poor economic performance" (Taylor, 1996, p. 128), with our schools to blame for the weaknesses of the national economy. As the 1991 Report *Learning Well ... Living Well* claims, "Canada's learning performance is simply not good enough" in the eyes of educators, business people and policymakers (1991, p. S3). It adds that "Canada is losing ground to industrial competitors who are simply better than we are at inventing, designing, manufacturing and marketing ... Our competitors will gain not by undercutting us – but by outsmarting us" (1991, p. S2). The Report also makes mention of the "common consensus" that is emerging that is guiding the actions of the federal government; a climate of ideas that supports an "innovative, competitive economy based on high skill, high-pay jobs ... A society where all Canadians value learning and enjoy the fruits of their learning and labour" (1991, p. V2). The 1992 Prosperity Report, *Inventing Our Future*, reaffirms this thinking, arguing that

"Canadians believe that we have been putting too much emphasis on the manner of teaching and learning rather than on the acquisition of knowledge and skills" (1992, p. 36), and recommends that learning expectations be defined nationally, that performance indicators based on Canadian and international standards be developed, and that a competence-based approach to education be adopted.

The Prosperity Reports also advance a fourth theme: that improvements in our educational system do not necessarily require a greater financial investment. As the 1991 paper states, "(s)ome of the most critical steps we can take (to improve learning) do not require increased expenditures at all, but greater awareness and a change in attitude on the part of users – parents, employers, and individual learners" (1991, p. l3). In the 1992 Report, the point is further made that since Canadians already spend more per capita on education than most industrialized countries, we need to take "greater advantage of existing facilities and community resources" (1992, p. 52). As Taylor (2001) sums up, "this framing of problems and their causes within a vision of 'education for economic prosperity' that accepts the need for fiscal restraint, clearly limits the range of possible solutions" (Taylor, 2001, p. 56).

The themes contained in the federal prosperity initiative echoed major reports undertaken during this time by such influential business organizations and think tanks as the Economic Council of Canada, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and the Conference Board of Canada. The Economic Council of

Canada's 1992 report *A Lot to Learn: Education and Training in Canada* advocates for greater emphasis on science, math and engineering education at the post-secondary level to enable Canada to compete in the global economy and for greater congruence between education and employers' needs. It also speaks of the "crisis" befalling Canada's education and training systems and concludes that important changes are required in these systems if Canadians are to maintain their standard of living. Comparisons with other countries are also drawn, with Canada reported to be lacking in terms of school-to-work transitions and the importance it places on education for economic prosperity (Economic Council, 1992). At the same time, both *A Lot to Learn* and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's 1993 report *The National Direction for Learning* emphasize the importance of standards and accountability in educational reform; reflecting the accountability debates that had already become widespread in the United States. "'Market responsiveness' became the magic phrase for universities, advocated by such groups as the Fraser Institute, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Conference Board of Canada, and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 314).

Beginning in 1989, the Conference Board of Canada also began to take a more focused interest in the role of education in fostering economic competitiveness. Dedicated to enhancing the performance of Canadian organizations within the global economy, the Conference Board of Canada established the National Business and Education Centre in 1990 in order to "assess educational issues

and assist business in developing strategies to work with the education system to ensure that Canada's youth is prepared to meet future workplace needs" (Taylor, 1996, p. 84-85). Undoubtedly influenced by the decision in 1983 of its sister organization, the U.S. Conference Board, to begin holding business-education conferences in the United States, the Conference Board of Canada also began in 1990 to hold annual conferences on the same issue. The aim of these conferences was to consider how business could be more involved in education in Canada, and brought together key actors from the corporate sector, government, and educators to discuss education and the economy. Taylor (1996; 2001) argues how these conferences, by highlighting American educational reforms and inviting such neo-conservative keynote speakers from the United States as John Chubb to participate, advocated strongly for similar American-style changes in Canada. Hence, throughout these conferences and the reports which followed we find an emphasis on accountability, choice, and standards in education, as well as a greater decentralization of control away from the educational community and towards parents and students.

The kinds of change advocated by business and political leaders corresponded with what appeared to be a growing level of dissatisfaction with the public regarding education. Public opinion polls at the provincial and national levels found a growing level of public dissatisfaction with the public school system and the teachers in it. The authors of a 1984 national survey on education in Canada concluded, "during the past twenty years, teachers have declined in public

esteem more than any group in Canadian society" (Toronto Star, May 18, 1984, p. 1). As Hart and Livingstone (1998) maintain, there has been abundant evidence over time of apparently chronic, widespread popular discontent with the school system. "Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s critics of the schools were able to cite poll results showing widespread dissatisfaction with schools, perceptions of declining quality, and apparently low levels of public confidence" (Hart and Livingstone, 1998, p. 2). Indeed, these same surveys found that Canadians were losing confidence in all of their public institutions. In the case of public education, while Canadians viewed education as increasingly important, levels of dissatisfaction with schools rose from 45% in 1973 to 62% in 1992 (Guppy and Davies, 1999; Hart and Livingstone, 1998).

Hart and Livingstone (1998) add that while there has been a definite drop in support of public confidence in schools, the corporate sector in Canada remains the sharpest critics of education. This isn't overly surprising, since corporate executives tend to also share neo-conservative views and are distinguished by their strong commitment to fiscal restraint and the needs of the market. Even when public confidence in schools began to stabilize and then slowly improve after 1993, the opinions of business executives moved relentlessly downward and remained lower than other segments of the population. The authors conclude that the perceived "crisis" in education may reflect more the views of a particularly influential group within Canadian society, the corporate elite, rather than the views of the general public. Hence, while the public would undoubtedly

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like to see schools be more efficient and productive, "whatever the improvements many people would like to see in public education, there is no current crisis in public confidence" (Hart and Livingstone, 1998, p. 16).

The changing ways in which educational policy was being viewed by political leaders and the public led many provinces across Canada to reconsider their education systems. In this provinces were motivated by federal government actions designed to reduce both the size and cost of government. One such action was the passage of Bill C-124 in 1982, which restricted wage increases and suspended collective bargaining rights for two years in the federal civil service. Provinces were urged to adopt similar wage restraint measures in their respective civil services. "The provincial governments, recognizing the apparent swing in public sentiment which generally supported the federal government action and being sensitive to the growing public shift in attitudes toward fiscal conservatism, rode the coattails of the federal wage restraint initiatives to implement restraint measures of their own which directly impacted upon education" (Williams in Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 39). In 1983, the federal government applied its overall restraint legislation to the education component of federal transfer payments to the provinces, capping the growth of per capita payments at 6% in 1983/84 and 5% in 1984/85[1].

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[1] Federal grants for Canada's universities began in 1951, in response to the country's rapidly expanding post-secondary education system in the postwar period. These grants were replaced in 1966 by direct federal transfers to the provinces, which covered approximately half of the cost of post-secondary education. See Cameron, 1991; Cutt and Dobell, 1992; Barnetson and Boberg, 2000; and Wirt and Harmann, 1986.

As part of its deficit cutting efforts the Mulroney government introduced in its first budget what were to be a series of further caps in EPF transfers to the provinces for post-secondary education (Cameron in Jones, 1997). While funding for post-secondary education in Canada did increase in the 1980s, it failed to match the escalating enrollments in Canadian universities simultaneously occurring throughout the decade (from 382, 617 in 1980 to 532,132 in 1990); funding that the provinces did not rush in to make up. As a result, computed on a per-student basis, university funding declined steadily from the late 1970s on in Canada (Cameron, 1991; Cutt and Dobell, 1992). In fact, the clearest sign of changing times in Canadian higher education was a decrease in the proportion of university costs that governments were willing to finance. Government subsidy as a percentage of university budgets fell from 80% in 1984 to 74% in 1994; with tuition rising as a percentage of income from 16% to 23.1% in the same decade (Bercuson, Bothwell and Granatstein, 1997). As Wirt and Harmann conclude, the actions of the federal government throughout the 1980s created a climate which has "encouraged provincial governments to reduce their commitments to post-secondary education (a move urged by some critics for a number of years) while at the same time being able to point the finger at an extra-provincial agency" (Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 41).

The culmination of these factors - recession, the economic agenda of the Mulroney government, the growing involvement of business in educational issues, the influence of change in the United Kingdom and the United States -

upset the normally stable environment in which educational policies in Canada had traditionally been formulated. In response to these challenges a proliferation of studies, reviews and commissions appeared in the 1980s and 1990s as provinces struggled to come to terms with their higher education sectors. While the scope of these studies varies from province to province, what is striking is the degree of convergence on a number of issues and viewpoints. In virtually all of these studies, from Nova Scotia's 1985 *Report of the Royal Commission on Higher Education* to Ontario's 1992 report *Towards 2000 Together* and Alberta's *Responding to Existing and Emerging Demands for University Education: A Policy Framework* (1990), several common themes emerge. Foremost amongst these themes is how global economic developments have altered both the content and significance of higher education, and the role that universities must play to ensure vibrant and productive economies. A second theme is the call for greater accountability, rationalization, and coordination of university activities, echoing much of the managerialist rhetoric prevalent in public administrative reform. A third theme concerns the need for greater partnerships amongst educational stakeholders, notably business, as well as the idea of post-secondary education as a shared responsibility amongst governments, students, and the private sector, rather than governments alone[2].

A further theme contained in many reports surrounding the future of higher education in Canada is how the new landscape of education has necessitated a

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[2] For a good overview of many of these reports see Jones, 1997. This text also offers an excellent history of the development of higher education systems in each of the country's ten provinces as well as the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

different response on the part of provincial governments. This different response has typically assumed the kind of "loose-tight" policy approach seen with New Public Management in general; whereby government departments or intermediary agencies are responsible for setting stricter policy guidelines to achieve greater accountability, rationalization and coordination of the system while universities are given the freedom to determine how best to meet state goals (Young, 2002). As Manzer (2003) notes, during the 1980s and 1990s the recurring vision with regard to reforming educational governance was the need for a clear division of the functions of policy and management, respectively, between provincial education departments and local school boards. In practice, however, "provincial ministries of education did indeed take command of educational policy, especially during the 1990s, but they also tightened their control over local educational governance" (Manzer, 2003, p. 264). As evidence, he points to such trends as closer government control over curricula, instructional methods, research, and student assessment; the amalgamation of school districts; the promotion of parent councils; and greater government involvement in collective bargaining with regard to teachers' salaries and working conditions.

In each case that a commission or review was struck, it was the provincial government, a government agency, or a government-appointed commission which carried out these reviews (George and McAllister, 1995). Throughout this time changes in the direction of educational policies both originated in, and were pursued from, the political arena and not, as tradition would have it, through

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professional bureaucratic routes. In the 1980s the balance of power began to shift from educators to ministers of education, who pushed through significant program changes over the loud public protests of the teaching profession. "Whereas the traditional policy scenario in Canadian education saw the educational professional dominating the process, the recession saw this position changed; the elected provincial politicians now exert the dominant influence" (Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 36). As Manzer (2003) adds, during this time the pretense of educational partnership amongst government, organized teachers and trustee associations was dropped. As power shifted away from local boards towards political actors, "the governmental rhetoric of educational reform paradoxically emphasized the importance of committed teachers for its successful implementation in schools, while teachers' unions were widely portrayed as 'special interests' threatening to block meaningful change" (Manzer, 2003, p. 268).

This shift in power was particularly notable for Canada's higher education sector, which has typically enjoyed a degree of independence unprecedented in the western world (Cameron, 1991; 2001; Jones 1997). The principles of academic self-government and institutional autonomy have meant that for the most part, universities have historically been relatively free to go about their business in a laissez-faire environment, largely unencumbered by regulation and removed from the direct scrutiny of the general public (Kearns, 1998). This began to change, however, as governments sought ways of making their higher education systems

more accountable for tax dollars and more attentive to the needs of the economy. In this, they turned to the metaphor of the market as a panacea for the perceived ills facing higher education (Young, 2002). Reflecting the larger trend of New Public Management and the ideology of the New Right, issues related to accountability, performance and outcomes became the primary focus of governments seeking more bang from their university buck. The shape of this new accountability movement also began to shift away from earlier experiments with assessment strategies which tended to be internally focused, institutionally developed and largely voluntary in nature (Ruppert in Gaither, 1995; Sibley, 1993; Alexander, 2000). Historically, universities bore primary responsibility for designing and implementing their own programs to assess institutional performance. By the late 1980s, however, governments began to seek ways to better steer their higher education systems, while still respecting, at least on the surface, the traditional academic values of institutional autonomy and self-government.

In terms of governance in Canada, then, the trend across provinces has been "towards strengthening external controls over universities" (Higher Education Group, 1987, p. 46). As Gregor and Wilson (1979) add, "although the tempo may vary from province to province there is a general movement toward greater government control of universities and other institutions such as hospitals" (Gregor and Wilson, 1979, p. 30). By the 1980s the historic arms-length relationship between universities and government in Canada began to weaken in

the face of escalating costs, public discontent, and the souring economy. In a study of university-government relations across Canada, George and McAllister (1995) came to the conclusion that "(A)ll ten Canadian provinces, including the predominantly francophone province of Quebec, are experiencing centralizing pressures comparable to those in the rest of North America and much of the British Commonwealth" (George and McAllister, 1995, p. 350).

The changed economic climate in Canada has resulted in a simultaneous change in the relative influence in education of each of the three levels of government. As Williams (1986) argues, while the federal government has little formal presence in educational matters, it began to exert tremendous leverage during the recession by establishing a climate which allowed dramatic changes to occur in the status of public employees such as teachers. Through federal cuts it has also increased the revenue dilemma of the provinces, forcing them to make more draconian spending cuts then they might otherwise have taken. In the area of general education, provincial governments have also wrested control from local educational authorities such as school boards. Hence, whereas educators previously exercised major influence on curriculum matters and job related questions, now elected politicians are enacting changes despite teacher protests. This has been complemented by an apparent shift in public opinion which has redefined the teaching position as no longer being buffered from the financial pressures facing society at large.

It appears that elected provincial figures are now very much in control of educational policy in Canada. "Elected officials, the ministers of education and their cabinet colleagues are directing the educational policy-making process on a scale not seen in Canadian education for decades" (Williams in Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 44). At the same time, while discounting the influence of the educational community, politicians have accorded increased influence to other groups such as the business community. Hence, "Canada has moved form a tradition of professional dominance of most educational policies to one now of overt elected politician dominance represented by swings to the right in fiscal policies, curricular policies and on many personnel matters" (Williams in Wirt and Harmann, 1986, p. 45).

While centralizing control in order to set overall direction, however, provincial policy has at the same time sought to encourage institutions to be more creative and undertake their own reform processes. Hence, rather than the micromanagement of post-secondary institutions and a full-scale attack on the traditions of institutional autonomy and academic self-government, the stated goal of government has been to find ways "to stimulate and strengthen the internal capacity of universities to manage strategically their own affairs" (Cutt and Dobell, 1992, p. 93). At the same time that universities are encouraged to better manage their own affairs, however, this can only occur within the policy framework set by government. As Barnetson and Boberg argue, "(G)overnment policy has decreased institutional autonomy by pressuring institutions to offer

programs in areas with high labour-market demand and to conduct research on topics that result in economic benefits" (Barnetson and Boberg, 2000, p. 80).

Moreover, as Dill (1997) points out, relaxing regulation in one area may create increased government control, or at the very least greater government involvement, in another area. For example, delegating discretion to institutions for finances or fee levels may also bring additional rules for accounting for the ways in which these funds are used, as is the case, he suggests, in the United States and Britain. Young (2002) highlights the province of Ontario as a Canadian example of this trend. "In that province, universities have been granted greater freedom to set tuition fees in certain areas in exchange for directing a portion of fee increases to institutional student aid programs" (Young, 2002, p. 89). Through the use of targeted operating funds, which have become an increasingly popular tool of provinces, governments can also exert greater control over what universities focus on and the kinds of programs and services they offer (George and McAllister, 1995).

Provincial Trends

In terms of individual provincial systems, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia offer interesting case studies of the scope and depth of post-secondary educational reform in Canada. In the case of Alberta, the establishment of the Department of Advanced Education in 1972 and the government's decision to scrap its buffer body, the Alberta Universities Commission, the following year marked the

beginning of greater central scrutiny and control of postsecondary education in Alberta (Cameron, 1991). "The costs of higher education and Alberta's dependency on non-renewable resources became important issues ... (I)n order to control and direct expenditures, while restraining the costs of the system, greater central involvement seemed to be required" (Andrews, Holdaway and Mowat in Jones, 1997, p. 77).

Economic downturn in the Alberta economy in the mid-1980s led the government to implement further steps toward more centralized monitoring of the post-secondary system. Under the broad brush of public sector reform that included the privatization of government services and the introduction of business planning and performance measures, a distinct managerialist approach was adopted towards higher education. Included in this new approach was the introduction of such things as business planning, benchmarks, and a tuition fee policy for the province's universities and community colleges. In 1993 Alberta also became the first province in Canada to introduce performance indicators for its post-secondary institutions, and to link a portion of its funding to institutional performance. These indicators measure institutional progress in relation to the government's four declared goals for its postsecondary system: accessibility, responsiveness, affordability, and research excellence, and were designed to ensure that "Albertans are getting maximum returns on their investment in post-secondary education" (Alberta, 1997, p. 7).

Perhaps the most dramatic of these changes in Alberta was the government's decision in 1994 to cut funding for postsecondary institutions by 21% over three years; a reduction that was consistent with a long-term trend that saw real-dollar, per-student grants decline by almost 46% between 1982/83 and 1996/97 (Barnetson and Boberg, 2000). At the same time, tuition fees were allowed to increase as institutions shifted their focus toward other revenue sources. Throughout the 1990s government of Alberta documents also increasingly framed higher education as a source of labour market training. This trend first became evident in 1992's educational report *Towards 2000 Together.* As the document reads, "(A) highly skilled workforce will be essential for Alberta to succeed in the knowledge intensive world of the 21st century ... (C)onsequently, new approaches may be required to more effectively bring together economic and educational priorities" (Alberta, 1992, p. 10). The government's first business plan in 1994, *A Better Way: A Plan for Securing Alberta's Future*, also stated the following goal: "to increase the responsiveness of education and training programs to individual Albertans and their communities with priority given to contributing to Alberta's economy and preparation for the labour market" (Alberta, 1994, p. 63).

In its 1994 report on the future direction of post-secondary education in the province, *New Directions for Adult Learning in Alberta*, the government outlined its policy objectives: the reapportionment of responsibility for funding higher education (specifically, shifting the balance of funding from government to

students and the private sector); the expectation that post-secondary institutions would become increasingly responsive to labour market training demands; and the anticipation that post-secondary institutions would increase the transfer of knowledge to the private sector. "Resource reallocation, rather than new funds, must be relied upon to maintain and improve quality (in our universities and colleges) ... "There is an increasing need to ensure value for money and accountability for public funds" (Alberta, 1989, p. 22).

A fundamental shift has been the Conservative government of Alberta's redefinition of its policy community as comprised of business leaders and parents, as opposed to the traditional educational groups (Taylor, 1996). Indeed, in a 1994 report the government itself outlined how the role of various stakeholders in Alberta's post-secondary education system had altered. As it maintained in *An Agenda for Change*, "(L)earning providers will be more responsive to the needs of the economy. They will solicit information from industry about the needs of the labour market and encourage employers to play a greater role in program design". The same report went on to state that "(b)usiness and industry ... will play an expanded role by becoming active participants in the adult learning system. They will have an enhanced role in providing advice to the system both in terms of overall direction and specific program design" (Alberta, 1994b, p. 15 - 16).

Over the past fifteen years governments in Ontario have also implemented a number of reforms in their higher education sector. The systemic and structural expansion of higher education in Ontario that characterized the 1960s had ended by the early 1970s, in the wake of economic downturn. "The notion that there was a direct relationship between economic growth and educational investment quickly came into question as a major recession forced the provincial economy into neutral gear" (Jones, 1997, p. 147). The Ontario government, concerned with the speed with which higher education appeared to be able to consume public resources at an insatiable rate, began to apply the brakes. Within a few short years attention turned from how best to expand post-secondary education in Ontario to how to manage universities within the context of the new economic climate. It was in this context that in 1984 the government of Ontario released the report of the Bovey Commission on the Future Development of the Universities of Ontario, entitled *Ontario Universities: Options and Futures*. Viewed by some in the academic community as "a thinly disguised agency to legitimize drastic government intervention in the system of higher education in Ontario" (Rea in Higher Education Group, 1987, p. 168), the Bovey Commission maintained that the quality of the Ontario university system was in jeopardy. It made over 50 recommendations for improvements, including higher student fees, entrance exams, reduced enrolments and the retirement of older professors.

The Bovey Commission also recommended the introduction of targeted funds and the establishment of a stronger provincial intermediary body to replace the

Ontario Council on University Affairs (OCUA). The OCUA and its predecessor entities had been in existence in Ontario since 1958, and had been established to advise the Minister of Education and Training on matters of university policy. The Bovey Commission's recommendations to scrap the body spoke to the criticisms that the OCUA had long suffered, regarding its perceived ineffectiveness and lack of any real clout to effect change. Despite this, however, attempts to strengthen the planning and decision-making authority of the OCUA in the 1970s and 1980s consistently ran into opposition from both the academic community, which resisted any further constraints on their autonomy, as well as from the government, who were less than enthusiastic about strengthening the planning and decision-making authority of an arms-length body. While the OCUA was allowed to take on a number of regulatory and administrative capacities in the late 1980s in an attempt to provide more direction to the post-secondary system, by the mid-1990s it was "viewed by the universities as too much an instrument of government and by the government as insufficiently effective" (Clark, 1999, p. 9). The OCUA was eventually abolished in 1996, with responsibility for post-secondary education folded into the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

In addition to the governance issue, concerns with economic competitiveness were also a consistent theme in Ontario's educational reform efforts[3]. In 1987 the Ontario government released the first such report to speak to this theme. The

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[3] Ontario also re-named its ministry 'Training, Colleges and Universities' precisely to make the point about its priorities (Levin, personal communication, June 2006).

Radwanski Report, the *Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and the Issue of Dropouts,* became the first major policy document to articulate successfully to Ontarians the province's need for a paradigm of global economic competitiveness for education. As the Report maintained, "to compete effectively in a new knowledge-intensive global economy ... excellence in educating our workforce is our single most important strategic weapon" (quoted in O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 314).

In 1995, Ontario elected a Progressive Conservative government led by Mike Harris. Under the banner of a "common sense revolution", the Conservatives unveiled an agenda that spoke to a specific economic vision for Ontario. Early in their mandate the provincial Tories pledged to work with the business community and corporate capital interests to restructure and downsize the education system to ensure school improvement. The intent of these initiatives was to insert Ontario into the global marketplace and to bring market reforms into education. "However, in order for these reforms to be pushed through without a serious public backlash, it was necessary to create a 'crisis in schooling'" (Dei and Karumanchery, 1999, p. 27). Shortly into the Conservatives' mandate the newly appointed Minister of Education achieved notoriety when a leaked tape revealed him explaining to senior civil servants how an artificially created "crisis" atmosphere was needed to win public acceptance for the government's plans for overhauling the education system (Hart and Livingstone, 1998, p. 2). These plans culminated with Bill 160, *The Education Quality Improvement Act,* which

involved the decentralization of state responsibility to schools while centralizing power under the auspices of government control. "Framed in the discourse of market and choice, Bill 160 is an example of the massive grasp for centralized power by the state as it concentrates its authority over public education in the hands of a few cabinet ministers and government advisers" (Dei and Karumanchery, 1999, p. 27). For its critics, the goal of the Harris government was to consolidate its power over education in Ontario by reducing the authority of schools and teachers and to assert more control over curriculum, testing and standards. In this, O'Sullivan (1999) argues that "highly public reform agendas from other nations – in particular, U.S. thinking about educational reform and the global economy – have consistently influenced Ontario educational reforms since Radwanski" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 321).

For Young (2002), "state control over higher education (in Ontario) has been strengthened with the use of market mechanisms, particularly as they have been utilized in resource allocation" (Young, 2002, p. 79). Fundamental changes in the ways in which universities are funded in Ontario and indeed throughout Canada (notably, away from the block grant and a predominant reliance on government funds) has created a marketized climate in which institutions are required to engage in a competition for moneys, whether in the form of targeted funding envelopes, external grants and contracts, endowment funds, university-industry partnerships, or student tuition and fees (Dill, 1997). "The relative decline in the block grant – which constituted a large and important source of universities'

operating income – creates a destabilized environment for universities, resulting in resource dependencies" (Young, 2002, p. 87). This has resulted in the external agent that provides the bulk of funding to universities – in this case, the Ontario government – wielding substantial control over the higher education sector.

In addition to the introduction of targeted funding and performance measures, Young also points to such trends in Ontario as the province's tuition fee policy, which regulate some areas (i.e. basic arts and sciences) and deregulates others (professional programs); information dissemination requirements to better inform consumer choice; the Ontario Student Opportunities Trust Fund, which increased the amount of student support funds available to needy students; the Access to Opportunity Program, designed to double the number of computer science and engineering graduates in the province; the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund, a cost-sharing arrangement with universities and the private sector to support research initiatives; and new laws and policies that enable the establishment of new private degree-granting institutions and programs in Ontario. "Considered together, these policies derive considerable coherence from the idea of the market ... as additional levers to enhance government control" (Young, 2002, p. 94).

