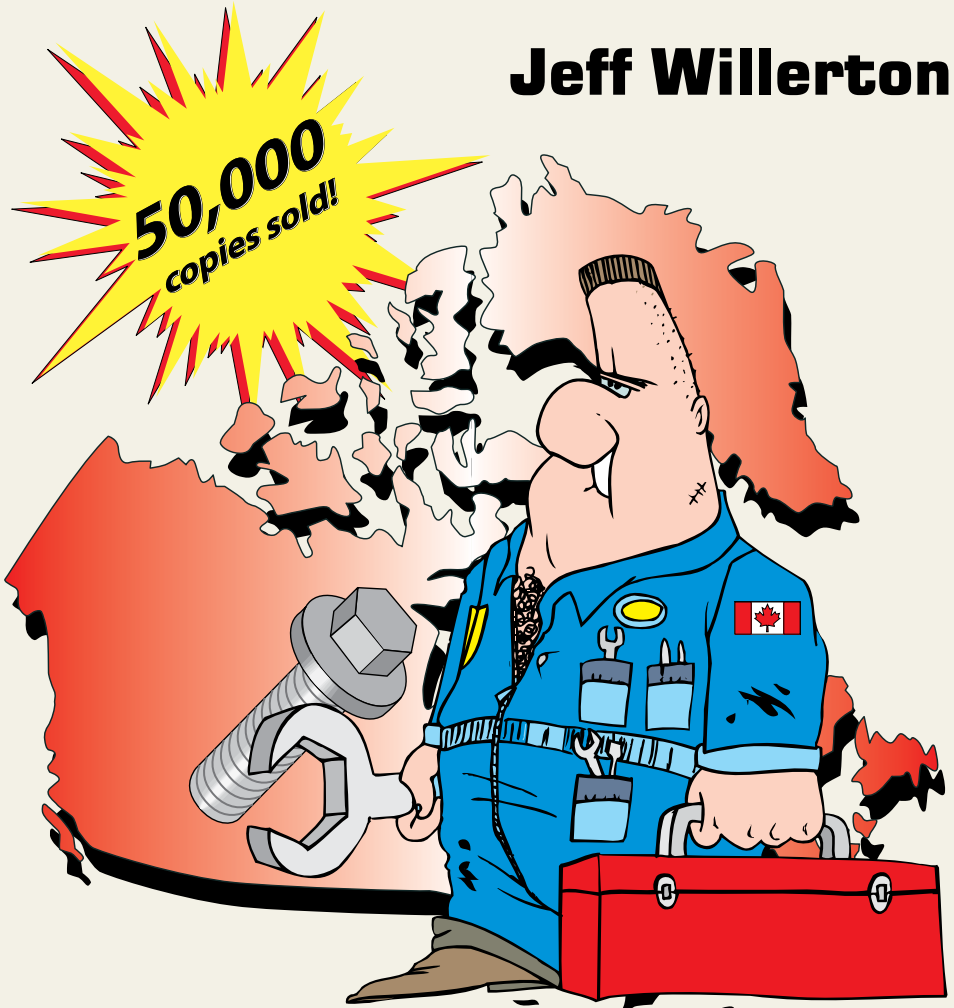


FIX CANADA

Fourteenth Edition

Jeff Willerton



This is not meant to entertain but inform.
That it is ridiculously entertaining is
just a happy coincidence.

Fix Canada

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To Dad, whose political zeal
had to rub off on someone:
I couldn't have asked for a
better example of how to do life.

Who Is Saying What About This

“This is the flat-out best political book I’ve ever read, and I’ve read many.”

Angie Warwick, School Trustee

“I don’t do politics and have never read a political book in my life... until now. Wow!”

Jennifer Gardiner, Executive Administrative Assistant

“Willerton’s words are infectious and refreshing, and I’ve read this collection of them four times – thus far!”

James Hansen, Stock Car Racer

“This is the only book I’ve ever read – five times!”

Ernie Boehm, Retired Chef

“The only other author I’ve read seven times is Tolkien.”

Dmytro Kushneryk, Prep Cook

“I might disagree with half of what Willerton wrote here, but I don’t care! I’ve never in my life read anything that stimulated so much intelligent political debate – and this book will be mandatory reading for my son one day.”

John Telehanic, Sales

“The Mrs. and I are downsizing. She wanted to sell my books. ‘Okay,’ I said, ‘but not this one. This one’s for the grandkids.’”