Nova Scotia has gone the furthest in its attempts to coordinate and rationalize its higher education institutions; an issue which had long plagued the province's ministers of education. When the province struck its Royal Commission on

Higher Education in 1983 (its second royal commission on post-secondary education in less than a decade), Nova Scotia's system of universities and community colleges could hardly be called a system at all, but rather a hodgepodge of some 13 institutions, with seven of the thirteen located in the capital city of Halifax. Successive governments in the province had long attempted to get the universities themselves to voluntarily agree on a plan to rationalize the system and reduce program duplication and overlap (Cameron, 1991; Christie in Jones, 1997). When the *Report of the Royal Commission on Higher Education in Nova Scotia* was released in 1985, it recommended that the universities in the province perform as a coordinated system and that a Council on Higher Education be created with "executive authority" and discretionary powers over funding. The Report maintained that this new intermediary body for the universities sector "should assume an active role in promoting coordination, with the power to compel rationalization to occur, rather than rely solely on voluntary cooperation between the universities" (Nova Scotia, 1985, p. 163-64). With the establishment of the Council, the report suggested that government's role be contained to the following: "provincial policies at the highest level with respect to university education; overall level of resources to be provided to the province's university sector, and the continuation of the Council's mandate with respect to higher education" (Nova Scotia, 1985, p. 164).

The Commission Report also took aim at the province's community colleges, documenting a long list of complaints about occupational education in the

province. Referencing the changing global economy and the need to boost the province's economic productivity, the Commission noted the sector's lack of responsiveness to industrial and job market needs; out of date equipment, curricula and instructors, and insufficient contact with industry. In response to these criticisms, the government in 1991 amalgamated the province's various technical and vocational institutes into a single Nova Scotia Community College under the direction of the Ministry of Education.

The idea of a new intermediary agency for Nova Scotia's universities as suggested by the 1985 Royal Commission was well-received by the provincial government. Since 1974, post-secondary planning in Nova Scotia had fallen under the rubric of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC). Established by the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, the primary function of the MPHEC was to advise the Maritime premiers on financial and policy issues related to post-secondary education. While the MPHEC was given the responsibility for planning and coordinating the system and assessing the quality of academic programming, it did not possess any autonomous executive authority (Cameron, 1991). In its 1985 report, the Royal Commission noted the MPHEC's less than stellar record in regard to system rationalization, stating that "while the MPHEC is entrusted with planning functions and with the encouragement of facilitation of cooperative arrangements and regional centres of specialization, its lack of autonomous executive authority would seem to have impeded it from undertaking effective

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action in these areas" (Nova Scotia, 1985, p. 159). This critique reflected the Nova Scotia government's own unhappiness with the MPHEC, primarily because for a number of years it had been recommending increases in funding for the universities larger than the government was willing to provide. Pointing to the MPHEC's failure to accomplish its coordinating and rationalizing function, Nova Scotia established a new body in 1989, the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education (NSCHE). With the establishment of the NSCHE, the role of the MPHEC in Nova Scotia's university system was to be consigned to data collection and the coordination of inter-provincial programming.

The NSCHE was created by order-in-council to advise the government of Nova Scotia on university funding, long-range planning, and cost-efficient program delivery, (ostensibly the same functions as the MPHEC), but with greater executive authority in the area of funding decisions. The Council, established in Halifax as an agency of the Department of Education, had a full-time chair and membership appointed by order-in-council[4]. As Christie (1997) notes, "the creation of the Nova Scotia Council inaugurated a new era of intensive consideration of the rationalization of university affairs in the province" (Christie in Jones, 1997, p. 235). When the universities themselves proved unable to achieve much headway on the issue of program rationalization, the NSCHE

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[4] The Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education was eventually replaced in 2000 by a new body, the Nova Scotia Advisory Board on Colleges and Universities. While now responsible for both colleges and universities in Nova Scotia, this new body has advisory powers only; advising the Minister of Education on matters related to the province's universities, community colleges, and student financial assistance. See Nova Scotia's Department of Education website, www.ednet.ns.ca.

began in the early 1990s what was to be the most radical restructuring of post-secondary education to occur in Canada up to that point. Over the next few years the Council released a number of reports dealing with various aspects of rationalization of the system; including the areas of teacher education, engineering, and computing science. "We are lopping off limbs", the chairwoman of the Council said at the time. "The successful university of tomorrow is one that knows what it is and does not try to be all things to all people, but what it does, it does extremely well" (quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press, January 12, 1995, p. B2).

In addition to closing one university altogether and closing or scaling back faculties in several others, the Council also ushered in a new funding formula in 1995 that included the use of performance indicators, targeted envelopes and a new research funding mechanism that matched provincial dollars with private sector support for research projects. In conversations that I had with the Chair of the Council at the time, Janet Halliwell, as part of my research for the Interim Transition Committee on what Manitoba's new governance system should look like, Dr. Halliwell stressed the need for strong government direction. "We have tried for years to get the universities to implement reform on their own", I recall her saying. "If they are not prepared to do it themselves, then government must be willing to force the issue". In her advice for Manitoba, she recommended a governance body that would have real executive powers to make the hard decisions that needed to be made, as opposed to an advisory council that would

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be "just a waste of time". She further recommended that the new structure be staffed with people willing to exercise these powers, and who would have the support of political leaders in their challenge to the status quo.

Conclusion

The changing economic climate across Canada through the 1980s and early 1990s had important ramifications for how political leaders defined public policy, and the kinds of issues that were garnering the attention of policymakers. Economic recession forever changed the way in which education was to be viewed in public discourse. The need to get a better handle on the economy in order to more effectively compete in the global market, coupled with public frustrations over the burgeoning costs of government and the perceptions of bloated and inefficient bureaucracies, gave political leaders the ammunition they needed to implement wide-ranging reforms of their public sectors. At the same time, the growing importance of universities to economic productivity shed light on a segment of society that had for over a century been allowed to more or less go about its business, relatively free from government restraint and public scrutiny.

These factors have had a dramatic impact on both the content and character of the policy-making process in Canadian education. Economic concerns have altered the kinds of programs that universities and colleges now offer (notably, in terms of greater responsiveness to the needs of employers and in fostering core

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learning skills that students can build upon throughout their lives) and as well as how these programs are delivered (i.e. through a greater range of distance, part-time and web-based formats). At the same time, the process of educational policymaking in Canada has also changed. As education became more important to provincial and federal politicians, they began to assert greater control over their education systems and the policymaking process. Hence, throughout the past two decades we see a decline in the status of education and educators; an increase in the influence and control of elected educational officials; a recentralization of policy-making control and direction at the provincial level of government at the expense of local school board autonomy; and an altered balance between the federal and provincial levels of government in educational matters.

When one surveys the university and college landscape across Canada, it is clear that post-secondary education has indeed become marketized. Whether it be Alberta's performance indicator system, Ontario's funding arrangements or Nova Scotia's ambitious rationalization program, provincial governments have gone a long way to better access the potential offered by their post-secondary education systems. No longer do universities exist along the fringes of civil society; instead, they now form an integral part of national and provincial state policies. It is against this backdrop that we now turn to an examination of post-secondary education change in Manitoba.

Chapter 8:
Telling the Story: Prioritizing Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba

With the conceptual framework outlined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 in mind, along with the discussion of educational change in Canada and other parts of the world described in Chapters 6 and 7, we are now ready to turn our attention to Manitoba. The purpose of this chapter is to "tell the story", so to speak, of how the Progressive Conservative government of Gary Filmon came to prioritize post-secondary education while in office from 1988 to 1999, and the reasons behind its decision to create the Council on Post-Secondary Education. Drawing extensively on a variety of primary sources including Hansard, government documents, media reports and interviews with key actors involved in policymaking at the time, this chapter will explore the degree to which the conceptual framework outlined in the previous chapters fits our case study of agenda setting in Manitoba.

In particular, I will examine the extent to which the data supports the three key elements of this framework: processes, actors and the larger context. The story of post-secondary agenda setting in Manitoba will be organized into Kingdon's (1995) three policy streams of problems, politics and policies. By organizing the discussion in this way, we can determine more clearly what the key factors were in each stream that shaped the government's decision to place post-secondary education on its agenda, and to choose the policy option of the Council on Post-Secondary Education. At the same time, we shall see how the themes contained

within the larger context (globalization, the economic paradigm, the climate of ideas, policy borrowing, and New Public Management) influenced the nature of the debate and the events that transpired in Manitoba.

And lastly, Chapter 8 will discuss the key actors involved in agenda setting in Manitoba. The data confirms the prominent role played by the chief executives within the cabinet at the time, notably the premier, his closest advisors, and the Ministers of Education and Finance. The evidence also supports the prominent role of the business community in shaping the post-secondary education debate and in providing further impetus to the Filmon administration to prioritize this public policy area on their government agenda.

A. The Problems Stream

As the reader will recall from the discussion in chapter three, in his multiple streams model Kingdon (1995) argues that at any given time there are a number of issues clamoring for a government's attention. Not all of these issues make it onto the government's agenda, only those that come to be viewed as a problem warranting attention. Hence, issues only become defined as problems "when we come to believe that we should do something about them" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 109). In explaining this process, Kingdon highlights three factors that are important in the problems stream: focusing events (i.e. a crisis or other major occurrence); indicators (data collected from various policy activities and events); and feedback from existing policies from bureaucrats, interest groups and the

general public. These three factors help explain why some issues eventually become seen as problems while others do not.

This first section will examine the extent to which post-secondary education came to be defined as a problem in Manitoba by the Filmon administration. As we shall see, while indicators and feedback pointed to a certain level of concern over the state of the province's universities and colleges system, there was no real "crisis" in education to speak of. What was perceived to be a greater threat was the state of the Manitoba economy and the challenges posed by globalization. As education became subsumed within the broader economic paradigm reform of the post-secondary education system came to be seen as a priority area for the Progressive Conservatives, as a means of achieving their larger economic goals.

The "Problem" of Post-Secondary Education

Prior to the election of 1988 which brought the Progressive Conservatives to power in Manitoba, post-secondary education was already an issue of some concern in the province. These concerns focused on the fact that although few people seemed to know exactly what when on in the province's universities, the post-secondary system seemed to eat up a substantial amount of tax dollars, with little end in sight. While enrollments at Manitoba's three universities (the University of Manitoba, Brandon University, and the University of Winnipeg, along with the separately funded Saint Boniface College) continued to increase

throughout the 1980s[1] the fallout from the national recession and the resultant cuts to federal transfer payments severely limited the ability of the province to maintain adequate funding levels for its universities and colleges. Under intense financial pressure, the NDP government under the premiership of Howard Pawley attempted to come to grips with the growing government deficit by announcing a 3% government-wide restraint program. Arguing that provincial funding was failing to keep up with institutional costs[2], the province's four universities responded by cutting their budgets and raising tuitions by as much as 10% a year, the highest increase allowed under the NDP's tuition fee cap.

While tuition rates continued to rise, however, the weekly living allowance under the student loans program failed to adjust accordingly, thus increasing the financial pressure on students. In protest of these tuition hikes, University of Winnipeg Students Association President Gaylene Van Dusen was quoted as saying "the quality of education has been eroding at the University (of Winnipeg) for years. We recognize the university needs the money and we're blaming the government for their situation. They are responsible for underfunding the universities" (Winnipeg Free Press, July 10, 1984, p. 8).

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[1] University of Manitoba enrollments, for example, increased by a third from 1980 to 1988, and by 9% alone from 1986/87 to 1987/88 (Universities Grants Commission, Institutional Statistics Briefing Note, August 1988).

[2] Salary increases constituted a significant factor in the university funding squeeze. Over 1982/83 to 1991/92, average salary figures increased an average of 60% at the province's three universities (Winnipeg Free Press, January 7, 1995).

While university enrollments were on the rise, the picture of post-secondary education participation rates in Manitoba was far from rosy. College enrollments in the province had remained essentially static over the previous few years, with the result being that Manitoba had the worst post-secondary participation rate in the country. And this was despite the low tuition fees and relatively accessible entrance requirements in Manitoba schools. Statistics published by the Secretary of State Department revealed that in 1989, only 14.9% of Manitobans aged 18 to 24 were full-time students at university or college; compared to a national rate of 21.9%. Other provinces came in at participation rates of 16.5% (Saskatchewan); 18.8% (Alberta) and 23.1% in Ontario (Secretary of State Canada, 1992, p. 22). And while these figures were alarming in themselves, it was particularly bad for the colleges sector. Of the approximately 15% of young people in Manitoba enrolled in post-secondary education, only 5.8% were enrolled in a community college, compared to a national figure of 20.5%; 16.8% for Ontario and 16.7% for Alberta (Statistics Canada, 1991, p. 117-129).

While arguments were being made that participation rates had to increase if Manitoba was not to be totally left behind by other provinces, the institutions were pointing out that they were already severely underfunded. And in fact this appeared to be the case, at least in comparison to other provinces. A federal-provincial report on government expenditure management published by the federal finance department showed that between 1975 and 1990, Manitoba had the lowest growth in spending on post-secondary education spending in Canada.

During this period, Manitoba increased its spending by only 5.2% per capita; while Ontario and Saskatchewan, the next provinces up, increased funding by 6.8% (Winnipeg Free Press, February 8, 1993, p. A7).

While the provincial government did increase funding for universities and colleges in 1987/88 and again in 1989/90, these increases failed to cover inflationary costs. As a result, government grants comprised less and less of university budgets, with students picking up the slack through rising tuition fees. At the University of Manitoba, for example, in 1989/90 government grants covered approximately 70% of total operating revenue while tuition covered 14%; by 1993/94, these numbers were 65% and 21% respectively. Similarly, at the University of Winnipeg, while government grants covered 67% of costs and tuition 27% in 1989/90, by 1993/94 it had shifted to 61% and 37% (Universities Grants Commission Briefing Note, January 7, 1995).

The following table, published by the Winnipeg Free Press on data provided by the Universities Grants Commission, demonstrates the extent of university underfunding from 1982/83 to 1992/93:

Year	Universities Requested Increase	Government Grant Increase
1982/83	18.2%	16.1%
1983/84	22.7%	10.9%
1984/85	13.0%	2.9%
1985/86	10.6%	2.4%
1986/87	12.1%	3.6%
1987/88	11.4%	5.4%
1988/89	10.1%	3.8%
1989/90	10.0%	5.5%
1990/91	12.8%	4.2%
1991/92	14.0%	3.5%
1992/93	11.6%	2.4%

Source: Winnipeg Free Press, January 7, 1995 (information provided by the Universities Grants Commission)

In addition to criticisms regarding the financial squeeze being placed on institutions, and more particularly on students, questions were also being asked regarding the inability of Manitoba's post-secondary institutions to compete with schools in other provinces. Notable amongst these was the issue of the "brain drain" from Manitoba, as star researchers in such key fields as science and technology were lured away to better supported schools in other jurisdictions. "Manitoba campuses just cannot compete any longer with other universities", the University of Manitoba's Dean of Arts publicly stated in 1987. "We have very good scientists here, but every year we're forced to cut back. Now we're at the point where life is very desperate" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 3, 1987, p. 1).

As the University of Manitoba bluntly put it in a brief to the Universities Grants Commission a couple of years later, "due to prolonged underfunding, the university has been in a retrenchment mode for nearly two decades" (quoted in Hansard, May 16, 1991, p. 2218). The University went on to point out how the opportunity cost of the chronic funding shortfall could be readily seen in the deterioration of the operating norms of the university, decreased teacher-student ratios, inadequate support services for teaching and research, and deficient library resources and equipment, in addition to the loss of qualified faculty and staff.

The brain drain issue became all the more germane in light of the emerging global economy, and the need expressed in some quarters for governments to provide more leadership in this area. In a 1987 editorial the Winnipeg Free Press discussed the impending Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Canada, and the role it felt the universities should play to ensure that Manitoba has sufficiently trained workers in order to take advantage of new opportunities. In order to achieve this, the editors argued, the province's universities would need greater direction from government. "Universities would find it easier to help (Manitoba adjust to the global market) if they knew what view the government takes of the province's future evolution, what sectors it plans to encourage, what skills it expects to hire" (Winnipeg Free Press, October 22, 1987, p. 6).

Issues related to the apparent lack of transparency and accountability within the province's post-secondary institutions, and the lack of connection with the external community, were also being raised at this time. Ron Duhamel, a former Deputy Education Minister and University of Manitoba education professor, publicly stated that "universities must do a better job of telling the public what they do or potential students will head elsewhere" (Winnipeg Free Press, June 15, 1987, p. 2). In our interview Leo LeTourneau, former Executive Director of the Universities Grants Commission in Manitoba, recalled to me how little the public and government actually seemed to understand what went on in universities; how there seemed to be little accountability to external stakeholders regarding what universities did, how they did it, and who was responsible for making decisions. "There was some very serious comment being made in the House at the time; I'd call them critical comments I think. People were being critical about universities, because they did not know basically what they were about, they were not very transparent" (Interview, October 2005, p. 2).

At the same time, Mr. LeTourneau added, universities did not seem to be helping the province in some of the major issues they were dealing with, whether it be social, health or financial issues. "They didn't seem to be part of that dynamic, and I think some people felt that with all this investment and all this intellectual power there ought to be a greater link" (p. 2). For Jim Downey, Deputy Premier during the Filmon years, the general assessment in cabinet was that universities weren't paying enough attention to the needs of the community in terms of the

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kinds of programs and services they were offering. "A lot of times where you get certain professors who believe that unless its taught by them, its so important to them, they kind of lose sight of what society is looking for because they get so tied up and bound in their own world" (Interview, October 2005, p. 2).

The accountability debate in Manitoba quickly focused on the province's Manitoba's Universities Grants Commission (UGC). Over the previous few years the UGC had become the subject of criticism not only by the media, but by the opposition, students, and university administrators, for its perceived failure to properly manage the province's universities system. Originally established in 1967 under the Progressive Conservative government of Duff Roblin, the role of the UGC was to provide advice to the Minister of Education on levels of funding (both operating and capital) for the province's universities, to allocate these funds, and to approve requests from the universities for new or expanded programs and services.

In addition, the Commission was charged with the responsibility for studying "the need for post-secondary university education in the province in terms of kind, quality and quantity, and the capacity of the universities to provide it" (UGC Annual Report, 1988-1989, p. 3). Headed up by an Executive Director and reporting directly the Minister of Education, the UGC was comprised of nine members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. Manitoba had borrowed the idea of a buffer agency in the form of a UGC from the United

Kingdom, which had implemented a similar structure for its publicly funded universities. Other provinces followed suite, so that by the late 1960s the buffer agency concept characterized the prevailing trend in university-government relations across Canada. In speaking of his decision to create the UGC, former Premier Roblin commented how it was seen as the best way to recognize the role of governments in funding post-secondary education and ensuring the proper accountability of these funds, on the one hand, and the need to respect university autonomy, on the other. In this way, "the government provided the money and the commission coordinated and supervised the universities' activities" while the institutions remained autonomous in their academic role (Roblin, 1999, p. 121).

Despite this theoretical arms-length relationship, however, the UGC slowly came to be seen by many as merely a rubber-stamp body to implement the will of government. The decision in the mid-1980s to appoint the Deputy Minister of Education as Chairman of the Commission "flagged its evolving character as a semi-autonomous arm of government" (Gregor, 1995, p. 6). The appointment of members to the UGC, all of whom were selected at the discretion of Cabinet, had also been a matter of concern to the universities, who felt that their interests were not sufficiently represented in the decision-making process. This was only exacerbated by the fact that most of the UGC's work was done in camera with little explanation after the fact; further feeding the universities' mistrust of the Commission. "It's like a black box", one university administrator commented to

me at the time. "We get called in once a year to make our presentations before the Commission, then wait for a decision to be spit out some time later. What actually goes on in the meantime remains largely a mystery".

And in many ways, this was a fairly accurate description of the UGC decision-making process[3]. What occurred in the intervening time between when the institutions were invited to plead their case before the UGC, and when Treasury board ultimately made its final decision on funding allocations, and the events and issues which impacted the decision-making process along the way, remained unclear even to those such as myself who worked in the system. As the president of the University of Manitoba described the process in his presentation before the University Education Review Commission, over the years there had been a progressive movement away from the arms length relationship with government, and a growing perception within university circles that government was determined to control the UGC and to treat it as if were "merely a sub-unit" of Manitoba Education and Training. "There is virtually no feedback to universities of how the UGC has assessed the validity or feasibility of their requests. Year after year the universities make detailed submissions of estimates

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[3] During my tenure in government, the process essentially worked like this: universities were first requested to submit their budgets to the UGC by a certain date, which were analyzed by UGC staff for the Commission members. Officials from each university were then invited to present before the UGC members their institutional budgets and to discuss priority areas, stress points, and longer-term objectives. After these presentations the UGC prepared a set of funding recommendations for the Minister of Education, which were then modified and presented to Treasury Board as part of the Estimates process. Treasury Board would then review these recommendations, modify them, and render a final decision.

for operating and capital grants that disappear into some black hole that emits neither resources nor light" (University of Manitoba, February 1993, p. 32).

While the universities felt that the UGC was more an arm of government rather than a true intermediary agency, the image of the Commission from other quarters was equally unflattering. The general consensus of the UGC was that it was, in the words of one expert on higher education, "woefully inadequate" in achieving its stated goals (Gregor, 1979, p. 48). Many felt that the Commission was largely an ineffectual body, doing little but handing out money to universities and approving an increasingly wider array of programs and services with insufficient thought to the overall development of the universities system in the province. While in fact the enacting legislation of the UGC empowered the Commission to intrude into the existing programs of the provincial universities if it so chose, over the years it had limited its scrutiny instead to new program proposals, for which it was required to provide final approval.

As Gregor (1997) concludes in his analysis of the effectiveness of the UGC in providing direction and coherence to the universities system, while there was "general acceptance in principle of the desirability of having some neutral referee between the universities and the political process, there (were) serious reservations about a perceived ineffectiveness of the present arrangement as a device for conveying university needs to government or of providing a public

forum for broader discussion of higher education in the province" (Gregor in Jones, 1997, p. 119).

In our interview Leo LeTourneau reiterated some of the frustrations with the UGC that the politicians were having during this time. He said that there was a general feeling that although it was responsible for distributing some $200 million in provincial funding to the universities system, the UGC was not doing enough to advance the government's economic and social priorities. It was also making decisions that the government did not necessarily like, or that were incurring greater costs for the system than the government was willing to support. LeTourneau recalled one instance in particular where the UGC was contemplating whether or not to approve a new program at one of the province's universities. Despite the Minister's stated opposition to the program, the UGC decided to approve it anyway, which was in its mandate to do. The next day Mr. LeTourneau received a phone call from the Minister, who said to him "you're not supposed to do this (i.e. approve the program)"; to which Mr. LeTourneau responded, "but Minister, that's the role of the UGC". As he concluded, "they (the government) wanted to take over the decision-making; they were taking more and more control all the time, So they were reducing the UGC to a non-entity essentially; not letting the UGC do its work" (p. 9).

The general assessment within government was that the UGC had fulfilled it purpose and served its term, as Jim Downey described it to me during our

interview. "It (the UGC) needed a broader mandate to fulfill the wishes the government and the direction that we wanted to go" (p. 3). At the same time, as noted by the Senior Political Advisor that I also interviewed, many within cabinet felt that the UGC was too closely aligned with the academic community (despite the fact that it was a government-appointed board). As he said, "if one stakeholder has all the tools it's not a very good bargaining position, not a very good negotiating position. If you give everybody a stick to beat the other guy with maybe no one will use the stick and you can find the right way to it. But you know, academia has some pretty persuasive and knowledgeable people; you couldn't do that with the Universities Grants Commission" (Interview, October 2005, p. 2).

A further concern rested with fact that the UGC was responsible for the universities sector only. While the UGC made decisions affecting the universities, responsibility for the province's community colleges and technical institutes fell under the Postsecondary, Adult and continuing Education and Training Division (PACET) of the Manitoba Department of Education. In this regard Manitoba was out of step with the prevailing trend across Canada, whereby it and New Brunswick remained the only two provinces without autonomous governing boards for their community colleges. Given the different governing structures and in the absence of any central agency or coordinated postsecondary education strategy, universities and colleges in Manitoba thus tended to develop and operate in isolation from one another. As former Minister of Education and

Training Len Derkach said to me, "other jurisdictions had long since moved away from controlling community colleges. We hadn't" (Interview, March 2006, p. 8).

While college governance had become a more substantive issue by 1988, the problem had been initially pointed out a decade earlier in a major public review of higher education in Manitoba. The Task Force on Postsecondary Education, also known as the Oliver Commission, undertook in the early 1970s a comprehensive study of the province's universities and community colleges. In its 1973 final report, the Oliver Commission called for greater community involvement in post-secondary education in Manitoba, and closer articulation between the university and community college sectors. Noting how colleges needed to be more responsive to community needs, the report further recommended that Manitoba's community colleges be granted autonomy from the province through the establishment of institutional governing boards.

The Chair of the Commission, Michael Oliver, also proved to be ahead of his time in recommending an innovative new governance structure for the province that was virtually unheard of Canada at the time: a proactive post-secondary education commission charged with responsibility for both the universities and community colleges. Despite the broad range of representation on the Commission and the discussion which its activities subsequently invoked, however, the Commission's findings didn't go very far, eliciting "little discernable action on the part either of government or of institutions" (Gregor, 1995, p. 13).

For a period in the mid-1970s the province operated a separate Department of Colleges and University Affairs, albeit under the same minister as the Department of Education. Although initially seen as an indication that the government was ready to give the post-secondary sector higher priority, "the new department concentrated its attention on the non-university sector, leaving the universities to the UGC" (University of Manitoba, February 1993, p. 32). In the subsequent re-amalgamation of the two departments the community colleges lost their relatively central position and were placed in a division within Manitoba Education.

The Oliver Commission's recommendation regarding college governance also struck a chord with many in the province. Autonomous governing boards for Manitoba's colleges were seen by many both within and external to the institutions as an important step towards increasing Manitoba's rather dismal college participation rates. They were also seen as crucial to improving the province's overall economic productivity, by providing colleges with the autonomy and flexibility to respond better to labour market needs. Students, college administrators and employee representatives themselves were all united in their support for autonomy. In a newspaper interview Don Hillman, executive director of the Red River Students' Association, said changes to the colleges system were long overdue, as "morale among faculty and staff is low because they have no input into decision making" (Winnipeg Free Press, March 13, 1989, p. 4). A union representative for instructors at Red River College concurred. "A couple of

years ago morale was low and I didn't think it could get any lower, but I was wrong", he was quoted as saying in the same article.

The business community also supported the idea of college autonomy, because with this colleges would be in a better position to serve the needs of industry. Indeed, even before the Filmon government began to seriously contemplate the issue of institutional governing boards, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce struck a committee to study whether Red River College should become autonomous from the province. "We want to ensure that students come out (of college) with something viable and sellable" a member of the Chamber commented in the explaining the rational for the committee. "Rapid technological change is having a major impact on business and industry and the business community has indicated a need for greater input into how that change is being reflected in the curriculum" (Winnipeg Free Press, March 13, 1989, p. 4).

In addition to the goal of drawing closer linkages between the schools and industry, it was hoped that college governance would also boost Manitoba's poor college participation rates. By almost any measure, Manitoba lagged behind most of Canada in the development of its community colleges system. The numbers of colleges, college students and instructors in Manitoba "are far less, relative to population, than in Canada at large or in the more educationally advanced provinces, especially Ontario, Quebec and Alberta" lamented the Winnipeg Free Press in July 1991. And indeed, as the national study *Education*

in Canada revealed, only 15% of high school graduates in Manitoba between the ages of 18-24 were immediately continuing on to post-secondary education, with only 8% of these going to community college. As a result, in the early 1990s about 1.6% of adults in Ontario and Alberta held college diplomas, while in Manitoba the figure was substantially less at 0.8% - a figure that put the province at a distinct disadvantage nationally (Education in Canada, 1992, p. 62).

As Len Derkach explained in our interview, the general impression of those sitting around the Progressive Conservative caucus table was that universities and colleges were "somewhat out of step with the demands of the marketplace". Feedback they were receiving from the public and the business community, as well as their own internal research, was showing that Manitoba students were not performing as well as could be vis-à-vis other provinces in Canada. "Universities were telling us that students were not prepared for university when they left high school. Our community colleges were training students for skills in areas where there were no jobs. And yet there was a demand for a skilled workforce. And so there was a problem" (p. 1).

While there was a general consensus that some change needed to happen in the post-secondary educational system, however, the Filmon administration was mistrustful of its ability and willingness to implement meaningful reform on its own. "There was no question in our minds that the school system was generally moving into mediocrity", former Education Minister Clayton Manness expressed

to me in our interview (Interview, December 2005, p. 1). "Students were not being sufficiently challenged, curricula was not keeping up with the changing world economy, and it was clear that fundamental changes had to happen". While he recognized that there was an element of frustrated teachers "who wanted to step out of the shadow and the warmth and the comfort of the teachers union", for the most part the established educational groups (notably the teachers associations, superintendents, and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees) only wanted the continuation of the status quo; "they were just wanting more money" (p. 5).

There was also a distinct sentiment amongst most of those within cabinet that if there was a problem in education, most of the blame could be placed on the universities sector. Despite the fact that many within the Conservative caucus had a university education, throughout this period I recall a general climate of mistrust and suspicion amongst key politicians and their advisors regarding the universities and academia in general. I can remember numerous negative comments being made at the time regarding professors "sitting in their ivory towers", totally out of touch with "the real world". From my own perspective, there was a definite bias toward the colleges sector, undoubtedly reflecting the Filmon government's strong connections to the business community from whom they derived much of their political and financial support.

In fact, Clayton Manness admitted to this bias during our interview. In outlining his government's approach to post-secondary education, he stated that "we had no solutions from the university". "You're not going to tell the universities what to do. They zealously embrace their independence" (p. 5). Whenever as Minister of Education and Training he raised with universities the need for change, "all the universities wanted was more money, yet it was clear that just extra funding wouldn't solve the problems of universities" (p. 1). In his estimation, the colleges were different. "Colleges were much more responsive; they seemed to understand exactly where the economy was going and what types of graduates we needed to have. They were much more flexible and fluid and able to change" (p. 5). Colleges, he felt, had been undervalued both in society and by the former NDP administration. "We saw that they crucially more, needed more support in word and deed. And to that end we provided whatever extra funding we could find in education went to our colleges. So it became a funding issue with us and there was no doubt universities were not given the priority that they thought they should have. And that was because a choice was made to favour colleges to a larger degree" (p. 1).

Manness made similar comments in the Manitoba Legislature while Minister of Education and Training, regarding the government's basic mistrust of educators and the inability, or unwillingness, of the post-secondary education system to implement its own meaningful change. In particular, he took aim at the universities sector, as opposed to the community colleges, which he viewed as

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ready to meet the challenge of change. With regards to universities, however, he declared that universities have done little to reposition themselves in light of the new economy and were therefore no longer held in the esteem that they once were. The university "is trying in some respects", he admitted, "but as a blanket statement, the statement cannot be made ... that the university is well. I am just saying we have a problem" (Hansard, May 25, 1994, p. 2331). He added, "a lot of people said, government, stay out of it: you are the cause of the problem. We the educators can do it. Ultimately at the end of the day, not very much has been done, and the government of the day, whoever it is, has to take an action".

As evidence of this indictment the Minister pointed to the universities' unwillingness to become involved in the kind of applied research that could provide some immediate benefits to the business community. "Everybody (at the universities) better get behind the wheel", he warned, and provide greater support for and payback to the provincial economy. "To take it (tax dollars) out of our pockets and then turn it over to any institution or to any good cause, then there better be a pretty fairly immediate payback or at least a guaranteed payback" (Hansard, May 25, 1994, p. 2334).

To what extent, then, was post-secondary education seen as a problem warranting immediate action by decision-makers? While there were certainly legitimate concerns being raised regarding the province's universities and colleges, there is little evidence to support the existence of a "crisis" in post-

secondary education. Universities and colleges continued to operate, and students continued to get educated. Moreover, while there was some negative feedback regarding the existing governance structures there was no dramatic focusing event that suddenly made people aware that there was a problem that needed to be fixed. As Len Derkach confirmed, rather than any real big crisis, it was a slow growing realization over some time that change within post-secondary education had to occur; "and we finally decided that there was certain things that had to happen" (p. 2). "There wasn't a drastic sea change all of a sudden" added Clayton Manness (p. 5).

In fact, as we saw in the last chapter, national polls on the public's attitudes towards education found that most people supported increased funding for universities and colleges. A survey conducted by the University of Manitoba's Centre for Higher Education Research and Development (CHERD) in 1991 on public attitudes towards higher education in Winnipeg[4] revealed similar findings. The survey found that while the public was concerned about education, they did not feel it had reached crisis proportions. When asked how satisfied they were with the performance of the University of Manitoba, 56% of those interviewed stated they were satisfied, and 27% agreed that universities were taking as active a role as they should be in the social and economic development of society.

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[4] The survey consisted of a total of 533 interviews with individuals randomly selected on the basis of residence in the City of Winnipeg. The university survey was part of a larger study that measured the attitudes of Winnipeggers towards a wide range of issues including public schools, transit, police services, recreation and health care.

More intriguing, however, was the fact that an overwhelming majority of Winnipeggers (73%) believed that governments should provide extra money to universities to match enrollment increases, and would be willing to pay higher taxes as a result. In order to cut back on expenses, 68% agreed that government should look at other areas of public expenditure first before cutting university budgets. On the question of whether or not government should take a firmer hand in deciding what programs are offered at universities, 74% felt that universities should decide, with only 16% in favour of governments deciding. In their conclusion the authors of the report noted that the results of the Winnipeg survey reflected similar opinions found in other national opinion polls. While Manitobans and Canadians felt that universities could and should be doing a "better job of explaining what it is doing and why", the authors argued that "these various studies have confirmed a high level of support for the universities generally and an appreciation of the role and importance of the institution to social, economic, cultural scientific, and technological development" (CHERD, 1993, p. 17).

The Problem of the Economy

While post-secondary education was undoubtedly an issue for many in Manitoba, without question the real problem was that of the economy. In Canada, the decade of the 1980s was bracketed by deep economic recessions, from 1981-1983 and again from 1989 on. These recessions, the worst that Canada had ever experienced, created a climate of economic unease across the country. As

the public becoming increasingly alarmed about the economic state of the nation, the elections of such neo-conservative figures as Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States also led to a heightened interest in the ideas of New Public Management and the reinventing government movement. As a result, interest in public policy issues, once limited to politicians, bureaucrats and a select number of interest groups, now became shared by a wider cross-section of citizens. And as the media began to cover more stories related to these issues, greater attention became focused on what governments were doing, how much money they were spending, and what kinds of services were provided as a result.

While there are many factors that can lead to a change in government, one of the main features in the downfall of the Pawley government and the subsequent election of the Conservatives in 1988 was undoubtedly the burgeoning provincial debt and the neoconservative discourse that had already captured other industrialized nations such as Britain and the United States. This discourse was also gaining ground in Canada, as witnessed by the 1984 sweep to power of the federal Progressive Conservatives under the leadership of Brian Mulroney. Still suffering the aftershocks of the recession of five years earlier, and about to be plunged into another, there was a distinct ideological shift in Canada on matters related to the economy and government. As political leaders, the media and the public across the country became caught up in the language of globalization and New Public Management, by the late 1980s the NDP increasingly appeared to be

out of step with the prevailing winds of public mood. Faced with the choice between belt tightening in a recession or using fiscal resources in a counter-cyclical economic policy the Pawley government had chosen the latter; a choice that was to exact high financial and political costs for the NDP in Manitoba (Netherton, 2001).

Public confidence in the NDP's ability to manage the economy in the face of serious fiscal pressures had eroded in the midst of rising interest rates, increasing debt levels and declining transfers from the federal government[5]. By 1988, the province's total debt had grown to $10 billion dollars, more than doubling over the previous six years (Framework for Economic Growth, 1993, p. 24). The Pawley government scrambled to implement new taxes, including an unpopular poll tax, as well as a highly politicized series of rate and fee increases in major crown corporations, to cover these costs and attempt to bring greater stability to the province's financial position. Despite efforts in the 1987 budget to reduce the deficit and restrain public sector expenditures, however, the fate of the government had already been sealed. A year later the Pawley administration fell when one of its own backbenchers voted against his party in a budget vote.

Reflecting the prevailing winds of change in other provinces and in particular the economic policies of the Mulroney government, the 1988 election of a minority Progressive Conservative government in Manitoba "marked the shift to the

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[5] Interest rates had climbed to as high as 22% in 1982, with interest payments on the provincial debt costing the province an additional $500 million dollars a year. (See Framework for Economic Growth, 1993, p. 5; Hansard, October 29, 1990, p. 498).

contemporary globalization-neoliberal policy paradigm marked by fiscal orthodoxy, attention to market competitiveness, deregulation, and privatization" (Netherton, 2001, p. 225). The central and overriding concern of the new government was the repositioning of Manitoba's economic position in light of the emerging global economy and the country's newly-minted Free Trade Agreement with the United States. All public policy issues became subsumed under the central rubric of fostering economic growth and development, not as an end in itself, but as the means of achieving what the Filmon administration defined as the province's most important goal: continual improvement in the quality of life for all Manitobans. As the government summed up its basic philosophy, "a strong, growing economy is essential to creating jobs and supporting quality health, education and social services, and to maintaining a safe and healthy environment" (Framework for Economic Growth, 1993, p. 31). To this end, post-secondary education was seen an integral to a strong economy. As Len Derkach, the newly appointed Minister of Education noted in the Manitoba Legislature, "we have to acknowledge that if we are going to prosper as a province that education is still the key" (Hansard, May 25, 1989, p. 120).

Upon assuming office, the new government continued with the expenditure controls implemented in the last year of the Pawley administration, and extended it to areas such as post-secondary education (Winnipeg Free Press, August 15, 1988). With relative consensus on the limitations of fiscal policy, the Conservatives focused much of their early efforts on restructuring the delivery of

social services, particularly health services, to conform more to a centralized model of expenditure control. Changes in the public school system simultaneously centralized control over education in the hands of the provincial government and established a process of consumer selection among schools for parents.

In their first mandate from 1988 to 1990 the Filmon government set the tone for what was to become the key themes of their tenure in office: the centrality of the economic paradigm; a more business-like approach to government; closer ties with the business community; a general mistrust of universities; and a greater role for the colleges sector. As the premier stated in his government's first Speech from the Throne on July 21, 1988, "our vision for Manitoba is a competitive and diversified economy which will provide increased job opportunities for our citizens, and pay for quality health, education and social programs" (Hansard, July 21, 1988, p. 2). This speech also provided evidence of New Public Management thinking, and offered clues as to the kinds of changes that were to come under the Filmon Tories; not just in terms of new policies, but in a new approach to governance as well. Noting how Manitobans are "concerned that economic growth in recent years has been hampered by an unhealthy and unsustainable level of public sector spending which has left a legacy of high debt and taxes and a growing burden of debt service costs", the premier warned of the "difficult challenges that lie ahead" and the need for more prudent, effective and accountable government programs and services by

"streamlining our government operations, eliminating duplication and reducing overhead costs" (p. 2-3).

Post-secondary education was highlighted as an integral component of this economic paradigm; a premise that was to permeate throughout the government's three terms in office. For the Conservatives, a skilled, productive and adaptable workforce was seen as essential "if Manitobans are to compete and prosper in a rapidly changing global economic environment" (Hansard, May 18, 1989, p. 5). As the premier added in the July 1988 speech to the House, "in the increasingly competitive international marketplace, research and development is essential for existing businesses to remain competitive and for the creation of new opportunities vital to Manitoba's future prosperity" (p. 4-5).

The premier further noted his government's intention to give the business community a larger say in the post-secondary area, and its obvious bias towards colleges over the university sector: "there will be renewed emphasis on strengthening the links between community colleges, the communities they serve and the real opportunities that exist in the economies of all regions of the province" (May 18, 1989, p. 4). At the same time, however, it was made clear that the focus on post-secondary education would not be accompanied by new money. As Education Minister Len Derkach warned, while "there has never been as big a commitment to university education as there has been by this Government"; at the same time "the pot is not bottomless. We have to change

our thinking, we have to change our attitude and we have to live within our means ... We have to set our priorities carefully" (Hansard, May 25, 1989, p. 488).

In keeping with this view of education as a key component of economic growth, one of the first moves the new government undertook was to transform the Department of Education into a comprehensive Department of Education and Training. Whereas previously the Department of Education had focused on the public school system, with training and labour market programs scattered across several different departments, with this change all training, labour market and skills development activities were now to be subsumed under one department. The Department of Education and Training thus became responsible for all aspects of the education system; from the K-12 level to universities, colleges, training and labour market matters. As the Education Minister commented in the Legislature regarding this change, "the decision to merge (education and) employment-related activities with training puts us in a much better position to develop a coherent skills training strategy for the province" (Hansard, January 23, 1990, p. 4630).

As evidence of the great role for the business community in the setting of education policy was the government's establishment of the Skills Training Advisory Committee (STAC) in 1989. Chaired by prominent business person Arthur Mauro, the purpose of STAC was to bring together industry, labour and

education to examine Manitoba's future training requirements. In its final report STAC revealed a shortage of well-skilled workers in the province, and drew attention to the need for more flexible and results-oriented training programs. The report called for "a labour market strategy to ensure that education and training of a highly skilled workforce is carried out that will allow us to be competitive in a global economy" (Report of the Manitoba Skills Training Committee, 1990, p. 12). It also identified the need for Manitoba's educational institutions to better respond to the changes in Canada's social and economic landscape (EITC, January 21, 1993). The government responded with Workforce 2000, which provided private sector training incentives in targeted sectors of high demand occupations, and an ongoing industry-wide planning and training partnership to assess skill and training needs in Manitoba.

In discussing the reasons for why post-secondary education came to occupy such a prominent role on the Filmon government's agenda, all the participants that I interviewed for this study referenced the economy and the need to foster economic growth in the face of globalization. As the Senior Political Advisor affirmed, "the economy was the number one issue. The generation of jobs, job creation, was what we were most concerned about. The motive behind everything was job creation" (p. 1). The growth and diversification of the economy was seen as the overriding goal of the administration, and the first necessary step to achieving the government's other public policy goals. As Jim Downey explained to me, it was assumed that by creating an economic climate

that was conducive to growth, reducing taxes and bringing down the public deficit, business leaders would favourably respond by creating more jobs. In this way, "the other things we had to do (i.e. on the economic front) would produce the revenues to do all the other social things we wanted to do" (p. 4).

Leo LeTourneau described how "we (Manitobans) were in deep trouble financially. I mean the feds had cut their transfer payments significantly. And there was also the question of the deficit. The Manitoba deficit was critical I think" (p. 2). Cuts in federal transfer payments, the provincial deficit and government debt had all produced huge "challenges" for the Conservative administration, Clayton Manness indicated to me. These challenges were so significant that at the end of the day, "it (university reform) became a funding issue with us" (p. 1).

In his recollection of some of the motivating forces at the time Jeff Johnson, who was a prominent Winnipeg business person with strong links to the Conservative party (and who would later chair the province's Interim Transition Committee), described how the fiscal environment within which the government was operating in put severe constraints on what it was able to do. "Everything was being looked at with a fine-tooth comb" he said (Interview, June 2006, p. 3). With demands in other policy areas such as healthcare on the rise, the question became "how do you continue to fund post-secondary education when there's not enough money available" (p. 3). "We were fairly cruel in how we dealt out the money", Len

Derkach added. "Not because we wanted to be but because there was no money in the system" (p. 5).

With the focus on job creation the general assessment within cabinet was that university and college curricula had to be brought more in line with economic priorities. Change in higher education needed to occur, Len Derkach suggested, "so that at the end of the day, our students whether they were coming from the community colleges side or the universities side, could compete better in the world marketplace" (p. 5). Shortly after coming into office, he said, his ministry "embarked on some consultations with jurisdictions outside of Manitoba to see what they were doing" in a number of different areas. "And we very quickly learned that first of all, our curriculum had not changed and although we had massive committees for curriculum change there was not meaningful change to put us in a competitive position with other jurisdictions. And if you compared us to other provinces in Canada, other countries, we were not even in the game" (p. 2). The imperative of curricula reform was further confirmed by Clayton Manness. "Curriculum was crucial to us … we strongly felt that curriculum needed revamping" (p. 2). As he added, "there is still a greater desire in universities to put up new buildings rather than to reformulate programs and I still think our universities are not keeping up to the times" (p. 2).

Len Derkach affirmed that for the Tories the educational issue had been "growing for some time". As the province's fiscal situation worsened throughout the 1980s,

it became clear to the Progressive Conservatives while still in opposition that changes would have to be made to post-secondary education. "Through the two years in opposition it started to escalate and we finally decided that there was certain things that had to happen" (p. 2). When the Conservatives took office in 1988 the financial state of the province meant that they could no longer afford the system in place. Coming out of opposition, Derkach said, Filmon already had a good perspective of where he wanted the education system to go. "He said we have to understand where the economy is at and the direction our economy is moving, so that we're not educating a society that is moving in one direction and an economy that is going in the other direction" (p. 5).

Majority Government

In spite of some of these early steps in the area of post-secondary reform, during the election campaign leading up to the 1990 provincial election the Progressive Conservatives were chastised by the Liberals for giving too little time and attention to the needs of post-secondary education. The NDP, for its part, accused the Tories of possessing a 'hidden agenda" for higher education; namely, their desire to turn universities into little more than training centres for big business. Nonetheless, the Progressive Conservatives under Gary Filmon were elected to a second term, this time gaining five more seats to form a slim majority government.

Throughout the second mandate and their successive win in the 1995 election, the message that had been introduced two years previously remained the same, albeit in more forceful language. "Making Manitoba Strong" became the Conservatives' rallying cry. And of course, in order to make Manitoba strong, the economy had to be strengthened first. Throne speeches, ministerial statements and other government documents from this period are replete with such references as the "dawning of a new era" and the "new economic reality" facing the province, and the need for Manitobans to stay the course in responding to this new reality. As the government made clear in its first Throne Speech in October of 1990, "as we enter our second term, we remain committed to the vision set forth when we first took office: a strong economy with new and better jobs for our young people". (Hansard, October 11, 1990, p. 4-5).

To this end, the Filmon government reiterated its promise to implement a comprehensive economic program "to secure sustainable economic growth as the foundation of a stronger Manitoba" (Hansard, October 11, 1990, p. 3). At the same time, however, the Premier added, "we must come to grips with some inescapable realities. The first of those is that the private sector creates the wealth that governments spend. That means Government must build partnerships throughout the community". Education was once again linked to economic development, with a well-educated labour market seen as the best means of positioning the province to secure sustained economic growth and to take advantage of opportunities in the global economy.

The impact of globalization on the administration's thinking on post-secondary education was also clearly evident. As Len Derkach stated at the time, "we live in a rapidly changing world and the changing world is creating new pressures and demands on our system. We are in the midst of a global economic upheaval ... major changes are being undertaken throughout the world" (Hansard, October 29, 1990, p. 499). In the highly competitive world in which we live, he added, "there is a need to share the responsibilities and costs of education and training with stakeholders. For that reason we have called upon colleges, our schools, our universities, business, industry and labour, as well as parents and members of the public to become involved in the entire education process" (Hansard, November 6, 1990, p. 853). The Minister also made reference to how other countries are reviewing their education systems, and the pressure that this places upon Manitoba to follow suite if it is to remain competitive. "Change (in post-secondary education is necessitated by the process of continuous changes in our society and the training needs within our province. We know that we have to constantly be changing our training needs so that we can keep up with the global economy" (p. 857).

For the government, this meant that universities and colleges had to change how they did business. In particular, the kinds of courses and programs that universities and colleges were offering had to better reflect the needs of the economy, however these needs were defined by the government and the business community. As Jim Downey said in our interview, in order to grow the

economy, "you have to have the people trained and the educational systems in place to make it happen" (p. 4). He explained that education was seen by the Filmon administration as a crucial piece of the economic puzzle; in order to build a strong economy, all the pieces of the puzzle had to come together. As he stressed, there was no point in educating people for jobs that weren't out there: "there is no use in producing a whole lot of people that make buggy whips when there's nobody in society that wants to hire a buggy whip maker. And that's basically it" (p. 3).

The Conservatives' plan to focus on strengthening the community colleges sector and the role of business in post-secondary education was also unveiled early in the second mandate. The October 1990 Throne Speech referenced a "renewed emphasis on strengthening the links between community colleges, the communities they serve and the real opportunities that exist in the economies of all regions of the province" (Hansard, October 11, 1990, p. 4). And in keeping with this, the government noted that "we also recognize the need for a different form of community college government to make our colleges more adaptive and responsive to the needs of the students, business and industry" (Hansard, October 22, 1990, p. 316).

A changed governance structure was seen by the Tories as an important first step to strengthening the ability of colleges to contribute in larger way to the economic development of the province and to forging closer links with the

business community. While colleges would be granted their independence in the form of autonomous governing boards, however, Education Minister Len Derkach made clear the government's intention to firmly remain in charge of post-secondary education. As he affirmed to the House, in regard to college autonomy "the Government will retain its central policy control including approval of major programming and in this way we can then have some control in terms of some direction and the programming that perhaps is needed in the province" (Hansard, November 6, 1990, p. 857).

While most supported the idea of college governance, however, it was feared by some in the opposition and the media that the marked neo-conservative agenda of the Progressive Conservatives would lead to an overt focus on business rather than learning in the colleges sector. An editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press, for example, expressed the concern that the closer partnerships with industry pushed by the Tories would concentrate colleges too tightly on employment training rather than on a broader education, or alternately tie them too closely to government as their governing boards would be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. At the same time, the paper argued, "the proposal (for college governance) would merely create a new level of bureaucracy with political appointments, duplication of services and no efficiency" (Winnipeg Free Press, July 21, 1991, p. 7). The Brandon Sun took issue with the $1.8 million price tag that would accompany the new governance model, especially at a time when post-secondary education funding was not keeping up with the rising costs

of providing university and college education. As it declared in an editorial, "we must question the wisdom of an education minister who is trying to build a new level of bureaucracy" when departments and programs are being cut (Brandon Sun, July 16, 1991, p. 4).

Framework for Economic Growth

While the Filmon government was deciding how to get at the problem of the economy through the universities and colleges system, it was also in the midst of developing what was to become the singularly most important policy statement of its tenure in office: the *Framework for Economic Growth: Policy Directions for Manitoba*. And indeed, given centrality of the economic paradigm as outlined in this document, and the subsequent impact it had on the development of public policy, especially post-secondary education policy, this timing was not coincidental. Unveiled in 1993, the *Framework* brought together a number of earlier policy documents such their *Economic Renewal Strategy* (1990) and 1991's *The Fiscal Plan* in outlining the Conservatives' guiding vision for the province, and their fundamental priorities and plans for Manitoba.

The *Framework* document is worthy of some attention here because not only did it outline the economic priorities of the Filmon administration, but it became the central philosophical rubric under which all other policy issues were subsequently subsumed. All government departments, regardless of policy area, were required to incorporate the *Framework* into their business plans (in preparing the

Estimates for the Council on Post-Secondary Education, I recall being instructed to make as many as references as possible to the *Framework* as a way of impressing the Treasury Board ministers and hopefully winning them over to granting us our requests!). Reading like a primer on globalization and the new knowledge economy, as well as the assumptions of New Public Management, the *Framework* wholeheartedly reflected the prevailing neoconservative discourses of the time, and the ideas that influenced the cabinet in their decisions regarding post-secondary education in the province.

The *Framework* begins with a lengthy discussion of recent economic trends that have become a cause for concern for Canada and industrialized nations around the world; trends that "have not only led to dramatic shifts in economic conditions but in political attitudes as well". As the government argues in the *Framework*, "globalization is not just a concept; it is a reality that has profound implications for our future economic prosperity and competitiveness…in the 1990s, more than ever, government policies toward economic development, jobs, trade and investment and other policy areas can no longer be considered in isolation of international developments" (Framework for Economic Growth, p. 1; p. 16). As it further explained, in the "old economy", which focused attention on the relationships and practices of big business, big government and big unions, government was captivated by the appeal of a planned economy and short-term consumption financed by borrowing and taxation. In contrast is the 'new economy", marked by "competitive advantage in the hands of entrepreneurially

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motivated, flexibly organized firms" and "knowledge workers (who) are the single most important factor of production" (p. 12-13).