Bob Timmins, Retiree

Fix Canada

“I don’t think I’ve ever read anything more insightful or entertaining, and there’s also no small amount of truth between the covers of this book.”

Bill Mann, Service Writer

“It’s perfect the way Willerton put this together. A twelve year old or even a retired grease monkey like me could understand it.”

James E. Bonsor, Retired Mechanic

“Willerton hits the bull’s-eye in the middle of the bull’s-eye... every time!”

Ben Hildebrandt, Businessman

“Willerton uses language the way it was intended to be used: well and to convey truth.”

Tom Podollan, V.P. Operations

“I wasn’t expecting much when I opened this book. Was I in for a surprise! Absolutely fantastic!”

Ritchie Johnston, Retired Consultant

“Little did I know when I bought this book that it would change the way I think on so many issues. What an eye-opener!”

Ted Hurlston, Retired Custodian

“If you really want to know what’s happening in Canadian politics, you have to read this book. But you can’t borrow mine. I’m not letting it out of my sight!”

Joleen Chouinard, to a friend, regarding the book you now hold.

“I’m 90 years old, and I didn’t think I’d ever read a book like this. *It’s about time someone wrote it!*”

W.V. (Wilf) Russell, Veteran

“The only disappointment in this book is that it ends. I could read Willerton forever.”

Elsie Schmidt,
Administrative Assistant

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Introduction

Introduction

This book comes about as the result of the death of a very fine man. John Moerman was a teenager in WWII Holland where he worked with the Dutch underground protecting downed Allied airmen. One day he had coffee with an SS officer at his kitchen table while hiding one such airman directly underneath. It's the stuff movies are made of!

After the war John married his sweetheart Corrie, they immigrating to the country of their liberators where they pastored churches in the Edmonton area for forty years. Retiring to a small acreage John became a prolific writer, articulately taking on the left-leaning establishment and defending those who could not do so themselves, a cause to which he often returned. As son Jack eulogized, his father fearlessly took on both Nazis and Canadian politicians alike!

His letters were sent regularly to over two hundred publications across Canada. When the editor of our local weekly needed a conservative columnist to complete his revised editorial page, the retired pastor heard the call. That is to say he heard the phone ring, accepted the offered promotion and became a very fine weekly columnist. Sadly, it would be his last paying gig. Six months later, without so much as a hint of either physical or mental decline, he was gone.

To understand how John affected the lives of the people he touched, one need only consider the example of the receptionist at the doctor's office where he had been taking his beloved Corrie before his passing. The two had been there about a dozen times. When informed of why a forthcoming appointment had to be cancelled, (his passing) she—the receptionist—simply

exploded into tears right there in the office. Such was the effect he had on people who knew him even casually. I know; I was one.

It had been my privilege to meet John on three occasions. The first was in my role as a salesman in 1997. I introduced myself. He interjected: "Would that be the same Jeff Willerton who ran for Social Credit down in Calgary two weeks ago?" Note that there were probably 300 candidates across the province in that election, Alberta is three times the size of a unified Germany and I was a long way from home. Obviously this gentleman had a mind for details. He and Corrie and I coffeed away the balance of a very enjoyable afternoon.

The second time we met was at their 50th wedding anniversary into which I almost accidentally stumbled. I didn't particularly want to be back in their town that day but had been cornered by a business acquaintance into competing in a karaoke contest at a local hotel (that trophy now standing beside the monument to your then twelve year old author's budding skill on the chess board).

So it was a bit of happenstance that I was in their town that day, and a little bit more that I stopped to coffee with yet another acquaintance on the way out of it. He informed me of the festivities in town to which I informed him we simply had to go. Again a good time was had with the Moermans.

The third, two days later, was a brief encounter in which I gave John some literature he'd requested. It was brief but, as always, meaningful. He concluded it by looking me in the eye and saying, with a little twinkle in his own, "I think we think alike on a lot of issues." It was a meaningful encounter with a great man made more so by his sudden departure from the world five days later.

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That departure left an ache in the heart of all who knew John Moerman... and a column-sized void on our editorial page. As I whispered to the newspaper God at the time, if it's offered to me I'll accept the responsibility and fill that space to the best of my ability. Forget offered; I finagled until I got it.

I'd been writing letters to the editor for some time, as had John before being elevated to the status of weekly columnist. His last words to me were, in effect, that we were of the same mind on many issues – a veritable passing of the mantle if you will.