The *Framework* document presents more than just the government's views on economic matters, however. It demonstrates how the economic discourse embraced by the Conservatives imbued all aspects of government policy, including social policy issues such as education and health. As the *Framework* explains, "government policy has a major impact on the local economic environment. The wrong policies and signals can drive innovative economic activity away to other regions and other countries ... in this New Economy, governments must aggressively shape the context, institutional structure and environment ... to strive for competitive advantage in the global marketplace" (p. 29). In discussing how economic change impacts people and communities, the report states that "the economic and social policy contexts are inseparable" (p. 16).

The *Framework* outlines a 10 point strategy to achieve the government's economic and social agenda. The first such strategy – fiscal management - is the foundation upon which all other initiatives were to be built. Fiscal management was defined here as including public sector restraint measures, control of the public deficit and debt, the streamlining of government processes, and more accountable and responsible management of public programs and services. Throughout all of its efforts, the document added, the focus of the Filmon

administration would be on achieving economy, effectiveness and efficiency –
the building blocks of the reinventing government movement. In the past, the
Framework suggested, government tended to concentrate on inputs – how much
money is spent on a particular program, how many people are served and so on.
Instead, "government will continue to shift its focus to results and performance
which provides the accountability citizens demand and deserve of their
government" (p. 32). As it added, "competitive advantage in this new knowledge-
based world is increasingly dependent on ideas and skills, rather than traditional
input costs" (p. 3).

Education, or more specifically "skills training", is listed in the *Framework*
document as the second strategy for achieving economic growth. The
administration's philosophy of education as a means of achieving a wider
purpose, in this case economic development, is clearly articulated here: "our
educational investment must be channeled into meaningful skills training that will
match the talents of Manitobans with emerging opportunities in business and
industry" (p. 39). That more money is not necessarily the answer to maximizing
the benefits of the province's educational system was also made abundantly
clear; "despite Manitoba's high per-pupil spending on education, the basic skill
levels of many of our citizens are inadequate" (p. 39). Instead, the key for the
Filmon administration was in ensuring that skills are relevant to local industry
needs and responsive to a changing economy. Rather than increasing
educational funding, the *Framework* instead calls for better relationships between

educational institutions and industry, improved apprenticeship training and greater private sector support of skills training. "By working together, government, industry, labour and educational institutions can facilitate the development of an education and training system that will increase productivity and lead to more high-paying jobs for Manitobans" (p. 39).

That the government's *Framework for Economic Growth* was to be the policy framework within which universities and colleges were expected to work within was clearly enunciated by Clayton Manness in his capacity as Minister of Education and Training. In comments to the Manitoba Legislature, the Minister stated "governments everywhere have been pretty timid to impose, some would say directions, upon the university ... they (universities) are well aware as anybody, hopefully ... that when the government of the day lays out a framework for economic growth which sets aside, within all the sectors of our wealth creation, those which should be favored with respect to provincial programming and indeed provincial focus, one would think that universities would also understand where the leadership of the province was trying to take the province and would want to fit into that" (Hansard, May 25, 1994, p. 2328).

He later added in response to criticisms from the opposition that the Tories did not have a research policy for the universities or a statement of what they wanted the universities to do, "how much closer can we come than that provided within the *Framework for Economic Growth?*" (Hansard, May 30, 1994, p. 2604). The

Framework, he added, lays out "more so than other government that I have seen or any other document by any other government, a blueprint for where this province in all of its dimensions, in all of its institutions, should be providing its focus" (Hansard, May 30, 1994, p. 2590).

New Public Management

In their discussions surrounding their economic priorities and the need to re-tool the post-secondary education system to better serve these priorities, we find ample evidence of both New Public Management ideas and the neoconservative ideology of the Filmon administration. Throughout his tenure in office the Premier would reference how his government was bringing a "business-like approach to government" and how the public sector "needs sound corporate management". In response to criticisms from the NDP that he "talks too much like a businessman" Filmon argued that "I make no apology for that, because that is why we are on this side and they are in second place, because they did not take a business-like approach to Government when they were there" (Hansard, October 22, 1990, p. 312-313). A year later, Filmon made clear his government's commitment to the ideals of NPM:

> Through internal reform, we will move to a results-based government. We have to find new and better ways to deliver services to Manitobans so that every dollar is used to its greatest effect. That will involve looking for ways to reduce overhead and administration. It means reducing duplication of related programs in different branches of government. It means developing new delivery mechanisms and innovative management approaches ... We are now at a time when we must distinguish between the services we would like the government to provide and the services we need the government to provide (Hansard, March 7, 1991, p. 4).

These views were also reiterated by members of the Filmon cabinet. In comments made in 1994 in the Manitoba Legislature, Education and Training Minister Clayton Manness stated that universities could not escape the same kinds of scrutiny and restructuring that was occurring in all sectors of society. "The same rationalization, the same hard decisions that are happening in every entity today in the public and, indeed the private sector, are going to have to occur even in a greater fashion" in higher education, he argued (Hansard, May 25, 1994, p. 2329). He further added that closer ties with the community, notably the business community, would help facilitate this rationalization within the institutions, and ensure that their programs were meeting the economic needs of the province.

When asked about the impact of the reinventing government movement on their approach to governance, those interviewed merely saw these ideas as simply making good common sense. As the Senior Political Advisor commented, "you know, I don't think Gary Filmon personally, and most of the cabinet ministers, wanted to cut the size of government and cut spending as much as they said, there's a whole pile of money here and there's all kinds of things we can do better. I think there was a more honourable motive of saying we can better serve people" (p. 12). For Len Derkach, it was more about modernizing government rather than reinventing it; "modernizing our approach to how entities that were part of government should be run more effectively and more efficiently. And empowering them" (p. 8).

As a senior civil servant during the Filmon period Leo LeTourneau recalled lots of discussion and efforts to bring more of a managerialist focus to government[6]. "There was certainly a very strong push to make government work more like business", he said. However, he added, not much came out of these efforts because ultimately, funding decisions drove decision-making. "Treasury Board was controlling everything in those days. In the final analysis, when Treasury Board sent out its note and said, you are going to come in with a budget of 2% and that's all you're going to get, all the planning that had gone on and all these priorities that you had given yourself were suddenly, in the final hours, being on a flipchart, being torn out or destroyed or changed. That's the way it works. So you spend an enormous amount of time on strategic planning and doing all this wonderful stuff, for what? There was a great disconnect between the formal planning process and the budget process" (p. 14).

In my interview with Jim Downey he provided an interesting insight into how he and other key members of the Filmon team viewed their relationship with the civil service. He referenced several times the need for politicians to take the responsibility for making decisions and "getting on with the business of government", rather than allowing their departments to "run the show". As he told me, one of the most important lessons he learned from former Tory leaders such as Duff Roblin and Sterling Lyon was the need for politicians to take power back

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[6] During the early years of the Filmon administration, from 1990 to 1993, I worked as a political assistant to Jim McCrae, who was Minister of Justice and Attorney General at the time. I recall the premier giving each member of cabinet a copy of Osborne and Gaebler's groundbreaking book on the managerialist movement, *Reinventing Government*, and instructing them all to study it closely.

from the bureaucracy. "Our job as a minister was to tell the bureaucracy what the public wouldn't tolerate. So if ministers were driven and directed by their deputy ministers and by that whole bureaucratic system, which by the way we've tended to drift into as a country, it means you need to change the deputy. Because the deputy was running the show on their behalf and not on our behalf. As an elected people you had to take the responsibility of decision-making" (p. 10).

B. The Policies Stream

In Kingdon's (1995) multiple streams model parallel to the problems stream is the policies stream. This stream consists of ideas and options about how particular problems in society should be responded to by government. As Kingdon reminds us, it is not enough to have a recognized problem for agenda setting to occur. There must also be a solution proposed by policy actors within the policy subsystem that is acceptable to decision-makers. Hence, actors will not place a problem on its agenda if there is no workable solution available to fix it. As he states, "the presence of an available alternative is portrayed as another important factor that makes it likely a subject will achieve lasting high agenda status" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 117).

While any number of policy alternatives can float around in the policies stream, or what Kingdon refers to as the "policy primeval soup", those that rise to the top and stand the best chance of being selected must meet a number of criteria. Hence, the selection of policy alternatives is not a random act. Rather, the

strongest proposals are those that are technically feasible to implement (in other words, can the proposal actually be operationalized and put into practice); contain values acceptable to decision-makers (i.e. do they reflect the ideology of the governing party and the political culture of the community); have a tolerable cost (do they involve substantial new monies); and are most likely to garner support both within the Legislature and amongst the general public.

While universities and colleges came to be seen by the Filmon government as a potentially effective tool to fix the larger problem of the economy, the question then became one of how. This section will consider the policy options that were considered by the Filmon government, and that facilitated its determination to place post-secondary education on its agenda. Of particular importance was the decision to strike the University Education Review Commission (UERC) in 1991 and subsequently the Interim Transition Committee (ITC), both of which laid the groundwork for the later creation of the Council on Post-Secondary Education in 1996.

The University Education Review Commission

By 1991 Canada was already facing its second recession in less than ten years. While Manitoba had been lesser hit than many other provinces across the country, the economic climate during this period had an impact on virtually all aspects of policymaking. The Premier opened up the two Legislative sessions in 1991 with similar references to "these trying economic times" and how Manitoba

was facing the "most serious economic decline in a decade", which was only exacerbating an already difficult situation. While remaining committed to "building a stronger Manitoba", he also bluntly stated that "we face a very real threat to our future prosperity", with the province's future success threatened by the worsening position of the province's finances. As the Premier argued,

> The recession and reductions in federal transfers are putting serious pressure on our province's finances and jeopardizing the success we have achieved thus far ... no one challenge is more fundamental to my government's plans to reach our province's potential than the challenge of keeping the government's finances under control ...With no revenue growth, reduced federal transfers and growing interest costs, my ministers inform me that our province is in danger of becoming ensnared in a trap of spiraling debt costs that will rob us of our chance for economic prosperity and limit our ability to protect even the most fundamental social services (Hansard, March 7, 1991, p. 2).

As a result, the Premier maintained, it was "a time of decision" for the province. "With our limited revenues (Manitobans) will have to make choices between what you might like the government to do and what you feel the government must do" (p. 8).

The Tories' solution was job creation, and by extension, the mobilization of the post-secondary education sector. Post-secondary education was clearly becoming an issue of greater import across the world, as other jurisdictions began to examine more closely their educational systems in light of the changing discourses surrounding New Public Management and globalization. For the first time, both opposition parties in the Manitoba legislature appointed critics for post-secondary education, revealing that it was not just the Progressive Conservatives

that were becoming increasingly focused on this area. As NDP MLA and former education critic Dave Chomiak publicly declared, politicians of all parties were now "sitting on a time bomb". "Education is the biggest issue when I go door-knocking. The economy means everybody is worried about the future for their kids. They feel the quality isn't there, that their kids will have to leave to get properly educated. There is a profound unease. It's a sleeping giant" (Winnipeg Free Press, February 8, 1993, p. A7).

In its response to the pressing economic demands the government called upon the mobilization of the business, labour, education and research communities to help Manitoba gain a significant competitive edge in the global economy. The formation of "effective partnerships" with these groups was clearly seen as vital in this respect, as evidenced by the government's creation of two important bodies, the Economic Development Board (EDB) of Cabinet and the Economic Innovation and Technology Council (EITC). Serving as the critical focal point for the province's economic renewal efforts, the EDB represented the most powerful cabinet committee of the Filmon administration. The Ministry of Education and Training was brought under the EDB umbrella, demonstrating the extent to which post-secondary education was viewed as an extension of the government's economic agenda.

While the EDB was an internal cabinet committee, the EITC was comprised of representatives from both within government as well as the private sector, post-

secondary institutions and research organizations in Manitoba. Chaired by the business community, the mission of the EITC was to "promote and enhance a climate of innovation, entrepreneurship, and technological development that spurs responsible economic growth for the benefit of all Manitobans" (EITC, January 21, 1993, p. 1). Together the EDB and the EITC were designed to "address the need for more effective leadership, consultation, and partnership on economic growth policy. By working together, they provide an effective structure to initiate and deliver economic development policies" (Framework for Economic Growth, 1993, p. 25).

In our interview Len Derkach referenced the overarching importance of the EDB. "The Economic Development Board of Cabinet was one that was very close to the education system. And although it was there to drive economic issues, education was always a part of it. And during education time it was an extremely important area of policy decision-making", he stated (p. 6). Leo LeTourneau also spoke to me of how he would meet regularly with the director of the EITC throughout this time, and how they would discuss ways in which the goals of that organization could be better reflected in the province's post-secondary system.

The March 1991 Throne Speech, occurring just weeks before a stampede of over 1,000 enraged students protesting funding cuts attempted to storm the Manitoba Legislature, also referenced two significant developments in the post-secondary area. In declaring that "the renewal of the education system begins this year", the

government announced that legislation granting colleges their autonomy would be introduced, and that a review of Manitoba's universities would begin "to seek ways of enhancing the role of universities in the economic, social and cultural development of Manitoba" (Hansard, March 7, 1991, p. 6).

Minister of Education and Training Len Derkach publicly explained to the House the rationale for these moves. Phrasing his comments against the backdrop of the "difficult economic climate which is crippling our ability to deliver the services that we should be delivering", the Minister argued that it was time that universities became more accountable to government, the business community and taxpayers. "There is not a very good understanding between what goes on in the school system and perhaps the business community, and vice versa. Indeed, for too long the education community has been isolated from what goes on in the rest of the community" (Hansard, March 18, 1991, p. 316). He added, "the time has come for us to take a look and to determine what education can realistically do and what we want it to do... we need to take a look at the system, how we can do things differently and how we can be more effective". At the same time, he warned, the costs of education have to be controlled: "education costs cannot continue escalating" (p. 315-316).

In an editorial on March 11, 1991, the Winnipeg Free Press welcomed the broad review of post-secondary education promised in the Throne Speech, but noted "if you look closely enough, the renewal of the education system begins every year.

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The trouble is it almost always sputters quickly to a halt without producing discernible results" (p. 6). This generally reflected the view of critics as well, who argued that to date, the Filmon government had been long on promises and short on action when it came to post-secondary education. "That announcement was made in the last throne speech" University of Manitoba president Arnold Naimark declared to the press. "If they're going to do it, let's get moving with it", University of Winnipeg president Marsha Hanen added (Winnipeg Free Press, December 6, 1991, p. 19).

While the presidents of both Brandon University and Saint Boniface College also expressed their support for the announcement that universities would be reviewed, Paul Ruest of the CUSB pondered what would become of the results of such a review if it found that universities were in fact under-funded. As he cautioned, "we can identify these needs, but what will the government do with the results?" (Winnipeg Free Press, July 7, 1992, p. 7).

The review of higher education in Manitoba finally got underway over a year later. Maintaining that "it is time the learning institutions became more responsive to the needs of society", on June 26, 1992 new Education and Training Minister Rosemary Vodrey announced the establishment of the University Education Review Commission (UERC) under the chairmanship of Duff Roblin. The UERC was to be comprised of three prominent members from the community (Kevin Kavanagh, retired president and CEO of Great-West Life Assurance Co.,

Kathleen Richardson, and Sid Gordon, past chair of the Grain 2000 Task Force). The mandate of the Roblin Commission, as it was to be commonly known, was to review and make recommendations on a number of areas related to the universities of Manitoba, including governance structures, university management systems, the allocation of funding, accountability, accessibility, and "such other matters as may arise being germane to the organization, management and delivery of university education in Manitoba" (Report of the UERC, 1993, p. 149).

In a resolution to the House presented the following December, Progressive Conservative MLA Marcel Laurendeau provided further insight into the government's motivations for striking the Commission. Noting how the "social, cultural and economic landscape of society has changed dramatically", he declared that the Commission would be addressing a number of pressing issues and would be recommending "sweeping changes to the post-secondary education system in the province" (Hansard, December 14, 1992, p. 527-528) – an odd statement to make since the Commission was still in the midst of the review at the time and had yet to recommend anything. Laurendeau added, "university education plays a central role in economic performance, vitally important for the continued prosperity of this province … it is not all about money but, without the money, where is the education process going? Nowhere. It is about time that something was done" (p. 529).

And clearly, the government expected the Roblin Commission to present it with some significant findings and direction on exactly how universities should be re-modeled. "We have a strong belief", Vodrey admitted later to her colleagues in the Manitoba Legislature, "that we will find direction and we will find ideas from the Roblin commission. We are looking to the Roblin commission to provide us on the university side with the latest thinking, and also with some guidance and direction" (Hansard, May 11, 1993, p. 2830).

The new Commission was immediately blasted from some quarters for taking too long to establish (some fifteen months after it was initially announced in a Throne Speech) as well as for being little more than an elite panel of well-to-do conservatives. "There are no students, no young people on this panel, no northerners, no aboriginal people" NDP critic Jean Friesen publicly commented (Winnipeg Sun, June 27, 1992, p. 6); while Liberal leader Sharon Carstairs questioned why no one was appointed to represent post-secondary institutions and the high schools. "It's a question of representation. They may be good individuals, but I think they symbolize business and wealth" added Kevin Dearing, a University of Winnipeg student and local Canadian Federation of Students representative.

Some also argued that the Commission was little more than a delaying tactic, buying the government time from having to cope with the pressures of post-secondary education in the province. It also meant that the government would

not have to make any decisions. As NDP education critic Jean Friesen maintained, "like many of the reviews of this government, this one has been predicated upon an assumption that a review means that no action need be taken, no policies need be developed, no cabinet committees need meet, because a review is in place" (Hansard, June 28, 1993, p. 4787).

The Commission was further criticized with being too small, with too small of a support staff, and with too short of a timeline (the report was initially to have been completed by the summer of 1993) to be able to recommend any real sweeping changes to the university system. The NDP also blasted the government for not following the usual government protocol of issuing a white paper first, outlining from its perspective some of the issues facing higher education and what its expectations were of the system. "This particular government either has an agenda which it already wants to put into effect with the universities, or it simply wants to have a very limited, a very narrow perspective upon the future of universities in this province", argued the NDP education critic (Hansard, December 14, 1992, p. 530).

For his part, however, in response to these criticisms UERC Chair Duff Roblin said he and his fellow commissioners would "bring an element of common sense to any recommendation we might make which will improve the status and usefulness of higher education in the university sector" (Winnipeg Free Press, June 27, 1992, p. 21). At the same time, he added, "it's quite inappropriate to try

to second guess what we are going to find. At the end of the day, I hope we will have some idea of how we can better serve the public's interest in the field". And as he explained further, the first point in the Commission's terms of reference is to let the citizenry have their say. "So before we get down to brass tacks, or make any effort to decide what direction we are going to recommend, we have a lot of listening to do" (Winnipeg Free Press, November 8, 1992, p. B3).

Despite the opposition's criticisms, the Commission was generally well-received by the media and the business community. "A review of university education is long overdue" stated the Brandon Sun in an editorial. "All three of Manitoba's universities are suffering from the same problems: reduced funding at the provincial and federal levels, an increase in student demand and a critical community which says they are not meeting academic needs. The bottom line regarding this review of our education system is simple. As a result of economic and other factors there is a real need to change the way that university education is delivered in Manitoba" (Brandon Sun, June 29, 1992, p. 4).

The Winnipeg Free Press also concurred with this assessment, noting how much the world and the economy has changed over the past twenty years since the last comprehensive review of post-secondary education in Manitoba. While agreeing that the government could have included a more diverse cross-section of the community in its appointments to the UERC, it maintained that the common sense, experience and wisdom that Duff Roblin would bring to the

commission is "precisely what governments and the universities will need if post-secondary education is to survive a major restructuring of the global economy and if it is to compete successfully for dwindling public resources" (Winnipeg Free Press, July 2, 1992, p. A6). At the same time, the newspaper stated the importance of reviewing Manitoba's universities in the context of national and international trends. "The global economy is in the midst of a major transformation. Where does Manitoba fit in this changing global environment?"

Interviews with several of the key decision-makers at the time suggest that while the Filmon government already knew that they wanted to find a way to better harness the post-secondary education system in order to meet their economic goals, exactly how they were to get there was less clear. As the Senior Political Advisor told me, "there was always a sense that the universities had to be re-tooled but the actual, the strategy that said we have to upgrade our universities was one thing. The tactics used … were another" (p. 1).

In outlining his take on how the decision to strike a commission came about, Leo LeTourneau recalled to me some of the discussions he'd had at the time with Education Minister Len Derkach. The government had just embarked on a major review of the public school system, he said, and he pointed out to the Minister that maybe it was time to look at the universities as well. The last review of Manitoba's post-secondary education system had occurred almost two decades previously, he added, and the world had substantially changed since then. "All

these issues were out there", he said, that needed responding to. "Management issues, accountability issues, financial issues, relationships between colleges and universities" (p. 2).

And it wasn't only in Manitoba that these issues were being raised. In suggesting the review to the Minister LeTourneau referenced being influenced by what was going on in other jurisdictions and the fact that provinces such as Alberta and Nova Scotia were in the midst of reviewing their own higher education systems. As a researcher and senior advisor to government he also spoke of how a large part of his job involved staying on top of what was being said in the scholarly literature. The concerns and questions that were being discussed in the academic discourses around higher education reinforced for him the need for Manitoba to also reconsider its universities system. "I mean we never invented accountability. It was in the literature, it was in the papers, it was all over the place. You got immersed in it very quickly if you had anything to do with this area" (p. 3).

The idea of a university review was supported in caucus and cabinet, LeTourneau added, because there were legitimate questions that the government wanted answers to. These questions centered on issues of funding and accountability for this funding. "The universities were getting at the time upwards of $200 million dollars so it was a fairly significant transfer of resources from the provinces", he said. Members of cabinet were asking "what did they do

with the money they're getting, why is it that they don't have enough money all the time, they're always asking for more and more? And who makes decisions about these things?" (p. 3).

As Clayton Manness expressed to me his reasoning for the Roblin Commission, while the government knew they wanted to "take on the universities" and tie them more closely to their economic agenda, they needed to buy some time in order to figure out how best to proceed. "We were under a lot of pressure, and we just could not devote the attention. We were a government that was just up to our eyeballs in so many things", he said. In particular, Manness spoke at length of the series of far-reaching, and controversial, reforms on the public schools side that he was personally involved in and which were consuming much of the administration's energies. Hence, he explained, "we just figured we'd put it (post-secondary education) in the hands of the Commission to give us some advice"; to bring people to the table "and show us where to go". As he added, "maybe some would say it was a stalling instrument, but whatever it was it was trying to hammer home that just extra funding wouldn't solve the problems of universities" (p. 1).

The idea of a commission therefore appealed to cabinet because it allowed them room to maneuver while they figured out how best to reform the post-secondary system. The plan from Manness' perspective was thus "we're going to set up this commission, we're going to bring very high powered people to it, and then after

that we're going to do the proper thing, and get a community reaction and then build the legislation. That would take three or four years. We needed that time. But at least we were going to do it right ... with meaningful recommendations that would move us off the old system" (p. 7-8). Public reviews and commissions, Leo LeTourneau explained to me, are a useful way of doing this because "they sort of take problems away from government. And then you can sort of do other kinds of things until the commission submits its report". In this way, "when questions are asked of the government of why isn't it doing this or that, it can reply that it is waiting for the Commission to give direction in this area or that area. So the minister was taken off the hook so to speak" (p. 5).

The government knew that it needed to start building public buy-in on the need to shake up the post-secondary system. We needed to get the public on side, Manness stated, because "we sensed that it was powerless to try and force change through government" (p. 2). For Len Derkach, a critical reason for setting up the UERC was so that "we could sell the notions that we had (in post-secondary education)". As he told me, "we needed to bring the public along, and if you recall there was a lot of resistance to change when we were making changes in education. So by launching a commission into education it gave it the stature that was required to launch the changes. Because once the commission did its study we had the buy in from the intellectual or the educational community into the areas that the Roblin commission looked at" (p. 9).

This assessment was echoed by Len Derkach. As he commented to me, the government knew that certain changes had to happen in post-secondary education. They also realized, however, that "while we had to somehow start down that road", they would have to approach it in a careful and methodical way. "Any change, especially in education, brings with it a lot of resistance from those who have been comfortable with the system the way it is for years", he said (p. 3). Not only from the academic community; "there was great consternation and resistance from within the department" as well. "Often times the people who were in the system were reluctant to make that change as quickly as we wanted to make" (p. 5).

And while the Senior Political Advisor told me that "the global public policy that we had to fix universities was more than consensus, I would think it was pretty close to unanimous", he admitted that there were some within the Conservative caucus itself that were uncomfortable with any kind of rapid reforms. "Anybody who was in caucus or part of the education establishment, anybody who spent a long time in the teaching business or was a school trustee cautioned terribly about any kind of dramatic change" (p. 2). The commission was therefore a way of not only building legitimacy amongst the public and the education community, but it was also intended to soften up any critics in caucus as well. This "softening up" stage was seen as critical, because as Jim Downey informed me, "if you don't have a buy-in from your colleagues, and from the people of Manitoba, you don't survive politically" (p. 9).

At the same time, however, those involved in the decision to strike a commission knew that the government was incurring a risk by turning over the post-secondary issue over to an independent, and public, body. As Leo LeTourneau cautioned, "once you give the issue over to a commission it sort of gets away from the government agenda to some degree" (p. 5). Hence, in order to build buy-in from the community, while maintaining some control over the process, both the mandate and composition of the commission had to be carefully structured. As Clayton Manness told me, "we knew if we were going to do it (strike a commission) we had to get it right" (p. 7).