In the beginning the space he had occupied became a guest column. Your humble scribe filled it for all but three weeks of the following six months, at which point the editor finally succumbed to mounting public pressure (... I'm public!) and gave it to me as my own byline. Much of what you hold in your hand is a compilation of those columns (edited, at times, for brevity and/or clarity) written over the year and a half following John's passing. As I wrote in the opening paragraph, this book comes about as the result of the death of a very fine man, and truer words would frankly be hard to find. I hope in this introduction to have in some small way honoured his memory.

The column was largely a critique of the liberal policies imposed on us by various levels of government. Left-leaning federales have done more than their share of damage to this country. Unfortunately the provinces have marched lock step with them to the edge of the abyss.

Ralph Klein, for instance, the country's then most supposedly conservative premier, spent money more liberally than any other provincial leader in the history of Confederation. He had it to spend you might argue, but so did Peter Lougheed, and it was Lougheed's un-

bridled spending that landed Alberta in the soup in the first place. Klein's enduring reputation as some kind of conservative hawk simply testifies to the efficacy of double-speak and smoke and mirror politics, as you will see.

Of course both he and Jean Chretien, another prominent figure in the book, have long since departed the political stage. So why read about them? Why did your humble scribe read a book about Lougheed in the summer of '06, twenty years after he left office? Or why would one ever read about Trudeau, or Napoleon? Because it's history, of course, and we all know what happens if we don't learn from it....

The columns were written as issues arose so to read them chronologically would be to bounce from one issue and jurisdiction to another and back again. To simplify, the book has been divided into two sections. The first deals primarily with provincial issues in Alberta, issues largely shared by other provinces. The author might have written a similar column in P.E.I., for instance, but it's probably a good thing this unfolded in Alberta as Ralph Klein cut a somewhat more national and obviously more colourful figure than Pat Binns. Who? Exactly! The second section deals with federal and international issues. An attempt was also made to gather issues together, when possible, without violating the above divisions.

Being somewhat controversial, obviously the column was not without its detractors. One memorable day a reader tore a strip off me for A) spilling too much ink on the provincial Tories [understandably, as he was a member of their local constituency association] and B) being overly negative.

To respond to the second accusation first, that of being overly negative, I confess my guilt: I was negative. One

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must add, though, that it's hard to put a positive spin on the political situation anywhere in Canada while being governed into the toilet. To do so in the late nineties when these columns were first penned would have lacked either journalistic integrity and/or a modicum of insight. Probably both.

In response to the accusation of spilling too much ink on the provincial Tories in Alberta: A) it was a political column, and B) I live in the province. Naturally one would focus his writings on the politics of the jurisdiction in which he resides. Lastly, and in the words of another reader, "They deserved every drop!"

And so they did. They're far from alone, of course, but if the most notably conservative government in Canada is as liberal, and therefore duplicitous, as revealed in these pages, we obviously have a lot of rooting out to do. And not only provincially....

The federal Liberals and the pre-merger Progressive Conservative Party of Canada (historically) have been almost equally culpable for our nation's decline, if not completely indistinguishable. They've been aptly compared to two vehicles splashing each other with mud, travelling on the same road, in the same direction, to the exact same destination.

The players were well aware of this and seemingly entirely comfortable under either banner: Tory cabinet minister Jean Charest served as the Liberal premier of Quebec for three terms; admitted Trudeau fan and lifelong card-carrying Liberal Ralph Klein served as the Conservative premier of Alberta for almost fourteen years; and one-time Conservative Prime Minister Joe Clark was seen campaigning for Benedict Arnold (aka: Scott Brison) in Nova Scotia in 2004. If you, like me, are a victim of the public education system and thus presumably unfamiliar with the name, Benedict Arnold

was BFF with George Washington and a general in the revolutionary army before defecting to the British. If you're over seventy and unfamiliar with the acronym, BFF stands for 'best friends forever', the closeness of their relationship making the defection that much more egregious.

North of the 49th, many Canadians seem determined to vote as they and their families have for the last hundred years, apparently more concerned with maintaining tradition than seeking good governance. I'm referring now, post merger and the creation of the Conservative Party of Canada, to those who persist in voting Liberal despite 'da proof' that they're thieves and finance their election campaigns with that stolen loot; or for the marginally further left NDP which has thus far managed to cripple the potential of the provinces in which it has governed; or, where they continue to exist, for the Progressive (meaning liberal, thus conflicted) Conservatives.