In designing the UERC the government knew that the one thing they wanted to avoid at all costs was the kind of review that had previously been undertaken for the high schools system. This review had involved representatives from all of the major stakeholder groups in the decision-making process. As a result, LeTourneau said, in the high schools review "nothing was resolved without consensus, unless you got consensus. And the province wanted to avoid that kind of dynamic setting in where all interest groups would be sitting around the table and fighting it out". Instead, it was felt that a blue ribbon committee of "significant elites" from the community would be respected by the general population, and that "'people would listen to them". A small group of individuals close to the government was seen as the best approach to not only garnering legitimacy but also for maintaining a greater degree of control over the process: "it was four people, they were searching for answers to the questions that the

government wanted answers to, as opposed to trying to justify what existed, which would have been the case if it had been an interest group kind of committee" (p. 4).

For Manness, then, "the trade off was that we had to bring, if we were going to do it, and give it credibility for setting up this commission then we had to bring some very high powered people to it. Which we did". The selection of commissioners, he added, was a "political decision made at the highest level; this would be Premier Filmon that put together that group" (p. 7). While close to the Progressive Conservative Party, the appointment of Kathleen Richardson and Kevin Kavanaugh, both of whom had important links to two of the province's universities, was purposely done so the commission "could get the respect of the universities" (LeTourneau, p. 5).

Even more critical was the decision to appoint Duff Roblin as chair of the UERC. While he disagreed with the suggestion that perhaps the government was trying to steer the Commission in a certain way, Manness admitted that the selection of Mr. Roblin was not done by accident. Not only were the optics and symbolism positive in the sense that he was a popular and well-respected former premier of Manitoba, as well as a member of the Senate, he was also seen by many as the "education premier" and thus had clout in this area. At the same time, Roblin was "a conservative who's run government. He knows, he would know all the

challenges that would be confronting each other, on the fiscal and on the spending side" (p. 8).

As Len Derkach affirmed, the government knew it was "safe" in approaching Duff Roblin to chair the commission. "Mr. Roblin is a very astute individual who understands this whole notion of moving forward in the economy and in education" (p. 9). Jim Downey echoed the high esteem that he and his colleagues had for Roblin, and how he was viewed as a mentor to a lot of people in the Conservative caucus, "Gary Filmon for one". Downey added, "we had extreme confidence in Duff. He had been there, he had delivered as a premier (and although times had changed) he'd also seen the demands as they were changing out there and knew how to do it. Knew what needed to be done" (p. 12).

The Restructuring of Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba

In January 1994, the Report of the Roblin Commission was released to the public. From the title of the Report, *Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba: Doing Things Differently,* the Commissioners clearly sought to carve out a different path for the province's universities and community colleges. In formulating its recommendations the Roblin Commission had held a serious of public meetings throughout the province, and heard from over 200 presenters representing a range of interest groups including students, business, academics, Aboriginal groups, and the general public. The Report's 41 recommendations

ranged from the need for greater accountability systems in the universities sector to the identification of strategic priorities by each post-secondary institution and for greater coordination and articulation between the two sectors.

Reiterating much of the prevailing discourses of the time regarding the forces of macro economic and social change, the Commissioners argued for a post-secondary education system "closely attuned to our economic and social priorities" (UERC, December 1993, p. 9). While post-secondary education was viewed as critical to Manitoba's future success, however, the Report pointed out that universities and colleges must remain mindful of the financial and economic realities that constrain governments. At the same time, it called on "provincial authorities to take the responsibility to indicate the broad social and economic lines of policy that should guide university and college management" (p. 8).

The Commission also recommended that Manitoba dramatically upgrade and expand its community colleges by doubling college enrollment over the next five years and increasing the number of diploma programs, while leaving universities to do more with existing funding. "If there's more money to be spent, the first priority should be community colleges", Roblin said upon the release of the Report (Winnipeg Free Press, January 22, 1994, p. A1).

More controversial, at least for the universities, was the Commission's call for a new governance structure for the post-secondary education system in Manitoba.

The new structure was to be comprised of two elements: first, a new Cabinet Committee on Post-Secondary Education, chaired by the Premier, and second a Council on Post-Secondary Education incorporating both the universities and community college sectors. The Commissioners viewed the formation of a Cabinet Committee on Post-Secondary Education as a way of not only raising the profile and priority of universities and colleges on the public agenda, but also as a means of articulating "a set of economic and social priorities for the post-secondary education system to meet the strategic goals of provincial policy" (p. 62).

The Report also called for the replacement of the UGC with a new Council on Post-Secondary Education, which they envisioned as a "proactive planning, coordinating and mediating link for post-secondary education on a system-wide basis, linking strategic policies of the Cabinet Committee for Post-Secondary Education with institutional and academic development of both the universities and the community colleges" (p. 63). Headed up by a full-time chair of deputy minister rank, it was recommended that the Council be comprised of ten part-time councilors appointed by Cabinet.

Although a single commission responsible for both the universities and community colleges sector had been recommended by Michael Oliver twenty years before, the proposed Cabinet Committee and the Council on Post-Secondary Education were groundbreaking in Canada. No other province at the

time had such a governance model; in most provinces universities and colleges still tended to be governed as separate entities. In explaining the rationale for this bold move, Roblin stressed the Commissioners' feeling that a fundamental reorganization of the province's postsecondary education system was essential if it was to continue to play a crucial role in shaping Manitoba's future economic success. He added that a revamped governance model would also provide a clearer focus on provincial priorities: "When you are a province of a million people and when you have a financial support system that is under strain, then the question of priorities becomes important – to make sure that first things are done first" Roblin was quoted as saying (Winnipeg Free Press, January 22, 1994, p. A1).

While the colleges were thrilled with the recommendations ("I'm extremely pleased that they have recognized the important role that community colleges have to play", Assiniboine Community College president Brenda Cooke told the Winnipeg Free Press) it is safe to say that the universities were less so. The Roblin Report came under fire by the academic community because while it spoke of waste within the higher education sector it offered few details of this alleged waste, and the few specifics that it did provide were described as grossly exaggerated or incorrect and often not applicable beyond the University of Manitoba.

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Of greater import, however, was the proposed governance structure and its potential impact on institutional autonomy and academic freedom. In their presentations before the Commission all three universities had admitted that there were problems with how higher education in Manitoba was currently governed, both in terms of the priority placed on post-secondary education within government as well as how the UGC functioned. Their recommendations, however, called for the creation of a new department of post-secondary education, which would bring together in a single department not only post-secondary issues but also related programs in science, technology and research and development. The University of Winnipeg urged the Commission to continue with a buffer body, but a body which would be "accountable to the government, the public and the universities themselves, and (whose) decisions are made and are seen to be made on an objective basis" (University of Winnipeg, December 1992, p. 24). Brandon University also called for a new intermediary agency to replace the existing Universities Grants Commission; one that would be comprised of "members knowledgeable of university operations and with representation from the universities themselves" (Brandon University, undated, p. 16).

It is safe to say, however, that the new governance structure proposed by the Roblin Commission proved to be somewhat different from that envisioned by the university community. Rather than striking a more balanced relationship, the Commission's recommendations appeared to give government greater control

over the universities, and the power to micromanage their affairs. In a letter to the editor of the Brandon Sun John Blaikie, the President of the Brandon University Faculty Association (BUFA), attacked the Report's calls to create "a set of top-down arrangements" that would give cabinet "direct control over universities". As he stated, under the proposed arrangement greater government control would be achieved at three levels: at the apex would be a powerful cabinet committee responsible for the co-ordination of all forms of post-secondary education; while at the second level would be a new Council on Post-Secondary Education accountable to the Minister of Education and responsible for implementing the will of government. Compliance with cabinet policies and guidelines would be ensured at the third level of the universities themselves, through empowered boards of government appointees. This new structure, he warned, would "transform Manitoba's universities into institutions with little autonomy and an obligation to focus on parochial needs identified by the cabinet committee and the council" (John Blaikie, Brandon Sun, February 14, 1994, p. 4).

While the universities and many academics were critical, the media, for its part, endorsed the Roblin Commission's recommendations. "Roblin Committee Does Good Work" read the headline in the Brandon Sun editorial the day after the public release of the Report. "The Roblin Committee on post-secondary education has provided the provincial government with a useful document that could lead to some positive changes at Manitoba's colleges and universities", it said. "Most Manitobans would applaud the shift toward training that gets people

ready for an increasingly competitive job market …it has become clear that Canadians are not getting sufficient value for their education dollars" (Brandon Sun, January 25, 1994, p. 4).

The Winnipeg Free Press adopted a similar position, noting "Manitoba's universities will have a tough time proving that Duff Roblin is wrong. Mr. Roblin's plan is based on a broad, forward-looking conception of Manitoba's post-secondary education needs. It is politically realistic and fiscally responsible … and would put universities and community colleges on an equal footing, financed and supervised by a new council for post-secondary education operating at arm's length from the government" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 22, 1994, p. A6).

Winnipeg Free Press columnist Arlene Billinkoff provided a further endorsement of the Report, arguing that "it is innovative and reflects a willingness to look at issues without preconceived notions" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 30, 1994, p. A6). She noted that while the terms of reference for the Commission emphasized universities with only passing reference to colleges, its recommendation to in fact strengthen colleges sector was a "recognition of reality – the common sense which Mr. Roblin had promised". She also supported the idea of a Council that would tie all the elements together as a revamped UGC. "It would, it is hoped, lead to better co-ordination within the system". With serious problems in the post-secondary education system, Billinkoff avowed, it is time for a change. "The Roblin report has provided that base. Now the government must build on it".

While the media expressed their support for the Report's findings, however, it also recognized the tendency of the Tories to look at policy issues through a distinct ideological lens, and what this could mean for the system as they attempt to bring universities and colleges more in line with the economic needs of the province. The Winnipeg Free Press warned that a structure like the proposed Council would be needed to justify the government's educational reforms, by backing up any policy decisions it made in the post-secondary area with information and evidence. At the moment, they argued, Education Minister Clayton Manness is "armed only with a set of ideological blinkers. He considers that the universities ... should serve the Conservative's party's theories about the economic development and Manitoba and should not serve wider purposes" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 10, 1995, p. A6). To avoid what they framed as the "torification of education" the newspaper suggested that a Council answering to the premier would provide an independent source of research and advice on post-secondary issues.

A similar line of reasoning was also proposed by the Brandon Sun. In an editorial, they also argued that a Council would provide legitimacy to any proposed changes to the post-secondary education in the province; changes which they proposed could be far-reaching given the ideological "zeal" of the government. In this way, the Council would also provide a useful scapegoat for post-secondary change, and direct attention away from the Filmon cabinet: "Tories, rather than suffer the political heat from making tough decisions on

universities, would prefer to have others (namely the Council) to do their dirty work for them" (Brandon Sun, March 10, 1996, p. B4).

For its part the government warmly welcomed the release of the Roblin Report. Citing its "boldness", the Education Minister said that the Commission's findings should cause all stakeholders to "step back and come to grips" with the situation facing universities and colleges today. "It is time to get on with the work", he said (Winnipeg Free Press, January 30, 1994). While affirming that the government would take some time to study it before making an official response, in its budget presented shortly after the release of the Report the Filmon administration appeared to already have taken the general direction of the recommendations to heart. In the April 20, 1994 budget it was announced that provincial spending on community colleges would increase by 3.3%, while operating grants to universities were to be reduced by 2.7%. University tuition fee increases would be further capped at 5%.

The Premier also announced that a new deputy minister would be appointed for the post-secondary education sector in Manitoba. While a single minister would be responsible for all aspects of education and training in the province, departmental responsibilities were now to be split between two deputy ministers: John Carlyle on the K-S4 side and Paul Goyan on the universities, colleges and labour market training side. While this move ostensibly put colleges and universities on a more equal footing, some viewed it as a step toward reigning in

the universities and bringing a greater degree of political control over them. With the new deputy responsible for the universities sector reporting to the Minister of Education and not to the Premier, as the UGC had previously done, the appointment of Mr. Goyan was interpreted in some quarters as "leaving the grants commission with even less authority than it has recently held" (Winnipeg Free Press, April 28, 1994, p. A6).

In speaking of these changes in the Manitoba legislature some four months after the release of the Roblin Report, Education Minister Clayton Manness touched on the central themes that permeated his government's decisions regarding post-secondary education: globalization and the overriding significance of the Conservatives' economic agenda; New Public Management; a relatively negative view of universities and a distrust of educators to implement change on their own, and the need for greater government control and direction over higher education. In defending his government's actions against opposition attacks regarding the Conservatives' "market-driven ideology" towards the province's educational institutions, he argued that a substantial mind shift was needed within universities, institutions "to which we provide all of this academic freedom. What academic freedom has given us, however, is just more and more resources being funneled into universities and their failure to come to grips with their own problems" (Hansard, May 9, 1994, p. 1312). As he commented, "we need a mind shift at universities that recognizes how they have a crucial, critical role to play to

refocus and support the economy and economic growth" (Hansard, May 25, 1994, p. 2334).

Manness added that the challenge would be whether or not the universities were prepared to assume their leadership role in the government's economic agenda and initiate meaningful reform on their own. If they weren't, he warned, government was prepared to enforce compliance, as ultimately it is responsible to taxpayers. As he affirmed, "it is so easy for governments to move in and provide solutions which, of course, everybody can attack. It is not that I personally do not know where I want to go. I know exactly where I would like to see universities go. That is not the issue. The issue is because of the magnitude of the institutions and the history of the institution, and the academic freedom enjoyed by the institution, the government is going to very, very carefully and sensitively move along in a process" (Hansard, May 25, 1994, p. 2330).

The Minister added, "I am hoping that universities will be the first to try and come around that question (of their role in the advancing the government's economic agenda), but, indeed, if they cannot, then obviously the government is going to have to make those decisions" (p. 2328). The government, he said, was willing to assert its influence through the "autonomous" governing boards at the universities and colleges. "The fact is", he affirmed, "we sit down with the boards through our staff and say, look at, this is where the government is focused with respect to the Framework for Economic Growth. This is where the action is going

to be and of course that is reinforced by input from the community at large outside of government" (Hansard, May 30, 1994, p. 2610).

In our interview Mr. Manness spoke of how pleased, and relieved, he and the premier were with the Roblin Report. "It reflected so much of our own thinking", he said, about where the post-secondary system needed to go. He recalled the day when Duff Roblin came in to meet with him and the premier to discuss the Report before its public release. "I go back to Premier Roblin in a very businesslike way, telling Gary Filmon this is what we found, and this is why. And that took a meeting of an hour and a half and he covered the whole report. And we didn't even hardly comment because we were so much in agreement with the general direction (of the Report)" (p. 8).

The Manness Challenge

In what was to become referred to as the "Manness Challenge", the Filmon government released its official response to the Report of the Roblin Commission in June 1994. The minister praised the work of the Commission, and stated that its report "provides a timely policy framework for post-secondary education" (Government of Manitoba, June 1994, p. 1) In framing this response Education and Training Minister Clayton Manness pointed to globalization and the changing national international economy as the impetus for change in post-secondary education. The challenge to Manitoba's universities in light of this macro change, he stressed, is to "change the way they do business". As he declared, "to meet

the fiscal challenge and simultaneously respond to the demands of the community will require nothing short of re-engineering and redesigning the education enterprise so that universities and community colleges can improve their contribution to the social, cultural and economic development of the province" (Ministerial Statement, June 24 1994, p. 1).

In order to achieve this change Manness issued a series of challenges to the universities to find ways to reinvent themselves, within the framework provided by government. In particular, universities were instructed to inform government how they planned to rationalize their operations; establish program priorities for their respective institutions and identify potential centres of specialization; revamp their management structures; invest in new learning and technology processes; and develop plans to share resources with other post-secondary institutions. Throughout this re-engineering process, Manness instructed all components of the universities to focus on his government's priorities as outlined in the *Framework for Economic Growth*. As he commented to the press, "we're saying, I don't care who you are in Manitoba, what institution you are, you cannot divorce yourself from the *Framework* statement. Take it seriously. Recognize it's a leadership statement and decide whether or not you buy into it or reject it; have the courage to say so" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 7, 1995, p. A15).

The end result of this process, the Minister added, should be institutions that are smaller, stronger, more efficient, and more reflective of the economic and social

activities of the province. While government would be prepared to force change themselves if necessary, the Minister affirmed that he first wanted to give institutions the chance to redesign themselves. "We still believe that structural changes have to occur within our institutions", he noted. "Government just can't come up with solutions and impose them. The solutions pretty well had better be found from within" (Winnipeg Free Press, June 30, 1994, p. B2). While the Minister admitted that he didn't expect universities to come up with all the answers themselves, he nonetheless expected them to submit clear goals on how they planned to meet government's challenges within six months.

In its response to the UERC report the government also endorsed the idea of a new governance model in the form of a Council on Post-Secondary Education. As the Minister publicly stated, "government is of the view that the creation of a Council on Post-Secondary Education is important for the long-term integration of the post-secondary system ... (we) will therefore consider this matter over the course of this year as a post-secondary education strategy evolves". However, the Minister warned, "the establishment of a Council will only be meaningful once institutions have demonstrated their willingness to embrace necessary change" (Government of Manitoba, June 1994, p. 4).

The reasoning behind the Manness Challenge, Clayton Manness affirmed to me, was that the government wanted to at least give the universities a clear opportunity to reform themselves first; to "step up to the plate and realize that we

were serious". However, he added that didn't believe universities were serious about reform, and that at the end of the day, the government was prepared to force through change if necessary. "We knew that we were going make this a big issue, we were going to take some big steps and we knew what we wanted to do generally, generally speaking. That we really wanted to challenge the forces that be, the traditional so-called strong partners and that was the only way to convince people that we were serious about educational reform" (p. 3).

The Minister's warnings at the time, however, appeared to fall on deaf ears. None of the universities met the requirements of the Manness Challenge within the six month deadline. When asked to comment on their lack of response to his instructions, the Minister charged that the universities are "out of touch and irrelevant to most of their communities". And that, he suggested, beyond the question of money is why they must undergo fundamental change. "I question whether or not our university community is totally in synch with the daily lives of a lot of Manitobans. There's obviously a belief from my office that there's not a strong understanding of the economy of Manitoba, a strong understanding of the engines of growth which are so essential to the social fabric and a strong understanding of how they interrelate" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 7, 1995, p. A15).

Manness also disregarded the institutions' claims that they had transformed as much as they could in the absence of any new funding. He argued that the

reform efforts initiated by the three universities to date have been ineffective, producing little change and meager savings. "I think in the mindset of the universities they have tried to find savings", he said. "But the reality is, today in the world, that large corporations, governments and many other non-government agencies have had to go through radical structural changes. I honestly don't believe our university institutions have gone through those significant structural changes" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 7, 1995, p. A1).

The Minister further noted that he was prepared to see university programs, departments and even whole faculties close if they are unable to demonstrate a practical link to Manitoba and its current economic realities. "I can't define the changes totally", he noted. "But there will be changes, and I think they're going to call upon some structural changes" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 7, 1995, p. A15). Manitoba's universities will not get a second chance, he added. "The directive and challenges I put out to the universities are very strong. You couldn't miss the message. Nobody could miss the message" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 7, 1995, p. A1).

Some critics argued that the Manness Challenge was based upon faulty assumptions about higher education and was merely "political dogma" in response to a financial crisis. "I'm afraid that a lot of what you're hearing from Manness is simply – maybe genuinely felt but simply the repetition of old criticism in a neo-conservative framework" alleged Tim Sale, a former senior Education

Department official under the previous NDP government and a former NDP candidate. "Funding post-secondary education has fallen out of favor in the political cycle of what's in favor and what isn't" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 7, 1995, p. A15). For her part Joyce Lorimer, president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), argued that "for the province (of Manitoba) to say you must rationalize, I think the province must first have to prove there is waste and there is something to rationalize" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 12, 1995, p. B2).

The government's resolve to forge ahead with its reform process despite its critics was evident during the fall 1995 faculty strike at the University of Manitoba. During this strike, the first of its kind at the University, Premier Gary Filmon and the new Minister of Education and Training, Linda McIntosh, set aside the protocol of strict neutrality in a labour dispute. Instead, they publicly attacked the striking professors, dismissing their concerns about the loss of academic freedom. They further claimed that the professors were overpaid and had no regard for the students who had put out their money (quoted by Frances Russell in the Winnipeg Free Press, March 10, 1997, p. A6).

In December 1995 the government struck an eight-member Interim Transition Committee (ITC) to lay the groundwork for the proposed Council on Post-Secondary Education. Selected to chair the Committee was Jeff Johnson, a fundraiser for the Progressive Conservative party and a prominent member of

Winnipeg's business community. Criticized as yet another attempt to buy time in the hopes of getting the public to buy in to their economic agenda for higher education, NDP education critic dismissed the ITC as yet another "hand-picked Tory committee that's going to give them advice after two years on another hand-picked Tory committee" (Winnipeg Free Press, December 5, 1995, p. A7).

The primary function of the ITC was to decide upon the nature of the proposed council and to draft its enabling legislation. As Mr. Johnson described it to me, "we saw our function in the ITC as being a bridge to the Council" (p. 5). In reality, however, the ITC was a means of distancing the Minister and cabinet from what was shaping up to be a battle with the university establishment. The government knew that they were in for a fight, and while they were committed to making changes, were obviously looking for ways to minimize as much political damage as possible. By putting the responsibility into the hands of a technically arms-length body (whose members of course were all politically appointed), it was hoped that this would be achieved. "We've drawn our line in the sand", I recall the assistant to the Minister of Education and Training saying to me when the ITC was struck. "And even though we're not sure where it's all going to end up, we're prepared to take it as far as we have to. We really have no other choice".

In the course of deciding what Manitoba's new Council should look like, the ITC carefully considered what was occurring in other jurisdictions, namely Britain, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Alberta, and the United States. In addition to these reports

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I was also directed to provide the ITC with research papers on selected themes within the scholarly literature on higher education; in particular, the discourses surrounding such issues as accountability, governance, and internal management. As Jeff Johnson said to me in our interview, the ITC took seriously its responsibility to provide direction for the province's universities and community colleges system. The feeling of the ITC was "lets make it fairly broad based. If we're going to do this, let's do it right and look at what's going on elsewhere" (p. 4). He further added that the ITC was not above borrowing ideas from other places if they looked like they would be "a good fit for what we wanted to achieve in Manitoba". In addition to this review the ITC invited certain select groups, such as the university and college presidents and student associations, to present their views on what the proposed new governance structure should look like.

Despite these undertakings and the fact that the ITC was an apparently arms-length body, there were definite limits of how far it could go in rendering its advice. As Jeff Johnson admitted to me, the ITC took its policy direction from the Roblin Report and the government's response to it. "All of the suggestions and recommendations were already there", he stated, "we just needed to build on them a bit" (p. 4). Indeed, the first documents I was handed when I started my position as policy analyst was the Filmon government's *Framework for Economic Growth* and the Roblin Report.

The culmination of the ITC's efforts was Bill 32, the Council on Post-Secondary Act. When Bill 32 was subsequently introduced into the House on June 4, 1996, it was hailed by the government as the first of its kind in Canada. The new structure enshrined in the Bill will "help us gain a better sense of our post-secondary education priorities as a community", affirmed Linda McIntosh, the Minister of Education and Training. A new governance model, she added, will help government better deal with the wider picture of post-secondary education, "particularly as the university spends money, to delve into how it spends money, and is it spending money in ways that make the best utilization of offerings for students" (Hansard, June 19, 1996, p. 1937).

As outlined in Bill 32, the purpose of the Council was to achieve greater coordination, articulation and planning in the post-secondary education sector "by bringing universities and community colleges together under a single body, thereby bringing a system perspective to post-secondary education in the province". Included in the main functions of the Council were such things as the development of a strategic plan for the system; the allocation of operating and capital resources to the province's seven colleges and universities; a program approval process; the development of an accountability framework; the creation of a new tuition fee policy; and the implementation of a new credit transfer system. And while she admitted that the Council represented "a significant administrative change" for the province's post-secondary system, the Minister

assured that the universities would still retain their institutional autonomy through their respective boards of governors (Winnipeg Free Press, June 5, 1996, p. A5).

The introduction of Bill 32 in the Manitoba Legislature was met with general public support. "Education Minister Linda McIntosh has already taken the first step toward improved management of Manitoba's universities and colleges by announcing a Council on Post-Secondary Education", read an editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press (Winnipeg Free Press, June 5, 1996, p. A10). In a follow-up story, the newspaper called reform of the post-secondary education system in the province "urgent"; declaring "Education Minister Linda McIntosh should keep control of her new Council on Post-Secondary Education firmly in the hands of the elected provincial government that collects the taxes and pays for the universities" (Winnipeg Free Press, October 24, 1996, p. A12). The article continued, "the new Council may make bad decisions, but at least those decisions will be made by a publicly accountable authority and will be subject to public debate ... this will be a marked improvement on the present system, which gives the public no chance to judge the decisions or evaluate the results".

Most student groups, with the exception of the Canadian Federation of Students, also supported the legislation as a way of making universities more learner-centered. For example, Arlan Gates, past president of the University of Winnipeg Students Union, welcomed the bringing together of colleges and universities, but said if there is one criticism of the legislation to be made, it is that "it focuses

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much more on regulation than on direction" (Winnipeg Free Press, June 5, 1996, p. A10).

It was an altogether different situation for the bulk of university professors and administrators, however. While they might have agreed that change in higher education was needed, most took issue with both the content of Bill 32 and the process by which it was drafted, with what they felt was insufficient input from the academic community. They viewed Bill 32 as an attack on their independence and a threat to the value of university degrees, since colleges and universities would now be under the same administrative umbrella. In the eyes of one University of Winnipeg professor, Jim Clark, the proposed legislation represented nothing more than a blatant power grab from an administration openly hostile to universities. He also saw the intended legislation as exceeding what the Roblin Commission heard during its community hearings and subsequently recommended in its final report. "The Roblin Report did not recommend anything as intrusive as the council proposed by the Conservative government", he suggested (Winnipeg Free Press, October 19, 1996, p. A13).

For their part the Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations (MOFA) strongly condemned Bill 32 on the grounds that it would give Manitoba's Minister of Education more power than any other Canadian education minister "to decide what is taught at our universities and colleges, what kind of research is done, and how these are structured" (Winnipeg Free Press, September 19, 1996, p. A13).

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With this proposed creation of a "czar of post-secondary education", MOFA president Robert Chernomas maintained that the government of Manitoba "through its Roblin Commission, the premier and successive ministers of education – has made clear its vision of what the university system in Manitoba ought to be; namely, one in which the only good education is one that serves the employment needs of local business as these needs exist at present, and as the government predicts the market will develop in the future". He added that in MOFA's estimation, Bill 32 would give the Minister the power to micromanage the funding of Manitoba's universities and the power to dictate internal policy-making, with the Council having little independence from the Minister. "The government can dictate (the Council's) priorities and ignore its recommendations should these conflict with the government's priorities". At the same time, he alleged that under Bill 32 the government would be capable of closing undergraduate and graduate programs and laying off faculty members. "This is the sort of power that is unprecedented in Canada".

For University of Winnipeg Faculty Association (UWFA) president Alden Turner, "the most disturbing part is it makes universities instruments of government policy, and centralizes authority over education in the hands of government" (Winnipeg Free Press, October 22, 1996, p. A5). Calling it "draconian legislation", he maintained that under Bill 32 the current powers and responsibilities of senates, boards and administrators would be reduced or eliminated, with the Council having unprecedented authority to intervene in university academic

affairs. University of Manitoba president Emoke Szathmary agreed that the legislation would tip the balance of power firmly on the political side, arguing that it would take "policymaking out of the hands of the board of governors, and give it to the Minister of Education" (Winnipeg Free Press, October 22, 1996, p. A5).

Indeed, Bill 32 proved to be very controversial not only in Manitoba, but across the country. On the front page the Brandon Sun reported that "professors across Canada are watching nervously as the Filmon government moves to take control of Manitoba campuses" (October 18, 1996, p. 1). Carefully monitoring the public hearings that were held on the legislation and the degree of concern expressed by the academic community at large, Bill Bruneau, president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) made the point that "what happens in Manitoba affects all of Canada". He added that the under the proposed legislation the Manitoba Minister of Education "would have a level of direct control over the affairs of universities, which is completely unparalleled in the 20th century of Canada. It is a remarkable power grab, the like of which we've not seen since about 1895" (Brandon Sun, October 18, 1996, p. 1).

Not surprisingly, the opposition in the Manitoba Legislature also voiced their criticisms of Bill 32. This government "consults with industry and business but dictates to teachers and academics" argued NDP MLA Diane McGifford (Hansard, October 15, 1996, p. 4209). Added Education critic Jean Friesen, Bill 32 is reflective of the "radical right agenda" of the Filmon government and an

attempt to politicize universities. "Through the Council, the government will alter the position of universities and (create) an education system which is far more directive or dirigiste and which puts Manitoba's universities in an anomalous position" (Hansard, October 10, 1996, p. 4209). She predicted that the centralization of power in the hands of the Minister of Education and Treasury Board, not to mention a Council solely appointed by cabinet, would open the door to the political micromanagement of institutions and intrusion into the internal affairs of colleges and universities (Hansard, October 15, 1996, p. 4162).

In her attack on Bill 32 the NDP Education critic also noted parallels between the approach of the Filmon Tories and the United States under the Republicans and Britain under Margaret Thatcher. As she commented, "in 1988 the Thatcher government put through a series of changes to education, ones which were very similar to the ones which the government is insisting upon now in many areas of education" (Hansard, November 7, 1996, p. 4892).

For Ms. Friesen, the government's attempts to bring greater political control over universities and community colleges was not restricted to post-secondary education, but in fact represented their approach to public policy in general. In particular, she drew a comparison between the government-appointed Roblin Commission and the ITC and the parallel changes which the Minister of Health Don Orchard was implementing at the time in the healthcare field. Bill 49, the Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act, which the

Filmon government passed in the mid-1990s brought in a fundamentally new administrative structure in the delivery of healthcare in the province. While ostensibly a way of making the healthcare system in Manitoba more community-based, many saw this move as a way of exerting greater political control over hospitals. And, given that these regional health boards were appointed by cabinet, this criticism wasn't such a great leap[7].

For Ms. Friesen, these changes in both education and healthcare constituted more than just coincidence. Rather, what was happening in these policy areas "suggests that the extension of the powers of centralization, of decision making by unelected people appointed by the cabinet and accountable only to a governing party is a conscious political direction of this government:" (Hansard, October 15, 1996, p. 4164). And she was not too far off the mark in this assessment. In earlier statements to the Legislature on the Roblin Commission Conservative MLA Harry Enns commented on how it continued the model provided by the Minister of Health (Don Orchard), who "brought together a very unique team of experts that are guiding him and guiding this province in the very health reforms that are so necessary" (Hansard, December 14, 1992, p. 536).

Jeff Johnson, chair of the ITC, anticipated many of the criticisms to Bill 32. Reiterating the general assessment of the Filmon caucus, Johnson's view was that the academic community was not interested in implementing meaningful

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[7] In our interview the Senior Political Advisor referenced the government's decision to implement the Regional Health Authorities as a way of "busting up the ivory towers that was the Department of Health" (p. 11).

reform on its own. "Their position was give us more money but you have no right to tell us how to run our school" (p. 5). For him, the whole process of decision-making within the university rendered internal change virtually impossible to achieve. "Universities could never cancel a program, you'd never get it through Senate", he said. Hence "institutions weren't capable of making change. It would never happen" (p. 5). He also dismissed the criticism that in drafting the legislation the ITC only met with groups that reinforced what the government wanted to hear. "We did get a fair bit of input and wide representation from the community", he said to me. "We feel that we did a good amount of consultation" (p. 8).

The Council Comes to Life

In total, the legislative committee reviewing Bill 32 heard from over two dozen presenters. The government, buckling somewhat under pressure from the academic community, brought in two sets of amendments to the original legislation as an attempt to appease its critics. And while these amendments did not necessarily weaken the intent of the bill, they did involve wording changes designed to dispel the perception of the government dictating to the universities and overtly intruding on their autonomy. For example, reference to the Council operating within "the framework of government policy" was struck in the final legislation; and the term "intermediary" was added to render the Council more arms-length than it had been perceived to be.

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A more controversial change was the clause in the Bill that gave the Council the power to cancel university programs. While this clause was also in the old UGC Act, the UGC had never exercised this power. The inclusion of this clause in Bill 32 was seen as critical to several of the key decision-makers, notably Linda McIntosh, Leo LeTourneau and Jeff Johnson, in order to rationalize the universities. As LeTourneau told me, "we wanted it (the clause) there because it was the only hammer we could have". He recalled informing the Deputy Minister of Education at the time that "If we really want to go the way you want, you know the way government wants us to go in terms of priorities and so on, if we don't have the ability to cancel programs how are we going to ask the universities" (p. 16). For Jeff Johnson, "our assumption was that it was going to be a strong Council. If so, then you had to do it right by giving it the powers it needed, otherwise how do you ensure that you don't have a duplication of programs and truly achieve the things government wanted to achieve". He added, "when you looked at university governance, the universities would never get rid of a program on its own" (p. 8).

Other actors involved in the process, however, notably the premier's chief of staff at the time as well as the Secretary of Treasury Board, were leery of the negative fallout from the universities and the faculty associations as a result of this clause. They instead wanted the Council to use its funding powers to bring about system rationalization; which, as Mr. LeTourneau recalled strenuously arguing, was a moot point. "They said you can do it by funding. But we never funded on a

program basis. I said okay so you remove the value of the program, lets say a program costs a half of a million dollars to run, you're going to pull out half a million dollars, well they're going to take it elsewhere in order to support the program" (p. 16).

Despite the validity of this point, at the end of the day the government was not prepared to go as far as it might have in taking on the universities. As LeTourneau recalled, "one day we get the final draft and its out (the clause allowing the Council to cancel programs), and they pulled it out. So we knew who was making the big decisions, right" (p. 16). Jeff Johnson also reiterated to me that while he was frustrated when the clause was pulled out without his prior knowledge, he wasn't totally surprised when it happened. Despite the fact that it was charged with the responsibility of drafting the legislation, "at the end of the day the legislation was a political document and we weren't a political committee. We were there to do a job; to give a business focus rather than a political one" (p. 10). As I recall one Progressive Conservative member of the legislative committee hearing Bill 32 saying to me at the time, "we had our chance to really do something but we blinked".

The new Council on Post-Secondary Education was ultimately unveiled on February 28, 1997. Under the chairmanship of Richard Dawson, a former vice-president of Cargill Ltd, the Council was comprised of eleven members selected by cabinet to represent the "community at large". Most councilors were from legal

or business backgrounds; devoid of any academic representation, NDP education critic Jean Friesen once again condemned the new board as being "heavy on business and light education" (Winnipeg Free Press, March 6, 1997, p. A1). The Minister responded by maintaining that the government deliberately stayed away from people currently involved with the postsecondary system who could be accused of favouring one institution over another. Noting that the same model of appointments had also been used for the former Universities Grants Commission, she added that the "Council's purpose is to promote cooperation between colleges and universities for the benefit of students and taxpayers" (Winnipeg Free Press, March 6, 1997, p. A2). New chair Dick Dawson added in a radio interview that the purpose of the Council was to bring a more "business-like approach" to post-secondary education and for it to be "customer oriented". "We serve taxpayers and students" he said, then catching himself, he amended "rather, I should say, we serve students and taxpayers" (reported in the Winnipeg Free Press, March 10, 1997, P. A6).

Critics of the new Council dismissed it as a form of social engineering for the province's higher education system. Frances Russell, columnist with the Winnipeg Free Press, commented upon an interview Premier Filmon had recently done with World Link, the magazine of the World Economic Forum. In the interview the Premier argued that universities are not producing the right kind of graduates for the new economy. She quoted the author of the article as saying "he (the Premier) has moved to centralize control over universities and

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community colleges to influence spending priorities. In this he has the support of many business leaders, some of whom speak with undisguised contempt at the failure of universities to change with the times to produce business-oriented graduates" (quoted by Frances Russell, Winnipeg Free Press, March 10, 1997, p. A6). The article goes on to quote Great West Life Assurance Co. Ray McFeetors as saying "you should clean them (the universities) out. You couldn't run a business like that".

With regard to the question of why a Council on Post-Secondary Education instead of other alternatives, all of the participants confirmed that other policy options had indeed been considered by the central decision-makers. As Len Derkach commented, "there were other ideas that were talked around" (p. 10). Indeed, I myself remember preparing several research studies for the Minister of Education and Training and the Interim Transition Committee on different models that had been adopted in other jurisdictions vis-à-vis their post-secondary systems. Some of these options included bringing universities and colleges directly under the control of a single government ministry; creating an intermediary agency with advisory powers only; as well as dividing the Ministry of Education and Training into two departments; one for the public schools side and one for post-secondary education.

In addition to these policy options Leo LeTourneau referenced other ideas that were also talked about. Some of these included the idea of amalgamating the

universities into one central institution with several campuses (which had actually been the situation in Manitoba prior to 1967), as well as the cutting of certain university programs and schools that were seen as duplicative, too costly or not in keeping with the government's economic priorities. "I remember a lot of debates in cabinet about how far you had to push and a lot of good right wingers just wanted to take all the power away from the academics and dictate to them" added the Senior Political Advisor (p. 10-11).

In the final analysis, however, the decision to maintain an arms-length intermediary agency was seen as the best way to push government's agenda without having to take the university establishment directly head on. And while it was the Interim Transition Committee that was formally charged with devising the new governance structure, this decision clearly had the stamp of the major decision-makers in the post-secondary area. Mr. LeTourneau confirmed that the chair of the ITC, Jeff Johnson, was "very close to the Premier" and was regularly meeting with him and key members of the Premier's personal staff. Hence "we always had a fence up, the limits of where we could go with this" (p. 8).

In discussing the different options, Clayton Manness confirmed that while the Filmon government did appoint a separate deputy minister to oversee post-secondary education, the creation of a whole separate ministry was seen as too costly and politically explosive for an administration intent on reducing the size of government. At the same time, they felt that if they abandoned the buffer agency

idea altogether this would lead to an open war with the academic community. "We knew that we could not open that front up and possibly win that" (p. 6) affirmed Manness. He stated that the decision was also made early on to keep education under the direction of the Economic Development Board of Cabinet, rather than replace it with a separate Cabinet Committee on Post-Secondary Education as the Roblin Report had suggested. The reasoning for this, Manness articulated to me, was "so that the link between education and the government's economic priorities" would be maintained.

The province's long history of the Universities Grants Commission rendered the idea of a buffer agency, in Jim Downey's words, as "just making sense" and a "whole lot more comfortable politically" (p. 3). The fact that it was Duff Roblin who had created the first Universities Grants Commission in Manitoba obviously made it a more appealing option to many of those within cabinet. As the Senior Political Advisor described it, "we were just modernizing a good idea" (p. 5). And, as Leo LeTourneau explained, while the government wanted greater control after all was said and done they did not want to have a hands-on relationship with the universities. "I think people were generally uncomfortable with a direct relationship of government and university. It had never been done in Manitoba since the creation of the UGC (in 1967)".

For Jim Downey, the existence of a Council making decisions in the post-secondary area would make these decisions more palpable for the institutions

and the public, by helping "to massage and deliver the policies that the governing is wanting to deliver". As he explained, the Council was seen as the most feasible way of directing universities and colleges along the lines of government policies without direct political involvement:

> While that was there too, if you get a council which is made up of different people in the community who have different kinds of objectives, not purely political, not purely educational, but bring a more rounded and more balance from the community, to help give that direction, then I think it would seem as better reflecting what government wanted, what society wanted, and was able to help direct the higher levels of education in a direction that was compatible with government. When you're in government and you make a particular decision and you go a particular direction, you want to make sure you've tested the water and you've got as much public support as you can (p. 1).

At the same time, Mr. Downey added, the existence of a Council would help appease those members of caucus who might have problems with either the pace or direction of educational reform (which as we shall see later was the case with Len Derkach). "If a minister would go to cabinet and say, look this has been vetted by the Council, it is supported by the Council who has the mandate to make sure the universities are performing properly, it makes your cabinet colleagues and your caucus colleagues feel a whole lot more comfortable politically. You've done your homework" (p. 2-3).

However, what the government did not want was another Universities Grants Commission with little clout or political will to effect real change. "It (the UGC) needed a broader mandate to fulfill the wishes of government and the direction that we wanted to go" (Jim Downey, p. 3). In Leo LeTourneau's view,

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government's basic intent was to take over the decision-making in the post-secondary field from the UGC. "They wanted to be able to make decisions, and didn't have much confidence that the UGC would be responding necessarily to their priorities. I think there may have been some lack of trust between the UGC and government" (p. 9). While it was felt that the UGC had served its time, the decision was then to go with a beefed up intermediary agency, responsible for the entire post-secondary system, but under direction of government. As LeTourneau told me, "what they (the government) wanted is when they said something they wanted to get it done. So you tried to arrange it so that it was done" (p. 10). One of the ways that this would be achieved would be through a more direct connection between the chair of the Council and the Minister of Education and Training. "I also ensured that the chair of the Council had his relationship with the Minister and that they could sit together by themselves, and talk about priorities, so that the priorities of government got reflected in a direct way to the Council" (p. 11).

Clayton Manness stressed that despite the watering down of the Council's original Act, the government was not prepared to abandon its reform agenda in the face of open hostility from the academic community. While it knew it was going to take some heat for creating a Council that was more under the control of government, he affirmed that the Filmon administration was not willing to back down on this point. The Council "didn't have the blessing of the so-called

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stakeholders (but) I didn't care. I said we'll never get it. So either we believe

we're doing the right thing or we don't" (p. 10).

Leo LeTourneau added that the idea of a Council was also appealing because it

would deflect some criticisms off of government for controversial actions

undertaken in the post-secondary area. As he commented,

> I think there was a sense of tradition that had been established by
> the Universities Grants Commission, that it was a buffer. I think
> politicians respected that. And perhaps the politicians still liked the
> idea of a buffer, and they could use this to their advantage. Like if
> you have a buffer you create an environment in which the
> government could say well if there is a problem we'll just refer it to
> the Council, and the Council will come up with recommendations
> and so on. Knowing full well that Council was always talking to
> government, right. And I think it was a kind of political cultural kind
> of thing. That we had one form and it was simply extended to
> include the colleges. But we'll give it new powers, we'll give it a new
> act, and get perhaps different representation around the table and
> see what we can do with that. Perhaps we could get our agenda
> handled through that process (p. 8).

Mr. Manness also attested to the fact that the Council could be a means of

deflecting attention while still ensuring that the government's agenda was

implemented. "People were complaining that the didn't think it (the UGC) was an

arms length so we felt in this one area lets give some arms length responsibility

to a group, give them a few more powers and let them take the heat for splitting

up the pie. There was nothing too altruistic beyond that, believe me" (p. 6).

In our interview the Senior Political Advisor spoke of the fact that the premier

himself strongly endorsed the idea of maintaining a buffer agency for the

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province's universities system, albeit one that would conform better with the wishes of his government. "Especially from the premier's office, from the premier himself, there was always a belief that you had to have a place to be able to reflect on these things or to be able to deal with these things from a deeper context then no, I don't think that we should build a building there or we shouldn't spend more on four more professors. Those kinds of detailed decisions shouldn't be made by politicians" (p. 1). When I asked him about why Manitoba didn't just decide to bring universities and colleges directly under the control of government as Alberta had done, if there was a political fear from being too directive of the universities sector, the advisor replied,

> I think not quite a political fear but a political sensitivity that you couldn't push people away with a decision like that. I think some of those education establishment guys that were sitting around the big table (cabinet) could take this (creating the Council) but couldn't take bringing their friends in for a strap in front of the class so to speak. And our boss, he wasn't scared of a fight if he had to have one, but he was more of a consensus kind of person. If it took a year longer but we could come to it without confrontation that was the way to do it (p. 2).

C. The Politics Stream

While there was a policy option available that rendered the placement of the post-secondary issue on the government's agenda more likely, namely a beefed up Council on Post-Secondary Education, the political environment needed to be ripe for this to happen. Flowing along independently of the problems and policies stream in Kingdon's model is the political stream. Comprised of such factors as election results, changes of administration, the national mood, the ideology and

values of key decision-makers, and interest group pressure campaigns, "the political stream is an important inhibitor or promoter of high agenda status" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 163). Important policy actors in the system make a judgment on whether or not the balance of forces in the political stream favors action on certain issues, or whether they need to be shelved until a more propitious time.

The interview data confirms the importance of the political stream in our case study. While the post-secondary education issue had, in Len Derkach's words, "been growing for some time", certain things had to happen before the government was willing to place on its agenda for action. Notable amongst these factors was the Filmon government's majority win in 1990. As each of the participants stressed, while the general direction that the Progressive Conservatives wanted to go in viz. the education system was already clear by the time they formed government in 1988, the majority win in 1990 gave them the electoral cachet they needed to proceed in a substantive way.

In speaking of the importance of timing, Len Derkach described how the two years the Filmon Tories spent as a minority government from 1988 to 1990 gave them the time they felt they needed to soften up the public and the educational establishment for the structural changes that were to come. "We started to embark on a program (of post-secondary reform) in 1988 where you couldn't do everything at once. We had to start at some point. And the first point we had to start at was to reorganize the whole structure of post-secondary education" (p.

2). They also realized, however, that "while we somehow had to start down that road", they could not rush too quickly into reforms that the stakeholders were not ready for, and that could potentially cost them electoral support. Hence, Derkach explained, they opted to proceed slowly on their plans for reform, with each step in the change process serving as a springboard into more fundamental, and controversial, changes.

With the balance of forces in the Manitoba Legislature tipped in the Conservatives' favour after 1990, the Tories had a window of opportunity in which to act. When asked if they needed a majority government in 1990 to place post-secondary education on the government agenda, Mr. Derkach responded, "absolutely. Absolutely". He spoke of how the Filmon government was being closely watched from 1988 to 1990. "I'll never forget the first two years of government when I was Minister of Education", he said:

> We had to be so careful in how we addressed issues because the opposition parties, especially the NDP, did not want to see changes made to the structures that they had established in the education field. So they were extremely negative about that. But we massaged it slowly, and we knew that you couldn't move on anything very quickly. So we embarked on some reports, and some reviews to assist us and to give us, if you like, the credence, or the reason why we should be moving in a different direction (p. 8).

While a majority win was necessary to move in a big way on the educational front, the changing public mood during this time also provided a window of opportunity to act. Concerns with globalization, the economy, and the ideas of New Public Management that were gaining popularity across North America and

Canada proved to be a natural fit for the Filmon government's neoconservative agenda. As the Senior Political Advisor explained, while they had already decided to "take on" the universities early in their first mandate, before 1990 the education issue wasn't "ripe" yet; they needed time to bring it to the forefront and successfully sell the need for change to the public. He added that in the meantime, while the idea of educational reform was still pursued during the first two years of their administration, it was done so on a lower level. "A good government has policy in every area", he informed me. "Which ones you choose to profile first are the ones that you can win on at any given time. This doesn't mean, however, that you don't have other issues waiting in the wings for the right time".

After 1990, the Filmon government was in a different position than it had been two years previously. Not only was the public mood beginning to shift, as reflective in the ability of the Conservatives to win a majority of seats in the Manitoba Legislature, but the premier's own personal popularity was also on the upswing. The Senior Political Advisor spoke of how they managed to overcome the premier's previous image as "Flip Flop Filmon" in 1990 with Manitoba's stand against the Meech Lake Accord. "We'd gone through Meech Lake with the whole world looking at us as the tough guy that took on Brian Mulroney and the whole federal government. That very act reinforced our message that Gary Filmon was a leader" (p. 7). He stressed that in order to implement some of their ideas the government needed such an issue in 1990 where the premier "could take

somebody on and become a leader". "Had we not had Meech Lake we needed a jobs issue, another issue like that ... but Meech Lake fell into our hands and away we went". Before then, the Senior Political Advisor added, the government didn't perceive that it had enough legitimacy to be able to convince voters of the "problems" in post-secondary education and hence the need for change. "The issues in education touched 75% of the population, so you had to do them right. After 1990, we were seen as the best (party) to handle the issues in education". As he summed it up, "the political stars lined up" (p. 9).

In addition to the degree of Legislative support a government has, Kingdon also stresses the ideology, personal values and commitment of key policy actors to getting issues onto the agenda. And this certainly seemed to be a significant factor in the Manitoba case. While the Roblin Commission was publicly painted as a means to get the community's input on where the province's universities should go, in fact several of the key decision-makers already had a pretty clear sense of what it wanted to do, at least in a general way. At the same time, they also felt strongly about education and had a personal commitment to this particular area of public policy.

Several of the participants I interviewed spoke of the strong feelings that people like Clayton Manness, Gary Filmon and Taras Sokolyk, the premier's chief of staff from 1990 to 1995, had on the issue of education. During our interview Mr. Manness spoke at length of his own deeply-held views on education and the fact

that both he and Filmon had served as education critics while in opposition; Manness for three years during the time of the Pawley government in the mid-1980s and Filmon during the first two years under the previous leadership of Sterling Lyon. Coming out of opposition, he said, both he and Filmon harbored some specific beliefs about what needed to be done in education, and the "big changes" that they wanted to see happen. "We knew we were going to make this (education) a big issue", Mr. Manness said; "we were going to take some big steps and we knew what we wanted to do generally, generally speaking. That we really wanted to challenge the forces that be, the traditional so-called strong partners and that that was the only way to convince people that we were serious about educational reform" (p. 3).

Manness added that he always had strong opinions on education; that it had long been a personal passion of his. "Even though Finance portfolios were what I was given, I can say that I still had a lot to say on education, and the Premier had a lot to say on education". In addition to his and the Premier's personal connection to education he also referenced how Taras Sokolyk, the principal advisor to the Filmon cabinet, drove the issue as well. "Taras had his own passion for some of the (education) reforms he thought we needed" (p. 3).

When I asked the Senior Political Advisor who some of the main players were in the decision to act on post-secondary education, he reiterated that both Filmon and Manness were instrumental in not only putting the issue on the agenda, but

in getting their particular positions accepted in cabinet. Filmon was key, he said, but equally so was Manness, both as Minister of Finance and later as Education Minister. "Clayton drove it (educational reform)", he affirmed. "Clayton instinctively knew all that stuff (about the need to address universities and colleges) was right but it was so right and so clear to him that he was a little cautious about doing it until he had a little research to back it up" (p. 6). Jim Downey also described Manness as "very strong" on education, even during his tenure as Finance Minister, and referenced how the Premier's own background in education made him particularly interested in this area. As he pointed out, prior to entering politics Gary Filmon had owned Success Business College, a private for-profit training institution: "he was in the education business himself previously, he did sell it" (p. 8).

And it appears that it was this willingness to take on the universities in a substantive way, combined with the strong feelings of some key actors on the education issue, that led to a cabinet shuffle in 1993. As Manness recounted, early in the second mandate some individuals close to the Premier started "agitating for action" on the education front, and encouraged the Premier to replace Len Derkach, the first Minister of Education and Training, with a stronger minister (which ended up being Clayton Manness in 1993). Manness admitted that "I was a little surprised I went to Education. Because you know I kind of developed a crusty exterior by that time and yet I think that through Taras's

pushing they wanted somebody that wasn't afraid to take on some of these challenges (in education), these incredible forces" (p. 3).