Many Albertans, for instance, will likewise go to the polls and vote Tory again, A) because they always have, or B) because that party temporarily balanced the budget and paid off the debt. Of course those who base their vote on tradition have limited grounds on which to criticize others who do the same, (like federal Liberal supporters, for instance) and those who base their vote on the Tories' financial record overlook the fact that anyone who couldn't do at least what that gang did in this resource-rich province, in that era, should probably be institutionalized. I am, though, starting to pilfer from the column.

Speaking of which it was a privilege to write it. I have no formal training as a writer nor in the subject matter contained herein. I'm just a high school educated political layman with a passion for promoting better

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government. To do so, obviously it would help to know a little bit about the subject.

To that end you might say I've built a sort of grid of information over the years through which new information and events are filtered. To the extent the grid is faulty, so too will be said interpretations. Likewise to the extent the grid is properly built. You will be the judge as to its construction.

I don't profess to have plumbed any issue to its depths. I might believe I have a somewhat broad understanding of political issues. You might agree, adding that it's pretty shallow. Or not, but what will your judgment be based on, of course, if not your grid?

To understand the early columns one must be made aware of what were then some recent developments in the province. One was the Supreme Court's Vriend decision in which the high court agreed with an Alberta Court of Queen's Bench ruling to read 'sexual orientation' into the province's Individual Rights legislation. Another was that over the previous years the Tory government had brought electronic gambling devices known as Video Lottery Terminals into the province and placed them pretty much anywhere a person could sit down for a cold one.

Vriend, VLTs, judge-made law, major political cover ups and many other issues are dealt with in these pages. Occasionally some good news even creeps in. Depending on one's particular paradigm, or world view, one might find points with which one agrees and others with which one will perhaps even strongly disagree. Hopefully more of the former than the latter.

Should the column itself, though, have been written? It was well received by the readership, so probably, yes. But what of the book? More to the point, should it have been honed and redesigned these several times now

as I approach the publication of this fourteenth and (keeping in mind that I've said this nine times now) presumably final edition? In fact I was almost daily asking myself a similar question in the spring of '07 for reasons that will later be made clear. The answer came while reading a book on 18th century philosopher Adam Smith.

Smith is widely revered as the Father of Capitalism for his work, *Wealth of the Nations* (1776). This much I knew. What I discovered therein was that *Wealth* was almost an addendum to his earlier, seminal work entitled *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This he first published in 1759 – and republished, “honed and re-designed”¹ five times in the thirty-one years following.

Hold the phone(!) and note the timing. Questioning if I was on the right road publishing and republishing a book to a significant extent about social issues, (known in an earlier era as ‘moral sentiments’) it came to my attention that the one I was on had been trod before by no less than the Father of Capitalism himself! The moment was surreal! After it there was simply no question about continuing with this project. Not everyone will share my enthusiasm.

Comparing the home of the brave with our native land, one McGill University economist surmised: “You can be a social conservative in the U.S. without being labelled a whacko. Not in Canada.” If this is true, some will be tempted to write me off in short order.

I believe, for instance, that it is wrong for society to grant marriage licences to gay couples or otherwise endorse or further normalize a lifestyle that is widely known to slay its adherents in their prime and contributes frankly nothing to that society beyond, perhaps, the very temporal emotional comfort of those adherents.

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In view of today's zeitgeist (a German word meaning 'spirit of the age') it is understood that the preceding borderline run-on sentence will inevitably alienate more than a few readers, and not only for its structure. It is hoped, though, that even those in deepest disagreement will also be gracious enough to read on and discover the relative logic behind it and other positions articulated between these covers.

I likewise believe, for instance, that it's wrong for governments to place what is known as the crack cocaine of gambling devices under people's noses in bars and restaurants across the land. Like John Moerman before me, I also do my editorial best to defend those yet incapable of doing so themselves.

One is of course free to disagree with any or all of these positions. Unfortunately for those who do, those issues (gay rights, VLTs and abortion) are the first three dealt with in the book you're presently reading and comprise the first approximately dozen columns. And then like a dog with a bone buried in the back yard, I occasionally return to them.

Winston Churchill defined a fanatic as "one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject." Again, you will be the judge as to whether I qualify.

I by no means have the final word on the issues contained herein, but humbly submit my thoughts on them to you for your consideration. They may enrich or enrage you—or both—but I have a sneaking suspicion they won't leave you entirely unmoved. Enjoy!

Provincial Issues