He added that Len Derkach had been more of a "status quo" minister, because "he had been in the system, he'd been a teacher, and he thought that he could curry favour from within and work within the system" (p. 3). And while Derkach had been able to do "a little reforming", Manness suggested, in his estimation he hadn't been able to achieve any substantive change. When Manness became Minister of Education he stated that he was wholly committed to "taking a different path" in education "and I had the support of the Premier very significantly or I couldn't have done it. And of course that's all you really need" (p. 5).

Later in our interview Manness also brought up the fact that while there was general support for the need to prioritize post-secondary education on the government's agenda, he had "a lot of battles in caucus, had a lot of battles in cabinet" over the pace and content of some of the reforms he wanted to implement. "Some of caucus would tell me 'Clayton this is moving too fast' and I'd say 'that's the way I am, that's the way I'm built'. Until the Premier throws the red light at me I know this is the way it's got to be done" (p. 11). As Manness concluded, "I just pushed for it and I got it through, but again, I wouldn't have got it through if the Premier hadn't wanted it to go through" (p. 10).

Len Derkach admitted to me that there were differences of opinion within cabinet over the post-secondary education reform issue. In particular, during our interview he made reference to the fact that he had not always been in agreement with the Manness's and Filmon's views on education. While Clayton Manness "held the purse strings (as Minister of Finance) and of course he was very key", he described the Premier as a "hawk on education, someone who understood it and understood how it contributed to the economy but looked at it from a different perspective than I did" (p. 6). He added, "to be honest with you Mr. Filmon had very strong feelings about the quality of education but the problem that I saw was that both Mr. Filmon and Mr. Manness were business-oriented people who looked at education as more of a business rather than what education should be, in my opinion. And education can't be run like a business" (p. 3-4).

Derkach went on to say that as a former educator (prior to entering politics, he had been a physical education teacher) involved with the public school system and the Manitoba Teachers Association, he came at the issue from a slightly different perspective. While he agreed with the view that education needed to become more reflective of the economic needs of the province, he maintained that the best way to bring about improvements in education was by empowering the system: "to do the things that it had the ability to do but was restrained from doing because it was tied so closely to government" (p. 5). For Derkach, this meant more emphasis on such things as teacher education programs,

professional development opportunities, and a greater balance in the schools between science and math programs and the arts. He acknowledged that it was this difference of opinion that undoubtedly led to Filmon's decision to replace him with Clayton Manness.

In addition to the majority win and the personal views of key decision-makers, other factors helped to strengthen the resolve of the Filmon administration to prioritize post-secondary education on its agenda. One of these was the generalized level of public support that the government began to recognize for its educational reforms. As Clayton Manness commented, while in government the Progressive Conservatives were continually undertaking opinion polls to gauge the public' feelings on a host of issues. Coming into the 1990 election, he said,

> We saw at that time that education was a biggie, really. We saw in our surveys, in our polling that it was really coming forward as an issue. We were following the public by way of polling very closely, especially after when I barged on the scene with education reform. So we knew we were on the right track, we knew that when teachers were screaming at me and trustees were screaming at our government and all that and still the silent majority was pretty strongly in favour of us embarking on this path (p. 6).

The Senior Political Advisor reiterated the importance of the public mood in galvanizing the government's decision to forge ahead on the post-secondary issue. It was not enough for caucus and cabinet members to identify an issue amongst themselves; it also had to be seen as a problem (or at least a potential problem) in public discourse as well. "If a problem was identified at the caucus table and the cabinet table without hearing it on Main Street, you should be

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cautious about the solution because there probably wasn't a problem to begin with. That's how the process does work" (p. 6-7).

Framing the Argument

As the Senior Political Advisor stressed in our interview, however, "public opinion was in opposition to the (education) establishment, not the whole 100%" (p. 4). While people were not necessarily against the universities (in other words, perhaps there really wasn't much of a crisis in post-secondary education that needed immediate attention), there was still a level of generalized concern that the Filmon Tories knew they could play on. Hence, the government knew that if they could sell the need for post-secondary reform in a certain manner, they "could win the argument". They knew they could do this, he inferred, by building on the fact that since most people did not really understand what goes on in universities in the first place, it wouldn't take much to convincingly sell them as places of waste and mismanagement. Hence, the best way to get at the universities was on the matter of funding. "There is no one out there in focus groups or quantitative research that thinks university professors are underpaid or that universities are underfunded. Because, even though 20% of tuition or the costs of running a university are at 20% paid by tuition, everybody thinks universities are opulent places where tuitions are too high. No one takes a look at what it really costs to educate someone" (Senior Political Advisor, p. 4).

The Filmon government therefore knew it could pick a fight with the university community and win, as long as the motivations for doing so were framed and sold to the public in a certain way. As the Senior Political Advisor articulated, "properly positioned, you could win the argument. It's (the academic community) not a real tough group to pick a fight with if you can position the motive properly" (p. 4). But, he stressed, if you wanted to win the fight you can't just publicly say you're going to cut education for the sake of cutting:

> If you're going to cut university funding you have to make sure that people understand you're cutting the university professor that is teaching Greek mythology, or you're not going to have glass curtain walls in buildings anymore. If somebody thinks that you're taking a textbook out of the classroom, or taking away a library chair from a student you better be sure … that you can position the motive properly (p. 4).

The Filmon administration was therefore cautious to make sure that the "problem" of post-secondary education was constructed in such a manner as to bolster support for their proposed reforms. The Senior Political Advisor noted that in addition to making university reform a funding issue they also consciously framed it within the context of the larger economic agenda since "everyone was worried about where the economy was going and whether or not their kids were going to be able to get jobs" (p. 1). And when Clayton Manness requested some evidence in the form of research and polling data in order to justify pushing through their educational agenda, the Senior Political Advisor declared that "I was kind enough to make sure we worded the questions so I got the results I wanted. We were going anyway, what I needed was a fearless leader" (p. 6).

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In addition to framing the post-secondary issue in a certain way the Filmon administration also engaged in a healthy amount of "crisis talk" as a means of garnering support for their larger economic agenda. As Netherton (2001) argues, the Progressive Conservatives had rose to power largely on the basis of their success in prescribing the necessity of a "made in Manitoba" kind of neo-conservatism, and in convincing voters that this new paradigm was one of necessity, rather than choice or ideological preference.

A few examples of public comments made by the Premier attest to this. Indeed, even as early as in their first Throne Speech the new premier spoke of the threat to Manitoba if steps were not taken to get the province's fiscal house in order. After praising the strength and diversity of Manitobans, the new premier added:

> Yet Manitobans are concerned that economic growth in recent years has relied upon an unhealthy and unsustainable level of public sector spending which has left a legacy of high debt and taxes and a growing burden of debt service costs. This legacy threatens our ability to fund the public programs Manitobans want and deserve. It also threatens the investment and job creation potential of our economy which are essential to our continued prosperity (Hansard, July 21, 1988, p. 2).

The use of crisis talk escalated with the government's majority win in 1990. Early into its second mandate the Premier spoke of "the very real threat to Manitoba"; how the province is "at a "crossroads"; "perched upon a fiscal precipice"; and "in real danger of an accelerating economic decline" (Hansard, October 22, 1990, p. 311). These difficult economic times, he stressed, are "creating very real pressures on the Manitoba government" and have left it with "very little choice"

but to continue on the path of fiscal reform. At fault for this dire state of affairs, he was quick to point out, was the changing world economy combined with cuts in transfer payments from the federal government and debt servicing costs from previous administrations. These were factors that couldn't be avoided and were "beyond the control" of the current regime.

In the second Throne speech of that year, Filmon drew a parallel between the economic imperatives of the day and the threat of war. He stated "the past year has provided no shortage of difficult circumstances for all Manitobans. We are all well aware of the severe impact of one of the worst national recessions in Canadian history and the way it has touched the lives of many Manitobans". The challenges that we face today, he suggested, "may not be as fundamental and ominous as world war"; but finding solutions to the economic questions now confronting us "will provide a stern test of the strength of our spirit and determination" (Hansard, December 5, 1991, p. 3).

Policy Borrowing

The interviews also confirm the fact that the prime decision-makers were well aware of changes that were going on at the time in other jurisdictions, and the policy discourses that existed at the time concerning education reform. In approaching the post-secondary issue "we tried to take a look at what was going on" in other provinces and countries such as the United States and Britain, the Senior Political Advisor informed me (p. 5). But, he added, this policy borrowing

was selective: "now understand that if I called somebody in Colorado it was apt to be a Republican" (p. 6).

Mr. Manness informed me that the Filmon government was "well aware that some other provinces, particularly Alberta, had done something significant" in the area of post-secondary education, and that "there was a lot of anecdotal information about what was happening in the States and some other jurisdictions" (p. 3). At the same time, he stressed, the ideas that were being circulated at the time in the area of higher education did not cause the Filmon Tories to take action; rather, it gave them the confidence and resolve that they were on the right path. "I think we really drove the leadership of this (post-secondary reform) ourselves as a government, I really do" (p. 5).

For Jim Downey, "you're always keeping your eye on what's happening (in other jurisdictions)". Watching what's going on in other provinces, he stressed, is critical because "its competition". He stated, "if you don't keep up with what's going on somebody else will eat your lunch or you'll be behind where you should be in relative terms to the growth of what we wanted to happen here. And if all the students coming out of Manitoba were making buggy whips and all the students coming out of Alberta were able to run computers we would have been pretty far behind. Its always competition" (p. 10). And while other jurisdictions may not always be right, using them to justify what you might want to do "helps to get things happening".

During our interview Len Derkach confirmed that "Alberta was very key to us" in how the Filmon government viewed the post-secondary issue. He also stressed the importance of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), and the influence that the kinds of ideas and discourses circulating amongst this group had on Manitoba. The CMEC, comprised of Education Ministers and their officials from across the country, meets on a regular basis to consider a variety of education issues. While Minister of Education for Manitoba Derkach had chaired the CMEC for two years, and thus had ample opportunity to see what his colleagues in other provinces were doing on the post-secondary front.

Leo LeTourneau also referenced the role of the CMEC and his participation on the various committees that they had. Through this group and others like it, he said, "you had a connection with what was going on not only nationally but internationally. You had a sense of where this whole thing was going. And it made sense, not only out there but it made sense for Manitoba too". The higher education literature, he added, was full of talk about the challenges facing universities in the new millennium and the kinds of changes that were occurring in systems around the world. "The whole globalization discourse, knowledge being the main currency, universities connecting more to government priorities in terms of economic development, business and industry taking on greater importance ... all of these issues were becoming more prominent, not only in Manitoba but everywhere right. You couldn't avoid it. And I think that even the

politicians were sort of taken up by that whole thing, the knowledge industry and the knowledge economy and things of that nature" (p. 11-12).

Business Speaks Out

As Kingdon (1995) stresses in his discussion of the political stream, in weighing their decision of whether or not to place an issue on the government agenda policy actors will factor in the degree of consensus or conflict amongst organized interests. "If important people look around and find that all of the interest groups and other organized interests point them in the same direction, the entire environment provides them with a powerful impetus to move in that direction" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 150).

While the academic community was, for the most part, opposed to many of the changes that the government appeared intent on pursuing, by far a more important influence was the position of the business sector in Manitoba. The Filmon administration's resolve to pursue their agenda received a substantial push from the growing concerns, and the willingness to express these concerns, of the business community regarding post-secondary education in Manitoba. These criticisms revolved around funding issues, the changing world economy and the extent to which graduates were being prepared for the labour market, and the seeming lack of transparency in post-secondary institutions.

The business community also took issue with Manitoba's overall low post-secondary participation rates compared to the rest of the country, which put Manitoba at a distinct disadvantage economically, and the gap between high school graduation and attendance at university or community college. In 1993, the Winnipeg Free Press reported on statistics that showed that only 15% of high school graduates in Manitoba were immediately continuing on to post-secondary education, with only 8% of these attending community college. In the article the Winnipeg Free Press declared how, in the estimation of experts from the fields of business, labour and education, Manitoba's young people were floundering. "Business leaders have said that Manitoba's ability to compete and field a skilled workforce is seriously compromised by the delay exercised by many young people before entering college" (Winnipeg Free Press, February 7, 1993, p. 1).

In the same article, Sandy Ryder, human resources manager at Pollard Banknote Ltd, was quoted as saying that Manitoba's workforce is littered with young people in a hurry. "The kids who don't go to college are the marginal students whose only interest is to get out of school and get on with life. It takes them that first year or two or even seven years, to realize that they can go a lot further with more training" (p.1). Pat Martin, business representative of Local 343 Carpenters Union, added in the same article "the system is failing to attract kids between high school and the workplace".

Another issue for Manitoba industry was the lack of connection between the colleges and the community. "I really don't know anything about the community colleges", prominent businessman Laurie Pollard publicly declared. "I'm not sure what programs they have or even if their graduates apply to us". Dale Botting, Manitoba director of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), pointed out to the press the lack of formal ties between the community colleges and the 4,000 small business owners represented in the CFIB. He added, "that concerns me because we've created 80% of the all new jobs in this province in the last decade" (Winnipeg Free Press, February 7, 1993, p. 1).

While business leaders may have been willing to publicly express some of their frustrations with the province's colleges system, it was nothing compared to their views on the universities. "In the business world, universities flunk out", ran the headline in a Winnipeg Free Press article on January 11, 1995. "The world of business has given out its grades on the university system and there aren't enough F's to go around. Too fat. Too complacent. Too slow. Out of touch. Universities have been indifferent to and untouched by the pressures that have radically altered other sectors of society" (Winnipeg Free Press, January 11, 1995, p. A1) The newspaper quoted Mal Anderson, CEO of Credit Union Central of Manitoba, as saying, "our universities get absolutely incensed if you question if they are aiming their courses in a relevant way for what's going on in today's world".

The rather negative view of many within the business community towards higher education appeared to be corroborated by the consistently disappointing rankings of Manitoba schools in the annual Maclean's magazine's report on universities in Canada. The University of Manitoba in particular did not seem to fare well in these rankings; both in 1994 when the magazine started to publish its rankings and again the following year, the university placed last overall amongst the country's top 15 schools. In terms of its reputation among other academics and the country's top CEO's, the University of Manitoba also ranked last both years, while in their respective categories the University of Winnipeg was ranked 14th out of 23 in terms of reputation and Brandon University ranked 17th out of 18 in reputation (Maclean's Magazine, Annual Rankings of Universities in Canada, November 6, 1995).

Presentations to the Roblin Commission from a variety of business groups reiterated the same themes expressed by the Filmon administration regarding the need for post-secondary education to become more closely attuned with the needs of the economy. As the Toronto-Dominion Bank rather darkly summed up in its submission to the UERC, the general assessment within the business community was that "universities have become self-indulgent and complacent; they have lost their vision and misplaced their priorities and the place and role that universities play in society" (Toronto-Dominion Bank, January 8, 1993, p. 5).

In its submission to the Roblin Commission the Certified General Accountants Association of Manitoba maintained that "education must be market driven, meeting the interests of all stakeholders involved" (Certified General Accountants Association of Manitoba, December 2, 1992, p. 3). In order to compete in today's business environment, the group argued, universities must not only make their curricula more relevant to economic priorities but must also form closer relationships with the community it services. Similarly, in its brief the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba expressed the pressing and urgent need to revamp post-secondary education, particularly university education, in Manitoba. In their presentation the group spoke of the kinds of change occurring in the private sector, as a result of the pressures and challenges presented by the changing global economy. Post-secondary education institutions must also be prepared to undergo similar change, they argued (Chartered Accountants of Manitoba, January 1993).

The presentation made by the Canadian Manufacturers Association (CMA) stated even more bluntly the need for greater corporate involvement in higher education. In its submission to the Roblin Commission, the CMA referenced its organization's task force on business/education relations, whose mandate is to explore how the country's post-secondary institutions can be strengthened given the "central role that higher education will play in Canada's efforts to be an aggressive economy" (CMA, 1992, p. 4). For the CMA, the problems of post-secondary education cannot be solved by simply throwing more money at

universities. Instead, what is needed at the federal and provincial levels is both a policy change and an attitudinal change: governments must seek ways to make universities more accountable, flexible and responsive to changing economic and world conditions, while "the biggest attitudinal change of all will be accepting that, as the Canadian economy comes to depend more and more on the quality of its human capital, the relationship between business and education becomes an indispensable part of effectively responding to the competitive challenges confronting the country" (p. 14).

The Filmon administration's close ties with the business community (where much of its political and financial support derived) rendered it extremely receptive to its concerns regarding the shortcomings of the post-secondary education system. Numerous statements made by respective Ministers of Education as well as the Premier not only repeat these same criticisms, but also speak of the need for closer ties between education and the private sector. As Education Minister Len Derkach said to the House in 1990, "we have to make sure that parents are involved in education, that business is involved in education and that industry and the community is involved" (Hansard, November 6, 1990, p. 859). In the 1991 Throne Speech, the Premier specifically referenced the need for this involvement, stating, "as the competition for both national and international markets has become more intense, my ministers have realized that ... a stronger partnership with the private sector must be developed" (Hansard, December 5, 1991, p. 3).

Interviews with key political actors also confirm the relevance of the business community in further motivating the Progressive Conservative government to prioritize post-secondary education on its agenda, as a means of both fostering economic growth and bringing greater efficiencies and accountability to the system. "They had a major, major voice", said Jim Downey. "The majority of the people sitting around our table were business people, or had had some association with them. So just by the pure nature of the individuals the demand was seen from that front" (p. 13). As he concluded, "obviously there was a greater influence from that community than probably any other" (Jim Downey, p. 13).

Leo LeTourneau said that there was "no question" that business and industry were major players in the decisions that were made at the time regarding post-secondary education. As he noted, the individuals that the government appointed to play a role in the restructuring of post-secondary education; whether it be the Roblin Commission or the Interim Transition Committee struck to draft the legislation on the Council on Post-Secondary Education, were prominent business people. Jeff Johnson, chair of the ITC, was a partner in an international consulting firm, while the first chair of the Council, Richard Dawson, was a former Vice President of Cargill Grain Ltd.

In addition to the prominent role of these individuals in influencing the debate was the Economic Innovation and Technology Council (EITC). Comprised of

some of the major players in Manitoba's corporate sector and strongly linked to the Filmon government, LeTourneau stressed how the EITC brought a business focus to the discourses surrounding post-secondary education at the time. As he articulated, "business and industry were close (to the Filmon administration), and they were putting their demands on the table" (p. 13).

Aside from the EITC interview participants also referenced the role played by such organizations as the Winnipeg and Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers Association and a group of prominent business people associated with the Associates Club, graduates from the University of Manitoba's School of Business who were involved with the Progressive Conservative Party. As the Senior Political Advisor described it, in their meetings with cabinet business leaders would frequently express their frustration with the fact that "we don't have graduates in this, we don't have graduates in that; some of the deficiencies in what we had" (p. 4). Of course we listened to them, he added. Not only were they the backbone of our party, but "they were right".

Jeff Johnson reiterated that "obviously business would have the ear of the Filmon government because that's where it comes from" (p. 8). He added that as a business person himself he felt firsthand the frustrations of the post-secondary system in terms of the kinds of graduates universities and colleges were producing as well as the financial constraints facing the province. For him then it was largely a money issue: "I saw the financial pressures governments were

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struggling with. The cost of post-secondary education had to be brought under control, especially given demands in other areas like healthcare" (p. 3).

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to examine agenda setting in Manitoba; specifically in the area of post-secondary education policy from 1988 to 1996 under the Progressive Conservative government of Gary Filmon. I chose this case study for three reasons. Firstly, despite all of the work done in the area of policy analysis, agenda setting remains a relatively understudied aspect of the policy process. As Kingdon (1995) has argued, as political scientists we tend to know more about how policies are disposed of then we know about how they became issues in the first place. We tend to assume that policies are things that just happen; the logical reaction to a perceived problem in society. Yet, examples abound that question this assumption. Often times problems exist in society that never make it onto a government's agenda; at the same time, issues that aren't really a problem suddenly become the focus of attention.

Related to this question of why some issues and not others become perceived as problems and make it onto a government's agenda is the selection of policy options. Once an issue has become accepted as a problem, there is typically any number of ways that the government can choose to act on it. What are the factors that go into the selection of policy alternatives? Is it just random, or do decision-makers make calculated decisions about what options to adopt? And if so, then what are the criteria that are used to make these decisions?

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These questions are germane to not only a more complete understanding of the richness and complexity of the policymaking process, but also for a deeper insight into the ways in which the decisions of government impact a community. The visible outcomes of the policymaking process – the implementation of a new program or the passage of a law - only reveal part of the picture. The patterns of public policy in any given society are also shaped by what doesn't happen; the fact that some issues and proposals emerge in the first place while others are never seriously considered.

In addition to building on our knowledge of agenda setting, the second reason for why I chose this project was to enrich our understanding of post-secondary educational policymaking. In the educational policy field the focus of attention for the majority of analysts tends to be public education. There is a rich literature that looks at the politics of educational policymaking around the world, and the various actors, processes and causal determinants that shape these politics. Yet, the same cannot be said about the post-secondary education area. While much has been written about the modern challenges and issues facing universities and colleges, with a few exceptions[1] how these issues become identified by policymakers as problems and translated into specific policy outcomes remains a relatively understudied field of scholarly research.

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[1] While some scholars such as David Cameron, Glen Jones and John Dennison have done some excellent work on the relationships between government and universities and colleges in Canada, these works tend to focus more on content-based issues rather than the actual processes of post-secondary policy development.

This is unfortunate. If we indeed accept what scholars and the popular media have been telling us for the past two decades, that our world is undergoing fundamental change and the role of our institutions of higher learning in facilitating this change, then the importance of post-secondary education policy cannot be underestimated.

And lastly, as I outline in Chapter 2, my selection of this area of study was born out of my own experiences in the Filmon government, first as a political aide and then more specifically as a policy analyst in the Universities Grants Commission. While the assumption of those around me was that it was just made sense to prioritize post-secondary education, I wondered where the idea came from in the first place. At the same time, as my practical experience grew as a result of my work in government I became increasingly frustrated with what much of the existing literature had to say about policy development. Many of the prevailing assumptions tend to presuppose that policymaking happens according to the dictates of a neatly organized flow chart. Yet, as anyone who has worked in the system can attest, policymaking is more akin to making sausage – while you might appreciate the end product, you might be surprised to discover what goes on in the process.

This is the strength of multiple streams theory; the recognition of policymaking as not necessarily as neat and orderly as some models would suggest. I chose this approach, and in particular Kingdon's (1995) refinement of this model to agenda

setting, because it factors in the interplay of context, politics, and ambiguity that characterizes much of the political process. Kingdon's focus on the three streams of politics, problems and policies avoids the determinism of the closed-system, mechanical approach to the study of politics. As Mucciaroni (1992) notes, in Kingdon's schema the determinants are very broad and porous. What gets onto the agenda is constrained by the existing mix of problems, solutions and political conditions, but the range of what could conceivably reach the agenda is expansive. Second, Kingdon's model allows for opportunities. It views agenda change as contingent rather than automatic, and specifies probabilistic rather than necessary conditions. Third, the relationship between the variables is loose and independent. The existence of a problem has little influence on whether a solution is available or on whether political conditions are favourable to getting it on the agenda. And finally, there is plenty of room for chance, human creativity and choice in the influence of outcomes. What gets onto the agenda at any given point in time is the result of a fortuitous conjunction; whatever the combination of salient problems, available solutions and political circumstances that exist. Because of these strengths, it is no surprise that Kingdon's contributions continue to dominate the field of agenda setting.

Kingdon's model can tell us a lot about the "how" of agenda setting (in terms of the processes through which issues come to be placed on a government's agenda) and even "when" agenda setting is most likely to occur (when the streams couple and a window of opportunity opens up). However, where it

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potentially falls short is in explaining why some issues come to be viewed as more important than others. As Mucciaroni argues, "the model by itself does not allow us to predict what kinds of problems are likely to be coupled with what kinds of solutions, and, in turn, the kinds of political conditions that make it more likely for them to get on the agenda" (Mucciaroni, 1992, p. 464).

It is for this reason that in addition to Kingdon's work on processes, my conceptual model also focuses on what I refer to as the "larger context". As I have maintained, while we tend to view policymaking as a series of discrete stages, this can sometimes mislead us into overlooking the larger environment within which these stages occur. The characteristics of this context – its social, economic, and political features and the prevailing ideas that exist in society – impact the way in which policies are shaped and the alternatives that are considered by actors within the policy subsystem.

As this environment changes so too does the ways in which policymaking occurs, and the ways in which problems are framed and alternatives generated. Globalization has reframed not only the content of policymaking for states around the world, but the ways in which policy is defined and developed as well. This has meant that not only have economic considerations become paramount, but the processes of policymaking have also altered in significant ways. Chapter 4 discussed two of these developments – policy borrowing, which refers to the ways in which states borrow policies from each other; as well as New Public

Management, whereby governance becomes increasingly marked by the usage of management tools and techniques borrowed from the private sector.

The second key aspect of the wider context that needs to be considered in understanding why some issues seem to rise to the top of a government's to-do list while others don't is what I referred to as the climate of ideas. Every society has certain ideas, values and beliefs that it holds to be true. These ideas give shape to government activity, by setting the broad parameters of what decision-makers can and cannot do in terms of making public policies. The climate of ideas can be influenced by a number of forces, including ideology, the prevailing policy paradigms, the scholarly discourses surrounding a particular issue, and the public mood.

At the same time, however, political actors will seek to shape the climate of ideas in ways that strengthen or legitimize their particular goals. Hence, how ideas and problems come to be framed by decision-makers; the arguments and stories they put forth to persuade others of the rightness of their position and to discredit their opponents, is also an important feature of the process. How we define problems in society and the kinds of solutions that are proposed for their resolution are socially and ideologically constructed, with the advocates of competing proposals engaging in a verbal tug of war to enlist support for their particular views. How we choose to define problems, the causal determinants that we attribute to them and

who we accord blame for their existence, has much to do with the kinds of solutions that are ultimately proposed and accepted for their resolution.

What the Evidence Tells Us

The value of any conceptual model, of course, is the extent to which it is actually able to explain a particular sequence of events. This next section will explore the degree to which the three elements of the model utilized in this study – the processes, larger context and actors – actually fit with the case study of post-secondary agenda setting in Manitoba.

To recap the general features of Kingdon's multiple streams model, flowing through any political system are three distinct streams: the problems stream, the politics stream, and the policies stream. While each of these streams are largely independent of one another, with each developing according to its own dynamics and rules, at critical junctures they can interact, resulting in a policy outcome. Kingdon argues that governments decide to take action on a particular issue only when these three streams couple in such a way that there is a political recognition by decision-makers that something is a problem; a political opportunity to take action; and an acceptable proposal as to what action will be taken. In this way, the characteristics of issues combine with the characteristics of political institutions and circumstances, and the development of policy solutions, in a fashion that can lead to the opening and closing of windows of opportunity for agenda entrance.

In order for agenda setting to occur an issue must first be perceived as a problem. Three factors can facilitate the translation of issues into problems: focusing events, indicators, and feedback about existing policies and programs. On the basis of our evidence, it appears that while post-secondary education was definitely a concern amongst important stakeholders, the degree to which it was perceived as a problem warranting immediate government attention is debatable. No crisis had occurred in Manitoba to focus peoples' attention on post-secondary education. Universities and colleges were still functioning; students were getting degrees and diplomas; and graduates were still finding jobs. Instead of a significant focusing event, then, the post-secondary issue was, in Len Derkach's words, "a slow growing issue". As Clayton Manness added, "there wasn't a big sea change all of a sudden".

In terms of Kingdon's second factor, indicators, some of data on the state of Manitoba's post-secondary system at the time of the Filmon government's minority win in 1988 were troubling. Rising tuition fees of 10% a year (the maximum allowed under the previous NDP government's tuition fee cap) and declining provincial grants to the province's universities and colleges meant that a greater share of the financial burden was being born out by students. As universities struggled with chronic underfunding problems they lost star researchers to schools in other jurisdictions. Businesses bemoaned the fact that Manitoba had the worst post-secondary participation rate in the country (15% compared to a national average of 22%); notably in the colleges sector where the

national average of young people attending college was almost four times greater than the Manitoba average. The fallout of government's inattention to these participation rates, the business community added, were gaps in the province's labour market that were hampering Manitoba's ability to compete effectively with other provinces.

There was also negative feedback regarding the province's existing policies and governance structures in the post-secondary area. Government leaders and the institutions alike expressed their frustration with the Universities Grants Commission; the government because the UGC seemed too closely allied with the universities and the institutions because the UGC was perceived as too much the handmaiden of government. Universities also seemed for many to be mysterious places in which few understood what actually went on there. Hence, issues related to management, accountability, financing, and curricula were finding their way into the larger discourses. As Leo LeTourneau affirmed to me in our interview, "people were being critical about universities because they did not know basically what they were about, they were not very transparent".

On the colleges side, the issue of college governance was also a sore spot for some. The absence of autonomous governing boards in the province's community colleges, which most other provinces across the country had already implemented, were blamed for not only Manitoba's poor college participation rate but also for the disconnect between the kinds of programs being offered in the

colleges system and the needs of the labour market. At the same time, the lack of coordination between the colleges and the universities in Manitoba, as evidenced by the two distinct governance structures for each sector, was also criticized as hampering the province's economic development.

Despite these concerns, however, there appeared to be a general level of satisfaction with the province's post-secondary system, at least from the public's point of view. Opinion polls on public attitudes towards higher education in Manitoba found that a majority of Winnipeggers (56%) were satisfied with their universities and colleges; reflecting the prevailing trend across Canada as well. More surprising, however, was the fact that almost three-quarters of those interviewed believed that governments should provide extra money to universities, and would be willing to pay higher taxes as a result; again reflecting the national data.

At the same time, studies showed that the overwhelming majority of people supported the idea of institutional autonomy, and believed that universities themselves should decide what programs they should offer. While Manitobans and Canadians felt that universities could and should be doing a better job of explaining what they are doing and why, the authors of the Winnipeg study concluded that "these various studies have confirmed a high level of support for the universities generally and an appreciation of the role and importance of the institution to social, economic, cultural scientific, and technological development".

While post-secondary education may have been an area of some concern for the Filmon Conservatives and the general public, the real problem was the economy. As all of those interviewed attested, the overwhelming priority and focus of the Filmon administration in 1988 and again in 1990 when it won a majority government was the economy and the financial state of the province. "The economy was the number one issue", the Senior Political Advisor said. "The generation of jobs, job creation was what we were most concerned about. The motive behind everything was job creation". As Leo LeTourneau summed it up, "we (Manitobans) were in deep trouble financially".

And, given the economic pressures facing Manitoba coupled with the Filmon government's own neo-conservative focus, it is not hard to see why economic issues would achieve such penultimate status. While Manitoba had perhaps not suffered to the same extent as other provinces in Canada, by 1988 it was still facing the fallout of a national recession, considerable debt problems, and declining federal transfers. Canada's signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States also put the issue of globalization and economic restructuring front and centre of these debates, and the role of Manitoba in the larger national and global economic picture.

That post-secondary education was seen by the Conservatives as a way to fix the real problem of the economy was born out by the numerous references made by Premier Filmon and his ministers in Throne Speeches, comments in the

Manitoba Legislature, and statements to the press. Even the guiding policy document of the Progressive Conservatives, the *Framework for Economic Growth*, spoke of the inseparability of the economic and social policy agendas, and how "our educational investment must be channeled into meaningful skills training that will match the talents of Manitobans with emerging opportunities in business and industry". As Jim Downey put it, "growing and diversifying our economy was paramount. To do that you have to have the people trained and the educational systems in place to make it happen".

As Kingdon (1995) stresses, however, it is not enough to have an identifiable problem for agenda setting to occur; you must also have a workable solution as well. If decision-makers do not have a feasible way of addressing a problem they won't bother placing in on their formal agenda, because doing so would only open them up to criticism. While there may be any number of ways of addressing a particular problem, Kingdon adds that those policy options most likely to be accepted by decision-makers are those that meet several criteria. Included are such things as value acceptability, technical feasibility, tolerable cost, and likely degree of legislative and public support.

In terms of the policies stream the Filmon government was lucky. The province's long history with a buffer agency in the form of the Universities Grants Commission made the option of a Council on Post-Secondary Education an appealing and workable solution. The extension of the buffer body to include the

colleges sector would not involve substantial new monies or a massive new bureaucracy, and it was easy to implement (once the legislation was passed, of course). At the same time, the idea of a Council was seen as ideologically acceptable to decision-makers and members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, provided that it would have a more directive focus. And, because Manitobans had already been used to the idea of an intermediary agency for the province's universities, a revamped UGC in the form of the Council was anticipated to meet with public support as well.

In order to ensure that the public would endorse the idea of a Council on Post-Secondary Education, the Filmon government took the prudent step of first striking the University Education Review Commission. Comprised of prominent Manitobans and chaired by a popular and well-respected former premier of the province, the Roblin Commission could be viewed as an attempt to legitimize the changes that the Filmon administration wanted to implement in the post-secondary area. In fact, the idea of striking a commission as a precursor to reform had also been used before in Manitoba in not only the post-secondary sector (1973's Oliver Commission) but also by the Filmon government itself on the public schools side (the high schools review in the early 1990s).

The interview data confirms this assessment. In our discussions of why he felt that the idea of a Council was ultimately chosen, Jeff Johnson, for example, said that "it just seemed to make sense. We already had the UGC and it seemed

logical to just build on that". During our interview Leo LeTourneau spoke at length of the fact that despite their frustration at times with the decisions of the UGC, politicians still liked the idea of a buffer agency. "After all was said and done government did not want to have a hands-on relationship with the universities. I think people were generally uncomfortable with a direct relationship of government and university. It had never been done in Manitoba since the creation of the UGC ... it was a sort of a tradition and I think politicians respected that".

The personal support for the continuation of an intermediary agency by the Premier and those closest to him also made this option the most likely to be accepted by policy actors. The Senior Political Advisor spoke of how the Premier personally felt that they needed a place external to government where decision-makers could reflect on university issues "from a deeper context", while Jim Downey, the Deputy Premier at the time, noted how the government had also used the idea of a stand-alone agency in other areas (for example, health and agriculture).

More importantly, perhaps, was the fact that the solution of the Council would also help the Progressive Conservatives achieve their more pressing goal of enhancing the province's economic productivity. A Council under the policy control of the government and more closely linked to cabinet through the Minister of Education and Training would ensure a greater correspondence between the

post-secondary system and the economic priorities of the Filmon Tories. The bringing together of colleges and universities under a single entity would also bring better coordination and direction to the entire system, and would hopefully allow government to better address labour market shortages. At the same time, greater control of the system through the Council would also hopefully put the brakes on the all-consuming post-secondary education budget, hence helping to achieve the government's deficit reduction goals. Universities and colleges needed to become more efficient, Len Derkach affirmed, because there was no money in the system. Hence, by changing the system they knew they could find efficiencies within it "and re-allocate dollars to the places that were priorities".

The political actors involved in the policy subsystem also liked the idea of a Council because it would hopefully deflect criticism away from government; something that appeals to all politicians. Even though the government's stamp would be all over the Council's activities, by having an arms-length body making tough decisions and taking the heat for those decisions, the Minister would, in Leo LeTourneau's words, be "off the hook". Moreover, the Council would also help generate buy-in from the public on the changes that were being made to the post-secondary system. The Council was viewed as being a good way of massaging and helping to deliver the policies that government wanted to deliver, Jim Downey affirmed. "When you're in government and you make a particular decision you want to make sure you've tested the water and got as much public support as you can".

While the problems stream and the policies stream are important to understanding how agenda-setting occurred in Manitoba, by far the most critical was the politics stream and the events that transpired within it. In his description of this stream Kingdon points to such factors as the size of the governing party's mandate in the Legislature; the personal values and ideology of key decision-makers; interest group campaigns; and the national mood. These factors facilitated agenda setting in Manitoba, and played a determining role in the ability of actors to get the issue of post-secondary education on the government's agenda.

All of those interviewed spoke of the importance of the government's majority win in 1990 as instrumental in their ability to move forward on the post-secondary issue. Len Derkach, for example, spoke of the fact that even though the Filmon government knew it wanted to do something in this area in order to begin addressing the province's economic needs, it could not proceed in a big way until 1990. "We knew we were being watched", he admitted. Knowing that it didn't have the mandate or the stakeholder support to move on anything too quickly, Derkach described how the government first embarked on some reports and reviews on various related issues to give them the credence for why the province should be moving in a different direction.

For the Senior Political Advisor, "there was no question" that the government wouldn't have moved on the post-secondary issue if the Tories had failed to win

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a majority number of seats in 1990. Not only was this electoral strength key, he added, so too was the changing perception of Gary Filmon as a strong leader. Echoing Light's (1991) arguments regarding the importance of political capital in agenda setting, the Senior Political Advisor spoke of the importance of Manitoba's position on the failed Meech Lake Accord to changing the public's perception of the Premier. The Premier's tough stance in the face of pressures from the federal Conservatives under Brian Mulroney gave him and his government the added legitimacy to undertake more controversial reforms in the post-secondary area.

In addition to the importance of the majority win in 1990 was the changing national mood and climate of ideas surrounding the economy and governance. In the 1980s and 1990s the forces of globalization and the rise of New Public Management had a substantial impact on how both politicians and the general public thought about government and the kinds of activities that they believed their political leaders should engage in. As we have seen, the economic recessions and dislocations that shook the western world in the late 1970s created a climate of unease that had profound implications for the kinds of issues that were to assume dominance on the public agenda. These economic changes, coupled with the emerging discourses around globalization and a disillusionment with the Keynesian welfare policies of the past, meant that the economy became the dominant paradigm through which all other policy issues became subsumed. As governments sought ways to manage declining economic productivity,

burgeoning deficits and an increasingly skeptical public, expansionist public policies were no longer seen as "good common sense".

Education policy became subsumed under the dominant economic paradigm. Seen as an effective means of getting at the more troubling issue of how to enhance economic productivity, education thus became increasingly important to governments everywhere. Not only did policymakers look more closely at what their post-secondary institutions were doing, the kinds of programs they were offering, and the ways in which they were being managed, they also paid closer attention to what was going on elsewhere. Anxious to harness the capacity of their universities and colleges to better compete internationally, governments looked to other jurisdictions for inspiration and ideas in how to restructure their own post-secondary systems. The interviews provided evidence of this policy borrowing, as several of the participants spoke of "trying to take a look at what was going on" in other provinces and countries. As Jim Downey confirmed, "you're always keeping your eye on what's happening".

As I argued in Chapter 4, globalization has impacted more than just how our economies are structured and the kinds of issues that became important to governments in the 1980s and 1990s. With the rise of New Public Management and the reinventing government movement, the ways in which the public sector is organized and managed has also changed. As much of the blame for the economic problems facing governments became centered on "old style"

bureaucracy, political leaders looked to the private sector for inspiration. In the rush to reinvigorate and streamline their public sector organizations and to prove to the public that they were "doing something" to fix government, politicians began to experiment with new management models, accountability mechanisms and funding arrangements.

Accompanying the application of tools and techniques borrowed from the corporate world was the development of what Thomas (2002) has called "steering by remote control". As political leaders struggled to bring a greater managerial focus to their departments, decision-making became increasingly centralized in the hands of the executive. Premiers, Ministers of Finance and their closest advisors became responsible for the setting of overall policy direction with civil servants relegated to the role of implementers of these policies.

While those interviewed did not necessarily view it as "reinventing government", but rather, simply doing what "made sense" within their particular ideological reference points, there is no question of the impact of New Public Management on the Filmon government. As Leo LeTourneau affirmed, "there was certainly a very strong push to make government work more like business". Not only was the focus on post-secondary education seen as a way of enhancing economic productivity through a better trained workforce, but also as a way of achieving greater efficiencies and cost savings in government expenditures. As Clayton

Manness admitted to me, at the end of the day (post-secondary reform)" was a funding issue for us". At the same time, Jim Downey spoke of the Filmon cabinet's belief in the need for politicians to take a firm hand with their departments and to "make decisions".

Born out of New Public Management and the dominance of the market metaphor is a particular ideological perspective, neo-conservatism. The ideas of the New Right markedly shaped the climate of ideas in the 1990s, and had a profound impact on how people thought about economic issues and the role of education in society. By capitalizing on the public's general unease with modern society and the economic problems of the day, New Right leaders such as Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Ronald Reagan in the United States, Brian Mulroney in Canada and ultimately Gary Filmon in Manitoba, managed to garner wide support for their conservative policies and fundamentally alter the climate of ideas in the industrialized world.

At the same time, as I argued in Chapter 5, while the public mood and changing discourses around the economy, governance and education in general worked in their favour, the Filmon administration also realized that in order to win support for their plans for the post-secondary system they needed to frame the debate in a certain way. We find ample evidence of the ways in which the Premier himself, as well as the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, engaged in crisis talk as a way to convince the public of the absolute necessity of change.

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The formulation of the post-secondary issue into a problem of crisis proportions was a carefully constructed strategy on the part of the administration. As the Senior Political Advisor told me in what was one of the most interesting political discussions I had with the interview participants, "properly positioned we knew we could win the argument".

The fact that the business community in Manitoba was engaged in framing the post-secondary education debate within the larger economic context also helped facilitate the placement of the issue on the government's formal agenda. Not only had business become more interested in education issues in the late 1980s and 1990s (following trends elsewhere), but they were also more willing to speak out on their concerns and demand a place at the decision-making table. The close relationship that the Progressive Conservatives had with the business community meant that these concerns would be responded to. Not only were several of the external decision-makers in the policy subsystem from the corporate world (for example, Kevin Kavanaugh and Kathleen Richardson on the University Education Review Commission; Jeff Johnson on the Interim Transition Committee and Richard Dawson on the Council on Post-Secondary Education), but their views were given precedence over others. There was no question that the business community had the ear of the Premier, Jeff Johnson articulated, "because that's where the party comes from".

I see the political stream as the most critical in the case study because the majority win of the government in 1990 opened up a window of opportunity for agenda setting to occur. With a conducive political climate in the sense of not only a majority win but also a favourable public mood, a business community that was giving voice to many of the concerns of the Filmon Tories, and the neo-conservative ideological convictions of key decision-makers, in the words of the Senior Political Advisor, "the stars lined up". These favourable conditions in the politics stream, coupled with the problem of the economy as well as the feasible option of a beefed up intermediary agency in the policies stream, together explain the occurrence of agenda setting.

In terms of the predominant actors involved in setting the post-secondary agenda in Manitoba, the findings confirm the hypotheses outlined in Chapter 3. In addition to the prevalence of the business community, the interview participants pointed to Premier Filmon and his closest political advisors (namely the Senior Political Advisor that I interviewed) as pivotal to not only getting the issue of post-secondary education onto the government agenda, but in the decision to select the Council as the preferred policy option. At the same time, Clayton Manness, both in his role as Minister of Finance, member of Treasury Board, and later as Minister of Education and Training, was singled out as a key player in the sequence of events.

While these individuals were important throughout the process, once the broad contours of the direction that the government wanted to go in was set other actors became influential. Members of the bureaucracy played a greater role in helping shape the policy options that were considered by decision-makers; affirming Bennett and McPhail's (1992) position that bureaucrats are more salient in the policy specification stage than in the agenda-setting stage.

While a senior civil servant Leo LeTourneau played a critical role throughout the process, not only in the agenda setting stage (it appears that he was the first to suggest that a review of the province's universities system be undertaken) but indeed throughout the policy specification and implementation stages as well. As he had specific ideas about not only the importance of post-secondary education but how the system needed to be better managed in the form of a new governance model, Mr. LeTourneau was very much of a policy entrepreneur. It was largely his desire to see the issue through, aided by the personal interest of both Filmon, Manness and the Senior Political Advisor, that together made things happen.

Areas for Future Research

Upon reflection, the conceptual framework utilized in this study does an accurate job of explaining not only how agenda-setting occurred in Manitoba, but also who the main actors were. Kingdon's process streams helped us to understand those issues in the political, problem and policy streams that facilitated the placement

of the post-secondary issue on the government's agenda, and the selection of the Council Post-Secondary Education as the preferred policy option. His model also explains how these three streams came together in such a way that produced the final outcome. Hence, it was the financial state of the province (problem) coupled with the majority win of the Conservatives, the strongly-held convictions on education of the Filmon Tories and the agitation for action from the business community (politics), plus the availability of the intermediary agency idea (policies), that together produced the opportunity for agenda setting to occur.

At the same time, the features of the larger context that are interwoven through these streams helped create the appropriate conditions for change to happen. Globalization, New Public Management, shifts in the national mood and the larger climate of ideas determine the kinds of problems societies develop, which problems are considered legitimate for government to address, and the kinds of solutions appropriate for consideration. The focus on the larger context, in particular the themes of globalization and the climate of ideas, also helps us to understand why the issue of post-secondary education seemed to come out of nowhere and attain such a high priority under the Filmon Conservatives.

As supported by the evidence, what institutional actors become active participants in a policy arena matters in whether certain items reach the agenda or not. Each of the interviewees stressed the importance of leadership, and the

role played by key leaders in getting the post-secondary issue onto the agenda. If the premier, for example, had not felt as strongly as he did about the education issue one wonders if the events would have played out as they did. At the same time, Clayton Manness spoke of his personal commitment to pushing his reform agenda through, despite "whatever anyone was going to throw" at him. Given Manness' influence in cabinet, if he had not become Minister of Education and Training in 1993 it is debatable whether post-secondary education would have become the issue it did under another, weaker, minister.

While I underestimated the importance of leadership in agenda setting, another issue which I did not anticipate was the extent to which governments consciously engage in framing in order to sell their ideas. Despite my years in government preparing briefing notes for Ministers and witnessing first hand the amount of spin that accompanies the political process, I was still surprised by how political actors engage in crisis talk in order to garner support for their ideas. I would have liked to further explore this issue with the Senior Political Advisor; namely why he felt it was necessary for the government to engage in crisis talk and to strategically shape the debate in the manner that it did. Did the Conservatives not feel that they could win the argument and convince the public otherwise? And if so, what does this have to say about the ethics of the political process, if conscious manipulation is seen as such an acceptable method of governing?

The third issue that I underestimated before beginning this study is the importance of timing in shaping outcomes. Although Kingdon's model stresses the importance of timing and the interplay of fortuitous circumstances in agenda setting, I was still surprised by how this was born out in the case study. If all the political stars didn't line up the way they did in 1990, a very different set of outcomes could have resulted in Manitoba.

At the same time, a couple of questions arose during the interviews that could not be fully explained by the conceptual framework. In our discussions of why decision-makers chose to create a Council on Post-Secondary Education instead of one of the many other policy options that were available, several of the participants that I interviewed made reference to the historical connection with the former Universities Grants Commission. While they were frustrated with how the UGC had functioned in the past, the participants all expressed some fairly strong feelings about not wanting to abandon it altogether. They were connected to a particular institutional arrangement that, on the face of it, seemed to make little sense. I was therefore intrigued by the idea of this "historical pull" that institutions can have on decision-makers, and how this pull can have such a decisive impact on shaping outcomes. As Len Derkach said to me, the idea of maintaining a buffer agency "just felt right to them".

I was also curious about the role of bureaucracies in facilitating or hindering agenda change. Several of those interviewed spoke of the fact that the

Department of Education and Training was resistant to the kinds of change that the Filmon Tories wanted to implement. This resistance seemed to have much to do with the government's decision to create the Roblin Commission, an independent body with no formal ties to the Department of Education and Training. Hence, it appears that Filmon administration consciously attempted to circumvent this departmental resistance by placing the responsibility for making changes to the system in a body external to government.

The fact that the Universities Grants Commission was a stand-alone agency also made it easier for decision-makers to make changes in the post-secondary area; a point supported by Leo LeTourneau. As he surmised in our interview, the relatively independent nature of the Roblin commission probably emboldened the decision-makers to undertake a wider reform agenda than perhaps they would have otherwise done. At the same time, he added, "you have to realize that the UGC was really a stand alone agency. The links to the Department of Education when I began working there were quite minimal. If you're asking me if the Department had any role in the broader influencing of that whole debate I would think not, no. The Department had very little to do with (us)".

These findings led me to two conclusions. In hindsight, I think in the development of my conceptual model more attention should have been paid to the structural factors, such as the role of bureaucracies and other institutions, that can constrain or promote agenda change. In this Kingdon's model falls short. It is

conceptualized at what can be referred to as the situational or temporal level of analysis. It looks at the particular mix of problems, solutions and politics at a certain point in time, and how these streams couple in order to produce an outcome. This is both a strength and weakness of Kingdon's multiple streams model. As he argues much of policymaking is indeed transitory, shifting depending on the nature of the issues, the actors involved at any point in time, and the opportunities that present themselves for action to be taken. Indeed, it is this failure to recognize the temporality of much of politics and policymaking that weakens other approaches.

At the same time, however, an overt emphasis on this temporality neglects those aspects of political life that either do not change, change infrequently, or change very slowly. As March and Olsen (1984) point out, the policy alternatives of leaders are not defined completely by circumstance or exogenous forces, but are also shaped by existing administrative agencies, and the values, traditions, and norms of behaviour that they encompass. These structural constraints are significant because they constitute the rules of the game, so to speak, that impact on what is acceptable and what is not for political actors. Hence, they argue, political institutions can be treated as actors in much the same way we treat individuals as actors. "Institutions seem to be neither neutral reflections of exogenous environmental forces nor neutral arenas for the performances of individuals driven by exogenous preferences and expectations" (March and Olsen, 1984, p. 742).

Hence, while Kingdon does identify one important structural constraint – the national mood – we still need to trace out specifically what kinds of institutional structures facilitate or constrain various problems and solutions from reaching the agenda. As I learned from the case study, bureaucracies and other organizational arrangements do matter. How a political system is structured in terms of its institutions, and the kinds of values and traditions that permeate them, can have a bearing on policy outcomes.

March and Olsen (1984) also highlight the importance of history in shaping policy outcomes, the ways in which institutions learn from their experience, and how policies, once adopted, become embedded in them. Mucciaroni (1992) adds that items that reach the agenda in any given period have their roots in the conditions, events and choices of the past. "The past does not determine the future, but it does make certain outcomes more likely and others less so" (Mucciaroni, p. 470). Kingdon's model does not go very far in developing historically grounded explanations. It focuses on more or less recent trends and immediate events in the problem or politics streams, which serve as catalysts for pushing items onto the agenda. Yet, problems evolve over time, as both Clayton Manness and Len Derkach attested to with regard to the post-secondary issue.

The last issue concerns that of generalizability. The strength of the case study method is that it allows us to delve into the contextual and multilayered aspects of a particular phenomenon (in this case, the study of post-secondary agenda

setting in Manitoba). However, as with any methodological tool it is not without its limitations. While case study approaches are generally considered to have greater validity than other methods, the degree to which they are applicable to other research settings is less certain (Babbie, 1992). As Yin (1993) has argued, case studies in particular can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the researcher to presume that his or her findings are accounts of the whole rather than just the part.

While the only way to know for sure if this is true is to test the model in other settings, I am confident in the findings of this study. The triangulated methods of data collection that I employed in the study, notably the extensive review of the scholarly literature, the elite interviews and archival research, compensated for my reliance on a single case study. While the literature on post-secondary education policymaking is scant, there is a voluminous data on the public education side. This literature confirmed much of what I found in the case of Manitoba, in terms of the importance of the larger context and the climate of ideas in shaping educational policy. At the same time, many of the factors in Kingdon's model of agenda setting (namely, the importance of majority wins, the personal views and ideologies of the executive, how conditions become problems; the criteria that promote one policy option over another) can easily be applied with some success to other areas of public policy.

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